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No Shortcuts:  
The Case for Organizing

by

Jane F. McAlevey

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2015

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APPROVAL PAGE, NO SHORTCUTS: THE CASE FOR ORGANIZING

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Sociology to satisfy the dissertation requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

No Shortcuts: The Case for Organizing

By Jane McAlevey

Advisor: Frances Fox Piven

This dissertation will explore how ordinary workers in the new economy create and sustain power from below.

In workplace and community movements, individuals acting collectively have been shown to win victories using a variety of different approaches. In this dissertation, I will argue that different approaches lead to different outcomes—often very different outcomes. I will use a framework throughout of three broad types of change processes; advocacy, mobilizing, and organizing, although my emphasis is on the latter two. And I will argue that each is productive of a different kind of victory.

In arguing my case, that advocacy, mobilizing, and organizing are different approaches to social change that produce different outcomes and relative successes, I will move in, out, and between key arguments in the literature of social movements and unions published over the past forty years: the years when progressive movements began to lose everything they had gained and the right wing began consistently winning back the ground progressives lost. The twelve cases I analyze involved one classic social movement organization, two national unions, and two local unions, one of them also a local of one the nationals. Strikes were utilized as part of the overall

strategy in three of the cases. By focusing on campaigns that led to success, I will identify the factors that I argue facilitate rather than inhibit the rebirth of a vibrant workers movement.

This research will contribute to the sociological literature on social movement strategy and power. Specifically, my dissertation will test the current debate about “leaderless movements” and “horizontalism” by sharply focusing on leaders, including who they are, how they are identified, how they develop, the choices they make, and the roles they play. The cases involve workforces with mostly women workers, in projected growth sectors of the U.S. labor force (health care and education) that are dominated by women. Therefore, my work will address the dearth in the literature about labor organizing in heavily gendered sectors of work. By analyzing the factors that explain successes under new political, economic, and work conditions, I will contribute to new collective action theory and offer a substantive understanding of how strikes are won in the new millennium.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS &amp; GRATITUDE

To master something new, books can help. But good mentors are worth one thousand books. The acknowledgments in this dissertation can best be viewed as an update and (super) friendly amendment to the acknowledgments pages in *Raising Expectations (and Raising Hell)*, pages 316-318 (Verso 2014). Any intelligence I might display in this dissertation is the cumulative wisdom of many decades of work in the field where I literally had thousands of teachers. *Raising Expectations* was about campaigns I participated in and mostly led. My new academic mentors were firm, despite my at times fierce protestations, that I had to select campaigns that I had nothing to do with as the evidence for my empirical work. They were correct, of course.

I haven't changed my opinion one iota of the many people to whom I owe tremendous thanks for their patience with me, for sharing key life lessons with me, for the endless time and skill they've invested in my thinking and my work, and, often, for their love. But I will limit these acknowledgments to the players who have specifically helped me get through five years of a PhD program.

Mapping my academic pursuit chronologically, two people more than any others talked me into the doctoral program: Larry Fox and Frances Fox Piven (no relation, except they share a soon-to-be-discovered gene for wicked intelligence). I had zero plans to attend graduate school and couldn't imagine why I would shift out of full-time organizing. When internal warfare inside the trade union movement led to the destruction of a ton of good efforts and dashed the hopes and dreams and possibilities of thousands of workers, I knew it was time to step outside the fray to better reflect on and understand what was happening, and what it meant for the future. At that very moment, coincidentally, I received an early stage cancer diagnosis which would require a

full year of nothing but medically focused pursuits. It was during that time, my Sloan Kettering year, that my old friend Bob Ostertag talked me into writing down my reflections and offered to mentor me through a book. That project became *Raising Expectations (and Raising Hell)*.

Frances and Larry were early readers of the manuscript, and each came to the same conclusion: I should weather the storm and continue thinking and writing by going to graduate school for a few years. They've always given good advice, and I thank each of them enormously for guiding me through complicated chapters of my life. Frances became in academia what Larry had been in my SEIU years, an incredible mentor.

Once I made the decision to attend school, there was the vexing issue of how to afford life in New York City as a graduate student. My sister Catherine, who always held higher education as a top value, was thrilled with my decision and, along with her life partner, Debra Hall, generously offered to support my housing needs for the first two years of school. If my dissertation has a dedication, it's certainly to Catherine, who lost her own cancer fight during my third year in graduate school. I loved her wildly, and she was ecstatic about my getting a PhD. My brother Ben and his wife, Melissa, and her mother, Anne Barnes, have also been providing great logistical support that facilitated and enabled some of my graduate school research. My sister Bri has been a full-on cheerleader and supporter, as have my many wonderful siblings and extended family.

My cohort, the 2010 Sociology cohort, is an extremely talented, fun, solidaristic, smart, supportive, and incredible team. The mostly women and a few men we consider honorary women guided me through the early course work and big exams. I could not have gotten through those first two years without my cohort. Marnie Brady and Bronwyn Dobchuck-Land were regular and crucial readers at every stage of my dissertation work. They were patient and



flexible, constantly trying to teach me to use signposts in my academic writing and to persuade me to say the same thing three ways in the same chapter—a concept with which I still struggle. Erin Michaels, Dominique Nisperos and Martha King pulled me successfully through two semesters of statistics. I chose not to use OLS regression in my final work, despite all they taught me!

My committee, headed by Frances Fox Piven, and consisting of Dan Clawson, Bill Kornblum and Jim Jasper, were terrific. Each of them played a different and special role in helping me through this process. Please hold them harmless for any flaws, weak spots, bad ideas or problems in this dissertation but credit them for all the good. They were encouraging, they generously made time for me, and, like my cohort, they had to help me transition from thinking like a field organizer to a later-in-life academic—at times a very challenging endeavor. I have enormous gratitude for my committee.

Along the way, I had an informal committee reading and commenting on various pieces of my writings, including Janice Fine, Jeff Goodwin, Colin Barker, Sam Gindin, Laura Flanders, Marshall Ganz, Jamie McCallum, Betsy Reed, Doug Henwood, Mark Brenner, Katie Miles, Bill Fletcher, Catherine Banghart, Peter Olney, John Stamm, Patty Hoffman, John Krinsky, David Morris, Deepak Pateriya, and Seth Borgos. As with my PhD committee, please spare these people blame for any failings on my part but do recognize that they helped sharpen my thinking and writing.

I am deeply appreciative to several people amid many whom are quoted in and were part of the field work and cases I studied. I thank every person who made time for an interview, for sharing their thoughts and ideas. But there's a special few who generously opened doors for me, who encouraged people to talk openly and honestly with me, who dug through their own

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While doing my field research and case work, a few people played key enabling roles: Don Hazen has shared his New York City apartment generously as I ploughed through the end of this dissertation. Susy Stewart and Thea Chalmers cared for my trusted steed, Jalapeño, keeping him happy, in good physical shape and well-loved during my long absences. And of course, Rati Kashyap, the more than able assistant in the Sociology Department at the City University of New York's Graduate Center makes every single academic thing work!

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## CONTENTS

Copyright.....	ii
Approval Page, No shortcuts: The Case for Organizing .....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Acknowledgments & Gratitude .....	vi
List of Tables, Illustrations, Charts, Diagrams, and Figures .....	xiii
Chapter 1 Introduction .....	1
Sociologically Speaking: .....	1
Labor Unions as Social Movements and .....	1
Unions as Hardest Test of Social Movement Success.....	1
Which Unions, Why, and the Context Today .....	9
The Search for Black Swans: .....	13
Unions That Still Run Successful Majority Strikes.....	13
Methodology.....	15
The Chapters .....	16
Chapter 2 Theoretical Background .....	18
What We Did and Didn't Learn About Organizing .....	20
from the Grand Theorists.....	20
Beyond the Grand Theorists: Organizing in the USA.....	24
George Herbert Mead: Organizing Theorist .....	27
(Another Posthumously Awarded Label).....	27
Saul Alinsky: Gestating in Mead's Chicago School in the 1920s .....	31
and Marx's Workshop in the 1930s .....	31
Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward: .....	36
Putting Power, Ordinary People, Agency and Bottom-Up Strategies.....	36
Into Sociology and Social Change Movements .....	36
Marshall Ganz: Strategy Defined .....	40
Organizing at Center and as Process.....	45
(Not Tactic, Not Repertoire, Not Campaign).....	45
My Dissertation: Mobilizing Versus Organizing .....	62
Chapter 3: Nursing Home Unions, Washington versus Connecticut .....	67

Local 775, Origins and Approach to Private Sector Nursing Homes .....	68
The Union Difference: What Being a Unionized Nursing Home Worker Means in Washington and in Connecticut .....	83
Washington’s Approach Equals Three Sides as Three Sides .....	87
Connecticut’s Approach Equals From Three Sides to Two .....	87
Conclusion: Robert Michels and Oligarchy versus George Herbert Mead and Transformative Participation .....	89
Chapter Four Smithfield Foods: Huge Success You’ve Hardly Heard About.....	91
Two Different Kind of Struggles Get Different Attention .....	92
Smithfield Foods and Conditions of the Global South .....	93
Within the Global North .....	93
Failure Round I .....	94
New Labor is Elected, Still More Failure Round II.....	96
Key Factors that Conditioned a Win in Round Three.....	99
The Purpose of the Union Changes .....	99
The National, Elected Leadership .....	99
The Staff Leadership .....	101
Workers as Primary Actors .....	105
The North Carolina Community as Key Secondary Actors.....	119
Adding Leverage: the National Consumer Boycott.....	123
Making Real Partnerships with National Groups.....	123
The RICO Suit and the Election Procedure Accord .....	126
Conclusion: Worker Struggle Builds Resiliency,.....	130
the New Local Union, #1208.....	130
Chapter 5 Make the Road New York.....	134
Despierta Bushwick (Wake Up! Bushwick) .....	139
Wage Theft Legislation .....	143
Secure Communities Campaign .....	144
Strategic Capacity .....	146
Participatory Democracy and Make the Road’s “High Touch” Model.....	148
Future Challenges .....	151
Chapter 6 Chicago Teachers Union, Before and After 2010 .....	157

From Militant to Milquetoast .....	160
Change Begins, From the Outside In.....	166
The Caucus of Rank-and-File Educators (CORE) Forms.....	168
The Slate of Candidates Emerges.....	172
From Milquetoast to Militant .....	178
Emanuel Ups the Ante, Shifts the Power Equation, .....	185
and Doubles Down the Challenge.....	185
Mass Political Education and Structure Tests .....	190
Exercising Workers Most Powerful Weapon .....	194
After the Strike, Challenges .....	199
Chapter Seven: Two Models Produce Different Kinds of Success .....	204
Section I: Conditions and Context Today.....	205
Section II: Overarching Observations from the Cases .....	208
Section III: Saul Alinsky: His Legacy in New Labor and the Community Organizing Sector .....	214
Section IV: Two Models, Distinctly Different: Mobilizing and Organizing .....	231
Section V: The Missing Power of the Current Organizing Model .....	247
Secondary Power Is In the Community,.....	247
Not Corporations or 1% Stakeholders .....	247
Chapter 8 Conclusion: Pretend Power Versus Actual Power.....	263
Notes & Works Cited.....	271

## LIST OF TABLES, ILLUSTRATIONS, CHARTS, DIAGRAMS, AND FIGURES

Chart #1,	Cases	page 6
Chart #2,	Types of Collective Action	page 65
Chart #3,	Contract Comparison	page 84
Table #1,	Postulates, Alinsky Versus 1199	page 232
Table #2,	Two Models	page 236
Diagram #1,	Typical Corporate Campaign Schema	page 238
Figure #1,	Concession Versus Disruption Costs	page 250
Diagram #2,	Community Networks Schema	page 256
Diagram #3,	Whole Worker Model	page 262

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

*Sociologically Speaking:  
Labor Unions as Social Movements and  
Unions as Hardest Test of Social Movement Success*

Social movements and unions have been studied in separate academic disciplines for longer than I have been alive. After long practical experience—as a young, radical educator at the Highlander Center, a full-time worker in the community organizing movement, an overtime organizer and chief negotiator in the union movement, and an electoral campaign manager in each sociologically divided sector—I find it impossible to sort the process of progressive social change into two distinct piles or traditions.

There's an informal gestalt in much of the social-movement field that unions are not social movements at all; that *union* equates to *undemocratic, top-down bureaucracy*. Yet not all so-called social movement organizations (SMOs) fit their own definition of “social;” some function from the top down as much as any bad union. An SMO's membership can be as irrelevant and disregarded as the rank and file in the worst union. Likewise, there is an assumption that material gain is the primary concern in unions, missing that the most important aspect of the fight is over the deepest of human emotions: dignity. It is the development of an emotion, dignity, which can lead to workers clubbing up to form the type of solidarity needed to sustain workers in the face of the union busters. Equally true, *all* of the unions with which I worked were by any definition absolutely social movements, with progressive goals that went well beyond the workplace,

prefigurative decision making, and robust participation by workers, their families, and their communities.

For the purpose of this dissertation, when I use the term *movement* or *movements* I am consciously merging agencies that have been studied separately: the people in unions, who are called *workers*, and many of the same people after they have punched the clock at the end of their shift and put on their SMO volunteer hats—people who are then called *individuals*. Workers, too, are individuals. A dichotomous approach to workplaces and communities prevents people and movements from winning much more significant victories. To the extent that a dichotomous approach persists in academia, it impairs sociologists, even those we might call Phase II social movement theorists, the ones who thankfully put agency (people) and strategy (choice) alongside and not subservient to structure in social movement studies.

In workplace and community movements, individuals acting collectively have been shown to win victories using a variety of different approaches. In this dissertation, I will argue that different approaches lead to different outcomes, often very different outcomes. I will use a framework throughout of three broad types of change processes; advocacy, mobilizing, and organizing, though my emphasis is on the latter two. And I will argue that each is productive of a different kind of victory. My intense interest and focus is on what I am calling *relative success* (and perhaps relative defeat, too). There is an impressive body of evidence for what leads to failure. And there's a lot of analysis of the factors involved in big, huge, macro-level social movements, as, say, in the civil rights movement. There's very little understanding of what factors lead to small, medium-, and high-impact victories, or why. There are three key variables that I see as crucial to *relative success*: power, strategy, and collective action method; that is, the degree of power needed to win a particular victory; a strategy for making full use of the power;



and a methodology for engaging people in collective action. I will argue that many small victories can be and are won without any collective action at all, the key actors being paid lobbyists, PR professionals, and good smoke and mirrors. That model is what I call advocacy, and, those are small victories, and I am getting ahead of myself.

I focus on relative success because, contrary to prevailing wisdom, I think progressives are entirely capable of rebuilding a movement with the power to successfully challenge the dominating corporate right wing. I even think they have enough resources to achieve a massive turnaround in what's been happening in the United States, if not in all of the so-called Western industrialized countries. One implication of my argument is that the people controlling the movement's resources, the individual people who are decision makers in national unions, the Democratic Party, and in philanthropy, have been focused on the wrong strategies for decades, leading to an extraordinary series of setbacks and defeats. The biggest victories of the past 100 years, those won in the heyday of the labor and civil rights movements, have been all but rolled back.

Yet the victories achieved by the people in these two movements were durable—and have not been entirely lost—because they instituted major structural changes that became embedded in government policies throughout the national, state and local levels; they included strong or relatively strong enforcement mechanisms; the governmental agencies that enforced them had more income and many more enforcers than they do today; and, most importantly, each victory penetrated and became part of the consciousness of most people, what sociologists sometimes call collective consciousness. We know this because even today, people who say they don't like unions will also say, "At least in this country it's illegal for children to work in factories," or "I told the boss I wouldn't handle anything so toxic without protection," or simply, "Thank God It's

Friday.” That is, they don’t like unions, but they see child labor laws, workplace safety regulations, the eight-hour workweek and the weekend—all benefits won by workers engaged in collective action through their unions—as the reasonable and beneficial norm. Similarly, most people in this country who feel personally uncomfortable with or suspicious of those outside their own racial or ethnic group would still not accept a *formal* return to the apartheid of Jim Crow laws.

That is why reversing the gains of our two most successful movements—labor and civil rights—has required a sustained, multidecade and multifront campaign by the corporate right wing. The global trade rules they have put into place have been a key strategy: they have put workers in the U.S. (and, increasingly, in Europe) in direct competition with workers making \$1 a day in countries where repression is high and rights are low. These changes to the trade rules are but one example of people, in this case the corporate right, changing the ‘opportunity structure’ to suit their long term goals. Global and regional trade accords give multinational corporations the right to buy land anywhere in almost any country, and those corporations have forcibly evicted millions of people from self-sustaining plots of land (or tricked them into giving land up for one-time payoffs that seemed much better deals than they actually were), directly contributing to a huge rise in the immigration into the U.S. and Europe of cheap labor.

The corporate-driven right wing has pocketed the courts, one judicial appointment at a time over forty years, and this deeply conservative judiciary has inflicted death by a thousand cuts to the major laws sustaining the victories of labor and civil rights. Seizing the judiciary has also facilitated a vertically integrated system resulting in the mass incarceration of African Americans and mass detention of small farmers and peasants whose land in their own countries was

engulfed by the corporate shareholders in our privatized prisons and, now, privatized detention centers.

The corporate right has also created a version of a ‘popular front,’ including seizing the cultural apparatus through rulings like the Federal Communications Commission’s Clinton-era decision to allow multinationals to outright own the means of communication, and by building up, through very generous funding, the powerful Christian right.

In arguing my case, that advocacy, mobilizing, and organizing are different approaches to social change that produce different outcomes and relative successes, I will move in, out, and between key arguments in the literature of social movements and unions published over the past forty years: the years when progressive movements began to lose everything they had gained and the right wing began consistently winning back the ground progressives lost. The twelve cases I analyze involved one classic social movement organization, two national unions, and two local unions, one of them also a local of one the nationals— an outlier with a very different approach than its parent.

The unions span the private sector and the public sector; the cases involve trade jobs and service jobs, workers harder to replace (teachers and nurses) and easier to replace (factory hands, teacher’s aides, nurse’s aides, cooks, and cleaners). In one case, (mostly) men of widely diverse backgrounds slaughter and prepare pork in a right-to-work Southern state. In others, (mostly) women teach and care for the young and tend to the sick and infirm in at least partly unionized Northern states. Multiple cases originated *within* each of the five organizations. In one of the national unions, the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW), three separate campaigns to unionize workers in the same factory, spanning more than a decade, resulted in two defeats and one big victory. I will argue that in *all* of the union cases, losing and winning a little

or a lot are correlated to one common factor: the beliefs and motivations, or purposefulness, of the leadership team. Chart #1 provides a summary of the cases.

<b>Chart #1: Table of Cases</b>				
Organization Type & Name	SMO Make the Road New York	Union: SEIU Service Employees International Union	Union: UFCW United Food & Commercial Workers	Union: AFT American Federation of Teachers
Time Frame	New Millennium 2000 to 2015*			
Sector & Type of Profession or Employment	Poor/'Precariat'/Small worksites, most fights in terrain of community	Private Sector Service Nursing Homes	Private Sector Manufacturing Pork Production	Public Sector Service Education
Geography	New York City, NY	Washington, <i>National Strategy &amp; Connecticut &amp; Rhode Island, Local Union Strategy</i>	Tar Heel, North Carolina	Chicago, IL
Legal Framework	Outside Labor Law Framework (mostly)	Union Security	Right-to-Work	Union Security
Demographics	Latin American Immigrants, documented and not documented	Women African American and Documented Immigrants	(Mostly) Men African American, White, Undocumented Immigrants	(Mostly) Women White & African American, Few Latina or Asian
Numbers of Workers	Varies from Handfuls to Impact of State Law	6,000	5,000	30,000
Loss & Relative Wins: Advance Significant Movement Building (MB)	2 Advance 1 Significant	23/1 Advance ** 60/1 MB/s **	2 Losses 1 Movement Building	3 Significant 1 Movement Building
Type of Effort	Litigation, Statewide Law Change, Blocking Enforcement Actions	Employer Accords w/ Neutrality Agreements, NLRB Elections, Collective Bargaining, and Strikes	NLRB elections, Employer Accords, and Strikes  *the 2 losses were '94 & '97	From Decline to Renewal Strategies, Collective Bargaining, and Strikes

Until just a few years ago, I would have argued that private-sector unionization and collective bargaining efforts, when they involve majority strikes (the kind that shut down production) are the hardest test of any kind of campaign mounted by any type of organization in the U.S.A., definitely presenting conditions much tougher than those faced by social movement organizations. This is still true, as I will explain; but now, *some* types of public-sector union fights have become just as tough, with conditions just as stiff, and my case studies include examples of those too.

Factors that make private sector union fights and now some public ones so hard include:

1. Recruitment: In union fights, your *opponent* recruits your membership base, by hiring the workers. In the vernacular of McCarthy and Zald's classical resource mobilization theory, there are *no* "bystander publics" in a unionization fight or in a strike; every single person is immediately invested ("a direct beneficiary") and expected to vote yes or no. Because the union needs yeses to win, in a contentious union campaign any abstention equates to a no.

2. A threat level *always* set to High Threat–High Risk: Throughout a union campaign, your *opponent*, the employer, who recruited your base, is in full control of whether or not to unrecruit them; that is, to fire them, or to institute a sudden wave of layoffs, or, more subtly but no less effectively and quite commonly, to make their working lives go to hell very fast, by radically altering their schedules (say, assigning the night shift to single parents), by canceling a long-awaited vacation in the name of a sudden workplace emergency (think of all the nonrefundable parts of a family vacation), or by instituting a new reporting system designed to put unfavorable write-ups into everyone's personnel file.

3. Concession cost: this is variable, as I will discuss, but in all union fights, and, in the biggest and hardest, the concession costs are high which motivates the employer to fight-to-kill.

4. The arena: The arena of this game, using the strategic-choice game theory analogy, is owned and controlled by your *opponent*, and your opponent, the employer, can easily make it a war ‘space,’ a vantage point for constant surveillance of the actions and behavior of your membership base.

5. Access to the base: The staff or outside volunteers working for the union are forbidden to enter or approach the chief arena in which the game plays out, and therefore cannot even talk to the players involved in the “game.” Even parking lots have been ruled as private property so that the employer can institute a total-control arena, where no outsider has access to the workers, not only once they’ve punched the clock, but even afterward, when they are punched out and are walking on their own to their parked cars. All the union representative may do is visit the workers in their homes, and to obtain the necessary list of names and addresses, the union must file for a National Labor Relations Board election and satisfy the NLRB standards for sufficient interest in such an election *before meeting most voters*.

All of this adds up to a substantially more difficult terrain than most social movement organizations fight on. Many typical SMOs put out a flier or post something on Facebook that says, “Hey, if you are interested in x,y,z, come to a meeting on p,d,q day.” Unions have no way of doing this with workers— certainly, they cannot stand outside the parking lot handing out fliers or announce a union meeting for a specific employer via social media, unless they want the

employer to turn the workplace into a war zone the next day, a sure way to kill the campaign before it starts. The entire campaign has to be run by brand-new volunteers. And that the toughest, most gut-wrenching moments of the campaign will be handled by these workers themselves rather than paid, experienced staff like the ones who often run SMO campaigns.

The now stale distinction between the challenges faced by the private and public sectors has historically been made on the presumption that public-sector bosses don't fight as hard. This can be true, but it was not true in the my case study of the Chicago Teachers Union, whose boss was very powerful and very vicious. The other special challenge to private sector union fights is that outside union organizers, whether paid or volunteer, are prohibited from entering the workplace. In the case of a school fight, since Columbine, Sandy Hook and similar disasters, the K-12 school system has effectively been as closed as a private-sector worksite. In Chicago, in order to conduct observations and meetings with teachers in school, I had to present all sorts of ID and be accompanied by someone on staff at all times, and the teachers had to notify the principal and front desk that they had a guest.

### *Which Unions, Why, and the Context Today*

Unions in the United States are experiencing a profound crisis. In 1995, the biggest shake-up in the U.S. labor movement in more than fifty years took place when a new generation of unionists forced the first contested election in the history of the AFL-CIO. The victors, dominated by the service-workers' unions and often referred to as New Labor,<sup>1</sup> promised revitalization through aggressive new organizing. Exactly two decades and hundreds of millions of dollars later, union ranks have declined even further to 6.7% in the private sector and 11.3% overall.<sup>2</sup> Why has New Labor failed to reverse the decline of union power?

U.S. unions are not monolithic. As some of my referenced literature will attest to in chapter two, most unions have not been trying to organize the unorganized; mostly they've been managing their decline. In 1995, though, a set of unions declared they would reverse the tide of their falling membership. This dissertation is focused on that set of unions. The grouping is slightly porous but contains a core that self-identifies as unions trying to change and organize. I rely on several intersecting groups of unions to constitute the universe I investigate: a list generated by Kate Bronfenbrenner that she used in her enormous body of union research; the list on the winning side of the AFL-CIO victory in 1995; the unions that formed the breakaway from the AFL-CIO in 2006, known as the Change-To-Win (CTU) unions; and, very recently, the two main teachers unions that have gone through significant top leadership changes, and, owing to the national attack on teachers unions, that have been active participants with the others for the first time in decades.

Dominated since 1995 by unions in the service sector, the overlapping lists include Service Employees International Union (SEIU); Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE) and Union of Needle Trades Employees (UNITE), which merged to become UNITE-HERE; American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME); United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW); United Auto Workers (UAW); United Brotherhood of Carpenters (UBC); Laborers International Union of North America (LIUNA); the United Farm Workers (UFW); the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA). There is a complicated variation of who is in and out of the overlapping list, depending on the exact months and years of various turf wars.

This dissertation argues that although the *external* environment of all unions is extremely hostile, the reasons for the ongoing decline of union membership lie mainly in *how unions*



*organize among their existing members as well as among unorganized workers.* Most labor history and analysis focuses on external factors—such as the employer offensive, hostile courts, globalization, automation, and a changing employment structure—relegating organizing methods to a “black box.” In contrast, this dissertation connects New Labor to the legacy of Saul Alinsky, who is often referred to as the dean or father of community organizing. It identifies the influence of several strands of the Alinsky doctrine in the organizational background of many current New Labor leaders and attributes the strengths and weaknesses of New Labor’s organizing approach to Alinsky’s own strengths and weaknesses.

I will argue that a critical factor in the failure of the effort at union revitalization after 1995 has been the strategic choice made by key leaders of New Labor to move away from workers and the workplace. Because of hostile labor laws and unfriendly court rulings, these leaders decided they could no longer win traditional union elections and shifted their strategy to securing so-called card-check and neutrality deals, and fair-election-procedure accords with employers. The means they used to achieve such agreements are anchored in demonstrating that they could cost the employer money through a “corporate campaign,” including publicity offensives against the employer’s brand, stockholder actions, and lobbying to have the varied public subsidies that flow into the so-called private sector cut off or decreased.

When these labor-run corporate campaigns first developed in the 1970s as a response to the degeneration of worker protections under U.S. labor law, they were designed to complement worker organizing.<sup>3</sup> By the early years of the new millennium, they had all but replaced it.<sup>4</sup> The strategy of weakening employer opposition to union organization through corporate campaigns made employers—not workers or their communities—the primary focus of New Labor’s energy. Today corporate campaigns continue to locate the fight in the economic arena by threatening to

disrupt profit making, but not by workers withholding their labor. Instead, a new army of professional union staff wage the strike by devising tactics to hit the employer's bottom line.

In examining this change in strategic choices after 1995, I argue that the New Labor leadership's Alinskyist origins are a causal factor in key aspects of their methodology. New Labor's prioritization of corporate campaigns reproduced and privileged Alinsky-like "jujitsu tactics in a war conducted between labor and business elites. *Workers were no longer essential to their own liberation.*

I will argue that Alinsky's extreme pragmatism and his embrace of "ends justify the means" tactics enabled New Labor's leaders to rationalize accords with big business that stripped workers and their communities of the ability to defend themselves against their employers.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, New Labor's adoption of Alinskyist tactics stands in contrast to the organizing style at the root of many of organized labor's great victories, which were won during a more hostile period of industrial relations than that of the past four decades: the successful organizing of the unions of the Congress of Industrial Organization (CIO) during the 1930s. A key aspect of the CIO organizers' craft was identifying organic worker leaders in the shop and anchoring campaigns in the "whole worker," understood to be a person embedded in a range of social relationships in the workplace and in the community.<sup>6</sup>

By contrast, Alinsky's "people's organizations,"—what he called "O of O," or Organization of Organizations—were top-down rather than bottom-up formations, staff driven and focused more on tactical warfare than on keeping workers organized to control their own destiny.<sup>7</sup>

One serious consequence of McCarthyism was that organizers skilled in the CIO-era method were driven out of the labor movement. Since then, union leaders have adopted an increasingly accommodationist method that has achieved material gains and union security by

surrendering the option to strike and often all other real rights on the shop floor. After the strikes that crippled production were abandoned, there was no longer a perceived need to build a strong organization among a majority of workers. As a result, wage increases and improvements in working conditions have come to a halt. Workers as the primary leverage in their own salvation has been replaced by the corporate campaign, a method of tactical warfare that takes campaign action away from the shop floor and away from the workers.

*The Search for Black Swans:  
Unions That Still Run Successful Majority Strikes*

This dissertation will explore the thesis that workers can still win more substantial victories by building and holding majority participation among the key affected constituencies, a very different strategy from the one deployed by New Labor. Because strikes that shut down or cripple production—the most powerful kind—are *contingent* on the overwhelming majority of workers, not staff, engaging in collective action, it follows that to use labor’s strongest weapon requires organizing models that facilitate most workers’ participation in the union. The preponderance of cases I will examine involve successful majority strikes in the new millennium. While creating an analogy to the industrial-era factory of the past, I will focus on cases in the growth industries of today’s service economy—health care and education—in which many workers with a wide range of skill and education constantly collaborate in the same buildings. Unlike in the past, however, the workforces in my case studies are mostly comprised of women, and emotional labor and technical skill are equally crucial to success. In my research I ask, how do these factors, characteristic of today’s economic growth sectors, affect the strategies and relative successes of these strikes?

These case studies will lead me to be able to contribute analysis to the following big-picture questions:

1. What is the relationship between the ideology of the insurgents/organizers and the strategies they prioritize? Is the decision to embrace a minority participation versus a majority collective-action model contingent on ideology?
2. What is the relationship between power and strategy? What is the relationship between research models and their subsequent collection-action models? Has New Labor's focus on the corporate campaign—colloquially called the air war—and its concurrent power-structure theory, “corporate research,” helped or hindered labor's revitalization? What alternative power and research theories have been utilized in the new millennium?
3. The transition from a manufacturing to service economy radically altered traditional worker-consumer relations, what are the strategy implications for insurgents? Does the strike strategy of a female-dominated workforce look different from the old one? Many large workplaces today are dominated by women engaged in emotional labor intimately tied to the consumer, does labor need to view the public differently in strike strategy? Does the relationship between these workers and their patients, students and their families demand a different relationship between their unions and the community? The corporate right is attempting to wedge the public against workers whose salaries rely on taxes, but can the public in the neoliberal service economy instead become an extension of the workers against the employer?
4. What is the relationship between success in collective bargaining and revitalizing or expanding labor's ranks? Do workers' expectations of winning concrete and measurable improvements in their lives through collective action have to be raised as a precondition

to workers themselves for them to become the base from which labor's ranks might grow?

### *Methodology*

In this paper I employ mixed qualitative and quantitative methods. I conducted fifty-eight semi-structured interviews with rank and file workers, civil society leaders, members of local media organizations, current and former lead strategists in the campaigns, and long-time active as well as retired Alinsky-trained organizers. I analyzed data sets from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Services (FMCS) work-stoppage databases from the year 2000 to present. I did archival research on each case's strategic planning documents; analysis of the current collective bargaining agreements of each local union; read published newspaper stories and internal memos; and I conducted a line-by-line content analysis of the key Alinsky texts and the organizing training manuals of numerous Alinskyist organizations. I utilized participant observation for chapter four, first as a young organizer being apprenticed at 1199 New England and later as national deputy director for SEIU's Healthcare Division, where I participated in numerous discussions leading up to the launch of what became known nationally as the Nursing Home Industry Alliance, which the Washington State case represents. I was trained as a community organizer in one strand of the Alinsky tradition prior to my years as a labor organizer and contract negotiator

My case studies represent a small section of union and worker-center actions. They include failure but are mostly comprised of relative successes in a period of massive union decline. My aim is not to produce theory that explains labor successes and failures in toto but to understand in depth the dynamics, strategies, and contexts in which particular victories were

achieved. I argue that understanding these successes is key to attempts to rethink and revitalize the future labor movement.

### *The Chapters*

In chapter two, I explore the literature that relates to my primary interest: organizing. I begin by reflecting on what sociology's grand theorists did or did not tell us about organizing. I move to a more substantial discussion about four key thinkers: George Herbert Mead, Saul Alinsky, Frances Fox Piven, and Marshall Ganz. I argue that all of these theorists merit special attention in my drive to delineate what I consider to be real organizing (versus other actions commonly called organizing). I then integrate the concepts of the four theorists and that of more recent literature in social movement and union revitalization.

In chapters three through six I examine my twelve cases of failure and relative success. Chapter three explores the Chicago Teachers Union (AFT) before and after its 2010 leadership change. I examine the twenty-five-year period leading to its successful strike in 2012 and compare and contrast the relative success of its various leaders and contracts.

Chapter three takes two similarly situated union locals—members of the national SEIU—and examines the wildly different strategies each deploys in private-sector nursing homes. One local represents the best expression of Andrew Stern, who the press for years called the leading figure of New Labor and whose imprint still dominates the local's present culture and strategies. The other local is an outlier of the national SEIU and represents the past militant traditions of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO).

Chapter five steps outside the bounds of the traditional service sector to explore the relative failures and relative successes in the exit-prone manufacturing sector. Most academics have long assumed organizing the unorganized might be possible among low-wage service

workers, but this chapter demonstrates that motivation and strategy may have more to do with failure and success across all sectors of workers than previously thought. This is a case study of a Smithfield Foods plant in North Carolina, the state with the lowest rate of unionization in all of the U.S. Here, the workers are mostly men. They are twice defeated in attempts at unionization, but on third try, they win—and win big, bringing massive change to plant operations and to their own lives.

Chapter six explores a group that is not a union: Make the Road New York, which is typically considered a worker center by today's literature. It is actually a hybrid worker center and community-organizing community that has enjoyed more success than most other groups that are similarly situated, and I discuss the reasons.

Chapter seven, titled Two Models, is a discussion that sums up my observations and lessons from the cases I have examined. I suggest there are two dominant models today: what I define as the mobilizing model, a staff-heavy model that can lead to limited success; and the organizing model. I posit that only the latter wins the hardest fights.

## CHAPTER 2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

"In short, the principle must always rule that ideas are not born of other ideas, philosophies of other philosophies; they are continually renewed expression of real historical development....Identity in a concrete reality determines identity of thought, and not vice versa. It can further be deduced that every truth, even if universal, and even if it can be expressed by an abstract formula of mathematical kind (for the sake of theoreticians), owes its effectiveness to its being expressed in the language appropriate to specific concrete situations. If it cannot be expressed in such specific terms, it is a byzantine and scholastic abstraction, good only for phrase-mongers to toy with."  
 Antonio Gramsci, 1932<sup>8</sup>

Labor renewal and collective action theorists stack their books in two distinct piles and conduct their intellectual gatherings as parallel but separate dialogues. Existing sociological literature reflects, but does not challenge, the modern ensiling of movements. Union revitalization literature (Voss, Sherman, Milkman, Fine, Chun, Cobble, Bronfennbrenner, Clawson, Getman, Fantasia, Lopez, McCullum, Moody) is distinct and divided from social movement literature (McAdam, McCarthy, Zald, Benford, Bellah, Goodwin, Jasper, Polletta, Swidler, and Payne). Because I will argue that the terrain of success for ordinary people in the twenty-first century is located in their ability to forge equally deep solidarities *in, outside, and between* the workplace and the community, my analysis breaks down these two silos and combines them.

In this chapter I begin by briefly situating my ideas about organizing and relative success in the early works of our field's three grand theorists, Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim, and Max Weber. I do this precisely because the literature I am engaging tends to root itself either in Marx (labor renewal) or Weber (social movements). I propose that sociology's failure to understand what I call organizing began more than a century ago, and at least in part because our three grand theorists were situated in Europe, where conditions at the end of the nineteenth century were quite different from those in the newly formed nation-state, the United States. Because of the



dearth of sociologists writing about my primary interest—that is, organizing and what leads to its success or failure—I also turn to historians to fill in the many gaps in the sociological literature.

I next discuss George Herbert Mead, considered the founder of a field that didn't exist in the years Mead was writing but was later recognized as a distinct subfield in the discipline of sociology, symbolic interactionism, by one of Mead's students, Herbert Blumer, and credited posthumously to Mead. I argue that Mead's theoretical work, the basis of Blumer's symbolic interactionist theory, is intimately related to organizing as I understand it. Mead was an esteemed professor at the newly constituted University of Chicago in the 1920s and 1930s and worked alongside Robert Park and a set of professors who developed theories that presented the community as a social ecology.

I trace the influence of symbolic interactionism on the methodology of one eager student who studied with and under the University of Chicago team from 1926 through 1932—Saul Alinsky. But I also link Alinsky's method to a second major influence: the communists and socialists in the leadership of the first union Alinsky worked with, the Packing House Workers Union. I follow this thread to the pivotal work of Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, who introduced the agents of change into contemporary literature and focused generations of thinking on the central issue of power. From there, I move to a discussion of Marshall Ganz's contribution to our understanding of strategy. Finally, I introduce a dozen more writers who, I argue, have all been discussing in some shape or form the key role of the process of change and how human interactions bring about success or failure in union and nonunion groups alike.

*What We Did and Didn't Learn About Organizing  
from the Grand Theorists*

An axiom of sociology is that a decade or two must pass before theorists can translate or understand actual events that have taken place in society. For example, it took resource mobilization and political opportunity structure theorists a decade or two after the civil rights movement to legitimize protest and devise theories attempting to explain it, normalizing protest actions and civil disruption within what the subfield section the American Sociological Association calls collective behavior/social movements.

Karl Marx was a particularly astute observer who interpreted the events around him and formed his interpretations into theory. Thanks to historians, whose records help sociologists to compare what happens with what theorists predict will happen, it is clear that some of what we understand as Marx's theories, even his central theories, were based on his direct observation of the social history unfolding around him. He theorized that the economic order, what he calls the mode of production, conditions the whole of society. He predicted that workers would rebel against the capitalist economic order. Marx's writing was much influenced by his observations of the English working class in the Victorian era, the dawn of industrial capitalism. E.P. Thompson, writing of that era in his great social history *The Making of the English Working Class*, a biography of that class "from its adolescence to its early manhood," reveals that Marx in fact was predicting what was already taking place: "In the years between 1780 and 1832 most English working people came to feel an identity of interests as between themselves, and against their rulers and employers."<sup>9</sup>

Thompson quotes from and discusses pamphlets and crudely written articles produced in the early 1800s, in which workers engaged in active struggle debated on how massive changes in the economy were changing their society:

“The equation between the cotton-mill and the new industrial society, and the correspondence between new forms of productive and social relationship, was a commonplace among observers in the years between 1790 and 1850. Karl Marx was only expressing this with unusual vigor when he declared: ‘The hand mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam mill society with the industrial capitalist.’”<sup>10</sup>

Thompson argues that mass consciousness developed not because of the teachings of what would become Lenin’s vanguard party, but rather because

“...where the manufacturer not only made riches out of the labour of the hands but could be *seen* to make riches in one generation—all contributed to the transparency of the process of exploitation and to the social and cultural cohesion of the exploited.”<sup>11</sup>

Marx and Engels methodically described the way the capitalist factory system worked, and they also correctly identified the primary leverage against the system: the workers, the system’s own agents. In the *Manifesto*, they lay out an explicit theory of power: workers could withdraw their cooperation from the capitalist class by collectively withholding their work through the strike weapon; labor as a class in itself would eventually become a class “for itself.” Workers, once small farmers or craftspeople with little experience working collectively or cooperatively, would learn solidarity *as a feature of capitalism* by interacting together in the

factories. As industrialization spread around the globe, so, too, would the ranks of the discontented. At some never specified time, the working masses would rise up.

Beverly Silver's recent book *Forces of Production* confirms that Marx was generally correct in what he imagined might happen, as he watched from his vantage point what was happening. Her thesis, in part, demonstrates that under certain conditions, in situations with key features similar to those of Victorian Marxism, when societies undergo the mass industrialization process, workers consistently rebel. Under very specific conditions, in very specific contexts, workers will learn to act collectively rather than individually, will understand their power to withhold their labor, and will sometimes even win concessions. The problem, as many analysts before me have recognized, is that these very specific conditions rarely occur in the very specific way they are theorized in order for such events/developments to unfold.

Marx couldn't know all that we know 175 years later, but his successors more often than not have doubled down in defense of the idea of inevitable worker collective action, even when faced by a colossal body of evidence that things aren't turning out the way Marx prophesied. As C. Wright Mills argued, we can use Marx's model, but we must adjust to the conditions of time and place. Many of Marx's successors have not done that.

Ironically, it was another member of the grand trinity, Durkheim, although he wrote no literature relating to my central interest, organizing, whose concept, *anomie* is central to the arsenal of successful activists today.<sup>12</sup> Durkheim describes anomie as the rather massive gap between the life people are told they can expect under capitalism and the life most of the working class is actually handed. Conservative and right-wing activists use anomie to sow anxiety and fear, tugging at human emotions by blaming blacks for taking white male workers' jobs, for example, Durkheim is also in *every* face-to-face conversation where leftist-inclined

organizers seek to raise workers' expectations of what they deserve. Marx doesn't enter the conversation until near the end, if and when the successful organizer has guided the two-way conversation to strategy. I will speak more about these conversations in chapter seven, "Two Models."

The third of sociology's grand theorists is the deeply relevant Max Weber. Though many before me have insisted that Weber saw himself in conversation with Karl Marx, in his own time Weber was dismissed by the left and Marxist academic circles as soon as he veered off the main path of Marxist doctrine. As a result, many people today who desire radical change miss out on the valuable contributions of Weber and his successors. This is especially so among leftists pursuing academic labor studies. The very fact that sociologists recognize two distinct subfields of collective action in sociology, labor movements and collective behavior/social movements is a testament to how little we have really learned since the grand theorists were first canonized. Human agency works in the workplace as it does in the community, despite the academy's untiring insistence that these are distinct arenas of action. Humans don't self-sort their consciousness into categories—"mind on the clock, mind off the clock." Weber suggested that power lies both in and outside the economic arena, a concept he tried hard to define with words like *social status* and *prestige*. Weber insisted that the social and political order would greatly complicate the Marxist project if left unattended.

Weber was clearly onto something important. He said:

"Economically conditioned power is not, of course, identical with 'power' as such. On the contrary, the emergence of economic power may be the consequence of power existing on other grounds. Man does not strive for power only to enrich himself

economically.... Very frequently the striving for power is also conditioned by the social honor it entails.”<sup>13</sup>

In his unfinished essay *Class, Status and Party*, Weber attempted to describe how nationalism arises and how racism, religious identification, and other factors complicate Marx’s theory that workers the world over would rise up together. Marx’s analysis of capitalism and the power of the economic arena is profound, yet it has proven insufficient. Unfortunately, although Weber saw the problems, he only hinted at solutions; he didn’t fully develop answers to the urgent questions he raised.

I argue, finally, that academics studying progressive or radical societal change—who have long been split into social movement theorists drawing heavily on Weber’s insights about prestige and emotion and labor movement theorists drawing on Marx—need to reunite. Neither theoretical body is sufficient on its own. We need to bring them together, and we know we need to bring them together not only because these two theories of capitalism complement each other, but also because in practice people’s working lives are not separate from the lives they live outside of the workplace, where other forms of power complicate and condition their decision making.

### *Beyond the Grand Theorists: Organizing in the USA*

By the time sociology as a discipline had begun to gain a foothold in the United States, capitalism had already established itself here in a far more vicious form than in Europe. While Marx and Engels were theorizing and issuing the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, calling on all workers to unite, slavery was still legal and, for the first time in world history, racially

bounded. While the debates of the Second International raged, vast numbers of American trade unionists were being beaten and shot by American employers. As historian Jeremy Brecher writes in *Strike*:

“The assumption that American society is based on consent may be attractive, but it hardly fits the facts. Instead, we find that the realm of protected liberties is a small, circumscribed sector of society, surrounded by vast hierarchical institutions based on command and backed by force. Repression is absent in American history only where the status quo is unchallenged.”

In fact, Brecher’s history of worker struggles in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and Charles Payne’s *I’ve Got the Light of Freedom*,<sup>14</sup> a detailed compendium of the routine nature of lynching in the American South in the years leading up to the civil rights movement, paint a picture of the nation’s working class as courageous and resilient in the face of massive repressions unimagined of by the European theorists.

U.S.-based theorizing does not pay enough attention to *hegemony*, Antonio Gramsci’s term for the way capitalism plants seeds and takes root not only in every aspect of a society, but also in the hearts and minds of the individuals who make up that society. To date, our official narratives still begin with some variation on “The U.S.A. is so different, and so exceptional, because it is the only country to have come into being without a war.” Howard Zinn’s *A People’s History of the USA* has helped shatter the myth by exposing the genocide against the indigenous population quantitatively and qualitatively and ridiculing the notion that this country began “without a war.” But the narrative persists.<sup>15</sup> So too do K-12 history books that are filled with the

same propaganda, a constructed narrative aimed at legitimizing the powerful as they carry out repression. Weber gave us an insight about this in his essay on “Power Structure” where he explain that the elite holders of power will seek to legitimize their repressive behavior.

In 1835, political scientist Alexis de Tocqueville, whose own aristocratic family had lost their ancient wealth to the masses in the French Revolution, wrote passionately about the brilliance of the New World’s new nation state in *Democracy in America*.<sup>16</sup> He describes in detail the development of the hegemony project in the United States in his chapter “Why Great Revolutions Will Happen Less Often,” and outlines how the elite might transition successfully from the legal but illegitimate sanction of a formal aristocracy to the far more legitimate power class of a democracy, by “giving a little” to maintain stability. “Giving a little” meant creating a middle class, so that a limited number of people outside the aristocracy could own property, and awarding the franchise to the new property-owning class: non aristocratic white men. He predicted that this novel political order called democracy would ensure its informal aristocracy a firmer footing than that enjoyed by the aristocracies of Europe’s old regimes.

E.P. Thompson argued that the European Karl Marx accurately observed that mass consciousness developed because “...where the manufacturer not only made riches out of the labour of the hands but could be *seen* to make riches in one generation—all contributed to the transparency of the process of exploitation and to the social and cultural cohesion of the exploited.”<sup>17</sup> Yet although Marx himself addressed mass meetings of workers and helped to found the International Workman’s Association, his analysis fell short of explaining the role of organizers and party organizations in transforming the working class *in* itself to the working class *for* itself. Perhaps he didn’t need to, because capitalism, like the working class, was then only in what Thompson called its adolescence. By the time the working class reached adulthood,



capitalism had, too, and had woven itself into all aspects of an individual's socialization process from birth, through the school system, religious practice, social traditions, the media, and more. The ruling class was developing a cultural apparatus that impeded the workers' from more easily *seeing* their oppression.

*George Herbert Mead: Organizing Theorist  
(Another Posthumously Awarded Label)*

Herbert Mead didn't call himself a symbolic interactionist; he was given the identity after his death, by his former University of Chicago student Herbert Blumer. Nor did he call himself an organizing theorist; he called himself a pragmatic philosopher. I propose to examine Mead's concepts, in particular *role play*, for their significance to organizing, a significance that until now has been all but completely overlooked by social movement and labor theorists alike.

Although it was Blumer who established symbolic interactionism as a field, the foundational texts are Mead's.<sup>18</sup> In 1934, Mead connected his formal education and training in philosophy to behavioral psychology in *Mind, Self and Society, From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*. His analysis explored objectivity in the social realm and how the self develops. He argued that we are born without a concept of self:

“The self is something which has a development; it is not initially there, at birth, but arises in the process of social experience and activity, that is, develops in the given individual as a result of her relations to that process as a whole and to other individuals within that process.”<sup>19</sup>

For Mead, meaning in life is based on the *triadic relationship*, which consists of two partners in reciprocal communication with an indicative object, a gesture.<sup>20</sup> Mead calls this process a conversation of gestures. What separates humans from animals is their ability to be reflective through the use of *significant* gestures. Mead argued that language itself is a gesture, taking the form of what he calls a *significant symbol*.<sup>21</sup> Significant symbols are central to human interaction because they elicit meaningful responses between people in a two-way, interactive call and response.

In Mead's view, there is the *self* and the *generalized other*. He further theorizes that two phases of self, both conditioned by the generalized other, are distinct in human development. The first, the 'I' phase, is not reflective; it represents the child's conception of coming into being. When the child moves from 'I,' self as subject, to 'me,' self as object, reflection and self-reflection have emerged: the child is aware of its relationship to the preexisting society, to a set of social institutions that predate its own existence and condition its sense of personhood. This is the *generalized other* that, according to Mead, conditions the set of expectations people bring to society based on their socialization process.

To Mead, the concept of *role play* is a central mechanism in this process of human development.<sup>22</sup> He argues that the process comes about initially when a child *plays* alone, as with a doll. Before children play multiple roles, they play alone, developing their sense of 'I.' Toddlers talk to themselves; speech for them is not yet a *call and response*, but rather "just a set of responses that follow on each other indefinitely."<sup>23</sup> As they mature, they begin to engage in *games* with other children, "either the competitive or more or less dramatic."<sup>24</sup> It is in this game phase<sup>25</sup> that they transition to the more reflective understanding of self, called 'me.' In games with others, they are expected to play multiple roles—pitcher, catcher, first, second, and third

base; doctor, nurse, patient; mommy, daddy, baby—and they interchange in these roles, responding to others in the game and at the same time being conditioned to the expectations of the varied roles of society. They internalize the generalized other by becoming aware of individual others' responses and their own, as well as of the expectations and intentions in the game.

As individuals grow into adults, they become more reliable and transition into group behavior. Mead defines two types of groups: *concrete*, including “political parties, clubs, corporations,” and *abstract*, such as “class of debtors, class of creditors”—the latter type cutting across functional lines.<sup>26</sup> The institutionalization of behavior happens when whole communities behave in certain ways, when the generalized other produces group- or community-wide responses toward and between the individual and the community. Mead accounts for the possibility of social change when he discusses how an individual might decide to change his or her gesture toward the community, to respond to the community in a new way, which in turn could change the response of the community.

As a rule, Mead assumes that the general voice of the present community is identical with that of the larger community of the past and the future:

“We can reform the order of things; we can insist on making the community standards better. We are not simply bound by the community. We are engaged in a conversation in which what we say is listened to by the community and its response is one which is affected by what we have to say. This is especially true in critical situations... The process of conversation is one in which the individual has not only the

right but the duty of talking to the community of which he is a part and bringing about those changes which take place through the interaction of individuals.”<sup>27</sup>

For Mead, the mind is in society and the society is in the individual mind; it is not transcendental. This is similar to Marx’s, and later Antonio Gramsci’s, concept of hegemony. Marx described class struggle as the mechanism by which the working class would overthrow its oppressors. When he talked about workers moving from field to factory, assuming new roles in the division of labor, and described them as pitted against their employers, the workers’ generalized other changed dramatically; class struggle reconditions the sense of me and that other. Interacting with each other in new roles in Mead’s “critical situations,” workers could decide to change the rules—and roles—of the game.

I argue in the next section and in chapter seven, “Two Models,” that the social theories of Mead and Marx—both philosophers by training—are complementary. Furthermore, Gramsci’s observations of the workers in the 1919 Turin revolts<sup>28</sup> and their interaction with the small farmers who aligned with them are consistent with Mead’s observation of how in a more mature phase of the capitalist system the working class can unify and rebel within and outside the factory gates through the *interaction* of class struggle—a “critical situation.”

When workers in the U.S. attempt to form a union, or go on strike, Mead’s “critical situations” go into overdrive. As most employers faced with employee organization immediately commence class struggle, workers can begin to *see*, far more clearly, both their own contribution to the work system and the employer’s repression. The repertoire of a well-designed union organizing campaign serves to undo and redo the self and the generalized other, first inside the workers, as individuals begin to understand themselves differently, and then understand their

coworkers in new ways, and finally in confrontation with their employer. Because consciousness is shaped by role plays, the stages of a worker campaign correspond to Mead's games.

Conditions change fast, speeded by the maneuvers of the employer, and workers build their sense of self and their confidence in each other in an escalating series of actions that enable what Frances Piven and Richard Cloward call rule breaking.<sup>29</sup>

Mead did not situate *Mind, Self and Society* within a political framework promoting revolutionary or even radical social change. Very few scholars in the field have so framed their work, which begs further research. In chapter seven, I will situate Mead in a discussion of the craft of organizing—a process whereby individuals come to see themselves in relationship to society in fundamentally different ways. In the next section of this chapter, I turn to three particularly preeminent people who *have* discussed organizing at length.

*Saul Alinsky: Gestating in Mead's Chicago School in the 1920s  
and Marx's Workshop in the 1930s*

“Political philosophies are intellectual and moral creations; they contain high ideals, easy slogans, dubious facts, crude propaganda, sophisticated theories. Their adherents select some facts and ignore others, urge the acceptance of ideals, the inevitability of events, argue with this theory and debunk that.”

—C. Wright Mills<sup>30</sup>

Saul Alinsky was born in Chicago in 1909 to two working-class Russian Jews.<sup>31</sup> In 1926, he entered the newly established University of Chicago, where Herbert Mead and Robert Park

were significant intellectual powers. According to Alinsky's biographer, Alinsky took many of Park's classes, and whether or not he studied under Mead as well, certainly he would have felt Mead's influence. In two articles written in the 1980s, Donald and Dietrich Reitzes, trace Alinsky's roots to the influence of Park and the University of Chicago generally. They call Alinsky an "urban social interactionist"<sup>32</sup> and attribute his understanding of the community as a complex set of institutions—what they call the social ecology of the community—to his graduate fieldwork in criminology. According to the Reitzes, Alinsky saw the community in broad terms, and their analysis of his thought does not take into account his views on organizing or the nature of the interactive process. They also entirely miss Alinsky's other significant schooling: the socialist mentors he adopted in Chicago's unions, especially what Judith Stepan-Norris and Maurice Zeitlan<sup>33</sup> call the Red-led unions, such as Alinsky's first partner, the Packing House Workers. If Alinsky benefited intellectually from Mead's early teachings on symbolic interaction, he experienced firsthand Marx's own form of that interaction, the classes in struggle, throughout the 1930's in his own hometown.

Alinsky spent a full decade doing academically directed participant observation, first with youth gangs and then with the Chicago mob. He published several scholarly articles in the 1930s and early 1940s that reveal his early thinking about power analysis, based on his observations of the power dynamics of both of these nontraditional types of organization.

In the late 1930s, bored with criminal justice work (he often referred to boredom as a kind of chief life motivator) and alarmed by the rise of fascism in Europe, Alinsky transitioned from his job in the Joliet Prison into "moonlighting with the CIO." This gave him his first contact with the people he later said were the best organizers of his day: the communists in the CIO. Working as a volunteer, he helped raise funds for striking mine workers, and for the

International Brigades heading off to fight in the Spanish Civil War. It would take several more years before for Herb Marsh, a socialist and the leader of the Packing House Workers, would enter Alinsky's mentorship team.<sup>34</sup>

Saul Alinsky's name has been synonymous with organizing for more than half a century. Though he died in 1972, shortly after the publication of his most famous book, *Rules for Radicals*, his influence remains strong among community and New Labor organizers today. And since Obama came to power, he has been reborn as an inspiration to Tea Partiers, a development that has confounded many (though not this author). In any casual Internet search, next to Wikipedia, the top three Alinsky hits are radical-right websites, including Glen Beck's, and these sites urge anyone serious about building power to read *Rules for Radicals*— a top seller in 2008 and 2009 to right-wing grassroots activists, whose leaders got complimentary copies from the likes of Dick Army.<sup>35</sup>

So trying to talk about Saul Alinsky in the activist world is a lot like trying to talk about Marx in the academic world. There's what Marx and Alinsky wrote and what Marx and Alinsky actually did, and, based on one or the other of those aspects, there are the very diverse people and groups claiming to be the real Marxists or the true Alinskyites.

The resemblance ends there, however, for Saul Alinsky and Karl Marx had very different goals: Marx wanted to overthrow capitalism; Alinsky wanted to defend and protect it with ideas very close to his favorite political scientist, Alexis de Tocqueville. Both Alinsky and de Tocqueville were enchanted by the nebulous concept of freedom. And both placed a high value on individualism. Alinsky quotes de Tocqueville more than anyone else in each of his two books, *Reveille for Radicals* and *Rules for Radicals*. He spun de Tocqueville's long digressions about the importance of creating a middle class into his own vernacular: he called de Tocqueville's

creation the “have a little, want some more class.” Both he and de Tocqueville agree that it’s essential to have a such a class to ward off the Jacobins and the Communists.

Stability in our freedom-loving society, said Alinsky, will be achieved by having strong unions, the guarantor of a middle class. The unions Alinsky wanted were the kind John Lewis believed in. Lewis, the anticommunist head of the Congress of Industrial Organizations, was Alinsky’s hero, and Alinsky’s *John L. Lewis: An Unauthorized Biography*<sup>36</sup> is a 400-page love letter to the man. The book opens with a grand, full-page black-and-white photo of a regal-looking Lewis standing over Alinsky, his hand gesturing as he explains some important concept, while Alinsky take notes. Both men are wearing crisp suits; the room they inhabit is furnished with handsome lamps and oversized leather chairs—the kind of chairs fancied by Mills’s “men of power.” In fact, the photo shows an American working man’s dream of economic and social as well as political achievement; it seems to illustrate the best outcome of organizing for de Tocqueville’s aspiring middle class.

Alinsky tells us, “To me, Lewis is an extraordinary individual and certainly one of the outstanding figures of our time.”<sup>37</sup> And certainly under his leadership the CIO won campaigns, though his noncoms were not always rewarded. According to Stepan-Norris and Zeitlan, in their chapter “Who Gets the Bird?” Lewis routinely hired socialist organizers—the “best of the day”—and once the fight was won, he just as routinely purged them. Lewis famously quipped, “Who gets the bird, the hunter or the dog?” Clearly, Lewis was the hunter.

That Lewis became Alinsky’s chief mentor probably explains some of Alinsky’s lack of focus on internal democracy within the organizations he helped form or brought into his orbit. Alinsky did not invent community organizing—despite the right wing’s claim that he did, repeated loudly and often since Obama’s election in 2008—but he did codify it into a practice.



His efforts to document his model enabled successive generations to focus on the craft itself, which Alinsky defined as an explicit effort to get ordinary people to participate in the decisions affecting their lives.

Alinsky was drawing, then, on Mead and Marx. But, I will argue, when he blended their influence with his own showboating personality and his commitment to defeat communism within the movement, and when he moved the method outside the factories and into the community, he oversimplified and bastardized their theories. Weeks before his sudden death from a heart attack, he spoke of his aspirations to *Playboy* in a wide-ranging interview, published posthumously:

“What I wanted to try to do was to apply the organizing skills I’d mastered in the CIO to the worst slums and ghettos, so that the most oppressed and exploited elements could take control of their own communities and their own destinies. Up until then, specific factories and industries had been organized for social change, but never whole communities.”

Later in the same interview, he made an interesting acknowledgment:

“Back in the ’30s, the Communists did a hell of a lot of good work... Their platform stood for all the right things, and unlike many liberals, they were willing to put their bodies on the line. Without the Communists, for example, I doubt the CIO could have won all the battles it did.”

This was tardy praise from a man who'd spent most of his adult life trashing the socialists and communists, as Alinsky does throughout *Rules for Radicals*. Alinsky himself never did any labor organizing; he just observed it. He never mastered the best labor organizers' method and, I will argue, his attempt to unlink it from the workplace has led to seventy-five years of confusion about how successful organizing works.

*Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward:  
Putting Power, Ordinary People, Agency and Bottom-Up Strategies  
Into Sociology and Social Change Movements*

Alinsky's *Rules for Radicals* has been a consistent best-seller for decades, but so, too, has the classic book by Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How they Fail*. While Alinsky is praised by Glen Beck, Frances Fox Piven is demonized. Alinsky's *Rules* is about the people he names as the real agents of change, the professional full-time organizers. *Poor People's Movements* is about Piven and Cloward's (and Marx's) agents of change; ordinary people. Piven's influence inside academia and outside, in social movements, is unmatched by that of any other contemporary theorist. Like Alinsky, Piven was born to Russian-Jewish immigrants and attended the University of Chicago. But after six years Alinsky dropped out of academia; Piven stayed and attained the very highest positions among her peers, eventually becoming the president of the American Sociological Association. And Piven, alone and with Cloward, has authored a long list of pathbreaking articles and books. Before Piven and Cloward published *Poor People's Movements*, they worked with poor people

in the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO), helping to devise strategies and publicizing the efforts in the popular press, notably *The Nation*.

In *Poor People's Movements*, they pay particular attention to structure *and* agency, searching for and identifying structural changes that enabled the forms of power that ordinary people exercised. Piven and Cloward point to the mass defiance shown by workers in the 1930's as causal to some of the most important and lasting policy changes favoring the poor and working class.<sup>38</sup> Large numbers of workers in an expanding swath of industries interrupted the flow of profits in the big factories, a situation that by 1934 the corporate owners could or would not withstand. But it was precisely because of the more widespread/general consolidation of capital into large factories and urban areas that workers could exercise the strike weapon with such great impact. Large national corporations had been fewer in number and therefore less vulnerable forty years earlier. And, as historian Jeremy Brecher has pointed out, the repression of labor in the late nineteenth century was more difficult for individual workers to survive and therefore harder for workers as a group/class to overcome.<sup>39</sup>

Piven and Cloward observed something similar in the Black freedom movement. African Americans in large numbers defied the rules of society by engaging in mass protests across the American South. The local authorities' heavyhanded and violent response, brought into homes throughout America (and the world) by a new device, the television, revealed the true vicious nature of those who controlled the lives of Southern Blacks. As Thompson said, people were suddenly *seeing* something they had previously been ignorant of or had ignored. Black protest and the retaliation of Southern racists made visible an amoral system, and that exposure led to its collapse and to the signing of laws as significant as those generated by workers protesting the ordering of America's factories.

According to Piven and Cloward's analysis of the civil rights movement, in order for the African American campaign for freedom and equality to be successful, the structure of the South's economy had to first change. As long as agriculture was the dominant industry there, Black workers remained dispersed across isolated working and living communities, and were easily divided and often terrorized. Total repression of the African American population only eased when automation and globalization radically decreased the South's reliance on agricultural labor. Rural Blacks began a massive migration to urban areas, creating new possibilities for a movement to rise.

In *Rule Making, Rule Breaking and Power*, Piven and Cloward theorize about the very nature of social life and what constrains and enables people to acquiesce in or rebel against societal rules. They posit that ordinary people have a great deal of potential power. This power is embedded in what the authors call "the interdependent relations that are social life."<sup>40</sup> Their essay is a groundbreaking analysis of the conception of the power of the nonelites, expanding Marx's theory of the power of the proletariat beyond the workplace and even the working class. Marx said that the proletariat, specifically, were *the* revolutionary agents because of their particular position in the capitalist production system: they literally had their hands on the machines; they could shutter the factory. It wasn't that Marx didn't appreciate farmers, intellectuals, or the unemployed poor, it was that the proletariat could stop production.

Near the end of *Rule Making, Rule Breaking*, Piven and Cloward suggest that their challenge to the exchange theorists, on the issue of the perceived value of the relative contributions of the various players involved in interdependencies, serves as a "bridge" between structure and agency.<sup>41</sup> I agree. A few paragraphs later, they return to Thompson's point about how mass consciousness emerges when people *see* the impact of a process—in the case of labor,

when workers see the impact of their own contribution to and position in the interdependencies of industrial society:

“Of course social structure is constraining. Human agents do not construct interpretations out of whole cloth. Rather, they reevaluate their circumstances within an ideological framework that is largely inherited, to which they are largely socialized. To assert a capacity for reflection and innovation is not to deny this but rather to say that people continue to probe and question the dominating interpretations that they inherit and to modify those interpretations in the light of their experience. That experience includes the reflexive observations of their contribution to social life.”

The concluding paragraphs of the article discuss why people obey and disobey social rules in ways that enable their continued exploitation.

I argue in chapter seven that Marx’s analysis of class struggle might serve as a bridge between Mead’s analysis of how socialization occurs and Piven and Cloward’s astute analysis of, and lingering questions about, why people decide to break the rules.

Piven and Cloward’s work is focused on what behavior leads a struggling class/group to success and what to failure. I will argue, drawing in part on Mead, that successful organizing changes conditions in such a way as to enable very large numbers of workers to engage in rule breaking, to respond sometimes *spontaneously* and effectively to the employers’ actions in a union campaign, or to the landlord in a tenant fight, and even to do this in the periods in between great change. Making use of Piven and Cloward’s framework, I propose that only people situated in a very particular relationship can themselves exercise interdependent power. In chapter seven,

again drawing on Piven and Cloward, I will argue that if more union campaigns premised on interdependent power were anchored in locally focused, bottom-up organizing—class struggle in the workplace—ordinary people would be winning more, and our movements would be more successful. I further propose that what Piven calls the times-in-between<sup>42</sup> could be brief. The method matters, and as Piven tells us, the keys to the exercise of power are the ordinary people themselves.

### *Marshall Ganz: Strategy Defined*

Building on Piven and Cloward's work, Marshall Ganz defined strategy in clear and simple terms that broke through the structuralist approach and gave sociologists new tools for understanding how people and groups with less power can combat and defeat those with considerably more. In *Why David Sometimes Wins: Leadership, Organization, and Strategy in the California Farm Worker Movement*, he uses his formulation to explain why the United Farm Workers (UFW), with fewer resources than their rival, the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC), gained far more from the growers, in a campaign more successful than any previous attempt at farmworker organizing. This work also owed much to a new cohort of leaders in social movement scholarship who several years prior to Ganz's contribution had begun challenging the overly structuralist concepts that Wave I sociologists used to explain "outcomes." These Wave II social movement scholars, including Jeff Goodwin, Francesca Polletta, and James Jasper, had all been writing about the choices and real-world dilemmas that people in leadership confronted when trying to make decisions on the fly during a campaign—decisions that would have direct bearing on outcomes.

The concept of strategy is still not sufficiently attended to in much of the analysis of how social change happens. In part this is because actors hide strategy, and for good reason: they don't want the opposition to understand what they are doing. Moreover, successful campaigns can span many years and decades. Movement strategists understand that five or six plays may be needed to bring about a desired outcome, including changes in the law, policy revisions, or any number of things. The successful outcome of the final play may appear to the general public and even to academics studying the field to be the only, or only significant, victory. A good example of this is found in the effort to help homecare workers improve both the quality of care they provide and the quality of their own lives, at work and in the community.

Like farmworkers, homecare workers were excluded from the limited provisions of the National Labor Relations Act, but for a different reason: they didn't have what is called a common employer. They were considered isolated workers, employed by private homes, even though most of them were paid through Medicaid and Medicare and county-level social service agencies. Improving their working conditions and pay took more than a decade's campaigning made up of many individual battles and wins—changing the law, creating an employer of record by changing how homecare workers got paid, defining a common employer where none previously existed—before contracts that began to raise base wages could be won. The law, that is, the *structure*, stood in the way of that victory, and movement actors changed the law.

By understanding how the process of long-term strategy worked, Ganz was able to successfully challenge three overarching theoretical approaches that had dominated social movement literature: political opportunity structure, resource mobilization theory, and framing.

Ganz also understood what factors are needed for social movement organizations to win a long-term strategic fight. He emphasizes the importance of diverse leadership teams comprised

of highly motivated individuals with access to salient information and relevant life experience and knowledge. Motivation is a key aspect of what he calls *strategic capacity*, because it generates “critical creative output” and keeps an actor focused while working long hours for extended periods of time. Judith Stepan-Norris and Maurice Zeitlan discuss the same factor in the success of labor movements of the 1930s and 1940s, but what Ganz calls motivation they call ideology.<sup>43</sup>

Previous analysis of the UFW fight by Jenkins and Perrows<sup>44</sup> argued that the elimination of the Bracero, or seasonal worker, program made a positive change in political opportunity structure for farmworkers. They were correct, but as Ganz points out, *people*, that is, movement actors, campaigned to end the Bracero program, because they knew the farmworkers could not stop production as long as cheap labor was endlessly and easily coming in from Mexico. The Bracero program didn’t end because the employers got tired of it, or because a shift in tectonic plates broke Mexico off from California. Movement actors ended it and changed the previously existing opportunity structure.

Ganz also lays waste the notion that simply having more resources means one group can succeed where another fails. According to McCarthy and Zald’s classic primer on resource mobilization, AWOOC had far greater financial resources than the UFW. The rival farmworker groups each had access to various parts of the resource mobilization schema: the actual farmworkers, called the constituents (because they directly benefited); their families, who could be either constituents or conscience constituents (depending on whether you define them as supporters or direct beneficiaries); their communities and sympathizers, known as conscious constituents or conscience adherents (depending on whether you define them as direct beneficiaries or simply supporters); the public at large, called the bystanders; and of course, the



agricultural lobby, called the counter movement.<sup>45</sup> Resource mobilization wasn't just insufficient as an explanation, it was overly complicated.

Framing, or one-way messaging, on the other hand, did matter in the Ganz schema for this campaign. Repositioning the farmworker fight in the public eye, turning it from just another self-interested union effort for wage increases into a civil rights struggle, was key, particularly in the America of 1965. Ganz notes, however, that framing alone would have been insufficient as a winning strategy. It was also necessary to deploy "a heuristic process" in which decision making came from leaders with close ties to the farmworkers, with "life experience, networks, and repertoires" distinctly different from the backgrounds of organizing staff in the other unions, in order to arrive at the right mix of factors to generate movement success.

Ganz's great analysis does justice to some factors previously underappreciated in social movement studies, but there are others he does not fully examine and that require further investigation. For example, his primary focus is on leadership and leadership capacity. This is important because, he explains, leadership teams get more done than single leaders, no matter how charismatic and talented a single leader may be. Ganz defines leaders as "persons authorized to make strategic choices within an organization."<sup>46</sup> He uses this definition to constitute the people whose biographies he foregrounds as central to his analysis of strategy. As I will explain in more depth in chapter seven, I define leadership differently. While I think Ganz is right that the formal leadership, the top leadership, fits this definition, I will argue there are hundreds, if not thousands, of what I call organic leaders in the grassroots base of any community or union group. And if we apply his chart "Three Elements of Strategic Capacity,"<sup>47</sup> which layers motivation, salient information, and heuristic process onto biography, networks, and repertoires, the strategic capacity of a group overall might be many times magnified. In the

UFW fight, the organic leaders I have in mind were out in the fields among their fellow workers, and if, like Ganz, we focus only on the fights directed by the official leaders in that campaign, we miss recognizing some potentially unexplored capacity, the capacity of the base.

Another element we don't learn enough about in Ganz's excellent contribution is the method by which the leadership arrived at the power analysis. Ganz refers to *targeting*, making a main issue of what I consider only a part of the variables mix that goes into power analysis. He tells us, in effect, that David (the farmworkers) realized that Goliath (the employer) had too much power for them to tackle alone. He does not tell us *why* that decision was reached. He simply speaks of the importance of the deliberative process, the highly interactive process the UFW leadership team used to arrive at strategy overall, adjusting it in the heat of the fight, without discussing *who did the research* so crucial to informing that strategy. I will argue later in this dissertation that how the research is done, and by whom, is a reflection of the kind of organization that gets built. Is it exclusively done in a locked room by a handful of Ivy League-educated professionals, or is it made part of an interactive, heuristic process that brings in the organic leadership and the base?

Ganz tells us much about the leadership team and what made the UFW's a good one, but too little about the collective action mechanisms among and between the actual farmworkers. Frank Bardacke's 2012 book *Trampling Out the Vintage* suggests that there were never many farmworkers involved in the UFW. In some ways, that makes the union's success even more interesting. It might mean, however, that very low wage immigrant workers, such as farmworkers, simply don't possess the ability to exercise power in the ways that Marx or Piven and Cloward imagined. In *Rule Making and Rule Breaking*, Piven and Cloward raise this very issue: "... the power seekers must be able themselves to tolerate the costs imposed by a halt in

cooperative activities...”<sup>48</sup> Though the growers depend on farmworkers for their outsized profits, they allow most farmworkers—those that have not been successfully unionized—to live hand to mouth, with no savings at all, housing them in shanty-like facilities from which they can be easily evicted, with no prospect of being able to find affordable new lodging. This suggests that for so oppressed a workforce to win, they must rely heavily, at least initially, on full-time professionally staffed operations driving secondary strategies like consumer boycotts and framing rather than strategies that depend on the power of the workers themselves. I will explore this further, in this chapter and throughout my cases.

*Organizing at Center and as Process*  
(*Not Tactic, Not Repertoire, Not Campaign*)

Three great books describing the process of organizing hit the literature within twelve months of each other in the late 1980s: Rick Fantasia’s *Cultures of Solidarity, Consciousness, Action and Contemporary Workers*;<sup>49</sup> Howard Kimeldorf’s *Red or Rackets? The Making of Radical and Conservative Unions on the Waterfront*;<sup>50</sup> and Leon Fink and Brian Greenberg’s *Upheaval in the Quiet Zone, a History of Hospital Workers Union Local 1199*.<sup>51</sup> In the early pages of each of these books, the authors discuss the “crisis” facing labor, describing dwindling membership and a hostile climate brought on by neoliberal structural shifts and an increasingly aggressive employer offensive. Poland and PATCO lurk in the background. It was 1988 and all of these authors were sounding alarm bells. Far more important, all were analyzing and publicizing the kinds of organizing strategies that I argue could have greatly stemmed the tide of disaster that swept over American labor from 1988 to the present day, strategies that were largely shelved by the end of the twentieth century. For a little perspective, the numbers in the chart

below show union membership percentage statistics for the three states that have recently skidded into the legal framework (incorrectly) called right-to-work.<sup>52</sup>

3 States Now Right To Work & Year	Overall Union Density		Private Sector Density		Public Sector Density	
	1988	2014	1988	2014	1988	2014
Indiana 2012	20.6	10.7	20.2	8.7	22.9	25.5
Michigan 2012	26.6	14.5	21.6	9.9	55.1	50.5
Wisconsin 2015	21.7	11.6	16.7	8.2	48.8	30.9

CPS data gathered from UnionStatistics.Com<sup>53</sup>

All three books describe successful unionizing efforts during this otherwise disastrous period, and all of the efforts described have certain factors in common: they were focused on bottom-up grassroots organizing within the labor movement, and featured campaigns in which *dignity* and not wages was the front-and-center issue, in which the workers themselves were rightly understood by the authors to be the primary lever of power, and in which smart strategy was devised by savvy and diverse leadership teams that deployed good framing. All three books celebrate the ingenuity of the working class.

Kimeldorf examines the stark differences between two dockworkers' unions, one on the East Coast and one on the West Coast, during same time period. He identifies several key factors that led to distinct development paths for the two organizations, focusing less on which arose first or which were more important than on the way these factors combined to create the unions they did. Kimeldorf's narrative describes the distinctions between the employer's agency and the particular opportunity structures on each coast and how they inevitably enabled and constrained the workers and their unions in fascinatingly different ways.

On the West Coast, when workers began to demand safe conditions and better treatment—essentially a fight over control of the production process—they faced a more homogenous and consolidated employer class, which united against the workers and set the tone for class warfare on the docks. The result was almost an invitation to the Wobblies and the development of a fighting union.

On the East Coast, the employers were much less consolidated and in fact were often in cutthroat competition with one another, and this division prevented them from mounting the kind of employer offensive the dockworkers in the West had to face. Too, the Eastern workers' primary demands did not involve control of the production process, but had instead a more materialistic aim: better wages and compensation. Kimeldorf probes and examines the recruitment base of the employers on each coast and determines that the West Coast dockworkers were more readily able to develop what Rick Fantasia's book calls a culture of solidarity because they came primarily from the logging industry and the maritime trades. As loggers and seamen, they had all spent months on end working and living with other men in rather isolated situations, drinking, eating, playing cards and living the life of cooperative bachelors. Thanks to this experience, they brought to the dockyards an instinct for bonding outside of the workplace as well as in it. On the East Coast, at least in New York City, Kimeldorf's case study, dockworkers were recruited from an entirely different base, more miscellaneous, and isolationist in temperament. And like their employers, they faced intense competition with one another, vying for jobs in a region and city with a glut of unemployed immigrants.

The West Coast's Wobbly-inclined base produced a radical leader, Harry Bridges, openly a socialist. Wobblies and their methods were rejected by the East's more conservative, divided,

and weaker base, which produced a leader the polar opposite of Bridges, Joseph Ryan, a “fanatical anticommunist.”<sup>54</sup> Kimeldorf comes to many of the same conclusions about the relative strengths of the West Coast radical dockworkers compared with their East Coast counterparts as do Stepan-Norris and Zeitlan in their examination of socialist or “Red-led” versus conservative unions.<sup>55</sup> Bridges and the workers on the west coast routinely engaged in strikes; they had to; their employers weren’t easy to beat. On the east coast, where money was the chief issue for the workers and their leaders, official corruption and bribes became legendary and served to buy off the unions for decades. On the west coast, where the demand was for control of production, so that safety, hours and more could be negotiated for and by the workers, bribes didn’t work; money didn’t supply what the workers were looking for. Kimeldorf concludes that the left-wing leadership was better at every level and observes that socialists were routinely reelected, even in the face of McCarthyism and their expulsion from the CIO, precisely because the endless class struggle in which they engaged cemented a strong membership and a strong relationship between the rank and file and union leaders.

Fantasia and Fink and Greenberg reach the same conclusions. This might be because both books examine, Fantasia’s in part Fink and Greenburg’s entirely, the same union: the independent national hospital and healthcare workers’ 1199. After the books were published, the union would split, with some locals remaining independent, some merging into the SEIU, and a smaller group merging into AFSCME. Yet the successes even these remnants are still producing in 2015 are significant and deserve further attention, especially as there are too few unions producing equivalent victories. There are also, I argue, too few books or even scholarly articles about good union organizing in contemporary times. Exceptionally and interestingly, 1199 and its radical traditions are the subject of yet another terrific book on organizing, *Reorganizing the*

*Rust Belt, An Inside Study of the American Labor Movement*, by Steven Lopez. And 1199 is the one of the cases covered in this dissertation. That one of the most successful unions in the post-McCarthy period has served as the basis for so many good books about organizing might seem almost surreal, but it is significant.

Fantasia rejects the use of surveys as instruments to assess whether or not or to what degree class consciousness exists in the U.S. Instead, he documents case-based proof that working-class solidarity, the kind workers need in order to stand a chance against union-busting employers, is formed *through struggle*. Workers aren't born with a culture of solidarity any more than they are born with a high-school degree: each are developed through a type of pedagogy—one in a formal classroom, the other in the classroom of struggle. Using many of the same arguments proposed in George Herbert Mead's analysis, though never referring to Mead, Fantasia lays bare the process by which workers in struggle, in "critical situations," come to develop a different sense of self and a totally different notion of the generalized other—that is, the workplace and society around them. Fantasia uses key words and phrases many times throughout his book—*collective interaction, collective chemistry, in interaction*. Near the end of it, he tells us:

“It is not a simple matter of preferring solidarity over individual responses. What the case studies have shown is that whereas corporate praxis and the system of labor relations create formidable obstacles to solidarity, cultures of solidarity are formed out of friction and opposition itself. That is, solidarity is to a considerable degree formed and intensified in interaction with the opposition.”<sup>56</sup>

Like Kimeldorf when he discusses the case of the West Coast dockers' union under the legendary Harry Bridges, Fantasia concludes that the militancy of the employers in the case of Local 1199 helped create a deep solidarity among the workers. Fantasia and Lopez point out one difference between their own period and that covered by Kimeldorf: the structural position of the organizers. In the heyday of the labor movement, most people who developed an expertise in the craft of organizing were socialists who took jobs *in* the factories and spread the craft by being cadres *in* the plant.<sup>57</sup> Fantasia's book (and all three of the excellent books about 1199 and organizing that I have named) point out that while the 1199 organizer is structured *outside* the plant, he or she plays the *same* role: identifying the organic leaders within the workplace and then *teaching, coaching and apprenticing them throughout the fight*. I will argue in later chapters of my dissertation that this suggests that the *craft of organizing* is being practiced at the very highest levels possible in the 1199 model, because the agency for the fight is vested 100 percent in the organic worker leaders themselves and not in outside cadres sent in among the workforce to do the leading and fighting for them.

There is one union today that relies heavily on the use of outsiders being planted inside the workforce: UNITE-HERE. Some argue that this is a perversion of the methods used in successful unions of the past. A strange dynamic is created when these often young and middle- or upper-class student organizers begin to confuse themselves with "real workers." Mead's thesis about role plays and consciousness might help explain this; if you keep playing a role, you might begin to believe yourself to be the role you play. In a fascinating story in the New York Times by Steve Greenhouse, UNITE-HERE has been accused of acting like a cult with these middle and upper class youth-turned-workers.<sup>58</sup> Teresa Sharpe raised a related issue, that they name workers as leaders but in fact they don't make many real decisions at all.<sup>59</sup>



Fantasia's book is very rich in detail, so rich that his discussion of the actions of the organizer in the Springfield hospital fight reveal that the organizer there did not, in fact, build the organizing committee in a way that could have possibly led to success, except by accident. In chapter four, Fantasia discusses this at length in a section he calls "The Organizing Committee." But successful union organizers reading his terrific analysis would pick up on clues that this committee was a poorly constructed committee even before Fantasia gets to this distinct subsection. In expounding the 1199 method, he intersperses two terms that carry distinctly different meanings: *union activists* and *organic leaders*. He conflates commitment with both, and in real life and in this case study that proves problematic. He says, "An organizing committee generally consists of the most committed and most active supporters of the union drive, and in many respects it is the main actor in the process of unionization." He's right when he says the committee is the main actor—today's cadre—but he's wrong in describing the committee it as the most committed. .

In the 1199 case, as I will describe in detail in chapters four and seven, we see that a leader might well be antiunion and that the definition of *leader* has *nothing to do with being committed to the union*. The union lost the Springfield campaign, and from his quite detailed description it seems evident that the main reason it lost is that the organizer did not build an effective committee. The organizer's *primary* job is helping to select and then coach this group of workers. Fantasia's descriptions of the committee in the losing campaign are ample evidence that this was not done; in one telling revelation he notes that twenty-four of the forty-six employees in the organizing committee worked on the same shift. That's too many from one single shift, and, on top of that, it's the wrong shift: the day shift has the most staff in any healthcare facility and Fantasia tells us most came from the swing shift, the bridge between day

and night. I was not surprised that this drive ended in defeat for the workers. I discuss this extensively in chapters four and seven.

The same themes that are brought to the fore in Fantasia's and Kimeldorf's books appear in Fink and Greenburg's and also in Lopez's *Rust Belt*. Where Fantasia goes deep into the details of organizing drives and strikes, blending all the interactions into a process, Fink and Greenburg opt for a historical approach, taking us back in labor history. before coming forward to the 1970s and 1980s. There are actually many parallels between Ganz's analysis of the UFW's strategy and success and Fink and Greenburg's writing on 1199 in the same era as Ganz covered. Both groups of workers, farmworkers and healthcare workers, were officially excluded from the National Labor Relations Act of 1935. Not surprisingly, the workforces in the fields and in what Fink and Greenburg aptly describe as the quiet zone—the corridors of a hospital—are both predominantly people of color, Black and Brown. Yet there is a key difference that is as true today as it was in the days when Cesar Chavez was working for Saul Alinsky and Elliot Godoff for Leon Davis: although both industries, agriculture and healthcare, rely heavily on immigrant labor, in healthcare, because of the high level of active government regulation and the need for employees to speak English, the immigrant workers tend to be second-generation or at least documented. In agriculture, the opposite is true, so farmworkers are a much less secure workforce, a “precariat,” like many of the workers in the Justice for Janitors campaigns. There are other significant differences—including gender and the attitude of each workforce toward that which they “produce”—which I will discuss in chapters three through seven.

But the similarities are still highly significant, as we learn. In both cases, the authors show that the workforce's exclusion from the Labor Act functions as a constraint yet also allows the workers to use militant tactics forbidden to other unions by the NLRA's many restrictions.

The UFW has been able to engage in boycotts and 1199 in wildcat strikes, tactics illegal for unions covered by the Act. Both fights were born and embedded in the frame, repertoire, and alliances of the civil rights movement, far less the case with other unions. Both sets of unionization fighters do a fantastic job of what Patricia Hill Collins calls intersectionality, as they confront, rather than avoid, the intersections of race, gender, and class (gender more notably in the case of 1199). The 1199 workers won a state-level labor law in 1963. But also unlike the farmworkers's case, in 1974 the National Labor Relations Act was amended to include healthcare, something that Jerry Brown, leader of one of the most militant 1199 Locals for many years, described in an interview with me as a huge setback. With the federal law, as distinct from the state law that Nelson Rockefeller signed under pressure in 1963, the right to strike and mount protests was significantly weakened by the imposition of legally mandated ten-day notice-to-strike and ten-day notice-to-picket provisions. I have examined the changes to the law and have also experienced the ten-day provisions as an organizer and contract negotiator, and can state that the provisions are not insurmountable, but they are quite problematic.

For Fink and Greenburg, 1199's victories have the same crucial elements as the victories of the West Coast dockworkers in Kimeldorf's analysis: the rank-and-file workers were the key actors and the leadership was explicitly left-wing (socialist originally; merely radical-left in later decades, including today in the most successful locals). The model, unlike the UFW's, was based on achieving *majority support* among the mass base of the workforce. I will argue later in the dissertation that this is related to the capacity of the base of the workers to effectively withdraw their labor. Nurses and most other healthcare workers, like most dockworkers, play a strategic role, are difficult to replace, and tend to have some savings in the bank, all factors that enable them to take a high-risk action and succeed by withdrawing from the interdependencies

discussed by Piven and Cloward. Fink and Greenberg's *Upheaval* and Ganz's *Why David Sometimes Wins* focus more on the endlessly clever leadership teams and far less on the base. Ultimately, both unions' leadership teams later experienced internal division and paralysis because of succession crises; in many ways, 1199 overcame its crisis, but the UFW has not.

Though Lopez uses fictitious names throughout *Rust Belt*, he gives a clear picture as he picks up the pieces of the 1199 story after the union's national breakup and the confusing array of mergers that followed. Fortunately, that's *not* the main focus of his book; his focus is on the workers, the organizers, and the *process* of organizing. Lopez unravels three complicated campaigns and then masterfully stitches a relationship between them and lays out a coherent analysis of that relationship. He sets his narrative in one of the more successful 1199 local unions, 1199 Pennsylvania—1199P for short. This union covers most of the state, except for Philadelphia, whose 1199 branch voted to join AFSCME). At the time he writes of, 1199P was embroiled in a war with a company then known as Beverly Industries. Their reputation for union busting was bested only by their reputation for fraud and patient abuse, which in recent years prompted a name change, but not a change in attitude or policy toward staff or patients.<sup>60</sup>

The same employer plays a bit part in my chapter three, in a case where I extend the 1199 story into the second decade of the new millennium. In addition to everything else we learn about organizing from the many organizing-focused books that involve this same union, the very fact that 1199's story is ongoing, that the union continues to enable its workers to be the primary lever of power, including militant actions and majority strikes, is evidence that oligarchy does *not* always win.

Lopez, like Fantasia, shows both a defeat and victories of an organization that by any standards would be considered a highly functioning union today, if only because the workers are

its central agents and actively participate in its campaigns. Lopez points to organizer failure as the reason for the one defeat he profiles early in his book. He then does a good job of showing how the organizer herself understood exactly how she failed the workers by attempting to *skip steps*. There is some similarity here to Fantasia's analysis of the Springfield failure, but either Lopez's organizer is more aware of her errors or Lopez was more interested than Fantasia in discussing the specifics of the organizers failure. I will argue later, using Mead's analysis of how the self in relationship to the generalized other develops through a series of steps, from *play* to *game* to *role play*, that the organizing method as I describe it, and that Lopez and Fantasia have described, does *not* work successfully if steps are skipped, because it is not a set of interchangeable tactics, but rather a *process*. In his analysis of the development of self-consciousness, Mead doesn't presume that the "me" phase of human development can be rushed by skipping over the toddler phase of "I." So, too, good union organizers know that skipping steps in developing worker leaders and the worker base will likely, though not always, lead to problems, if not colossal defeats.

Lopez recognizes and points out how important it was that the organizer was able to recognize her mistake, analyze it, and then tell the workers what had gone wrong, accept responsibility, and return one year later, to help the same workers build their union *step by step*—and then win their campaign. Frances Fox Piven, writing in the forward to an organizing manual written by Lee Staples back in 1984, says that most organizers *are* reflective and do know why they fail or succeed, but they rely on an oral tradition instead of making the time to record their successes and failures for others to learn from. In this case, an astute sociologist has filled in the blanks for us and shared the details. One reason Lopez's book is so superb is that he takes us through several different kinds of efforts made by the same local union within a short

time period, fights that each played out in a different arena and involving related but distinct challenges: in the private sector and in the public sector; inside the workplace and out in the terrain of the broader community; with workers who had not had a union before and were fresh to the process, and with more long-standing, cynical union members who had lived through the cycle of being mobilized and then demobilized over and over again.

Lopez, like Fantasia, also addresses head-on the issue of antiunion workers and an antiunion working class. In Pennsylvania, this attitude was cultivated by the capitalist classes' diabolical destruction of the once proud Pittsburgh working class who produced the coal and steel that built much of America. (Jack Metzger's *Striking Steel* is an eloquent and sharp analysis of that generation and workforce.) Lopez finds the same solution for it that Fantasia found: working-class consciousness emerges or reemerges in struggle, through interactions first among the workers themselves and then between the workers and management.

The fact that books about union fights that were printed in the late 1980s could use real names without threat of legal action or retaliation, whereas in 2004 Lopez had to fictionalize his narrative, suggests that as union membership numbers were plummeting in the private sector (see the chart at the beginning of this chapter), and along with them the relative power of the private-sector workforce, the private-sector employers' power was increasing. Jake Rosenfeld<sup>61</sup> talks about how the fall of union membership contributed to a rise in income inequality. He's right, but it is even more important to focus on power inequality, the root cause.

No single scholar has done more than Kate Bronfenbrenner to analyze and make real the employer offensive that led to that huge gap in power—and the repertoires that can overcome their current very sophisticated union-busting schemes. Bronfenbrenner's theory is that if union organizers would adopt a checklist of certain tactics to be used in each campaign regardless of

context or setting or opportunity structure or type of worker, unions would win more. Her checklist includes making house visits to workers, having a system for regular assessment of worker support for the union, and conducting high-level corporate research on corporate vulnerabilities. Our work is similar in that we both are trying to determine what is crucial to union success, and what therefore could be done even under current adverse conditions.

Bronfenbrenner's writing has been extremely influential, and for good reason: Many union organizers and activists are eager to learn how they could be more effective. Although our general goals are similar, we take very different approaches to making our case. Bronfenbrenner relies heavily on regression analyses of the presence or absence of various tactics; I believe that in-depth qualitative analysis is a better way to understand the process of building powerful solidarities and helping a united working class gain the confidence to act successfully.

Regarding the employer offensive that Bronfenbrenner has very astutely analyzed, many scholars attribute labor's current failure to globalization. Beginning with the development of the Maquiladora Free Trade Zone in northern Mexico in the late 1960s and accelerating with each new regional or global free trade pact, capital has used its mobility as a weapon against domestic union-organizing efforts. In fact, Bronfenbrenner's research documents just how often the threat of "exit" is deployed by employers during campaigns, especially employers in manufacturing. It is true that in some sectors of the U.S. economy, such as manufacturing and textiles, capital has relocated to countries where the cost of production is vastly cheaper (and the price paid for attempts at workplace organizing far higher). But other scholars insist that the importance of global mobility has been exaggerated.<sup>62</sup> Kim Moody and Sam Gindin argue that while large numbers of jobs with American auto makers moved out of the U.S., Japanese and German auto makers were simultaneously creating a new U.S. auto economy, located not in the Northeast or

Midwest but in the nonunion, right-to-work South. Likewise, the Big Three U.S. auto companies have been hollowed out in the Rust Belt, replaced by a new U.S. growth sector of nonunion auto-parts plants located away from urban areas to traditionally nonunion geographies such as suburban and rural areas. What Moody and Gindin argue is that in blaming corporate globalization and outsourcing for the job losses in their traditional bailiwick, unions are obscuring their failure to organize the new plants.<sup>63</sup>

The employer class, exercising its agency, identified several weapons to change the opportunity structure and facilitate the deunionization of the American workforce. Globalization was one of them; others were privatization and outsourcing. All of them created, by design, a vast new low-wage workforce.<sup>64</sup> Janice Fine argues that there is a “mismatch” between today’s employment structure and labor union structures,—a mismatch that is hobbling unions.<sup>65</sup> Fine<sup>66</sup> and Ruth Milkman<sup>67</sup> suggest that demographics is another, related factor in the decline of unions: the rapidly expanding contingent workforce is made up in disproportionately large numbers of undocumented immigrants, who have historically been excluded from U.S. unions. They argue that in order to expand rapidly in today’s economy, unions must embrace immigrants, documented or not.

Milkman points to the success of the SEIU’s Justice for Janitors unionization drives as an example of success in immigrant organizing.<sup>68</sup> Fine suggests that the state has replaced any single private employer as the key target for much of the low-wage contingent labor force.<sup>69</sup> In a new volume edited by Milkman and Ott, thirteen case studies of advocacy and organizing among New York’s largely immigrant precariat demonstrate some success with the remedy Fine suggests: worker centers targeting the state as a way to “fill in the holes of what a collective bargaining agreement can get for workers who don’t have a collective bargaining agreement.”<sup>70</sup>



However, every state law that has been heralded as a win by worker centers has relied *heavily* on the preexisting power of unions in states where unions still have some clout. This raises significant future challenges, as the model articulated by Fine and Milkman doesn't address the central issue which is how to build power where little or none exists. This difficulty has been magnified by Supreme Court decisions that are unraveling the 1965 Voting Rights Act and solidifying corporations not just as persons, but as superpersons entitled to spend without restraint to increase their political influence. The corporate rightwing's strategy is to make irrelevant the demographic changes that Democratic Party strategists, and, some trade unionists, hoped would alone be a panacea of some sort.

While much of the hope of a revitalized labor movement has been focused on low-wage workers and immigrants, as Dan Clawson discusses in *The Next Upsurge, Labor and the New Social Movements*,<sup>71</sup> the strategies used in low-wage worker campaigns—short-term “minority” strikes (meaning a minority of workers are participating), which Jennifer Jihye Chun<sup>72</sup> calls “symbolic strikes”—may not suffice for the campaigns of higher-wage workers, whose labor represents a greater proportional cost to employers than does casual, lower-wage work. And since most low-wage workers cannot effectively withdraw their contribution from the interdependent relationship they have with their employers, the academics focused on low wage and symbolic efforts do not adequately address the question of power-building strategies for such workers. I agree with Clawson, and my dissertation addresses a broad spectrum of types of workers precisely so that I can more accurately probe some of these issues.

Dan Clawson, Bill Fletcher, and Fernando Gapasin<sup>73</sup> have all suggested that unions will only be able to grow when they see themselves and position themselves as part of a broader movement for change. These thinkers call for a more intentional form of “social movement

unionism” than what is often found in the stiff, self-interest-driven labor-community alliances or coalitions—coalitions typified by staff leaders of groups signing onto each other’s efforts but rarely integrating the base constituents, that is, if they have any grassroots base at all. Amanda Tattersol<sup>74</sup> calls for more coalition building, too. I intend to go further and ask: coalitions with *whom*, and much more importantly, based on what *kind and level of power*? Clawson uses the term *fusion* to express a model that goes beyond our often weak contemporary coalitions. Part of the general trend in the United States under neoliberalism has been a general weakening of civil society broadly speaking, a point made succinctly in Robert Putnam’s 2000 classic, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of the American Community*.<sup>75</sup> Sam Gindin<sup>76</sup> argues that part of neoliberalism’s logic is to condition people to turn inward, to reinforce what in America already has deep roots: individualism.

Charles Payne’s *I’ve Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle*, Aldon Morris’s *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change*, and Francesca Polletta’s *Freedom is an Endless Meeting: Democracy in American Social Movements* have the same richness and depth as the Kimeldorf, Fantasia, and Lopez trilogy discussed at greater length earlier in this chapter. All three books interrogate the central role of agency in social change movements. All three examine leadership decision making and strategy. Payne and Morris pay particular attention to the role of the indigenous leadership in the South and the relationship between grassroots-level leaders and the better-known decision makers in the movement. Payne perhaps more than the others investigates the process of organizing.

But social movement scholars interested in effective bottom-up organizing, like labor scholars, are stymied by the dearth of actual organizing since the late 1960s. The general failure

of unions to organize from the base upward is evident, but the crisis is at least equally dire on the nonunion side of the movement, at least when it comes to the kind of organizing that Payne describes taking place in Mississippi. This underscores the pitfalls of calling for coalitions and alliances as solutions. Social movement scholars and people examining motivations, emotions, and cultural processes would have an expanded and more contemporary field to study if they more readily examined local level labor struggles as micro-social movement cases. Gabriel Hetland and Jeff Goodwin<sup>77</sup> assert that the very concept of capitalism has vanished from the field. In their chapter “The Strange Disappearance of Capitalism from Social Movement Studies,” they juxtapose the spread of capitalism with the decline of analysis of capitalism in contemporary social movement studies.

Today’s fashionable strategies—most of them not yet found in book-length treatments, but bubbling up in the mainstream and progressive media and in secret and not-so-secret strategy meetings—amount to what Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward have called “spitting in the wind.” By that term, they meant strategies that were nonstrategies because to enact them the movement would need to expend just as much power as would be required to win something big. Many of these strategies, too, seem quite dangerous, because they involve making changes to the National Labor Relations Act, and the only changes that would likely be made to the NLRA given today’s power structure would put a final end to whatever benefit to workers the law still affords, and there is plenty of benefit still left in it, including the right to strike. Labor leaders have chosen not to strike; they have not been forbidden to—certainly the law does not forbid it, although yes, it has gotten more and more difficult. The most popular of these calls for reform is the demand to end what’s called exclusive representation under the NLRA. But if unions could not force employers to actually bargain collectively, something today’s Congress and courts

would never do, this idea would be worse than spitting in the wind. It would get workers nothing at all and only increase already problematic divisions and turf wars between unions.

Another idea afloat is to change the Act to include many types of workers currently excluded. Other than the always savvy New York City Taxicab Workers Alliance, almost all of the “excluded workers” represented in the Excluded Workers Congress have called for their own inclusion under the Act. The taxicab workers have taken a different position precisely because they have built more *power* than the others among their primary base, taxi drivers, and exercised that power using tactics that would be illegal if they were included under the Act, such as wildcat work stoppages, work slowdowns, and actions against secondary targets. In today’s climate, opening the Act to change is much more dangerous than protecting what we have, a point made well by Rich Yesselsen in his article “Fortress Unionism.”

### *My Dissertation: Mobilizing Versus Organizing*

As some of this literature suggests, victories have been won using a variety of different approaches. My hunch is that what I call a mobilizing approach, which is a staff-driven model, is only capable of winning under certain restrictive conditions (and in other cases fails), whereas an organizing approach, which relies not on staff but instead places the agency for success on an ever-expanding base of ordinary people, can win even in the more difficult circumstances. My dissertation will investigate what the key factors are that will enable sociologists and practitioners to understand when a mobilizing approach can win and when only an organizing approach can win. My hypothesis is that the critical factors are going to be how well unions understand the degree of power needed to win and whether movement organizations deploy a mobilizing or organizing approach.

To clarify the degree of power required to win, I will build on a thesis articulated by Joseph Luders. Interestingly, his theory about costs structures related to protest is situated in the civil rights literature, not the labor literature. He argues that the *most successful organizing drives* in the civil rights movement were those that carried high economic concession costs for the racist regime, and those where movement actors could inflict a high degree of economic pain. In his article “The Economics of Movement Success: Business Responses to Civil Rights Mobilization,”<sup>78</sup> Luders created what he calls an economic opportunity structure to explain and predict outcome of the power of people, that is, of agency. I find it ironic that that he felt a need to describe agency as structure, but I also find his argument compelling. His central thesis is threefold:

“First, economic duress is a major proximate cause behind the decision of economic actors to make substantial concessions to movement demands; second, two general movement-imposed costs can be distinguished, and the uneven vulnerability among economic actors to these costs produces distinctive responses; and, third, economic sectors vary in their exposure to the costs movements generate.”

The two movement-imposed costs are what he calls the concession cost, that is, how much it will cost the business to agree to the movement’s demands, measured against the disruption cost, meaning the ability of the activists to create highly effective actions against the target.

What Luders calls the concession and disruption costs is central to my overall analysis about power. I will build on Luders’ thesis in what I will call the “power needed” variable in my

overall theory of relative success in the new millennium. I hypothesize that success in any fight or any contestation waged by movement activists *across* sectors is absolutely contingent on movement actors accurately assessing what Luders' "concession costs" *before* the fight begins. I argue that movement actors must reasonably predict the concession costs ahead of time; otherwise, they enter the fight without knowing *which strategies to deploy*, since, as Luders says, different economic actors are more or less vulnerable and concession costs are not static: they are variable and also contingent on the ability of actors to deploy disruption costs. If, for example, the movement actors' demand is for single-payer health care, if activists fail to understand what it will cost the healthcare industrial complex to concede that demand, they might adopt the wrong strategy, applying for example what I call a mobilizing model rather than an organizing model. An incorrect power analysis might lead people who want to end capitalism to think that small numbers of demonstrators occupying public spaces like parks and squares and tweeting about it will generate enough power to collapse Wall Street. Others might think that the good frames used for or derived from these occupations will marshal enough emotion to suddenly overwhelm lawmakers with the revelation that the system is unfair, and the lawmakers then will institute a set of fair rules to govern corporate capital. In a more micro-level setting, if movement actors were to demand a more equitable funding of the public school system, but never grapple with what that would cost or where the money might come from, they would likely *apply strategies insufficient to generate the power needed for their claim*.

Because my dissertation is focused on relative success more than on absolute failure versus absolute success, most of my cases involve examples of mobilizing versus organizing models. But the advocacy model is in some ways even more prevalent in the U.S. today, which I propose is part of the reason why we have not replicated the kinds of gains achieved by either the

pre-McCarthy labor movement or the civil rights movement. In the chart below, I characterize each model as having a distinct approach to power, strategy and approach to people

<b>Chart #2 Types of Collective Action</b>			
	Advocacy	Mobilizing	Organizing
Theory of Power	Don't have one. These groups tinker with the margins, seeking one-time wins or small policy changes with low concession costs that do not permanently alter the relations of power.	Mobilizing groups have a limited theory of power, if they have one at all. They tend to either set goals more like advocacy groups, with low to medium concession costs, or routinely "win" victories that are actually quite porous, for example, a policy change with no enforcement provisions.	Organizing groups prioritize understanding power analysis. They aim to alter the opportunity structure to favor base constituents and diminish the power of their opposition. The power theory will involve a mix of corporate action and state targets and offer an understanding of the relationship between economic, social, and political power. Direct action inside and outside of workplaces is likely.
Strategy	Gimmicks, smoke and mirrors, paid media, lots of lawyers and litigation.	A blend of staff and volunteers, driven by staff, engaging in numerous smaller actions that prioritize good frames and good messaging over people. Authentic messengers from the base selected by staff to be displayed to media and policy makers.	Large numbers of people who can withdraw their services from those who rely on them. Frames matter, but the numbers are sufficient to create a significant earned media strategy.
People Focus	None	Grassroots <i>activists</i> . That is, people who are <i>already committed</i> to their cause and will show up over and over and over again. Tweeting and Facebook are key.	Organic <i>leaders</i> . <i>Base expansion</i> through developing the skill of organic leaders who can recruit new people <i>never before involved</i> , independent of staff. Face-to-face interactions are key.

My hypothesis is that if we are willing to confine our actions to those campaigns that can be won with little power, we can specify a set of actions/conditions that will enable us to win;

campaigns with those characteristics will win even if they don't involve the full organizing approach. However, if we face a tougher opponent and set of circumstances, victory will *only* be possible if our side meets conditions that enable it to consistently generate very high concession costs, with large and expanding numbers of people as the central power lever.

To explore these issues, in each of my cases I will assess the power required to win and whether or not the groups involved understood the power required. I will determine who was involved in conducting the research required for the power analysis and whether or not the groups devised strategies that fit the power required to win their demands. In the case of groups that involved ordinary people in their strategy, mobilizing and organizing groups, I will assess what Ganz calls the strategic capacities of the constituent base, rather than only those of the leadership team. One method I will use to assess strategic capacity will be an analysis of the group's willingness and capacity to utilize majority strikes, rather than the symbolic ones that generate headlines but don't force the employer to pay in production-related costs.



### CHAPTER 3: NURSING HOME UNIONS, WASHINGTON VERSUS CONNECTICUT

This chapter will analyze two radically different approaches to forming and governing unions in private sector nursing homes. As a reflection of how diverse big national unions can be, I profile and analyze two local unions that are part of the same national union, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU).

One model, represented by SEIU Local 775, reflects the strategies adopted by the national SEIU under Andrew Stern, president from 1996 through 2009, which I argue significantly diminish the role of workers in their own emancipation and have contributed to labor's ongoing decline. The second model reflects the origins and traditions of another local—1199 New England (1199NE), a union still steeped in the CIO-era influences of its founders—which has achieved the highest nursing-home standards in the nation. For the purposes of this paper, I refer to that particular local union and not to any other inside or outside SEIU, even those with “1199” in their official name. I argue that 1199 New England's organizing model is similar today what it was in 1968, when the New York-based union began expanding into new regions across the U.S.

I outline two cases of similarly situated nursing-home workers in which these two organizing and governing models were deployed, resulting in disparate outcomes. These workers, considered low-skilled and easy to replace, labor for some of the same national corporate owners in two blue states, Washington and Connecticut. (I agree with Barbara Ehrenreich that the term *low-skilled* is offensive and wrong: How could work with the sick and/or elderly be low-skilled?). In Washington, the union's strategy was to create a partnership with the employer that resulted in twenty-three nursing homes being unionized;<sup>79</sup> a small

increase in pay; a constrained and limited set of worker protections; including an absolute and “permanent” prohibition on the right to strike; and virtually no difference in benefits for union versus nonunion workers. In Connecticut, in a comparable period, the union conducted nearly sixty successful union elections, utilizing militant trade-union methods including strikes, and it achieved strong contracts that substantially increased pay *and* benefits, and greatly expanded on-the-job protections, resulting in the highest standards for U.S. in nursing-home workers.

Each local union includes thousands of workers of other types—primarily from the public sector—and each has achieved real gains in the public sector. But until very recently—since the writing of this dissertation commenced—organizing and bargaining in the public sector has been considered considerably easier than the private sector. My focus here is on the years 2000 through 2014, when the general rule that the private sector was by far a harder test of unionization efforts held true.

I will argue the approach of each effort was far greater than any state-level factors, and this accounts for the difference in outcomes. Outcomes in this chapter focus on relative success, and pose the question, what is built or developed from each of the two unions’ “success?” I conclude with a consideration of the national SEIU corporate allied-business unionist model for contemporary labor organizations and suggest that the relative strengths of the 1199NE model are capable of developing powerful member-led unions, the kind of unions needed to rebuild labor in a hostile climate.

### *Local 775, Origins and Approach to Private Sector Nursing Homes*

On November 6, 2001, in Washington State, ballots were being counted on Initiative Measure 775, a referendum to create a *statewide* homecare authority, the first of its kind.<sup>80</sup> The

initiative passed overwhelmingly, setting the stage for the creation of a new SEIU union, Local 775. At the time the ballot initiative passed, however, there was no plan for the creation of yet another local in the state of Washington. Washington already had three local unions of the SEIU, 1199NW (North West), which represented registered nurses in hospitals, clinics, and other healthcare settings; Local 925, a local of mainly classified staff at the University of Washington, and eventually additional types of workers; and Local 6, which began as a Janitors union, and by 2001 also had nonnurse hospital and healthcare staff, nursing-home workers, and a smattering of other workers.

The original plan was that after the ballot initiative passed, homecare workers would be folded into Local 6, already a local with nonprofessional status nursing-home workers and other health-care workers. (There were never enough janitors in downtown Seattle to make it a nationally significant focus for Justice for Janitors- janitors in one of the largest area employers, Boeing—were direct hires not contractors so they were members of the International Association of Machinists, IAM). Before the national union could attempt to organize homecare workers in Washington, they had to have changed the opportunity structure of the state of Washington. Like in most of the nation in early 2001, homecare workers were considered independent contractors. Fresh off the big victory the union achieved in Los Angeles in 1999 (mentioned in chapter two), SEIU wanted to now attempt to create a statewide—not municipal, such as in Los Angeles—strategy. Because David Rolf, the person credited with driving the strategy in Los Angeles, was white man and within SEIU, it was considered problematic to make him the first leader of the new union in Los Angeles, which was comprised of 74,000 mostly African American and Latino female homecare workers.

Andy Stern wanted to reward David Rolf for his Los Angeles success, and, as was customary under Stern's leadership, he suggested that Rolf move to Seattle. Rolf initially became staff at the Washington State SEIU Council—the political lobbying arm SEIU established in each state that works across the local unions. When the longtime leader of Local 6, Marc Earls, announced his plan to retire, Rolf was quickly shifted to staff at Local 6 which conveniently already had the jurisdiction for long-term care, nursing homes. Without wasting a lot of time, Rolf announced he was running for President and put together a slate, inviting an indigenous leader, Sergio Salinas, to run with him as the number two spot, the position of Secretary-Treasurer. Salinas had been a union leader in his country of origin, El Salvador, where he had actually been jailed for his union activism. He came to the United States as a refugee. He started working as a janitor in Seattle, became an organizer, and, had broad popular support among the rank and file base.

Part of the difference in the SEIU model is that often the staffs of local unions are also *members* of it, regardless of whether they came from the rank and file. As such, Rolf had become a member when he got sent there by Stern. The plan between Stern and Rolf that Rolf would become President with Marc Earls stepping down became complicated when Salinas decided to rebel against Andy Stern and David Rolf's plan. It turned out that Salinas had put together his own, different slate, too, which he announced as he filed his own petition for election with a full slate on the final day when signatures could be gathered. In essence, he had outfoxed Stern and Rolf.

To quickly fix the urgent problem created by the indigenous leadership, successfully rebuffing what they perceived as something similar to a hostile corporate take-over, Stern and the national legal team invoked the national union constitution. They created hearings and rearranged the structure of other locals in Washington, taking nursing-home and all healthcare

jurisdiction away from Salinas and Local 6 by creating a new long-term care local, 775, and assigning jurisdiction for non-nurse hospital workers to the local that had historically consisted only of registered nurses, 1199NW.<sup>81</sup> In the end, all long-term care jurisdiction was consolidated into a new local where Rolf didn't run the risk of losing an election; he was declared the head of the union because it was new. To date, the Washington local has unionized twenty-three nursing homes under 775 contracts, and there has never been a strike in any of them. Several other nursing homes were given to Local 775 as part of the transfer of the nursing-home jurisdiction.

David Rolf was and is a protégé of Andrew Stern; he may be the closest adherent to Sternism in the union today. He and Stern sound indistinguishable when they speak of their shared belief that unions are a last-century concept. Harold Meyerson, writing in the *American Prospect*,<sup>82</sup> links Stern and Rolf throughout the article: “Rolf studied how Silicon Valley incubated start-ups. With Stern, he paid a call on former Intel CEO Andy Grove, that rare Silicon Valley guru who'd written critically about American business's abandonment of American Workers. ‘Grove told us he didn't know enough about the subject to offer specific advice,’ Rolf says. ‘But he did say to think about outcomes and treat everything else—laws, strategies, structures—as secondary. That made me understand the death of collective bargaining isn't something we should be sentimental about.” Later, in the same 2014 article, Meyerson reports on Rolf's critics: “Rolf and Stern's attraction to the culture of Silicon Valley, their belief that labor could profitably learn from the Valley's experience with start-ups, and their penchant for business school lingo have only further estranged their critics.” *Profitably* may have been the perfect word choice since both Stern and Rolf regularly use the term growth in place of the word organizing.

Rolf kept his focus in the early years of 775 on a strategy with which he was familiar and had prior success with: political deals and homecare workers. In keeping with his frequently

expressed view that collective bargaining is dead and there's no need to be sentimental about it, he had no strategy for the rough-and-tumble world of nursing-home organizing. As Steve Lopez discusses in *Reorganizing the Rust Belt* (mentioned in chapter two), nursing-home operators had become first-rate union busters. Lopez, however, was writing this at the exact time, the early 2000s, describing in detail how another local SEIU union birthed out of 1199—1199P in Pennsylvania—was defeating the nursing-home operators in an all-out class struggle. Rolf didn't believe in class struggle, which means he didn't have a strategy for private sector nursing homes. Not until the national union devised a business plan to help the owners of the financially over-leveraged nursing-home industry, that is.

The workers in the majority of 775's nursing homes were eventually unionized through a top-down and top-secret agreement as part of a national experiment to partner with nursing-home employers in key states. In 2003, the national union staff, under Stern, decided to embark on an initiative with nursing-home operators aimed at increasing the pace of growth or density in nursing homes. David Kieffer, the director of nursing-home operations for the national SEIU, began a series of discussions with CEOs of national nursing-home chains to explore whether the corporations were interested in the initiative.<sup>83</sup> No workers were invited to participate in any of these discussions, nor were they aware of the meetings.

Kieffer advanced the national union leaders' interest, which was growth. The employers wanted three things in return for growth deals (for the union this meant card-check or quasi or real neutrality in outside the NLRB election-procedure agreements). First, they wanted the union to deliver increases in Medicaid spending at the state level, the largest source of their income (often called *rate reform* in policy circles). They wanted tort reform, meaning less liability for nursing-home operators if, for example, accidents, deaths, or injuries occurred in their homes.

Finally, the employers wanted status quo management rights inside their nursing homes. In exchange, they would be willing to offer neutrality in unionization campaigns in some form and marginal improvements in the workers' pay, assuming the union could deliver the increases in Medicaid reimbursements to cover the cost. In addition, there was a caveat to the neutrality agreement: the employers would select which nursing homes could be organized during the life of the accord. If workers at nursing homes not selected by the employer called the union and wanted help forming a union, the union would be bound to decline. New Labor has a term for when it agrees to create large geographic areas (an entire state, a region of the USA) in which workers have no right to form a union, even if they want one: "establishing no-fly zones."

In Washington, Rolf embraced the deal immediately, although it would take another year or two before the final "Agreement to Advance the Future of Nursing Home Care in Washington" could be ironed out; bigger states, such as California, were a priority for the employers (and Stern).<sup>84</sup> In 2005 the union and Rolf set to work operationalizing the agreement, but the deal was finalized between Local 775 and Washington State nursing-home employers in 2006.<sup>85</sup> That same year, 775 lobbied hard and secured sufficient increases in nursing-home funding to trigger the local 775's ability to unionize nursing homes under what was called Phase I of the employer agreement. According to the *Seattle Times*, it was a \$20 million transaction; the union had to secure \$10 million in additional state Medicaid funding and generate a federal match. "In exchange, SEIU local 775 got to organize 10 nursing homes, with management's blessing. The 750 new workers doubled the union's nursing-home membership."<sup>86</sup>

The same article states that in 2007, the union was to secure \$120 million for an unnamed number of nursing homes, including funds that had nothing to do with patient care. "For instance, about a quarter of the new money in the alliance's proposal would reimburse for-profit

nursing homes for the business and property taxes they pay.” Paul Kumar, the former political and legislative director for SEIU’s California health-care local under Sal Rosselli and privy to the negotiations, explained the entire national accord as the “wounded duck theory of organizing.” By this he meant that the for-profit nursing-home industry had grossly overleveraged itself and that the national union’s idea was to cut a deal to bail out what he called a “scumbag” industry in exchange for dues payers.<sup>87</sup>

But the terms of the secret accord between the union and the employers placed severe limits on the rights of future union members. The union agreed to prohibit the workers from any form of negative messaging or negative campaigning during the life of the agreement. The grievance and arbitration clauses are constrained by language stating that any problem not brought to the grievance process within fifteen days is null and void. Further, in some agreements, only suspension or termination can go to arbitration, which left management as final arbitrator on all other issues, just as in any nonunion nursing home. The no-strike clause in the contracts in these agreements excluded the two words modifying most no-strike clauses: *no lockout*.

The final section of the 775 no-strike clause is highly unusual:

Upon the termination of this Agreement, this Article 23 (No Strike Clause) shall remain in full force prohibiting workers from engaging in work stoppage over labor contract disputes and the parties shall engage in prompt, binding interest arbitration to resolve the dispute. The No Strike Clause shall survive the termination of this Agreement, and, this language will automatically be included in all future contracts.”<sup>88</sup>



Workers' wages in the Washington agreements are considerably below Seattle's newly won minimum wage of fifteen dollars an hour.<sup>89</sup> And the clauses on wages in the contracts are triggered up *or down* based on whether the union can deliver specified increases in Medicaid funding from the state. The final clause of a typical 775 nursing-home contract includes the following language:

The Operator, Union and/or Arbitrator shall not establish a collective bargaining relationship that would create an economic disadvantage to Operator by requiring increases in worker pay, benefits, staffing levels and/or shift ratios that both were not adequately reimbursed by Medicaid revenues and prevented Operator's reasonable economic return on operation of the specific Operator-facility covered by this Agreement. *Operator will not be required to provide financial records to Union or arbitrators.*

[Emphasis added]

Almost fifteen years after launching Washington's new long term care local, nursing-home workers have achieved little more than their nonunion counterparts. The local union, however, gained several thousand dues from payers.

### 1199 New England, Origins and Approach to Private Sector Nursing Homes

When the exact arrangement that 775 had accepted was presented to the leaders at 1199 New England in 2004, "We told them to go fuck themselves," says current 1199NE president David

Pickus, paraphrasing then president Jerry Brown. When I asked Brown in a recent interview what his objections were, he said, “The state is a huge player in nursing homes. It would be great if we could make demands for increased nursing-home funding with the industry, to cooperate with the employer. So long as we didn’t have to give away the democratic principles of the workers running their own union. Our position was we couldn’t sell that which we didn’t own, and we didn’t own the workers’ right to make their own decisions in the future. Kieffer and Rolf were selling something they didn’t own. We refused to do that.” Brown is now retired, but he was the long-time President of what used to be called District 1199 New England, a division of the old national union known as 1199. Brown apprenticed directly with and under Leon Davis, considered the founder of the national union (see chapter two: Fantasia, Fink and Greenburg, and Lopez).

The two individuals chiefly responsible for creating 1199 were both members of the Communist Party: Leon Davis and Elliot Godoff. Davis and Godoff were Russian-born Jews shipped to the United States to live with relatives in New York City as young kids during the tumultuous Russian revolution period. Both wound up in pharmacy school. Davis dropped out to start working with the Trade Union Unity League, an arm of the Communist Party. Godoff completed school and became a pharmacist, but he too was quickly caught up in Communist Party activism. The two men separately navigated through various splintered attempts to form pharmacist unions in New York City, bouncing and being bounced from one purge to the next. In 1957, they finally met.

Davis was already president of Local 1199 when he hired Godoff to do exactly what Godoff had long wanted to do: expand from organizing only pharmacists into general hospital organizing. William Z. Foster, head of the Communist Party during the years that Davis and

Godoff were learning their craft, was churning out literature that called on followers to organize “every category of workers, not merely a thin stratum of skilled workers at the top.” In his 1936 *Organizing Methods in the Steel Industry*, Foster writes, “Organizers do not know how to organize by instinct, but must be carefully taught ...” and “Chair-warmers and irresponsibles should be made to feel unwelcome in the organizing crew.”<sup>90</sup>

The methods in which Davis and Godoff were apprenticed were based on a mass-collective-action, high-participation model anchored in the idea of workers themselves engaging in class struggle. Many of Mead’s stages of the development of the I, the Me, and the generalized other are evident in the method. Foster argued that “the campaign can succeed only if thousands of workers can be organized to help directly in the enrollment of members. This work cannot be done by organizers alone... Very effective are small delegations of steel workers from one town or district to another and large mass delegations of workers from organized mills to unorganized mills.” Among other methods of drawing in new members, music mattered, and so did “social affairs such as smokers, boxing matches, card parties, dances, picnics, various sports, etc.,” involving the workers *and their wives*.<sup>91</sup> The Communists understood that workers were embedded in an array of important workplace and nonworkplace networks, all of which could be best, and to organize on mass scale, accessed *only* by the workers themselves. Foster describes the “list” and “chain” systems,<sup>92</sup> which are 1930s lingo for building a network of the most respected workers inside and outside the workplace who will then mobilize their own networks.

Davis and Godoff were not enthusiastic about writing manuals. Davis was barely functional in written English, and in any case they believed that organizers, paid and volunteer, learned in struggle.<sup>93</sup> But a comparison between a fifty-one-page organizing manual<sup>94</sup> written by a longtime 1199 rank-and-file worker-leader, Bernie Mintor, typed up in the 1980s, shows much

of the same core technique as Foster's 1936 *Organizing Methods*, and includes some identical language. Mintor was a rank-and-file worker leader at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine who organized his hospital into the union in the late 1960s.<sup>95</sup>

The method for identifying the most respected workers of each employer has a name: *leader identification*. The methods for persuasion have names too: "Steps to Successful Organizing Conversations." Organizers in the model place very high value on semantics, which relates to Mead's discussion of semantics as significant gestures in a two-way, interactive conversation. The process begins with understanding an individual organic leader's self-interest and helping the leader come to their own understanding, through face-to-face discussions, that his or her self-interest can *only* be realized through collective—not individual—action; that is, through a union. The entire process of steps in the conversation relate to Mead. If an organic leader remains undecided, the next step is taken: "Framing the Hard Choice." The conversation continues until the organic leader shifts to a definite pronoun stance or can be clearly identified as antiunion.<sup>96</sup>

The CIO-1199 model insists that only the workers themselves can identify their leaders. Union staff in a private-sector unionization effort are legally barred from entering the private-sector workplace, which includes the parking lots and cafeterias, so mastering the craft of learning who the organic leaders are and persuading them to support the union—so they can persuade their fellow workers to do so—is essential to winning the struggle. In a private-sector shop, the workers must lead their own "inside" campaigns, almost always in an *extremely* hostile climate. Until very recently, conditions have been different in the public sector; union organizers can blend in with the public and routinely walk into most public workplaces to meet up with employees themselves, allowing staff to do the work for the workers. The Stern-Rolf model has

succeeded better in the public sector arena than in the private sector in part because it didn't require class struggle, merely political behind the scenes financial transactions.

Jonathan Rosenblum is an experienced observer and participant in this situation. He is a third-generation 1199NE-trained union organizer who later went to work for Rolf during Rolf's "start-up" years at 775. He would eventually resign from the local, disgusted by the nursing-home agreement. Most recently, he was the campaign director of the successful SEATAC \$15-an-Hour Airport campaign. He says, "The first, and in many respects most important job of the 1199 private-sector union organizer is to unearth who the majority of workers identify as the most respected worker in each shift and in each unit."<sup>97</sup> This takes dozens of painstaking conversations, because simple questions like "Who is your leader?" and "Who do you respect most?" cannot be asked. The result would be incorrect leader identification, because words like *leader* and *respect* have imprecise and variously understood meanings. Instead, an organizer must ask a long series of questions as part of a longer conversation: "Whom do you turn to when you don't know how to get something done? Why?," "Whom do you consult if you are worried about something at work? Why?" The skilled organizer (whether professional or volunteer) must ask dozens of questions like these to identify and understand the organic worker leader in each work area and shift.<sup>98</sup>

On March 20, 2001, months before Rolf was running the ballot initiative to create the homecare authority in Washington State in the same year, the largest nursing-home strike in U.S. history began.<sup>99</sup> The workers, overwhelmingly women of color, were members of 1199NE in Connecticut. When they walked off the job, they already had the highest wage and benefit standards of any nursing-home workers in the nation, including a substantial pension (not to be confused with a 401(k)), an impressive self-funded health-care plan, a robust employer-paid

training and upgrading fund, a two- or three-step grievance and arbitration procedure, and more workplace rights than almost any other nonmanagement employee in the United States enjoys today.<sup>100</sup> Jerry Brown, the now retired president for most of 1199NE's history, said, "The strike muscle is like any other muscle, you have to keep it in good shape or it will atrophy."<sup>101</sup> Since the beginning of the new millennium, Connecticut's nursing-home workers have gone on strike every year except 2008 and 2011, for a cumulative total of over 100 strikes. The action in 2001 was a large multiemployer strike; there have also been thirty-eight work stoppages since 2002. By constantly engaging in strikes, and by practicing what is called open collective bargaining—where all workers are encouraged to attend their negotiations—Mead's role plays are endlessly at work in the 1199 model, creating a new sense of the generalized other in relationship to the individual. Strikes are Mead's "critical conditions."

In the same decade-plus period that Rolf was given the jurisdiction for nursing homes in Washington State, 1199NE has run almost sixty successful elections: some big, some small. Like the Washington union, 1199 in Connecticut recently signed a multiemployer election procedure neutrality agreement—but one negotiated across the bargaining table, with workers in the room, in a collective-bargaining process transparent and open to all members of the union. By this process, they were able to secure a neutrality agreement, in which the workers surrendered nothing and are not bound to limitations in their contractual rights, covering three unorganized nursing homes. There are no binding contract provisions or clauses that are "automatically renewed," and the union is not required to lobby for the money to pay the workers. The language, printed in the contracts of the workers who fought to win them, includes the following:

“The parties agree that the Employer will remain neutral and not conduct any campaign in any organizing drive conducted by New England Health Care Employees Union District 1199/SEIU in any unorganized center [for] long term care or assisted living owned or operated by the Employer or any of its related entities now or in the future in the State of Connecticut.”

Workers reached the agreement, fighting to expand their union to nonunion homes, across the bargaining table, in the final days of 2012. Under its terms, if the union can present union-authorization cards from 40 percent of workers from any of the three nonunion facilities, the employer must turn over a full employee list and release a letter to all employees declaring that during the union’s campaign the employer remain will neutral and will bargain in good faith. Any violation of the neutrality agreement goes to “expedited” arbitration, with the final decision resting with the arbitrator. The workers at the biggest nursing home under the agreement, St. Joseph’s Manor, successfully won their election in July 2014. Despite the neutrality agreement, the organizers approached the campaign as seriously as they would have any organizing campaign—as *a struggle*. Rob Baril, the organizing director of the union and the lead on the campaign, explained the process:

“We blitzed the home’s workers starting in February. We got a good idea of what the issues were and we began to do leader ID by work area. We talked about building to majority to fight the boss, and filed for an election with 70% of the workers on a petition. We had volunteer member organizers with us in every committee meeting from the same employer. They would stand up and say, ‘we won this for you, we expect you to now get strong, be

prepared to fight and to strike because we expect you to win a common expiration with us, our standards are in jeopardy because you make \$3 less than us and you don't have the pension, our future depends on you and you better be ready to stand up and fight.' ”

Asked why this employer would give a neutrality agreement without asking the workers to surrender anything, David Pickus, the lead negotiator in the fight, explained, “We were negotiating with five other homes of theirs we already had under contract, so we said, If you don't give us these places, we are going to strike all five homes. They knew from past experience we could cause a big problem because we had struck them successfully before.”



*The Union Difference: What Being a Unionized Nursing Home Worker Means in Washington and in Connecticut*

As shown in chart #3, a nursing-home worker in New England, where the minimum wage is lower than Washington's, earns substantially more pay on her first day of her sixth year, and in every year of her working life compared with her counterpart in Washington. Three quarters of 1199-unionized nursing-home workers in New England have employer-paid health care for themselves and their families, with minimal copays and deductibles. A majority also enjoy a real, defined-benefits pension ("DB" pension). All employees have the right to take sick time that doesn't draw from their vacation time. Finally, they retain the right to strike at the end of each contract. Through sustained collective action, including the strike weapon, nursing-home workers in New England, have transformed their workplaces and the quality of their lives.

**Chart #3, Contract Comparison SEIU local 775 Versus 1199NE (SEIU)**

	Starting CNA Wages October, 2014	Access to Healthcare	The Right to Retire	Able to Stay Home if Sick	Contract allows for wage reductions when state funding declines?	Union commits to no strikes after contract ends.
<b>1199NE</b>						
A= 41% of all contracts	\$14.39	Full Family coverage, employer contributes 23% of gross wages to union-run insurance plan (up to \$8,750 per worker) Workers pay a fixed portion of their premiums, \$18.26 for individual	Employer contributes 8% of gross wages to union-run, defined-benefit fund.	Up to 12 paid sick days per year; can cash out unused days.	NO	NO
B=48% of all contracts	\$13.88	\$55.02 per week for family coverage; maximum annual increase capped Before 2015, workers pay up to 15% of their premiums (\$13.90 -	Employer contributes from 8% to 8.5% of gross wages to union-run, defined-benefit fund.	Up to 10 paid sick days per year; up to 8 accrued days can be cashed out per year.	NO	NO
C=11% of all contracts	\$14.95	\$35.36 weekly in 2011). After 2015, employer-run plan.	401K plan.	Up to 9 paid sick days per year, can be cashed out, with a 10% added premium, each December	NO	NO

775WA						
EmpRes Healthcare (agreement covers 6 WA homes)	\$10.75 - \$12.00, depending on which home	No coverage for spouses or families. Workers pay 20% of premiums to company-run plan. Same as offered to non- union employees.	401K plan (no employer match)	6 paid sick days per year, but must use vacation time for first three days of any illness	YES	YES
Extendicare Homes (covers 4 homes)	\$10.70 - \$11.10, depending on which home	Identical to above, same as non-union plan	401K plan (no employer match)	No provisions for paid sick time, must use vacation time.	NO	NO
Avamere (covers 2 homes)	\$10.95	No family coverage; current enrollees grandfathered; then same as above, same as non-union plan	401K plan, which employer “may match” up to \$500	No provisions for paid sick time.	YES	YES

In Washington State, where the minimum wage is higher,<sup>102</sup> negotiated contractual wages in most nursing homes are considerably lower than in nursing homes in New England. In addition, the contract at many of Washington's organized nursing homes allows negotiated wages to be decreased when Washington decreases Medicaid reimbursement rates—guaranteeing operators a fixed percentage of revenues from the state while passing the risk of lower revenues on to the workers. Moreover, the majority of unionized nursing home workers in Washington have health-care coverage for themselves *only*, not for their spouses or children. These bargained-for health-care plans, as explicitly stated in the 775 union contracts, are to be *identical to those of all nonunion workers* employed by the same owners. Nursing-home workers in Washington also

have little opportunity to build retirement savings; they do not enjoy a pension or even an employer match on their 401(k). Their contracts specify that their retirement provisions, like their health care plans, shall be *identical with those of nonunion employees* working for the same operators.”

In Washington, 775’s alliance with the employers for a fair election process is controlled by the employers and contingent on the union’s making significant gains for the employer in the legislature; it places severe limits on the collective bargaining and representation process, it was negotiated with no workers in the room, it was confidential, and it has yielded less than one half the number of nursing-home elections as the 1199NE in Connecticut. In an article in the *Seattle Times*,<sup>103</sup> the Washington union’s president David Rolf was quoted as saying, “Wouldn’t it be something if people thought unions weren’t about creating problems but they were actually about working with management to solve problems? Where is it written that the thing we need to do most is have fights?”

*Washington's Approach Equals Three Sides as Three Sides  
Connecticut's Approach Equals From Three Sides to Two*

In Washington State's local 775, the employer and the union and the workers are all distinct. The union remains a third party, an entity different from the workers, with its own interests being advanced through negotiations with the employer to meet the employer's primary objectives, increased revenue, and status quo management rights. The union, in turn, is a freestanding entity separate from the workers and has its primary objective met: growth. The third group, the workers, gets the least consideration in the negotiations. In this case, there are still three sides to the bargain, but the two whose interests lie closer together are the union and the employer. These two oppose the primary needs of the workers: stronger shop floor protections, a meaningful voice in shop rule-making, and benefits that might lift them out of poverty.

Today, 1199NE continues to run a successful NLRB election program. The workers routinely strike and win contract standards better than those of any other nursing-home workers in the country; they have converted lousy jobs into fairly decent ones. The only reason that 1199NE was not placed in trusteeship in 2004—when, on being presented with the framework of the Nursing Home Industry Alliance, they told the national union “Go fuck yourselves”—is that in 1989, when members of 1199 voted to join SIEU, they forced the national union to sign very strategic and legally airtight affiliation language. Under Sal Rosselli, California's health-care workers' local did not have such language when its own dispute with the national union began over this very issue, the Nursing Home Industry Alliance, and it was placed into trusteeship. I asked Jerry Brown whether he thought his union would have been trusted without the presence of legal affiliation and jurisdiction language that stipulated that the local union could not be

placed in trusteeship without three-quarters of the elected executive board asking to be trusteeed. He said:

“If we didn’t have strong affiliation language, we would already have been forced to merge with the New York mega local right now. The national union would have made deals with the nursing home bosses without us. They would have created a new local in Connecticut and taken our nursing home jurisdiction away. They’d rearrange everything, set up new locals, eliminate jurisdictions; they did whatever the fuck they wanted. And they were great about having votes, but they rigged every vote to work in their favor by who was allowed to vote. There’s no way we would not have been trusteeed.”

As these two cases demonstrate, the 1199 tradition is about identifying *preexisting* worker-leaders and connecting with them, then coaching and apprenticing them through the inevitable employer fights to come, fights that 1199NE understands can only be won by the workers themselves. By contrast, in the Stern-SEIU tradition, the union decides who should be a leader based more on community organizing criteria, such as likability; commitment to the organization’s agenda, attendance at meetings; ability to follow organizational conversation, speak to the media, chair a meeting, and exercise charisma. In the 1199 model, none of those factors matter. The only factor that *does* is that coworkers trust and respect the worker-leader, who might not, and often does not, meet something closer to an Alinskyist community organizer’s criteria described above.

According to the former head of the Washington Health Care Association (WHCA)—the employers lobbying group, Brendan Williams,<sup>104</sup> “One challenge for the [775] union is [that]

they could never get the big players on board, those guys, with the most homes, the national players, have so much money they can afford their ideology and ignore the union's partnership offers." Williams explained that even though he assured the owners that Rolf was a decent guy, he could not move them. He encouraged the owners to see "the entrepreneurial aspect to it, to set aside ideology and look at the union, they aren't being ideological, they don't want to bring about the destruction of capitalism, they want to grow just like you want to grow." But by 2007 it appears that the Washington union ceased "growing" in nursing homes because the state legislature voted to lock in a multiyear reimbursement rate that was set to last until 2015. Because Rolf could no longer increase the rates for the owners, he couldn't draw down more election 'victories.'

*Conclusion: Robert Michels and Oligarchy versus George Herbert Mead  
and Transformative Participation*

Local 775 has no ability to help nursing-home workers form unions unless they cut a deal with the employer of each home. Because private-sector nursing homes are the hardest test of social movement work, and since the public sector will soon be as hard as the private sector, the local has no strategy.

In New England, they are having a harder and harder time—the ongoing decimation of labor unions across the country and the near-complete acquiescence to the employer-alliance model have made the more high participation model more and more challenging. According to the current head of 1199NE, David Pickus, "The employers have got it down now, it takes them about ten full days to replace the entire staff of a nursing home for good during a strike." But as I will discuss later in this dissertation, by invoking Mead-like interactions with the broader

community, I predict there is a way to stay the high participation, broad democracy model and win, even in today's hostile climate.



## CHAPTER FOUR SMITHFIELD FOODS: HUGE SUCCESS YOU'VE HARDLY HEARD ABOUT

This story of five thousand workers at Smithfield Food's largest production plant in the world is a case study of a large, highly transient, ethnically divided workforce who fought for and won unprecedented gains in the manufacturing sector in a right-to-work state with the lowest union density in the U.S. It examines their organizing strategy, and reveals the key role of individual actors, challenging the concept of "leaderless" movements. My study focuses on the emotions and ideology that motivated key individuals and guided their understandings of power and strategy. I provide evidence that militancy, including a series of wild cat strikes, was central to the campaign in question, and allowed the workers to win a union, a strong first contract, and raised expectations - gains that have not been achieved with more typical contemporary accomodationist union politics, nor in campaigns to increase minimum wages. I describe how bottom-up majority participation by the workforce in a fight considered against-all-odds motivated and conditioned what became a significant statewide community campaign in a union-hostile state. I argue that in defeating the company, the workers achieved much more than a contract, more than \$15 an hour, they won confidence in themselves, including the confidence to later help to organize other workplaces. These 5,000 workers are now an important constituency in the effort to help change the conversation among thousands of workers in rural North Carolina in the 2014 Moral Mondays movement whose leader, the Reverend William Barber, developed from seeds planted in this successful union campaign.

### *Two Different Kind of Struggles Get Different Attention*

King County, Washington, has a population of 2 million. Ninety-three percent of its people are city dwellers; most of them live in Seattle. The median income is \$71,175, and the average rent for a two-bedroom house is \$1,123 per month.<sup>105</sup> In 2014, there was a successful campaign to increase Seattle's minimum wage to \$15 an hour. The story was banner news worldwide in print and broadcast media and a cause célèbre for many liberals.

Meanwhile, without the fanfare of a single national headline, another kind of contract in a very different region also introduced a wage of \$15 an hour. Bladen County, in southeastern North Carolina, has a population of 35,843. Ninety-one percent of those people live in the countryside; the rest are in the county's few small towns. Thirty-five percent are African American. The median income is \$30,031, and the average rent for a two-bedroom house is \$637 per month.

In 2008, in the county's tiny town of Tar Heel, 5,000 workers at the Smithfield Foods pork factory voted to form a union with the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW). It was the single largest private-sector union victory of the new millennium.<sup>106</sup> It happened in the South, in the state with the lowest rate of union membership in the entire country: 3 percent.<sup>107</sup> The new, ratified contract guaranteed not only a \$15-an-hour wage but also paid sick leave, paid vacation, health care, retirement benefits, overtime pay, guaranteed minimum work hours, job security through a "just cause" provision, and tools to remedy dangerous working conditions. The wage alone far outranks Washington's; given the dollar's buying power in Bladen County—King County workers would have to earn \$26.40 an hour to equal it.<sup>108</sup>

Because the union signed a 'gag order' as part of the final deal to reach a 'fair' union election process, little has been said or written about the campaign since the workers victory.

In this chapter I highlight the decisive moments in the campaign where the decisions of the key individuals made the difference between winning and losing. I identify these decisions as embodying the organizing strategy that differs from New Labor's mobilizing approach.

*Smithfield Foods and Conditions of the Global South  
Within the Global North*

Smithfield Foods is the largest pork producer in the world. It is a vertically integrated company that owns tens of thousands of acres of land where Smithfield farmers and contractors raise hogs who are then taken to company owned plants for slaughter, production and packing, which is then shipped to all 50 states as well as exported to China, Japan and Europe. In the U.S. alone, the company markets twelve distinct brands, including Healthy Ones, Margherita, Farmland, and Armour. They have another fifty brands globally. Smithfield's land ownership and farms are concentrated in the U.S. south due to lax environmental laws and the lack of unions. Two factors expanded Smithfield Foods out of the deep south, the first were a rash of acquisitions throughout the 1980s of existing, smaller pork producers, mostly in the Midwest. The second was the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994. NAFTA was conditioned on many domestic rules in the U.S., Canada and Mexico being changed to facilitate global capital's mobility between the three countries.

One such change was a mandate that Mexico amend its constitution to allow foreigners to own Mexican land. Mexico after NAFTA would prove useful to the company because there were basically no environmental laws and even less enforcement than the US south. Typical hog farms concentrate thousands of animals in small spaces, creating lake-sized waste pools containing a toxic brew of blood, bones, and guts mixed with poisons to theoretically stop the waste pools

from generating or spreading deadly mosquito-born or other diseases that spread with insects. The combination of low to no laws, zero enforcement, and a second NAFTA requirement, the ability of Mexican trucks and truckers to drive their rigs across the U.S. border, would make Mexico a new, strategic enclave for Smithfield.

But in the late 1980's, prior to NAFTA, Smithfield viewed North Carolina as a mini-Mexico inside the U.S. The workforce had darker skin and spoke English. A big international ocean port, a plantation legal culture and lax laws advantaged southeastern North Carolina when the company decided to build the biggest hog plant in the world. New York Time's columnist Bob Herbert described the area in a 2006 column, "Spending a few days in Tar Heel and the surrounding area — dotted with hog farms, cornfields and the occasional Confederate flag — is like stepping back in time. This is a place where progress has slowed to a crawl."<sup>109</sup> In 1992, the plant in Tar Heel opened for production. Thirty two thousands hogs a day are slaughtered and processed in this single plant. Five thousand workers staff departments with names like the Kill Floor, the Gas Chamber, and the Hanging and Rehanging Rooms. Meat production is considered one of the most dangerous jobs in the world, and a Human Rights Watch report in 2005 listed five factors that make meat factories deadly to the workers, not just the hogs: Line Speed, Close-Quarters Cutting, Heavy Lifting, Sullied Work Conditions, Long Hours and Inadequate Training and Equipment.<sup>110</sup>

### *Failure Round I*

In 1993, the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, the UFCW, decided to help workers at the new Tar Heel plant form a union. The UFCW was founded in 1979 as the union that resulted from several mergers of four older unions, including the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen of North America, chartered by the American Federation of Labor in

1897, which was reformulated by the Congress of Industrial Organizations, the CIO, into a new union in 1937 called the Packinghouse Workers Organizing Committee, PWOC.<sup>111</sup> The PWOC, a union considered a “Reds” controlled union,<sup>112</sup> was the union that Saul Alinsky partnered with in Chicago in his first-ever community organizing effort called the Back of the Yards Council.<sup>113</sup> Upton Sinclair described the conditions in the Chicago meat packing plants in his 1906 novel, “The Jungle.”<sup>114</sup>

The UFCW had other Smithfield Foods plants in several Midwestern states already long under union contract. But the union presence in Smithfield’s was not a result of contemporary organizing by the UFCW, but rather from Smithfield Foods aggressive acquisition during the 1980’s of smaller companies like John Morrell and Farmland, plants and companies that had been unionized by the former Packinghouse Workers Organizing Committee in the decades prior to the election of Ronald Reagan and his launch of a pronounced effort to deunionize America. But the Tar Heel plant dwarfed all other facilities in size, workforce numbers, and, production output. The union understood that its ability to hold or set decent standards in its older Midwestern meatpacking contracts would be eroded or threatened if it couldn’t organize a union in the shiny new factory, the biggest facility in the world. The plant was so massive that its arrival instantly altered the balance of power between the union and company. The plant had been open for one year when the UFCW first attempted a union drive in 1994. The UFCW approached the organizing drive as if it was still the early 1970s and followed the standard legal playbook which requires getting 30% of the workers to sign union authorization cards, then filing for an election at the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

The company also followed a standard company playbook, though unlike the union, theirs was updated for the post Reagan era and systematically broke almost every law on the

books including intimidation, threats and even violence. The company beat the union, 704 votes for the employer, 587 for the union, in a low turnout election. But Smithfield violated the National Labor Relations Act so egregiously that the already underfunded and understaffed NLRB managed to prioritize conducting an investigation into election abuses and reports which had been filed by workers through the union. Three years later, in 1997, the NLRB concluded their investigation and found the company committed a series of flagrant violations in 1994, and, ordered a new election to be held.<sup>115</sup>

The union in those years could gently be characterized as inept. Its leadership seemed to have missed Reagan's election and the big business clarion call to wipe unions out of the private sector through union busting, trade deals, automation, and relocation to non-union states. Joseph Luter III, the third generation family CEO at Smithfield, met with a senior official of the UFCW shortly after the NLRB ruling and made a personal promise in writing not to break the law. The union approached the second election with almost the same playbook as the first disastrous election, resulting in a second and even more disastrous election defeat, 1910 votes for the employer, 1107 for the union.<sup>116</sup>

### *New Labor is Elected, Still More Failure Round II*

But by the 1997 election, one substantial factor affecting workers had changed; the first contested election ever at the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) resulted in new leadership at the top of the house of organized labor. Even though the UFCW had campaigned vigorously against the winning slate, clearly aligning itself with an older generation of unionists interested in the status quo of slow death, the new team at the AFL-CIO was beginning to make changes at the state level in the State Federations of Labor, and, even one level down, at the level of the Central Labor Councils. In a last ditch

effort, the AFL-CIO in North Carolina, seeing the handwriting on the wall coming in the 1997 Smithfield election, persuaded the UFCW to mobilize some community support for the workers. They assigned Roz Pellas to try to help the union in its Smithfield drive. Pellas was a well-known North Carolina activist who had recently been hired as part of the new wave of reform at the AFL-CIO, and she was assigned to the North Carolina Federation of Labor.

“We were called in six weeks before the election, and, even though we were able to broaden the campaign beyond the plant gates in 1997, by talking to Black ministers, and, tribal chiefs, it was too little, too late. They (the union) had never done this before, worker organizing and community organizing at the same time. It was simply too late, the approach was right, but it has to be from the beginning not slapped on in the end.”<sup>117</sup> Pellas, the only woman who was allowed into the National Labor Relations vote count during the 1997 election, described in horrific detail the scene during the second election, conducted over three days in 1997, “It was a defeat in many ways, not just the numbers, we were being chased down the stairs by goons, the NLRB agents were hiding under the voting tables, the company was having people arrested outside as they tried to come in and vote, Smithfield had hired and deputized their own police force dressed in riot gear and stationed them all around the plant for the election, forcing workers to do something like walk-the-plank if they attempted to vote in the election.” Over 100 labor law violations were filed by the union against the company resulting from the 1997 “election.” Pellas described it as something beyond a defeat, more a beat down of epic proportions; the kind of defeat intended to drive futility, along with fear, into the hearts and minds of workers lest they ever think about a union again.

After their drubbing in 1997, the union again walked away from the workers, this time, walking away from 1,901 workers who had voted yes, abandoning contact with them. While the

union turned to the legal fight, there was an explosion of Mexicans into the region over the next decade, the direct result of NAFTA and Smithfield scooping up hog farms in Mexico. As Smithfield displaced workers on previously Mexican-owned lands, it dislocated Mexicans in Mexico and helped persuade them to cross the border to work in the big, new plant in North Carolina. This was a perverse and extreme extension of the concept of Smithfield's vertical integration.<sup>118</sup> This decision to twice walk away from the workers can be contrasted with the decision Steve Lopez discusses in *Reorganizing the Rustbelt*, where 1199P organizers began to plan every immediate next step with the workers at Rosemont Pavilion.

What began as a legal battle over the one hundred labor law violations that had taken place during the election became a case study in how the laws are stacked against workers. At every turn, the National Labor Relations Board would rule in favor of the workers and against the company. And, every time this happened, the company dragged out and stalled an appeal to the next level. This legal fight went on for nine years, from 1997 to 2006, until the case reached the U.S. Court of Appeals, which also ruled in favor of the workers and against the company. Facing only the Supreme Court as their last option, and, with the likelihood the court would decline such an appeal based on the bevy of evidence produced against the company, Smithfield stopped their endless appeals. After more stalling and legal delays, things as simple as first delaying when a hearing would occur due to very busy schedules, then, having the company lawyers call in sick the morning of an already delayed hearing, the U.S. Court of Appeals issued an unusually strongly worded demand to reinstate workers who had been fired in the 1997 election, and, ordered a new election.



### *Key Factors that Conditioned a Win in Round Three*

I am arguing that four key factors changed in the mid 2000's that set the stage for a victory where none had been believed possible. The four factors integrate structure and agency, weaving together a tapestry of factors that alone could not have produced a victory. The mix of structural and strategic factors that were decisive to the win include: [In this section I lay out what I am arguing are the four key factors that set the stage for a victory. I describe the empirical, grounded conditions (a la Gramsci) through which the more general principles of organizing I am highlighting came to make sense....] [or something]

- 1) A change in the leadership of the national union, which led to a change in the staff leadership of the campaign, changes which radically altered the vision of the union, including the *purpose of the union* (ideology)
- 2) The *role of the workers* and the development of a militant, "inside" the worksite campaign, placing workers at the center of the struggle
- 3) The development of a North Carolina community campaign that changed the frame of the campaign and put *community leaders as key secondary actors* in the fight
- 4) The creation of a national consumer campaign against Smithfield, bringing *national leverage*

### *The Purpose of the Union Changes The National, Elected Leadership*

The first change was in the leadership of the national union. Joe Hansen, originally a rank and file meat cutter from Milwaukee, was elected UFCW president in 2004. Hansen represented a significant departure from his predecessor, Douglas Dority, the union's second president who was initially appointed to his position by the union's executive board. Dority was strongly

aligned with the business unionist old guard of the national labor movement. During the AFL-CIO's tumultuous 1995 election, the first contested election in the organization's history, he acted as chief campaigner for Thomas Donahue, the status quo candidate. In 2003, five unions formed a coalition inside of the AFL-CIO called the New Unity Partnership, the NUP. This group represented a group of unions that were demanding changes in the direction of the AFL-CIO, pushing it towards more effective organizing. Dority again refused to enter the rebellious team. Upon Joe Hansen's election, he immediately signaled a change in the union's image and actions by realigning the UFCW's position in the debate and by joining the NUP leaders. By 2005, Hansen went from merely aligning with to becoming the leader of the NUP unions who would soon break away from the AFL-CIO to form the rival national labor federation, the Change-To-Win federation, arguing that much more aggressive organizing was not only needed but urgent. These were big changes for the UFCW in a short time period.

Late in 2004, not long after Hansen was elected to his new post, but seven years after the second attempt at a union election at Smithfield in 1997, the National Labor Relations Board issued a one hundred seventy five page decision in favor of the workers and against the company.<sup>119</sup> Smithfield immediately appealed the ruling, but Hansen began to send organizers down to North Carolina, confident that at some point, Smithfield would exhaust all appeal options. The organizers he sent were inexperienced with the exception of one skilled lead organizer. Despite sending a team, the national union spent one year in a kind of schizophrenia about whether or how to commit to a new campaign on the ground, inhibiting any real progress. They opened up a small worker center, aimed mainly at mutual assistance efforts for the now majority Latino workforce in the plant. By providing basic immigration legal services and

responding to other, largely non-workplace issues facing the new Latino population in the area, they began to make worker contacts.

This change in the national union set the context for the UFCW's decision in 2006 to go all-out to win at Smithfield, and, to radically change the strategy. Since Hansen had led his union out of the AFL-CIO on a pledge to organize the unorganized, he was under pressure to deliver a big organizing win for the union. In January of 2006, four months before a U.S. Court of Appeals issued a strongly worded order compelling Smithfield to follow the National Labor Relations Board's legal order, Hansen began a new round with Smithfield with urging and some support from the new Change-To-Win Federation. In some ways, this removed internal obstacles—including staffing decisions—within the union that might have slowed the campaign at Smithfield. A new Campaign Director was hired to run Smithfield, under the aegis of the Change-To-Win Federation but with heavy funding from the UFCW.

### *The Staff Leadership*

In campaigns to help workers form new unions where none exist, the full-time staff of the union determines how union resources will be used because there is not yet a local union run by rank and file workers. The staff at this stage, therefore, plays an outsized role in encouraging or discouraging worker activism, participation, levels of militancy, and more, in addition to setting the framework for what a union means to workers who have never had one. In North Carolina, the state with the lowest union density in the U.S., just 3%, no workers interviewed for this investigation had any prior involvement in, and, in many cases, even knowledge of such a thing called a union. How the staff talks about the union, literally the semantics used, in addition to key decisions made, condition the future of what kind of union will be created by the workers.

Mead talks about semantics as significant symbols and every successful organizer plays very close attention to semantics.

In the previous attempts to unionize the factory, in 1994 and 1997, it seems the staff was inadequate for the task. No matter how many workers wanted the union in the beginning of the campaign in 1994, few understood how the employer would respond. How could they? Had they been in a union stronghold, such as healthcare in New York City, it might be possible. But in rural North Carolina, as workers later described it, many had never even heard of such a thing as a union. This situation demanded organizers who had sufficient know-how to be able to teach and coach worker leaders through what experience would have led them to believe, given the stakes, the location, and more, was going to be a very hard fight. It was blatantly obvious from the scale of the violations of the first election in 1994 that the company would repeat if not double down their behavior in the 1997 election. And, with no fines or penalties assessed to the employer for their illegal behavior in the 1994 election, there was no incentive against a repeat performance. One of many examples of poor decision making was the decision to hold the 1997 election. One tool a union can utilize heading into an election is to deploy a tactic called “blocking charges.” Blocking charges are when a union gathers evidence from workers that the “laboratory conditions for the election” have been so tainted as to render the possibility of a fair election moot. The NLRB has to react immediately to “blocking charges” to determine whether or not to suspend the election. After assessing the more than one hundred and fifty violations filed by the union after the election, the sheer number and types of charges that took nine years to investigate, it seems clear the union’s staff leadership, had they been experienced, could have discussed with the worker leaders an alternate route, filing charges to block the election itself, rather than putting the workers through what’s sometimes called a “death march” in union lingo.

Overcoming the union's two prior defeats at Smithfield would surely signal a new day at the national union. And, the new union leadership understood that a conventional approach had failed twice and would fail a third time, too, if they didn't change the strategy. Based on the repression level deployed by the employer in the first two attempts, they knew they would have to bring pressure from outside the workplace to help create room for the workers to sustain the campaign on the inside. By chance, the first person that they wanted to run a new Smithfield campaign, an internal candidate, had to back out of the role for family reasons (he couldn't spend the time needed in North Carolina). Their second choice became Gene Bruskin, a long-time and respected campaigner working in the union movement. Bruskin's main identity for decades in the labor movement had been as the elected Secretary Treasurer at the Food and Allied Services Trade (FAST) Department of the AFL-CIO, where he was mentored by Jeff Fiedler.<sup>120</sup>

In the book, *Restoring the Power of Unions*,<sup>121</sup> Julius Getman credits the leaders of FAST generally and Fieldler, the elected President of FAST and Bruskin's mentor, specifically, with helping to invent the modern *comprehensive* campaign, experimenting through the 1980's on blending high levels of worker engagement and agency along with non-worker pressure into one effort.<sup>122</sup> Crucially, the comprehensive campaign model that FAST was developing in the 1980's was not simply a corporate campaign. Corporate campaigns typically downplay if not outright ignore the workers in the effort to use a leverage strategy against an employer. Comprehensive campaigns, by contrast, place equal priority on what's called the "inside strategy," meaning the workers inside the plant, and, combine that with the "outside strategy," meaning other forms of leverage.

Bruskin is a working class Jew who was raised in Philadelphia. "I definitely describe myself as a leftist and have since the 60s, I am a child of the 60s anti-war, anti-racist, anti-sexist

movements. I didn't get involved in the labor movement for ideological reasons—in 1977 I was driving a bus because I was doing community theater and needed an income and we went on strike to demand a union election and they put me in jail. My politics were central to everything I have done in the labor movement.”<sup>123</sup> By the time he was hired to run the Smithfield campaign, he had been a founder of another organization, U.S. Labor Against the War, formed in 2003 as a reaction to George Bush’s war against Iraq. He had worked on Jessie Jackson’s Rainbow Coalition campaign effort in the early 1990s, and done extensive solidarity work with liberation struggles in Central American, South Africa, the Middle East, and the Philippines. I argue Bruskin’s leftwing politics *significantly informed the organizing strategy he used*, a strategy that kept the focus on the workers themselves engaging in class struggle.

Describing his entry to the Smithfield fight, “I came in as an outsider. I didn’t know meat packing. Fiedler said, ‘give it to Bruskin.’ So I made a deal with them [the UFCW] which was I will go on loan to the UFCW if you want me to do this, I am going to hire my own staff, put together my own Smithfield team, control my budget, and you can’t take my people away from the campaign for any reason, I don’t care if you have nine decertification campaigns going someplace else, you can’t touch my team.”<sup>124</sup> When he met with Joe Hansen, Hansen told Bruskin, “Luter (Smithfield’s CEO) will never give in, I’ve talked to him, he will never give us a deal.”<sup>125</sup> Bruskin thanked Hansen for “giving me the chance to organize the biggest meat packing plant in the world. I wanted to say, ‘I’d do this for free,’ but I didn’t, I just thanked him.” Bruskin’s years of work with Fiedler orientated the subsequent campaign, a campaign where Bruskin would at times have to beat back the union’s attempts to downscale, downsize, and diminish the worker’s role in the campaign. It was Bruskin’s long experience in unions that

gave him the foresight during his personal hiring negotiations to place a fortress around his staff and negotiate some autonomy that conditioned the subsequent campaign.

### *Workers as Primary Actors*

*“They pissed off the wrong motherfucker.”*<sup>126</sup>

Kieth Ludlum, Smithfield Employee Fired for Union Activism

Bruskin was put in charge of this campaign at the height of the debate between unions in the AFL-CIO and the break-away unions of the Change-To-Win Federation. Most of CTW’s leaders were being heavily influenced by SEIU, especially when it came to central questions of worker agency in campaigns. As I will describe in this section, there was growing pressure on Bruskin to stop focusing so much on the workers. I begin this section by describing the context of how intense the previous fights were, and, just how skilled some of the workers leaders became because of their experience in struggle.

A nine-year legal battle culminated in early 2006. On May 5<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. Court of Appeals, DC Circuit, issued an order for the “Enforcement of an Order of the National Labor Relations Board.”<sup>127</sup> The strongly worded eleven page ruling affirmed the NLRB’s one hundred seven five page order issued on December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2004. The December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2004 NLRB order was itself a result of the employer appealing the *initial* decision in favor of the workers, a four hundred plus page decision by what is called the NLRB’s Administrative Law Judge or ALJ on December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2000. Administrative Law Judges hold hearings that are much like a trial, but within the National Labor Relations Process, where both sides present their cases, with witnesses, lawyers, evidence, etc. Though the workers “won” at this first stage, which the employer had already slowed down by taking an extra-long time in scheduling hearings, providing required documents

and more, the employer appealed. Four years later, the workers won again. And, the employer appealed, again. Two more years later, the workers won for the third time and still no election nor any action at all took place with the workers due to company's effective legal strategy; stall.

In 2002, long after the initial trial was concluded, after the case had been heard and was working its way through employer appeals, a whistle blower emerged. A manager quit, a manager who had been in the human resources department at Smithfield and who had been part of the team that disciplined and fired union supporters. Even though the trial had been wrapped up two years earlier, the union engineered for the manager to present testimony, under sworn oath, before a Congressional committee. She gave alarming details in her testimony including that Smithfield told her to engage in illegal activity or she herself would be fired.

The former human resources manager, Sherri Buffkin, told the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee in 2002. "I'm here because Smithfield Foods asked me to lie on an affidavit and made me choose between my job and telling the truth. I'm here today to tell you how Smithfield Foods sought out and punished employees because they were union supporters, and that the company remained true to its word that it would stop at nothing to keep the union out."<sup>128</sup> While this evidence came outside of the earlier trial court process inside the NLRB, because it was sworn under oath before Congress, and, because the manager testified that her own affidavits used by the employer in the trial were falsified, this testimony was referenced by the subsequent legal orders.

The contents of the eventual order took one hundred and seventy five pages because the employer had violated so many laws, each one of which was investigated. For example, in the order itself, in section one, the company had to "cease and desist" a series of behaviors. There were so many "cease and desist" orders that the NLRB judge exhausted the number of letters in



the alphabet, starting over after “z” and creating “aa,” etc. On page fourteen, starting with letter “a”, which stated, the employer shall cease and desist from “Threatening employees with plant closure if they select the Union as their collective bargaining agent,” and going all the way through “z” to letters “ee,” which read, “In any other manner interfering with, restraining, or coercing its employees in the exercise of their rights.” Letters “x” through “aa” offer sobering insights and evidence of what the employees had faced in the 1997 election, with orders for the company to “cease and desist from”

- “x” Threatening employees that wages would be frozen if the Union were elected as the collective bargaining representative;
- “y” Assaulting employees in retaliation for their union activities.
- “z” Causing the arrest of employees in retaliation for their union activities.
- “aa” Threatening violence in retaliation for employee activities.

In language related to the above letter ‘y’, the document reads,

*In the cafeteria after the ballots in the 1997 election were counted and it became apparent that the Union had lost, [manager] Null and Plant Manager Larry Johnson told Anthony Forrest, an observer for the Respondent, “to go kick Chad Young’s ass.” Forrest then approached Young, and pushing and shoving began in the cafeteria.*

Young had been an observer for the union and the employers physically beat him in public, just to make the point that not only would the workers lose the election, but union supporters would get beat up in front of coworkers, and lose their job. Later in the NLRB order,

the judge describes how each of ten workers were illegally fired, and, stipulates the terms for their rehire, and, an order to “make them whole,” meaning pay any loss of back wages from the nine years in between. Most of these fired workers had long since found alternative employment, died, or, moved.

By June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2006, Smithfield was forced under threat of the US Court of Appeals to post a legal “Notice to Employees, Posted Pursuant to a Judgment of the United States Court of Appeals, Enforcing an Order of the National Labor Relations Board.” This notice was posted at every time clock and in every break room. Moreover, because of the companies glaring violations, the NLRB made Smithfield mail this to every single employee who had been employed from 1997 to the present. In addition, the NLRB ordered the company to have an actual NLRB agent enter the factory and, over the course of several days, read the order out loud in employee meetings. Though the U.S. Court of Appeals ordered a new election, the union understood that a third election without a pre-agreement for employer neutrality, union access to the inside of the facility, or some kind of accord limiting their anti-worker behavior would be futile. The union’s goal became securing a “card check and neutrality agreement” whereby the employer would legally recognize the union as the certified collective bargaining agent once a majority of workers had signed union authorization cards.

The conditions at the Smithfield Tar Heels factory were so bad before the union that some workers joked that there was 100% turnover every day. A *New York Times* reporter, Charlie LeDUFF, went undercover and worked in the Smithfield factory in 2000, for what became part of a Pulitzer Prize winning series on race in America. Quoting from LeDUFF’s article, “Slaughtering swine is repetitive, brutish work, so grueling that three weeks on the factory floor leave no doubt in your mind about why the turnover is 100 percent. Five thousand quit and five

thousand are hired every year.”<sup>129</sup> LeDuff reported that Blacks and Latino’s got the dirtiest jobs, with the Latino’s being the absolute bottom of the dirty jobs ladder, along with prisoners in full prison uniforms often allowed to work just prior to their release, to earn a little money.

According to union reports, the turnover at Smithfield actually was nearly 100% each year. They had received the “Excelsior Lists” three times; employee lists that employers must give to the union when the NLRB has declared an election will take place. Five thousands employees were different each time, save for 200 names that overlapped. In the first election in 1994, a majority of the plants employees were Black. By the 1997 election, some 35% to 40% were Latino, the rest divided up with Blacks, Indians (Lumbee, mostly) and whites. The Center for Immigration Studies reported that during the 1990’s, the Latino population in North Carolina ballooned faster than any other state in the U.S., a 394% increase from 76,726 to 378,963.<sup>130</sup>

By the time the union received the list again in 2006 as part of the court order, roughly 60% of the plant was Latino.<sup>131</sup> And by the time of the election, the Latino number would fall again to 26%.<sup>132</sup> High turnover is often used as an excuse for union defeat, or union inaction, but high turnover had little to no effect on the results in these elections. The workforce was primarily African American in the first election and that did not lead to a yes vote, despite the common moniker of academics (including Bronfenbrenner) that Blacks vote for unions.<sup>133</sup> According to the Congressional testimony of the former manager Buffkin, it was the employer’s intent to replace Blacks with Latino’s with two objectives in mind: (1) to keep the workforce divided with constant racial instigations and overt segregation, and, (2) the employer believed they could more easily control undocumented Latinos.<sup>134</sup> While the employer succeeded at driving racial division between 1997 and 2005 in the absence of a union campaign, a key to the union’s

success would be first earning legitimacy with each major constituency in the plant, and then, bridging the divide and sowing unity and solidarity.

Gene Bruskin learned early in his tenure as campaign director that the employer's calculation about the timidity of the Latino's was wildly off base. Immigrant rights organizations had declared May 1, 2006 to be a national "strike" by immigrant workers. A few weeks before May 1, Latino worker leaders approached the union to tell them they planned to participate in the national strike. This would be the first walk out on the new staff directors watch, but the second in three years. "The workers decided to strike and asked for our help to organize a large march and we did what they asked," according to Bruskin. While this meant union organizers were encouraging the May 1 walkout, there's no doubt that an earlier wild cat walk out in 2003 by Latino cleaners had nothing to do with the union; the union had no presence at all during the 2003 action.

For May 1, the union was laying low, waiting for the US Court of Appeals ruling. The UFCW assembled a meeting with workers, the main Latino radio station DJ, Catholic priests in the area, and the soccer club President, to make a plan. Bruskin set the stage for many subsequent responses to such actions by directing staff to order 5,000 t-shirts that said, "Immigrant rights are worker rights." They also made a leaflet linking Cesar Chavez to Martin Luther King, Jr., to distribute along the march. On May 1, over 2,500 Latinos refused work and joined even more in a march that by local standards was the largest people could remember in Tar Heel. They returned to the plant the next day, and, the employer, hoping to not alienate them just as the courts were sputtering out their legal orders for a new union election, actually waived employer action against this group of Latinos. By late June, after the NLRB forced management

to post, mail and discuss their many violations of the law, conditions inside the plant would pick up where the May 1<sup>st</sup> action had led off, and, slowly escalate for the next 18 months.

Included in the U.S. Court of Appeals order was a demand that the employer offer ten workers illegally fired in the campaigns in the 1990's their jobs back. The order also included making the workers "whole," which means financially compensating them for loss of wages. Order number 1 was the cease and desist order mentioned earlier. Order number 2 was:

*2. Take the following affirmative action necessary to effectuate the policies of the Act.*

*(a) Within 14 days from the date of this Order, offer Lawanna Johnson, Keith Ludlum, George Simpson, Chris Council, Fred McDonald, Larry Jones, Ray Shawn Ward, Margo McMillan, Tara Davis, and Ada Perry full reinstatement to their former jobs or, if those jobs no longer exist, offer them substantially equivalent positions, without prejudice to their seniority and other rights or privileges previously enjoyed.*

Of the list of ten employees, nine accepted the financial compensation and never returned to Smithfield. One worker, Keith Ludlum, wanted his job back.

Ludlum was fired from the Smithfield plant during the '94 election, taken out in handcuffs.<sup>135</sup> Even though the NLRB ordered that he be reinstated in time for the 1997 election, the company refused to reinstate him.<sup>136</sup> His termination and the company's refusal to follow the first order for reinstatement were rolled into the longer legal battle. Ludlum is white, a North Carolina native, and a Desert Storm veteran who, to the shock of just about everyone, accepted his offer to return to his job in 2006. By then Ludlum had a new life and was making good money as a construction contractor, much better money than he would make walking back into

nonunion Smithfield. But Ludlum had unfinished business at the plant. In his own words, “They pissed off the wrong motherfucker.” After a pause, he said, “Not sure I should be quoted saying that? But when you escort people out with sheriff’s deputies, in handcuffs, we tend to not accept that real well. They really pissed me off.”<sup>137</sup>

On his first day back inside the plant in early July of 2006, Ludlum had a sense of confidence that came with the court order from the U.S. Court of Appeal, DC Circuit. “When I first went back in, there was no inside campaign, so we started it. The company wasn’t reacting. First I figured out some relationships inside, who was relating to who, then I had to make the company react. I had to scratch their underbelly. I wrote *Union Time* across my hard hat. I had a mission. They had a mission. The next day, I did it on my raincoat, and, they came after me for that. I had to do things so that the other workers could see me winning the battle against them. I had a federal court order and I knew the company had to be careful.” Within weeks, he began leading direct actions with first dozens, and eventually hundreds, of his coworkers, including a sit-down action demanding clean water for the workers inside the plant. From my interviews with Ludlum, it was clear his knowledge of labor law, gleaned from the first organizing campaign and the subsequent legal fight over his termination, was an incredible asset on the inside of the 973,000 square foot maze of a plant.

“I remember everything, his hat, his raincoat, I remember it all,” Ollie Hunt says, “I came to work at Smithfield right after Keith was reinstated. I was right there running hogs stationed right next to Keith.” Ollie Hunt is a Lumbee Indian who grew up in Rowland, North Carolina, about 40 miles from the factory. His father is pure Lumbee, his mother is white. “I grew up in a town with one red light and as a kid I worked cropping tobacco and picking cucumbers.” He has two daughters and one son. “My first girl is named Miami Raynie Hunt after my wife, Amy’s,

favorite country song; “Miami, My Amy.” The song, by Keith Whitley, was #14 on the Country charts and remains their favorite. His wife is Lumbee Indian, too, she’s a youth development specialist who has gone back to school to become a Guidance Counselor. “Where I was from, I never heard of a union.”<sup>138</sup>

Within days of Keith’s return, Ollie, Keith and a third emerging union leader, Terry Slaughter, all stationed together in the Livestock department, began to plot their course to a union victory. Livestock was a key department, because if workers in Livestock stopped letting the hogs off the trucks, not only did the line stop, but they could cause a massive traffic blockade on major interstate highway. The workers all talked about how easy it is to block the highway. With 32,000 hogs a day coming in on trucks, the tactic was guaranteed to work.

Terry Slaughter was the crew shift leader in Livestock, making assignments about who took which station, where, and, generally keeping an eye on the flow of the hogs. This wasn’t a management position, but it did mean he knew a little more about hog flow, workers schedules and more. Slaughter is Black, from North Carolina originally though he grew up in New York City before moving back home to North Carolina. Unlike Keith and Ollie, unions weren’t a foreign concept to Terry and he knew people in New York City who had been in the healthcare workers union and also in city government unions. He’d left New York to try his hand someplace more affordable, where he might get a little house.

Slaughter, Hunt and Ludlum would build an inseparable bond during the campaign. As Ollie said, “Me, Slaughter and Keith, we had a tight relationship, people would see the white, the Black and the Indian, and management knew trouble was coming.” In a factory where workers were segregated by department, room, race, language and more, with incredibly loud machines running at all times, people were isolated to an unusually high degree. But Livestock workers

had to walk through the entire length of the plant to get to their job. This gave them a second privilege as power workers; they could see people, and talk, as they walked into and out of the plant. It took almost 40 minutes for Hunt, Slaughter and Ludlum to park and walk inside the length of the factory to get to the back of the plant to their jobs in Livestock.<sup>139</sup> They would soon turn that already-long walk into a saunter, doing union work along the way to and from their jobs, which only the worker leaders could do, of course, since staff were barred from going anywhere near this factory. More than one hour of face-chat time each day.

Bruskin says once the leaders established this first small team of worker activists inside the plant, they began to map and chart the entire factory, something the union had never attempted in the earlier campaigns. The sheer size of the plant was daunting, trying to draw a literal map, let alone chart which workers worked where, with who, when, and who related to whom and why, was another matter. The Livestock workers were key to helping map the place, and, to charting social networks among the workers. They spent the summer and fall escalating ‘in-plant’ direct actions, and, beginning to build a statewide community support effort and a national coalition that would soon launch a consumer campaign against Smithfield, all under the banner of Justice@Smithfield, complete with a website, facts about the employers track record against its workers, an endless litany of environmental law violations, CEO profits, and, just about as good a profile on a company ever done in such a campaign. Top notch research and strategic leverage had been one of Bruskin’s expertises coming into the fight, and FAST had already conducted years of in-depth research on every aspect of this company. They were marching at shareholder meetings, creating on-line petition campaigns and more. The Justice@Smithfield campaign was generating national newspaper headlines, as well as local



headlines. Workers were constantly challenging the company's authority inside the plant, including sitting down in the plant and backing up the line, the highway, and more.

By the fall of 2006, there were good union committees being built among the Latino departments and also in the Black departments. Bruskin was trying to figure out how to begin to build solidarity between Blacks and Latinos and this was harder than usual because management had almost perfected the science of fomenting racial hatred inside the plant. The three weeks the New York Times reporter spent undercover in the Tar Heel factory led to a searing journalistic indictment of company inspired hate. He reported how the whites and Indians hated the Blacks and Mexicans; the Mexicans hated the Blacks; the Blacks hated the Mexicans, and the boss drove hate.<sup>140</sup> Bruskin decided it was time for a Black-Brown weekend picnic among key leaders. People were ready to meet and talk as one factory, to emerge from their departmental ethnic enclaves. And, just as the plans for the weekend BBQ were launched, Smithfield launched an air strike.

In October, the employer sent several thousand letters to Latino workers saying that they needed to prove their immigration status by providing social security numbers that match birth certificates. The letters, according to Smithfield, were the result of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials contacting Smithfield and requesting that the employer verify that the employees on payroll could prove their legal status by verifying their social security numbers. Not surprisingly, and, also likely not a coincidence given the renewed union organizing drive and the headway the union effort was making among all of the workforce, this employer, known for rogue behavior since the plant opened, took a sudden interest in complying with a law, a law that could sow fear into the heart of more than half the factory. By early November, the employer sent 550 "no match" letters, informing workers they were unable to verify their

social security numbers from the documents provided. And, they fired two dozen workers based on bad paperwork. The 550 letters sent a signal that mass firings of Latinos were coming.

On November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2006, over one thousand Latinos staged a wild cat strike and walked off the job, temporarily shutting the plant down, again. Bruskin's deeply rooted values were perhaps best depicted by his response to this action, "I am on the job for seven months, and about to drive down to North Carolina to meet with some workers when I get a call from an organizer freaking out, 'Gene, they've just shut the plant down, the Latinos walked out. What should we do?'" His reaction to the call underscores the central importance of top staff leadership. Bruskin's response could easily have been, "get them all back to work as fast as you can," (exactly what Bruskin's supervisor demanded) or "run the other way," or worse, "hold a press conference condemning rogue behavior." But Bruskin, with his leftist roots, reacted by ordering all staff to get "one thousand bottles of water and 100 pizzas to the workers, fast!"<sup>141</sup> It's still hot in southeastern North Carolina in November.

A handful of non-Latinos walked out in solidarity, workers like Ludlum. According to Slaughter, "These firings and then the walk out was a wake-up call to us Blacks in the plant, watching Brown people get taken off the line and fired and then others walking out over it sort of shook us, like, hey, what are we waiting for? What are we doing about the conditions here? It was almost embarrassing how little we were doing."<sup>142</sup> The walk out generated headlines all through North Carolina, but also in the New York Times, whose headline declared how unusual it was for non-union employees, let alone employees with documentation issues, to wild cat in the U.S.<sup>143</sup> As soon as the walk-out began, creating a crisis for the employer, the Bruskin and the worker leaders decided to dispatch a Catholic Priest, Father Arce of St Andrews Catholic Church, to mediate and negotiate with the employer. Smithfield refused to meet with union staff

or union-identified worker leaders, so the union found a perfect alternative to handle the negotiations, a religious leader who had credibility with the Latinos but was not seen as the union. Father Arce was, however, receiving coaching from the Latino members of his parish who were also union leaders now acting as brokers between the union staff and the Catholic Priest.<sup>144</sup>

The worker's demands were that everyone who walked out be allowed to return to work the next day with no reprisals, that the company stop firing people, and that the workers be given more time to prove their status. When Father Arce first came out of the meeting with the employer with a 'promise' from the employer on all demands, the Latino parishioners turned union leaders sent him back inside to get it all in writing. They were schooling the Priest that the company was not to be trusted. Bruskin understood at the time the pivotal importance that for the first time ever, the employer was actually negotiating with employees; the fact that it was with a Catholic Priest was immaterial to Bruskin. The mere act of getting recalcitrant employers to begin to learn to bargain with employees can be an important first step towards later negotiations because the concept has been established.

On the heels of this walkout, Bruskin and key worker leaders, the very ones who had just met for the Black-Brown BBQ, agreed that they needed a way to get the Blacks activated and the Blacks and Latinos acting together. Their idea was to make a demand for Martin Luther King Day to be an official holiday at the plant, with paid time off for those who requested it and, double time for everyone who had to work shifts that day. The union immediately began to produce literature in Spanish and English, with Martin Luther King Junior's picture on one side, and, Cesar Chavez on the other, describing the common values and the liberation efforts of these two leaders. Additionally, the demand for Smithfield to honor MLK day was the kind of demand the union activists could use to rally the broader community to their cause inside the plant. By

the day of the nationally recognized holiday, a majority of workers had signed a petition demanding a paid holiday; the company's refusal generated press headlines sympathetic to the workers.<sup>145</sup>

The company finally reversed course but did so in a manner that disguised the workers victory; Smithfield announced a new policy to give all workers in all their facilities nationwide the MLK holiday, denying their decision had anything to do with worker demands. The euphoria was short lived. Two days after Martin Luther King Jr's national holiday, on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, the employer let ICE into the plant and the uniformed-clad immigration officials removed twenty one more Latino workers off the lines, in handcuffs, clearly heading for deportation. Anxiety moved throughout the plant. By the weekend, the news of the workers having been shipped to deportation facilities far from North Carolina had spread along with the fear that any one of hundreds if not thousands of employees would be next.

Rather than have people slink away one by one, worker leaders decided to shut the plant down, again. But this time, in an act of defiance as they packed up and left. On Sunday, January 28<sup>th</sup>, over two thousand Latino's walked off the first shift and shut the plant down immediately.<sup>146</sup> But this time, people left for good. There were no parking lot negotiations between Catholic Priests and the employer. "La Migra" or immigration was clearly returning soon to deport more workers. Whatever trust the employer might have earned with the November decision to allow the workers back into the plant had been permanently ruptured. By this time, with almost daily and daring actions by workers on the inside and the employer responding viciously, the fight was shifting outside where it would generate more support.

### *The North Carolina Community as Key Secondary Actors*

*“The first time I remember getting called from the union was when the ICE had just raided and deported some Smithfield workers. I was driving back from Tennessee that day, where I had just been part of starting a new faith formation called ‘the Word and the World,’ an effort to bring together the seminary, the sanctuary, and, the streets. To make ‘The Word’ more meaningful to the world we live in.”<sup>147</sup>*

Reverend Nelson Johnson, Beloved Community Church, Greensboro, N.C.

The pace of the worker campaign inside the plant was overwhelming the union staff, but still insufficient to bring the employer to the table. Bruskin sought out national allies to launch a national consumer campaign branding Smithfield Pork as the white meat that came with human blood through human sacrifice. A young North Carolina organizer named Libby Manley had been an intern on the campaign before Bruskin decided to make her position fulltime, assigning her to engage the North Carolina community in the campaign. Because the UFCW had pulled out of the national AFL-CIO, the national AFL-CIO wouldn't assign Pellas again to the campaign, but Pellas was committed to the workers and the campaign, no matter what official fissures were happening at the national level. Back in the 1997 campaign, Pellas had tapped any and every religious leader she knew in North Carolina. Reverend Nelson Johnson had attended college with Roz Pellas two decades earlier and they were still friends. Reverend Nelson would emerge as a central player driving the North Carolina religious leaders' response to the workers campaign. He understood that framing was going to be key if the workers stood a chance and his earliest objectives were to shift the frame of the story as it was unfolding.

“First of all, I think community is a framing for all the issues we face, and in this case the leading edge of the issue at Smithfield was labor. By calling this a community struggle, we began to change the frame and break down the structural division and set it up so that if justice is the issue here, than everyone in the community is invited to be a part of the campaign. So labor isn’t an ‘other,’ some ‘northern-based’ thing, some ‘anti-Southern’ thing, it’s actually people in our own community.”<sup>148</sup>

Reverend Johnson decided that the Smithfield workers campaign would be a good North Carolina project for his new effort, the ‘Word and the World.’ He hosted a meeting of religious leaders from around the region and invited a longtime North Carolina farmworker leader, Baldemar Velasquez,<sup>149</sup> to come to the meeting to educate the religious leaders about two issues; unions *and* Latino immigrants. Reverend Johnson’s network was almost exclusively a Black preacher network. Immigration was so new that people in the region didn’t understand it. Sarita Gupta, the head of Jobs with Justice, the group that would coordinate the national consumer boycott, reflects, “It seems hard to believe now, but in 2006, we’d try to talk about the immigrant rights sub-struggle taking place in this union fight and people would look at us and say, ‘Huh? Immigrants, in North Carolina, in a factory?’ People weren’t quite processing the rapid growth of the immigrant workforce in the U.S. south. And, the union was struggling with how to manage the conversation around immigration. The Smithfield management was as sophisticated as any we’ve seen in pitting people against each other.”<sup>150</sup>

Reverend Johnson understood what Gupta did, and Velasquez, that the Smithfield fight could be a break-through in many ways for North Carolina in Black-Brown relations, in addition to being a potential break-through for the national union in the meatpacking industry and also the

South. Reverend Johnson made a point of inviting a longtime colleague of his to attend the weekend meeting, a little-known pastor from Goldsboro, the Reverend Dr. William Barber. Today, Rev. Barber is regarded as the founder and a key leader of North Carolina's Moral Mondays movement. Back then, he had just made a successful run for president of the state branch of the NAACP. He beat a do-nothing incumbent who had routinely accepted financial contributions from Smithfield Foods during the horrific period of deportations, firings, and racist company shenanigans.

One of Rev. Barber's first public acts as president was to refuse a check for \$10,000 from Smithfield, informing the company that the NAACP would no longer be complicit in the company's abuse of the workers' human rights. He became a key figure supporting the Smithfield workers in their unionization effort and used the campaign against Smithfield to help renew a moribund NAACP chapter. Suddenly the workers had a historic civil rights group with considerably legitimacy in North Carolina helping to lead the charge, in addition to the emerging religious leader's coalition. Reverend Barber has a narrative of his own about why the third election worked:

“Once the union understood that we had to run a campaign where race was a central issue, where race and class were given equal weight and the intersectionality of the two was lifted up, and we reframed the fight as a moral fight, we won in just two years. People trying to win these fights with morality or race off the table, versus front and center, are starting fights with one hand tied behind their back.”<sup>151</sup>

Reverend Johnson, intent on making the Smithfield campaign a North Carolina community fight, proposed that the first action by religious leaders inside of North Carolina would be to hold twelve simultaneous pickets at North Carolina's homegrown and very successful grocery store chain, Harris Teeter.<sup>152</sup> He and the team of religious leaders picked these dozen Harris Teeter stores based whether or not they had large numbers of Black customers, and, if they had a willing partner in their religious network, a partner that could generate sufficient people to lead the protests. Harris Teeter's current website reflects the image conscious nature of the grocery store, something the local pastors already understood. The grocery store boasts page after page of "famous celebrities" who shop at their stores, including Dick Cheney, Tiger Woods, Tom Brokaw, and Wayne Newton, to name a few of the many. The picketers declared that Harris Teeter stores needed to stop selling Smithfield's products until the company began to treat the community right. The decision to target North Carolina-based Smithfield pork in North Carolina's home bred and popular chain grocery with North Carolina preachers calling on the company to be kind to "the community" was an instant success. Harris Teeter, which had a board dominated by evangelical conservatives, immediately began calling Smithfield to demand they "get these people out from in front of our stores."

According to Bob Geary, a veteran North Carolina journalist who logged over two dozen stories about Smithfield<sup>153</sup> and is currently a columnist at the North Carolina Indy Weekly, "Nothing made a difference with the union campaigns all those years until they brought the campaign to Raleigh [the state capitol]. No one goes to Tar Heel, it's all by itself this giant plant in a tiny town. Smithfield had no incentive not to fight. When they [the union] made it statewide, and, made it a broad political fight, they won."<sup>154</sup>



*Adding Leverage: the National Consumer Boycott  
Making Real Partnerships with National Groups*

The workers inside were firing on all pistons. The North Carolina community was engaged and upping their involvement in the fight. The company wasn't moving. By this time, the union had abandoned any real hope for securing the card check agreement they had set out to win. Bruskin discussed how difficult it was to win the argument against an election with the liberal allies, particularly with sympathetic journalists. By this point in the fight, the union was trying to get the company to negotiate a neutrality agreement of some kind, some terms in writing guaranteeing that the company wouldn't violate the workers' rights again when they attempted to form a union through what would be a third election.

Bruskin wanted an all-out national escalation. His first request was to the UFCW. The UFCW represents the retail workers in some large grocery stores across the country.<sup>155</sup> Bruskin thought if the fifteen biggest UFCW grocery store local unions across the country began to take action, the company would understand that the fight was leaving the North Carolina border. But there was a problem. The UFCW locals basically did nothing. A few tried to help, most took no action at all, no matter what the request. According to Bruskin, "I just wanted the heads of the 15 biggest locals to write a Dear Grocery Store letter to the grocery store owners saying, 'we want to talk about this one product,' but the retail locals were weak, always trying to make nice with the employer, and they were siloed internally from the meatpacking division. So we gave up." Bruskin decided to turn to Jobs with Justice (JwJ) to lead the field mobilization of the national escalation.

Sarita Gupta, Executive Director of Jobs with Justice, said that it was in part Gene Bruskin's style, in addition to Joe Hansen's arrival at the helm of the UFCW, that allowed local

North Carolina leaders and groups like hers to take ownership of the effort together: “The campaign was really different in the sense that the union actually turned entire pieces over to allies, invited us to the table, and challenged us to get it done.”<sup>156</sup> After the Taft Hartley Act was passed in 1947, unions in the U.S. were barred from calling boycotts or secondary boycotts. But community groups, religious organizations and other non-union groups are able, as consumers, to call for consumer boycotts. One of the most effective tactics that the national Jobs with Justice deployed in the national consumer strategy was the campaign to target Food Network celebrity chef Paula Deen. Deen, wildly popular at the time, written up in the New York Times and elsewhere for her butter-heavy southern cooking, was hired by Smithfield to promote their products. It is the kind of opportunity creative activists look for, and, the idea to get Paula Deen to drop Smithfield’s products and sponsorship unfolded.

Deen was on a national tour promoting a brand new cook book. Jobs with Justice tracked Paula Deen’s schedule of public appearances and began mobilizing their activist network in the places where they had enough strength for folks to picket and handbill Paula Deen. According to a Jobs With Justice (JwJ) internal report and evaluation of the Smithfield campaign, the Jobs with Justice coalitions “publicly confronted Paula Deen at events in Washington, DC; Portland, OR; Seattle, WA; Louisville, KY; and Chicago, IL. JwJ also intervened in numerous radio interviews by having community allies call-in and ask specific questions about the situation with Smithfield workers at the Tar Heel plant, most noteworthy was during the Diane Rehm show on NPR.”<sup>157</sup> When Deen came to Chicago to promote Smithfield products, the city where Oprah Winfrey produced her show, over two hundred union sympathizers turned out to protest, generating a good headline for the campaign in the Chicago Tribune.<sup>158</sup>

The header, "*Deen Appearance Has Lots to Chew On,*" was followed by opening lines which were, "If Paula Deen were everybody's grandma, every meal would hit the spot, puppies would get along with kittens and there'd be peace in the world. The genial face of Southern cooking on television's Food Network, Deen conveys a country-fried charm that seems to solve our ills with a slice of peach cobbler, although that probably wouldn't have worked with the band of union protesters who dogged her Chicago appearance."

That headline alone, and, the "birddogging" the protesters engaged in at an event for Deen that drew 3000 fans, according to the article, wouldn't end in Chicago.

According to the Deen public appearances website, the union knew she was headed for Oprah Winfrey's show. Bruskin, "We had Lelia McDowell, an experienced communication strategist with a social justice perspective, she's this really smart and radical Black communications consultant; she was so radical I couldn't get the union to hire her, and, she was incredible. So she takes the headlines we got from the Chicago Tribune, with 200 people protesting Paula Deen, and, starts faxing it to Oprah Winfrey's people till finally she gets someone on the phone. She says, basically, 'hey, I want to tip you off, I don't want Oprah to get in any trouble but if Paula Deen comes on and promotes Smithfield Hams, Oprah's wading into the biggest labor fight in the country and we all want Oprah to help Obama win, not get caught up in this big labor fight.'" Though the union wanted Deen's appearance cancelled, the compromise was that the Oprah Winfrey show forbid Deen from saying the word Smithfield, and, they prevented her from using Smithfield products. The reason Smithfield was underwriting Deen was for her to use her biggest public appearances to promote their hams. There was nothing bigger than the Oprah Winfrey show using its clout to shut down the Smithfield's

promotion. According to legal documents, the company had pre-ordered 10,000 special hams for the show, none of which were sold. In fact, these same legal documents identified this one event as crucial to their exaggerated claim that the “union effort” was costing them \$900 million dollars.<sup>159</sup>

### *The RICO Suit and the Election Procedure Accord*

The union had endured and managed a nine year legal fight that had finally culminated in 2006. But the company found yet another way to attempt to use the law to destroy the workers legally. On November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2007, eighteen months after the U.S. Court of Appeals ordered the company to cease and desist two alphabets worth of illegal behavior; ten months after a third ICE immigration raid that led over two thousand Latino workers to wildcat strike and shut the plant down as they quit en masse in a defiant action;<sup>160</sup> Smithfield filed a racketeering lawsuit against the union and the union’s allies. This was unprecedented at the time and was seen as the opening of yet a new legal front to defeat unions; Smithfield devised an unusual angle deploying a set of laws originally devised to prosecute organized crime and the Mafia, the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, RICO. The company asserted that the national consumer boycott of their products amounted to ‘economic warfare.’<sup>161</sup> Smithfield alleged that the union was attempting to “extort” the company to get a card check and neutrality agreement. With the help of discovery and subpoenas, the union analyzed the plan had been hatched by Richard Berman of the union website ‘The Center for Union Facts,’ a leading proponent of the effort begun in 2013 to legally label worker centers and other community based organizations essentially as “unions.” Bruskin reports,

“Smithfield hired the person that drafted the original law in the 1970s as their consultant.<sup>162</sup> They spent, according to them, \$25 million on legal work against us. In one

year, from when they filed the RICO suit until when we settled, there were over one million pages of materials subpoenaed from us, we had to take our hard drives from our desktop computers and our laptops and hand them over. Berman described the tactic in a memo as, ‘the nuclear option.’ In one year, which was being expedited by the judge, all the depositions, pre-trial motions all happened. The case was ridiculous, but every time we tried to get the suit dismissed, the judge let the company continue.”<sup>163</sup>

The contrast between the pace of activity between Smithfield’s legal team on the RICO suit with that of the nine year NLRB suit is like the contrast between a modern race car and a horse and buggy (in the rain). The RICO judge drove a fierce timeline for Smithfield, an unusually short timeline for cases of the scale of the RICO allegations. The RICO suit made many claims, an example of which was the company’s allegation that the union had been particularly effective in the Paula Deen campaign. Smithfield said the union had “deprived Smithfield of an incomparable marketing opportunity” when it convinced the Oprah Winfrey show to refuse to allow Paula Deen to “promote Smithfield’s products before millions of viewers.”<sup>164</sup>

Because RICO suits were designed to shut down individual family members involved in organized crime, and their organizations, RICO suits name and sue individuals, not just organizations. The Smithfield suit was filed against the key people and groups the company decided were the lynchpins in the effort, including naming: UFCW, the United Food and Commercial Workers Union; CTW, Change to Win Federation (the at that time new rival to the AFL-CIO); Research Associates of America (the 501c3 organization that was formed after the CTW split from the AFL-CIO to house the research team that was FAST, the Food And Allied Service Trades, the entity for whom Bruskin worked); Jobs with Justice; Gene Bruskin; Joseph

Hansen; William T. McDonough; Leila P. McDowell; Patrick J. O'Neill; Andrew L. Stern; and, Tom Woodruff (organizing director at CTW).

The suit had an instant chilling impact on the campaign. The high level players inside the UFCW who were uncomfortable with the intense and militant workers activism on the inside of the plant used the RICO suit as an excuse to damper down the direct actions in the plant. The more traditional thinkers inside the UFCW used the RICO suit to attack Bruskin's strategy at every level. Tensions were flying. Bruskin, the workers and their allies wanted to ramp up in response, the older guard types wanted to pull field resources and shift them to non-worker leverage strategies. Concurrently, the individuals named in the RICO suit were all coming to terms with the reality of significant personal liability if they lost the case as the purpose of RICO is in part to bankrupt corrupt individuals. Bruskin pushed hard against the effort to shut the campaign down, arguing they clearly had the company feeling desperate. These decisions about pedal-to-the-metal or full-brakes aren't uncommon in big union campaigns, and in this case, the strategy to fight-on and uptick the pressure was being driven by an avowed leftist as the old guard in the union took a position of surrender. Complicating matters more, a new generation of unionists birthed at Change-to-Win but schooled originally in Andy Stern's SEIU<sup>165</sup> took a position somewhere in the middle: continue the corporate campaign but shut down worker organizing and shut down the community campaign in North Carolina. Why? What is the thinking behind that? Bruskin's early-on individual negotiations about the terms under which he would accept the position, that they didn't control him so they couldn't fire him, were paying off. But his opponents inside the union were succeeding at ramping back some financial resources to the point where his daily battle became not just fighting Smithfield, but also fighting people inside the union.

For the next half of a year, there was internal dissension over strategy and months of time lost, once again, to subpoenas and evidence gathering. The “heat” in the campaign was being ratcheted down against Bruskin’s better instincts, but it wasn’t being closed down. During this time they managed to pull off a big “inside-outside” action day at the Smithfield Foods annual shareholder meeting, protesting on the inside with ministers and community supporters from across the country on the outside.<sup>166</sup> On the eve of the start of the RICO suit trial, in an-all night negotiation that ended thirty minutes before the courthouse opened its doors, the union and the company reached an agreement to hold a union election with pre-negotiated rules, the most important of which would become the union’s right to have access to the inside of the plant, and the naming of a “monitor” with strong enforcement mechanisms whose job was to be at the plant for the election cycle to “referee” the period leading up to the election. Each side agreed to cease certain activities; for example the employer dropped the RICO case and agreed to take down an anti-union website it created called [www.smithfieldfacts.com](http://www.smithfieldfacts.com); and the union surrendered the words “Justice@Smithfield” and along with the words, suspended the national corporate campaign. The deal on the courthouse steps was signed and ‘ordered’ as a settlement by the RICO judge on October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2008. The Presidential election was eight days away, November 4<sup>th</sup>. The election in the plant was set for the week of December 8<sup>th</sup>.

By the time of the court steps settlement, the tea leaves, including all polls, were showing a Democratic Presidential victory. Big, vertically integrated multinational companies, often with a history of supporting Republicans, sometimes find unions helpful when Democratic administrations take office, using the union itself as a conduit to the administration on key issues.<sup>167</sup> For the once-again majority Black workforce in the plant, the fact that a Black man was the first Democrat in 36 years to win the popular vote in North Carolina against-all-odds was a

huge validation that Black people in North Carolina really could overcome stiff odds and a plantation culture. After the election one worker wore a hand printed T shirt: “If we can change the White House we can change the hog house.”<sup>168</sup> The union ramped up the “against all odds” message between the Presidential election and the union election, just one month later. On December 10<sup>th</sup>, the United Nation’s International Human Rights day annually, the workers voted ‘yes’ to unionize the plant, 2,041 to 1,879.<sup>169</sup> Obama barely won North Carolina, and made history. The Smithfield workers barely won their election, and made history one month later. Their win represented the single largest private sector unionization effort in the new millennium.

*Conclusion: Worker Struggle Builds Resiliency,  
the New Local Union, #1208*

*“It’s been a busy year in the hog market. Pork prices way up, bacon seems to be everywhere,  
ice cream, milkshakes, even Las Vegas martinis.”*

Kai Ryssdal at NPR’s Marketplace, December 26<sup>th</sup>, 2013

According to UFCW national executive vice president Pat O’Neill, the most important long-term development from the campaign is that today there is a local union that is already helping non-union workers in a nearby poultry plant to form a new union in Bladen County. “What’s important is that we have a local union that’s actually organizing unorganized workers,” he says.<sup>170</sup> At least equally important is the internal organizing work spearheaded by the local union, a program that has achieved a steady membership of 80 percent in this right-to-work state.



And, they've done it because, in the words of the once-fired-worker-turned-local union president, Keith Ludlum,

“We've created an organizing culture. I meet every single new [employee] hire at the orientation and talk about the struggle to win the wages, benefits, and rights we've won. I tell every worker that the first thing the boss knows going into our contract negotiations is what percentage of workers are in the union—anything less than 80 percent and the employer won't be taking our concerns very seriously. Keeping our internal membership high isn't just my job, it's everyone's job here, just like helping the workers down the street at the Mountaineer poultry plant, where 2,000 workers work under horrible conditions. The first thing those workers say when we talk to them is, *We want the Smithfield contract.*”

By defeating the company, the workers achieved much more than a contract, they won confidence in themselves. Including the confidence to drive down the street to an unorganized chicken factory to help teach 2,000 workers exactly what will be required to beat their employer. Through the vicious fight inside the plant, the workers learned to take on controversial right-wing wedge issues like immigration and even gay marriage. These 5,000 workers are now key to the effort to help change the conversation among thousands of workers in rural North Carolina. Reverends Barber and Johnson both note with home-state pride that the workers are regular and consistent participants in what's become a 2014 movement called, “Moral Mondays.” Barber believes the fight at Smithfield helped lay the groundwork for North Carolina's newly elevated consciousness about the urgent need for unions:

“We learned to trust each other during the Smithfield fight; we deepened our ties considerably, like when we held simultaneous actions in twelve cities in North Carolina all at once, something that could only happen because the leadership of the union campaign at the time trusted the NAACP and Black Church network to lead the effort. The union had no capacity on its own to do anything like that without us.”

Sarita Gupta, “The Smithfield campaign was our campaign as much as the UFCW, the NAACPs, and the North Carolina religious communities. JwJ felt that way, that campaign was really our victory in a deep way, in a deep heart way that you don’t always feel on campaigns. The UFCW were really smart in creating and structuring the fight in such a way that groups could feel ownership and get credit for the work we were doing. It felt like a real joint campaign and that often doesn’t happen.”

Ollie Hunt has become a fulltime staff organizer of the new local union. He is working with the Mountaire poultry workers, helping them to form their organization. Hunt says, “I know people, cousins, who work at Walmart distribution centers, and I am telling them all about it. My parents wanted me to go to college, I want my kids to go to college, too. But what if they don’t? If you’ve got kids, you expect the best for them but things don’t always work out the way we think. The workers in the poultry plant, who could be my kids in the future, they drive two hours a day to earn \$250 per week with no health insurance and the company is building a \$5 million dollar expansion in their plant.” Delcia Rodriguez, a former worker in the Mountaire plant and originally from the Dominican Republic, was fired by the employer at the poultry plant when she had an industrial accident that caused her to miscarry her fetus. At 23, she’s now been hired by

the local union to help the her former colleagues at Mountaire. She reports that everyone in the poultry plant is scared, but they all want “what Smithfield workers got.”

What they got was the equivalent of a \$26.40 wage in Seattle while Seattle’s low wage non-union workers got far less. And, they’ve developed a worker-led unified movement among previously warring ethnic factions. They’ve become a base of workers in a key national electoral swing state with the lowest unionization level in the US who are taking on wedge issues not as outsiders, but as home grown North Carolinians, and who are helping their next door neighbors form another new union down the road.

## CHAPTER 5 MAKE THE ROAD NEW YORK

The room went uncharacteristically silent after the two leaders in the front of the room, Amador Rivas and Augusto Fernandez, posed the question, “What do you think it means?” The leaders seemed at ease with the nervous looks and fidgeting that often accompanies silence in a large group. Then, from the back of the room, a commanding voice boomed out, “I think it means us. We are the ones who are an army of the good. Every day we fight to hold politicians and bosses accountable for the wrongs they inflict on our community.” A round of applause and head-bobbing followed, signaling that the woman in the back of the room was speaking for everyone.

The scene was a “Trabajadores en Accion “(Workers in Action) meeting at the Bushwick office of Make the Road New York (MRNY). Over fifty people were present for this gathering, a weekly event where MRNY members and prospective members meet to analyze the previous week’s activities and plan future actions. The prompt that led first to silence and then to reflection asked those at the meeting to interpret the meaning of a quotation from Juan Bosch, “*No hay arma más potente que la verdad en los manos de los buenos*” (There is no weapon more powerful than the truth in the hands of the good.)<sup>171</sup> Such prompts are a regular feature of MRNY’s public meetings, which are conducted in Spanish. First, everyone present introduces themselves, stating whether they are first-time visitors or members (and if so how long they have been part of MRNY). Then the leaders open the discussion with a prompt designed to spark discussion that everyone can participate in—longstanding members and newcomers, old and young, men and women. The prompt is also intended to ensure that the meeting agenda includes a “big picture” question along with minutia like who will sign up for leafleting (a key form of

outreach for MRNY) in the coming week, evaluating what did and didn't work at the last big public event or direct action, or who will volunteer to cook for the next meeting.

About two hours after the meeting began, Augusto, who was co-chairing the meeting as part of such a leadership development assignment, asked for "silencio" and then approached each person in the room to ask them, "*Que le gusta sobre este reunion and que no le gusta?*" [What do you like about this meeting and what do you not like?] When he got to the third person, the front doors to the room opened and a few members began to carry in enormous pots of rice and beans.

The fragrant smell wafting through the room was a challenge for Augusto at this point—almost two hours after the meeting began, but he pressed on with his questions undeterred. The answers he got were all variations on a theme: People liked being able to participate in the discussion and having a clear agenda; what they didn't like was "that this meeting is going on too long, look—see—our dinner is here and we should be eating it." This exposed the time-intensive aspect of MRNY's "high touch," participatory decision-making process.

MRNY is the largest non-union membership organization of immigrants in New York City, with over 15,000 dues-paying members, an annual budget of over \$13.5 million, and 155 full-time staff.<sup>172</sup> Membership requirements include a one-time dues payment of \$120 for those members over 21 years of age, and newly established annual dues of \$20.<sup>173</sup> Members who have paid their dues can participate in meetings. MRNY has experimented considerably over the past decade with what constitutes being eligible to be a voting member and what, if any requirements there should be, to take advantage of MRNY's legal services and English-as-a-Second-Language classes - which also include political education and leadership skills. To become a voting member mostly has and does require a higher threshold, namely attendance at two meetings a

month. As they organization has evolved, most of what they call their ‘survival services’ have become free for the entire working class, not just their members. Deborah Axt points out that, “In addition to realizing that because much of our survival services are supported with public money that requires them to be open to anyone in need, we also see this as our contribution to the broader working class.”<sup>174</sup> In addition, all voting members must participate in a series of workshops during their first year in the organization. Workshop topics include: “Understanding Sexism,” “LGBTQ Tolerance,” education on each issue area in the organization, and a session on effective recruitment. (This last workshop is crucially important, since MRNY members do most of the recruitment of new members.)

MRNY was formed in 2007 when two organizations— Make the Road by Walking and the Latin American Integration Center – agreed on a merger. Make the Road by Walking had been founded in 1998 by Andrew Friedman and Oona Chatterjee to advocate for immigrant welfare recipients in Brooklyn. Friedman and Chatterjee had met as law students at New York University, and both were frustrated by the idea of legal work that involved defending poor people one at a time. “We thought if poor people had power, they would need fewer lawyers,” Friedman recalled.<sup>175</sup> At the time of the merger, Make the Road by Walking had a \$2.5 million dollar budget, 43 full-time staff, and one office in Bushwick, Brooklyn.<sup>176</sup>

The Latin American Integration Center (LAIC) had been formed in 1992 by a group of Colombian immigrants in Jackson Heights, Queens, New York City's “*La Pequeña Colombia*,” to promote mutual aid and citizenship assistance for Columbian and other Latin American immigrants. LAIC’s founding director, Saramaria Archila, was a Columbian human rights attorney in Colombia who had fled her country in response to threats on her life by the right-wing paramilitary. Upon arrival in New York, speaking no English and with professional

credentials that were not recognized in the United States, she found herself cleaning houses like many Latina immigrants until she helped found and then became a paid staff member of LAIC.

In 2001, LAIC hired Saramaria's niece, Ana Maria Archila, to open a new office in Port Richmond, Staten Island. Archila had emigrated from Colombia in 1997 at age 17 and joined the LAIC staff after she graduated from college. In Port Richmond, she organized citizenship and adult literacy classes; later she succeeded her aunt as LAIC's director when Saramaria died from cancer. In 2006, the year before the merger, LAIC had a \$702,295 budget and a dozen full-time staff.<sup>177</sup>

MRNY has won a series of significant victories involving immigrants, poor people and low-wage workers during a time when many other organizations were experiencing setbacks and defeats. In this chapter I document MRNY's work and explore the factors contributing to its growth and success.<sup>178</sup> One such factor is the favorable political environment of New York City, which has higher union density than any other major U.S. city<sup>179</sup> an enduring social democratic tradition rooted in its labor history<sup>180</sup> and a relatively immigrant-friendly political culture. These conditions make New York fertile ground for the kind of immigrant rights and worker rights organizing to which MRNY is dedicated. But these same conditions are also present for all the other similar organizations and campaigns in New York City, yet none can claim as strong a record of accomplishment as MRNY, which has amassed a larger staff and budget than any comparable organization in the city.

I identify three specific factors that have contributed to MRNY's extraordinary record of success. The first is what Ganz calls strategic capacity. MRNY has adopted a highly collaborative organizational model that reflects exactly the kind of approach Ganz described at the UFW, with "leaders who take part in regular, open and authoritative deliberation and are

motivated by commitment to choices they participated in making and on which they have the autonomy to act"<sup>181</sup>

The second factor is MRNY's highly deliberative and participatory organizational style—referred to internally as a "high touch" process. This is similar to Francesca Polletta's<sup>182</sup> analysis of participatory democracy and prefigurative politics. Polletta particularly emphasizes the importance of *process* for strengthening internal solidarity and enhancing the political impact of social movements. As I document below, MRNY operates along lines very similar to the participatory democratic model she outlines. Moreover, efforts to win and enforce progressive change, whether through the courts, the ballot box, negotiated contracts, or legislative bodies can only succeed in the long term if large numbers of ordinary people are participating at levels high enough to enable them to hold institutions accountable.

The third factor is the organization's multi-issue character. MRNY's strengths have enabled it to operate effectively on a range of issues, including but not limited to workplace justice. As MRNY Deputy Director Deborah Axt, an attorney and former union organizer, and MRNY founder Andrew Friedman have noted, "Make the Road differed from many worker centers in the breadth of issues it addressed that were not directly related to worker or workplace organizing, and in its broader use of in-house legal, education, and other services."<sup>183</sup> A broad issue spread with open and democratic organizational structures helps increase motivation among leaders and members alike because different individuals will feel passionately about different issues.

I argue that MRNY is not an advocacy group. By advocacy, which I defined in chapter two, I mean groups like the Center for Constitutional Rights, the American Civil Liberties Union or Greenpeace, groups that merely campaign *on behalf of* some broad societal goal and/or *on behalf*



of a constituency or constituencies. By contrast, Make the Road's members are central players in campaigns and have decision-making power in such key areas as hiring and firing staff, approving budgets, and deciding on the direction and priorities of the organization. They also understand that mass collective action is a key source of leverage. Another sign that Make the takes an organizing approach is that they are not simply trying to win specific legislation or material benefits, but they also try to make long-term, structural changes in the power structure of the wider society, shifting the balance of power toward the organization's base constituency and away from the forces that oppress them. I will provide of examples how this works later in this chapter.

### *Despierta Bushwick (Wake Up! Bushwick)*

Make the Road's initial workplace justice efforts were limited to a direct action approach to on-the-job grievance handling, though the grievances are limited to wage and hour violations, taking advantage of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). When an employer refuses to pay a member or denies them overtime, at least minimum wage, or shorts their hours, they are teamed up with other MRNY members who en masse go to the worksite and demand the money with a shame-based solidarity protest. But if the employer ignores the direct confrontation and refuses to pay, Make the Road's attorneys go after the employer legally. This program has long been the most important recruitment tool for Make the Road's worker justice campaign. Deborah Axt, another co-executive director, and a former union organizer and attorney by training, explains that that this program has deep value beyond recruitment. "These individual and small scale fights matter a great deal because the members can get involved and exercise, test, and improve upon their leadership immediately. It's like having dozens of mini campaigns going on all at once all the time."

By 2004, Make the Road decided to try something new in their worker justice campaigns—unions. It was a bold move, with a high risk of failure: Union election victories are hard to come by in any sector, given the incentive for employers to systematically violate the few remaining worker protections under US law. But given the sheer numbers of individuals experiencing wage theft, Make the Road wanted to scale up. If the workers could form unions, it would give them access to on-going assistance and potentially raise their wages and living standards above the poverty line. Make the Road sought a union partner. Enter the RWDSU.

The RWDSU under Stuart Applebaum's leadership joined up with Make the Road to attempt the near-impossible—win in marginal retail in the shadows of a big city in the Bush era. The Despierta Bushwick (Wake Up! Bushwick) campaign was born. According to Ed Ott, distinguished lecturer at CUNY's labor school, and the former long-time Executive Director at the NYC Central Labor Council, "From almost day one, Make the Road caught the attention of NYC's unions because the group's leaders understood that a union contract could be a tremendous tool for their members. This union friendly approach and their demonstrated ability to turn out large numbers of their members for events in NYC set them apart from every other group in NY."

The first tactical move for Make the Road was to map a geographic boundary of two blocks in either direction of Knickerbocker Avenue—an area where the organization had strong roots. Over the course of six months they knocked on just over 6,000 doors talking with residents about the conditions workers along Knickerbocker Ave were facing. Many of these residents had first-hand experience in the stores as either workers, friends of workers, or family of workers. At the end of each conversation, the canvassers asked the resident to sign a pledge card stating that

they would boycott any store that didn't respect its workers. The canvassers also gathered information from each resident about which stores they patronized on Knickerbocker as one way to gauge the potential impact of consumer pressure.

While Make the Road talked with folks off of Knickerbocker Ave, the RWDSU organizers were talking to workers on Knickerbocker Ave. The collaborative team began to work with the Attorney General's office to file unpaid wage claims. The tactic was to ratchet up the amount of back pay claims an employer might face should they resist the no-cost alternative of dropping the claims in exchange for an agreement to not fight the unionization effort. At the time, the Attorney General was Elliot Spitzer, who proved sympathetic to the effort.

In August of 2005, with back to school shopping about to begin, Make the Road sent a letter to two of the chains on Knickerbocker that typified the strip—FootCo and Shoe Mania. The letter notified the store owners that unless they were prepared to sign an agreement that would commit them to cease their unjust practices and permit their employees to make a decision to unionize free from intimidation or harassment; they would call for a boycott at a press conference. Shoe Mania shut down, almost certainly a response to the union threat. But FootCo responded immediately and by the campaign's end, the workers had formed a union with the RWDSU and negotiated a collective bargaining agreement covering 110 workers across ten stores that included health insurance, paid sick and vacation time for all workers, and a \$3.00 an hour raise. The FootCo contract would be renegotiated successfully until the company succumbed, along with thousands of other small retail stores, to the economic crisis.

Beyond FootCo, there were several other results from Despierta Bushwick. MRNY built deep relationships with key staff at city and state agencies that would enable them to engage in what they call strategic sweeps. A “sweep” is where Make the Road and one of their union partners—typically RWDSU—gather information from workers in an industry and a targeted area and provides it to enforcement agencies, which swoop in and cite multiple employers at once. In May of 2008 and again in June of 2009, MRNY played a crucial role in getting the NYS Attorney General’s office and the NYS Department of Labor to go after grocery stores for systematically stealing the wages of grocery store baggers. The result was substantial back wages payments, such as at C-Town in Queens which had to pay baggers over \$300,000 in back wages, Pioneer Grocery in Brooklyn which had to pay over \$160,000 and Key Foods in Brooklyn who owed over \$44,000 to baggers. Prior to the sweeps, the employers typically made the workers sign agreements claiming they were independent contractors, paid them no wages and only tips, and yet treated them just like employees (including assigning them other jobs, like cleaning, and firing them if they wouldn’t comply). MRNY’s large membership helps the generally underfunded state agencies launch what feels like a sting operation against unscrupulous employers and the impact ripples out well beyond the shops that get fined

But even after a couple of years of strategic sweeps, which significantly elevated the scale of their success, MRNY was getting increasingly frustrated by the inadequacies of the laws they were enforcing. So they decided to attack the deficiencies in the law. As Deborah Axt said, “For the many workers in the informal economy and the non union economy, we are trying to put as many pieces together as we can that offer protections like a [union] contract.”

### *Wage Theft Legislation*

MRNY has been active in campaigns to rectify minimum wage and other workplace violations throughout its history, winning over \$25 million in back pay and wrongfully denied government benefits settlements between 2007 and 2010 alone.<sup>184</sup> Frustrated by the slow pace of the legal process and the persistence of wage theft in the low-wage labor market despite the many highly publicized efforts to combat it, in early 2010 MRNY members decided, in committee meetings and eventually in a board meeting, to launch a campaign to strengthen the state law.<sup>185</sup> This gave rise to a successful coalition effort to pass the New York State Wage Theft Protection Act (WTPA), which was signed into law in December 2010 and took effect on April 9, 2011.

The new law increases criminal and civil penalties for minimum wage and overtime violations from 25 percent to up to 100 percent of back wages, along with additional penalties of up to \$10,000 for employers who retaliate or threaten to retaliate against workers for complaining about wage theft. The new law also strengthens employer payroll record-keeping requirements and requires more detailed written notice to employees regarding pay rates and deductions than before, including a new provision that these notices must be in the employee's primary language. While this victory may seem modest, its thrust is important for an organizing organization because it directly enhances the ability of ordinary workers to understand their employers' actions and also provides access to enforcement mechanisms – similar to those in union contracts. By forcing employers to document pay rates and deductions in each paycheck in the native language of the employee, the law enables workers themselves –with assistance from the MRNY staff in some cases – to fight back if the employer has cheated them out of the pay to which they are entitled. Thus the law “makes the hammer of reach and enforcement much

bigger”as Axt put it in an interview. “Our members are really proud of this victory and are now involved in outreach and education to all sorts of organizations across the city who we are teaching how to use the new tools afforded by the law.”

In 2014, the organization successfully fought for yet more improvements to the Wage Theft Prevention Act, including enhanced anti-retaliation provisions, increases in the liquidated damages provisions from \$10K to \$25K, and an expansion of the Act’s language to incorporate a new focus on the construction sector.<sup>186</sup>

### *Secure Communities Campaign*

On November 22, 2011, Mayor Bloomberg—flanked by members of Make the Road—signed a City Council measure ending the City’s cooperation with federal ICE authorities. Unlike the WTPA, which was developed and passed in less than a year, this campaign took years of careful work. “When we first decided to launch this campaign, everyone said, ‘You are fucking crazy,’” recalled campaign leader and MRNY Deputy Director Javier Valdes, a longtime immigrant rights advocate formerly on the staff of the New York Immigration Coalition.

In early 2009, Peter Markowitz, director of the Immigrant Justice Center at Cardozo Law School and a trusted collaborator of MRNY, approached the group with a plan to challenge New York City’s cooperation with ICE. Because this campaign idea did not originate directly from the base, MRNY staff conducted a membership survey to see if the issue mattered enough to members to warrant a shift in organizational priorities.

In response, members described cases of family and friends being deported after arrests for minor infractions, and in some instances even when they were found innocent. At the time, Rikers Island prison officials were holding immigrants suspected of being undocumented for up to 48 hours after their scheduled release and turning them over to ICE officials to be

“interviewed.” Between 2004 and 2008, over 13,000 undocumented immigrants had been shipped from Rikers to detention facilities outside of New York (Bernstein 2009). According to Valdes, Rikers officials were deceiving immigrants into thinking they were going to meet with an attorney about their case, rather than with an ICE official.<sup>187</sup> The interviews would begin with innocuous questions that were intentionally misleading, to encourage detainees to reveal how they had gotten to the United States. As the survey documented, MRNY members saw this as an urgent issue and this soon led to Board approval for the campaign.

Along with the New Sanctuary Coalition and the Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights, MRNY demanded that Rikers Island officials be required to explain to detainees in very explicit terms that these “interviews” were *not* with friendly attorneys. In June 2009 the campaign scored its first victory when the city’s Department of Corrections officials agreed to provide a written form in multiple languages to every detainee at Rikers *before* the interviews, explaining that the interviewers would be ICE officials, and detailing what could result. Rikers officials were also required to get signed consent forms from any detainee before any such “interviews.” could occur.

By February 2010, thirteen more groups had signed onto the campaign.<sup>188</sup> MRNY then successfully drove what had become a large coalition effort that eventually persuaded newly elected Governor Andrew Cuomo to announce in June 2011 that Secure Communities would not be implemented in New York State (Reddy 2011). Six months later, on November 22, 2011, in a move that gave new meaning to Thanksgiving for many New York City immigrants, Mayor Bloomberg signed City Council Bill 656, which prohibits the Department of Corrections from using city funds to detain immigrants, effectively ending the City’s collaboration with ICE.

Concurrent with the three-year-long Secure Communities campaign, MRNY also led several other successful efforts that had a significant impact on public policy. Among the results were the 2009 Language Access in Pharmacies Act requiring that 3,000 chain pharmacies in New York City provide translation and interpretation services; the 2010 Multiple Dwellings Registration Act which strengthened enforcement of tenants' rights; Governor Cuomo's Executive Order #26, signed in fall 2011, extending to all of New York State an earlier MRNY victory requiring city agencies to provide interpretation and translation services; and the 2011 Student Safety Act, making police and in-house school discipline more transparent.

MRNY was active on many other fronts in this period as well. In 2010 the organization negotiated a settlement with the retail chain American Eagle over discrimination against transgender employees. That same year MRNY's Youth Empowerment Project successfully blocked a city plan to cut funding for subsidized student Metro Cards. And MRNY filled forty-two buses with protestors for the May 1, 2010 immigrant rights march in Washington, D.C.—the largest turnout of any single group in the nation.<sup>189</sup>

By 2014, despite real reductions in the number of immigrants being detained, MRNY took further action and succeeded at getting the New York City Council to pass a law banishing the ICE officers from Rikers Island altogether. The law was passed in October 2014 and took effect in February of 2015.<sup>190</sup>

### *Strategic Capacity*

How does Make the Road get so much accomplished? A large part of the answer hinges on what Ganz calls strategic capacity. MRNY's original five-member Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) included three women and three people of color, one of whom, Ana Maria Archila, is an immigrant. Javier Valdes was born in the United States but when he was three months old his



parents' visas expired and the family, originally Argentinian, moved to Venezuela. Valdes returned to the United States at age eleven when his father, a civil engineer, was hired at Texas A&M—a job that allowed him to obtain permanent resident status. Archila and Valdes both went to college in the United States and both took jobs in progressive organizations soon after graduating. Oona Chatterjee was born in the United States to Indian immigrant parents. She was influenced by family stories about the fight for Indian independence; similarly Archila and Valdes were shaped by their parents' experience of fleeing repression in Latin America (in Colombia and Argentina, respectively). The other two SLT members, Andrew Friedman and Deborah Axt, are white and U.S. born, but also had politically progressive parents.<sup>191</sup>

Though Friedman, Chatterjee, and most recently Archila have moved to a new national organization that is attempt to nationalize the success of Make the Road, all five of these founding SLT leaders are passionately devoted to their work, exemplifying another aspect of Ganz's strategic capacity, namely motivation.<sup>192</sup> And, they still share office space. Valdes and Axt remain in the top leadership, with other newer team members stepping into today's SLT. The following excerpts from interviews with SLT members illustrate their level of motivation:

Friedman: “We lose before we even start if we remain risk-averse. We constantly take risks here!” 3-17-11

Archila: “I fell in love with the folks I was teaching and knew I was hooked.”

Chatterjee: “We want to build power. We want to be consequential in everything we do and move the ball forward.” 3-17-11

Axt: “We are not so good at slow, methodical approaches. This is both a strength and a weakness—we tend to go head-long into an effort.” 4-7-11

Valdes: “It’s a magical space here. The level of commitment to the cause, I have never experienced it anywhere as much as here—it’s not just the leadership, it’s everybody. Every member and all the staff know this institution matters.” 11-28-11

The relationships among and between just about everyone I observed start and end with respect for each other vertically and horizontally. For Ganz, this combination is key to the success of organizations fighting for social and economic justice. The frequent use of the word love (Chatterjee, “we love each other here;” Valdes, “we are rooted in love and community here”) reflects the deep commitment of the SLT to a highly participatory and equally diverse membership.

The full-time MRNY staff as a whole is also highly motivated, with a group of talented, accomplished organizers that work around the clock with extraordinary dedication. As Table 1 (prepared as part of a grant proposal submitted to the Ford Foundation) shows, the staff is also extremely diverse in terms of gender, race and ethnicity.<sup>193</sup>

Table ???. Make the Road New York Staff, by Gender, Race and Ethnicity<sup>194</sup>

	Underrepresented Racial and Ethnic Minorities		Total	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Board of Directors/Trustees	9	7	10	11
Professional Staff	48	17	61	22
Support Staff	8	3	8	3

### *Participatory Democracy and Make the Road’s “High Touch” Model*

Polletta argues that participatory democracy strengthens social movements and their organizations. Among “people with little experience of routine politics, making decisions by consensus and rotating leadership has helped create a pool of activists capable of enforcing the gains made by this movement and launching new rounds of activism. Participatory democracy’s

potential benefits... cannot be reduced to “personal” or “cultural” changes. They go to the heart of political impact,” she argues, adding: “Participatory democracy... can advance efforts to secure institutional political change... [and] can be strategic.”<sup>195</sup>

MRNY has adopted a detailed and transparent decision-making process. Most decisions are made by consensus, and rotating leadership is standard practice at meetings. The MRNY “Decision-Making Authority” document (available to members in both Spanish and English) specifies in detail how people are chosen for every role and every sub-body in the organization, and specifies the authority embodied in each role and sub-body.<sup>196</sup>

MRNY has committees focused on key programmatic areas, including both core issues that have long defined the organization's agenda like immigrant rights, civil rights, affordable housing, workplace justice, and environmental justice, to more ad-hoc committees devoted to campaigns like those described earlier such as Wage Theft and Secure Communities. Each MRNY member is involved in one or more of these programmatic committees, all of which hold weekly meetings concurrently at MRNY’s four offices in Port Richmond, Staten Island; Bushwick, Brooklyn; Jackson Heights, Queens; and Brentwood, Long Island. As Javier Valdes explained, “The weekly meetings serve the same purpose as church, it’s a ritual.... it’s the same time, the same day, every week, in the same office.” He added, “Having access to the membership so frequently provides a constant opportunity for growth and political education. The members all run the meetings and ... spend time every week thinking about the agenda and about how to run an effective meeting.”

Members actively participate in the process of hiring new staff, and are included on hiring committees and interview teams. After multiple and sometimes grueling interview rounds, finalists are asked to demonstrate their skills in front of members by either facilitating a meeting

or running a workshop. As Sabrina Harewood, a 20 year old Afro-Caribbean member of the LGBT working group explained, “We want to see the potential staff facilitate a meeting... we want to see how they respond to members' questions, if they can teach us anything new, and how they get along with people.”

MRNY's "high touch" decision-making process is also illustrated by the “Trabajadores en Accion” meeting described at the beginning of this chapter. In 2009, as part of a comprehensive strategic planning process, MRNY adopted a new set of leadership development protocols for both volunteer members and staff. Members who want to become leaders meet one-on-one with the organizers responsible for each programmatic area, and carry out a series of assignments (in this case, learning to run a large meeting). This is one of several prerequisites for running for election to the MRNY board of directors—a very active and hands-on board of directors, the majority of whose members are elected from the membership.

MRNY's self-understanding is predicated on the idea that its success depends on its ability to recruit, develop, mobilize and retain members. In many respects, then, it exemplifies Polletta's model of participatory democracy. But the deep commitment to democratic practice and leadership development is also a source of tension and what co-founder Andrew Friedman refers to as “democracy fatigue,” describing the more than thirteen regular weekly meetings—all of which require tremendous energy and attention. There is, according to Friedman, a dull but persistent discussion of the endless search for fewer and shorter meetings. Friedman absented himself from this fatigue by creating the Center for Popular Democracy, a national group without the kind of day-to-day base accountability that Make the Road still maintains. But Javier Valdes (who would later replace Andrew as a co-executive director) and others involved in building

MRNY's member participation program insist that any compromise in the highly participatory nature of the organization would weaken the organization's effectiveness.

### *Future Challenges*

MRNY has its critics, as became apparent at a December 2011 press conference about the proposed New York State Dream Act, where one youth group—the New York State Youth Leadership Council (NYSYLC)--accused Make the Road of insider politics and deal cutting.<sup>197</sup> MRNY leaders and some other groups in the coalition countered that the issue in contention (whether to support the New York State bill's limited expansion of state-based financial aid to undocumented youth) had already been resolved in previous meetings. When asked about such tensions in coalition politics, MRNY staff and leaders defend themselves with the claim that they put considerably more into coalitions than they get out them.

MRNY officially withdrew from the New York Immigration Coalition, a move that led some coalition members to accuse MRNY of arrogance and of being unwilling to share power with others. Yet at the December Dream Act press conference mentioned above, the New York Immigration Coalition defended MRNY against the youth group's accusations. MRNY's success does open it to the danger of becoming arrogant and isolated, as is the case for any group that quickly pulls ahead of its peers. Indeed, a similar dynamic emerged when the rapid growth of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) outpaced many other unions in recent decades.

The special burden of the most successful organizations across all sectors is to maintain their own momentum while exercising a kind of solidarity that lifts the floor of success across the entire progressive social movement spectrum.

Aside from such external accusations of insider dealings—accusations that typically arrive when one organization gains considerably more power and therefore access to the power brokers than its counterparts— there was an important critique written about MRNY by former staffer Steve Jenkins.<sup>198</sup> Jenkins criticized MRNY as being an advocacy organization that is limited in its ability to build worker power essentially because they are *not* a union. Jenkins cited MRNY’s early worker rights campaigns as examples of the difficulty that face advocacy organizations, and suggested that unions had greater ability to build effective worker leverage against employers and were therefore a superior organizational form. However, Jenkins ignored the fact that many unions engage in an equally leverage-less form of activity often called “hot shop organizing,” which means organizing isolated workplaces in response to immediate worker discontent (rather than as part of a broader industry-wide or regional organizing strategy).

One of his key claims is that reliance on foundation funding - which is characteristic of MRNY as well as other worker centers and community-based organizations for which dues income is limited - creates dependency on philanthropic elites that set strategic and tactical limits on the types of activities the organization can undertake. Jenkins contrasts this to the case of labor unions, which are funded almost exclusively by members' dues and thus enjoy more autonomy. However, I argue he all but ignores the fact that unions’ strategic and tactical repertoires are also *highly constrained* by such mechanisms as the no-strike clauses in collective bargaining agreements, to which dues "check-off"—the source of almost all union revenue—is tightly linked (see the Washington nursing home contracts referenced in chapter three). In addition, unions have deep institutional ties to political and economic power-holders that limit their effectiveness. The SEIU, where Jenkins now works, frequently limits the options available to its members by signing organizing rights accords with employers which mandate that the

union must stand down on legislation, organizing, bargaining and other forms of activism in the name of targeted base expansion (chapter three). In addition, many union leaders restrain their own rank-and-file members and leaders from engaging in direct action, based on strategic decisions that involve cooperation with key employers. This parallels the constraints faced by groups dependent on foundation support that Jenkins highlights. Risk aversion and a lack of faith in the intelligence of ordinary people is the key issue here, for unions and other types of worker organizations alike.

Jenkins' argument that unions are the superior organizational form becomes even more problematic in the context of the contingent labor force and the informal economy, which includes a rapidly growing number of workers who are excluded from the laws governing collective bargaining and for whom developing alternatives to traditional unionism is urgent. As MRNY's Deborah Axt states, "We are trying to fill in the holes of what a collective bargaining agreement can get workers for the workers who don't have a collective bargaining agreement. For the many workers in the informal economy, we are trying to put as many pieces together as we can to offer protections as if they had a contract." Moreover, MRNY is doing something that many unions who are parties to collective agreements fail to do, namely keeping their membership base active and engaged and therefore *able to enforce the agreement*.

Hard-won union contracts are enormously important, but are only effective if the membership is sufficiently organized to enforce them through building robust governance mechanisms and running majority strikes. The rule making provisions in the Wage Theft Prevention Act described earlier are evidence that non-union groups can also fight for provisions which advantage stronger enforcement mechanisms. Like union contracts, such legislation demands enforcement by a base of actively engaged people, informed by an accurate power

structure analysis. Workers' leverage is not a function of the legal structure they do or don't incorporate under, but rather the extent of the active participation of the members.

The high participation nature of MRNY's "high touch" model separates them from most unions and from the many advocacy groups in which "membership" is nothing more than subscribership. MRNY's ability to engage its members in active civic participation is palpable at legislative hearings, on street corners and marches, in the 42 buses they sent to Washington D.C. to demand immigration reform, and at its many press conferences. In these and other settings, the words and actions of organic members of the community not only move foundations to write checks, but also inspire the mainstream media to write stories highlighting key issues and sometimes even win concessions from employers and the state.

Ten years after Jenkins published his critique, he clarified his views in an interview with me:

I was writing for a world where unions are either ignored or reviled and where the most basic market analysis that a first-year union researcher would undertake was ignored in favor of proclamations about the power of oppressed workers. And if I criticized MRNY, it was simply because I worked there and thought that was the most honest and effective way to make the point I was making. In actuality, they would have been at the bottom of the list of organizations to go after, as they understand these dynamics and struggle with them every day.<sup>199</sup>

It is true that MRNY has not had to confront the kind of opposition that *organizing* unions routinely face. However, such unions are themselves a rare phenomenon within the 21st century labor movement, which includes many "do-nothing" unions<sup>200</sup> that at best engage in defensive struggles. Relatively few unions are actively organizing the unorganized. Those that attempt to do so often face fierce resistance from employers, who routinely threaten workers with loss of their livelihood, divide them along racial and ethnic lines, and more. But such opposition is by no means limited to unions. Any organizing organization that is seriously contending for power faces formidable threats. Immigrants (including many MRNY members) regularly confront



livelihood-threatening measures, such as the threat of deportation. People of color routinely encounter police brutality, disenfranchisement and mass incarceration.

Underlying all of MRNY's issue work is a commitment to building a high participation organization. What MRNY calls their "high touch" model, with a dizzying array of weekly and bi-weekly meetings, creates meaningful points of entry and leadership development for their thousands of members. Committee meetings share commonalities: dinner is cooked by members at the office and served near the meetings' end, often by teams of members carrying army-sized pots of beans and rice; they are facilitated by the members; and debriefing and discussing recent actions are a common feature along with planning for upcoming actions. In addition, MRNY has conditioned the many services it offers, from legal help with bad landlords to bad bosses, ESL classes, citizenship classes and more, on members participating in at least two activities per month, creating a sustained participation level where activism constitute a kind of dues.

Building, sustaining, and expanding high participation is crucial to just about every strategy available to the left. From disruptive strategies like protests, civil disobedience, blockades, occupations, boycotts and strikes to electoral strategies, winning and enforcing strong union contracts, and even legal strategies, the most important factor in winning versus losing in the movement has long been people power. MRNY's diverse issue mix, including workplace and non-workplace issues, covers just about every issue bearing down on the lives of workers and the poor, enhancing recruitment.

Their high-touch model fast tracks the development of large numbers of rank and file leaders, which enables large turn-out at actions. Some critics complain that bargaining with the state is less exciting than bargaining with bosses, but under neoliberal capitalism, the so-called private sector boss is indistinguishable from the state. With unions representing 6% of the private

sector workforce and shrinking and a rapid expansion of the informal economy, fighting to create and improve existing regulations is every bit as relevant as fighting to expand and improve unions. And, the power to enforce laws or union contracts is the same: robust, democratic, high participation organizations.

## CHAPTER 6 CHICAGO TEACHERS UNION, BEFORE AND AFTER 2010

“We’d done our homework; we knew that the highest threshold of any bargaining unit that had ever voted one way or another on a collective bargaining agreement was 48.3 percent. The threshold we were arguing for was three-quarters. So in effect, they wouldn’t have the right to strike even though the right was maintained. And so in the end game, the CTU leadership took the deal misunderstanding and probably not knowing the statistics about their voting history.”<sup>201</sup>

Jonah Edelman, cofounder, Stand for Children, “On Their Plan to Cripple the Chicago Teachers Union”

“I thought to myself, they are fucked. When the legislature passed SB7 saying the teachers needed a 76 percent turnout for a strike authorization vote, I thought, they are so fucked.”

Keith Kelleher, president, SEIU Healthcare Illinois

“I remember waking up the first day of the strike and thinking what was all the deafening noise? It was incredible, and it was the sound of cars three blocks away honking and beeping in support of the teacher’s picket line at my neighborhood school. We could suddenly visualize that this was our city, our streets; Chicago had never felt this way in my lifetime.”

Amisha Patel, parent and executive director, the Grassroots Collaborative, Chicago

On September 10, 2012, Chicago’s teachers walked off the job in the largest strike of the new millennium. Against the backdrop of a well-funded effort at the national and local level to demonize teachers and their unions for the ills of public education, the union enjoyed unprecedented backing from parents, students, and the broader Chicago community.<sup>202</sup> Over nine days, teachers and their supporters in the community trounced one of the best-known big-city mayors in the country, former White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel. With the parents of more than 400,000 school-age kids scrambling to maintain their own jobs and schedules, a mayor appealing to the parents, in paid ads and press conferences, to turn against the teachers, the teachers sustained majority support throughout.<sup>203</sup> Not only that: two years later, two major polls found that the head of the Chicago Teachers Union was significantly more popular than the mayor.<sup>204</sup>

U.S. unions have all but abandoned the strike; the incidence of strikes and number of workers on strike are at an all-time low,<sup>205</sup> so what explains the popularity of this strike with teachers, parents, and the broader public? Does the success of the teachers' strike during a period considered hostile to all workers and brutal to teachers and public-service employees suggest that other U.S. workers could effectively use the strike weapon? What lessons can be drawn from the example of the Chicago Teachers Union?

As Francis Fox Piven and Richard Cloward have analyzed, the ability of workers to withdraw their cooperation from the interdependent relationship of power is, in part, contingent on workers understanding their contribution to the interdependent power equation. Teachers and educators (including para professionals, clinicians such as social workers, school nurses, social workers and more), do understand their contribution to the education and development of today's K-12 children. I argue that teachers and all educators are what I call are mission-driven workers. Surely, they labor for a material reward that enables themselves and their families to pay their bills, but they labor for something deeply purposeful, they are called to their labor. Enabling mission-driven workers to strike requires a very particular set of circumstances, of context, because mission driven workers understand that the withdrawal of their labor has an immediate, direct impact on those they are called to serve: for teachers, America's children, teens and young adults.

When Chicago's teachers and educators went on strike, the strike authorization vote was 23,780 yes-to-strike to 482 no-to-strike votes, out of a total universe of 26, 502 members of the union.<sup>206</sup> One of the most dominant themes in my interviews with rank and file teacher leaders was their disbelief, after twenty five years of never having been on strike, that their students, and their students' parents, would fervently lend them support. When Chicago's teachers struck, it

was a total disruption of the “production process,” not a merely symbolic action so common today. Sociologically speaking, the Chicago strike brought a major United States city to a grinding halt. The strike impacted over 400,000 households, snarled traffic for days, and brought an end to business-as-usual. It was a massive exercise of power.

The American Federation of Teachers was born in Chicago in 1916 when four local teachers’ unions in the region merged to form a national organization. Two decades later, in 1937, the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) was founded; it would remain the largest and most influential local union in the AFT until the 1960s, when the New York City local eclipsed Chicago’s in power and influence over national union policy. Not only was Chicago an early leader in teacher unionism, but a signature legacy of the CTU during their many decades of dominance in the national union was its defeat of the Communist Party in its own ranks and those of the national union. Smashing the Communist influence was a preoccupation of the CTU during the 1940s up until the early 1960s. Charges, hearings, expulsions, and purges were common.<sup>207</sup>

By the late 1960s, the Communists were out of the union and things were changing. The second Great Migration saw waves of African Americans moving to Chicago. Though the number of black teachers was expanding with the growth of Chicago’s black population, they faced systemic racism inside the Chicago public schools (CPS) through certification and testing requirements designed to keep blacks on the rolls as substitutes, not full-time teachers. The momentum of the Civil Rights movement and the rise of Black Power emboldened a wildcat strike by black teachers that would shake up the union in 1968. The result was two key constituencies coming together for the first time: African Americans substitutes aligned with

Irish-American teachers to form the United Progressive Caucus (UPC). The UPC controlled the union for decades, and in that era, Chicago's teachers went on strike nine times.<sup>208</sup>

The 2012 Chicago Teachers Union strike was the CTU's tenth since 1969, but its first in twenty-five years. During the administration of Harold Washington, the nation's first big-city black mayor, the union, which had helped to elect him, led four strikes, including its longest strike ever: twenty five days<sup>209</sup> in 1987, just six months into Washington's second term. As George Schmidt, the union's unofficial historian, tells it:

“Harold Washington was the most anti-CTU mayor in Chicago history, if we measure his years by the number of strikes we were forced to go on. We first elected Harold against the white supremacists and racist attacks, but the minute he became mayor, he began establishing policies and appointing people who would force us to strike in defense of our rights.”<sup>210</sup>

The teachers union had endorsed Washington, but as is common today, this endorsement was not a guarantee of friendly labor relations between educators and his administration.

### *From Militant to Milquetoast*

The twenty-five years between that marathon 1987 strike to the strike in 2012 represented a steady decline from a once mighty and militant union to a weak, concession-prone union-in-name-only. The CTU began surrendering its members' rights under a wave of anti-teacher's union legislation, much of it Chicago-specific rather than Illinois-wide, that presaged the national attack on teachers' unions, including the subsequent federal law called No Child Left Behind. Chicago's students and teachers became the guinea pigs for a relentless assault of efforts to “reform” both education and unions—few of which changed actual outcomes in student achievement or teachers' morale.<sup>211</sup>

In 1988, on the heels of the 1987 strike, the first of a series of legislative changes was approved: the Chicago School Reform Law. The law was sold as a pro-community decentralization effort, and it resulted in several key changes to long-standing policy: Local School Councils (LSCs), consisting of one principal, six parents, two teachers, and two community members, were created and empowered to hire school principals and make budgetary decisions; principals no longer received tenure; and principals were empowered to hire and fire teachers. Hiring principals and hiring and firing teachers and setting budgets had previously been centralized functions of the Board of Education. The law explicitly barred teachers from running for the council as either community or parent members, despite the vast number of teachers who were both. Part of what makes teachers so interesting in the production process is that often they are also parents and community members. The law, therefore, redefined them as workers devoid of their status in society; teachers as a kind of third party constraint to their students, stripped of parenthood, stripped of neighborhood, a new constraint in the name of community control.

The slow downhill slide of the union's relevance became an avalanche after the death in 1994 of Jackie Vaughn, an African-American teacher, UPC leader, and CTU president. Tom Reece, who assumed the presidency from what had been his number-two spot in the hierarchy, was strike *and* conflict adverse.<sup>212</sup> There was opposition to Reece's candidacy from a slate called the Caucus for a Democratic Union or CDC. Most members of the CDC had also run in 1988, but at the time calling themselves the Teachers Action Caucus Two (TAC2). This presence of internal oppositions is important because Robert Michels<sup>213</sup> suggests that a signal of oligarchy is the absence of internal parties, or, caucuses. Reece was busy increasing pay and expanding the payroll, but not doing much else. The opposing slate alleged vote rigging<sup>214</sup>, but entrenchment and low voter turnout helped the UPC incumbents retain their positions.

Although Chicago has never had an elected school board, the presence of the nominating committee interfered with Mayor Daley's ability to control decisionmaking at CPS. Additionally, the grassroots reform groups who had been proponents of the 1988 Chicago School Reform Act concluded that the law hadn't led to greater parental involvement, one of their goals. Finally, a fiscal crisis—which some in the union allege was completely manufactured—prompted a new effort in the state legislature to “fix” Chicago's schools, one more sweeping and more explicitly aimed at weakening the union.

In 1995, the Amendatory Act, aimed at amending the Chicago School Reform Act, had as its bull's-eye the teachers and their union.<sup>215</sup> In the name of the alleged fiscal crisis, and with Illinois having trifecta Republican control meaning the Governor and both legislative chambers belonged to the same conservative party, the law permitted privatization within the Chicago public school system for the first time, encouraging the private contracting out of many functions, from the cafeterias to janitorial services and more. This legislation laid the groundwork for a concept that was then brand-new: charter schools. (At the time, only two states had adopted charter schools, Minnesota (1991) and Texas (1995).<sup>216</sup> As part of the provisions of the Amendatory Act, teachers lost the right to collectively bargain over the length of their day, their schedules, and class size, conditions long considered central to their quality of work and home life.

Daley reasserted total mayoral control by abolishing the nominations commission and shrinking the Board of Education, which the earlier law had expanded, changing its name from the Board of Education to the Reform Board of Trustees. The education model had shifted decidedly to a business model, one that entirely eliminated pedagogical experience from the requirements for the CPS's top staff positions. A chief executive officer (CEO) replaced the



superintendent; similar title changes across the hierarchy changed the language of school governance to that of business administration. Finally, Mayor Daley took defensive action against a struggle that was unlikely to emerge in that era of the teachers' union: he had language added to the law that for the first time made strikes illegal. The actual wording banned strikes for eighteen months; that was the period of time the mayor thought he needed to implement the whole law, with its radical curtailment of teachers' rights.<sup>217</sup> Reece, the new union president, wasn't yet a well-known quantity—if he had been, Daley might have realized that the anti-strike provision was a waste of ink and political capital. Reece got busy claiming PATCO meant that workers should never strike again.<sup>218</sup> Daley had given Reece an opportunity to galvanize teachers for their right to strike but instead Reece took this as political cover for his own anti-strike orientation.

It would take several years under the new pro-privatization, pro-charter, anti-teacher and teachers' union CPS administration before a serious challenge to the UPC and Reece emerged inside the union. In the 1998 union elections, a caucus calling itself the ProActive Caucus of Teachers, or, PACT, ran a slate to take control of the CTU, winning the union's high-school seats but failing to win the union's officerships and other executive board positions. Still, a challenge to the UPC had begun. Meanwhile, the first Chicago public school CEO, Paul Vallas, made changes in the schools that were as swift as they were sweeping. He was taking advantage of every corner of legislative permissibility, and deal-cutting with CTU leader Reece along the way.

The teachers were getting contracts with reasonable raises and not much else. This was in part, if not entirely, because the price of their raises were their acquiescence to the creation of charter schools in 1996, the mass privatization of many other city services that had previously

provided non-teachers with decently paid union jobs, and in Vallas's assumption and implementation of monarchical powers—to disband local school councils, fire principals, and fire teachers en masse in schools he deemed to be “failing.” Soon, he changed the justifying term “failing school” to “educational crisis school.” By 1996, he'd changed that to “on probation,” adding to his powers the ability to fire the school's entire staff. In 1996, he put 109 schools on probation, creating the first reserve pool of teachers in the district. Though initially these displaced teachers were paid for up to twenty months if they remained in the pool, the move marked the beginning of a challenge to teachers' seniority. Then Vallas changed the name of his game again, to “intervention,” and the reserve pool grew as he claimed the power to selectively fire teachers inside a school and to cut the reserve-pool pay period from twenty months to ten. Remarkably, this entire era is considered an era of labor peace with Chicago's teachers union.

In 2001, the year of No Child Left Behind, two changes set the stage for yet more upheaval: Mayor Daley grew disgruntled with Vallas, whose assumption of so much power publicly challenged his own. Daley preferred “his” people to genuflect, and Vallas had to go. That year also, the PACT Caucus finally succeeded in wresting the union from the control of the UPC. According to George Schmidt, “Reece was double-dipping by this point, because he was serving as president of the Illinois Federation of Teachers and the president of the CTU. It was to the point of corruption.” In May of 2001, Debbie Lynch and the PACT slate swept all the top offices and executive board seats in CTU— the first time that UPC had been out of office since the late 1960s. The difference between the slate she ran in her failed bid in 1998 from her slate in 2001 was Howard Heath, a black teacher she picked as her number two. The addition of Heath, along with the mounting chaos being created by Vallas, assured PACT's union election success. One month later, Mayor Daley would nominate Arne Duncan, Vallas's chief of staff, as the new

CEO of the Chicago school system. Duncan was a Harvard grad who had been playing professional basketball in Australia for four years. His education experience was minimal: he'd been the director of a small nonprofit that was working on educational achievement issues.<sup>219</sup>

Arne Duncan's strategy with the union was to foster collaboration with Lynch, its new leader, courting her, calling her often, and immediately bringing her into his fold. By 2002, the Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago, the most powerful big-business group in the city, had released a report titled "Left Behind: Student Achievement in Chicago's Public Schools." The report identified "school unions" and "politics" as the *chief* factors in poor student performance in a school system where 85 percent of the students participated in the school lunch program<sup>220</sup> and 9.4 percent were white. The report made two key recommendations: merit pay for teachers and the creation of 100 new charter schools in Chicago. CTU president Lynch's comment to the press was "Collaboration is best done with, not outside of, the CPS."<sup>221</sup> As a reward for the new union leader's commitment to collaboration, Duncan cut a deal to bargain over the school day, followed by him almost immediately getting Lynch to agree to lengthen the school day. By 2003, CEO Duncan, like his predecessor, had renamed the program by which the authority of the local schools council was to be undermined: "renaissance schools."

"Renaissance" described a school that was closed and whose staff was fired, but that was then "reconstituted" in the same building, with selective firing or keeping of teachers—at Duncan's will. Lynch brought a contract before the teachers that fall that was initially voted down, overwhelmingly (more evidence that Michels' oligarchy did not exist in the CTU). When the members trounced her contract, she was sent back to the bargaining table to come back with more and in her second settlement, the teachers narrowly approved a marginally better deal.

By the spring of 2004, teachers were fed up with Lynch's collaborationist model and decided that the change they voted for had been ineffective. They handed the leadership back to a UPC slate, headed up this time by an African-American special-education teacher named Marilyn Stewart. George Schmidt said that Stewart talked a good line and said the things teachers wanted to hear—an apparent reprieve from the one-term PACT-Lynch experiment favoring collaboration over confrontation—but Stewart didn't *act* tough. Shortly after her election, in June of 2004, Duncan announced the Renaissance 2010 plan, whose centerpiece was lifted from the pages of the Commercial Club of Chicago's 2002 report and which called again for the creation of 100 new charter schools.<sup>222</sup> The plan would be paid for by the closure of twenty of the twenty-two schools on Chicago's south side. The union did not protest. In fact, Marilyn Stewart, its president, officially refused to even comment.<sup>223</sup>

### *Change Begins, From the Outside In*

Two long-time community organizations in Chicago weren't waiting for the teachers' union to sort out their internal affairs or opinions at the end of a decade of massive disruptions in the lives of Chicago's school kids, parents and teachers. The first to take action was the Chicago Coalition of the Homeless, who attempted to thwart the charter plan, or at least stall it, by filing suit in Circuit Court in September of 2004, generating headlines as they linked the effort to privatize schools to broader gentrification and the demolition of Chicago's public housing. Two months later, Parents United for Responsible Education (PURE) and the Kenwood-Oakwood Community Organization (KOCO), a direct-action organization founded in 1965 by religious and community activists, started a fight-back when they brought hundreds of parents and students to a Chicago Public School board meeting to protest the plan to close all but two of their twenty-

two neighborhood schools. KOCO's members, like the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, had already experienced displacement of one sort, as many of Chicago's public-housing apartments were being torn down. At that November 2004 meeting, after being completely ignored by the CPS board, the KOCO's chair, Jitu Brown, announced loudly to the packed room and to the board, "Oh, now it's on! We were trying to be civil, but now it's going to be civil disobedience!"<sup>224</sup> The resistance campaign led by Chicago's community based organizations succeeded in getting the plan moderated, shrinking the initial closings from twenty to twelve, but it was clear more battles were coming. By 2006 Jitu Brown, already seen as a leader in the struggle against the school closings, went from chairing the board of KOCO to being a full-time, paid education organizer.

Ten schools on Chicago's South Side had been saved, but by the 2005-2006 school year, more than a dozen had been closed, along with another two dozen throughout the city. Each closing provoked site-based protests, but there was no effective citywide challenge. Chicago's long history of Alinskysim had created strong neighborhood-based organizations, but these had a political and policy vision which stopped at their tightly drawn and highly turfed-out neighborhood boundaries.<sup>225</sup> The organization that was citywide and crossed all neighborhoods, the teachers' union, was barely audible. But among the ranks of the teachers being impacted by school closings, a new generation of activists was individually aligning with various neighborhood groups across the city. When Englewood High School and De La Cruz Middle school were threatened with closure, and Senn High School with a complete revision of its mission, individual actors among the teachers—Jackson Potter at Englewood and his friend Al Ramirez, Norine Gutenkanst at nearby Whittier, and Kristine Mayle at De La Cruz, and eventually Jesse Sharkey at Senn, who was mobilizing a Save Our Senn (charter threat) effort—

began to coalesce into a broader teacher's movement. Potter was on the board of directors of another of Chicago's important neighborhood groups, the Pilsen Alliance, and Gutenkanst was an active member. The Pilsen Alliance was based in and identified with the Mexican neighborhood, just as KOCO had a black base and leadership. Ramirez and Potter devoted 2007 to making a handheld amateur video about the school closings, going around the city interviewing teachers, parents, and kids. By late 2007, these teachers had formed a citywide study group on the closings, inviting other teachers to join through informal activist networks.<sup>226</sup>

### *The Caucus of Rank-and-File Educators (CORE) Forms*

Out of the 2007 study group, whose first collective read was Naomi Klein's *The Shock Doctrine*<sup>227</sup>, two more important groups were developed: the Caucus of Rank-and-File Educators (CORE), inside of the Chicago Teachers Union, and soon after that the Grassroots Education Movement (GEM), a CORE-inspired coalition created with community-based organizations to fight school closings, gentrification, and racism.<sup>228</sup> *The Shock Doctrine* had just been published, and Klein was shaping an analysis about mass school closures, capitalism, and racism.

According to Kristine Mayle, a middle and elementary school special education teacher and currently the union's elected financial secretary, "We were going to neighborhood groups and saying, Look, we are talking about little human beings, about kids; we are teachers and you are our natural allies; we can't do this alone."<sup>229</sup> With each school closing, the ranks of teachers frustrated and angered were growing. By the time CORE was formalized in early 2008, many more were actively participating in the study groups, including Jesse Sharkey and Karen Lewis.

At this point, rather than fighting school closings or challenging the CPS, Marilyn Stewart, the union president, was focused on a single goal: taking total control of the union.

Stewart had been reelected in the spring of 2007 partly because of her tough talk in public, but mainly because of the absence of any coherent challenge. The PACT, the one caucus that had defeated the UPC in 2001, was engaging with Stewart in internal union politics. Petty cronyism and self-absorption ruled the day. Stewart had already brought her vice president up on internal charges and removed him from office, and now she was bent on removing other potential future challengers to her seemingly entrenched reign.

According to Jackson Potter, CORE's initial mission was "to do what the union should have been doing all along, acting like a union in the face of massive upheaval."<sup>230</sup> The CORE study group was now being augmented by other activities. Since Potter's school had been converted to a charter (half became a charter and half a charter-like 'Team' school), and with the resources of the ten months of paid 'reserve' time provided by CPS, he decided to study history at the graduate level.<sup>231</sup> He began to read about the recent actions of the British Columbia Teacher's Federation (BCTF), including an illegal strike in 2005 widely considered to have been won primarily because the teachers had spent several years developing mass support among community-based groups before they walked off the job in defiance of a recently passed law that defined them as "essential employees," which in Canada eliminated their legal right to strike. The source of the stories was Substance News, the long-time internal opposition newspaper, another challenge to Michels' iron law of oligarchy. The internal opposition paper had long publicized internal opposition as well as militant teacher activism from around the world. Potter raised the idea to CORE that they should pool their money and get a plane ticket to bring the head of the British Columbia Teachers Federation to come to Chicago for a day to educate CORE members about how the Canadian union had won their strike, beat back court injunctions, and more throughout the 2005–2006 school year.<sup>232</sup>

The CTU had officially disbanded their committee on school closings in 2007, clearing the path for CORE's ascent as the place to go for those concerned about Arne Duncan's plans. The teachers, many of whom had been engaged with local neighborhood groups in site-based fight-backs prior to this, saw the simultaneous formation of GEM as an extension of their foundational understanding of "what a union should be doing." According to Mayle, "We shared an underpinning, a common analysis about class, race and public education, and that common analysis lets us work it out when things get tricky." GEM and CORE grew and developed simultaneously while the official union bureaucracy was unraveling. There was no initial plan to contest for union office, but rather to see the new caucus as one that could make the existing union leadership do what it was, in these activists' minds, "supposed to do." In the fall of 2009, CORE teacher activists and GEM nonteacher activists attended every single school board meeting, each time amassing more recruits to their cause and challenging the school board. Meanwhile, the union bureaucrats were busy bringing each other up on charges.

GEM decided to organize a public community forum on school closings, to be held in the end of 2009, when the CPS planned to release the school closings list. CORE activists would use the forum to deepen their fight against school closings and to strengthen and expand their ties with the broader Chicago community, and also to recruit and expand their base among the teachers. Because Chicago's community groups had for so long lived in the legacy of Saul Alinsky and provincial neighborhood isms, GEM and CORE taking this effort citywide did signal a change in the Chicago norm. Their momentum was building nicely, but an external factor wasn't cooperating—Chicago's weather. On the day of the forum, a blizzard struck. There was a debate about whether or not to cancel the event, but its organizers decided to move forward. More than 500 people came out despite the blizzard. Several weeks later, the Chicago



School Board trimmed back the planned closure list. Expectations were suddenly raised that teacher-and-community coalition could beat city hall.

That spring, CORE held a convention and began to solidify its structure. They set affordable dues: \$35 per person per year. They ratified a mission statement. And they continued attending CPS school board meetings. They began discussing the potential for a discrimination charge against the CPS administration based on the fact that most of the teachers being impacted by the closures were black. The number of African-American teachers was declining rapidly as the turnaround schools hired Teach for America recruits and younger teachers, changing the demographics of Chicago's teaching force, bringing down the pay scale, and, perhaps most importantly, rupturing the tradition of teachers who lived in the same neighborhoods in which they taught. By June, CORE had decided to file a formal complaint at the Equal Employment Education Commission (EEOC). Though this challenge would later be dismissed, the organizing and media around the EEOC complaint increased CORE's base among black teachers and helped CORE build a relationship with the union's black caucus. The EEOC complaint and several other school and teaching profession-specific fights that CORE led during the summer of 2009 were part of an ever-expanding reach by CORE into all aspects of the union, pushing beyond the school-closings battles.

In October of 2009 a union-wide election was held for the union's pension board trustee seats. Potter and a few others decided to campaign as a test of CORE's ability to mobilize enough of a citywide school-based teacher vote to win an internal union election. The CPS CEO, previously the head of the Chicago Transit Authority, never previously considered a stepping stone to heading the schools, had already taken a wrecking ball to the Chicago transit workers' pension, so having smart and fighting teacher leadership on the pension board mattered in and of

itself and could be used as a test of CORE's mobilization capacity. When the CORE candidates narrowly won both trustee seats in a tight race, caucus members began to have a very different discussion about how to challenge the Arne Duncan Renaissance 2010 plan: this time, they would challenge their inept union leaders for top offices.

### *The Slate of Candidates Emerges*

In the August of 2009, CORE held a nominations convention, so that caucus members could decide who amongst them would run for the union's higher offices. According to George Schmidt, there was internal competition for each position, and members were allowed to listen to candidate speeches and ask questions of the potential candidates: "My only question that day in 2009 was to ask how are you going to prepare the union for the strike we are going to have to have in 2012 to get a contract?" CORE members chose their slate: Karen Lewis for president, Jackson Potter for vice president, Michael Brunson for recording secretary, and Kristine Mayle for financial secretary. In response to a credentials challenge from the old guard of the union, Potter had to withdraw: the union's constitution states that no member can run for elected office who has not been a continuous dues-paying members in the three prior years; Potter had a lapse in his dues from the year he'd taken off after his school had been closed. Though some in the union and active in the caucus, like Schmidt, thought Potter should challenge the ruling, Potter decided not to give the old guard any potential negative talking points about the CORE slate in general. And although he was off the slate officially, his role as a key strategist and chief influence in the union never faltered.

The architects of the slate paid close attention to developing a team that would represent the broad diversity of the union, including in grade level and type of teacher; race and ethnicity;

age and experience; untenured and long-tenured status. The top of the ticket, Karen Lewis, was a woman whose black father and white Jewish mother had both been public school teachers in Chicago (as is her husband). Lewis herself had been the only black woman in her 1974 graduating class at Dartmouth. She had taught chemistry in Chicago high schools for twenty-two years.<sup>233</sup> She had been a member of the union's black caucus prior to getting involved with CORE, but she had no deep experience with the union. With the exception of Chicago's mayor, Rahm Emanuel, it's hard to find anyone in Chicago who doesn't have great things to say about Lewis. Schmidt, CTU's informal historian and a long-time leader who himself once ran for president, in an unsuccessful bid to rid the union of the UPC, describes the Lewis appeal:

“Karen is half Jewish and half Black. She speaks better Yiddish than Rahm. She's a Nationally Board Certified Teacher. She's so intense and so thorough; the level of her intelligence is incredibly high. When Jean Claude Brizard became the CEO of the CPS, there was this policy forum organized by the *Chicago Tribune*, with one of those backdrop banners ‘Chicago Issues Week.’ I was taking pictures for the magazine, and Brizard, who speaks with a Haitian accent, comes on stage and Karen rattles off some long greeting in French to him, and he just stares at her, turns out she knows more French than him. It's just Karen stuff, so complex and so intelligent.”<sup>234</sup>

To become a National Board Certified Teacher, the highest possible certification available in K-12, teachers subject themselves to a rigorous process of exams over several years with an intense focus on best practice and pedagogy. Lewis is the only teacher union leader anywhere in the US with this distinction.<sup>235</sup>

Jesse Sharkey, the Vice Presidential candidate, like Lewis an early member of CORE, was also raised by a teacher, his single mother. And like Lewis, Sharkey was a top

student and graduated from an Ivy League school, Brown University. Unlike Lewis, Sharkey is white and grew up in one of the whitest regions of the U.S., rural Maine, where his mother was a back-to-the-lander. Sharkey was in high school in Maine during one of the most contentious strikes in the latter half of the last century, at the Jay Maine Paper Mill. The strike made a big impression on him; he later wrote his undergraduate thesis on it. He was a student activist in college and upon graduation went to work as a union organizer. His first move was to attend the AFL-CIO's Organizing Institute (OI), a program that taught the fundamentals of how to win a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) election. Successful graduates of this three-day program are placed with a union to apprentice their skills, and Sharkey was placed with the United Steelworkers of America. He worked as a young organizer on the ALCOA campaign, one of the larger union victories of that era. The person who led his apprenticeship was Bob Callahan, who would go on to become the national organizing director at SEIU under Andy Stern.

Sharkey tired of the hot-shop model at the Steelworkers, which followed easy but often pyrrhic wins rather than strategic and power building organizing. In 1993 he quit and moved back to Providence, where he went to work for the local union 1199 New England, where he was mentored by a long-respected organizer named Stan Israel. Eventually, he returned to school to get his teaching degree, then moved to Chicago when his fiancée was offered a job at *In These Times*, a progressive magazine. He began teaching high school social studies in the fall of 1998. In March of that year he was struck by a massive brain hemorrhage and was hospitalized in critical condition. Sharkey says that this experience changed his view of life and of the things that matter. After returning to work, he became a union delegate, but he was not particularly active until 2005, when his high school, Senn, was targeted to become a charter school.<sup>236</sup>

Jackson Potter's parents are activists. When Potter was growing up, they were considered left-wing and identified themselves as Reds. His father is a labor lawyer, his step-father worked with the Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), and his mother is a lawyer who has long worked on progressive causes.<sup>237</sup> Their son attended K-12 in the Chicago public schools and while in high school helped lead a school walkout for more equitable school funding. He attended the University of Illinois at Urbana, and then transferred to the University of Illinois in Chicago; he did his graduate program at the University of Chicago. He was a student activist all through college, working with Students Against Sweatshops and on anti-Iraq war efforts, campaigning against the UI mascot ( an Indian chief), and working for increased minority student recruitment. When he returned to the Chicago area to finish his university years, he got involved in antigentrification campaigns around campus, working with the Pilsen Alliance, the neighborhood group that later allied with the teachers against school closings. Potter became a history teacher and, like Sharkey, a union delegate turned serious union activist when his school, Englewood High, was threatened with a closure—a campaign Arne Duncan won, leaving Potter and many others out of a job. Potter and a colleague, Al Ramirez, are widely credited with being the cofounders of CORE, and Potter is often referred to as the lead strategist. Madeleine Talbot, a long-time and successful community organizer in Chicago, refers to him often as “brilliant”—a word she uses sparingly.<sup>238</sup>

Michael Brunson and Kristine Mayle had much less union contact or experience before they were elected to top union office. Brunson, who is black, was an elementary school teacher on Chicago's South Side and was better known for his activism on and with the Local Schools Councils (LSCs). His first involvement, like Mayle's, was with CORE in 2008. Though he had been teaching for many years, his education activism had been with community groups, not with

his teachers' union. Brunson met the CORE activists because the community organization he was working with at the time began getting involved in GEM. Mayle is white and is the youngest of the Lewis team. She had barely begun her teaching career when her school, De La Cruz, was targeted for closure. She hadn't had long experience suffering under a bad union, and she emerged as a top leader in CORE, known for her tenacity, smarts and energy and a commitment to build the kind of union that could stop school closures.

These CORE candidates had ten months to campaign before the every-three-years election in May of 2010. CORE's strategy was to continue what they had been doing, contesting the Renaissance 2010 plan, working through GEM with the community, and building a more systematic approach to developing their potential teacher voting base. With 600 schools, a universe of almost 30,000 voters, and few financial resources, they went to work in the biggest schools, those that would have the most votes in the election. In January of 2010, CORE, working with GEM, hosted their second wintertime forum on school closings, with 400 in attendance. As the May election neared, the union's old guard was both fracturing into sub-candidate slates, thus weakening their hand, and was throwing one obstacle after another in the way of the competition—including asking the administration to ban teachers from campaigning in any way in or near Chicago's schools. A different slate, the PACT slate, took the CTU leaders to court to get them to stop interfering in the election, but it was CORE who benefited the most from PACT's legal victories, as CORE had the most extensive grassroots operation by the spring of 2010. In part because of all the shenanigans taking place, all of the caucuses running against each other and against the current office holders, the UPC, met before the election and agreed that if the UPC did not win on the first round—which would require 51 percent or more of the vote—all other slates would line up behind the number-two slate in an effort to remove the UPC

from office. And on May 21, that is exactly what happened. With nearly 18,000—more than half of Chicago’s teachers—turning out to vote, the UPC got 32 percent of the vote to CORE’s 31 percent, and the other three competing slates dropped their campaigns and unified behind CORE.<sup>239</sup>

Reflective of the smart strategy and careful planning CORE had displayed since its founding, they had planned a Save Our Schools Rally for May 25, between the first election and the planned runoff date. CORE members moved this rally through the union’s House of Delegates, to make it officially a CTU rally, and this was a master stroke: the literature for the Save Our Schools Rally was covered with CORE’s logo, giving the slate additional visibility beyond their own campaign literature leading up to both elections; the universe of activists who would be motivated to recruit attendees for the Save Our Schools Rally would be larger than the typical universe of people involved in an internal union election; the rally cemented the image of CORE as the people who were already fighting for real change in the education system, not just electoral power; and, in case of a runoff, the rally would give them a huge visibility and credibility boost just days before teachers returned to the polls. The SOS event was the biggest rally in Chicago in many years, with more than 5,000 marchers. According to Madeline Talbot, “Some teachers organized this rally to fight school closures, in May of 2010, and I couldn’t get to it, and then I started hearing from people that it was the best fucking rally they had ever been to, and that was CORE.”

On May 31, CORE posted a 2 ½ -minute video clip of their rally, encouraging all of their supporters to take to social media to share it. In the clip, Lewis and Sharkey are seeing marching among the thousands who took to downtown Chicago. At the end, text comes up reminding

teachers to vote in the runoff on June 11.<sup>240</sup> On June 11, the online version of *Substance*, the Chicago Teacher Union's alternative weekly newspaper since the late 1960s posted the results:

“CORE not only won the top four offices in the union, but the other nine citywide offices, and all of the vice presidencies for high schools (six) and elementary schools (17). By the time the final vote counts were announced in the early hours of June 12, it was clear that CORE had completely defeated the United Progressive Caucus (UPC) and the six-year CTU president Marilyn Stewart.”

In her acceptance speech, Karen Lewis framed the crisis in a way no union president had since the 1988 Chicago School Reform Act, the act which began the attack on the schools:

“Corporate America sees K-12 public education as 380 billion dollars that, up until the last 10 or 15 years, they didn't have a sizeable piece of. This so-called school reform is not an education plan. It's a business plan...15 years ago, this city purposely began starving our lowest-income neighborhood schools of greatly needed resources and personnel. Class sizes rose, and schools were closed. Then, standardized tests, which in this town alone is a \$60 million business, measured that slow death by starvation. These tests labeled our students, families, and educators failures, because standardized tests reveal more about a student's zip code than a student's academic growth.”<sup>241</sup>

Lewis was reclaiming the identity of teacher as not just worker, but teacher, parent, community member, citizen activist.

### *From Milquetoast to Militant*

The *Chicago Sun Times* telegraphed the changed union with this headline: “New CTU President is a Fierce Foe of Daley's Agenda.” On June 15, just four days after the reform slate swept into office, the Chicago School Board held an emergency meeting and voted unanimously



to give the CPS CEO unilateral authority to lay off teachers and increase class size. This move the union interpreted as the first in a long series of welcoming gestures that would continue all summer. Within two days of the board's meeting, racing the clock against summer vacation, the new leaders sent out an urgent alert that read, in part, "The Board will work overtime this summer to ensure their demands are met. They assume that teachers, PSRPs, parents, and students will be "on vacation." The last thing the board wants us to do is to continue organizing." Attached was a sample Excel spread sheet and a plea that members gather the name, email, and phone numbers of not only every teacher but also *every parent*, with instructions to send the completed spreadsheet to the new leadership.<sup>242</sup> The newly elected slate hadn't yet taken the reigns of office—that wouldn't happen officially until July 1, per the union constitution<sup>243</sup>—but they were immediately shifting the vision and work of the union by including parents as a core constituency.

The union did not have an organizing department, but it did have a lot of staff, as well as plenty of field representatives. One of the first acts of the new officers was to reduce their own salaries considerably, aligning them with teachers' salaries; they also eliminated the excessive personal spending accounts of the previous officers. These savings alone freed up enough money for them to begin to cobble together their union's first organizing department. But unlike such departments in most unions, this one was created only for the purpose of internal organizing, to work with the existing members and help rebuild the union. The new leaders were keenly aware that they had less than two years before the union's current contract expired, and less time—eighteen months—before they would be sitting at the negotiations table; unions typically begin contract negotiations many months before a contract expires. They had inherited a vast organization—albeit one untested and unassessed—of teachers from each school. Hundreds of

these were elected delegates, the shop stewards of teachers' unions, that function as problem solvers at the shop floor (or individual school) level. But because the CTU had been mostly consumed by internal warfare for years, no one really understood the quality of the delegates the CORE leaders were inheriting.

Norine Gutekanst left teaching and took the role of organizing coordinator, heading up the new department. Though she had been a key CORE activist, unlike Sharkey she had no formal training as a union organizer. She quickly hired Matthew Luskin, who had been the organizing director from 2003 to 2010 at SEIU's public-sector Illinois (and later mega) local for home-care and child-care workers. Known for most of those years as Local 880, this union was later renamed HealthCare Illinois and then expanded to represent the same classes of workers in Indiana, Missouri and Kansas. The local, according to its president, Keith Kelleher, was "always considered one of those ACORN locals"—a reference to the local unions inspired or formed by Wade Rathke. Kelleher describes their model as a "community organizing model, very grassroots based, with a lot of door knocking, workers being responsible for their drive and not just in name only, but with heavy preparation and training."<sup>244</sup> Because of Luskin's experience, he and Gutekanst functioned more like co-coordinators in the design of the new department.

They saw their chief work as focusing on the delegates: winning them over to the new strategy would be key to their union's immediate future. They recast the delegates from "information conduits" to school leaders—leaders who would need to very quickly begin organizing and mobilizing in the schools. According to Luskin, "Our model wasn't about the staff picking leaders, it was about winning the debate about our future with the existing leaders in each school; we had to win the debate about our new strategy among the rank and file." The fight was being positioned as an all-out high stakes, high risk battle royal.

Organizers went from school to school attending as many school meetings as they could and blowing the debate about strategy wide open. Luskin recalls that they'd start by saying, "If any of you think the next contract is about a percentage-point raise, tell us, because we think we know it's about the future of public education as we know it: that's what's on the table."<sup>245</sup> If the labor movement's instinct has been to reduce demands in order to sound reasonable, the new CTU took the opposite approach: they led every meeting with school-based discussions of billionaires, banks, and racism. Mass political education of the existing base was their primary focus. Along with all of CTU's leaders, they were creating a sense of urgency, a burning platform, and framing the choice ahead in very clear and unambiguous language.

Because CORE had won a commanding victory, every single officer was a CORE slate member, including the many lesser ones—area vice presidents, vice presidents for every type of school and grade level, etc. All of these newly elected officers were on the same program, unified in their vision, making the work of "winning over the delegates to the new strategy" a union-wide effort at every level. CTU delegates meet on the second Wednesday of every month to make union policy. Under the previous leadership, these meetings had low attendance, so low that they wouldn't always make quorum. And when they did, often the old UPC leaders would talk for so long at the microphones during the "officer reports" at the meeting's beginning, that delegates would leave in frustration, which was just what the leaders wanted them to do. Verbosity was a useful tool to keep inconvenient delegates—such as CORE members—from raising issues from the floor. Then came CORE's clean sweep election, and, by the time the new school year began in September of 2010, the meetings were packed, with 800 teacher delegates walking in hoping to better understand their new union and begin to implement an entirely new program. Those monthly meetings came to resemble an entire union convention.

Union vice president Jesse Sharkey explains that CORE had an activist rather than a shop-floor model. It was consistent with the model Luskin brought from his SEIU years, but formed that way for different reasons and with different origins. Some of CORE's members had been elected as delegates in their schools, but most were just free radicals. "I would defend that model because during that time there were a lot of political defeats," Sharkey says. "We needed to create a space that was inspiring, where we could co-think and where we could get excited together, so at the end of a meeting it wasn't just telling people to go back to your buildings and work with your coworkers. People were learning politics, people were getting excited; we did a lot of things in early 2010, in 2011, and leading up to 2012 to get people excited about taking back Chicago."<sup>246</sup> During the first year, eight of the long-serving field representatives left, mostly through resignations and retirements. These changes gave the new leadership yet more resources for creating new departments in the union and re-creating old ones, such as communications and politics.

That September, the teacher's union was experiencing revolutionary changes on the inside, throwing off the shackles of the UPC, which had held union office in a one-party rule for thirty-six of the previous forty-two years. Outside the union, the entire city was hit with the equivalent of a massive earthquake when Mayor Daley announced he would not seek an eighth term.<sup>247</sup> Mayors named Daley had held the office for forty-two out of the past fifty-five years. As Amisha Patel, executive director of the Grassroots Collaborative in Chicago, recalls it:

"When Daley announced he wasn't running, we had a window where everyone began excitedly discussing what we could do in this new moment in our city. We had a mayoral forum called New Chicago 2011, and 2,600 people showed up and the energy

was rocking. Even though Rahm’s announcement a few weeks later crushed that moment, we had cracked open the idea that Chicago could be different.”<sup>248</sup>

Getting 2,600 people from across the city to attend a mayoral forum is even more impressive when you consider that not only had the mayor’s office been functionally a family-run business for generations, but also that the long history of Chicago’s community organizing sector was steeped in the traditions of Saul Alinsky. No city has been more impacted by Alinskyism than Chicago, and the resulting culture for more than a half-century was one of racially segregated neighborhood-based organizations existing inside tightly drawn neighborhood boundaries, all political imagination choked by the idea that one’s own little ward was the universe.

“The Daley legacy was so deep because people thought Chicago could never change, so having even a little space of time where there was uncertainty allowed groups to cross old lines and sit down in one big room and imagine a different kind of Chicago,” Patel says. Patel, a Chicago native, left the city to attend Stanford University on a full scholarship. Her parents were both born in India, and she represents another aspect of the changing Chicago. After becoming a student activist and getting involved in progressive issues in the San Francisco Bay Area, she was settling into the idea of never enduring a cold Midwestern winter again. Then one day, while she sat enjoying the warm California sun and contemplating various career options with progressive groups around the Bay, she had an epiphany, one that felt to her the way people have described feeling the call to religious duty. “I thought, Wait a minute, why not Chicago? Why not go home where there’s so much work to be done? The Bay Area is full of progressive activists.” So Patel did go home and went to work for SEIU’s government workers’ union in Chicago—a different local union than the one Luskin worked for, although the two met many

times. At SEIU, Patel was constantly trying to do coalition building with Chicago's communities in an effort to develop fairly traditional union-community labor alliances. In 2006, along with others, including ACORN and a few unions besides the major player, SEIU, she took part in the successful campaign to pass Chicago's 2006 Big Box ordinance, which forced warehouses like Walmart's to substantially increase base pay to \$9.25 an hour—an early forerunner of later minimum wage movements. In 2007, she was ready to do something focused more on shifting Chicago's community-organizing sector from turf-based to citywide thinking. By 2010, when the teachers' union and city hall were opening up in new ways, her Grassroots Collaborative was perfectly situated to become a key partner in that change.<sup>249</sup>

Throughout the fall of 2010, the CTU's new leadership was engaged in endless skirmishes with the Chicago public schools CEO, including a successful campaign to reverse most of the 1,700 layoffs the CEO had implemented in direct violation of the union contract. Using the powers vested in him by the emergency meeting held just after CORE swept into power at the teachers' union, he had ignored contractually negotiated seniority, and the union won in court. There were plenty of hints that the stakes in the next contract were going to be dialed to "highest risk." And when Rahm Emanuel resigned from his post at the White House in mid-October, returned to Chicago and quickly mobilized the signatures he would need to file by November for the February 2011 mayoral election, hints of high risk turned to something more closely resembling a visit from the Angel of Death. For two years, Emanuel had been deeply involved with a fellow Chicagoan, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, the original architect of Chicago Public Schools Renaissance 2010, the program that had in many ways provoked the birth of CORE. Within weeks, Emanuel's campaign team developed an ad in which the candidate took aim at Chicago's teachers, chiding them for not working enough hours in the day

and promising that as mayor, he would make it a top priority to lengthen Chicago's school day. Unknown to anyone at the time, the anti-teacher Emanuel TV ad had been scripted in part by the Stand for Children campaign. Jonah Edelman, the group's founder, was later busted snarkily boasting in a video clip at the 2011 annual elite one percent gathering called the Summer Aspen Institute that Stand for Children had "duped the Chicago teachers into accepting a deal that would mean they could never go on strike."<sup>250</sup>

The union was firing on more cylinders than a Porsche, trying to shift the CTU's 18-wheeler bureaucratic administration, which had long since stopped functioning in any meaningful way. Behind the scenes, as they tried to rebuild themselves while putting out fires like a fall 2010 legislative assault on public pensions—including those of teachers—Emanuel was home campaigning and putting a bull's-eye on the CTU with what Edelman called "the talking points we wrote" which Emanuel "repeated about 1,000 times." Stand for Children had also begun their stealth strategy of working to buy off the Democratic state legislative leadership, aiming to introduce a bill that would severely curtail the teachers' union by the time Emanuel took office and before the teachers' current contract expired. When Emanuel won on the first ballot in February 2011, averting a runoff, it was as if the fiercely anti-union Stand for Children had won the office, in a city with total mayoral control of the school board.

*Emanuel Ups the Ante, Shifts the Power Equation,  
and Doubles Down the Challenge*

Political parties and people who sweep into office with something of a mandate hit the ground running: they begin asserting their agenda during the outgoing administration's lame duck period. CORE did it at the teachers union after trouncing the entrenched old guard. And

Emanuel did it after winning the mayor's seat in a one-round fight. As Edelman tells the story, in his workshop on how to bust teachers' unions even in Democratically controlled states: "So in this intervening time, Rahm Emanuel is elected mayor, he won on the first ballot, and he strongly supports our proposal...that was another shoe that dropped on the Chicago Teachers Union because they didn't support him."<sup>251</sup> The Stand for Children legislative proposal would again strip teachers of the right to collectively bargain over schedules—an item that had been negotiable historically, was stripped away by the 1995 Amendatory Act, and then in 2001 was reinstated as a negotiable item, but under a compliant union that quickly negotiated a deal to lengthen the teaching day. Now it was taken off the table again, because a less compliant teachers' union was in power. But the Stand for Children legislation did far more than that: it included a frontal assault on tenure that would empower principals to hire and fire teachers and also mandated that at least one-quarter of the decision to fire be based on student test scores. Each of these measures took aim at unions. And the final provision of the proposed legislation was an attempt to bar teachers from striking. Stand for Children started the bargaining with an outright ban, but counted on "compromising" with a deal that would allow a strike, depending on what they believed would be an impossible criterion: 75 percent of all teachers would have to show up at the polls for a strike authorization vote to be valid.

Edelman's description of this deal making is illuminating, revealing not only that Emanuel was using all his muscle behind the scenes, but also that the two statewide federations of teachers were working against the new Chicago leadership. The Illinois Federation of Teachers (IFT) and the Illinois Education Association (IEA) dominated suburban and rural Illinois, which was largely white; their leadership, who found strikes an unappealing concept at best, were selling out the kids of Chicago, who were mostly black, and the union that ultimately



protected those kids' interest. Karen Lewis was known for her intellect—she had taught chemistry and was a master of pedagogy—but as head of the CTU she quickly made her first serious gaffe. Set down in a climate of backroom deal making, counseled by the statewide teachers' lobbyists, Lewis was told to take the deal. The biggest error she made, as she fully admitted later, was going into these meetings alone, without having sufficiently consulted CTU or CORE. With all the other teachers' unions signing on, she went along. The CORE caucus essentially censured Lewis for this breach, publicly and privately, challenging her authority and forcing her to announce that she made a mistake and that there was no way the Chicago Teachers Union supported the deal, but the damage was done. The legislation, called SB7, passed unanimously just before Emanuel's swearing-in ceremony, measurably shifting the power equation of the coming fight.

This was CORE's first exercise in holding union leadership accountable, and it was a breakthrough of sorts. Most caucuses that engage in electoral work either disband until the next election cycle or toe the party line once their party is in power. But CORE didn't start out as an electoral caucus; it was formed by progressive teachers to pressure the CTU to "act like a real union." and they felt that their new leader had just violated this principle in a way that was likely to have dire consequences for the rank and file. It was an important lesson: for Lewis, for the executive officers, for CORE, and for CTU members. Lewis's willingness to publicly apologize to those members was something of a novelty fairly unusual among union leaders at her level. And CORE's powerful message that she should never make such an error again helped the caucus reestablish itself as a voice independent of the leadership, including the leadership that had emerged from CORE itself. Meanwhile CORE and Lewis were able to quickly mend their

relationship and return to the business at hand, staying focused on building their power against the threat from Emanuel, which now loomed larger than ever.

Emanuel wasted no time using his victory. By June of 2011, he had appointed an all-new Chicago school board and a new CEO of schools. The board's first action was to vote to repeal that year's 4 percent raise, the final annual raise stipulated by the contract that had been agreed to before CORE took the CTU leadership— often referred to as the Olympics contract, because Mayor Daley gave it to the teachers when Chicago was under a public microscope in its bid to host the summer Olympics. (Chicago wouldn't be selected, but before that happened, even under its old leadership the CTU, like several Chicago unions that seized the moment, got its deal done).<sup>252</sup>

Now, for any of the teachers who doubted that the new mayor was coming for them, the unilateral repeal of the scheduled raise made their future crystal clear. Emanuel's arrogance erased almost all memory of the setback CTU president Lewis suffered in the SB7 negotiations, and though nobody in the new leadership wanted to see the teachers lose their raise, the repeal unified Chicago's teachers behind them in a way they could never have dreamed. The anger and the unity became palpable inside and outside of the union. Emanuel looked like a bully right out of the starting gate. And his behavior would only get more aggressive.

In early September, he made good on his campaign ad by launching his promised push for the longer school day, basing his argument to the public on the hours Chicago's teachers spent with kids in the classroom, without mentioning the hours they worked outside it, preparing lessons, grading homework, attending meetings, and performing other tasks that benefited their students. He then summoned Lewis to his office to discuss extending the school day. It was her first closed-door meeting with the Mayor.

Lewis may have erred in the SB7 negotiations, but what she did after this meeting was considered a stroke of genius. When she left Emanuel's office, the press asked what happened. Lewis did what she has come to be known for doing: telling them exactly what they asked to know. Long-time ACORN leader Madeline Talbot tells the story:

“Lewis ... said Emanuel said, ‘Well what the fuck do you want? And Lewis said, ‘More than you’ve fucking got.’ People were really angry that Emanuel started off the cussing, that a white man shouldn’t talk to a black woman leader that way, but they were really happy that Karen continued it—that Karen gave it back was just great.”<sup>253</sup>

That fall, the CTU began to signal that they would be trying out a different kind of contract negotiation. Through the house of delegates, they launched a survey and invited union members to participate in drafting the union's contract proposals. Negotiations had been scheduled to start in early 2012. Union members hadn't experienced a contract campaign in several decades. According to Sharkey:

“The old guard were Shankerites, basically unrepentant business unionists who thought that contracts were tough sometimes but we could win them by having a big hand on the table and making deals by talking tough, but we began to ask aloud, How's that going to work with Rahm? He's not coming to make deals, he's coming to fight.”

The new leaders were changing the conversation about how a contract should be won, and they were acting like a union in involving all the members in the discussion. The Occupy movement had just surfaced on the heels of the spring 2011 uprising in Wisconsin, which was led by Midwestern teachers with ties to Chicago. Every month, the CTU and CORE mobilized activists to attend the CPS school board meetings and to challenge the board during the open public comment on the agenda, which is required by law. The fall of 2010 was colored by CPS

administration-prompted skirmishes, the fall of 2011 with skirmishes prompted by the CTU and aimed at getting teachers ready for direct action. At the December 2011 meeting, the teachers used the #OWS (Occupy Wall Street) tactic Mic Check: one person says something and everyone else repeats it, as into a megaphone powered by human voices. After the Mic Check at the school board meeting— “These are our children, not corporate products!”—the board left the room and shut the meeting down.<sup>254</sup> The teachers and their allies were successfully finding their voice and practicing direct action; business as usual would not be happening.

### *Mass Political Education and Structure Tests*

In January of 2012, with negotiations imminent, it was time for the teachers to assess their internal strength after eighteen months of new leadership. Sharkey describes the strategy:

“We decided to hold a mock strike vote and we did it over three days. We had charted the entire union; we had charts all over the walls taking up entire rooms in our offices. We had a forty-person team working the vote and the district supervisors were the key people in the room with the staff [there were forty-nine district supervisors, appointed teachers who earned a small stipend for the job, which was to stay in touch with the delegates in their turf between meetings],<sup>255</sup> and we planned it so that right in the middle of it was our monthly house of delegates meeting, so we could announce how it was going on evening two and give out assignments to every school delegate for the third and final day of voting.”

Staging the three days of voting around the house delegates’ meeting, when 800 teachers from across the city come together, was part of the ongoing campaign by the union’s leaders to both teach and empower their members to own the union, to take responsibility for it, to see

themselves as the leaders of the union, all 800 of them. Sharkey adds, “Coming out of the mock vote, we did identify the schools where we had weaknesses.” This knowledge prioritized the union’s task for the next few months, letting the leadership zero in on the areas where schools had one of three scenarios: either the delegate wasn’t a real leader, clearly the case when the teachers in a school didn’t turn out to vote; the delegate was opposed to the idea of a strike, requiring the development of different leadership beneath the elected delegate; or the school was missing a delegate altogether. Once the need for internal structure work was laid out, the CTU moved on to its next potential base of support, the general public.

In February, the union released its opening salvo, a policy paper that framed its demands for the coming contract negotiations and also clarified its public message. The report was titled “The Schools Chicago’s Students Deserve, Research-based Proposals to Strengthen Elementary and Secondary Education in the Chicago Public Schools.”<sup>256</sup> Its top ten recommendations were:

1. Recognize that Class Size Matters (countering the message that size doesn’t matter)
2. Educate the Whole Child (stressing the importance of art, gym, theater, dance, music, and other key electives and activities)
3. Create More Robust Wrap-around Services (such as free transit fares and more school nurses)
4. Address Inequities In Our System (described as de facto apartheid)
5. Help Students Get Off To A Good Start (calling for access to pre-kindergarten and all-day kindergarten)
6. Respect and Develop the Professionals (lift all salaries, hire more classroom aids)
7. Teach All Students (addressing the need for bilingual and special education)

8. Provide Quality Facilities (citing the need for asbestos abatement and other repairs, especially those affecting health and safety),
9. Partner With Parents
10. Fully Fund Education (improve funding formulas and increase funds available)

The media received this report with open arms, primed by their respect for Lewis, who had established herself as a credible media source. Even more important, so did Chicago's general public. In the eight months since that memorable "fuck-you, well-fuck-you" press moment, pitting the image of Emanuel, snarky white male graduate of a rich suburban school against that of Lewis, tough black, female student, teacher, and leader from the inner city. Lewis had used her national board-certified pedagogical expertise to turn all of Chicago into her classroom and teach her entire community the ABC of what was really happening to the city's school system. She had created a master narrative, issuing daily press releases that the media were gobbling up. As Madeline Talbot put it:

"Karen was black, smart, and bold, and that alone made her newsworthy in a city not known for straight talkers; she was taking Rahm on every day on every topic, she had earned the media's trust as a person who told the truth; and for more than half a year she had been putting out an analysis, a frame about the schools that was never there before, and Chicagoans began to understand education differently."<sup>257</sup>

Lewis also had an email blast list and would send out a short fact about education every day. The list was for anyone who wanted to be on it; it included media, civil society leaders like Talbot, and, of course, teachers.

Negotiations were already under way. The CTU leadership hadn't merely given the members the right to participate in developing the contract proposals, they had also greatly

expanded the size of their bargaining team and the rules for negotiations. Traditionally, the bargaining team had consisted of the union's president, a lawyer, and just a few others. The union's constitution and bylaws are virtually silent on collective bargaining, except to say, "During major negotiations, [the president] shall be accompanied by at least one other officer or member of the Executive Board."<sup>258</sup> Lewis described launching her team in an article for the education blog Rethinking Schools:

"We said, 'OK, but we're bringing 50 people with us.' They said, 'Oh, no, we don't do that.' But we told them this is a new administration and we do things differently—we don't do things under cover of darkness. We want people to see and hear what really goes on so they can make good choices and so they can communicate back to our members. The difference is we're rank and file—we feel the members should make the decisions about what we should do."<sup>259</sup>

That wasn't the only change the new leadership made in the negotiations game. In the past, the CTU, like most unions, had agreed to a formal set of ground rules; these had included a gag rule, which had prevented the union team from talking with union members about what was going on at the table. Such ground rules are typical even though they are not required by labor law, being considered permissible but not mandatory; they reflect a business unionist approach to collective bargaining.<sup>260</sup> That approach is not quite universal: chapter three describes how the local union 1199 New England has never agreed to ground rules and doesn't believe in them.<sup>261</sup>

In the early stages of the Chicago negotiations, neither the CTU nor the CPS was bargaining very seriously, and there weren't many meetings set; each side believed that slowing the process down would work to their advantage under the new rules passed in SB7. Management, as represented in Jonah Edelman's extensive comments, was sure that the union

didn't really understand the rules very well, an impression that perhaps made the employer overconfident. Meanwhile, the union was still methodically working to shore up the weaker schools identified by the mock strike vote, and also working with parents and community allies, making sure everyone was on the same page.

### *Exercising Workers Most Powerful Weapon*

In May, the union began to prepare for the real, not mock, strike vote. The contract was set to expire on June 30, 2012. The old guard inside the union was leading an interesting campaign against the strike vote. They formally challenged the vote at a meeting of the union's rules committee, charging that holding such a vote over three days was a violation of the union's constitution. They were grasping at straws. According to Schmidt, who was a member of the rules committee, the old guard understood something few people did:

“The old UPC folks were fighting this so hard because they knew something important: that if the new leaders led workers through a successful strike, they would likely stay in power for a very long time because that's what happens when you lead people through a tough fight, they give you their trust.”

Eventually, Schmidt said, the lawyers had to be brought into a rules committee meeting before the new leaders could establish that a three-day strike vote was in fact perfectly legal. In the past, more than twenty-five years back, the CTU hadn't taken strike votes that seriously because they hadn't had to. Delegates called for a strike vote, and without much fanfare, over the course of a morning, the union would take a vote and declare a strike as needed.<sup>262</sup>



While the rules committee debated the procedure for a strike vote, a momentum-building structure test was playing out on the streets of Chicago. The union called for a rally on May 23 to show support for their negotiations team. They reserved a location downtown, the Auditorium Theater, at the corner of Wabash and Michigan. This theater is a national landmark, its great arches lined with 24-karat gold leaf; it has hosted many of Chicago's most famous performances. The CTU's turnout—some 7,000 teachers strong, all wearing their red T-shirts—far surpassed the theater's 4,000-person<sup>263</sup> maximum capacity, and the rally spilled out onto the street.<sup>264</sup> A sea of red below and vaulting gold above created a spectacular visual, and the Chicago media made the most of it. Footage from the many clips on YouTube reflects a crowd electrified by their newfound power, the power of unity and purpose. After this rally, with the rules committee clear about the union's right to conduct a three-day strike vote, planning was under way for June. The union leaders knew they had to complete the vote before school let out or they'd lose their chance of the high turnout they needed. The vote was held June 6–8 and by the end, 24,000 union members had voted, surpassing the number required by SB7's anti-union law. Ninety percent of all teachers cast a ballot, and of them, 76 percent voted to authorize a strike. The vote count each night was conducted by local religious leaders, working with the religious group ARISE, adding moral authority to the public image of the teachers' decision and a validation that strengthened the workers' courage.

But SB7 also had language mandating that the union and the CPS go to fact finding and seek the recommendations of a fact finder, and at least one side had to reject the fact finder's report before a strike could commence. In late July, the CTU and the CPS both rejected the fact finder's report, and everything was in place for the first teachers strike in twenty-five years. The union was running a Summer Organizing Institute, and had hired a few dozen extra teachers to

do parent and community outreach over the vacation. By August, the union was debating whether to strike on day one of the new school year, or to wait, let the schools open, then strike in week two. They decided the latter plan would be more effective. Their strategizing took into account that there would be brand-new teachers who hadn't been a part of the mobilizing efforts, and many other teachers who'd been away on vacation would need to be briefed about how the summer's events had unfolded. Walking out on kids and parents is a difficult act for mission-driven workers, such as teachers, and many in the rank and file would have to be shown that there really was no other option, that every attempt to reach a fair settlement had been made in good faith.

On September 9, the union called a press conference, and Karen Lewis announced that the strike was on, starting the next morning. From September 10 through September 18, the Chicago Teachers Union closed the Chicago schools, under a limpid sky. According to Schmidt, "God gave us nine of the most perfect-weather days in Chicago history!" On day one of the strike, an estimated 35,000 teachers and their allies marched through the heart of Chicago, effectively shutting not just the schools but the entire downtown and marking the largest rally in the city since McCarthyism first chilled the voice of Chicago labor. Not since the declaration of the end of World War II had Chicagoans showed up in such force to let their voices be heard.<sup>265</sup> Each day, the teachers would picket their schools, then join together in downtown marches. Three days into the strike, the CPS had consolidated 600 schools into 120 designated cluster schools, desperately trying to keep enough classes open to reduce the number of parents demanding that they settle with the teachers. Then the teachers' union and their allies consolidated their pickets, sending them to only the cluster schools, maintaining strong lines during the school day wherever the CPS tried to keep classes open, before moving to downtown

for daily direct actions. Teachers at almost every consolidated picket line felt the validation of parent committees, who even cooked for them, keeping the picket lines well fed during their long school-day vigils. This food for the teachers went way beyond shiny red apples. Parents grilled BBQ, cooked giant pots of traditional stews and soups representing every ethnic group in that diverse city..

Many parents had been placed in a tough position by the strike. “We talked about childcare for the working parents,” Sarah Chambers, a teacher at Saucedo school recalls. “It was really tricky, because you want the parents pressuring the CPS and the mayor to settle, but we knew it was really hard for a lot of people. Some parents came and cooked for us, and we just took their kids on the picket lines and the marches all day, meeting them later.”

The strike passed its fifth day and continued into the weekend, and the pressure to settle was indeed rising. Everyone wanted to avert a second week. The teachers were hearing it from the parents and the Mayor and city leaders were hearing it from them even more loudly. Up to this point, CORE members had forcefully exercised their power as the rank-and-file caucus only once, when they made Karen Lewis do an about-face on SB7. Now they again felt strongly the need to hold their leaders accountable as the time for a settlement drew near. The bargaining committee, in previous decades numbered in single digits, had been enlarged to forty-five people. Among the forty-five sat Sarah Chambers, teacher leader and co-chair of CORE:

“I was the only rank-and-file person in the room, and I was already a CORE steering committee member. Karen came in and said, ‘We are close to an agreement,’ and I said, ‘There is no way “we” can come to an agreement without the members who are walking the picket lines getting a chance to discuss this...our members feel like they got

to write some of those proposals for the first time; they own this fight; the entire membership has to decide to call this off, not you or us.’ The leaders said we were being too radical. People were screaming and crying and saying no, the members have to make this decision, not you, not the house of delegates.”

This moment, when Lewis and the CTU leadership agreed to extend the strike, against the intense pressure of the media and growing numbers of parents demanding they settle or go back to the table and try again, was decisive for CORE and for the new leadership’s decision to genuinely empower the rank and file. Tammie Vinson, a teacher who had hated the old union and became a very active rank-and-file leader through CORE and helped make her union *her* union, said:

“It’s so different now. I remember when Marilyn Stewart was president, we would just find out about contract settlements. She didn’t even give members the right to vote on them. I was so proud of CORE because we forced the leadership to make the time to let the members decide to come off the picket lines, to go from not even voting on our contract to being allowed to come off the picket lines and set up group readings by school and by picket line. It was so important.”

For two days, the strike continued, as teachers sat in the unusually warm Chicago sun reading the proposed contract line by line. They found that concessions had been made in the negotiations, but not many. Considering how much effort had been spent by the mayor and the political elite to pass a state law that they believed would prevent the teachers from ever striking, the mere act of going on strike was the first and perhaps biggest victory of this struggle. But in the face of an all-out war declared by an ideologically driven mayor, where the cost of settlement

was high, teachers, parents and students had taken over the city. The mayor did win a longer school day, but the union extracted a pay raise in exchange. And on Emanuel's second major objective, merit pay, the union defeated him, maintaining the system of raises based on years of service (called steps) and educational skills (called lanes). Finally, the mayor was defeated in his attempt to gut tenure.<sup>266</sup>

It had been a defensive fight for the teachers' union, and defend they did. Throughout the strike, parents and students had stood arm-in-arm with them, squaring off against the man some called the bully-in-chief. Emanuel's real objective had been to destroy the teachers union, and instead he had unified a group of workers who had been suffering insults for years—and a ferocious attack on their profession and on the reason most teachers teach: their kids.

### *After the Strike, Challenges*

Official Chicago's class warfare against those who occupy its classrooms went into overdrive with the passage of the Amendatory Act in 1995. In the years that followed, Chicago public schools became a laboratory for privatization and the charter program and results were devastating, especially for inner-city students, most of them poor and black. The 2012 strike did not end those troubles. In 2013, Emanuel announced the single largest public schools closing in history anywhere outside of New Orleans post Hurricane Katrina; he shuttered forty-seven schools in a gesture that many interpreted as part payback for the rank and file's 2012 victory and part message that this victory had been futile. His proposal, launched in the dead of winter, overwhelmed the city. Once more, the teachers' union locked arms with their community allies in a site-by-site fight to save the marked schools, but their protests were weakened by battle fatigue, and the mayor won the round. Amisha Patel—whom Chicago's media had nicknamed

the shadow bargaining-committee member for her visible role in coordinating the community support during the strike —was in a position to see that clearly:

“The hearings around the school closings were amazing, hundreds of people taking over hearings, throwing down, but it went back to being a site fight. Of the 50 sites proposed for closure, if it wasn’t your school, you didn’t get involved. Contrast this with the strike, which was a citywide fight and showed us how to lead a citywide effort for really the first time—but the narrative went back to a site fight and we got totally diffused.”

Despite the massive amount of organization required in 2012 to get a moribund union ready to fight hard in an all-out war, permanent systems for capturing the parent contacts and broader community hadn’t been developed. Neither were the internal tracking systems developed enough to make the kind of assessments the CTU is going to need for the next contract fight. Interviewed about the situation in October 2014 Sharkey said:

“A shortcoming to our work now is that the leader of the union in each school is the delegate and we are very dependent on the delegates. Traditionally many delegates ran their schools like they were servicing them, not organizing or mobilizing members onto committees so that teachers could be the union in the school. And even though we’ve put a lot of emphasis on a leadership development model to help shift our delegates to acting like leaders, not just servicing, if you asked me how many we have at a first-tier leader level, how many at a second-tier leader level, and third tier, and so on, I could only give you a low-quality number; we just haven’t gotten to that level of assessment.”

Shortly after this interview, Sharkey, the union's vice president, would become its acting president, when the dynamic Karen Lewis was diagnosed in late October 2014 with brain cancer—a massive tumor. Overnight, she was completely out of the picture, dealing with urgent medical needs.

Prior to her diagnosis, she and the teachers' union had planned to announce her candidacy for mayor, on November 5, the day after the fall elections, traditionally when candidates begin gathering the signatures required to qualify for office. Polls showed her beating Emanuel. The mood among the teachers was electrifying. The idea that a black woman teacher would and could challenge the most anti-teacher mayor in the nation's third-largest city, during an era of a massive, coordinated assault on unions and the teaching profession, had everyone in Chicago buzzing. When her unexpected diagnosis closed that possibility, a collective gasp seem to sound across the region. Lewis had been the main topic in coffee shops, on public buses, on street corners, and most definitely inside the union.

As part of the evolution of the union's work, and Lewis's decision to run, CTU leadership decided to jump feet first into city-level politics, too, running for seats as aldermen, something they had never done before. Ten teachers declared candidacies in the citywide election slated for February 2015. [*Note, I will have time to say the results, the election is Feb. 24<sup>th</sup> so I will update this with a few lines later*] The transformation of their identity from teachers, to teacher-leaders, to union leaders, to candidates for city council has been remarkable. Sue Garza, running for alderman in her ward on the South Side, says:

“I am not a politician and it's really scary; my mouth has gotten me into trouble, my life has gotten me thrown into jail, but everything in my life has gotten me ready to run for office. When we started talking about running people for office, I said no, but my

father literally read me the riot act,; he said, ‘When did you ever back down from anything in your life?’ And these people have backed us into a corner, but we can’t let a few people ruin the entire career of teaching.”

The future of the resurgent Chicago’s teacher union has yet to be written, but their efforts have demonstrated that teachers are willing and able to fight back and win against even their biggest foes. Teacher Tammie Vinson looks at the immediate future:

“The question of the ages right now is what is the role of CORE? How does a bureaucrat not become a bureaucrat? The majority of CORE’s founding leadership is now downtown. Now Jackson Potter is the guy sending out mandates from downtown, and he might be way more friendly than the people before, but how do you not let leaders get too far removed from the rank and file?”

CORE members are currently debating a resolution on term limits for union officers. They are also struggling together with the question of how best to do electoral work.

They’ve proved that a broken union can be rebuilt in a very short time—less than two years. They’ve demonstrated that the strike remains the working class’s most powerful weapon, but also that its successful deployment is contingent on first developing deep relationships with the wider community. And they’ve demonstrated the crucial importance of broad democracy in the union, beyond the formal vote—the democracy that let the rank and file read the proposed contract settlement line by line on the picket lines, that helped the teachers take full responsibility for their own liberation. In the process of that liberation, inevitably, there will be compromises on the way to more substantive victories. But Chicago has proved that when workers are empowered in real-life fights to make the decisions, the union becomes stronger, not



weaker. The union speeds the way to a better future when it slows down to allow broad democracy to flourish. The working-class teachers of Chicago are struggling *as* a class.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: TWO MODELS PRODUCE DIFFERENT KINDS OF SUCCESS

As the cases I describe in this dissertation demonstrate, many and various types of campaigns and efforts have continued into the new millennium. They span the range of relative success from defeat to victory, some impacting small groups of workers and involving very few concessions by not very powerful players, and some impacting hundreds of thousands—the entire working class in a given geography—and extracting enormous concessions from very powerful players. If some groups can achieve high-impact victories, like the Chicago teachers or the nursing home workers in Connecticut, why can't all groups achieve significant success? What key factors turned a double defeat at Smithfield Foods into an enormous victory in the most hostile climate, in a state with the lowest union density in the country, in manufacturing? How did largely undocumented immigrants, themselves ineligible to vote, nevertheless get progressive legislation passed? How effectively is that legislation now advancing their cause? Where are the dividing lines between success and failure, between small, middling, and great victories? Are there outcomes called successes that are actually defeats? Are there recognizable characteristics in the demands, in the approach, in the repertoire of efforts that achieve different outcomes? What factors have shaped these groups' various approaches to their efforts? And what answer to the question (debated by sociologists in the field) Do resources such as money and expertise matter? What's the relative weight of resources in the scale of an outcome? Are political vision, will, and risk-taking more important resources in a class war than money?

In this discussion chapter, I hope to address all of these questions. All matter urgently, with a corporate right wing on a forty-year winning streak and marching toward what they imagine to be a final offensive against the past gains of the working class. And so I will begin

this chapter with a brief review of conditions today, of the context in which today's movements must operate. I will then move to some overall observations from across the cases I have described that might suggest future research for academics and future directions for the movement. I will return to Saul Alinsky, often called the dean of community organizing, and evaluate his model and his legacy based on the past forty years of movement efforts, directly linking his strengths and weaknesses to the strengths and weaknesses in the New Labor leadership and in the community-organizing field. I will discuss, drawing on my cases, what appear to be the two dominant models that exist today among groups—including unions—that are *still trying* to win: the mobilizing model and the organizing model. I will delineate key features of each and suggest that the toughest fights can be won only by using the organizing model, a model I link to George Herbert Mead and his theories on the development of identity. I will conclude with a discussion of what is missing from the organizing model, the model with the potential to build the power required for success against the modern corporate popular front.

### *Section I: Conditions and Context Today*

E.P. Thompson informed us that mass consciousness in the working class develops under capitalism when people can *see* their oppression. Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward added that people have to see their *contribution* to the oppressor's wealth in order to act against the system. In both of these analyses, the twinned theme of power and acquiescence is central. "Power is rooted in the control of coercive force and in the control of the means of production. However, in capitalist societies this reality is not legitimated by rendering the powerful divine, but by obscuring their existence," say Piven and Cloward in *Poor People's Movements*. They note further, "Moreover, at most times and in most places, and especially in the United States,

the poor are led to believe that their destitution is deserved, and that the riches and power that others command are also deserved.”<sup>267</sup>

There’s little question, as Bellah et al. conclude in their analysis in *Habits of the Heart*<sup>268</sup> a decade later, that individualism has become a sort of cultural and moral creed. Mistrust of government has become so overwhelming that most Americans hold successful CEOs, actors in the economic arena, in higher regard than they do civic or political leaders. Americans have come to trust business leaders far more than politicians, corporations more than government, and the individual more than the collective. These conditions, playing powerfully enough to be clearly observed in the 1970s and 1980s, are on massive-dose steroids today.

Sam Gindin has analyzed that a chief aim of neoliberalism is to produce an even greater sense of class divisions and more “fatalism” among workers, and that in many ways the biggest success of the neoliberal project has been a doubling down of the self-blame articulated above by Piven and Cloward. Gindin points out that most unions stopped fighting and started concession-bargaining in the late 1970s—concessions having included the two-tier contract, which condemns every new hire to lesser pay and benefits status—and that this set the stage for the corporate right wing’s successful messaging to a raise-denied working class that tax cuts (which hurt the working class by eroding funding for a social safety net) are the working classes’ best hope for a raise.

Unions that stopped fighting did more than create the conditions for the successful establishment of a sophisticated frame that turned the beneficiaries of taxes, the working class, against taxes. From my field work and my experience as a union organizer and negotiator, I argue that four decades of two-tiered contracts may be a major factor in why Michigan voters resoundingly voted against enshrining the right to collective bargaining in their state constitution

in 2012. Mere weeks after the sitting governor, Rick Snyder, saw how the working class in the home state of that two-tiered contract union, the United Auto Workers, had voted on collective bargaining, he quickly moved to turn Michigan into a right-to-work state. And despite spending \$23 million on the ballot initiative campaign,<sup>269</sup> unions lost it: No amount of spending could erase four decades of newly hired employees blaming their union—not their employer, not capitalism itself—for their lesser status and lesser share of compensation under the union contract. This might also help explain why 38 percent of union households in neighboring Wisconsin voted to retain Scott Walker as governor when labor attempted a recall campaign.

Frames such as “Tax cuts are your best way to a raise” and “Collective bargaining made you individually more poor” play into, not against, individualism, the dominant narrative in the United States. When movement actors decide that frames alone will work for progressive causes, they don’t quite get that most progressive messaging and framing runs *counter to* the dominant narrative. Frames work for the corporate right, as does smoke-and-mirror-based grass-tops mobilizing, because the right is *running with, not against, the deeply ingrained individualist creed of America*. Drawing on the biggest successes among my case studies, I argue that Mead’s insights into the development of identity, into the creation of the I, me, and the generalized other, are extremely important because the working class must *experience* something akin to a redevelopment *in themselves, by themselves* of I, me, and generalized other before they can shake the stranglehold of self-blame, of the sense that their individual inadequacy has doomed them to an inadequate compensation for their labor and a generally inadequate life. No amount of pollster-perfected frames will undo several hundred years of individuals in America being conditioned to their economic and political roles by a generalized other that says, Collective is bad, individual is good, and good individuals will earn a good life.

Mead noted that people need to be in a “critical condition” that shifts their roles before they can shift their understanding of themselves and the general other. In critical conditions like Hurricane Sandy and September 11, people display tear-jerking, soul-affirming levels of instant and intense human solidarity. But the solidarity that follows disasters, natural and otherwise is created in a moment of fierce emotional heat that flares up and quickly dies down. Real organizing, the kind done by the Chicago teachers and the nursing home workers of Connecticut, creates a critical condition, too—the battle with the employer—but the craft of organizing helps people to connect the dots between the critical, solidarity-affirming moment and the larger system it challenges, and gives the people in crisis, the workers, a new way of seeing themselves and a newly formed sense of the generalized other that persist *long after the strike is over*.

## *Section II: Overarching Observations from the Cases*

Among the cases I have discussed, those in which the movement generated the greatest—power enough to overcome very powerful institutions and players—were those in which large numbers of the workers themselves decided to walk off the job. Risking your job in a very poor economy certainly makes a critical condition quickly emerge and can induce the same kind of solidarity as a sudden disaster. Based on those cases, I argue that the strategic front for the most successful movement effort is *still* the workplace, but not *only* the workplace. When workers walked out of the Smithfield Foods factory in rural South Carolina in wildcat strikes, without advice from any professional organizer or permission from any union, they created such a crisis for their employer that, even in a region as hostile to labor as North Carolina, the *community* began to take note that something was seriously wrong in that factory. Much more intentional work with the community would be needed in a new campaign, but the fact is, the community

mattered a great deal in the win, once the workers helped educate them about the reasons for their actions—about missing fingers and limbs and the hogs being treated better than the humans who worked with them.

The case of the nursing home workers in Connecticut is even more striking. It takes a gut-wrenching decision for medical workers to walk off the job: they must walk away not only from their livelihood but also from fellow human beings they care for day in and day out. In Connecticut, they do so only after they talk with the patients' families and prepare the families to step in during a strike to make up for the inadequate care that temporary or scab staff provide during a majority strike because the temporary staff can't possibly know the individual special needs of each patient. The employer may not and often is not concerned, but the workers and the families do care. Healthcare workers pre-strike can earn the support of the community by supporting these families, who are often like their own extended families, by explaining to them step by step how to care for their loved ones, so that the workers, freed to carry through their strike, can demand better conditions but for their patients.

Similarly, when Chicago's teachers walked off the job in a strike that riveted the nation, they did so after *several years* of good work with the broader community and *months* of *intentional discussions* with the parents in Chicago. *Their community enabled their success* by backing them against a vicious and powerful opponent who immediately took to framing the fight as teachers abandoning their students and their community. In that case, the neoliberal frame failed the mayor precisely because the relationships between teacher and parent and teachers' union and community had already been forged, and unlike the failed second campaign in the Smithfield fight, forged over several years, not several weeks.

There is still a manufacturing workforce in the United States that desperately needs unionization, and although the employers' exit threat makes it objectively harder, it is not impossible, as we eventually saw in Chapter Five. Within the service economy, I argue, education and healthcare are the strategic sectors, for several key reasons. First, there can be no exit threat: schools, nursing homes and hospitals, clinics, and many other sections of the always changing healthcare delivery system can't be moved offshore and can't be relocated from a city to its suburbs or from the North or Midwest to the South. This is why the corporate right is campaigning tirelessly to change the opportunity structure of the Rust Belt—and the nation—via the cases they bring before the Supreme Court. Immune to the exit threat, education and healthcare are also particularly strategic fields for organizing and movement building because of their placement in the community, geographic and social: they aren't walled off industrial parks, and the nature of the value-based services they provide creates an intense contact between the workers and their community.

While some see this contact as a complication, I think it's an incredible strategic advantage. For starters, as long as the workers, and especially their leaders, grasp the context of this relationship and do what the Chicago teachers did (in stark contrast to the efforts of most teachers unions and their national union officers), it seems clear they can win over the broader community not only to the importance of the craft of teaching but also, even more fundamentally, to the importance of unions in our society. Teachers and healthcare workers can hone that relationship by taking the conversation right to the families they live among and work for, showing them how their needs as workers and the quality of their work life relate directly to student performance (and patient outcomes). When unions get this right, when they understand the basis of the relationship between the workers and their own community, they can defeat not



only a bad employer but also America's centuries-old anti-collective messaging; they can change not only their workplace but also Mead's generalized other: society. Kimeldorf pointed out that the social base of a workforce is key to the kind of unions it forms. I argue that the social base of educators and healthcare workers trends fundamentally toward solidarity and collective behavior, because the workers are mission-driven, their motivation for success is high, and their work is performed in teams and in the context of success in outcomes with patients and students, the community. The workers get this; too bad their leaders don't.

And because of the context of power, victories for education and healthcare workers will be greatest when all the workers struggle together as one force, in one union, up against their employer in a united front. Why? For the same reason it was true in the 1930s and 1940s. Schools and nursing homes are today's factories, in the sense of the sheer numbers of workers who regularly work cooperatively inside them. In fact, it is even more true today, because the community matters so much to the success of these no-exit, highly community-oriented strategic sectors. For the best possible outcomes, healthcare workers and educators need to maximize their power inside and outside the workplace simultaneously. The hardest-to-replace workers in education and healthcare—those with degrees and professional status—obviously have more strategic power directly against the employer inside the workplace in a strike. But it's often the easier-to-replace workers in these settings—clinicians, paraprofessionals, secretaries, and the workers who serve in cafeterias, drive buses, and clean rooms—who have more powerful strategic relationships with the community outside the workplace, and in the cases I have described, though less strategically powerful inside the workplace such workers are *crucial partners* with a huge impact on the success or failure of these struggles when it comes to the crucial element of community backing. Both are needed, not one in one union and another in

another. Both types of workers, harder to replace and easier to replace have equal value and have to stay united to be most effective inside and outside against their employers.

Many of the new teachers being hired in Chicago today are from programs like Teach for America, or teachers fresh out of graduate school, and they see teaching as something they will do for a few years before moving on. They are a whiter group than in the past, younger, more mobile. They often don't live in their school's community, a big difference from the *social base* of recruitment thirty years ago, back when the union contract could control the hiring from a central office. Now individual principals hire whomever they want, whenever they want, and the result, according to everyone I interviewed in Chicago, is that although teachers have tremendous relationships with the parents of the students in their classroom during each school year, it's the rest of the education team that has a long-term relationship with those parents and with the local communities. A similar dynamic operates with registered nurses and everyone else in the healthcare setting. Although the socioeconomic base of the positions commonly regarded as less skilled—a concept I reject—makes them easier to replace, certainly less valued by employers in spite of their often heroic efforts, it also positions them more strongly in the community, in the churches, in the neighborhoods, and in local politics. Since it takes an inside-outside power strategy to win a labor fight, these “more skilled” and “less skilled” workers can't strike at different times and can't be at the bargaining table at different times: they need each other, and must forge solidarity by struggling together. With solidarity of action, they consolidate their power in the workplace and their power in the community, and they win their fight.

Finally, these strategic workforces are most powerful when united with a risk-taking, rather than risk-averse, leadership team. To save their jobs and to save the work they do, which the community can easily see means saving working-class neighborhoods' schools and

healthcare facilities, they must be willing to fight neoliberalism itself. Teachers and nurses are up against financial power brokers in venture capitalist firms who have invested in a long-term effort to privatize their two fields, precisely because these employers know they cannot use the exit weapon. Instead, bankers and Wall Street, who see profits where others see patients and students, have chosen automation and privatization for their primary line of attack.

Converting teachers and educators into robots who deliver tests via computer is a sure way to get these professionals and their salaries down to janitorial level. Changing laws so that any individual tasks that registered nurses or licensed practical nurses do can also be done by certified nurses' aides, and many isolated tasks that certified nurse's aides currently do can be done by anyone, is yet another way to cheapen the costs of staff and facilitate privatization and profit. The fight to save education and healthcare is a fight against the logic of neoliberalism, and it's deeply personal to every worker in each field. Their jobs are not to make cars faster, but to care for human beings—which is done best by other human beings exercising minute-to-minute judgment based on a deep well of experience. Computer programs can react to test scores or to levels of toxicity in the blood—even triggering a warning beep if the latter are too high. But they cannot save the failing child or the critical patient. Teachers, nurses, and the community know that.

The attack on public education feels more present and is more publicized, yet there are already far more for-profit healthcare corporations than there are for-profit schools. The battle Steve Lopez chronicles so beautifully in *Reorganizing the Rust Belt* took place when big private companies first began buying up mom-and-pop nursing homes in neighborhoods across the country. When Beverly Industries became the nation's largest owner of nursing homes, they declared war on the nursing home workers' unions. Good unions with more left-wing leadership,

like the 1199 locals discussed in Lopez’s book and this dissertation directly challenged and defeated these venture-capitalists. The national union, however, facilitated the demise of high-quality nursing home care by promoting schemes like that of the Washington union featured in chapter three. As the rank-and-file leader Bernie Mintor, quoted in that chapter, said, unions have a choice; they can go one of two ways. In chapter six, Chicago community leader Madeline Talbot describes the impact of the new leadership in the Chicago Teachers Union—a leadership that began to consistently fight Rahm Emanuel, a Democrat—as daily putting out “a frame about the schools that was never there before, and Chicagoans began to understand education differently,”<sup>270</sup> Chicago’s teachers chose to fight, not acquiesce in, privatization and public school closure, and backed by the community they educated, they, too, are winning.

### *Section III: Saul Alinsky: His Legacy in New Labor and the Community Organizing Sector*

*“But it wasn’t just, or even mainly, the infrastructure of Alinskyism that secured for Saul Alinsky a place in [Cesar] Chavez’s small pantheon of heroes; it was Alinsky’s ideas.”*

—Frank Bardacke, *Trampling Out the Vintage*<sup>271</sup>

*“Alinsky offered a model! You could get aspects of what organizing looked like from reading about SNCC or other movements. But what did it look like for sharecroppers, for example, to take the steps they were taking, none of that was anywhere. It’s 1963, and 250,000 people are marching on a monument, but what did the buses look like, how did they fill up those buses, get people to the march? It wasn’t till I was reading Alinsky that there was some process about this stuff. Finally, there was some idea of how to do it. He documented his practice in clearly digestible ways—like a cooking recipe with really helpful steps and very few competing organizing models have been documented as holistic models.”<sup>272</sup>*

Steve Williams, LeftRoots

*“The National Conference of Catholic Bishops initiated in 1969 the most significant and longest-running experiment of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century U.S. Catholic social action. Why would Catholic bishops approve funds for the poor to organize for power, much of which went to the community organizing projects associated with Saul Alinsky?”*<sup>273</sup>

Lawrence J. Engel, Asst. Professor, Writing in Theological Studies, 1998

There are many strong links between New Labor and key strands of Alinskyist organizing. Several recent books and articles document and trace numerous leading figures *across* the New Labor diaspora to the Alinsky diaspora.<sup>274</sup> Some came into New Labor unions via what Maryanne Clawson<sup>275</sup> calls the “redistributionist movements” in the 1970s, groups like ACORN and Citizen Action. Randy Shaw’s 2008 *Beyond the Fields* is the most comprehensive examination and is partly dedicated to demonstrating the strong ties between the United Farm Workers and the leadership of New Labor, in particular UNITE HERE and SEIU. Shaw has an entire chapter in his book, chapter eleven, called “Harvesting Justice Beyond the Fields, The Ongoing Legacy of UFW Alumni,” which consists of pages of charts with the name of former UFW activists and where they work today. Twenty one occupy staff positions in UNITE HERE and SEIU, some very key positions. Another thirty six former UFW staff are in a smattering of other unions, many considered part of the New Labor framework used in this dissertation (see introduction). Frank Bardacke, too, in his *Trampling Out the Vintage*, includes a full chapter about Alinsky’s influence on Cesar Chavez (and Fred Ross, though his focus is on how Alinsky influenced Cesar and subsequently the UFW writ large).

A long article in *Theological Studies*<sup>276</sup> asserts, with copious evidence, that the development of the single biggest source of funding for *four decades of community organizing* starting in the early 70’s, the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD), was developed *to support Alinsky’s* work. Engel’s research describes the Catholic Bishops 1969

commitment to raise \$50,000,000 to support community organizing and power building to alleviate poverty through a national collection strategy church by church. In today's dollars, the commitment the Catholic Church was making to fund Alinsky-based work would be just over \$300 million. Engel asks, "Why would Catholic bishops approve funds for the poor to organize for power, much of which went to the community organizing projects associated with Saul Alinsky?"<sup>277</sup> Given the lack of resources for organizing, it's not hard to understand why Alinsky-based organizations have dominated the field since the 1970s. Many of these groups serve as what Kimeldorf called the social base for New Labor's organizer recruitment. While some argue that Alinsky's influence in introducing power building for the poor might rightly have benefitted the church, it's less clear that the adherence to Bishop-approved ideological politics benefitted the development of the community organizing movement.

For the purposes of this discussion, the national Alinsky diaspora includes the United Farm Workers (UFW), National Welfare Rights, ACORN, Citizen Action and the Midwest Academy, PICO, Gamaliel, the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), and the *many hundreds* of local, neighborhood-based organizations funded by the Campaign for Human Development. Although there are surely differences among the Alinskyist groups in the community organizing sector, and also among the corollary New Labor unions, I argue that they share a set of core postulates that are evident across their various organizations.

I have used Alinsky's own texts, what he himself said and wrote, as the foundation for this discussion. I conducted a line-by-line content analysis comparing his first book, *Reveille for Radicals*,<sup>278</sup> with *Rules for Radicals*, which I consider the defining Alinsky text. And I put a premium on his very last public words, an extensive interview conducted by *Playboy* magazine three months before he died, suddenly, of a heart attack.<sup>279</sup>

Alinsky did not invent community organizing, but he did codify it into a practice. When he wrote *Reveille for Radicals* in 1946, it was the first book that discussed organizing as a craft devoid of ideology (and the first book on organizing published by a mainstream press). Prior to *Reveille*, organizers in the movements for race, gender and class-based emancipation had to hide their activity, or they might be murdered, jailed, or fired—and any of those outcomes would have had a disastrous effect on the movements they led. There was a smattering of pamphlets that laid out theories of mass collective action, but these were embedded in Socialist and Communist party circles.<sup>280</sup> As a result, there is a scarcity of literature on the actions of these individuals. Alinsky's books attained preeminence in part due to the sheer absence of any other books on the craft.

Alinsky has been mistaken by the leftwing as a community-organizer who emerged from the neighborhood, devoid of any notion that big problems couldn't be solved at the local level, rather than considered for his roots in labor struggles, and his experience in social analysis as a Chicago school sociology graduate student. Alinsky's skills were based on this multi-faceted integration of experience and struggle.

Alinsky, writing in the *American Journal of Sociology* in 1941, said, "The point of view of the [Back of the Yards] Council on organized labor is quite clear. First it looks to the national organized labor movements to cope effectively with many of those major social forces which impinge upon the Back of the Yards community with disastrous results."<sup>281</sup> Alinsky was not wrong to imagine, in 1941, that his job, his added value back then, was to teach the disposed how to fight for themselves locally on a range of issues where unions and big business had a seat at the table, but not the community. He understood his initial work to be similar to what Francesca

Polletta calls prefigurative organizing, to enable community members to participate in and practice power aka praxis.

The abstract to his article begins, “In the industrial area adjacent to the Stock Yards of Chicago, a community council was formed which included the two basic institutions of the area—(1) organized religion and (2) organized labor—as well as all the other interest and action groups in that community.” Today, however, given the absolute decimation of *both* labor’s power *and* their abandonment of 1939-like ideology, it’s absurd to think that local community groups can simply attend to local issues while *national* unions “cope effectively with” anything, let alone take care of the big issues. Alinsky did a few things well, but when standing in isolation from the 1939 CIO unions in Chicago, they just don’t *in any way measure* up today. In fact, his biographer Sanford Horowitz notes that even in the later 1940s and early 1950s in Alinsky’s first forays outside of Chicago, in Kansas City and in Los Angeles, he couldn’t make a community-only model work as well as Back of the Yards.<sup>282</sup> Horowitz says this was causing real concern for Alinsky at the time because he was fundraising and couldn’t quite show the model working. I argue what wasn’t working was he didn’t have the very smart and very left Packing House Workers Organizing Committee with him. Conditions and context matter.

According to organizer/scholar Marshall Ganz, Alinsky’s primary gift was “his brilliant understandings of strategy and tactics.”<sup>283</sup> This “brilliance” about strategy was anchored in Alinsky’s sharp understanding of power. He routinized the practice of understanding who and what he was going up against, what source or sources of power they relied on most, how invested they were or weren’t in some stated or unstated ideology, what their vulnerabilities were, who their allies and competitors were or could be, and, especially, how to create and



exploit cleavages using wedge issues.<sup>284</sup> The UFW that Ganz worked with for so long reflects this Alinsky influence.

Surely in part from his years in the University of Chicago, Alinsky spent months in each new community patiently studying the picture around him and testing his assumptions *before* he got into a big fight. In *Reveille for Radicals*, he states, “A fundamental difference between liberals and radicals is to be found in the issue of power or its application. They [liberals] labor in confusion over the significance of power and fail to recognize that only through the achievement and constructive use of power can people better themselves. They talk glibly of people lifting themselves up by the bootstraps but fail to realize that nothing can be lifted or moved except through power.”<sup>285</sup>

Alinsky understood how to draw a foul, that is, how to prod the bosses or the opposition into an overreaction that would generate sympathy for his campaigns and divide the opposition. (The match that lit #OWS was the video of the NYC cops teargasing young women. Alinsky would have set that up, not just waited to take advantage of its aftermath). Once Alinsky understood how power moved in a given community, he set out to build an organization anchored in the church and capable of turning out thousands of community residents for what Alinskyites call accountability sessions with business or political leaders. Conflict and agitation were the name of the game in these often well-rehearsed dramas. These were often so well-rehearsed that the deals had already been cut behind the scenes between Alinsky or his top staff and the local power brokers, but Alinsky thought it was important for the “leaders” meaning the ordinary people to have the ‘experience’ of winning, so, they’d stage the big session all the while knowing the end game. This, too, is prevalent in New Labor today and showed up in how the New Labor unions secretly negotiated with NYC power brokers to “let #OWS” stay in Zucotti

Park without being removed because the labor leaders assured the power brokers that they could more effectively end the encampment. If the police raided it, more protesters would show up. But the clever Alinsky-influenced SEIU leaders had a better plan, in light of winter coming, they said, and, calling for the big, final march across the Brooklyn Bridge, a highly orchestrated end move where SEIU and other staff were made to wear thousands of brightly colored shirts emblazoned with “MARSHALL” on them to police the marchers themselves and actively dissuade anyone from engaging in civil disobedience that was not pre-approved, like the New Labor leaders who were arrested near the bridge in a deal they cut to demobilize the more radical energy.<sup>286</sup>

Some critics rightly say Alinsky made himself too much the center of the action. Fair enough. But whether or not people agreed with it, Alinsky had a theory of power. Nothing produces deer-in-the-headlights moments among social movement groups today like the question, “What’s your theory of power?” As a consequence, activist groups across the country such as Make the Road or its new, national quasi-parent group, the Center for Popular Democracy, situated in a heavily pro-immigrant, union-dominated New York City with still progressive traditions—err by thinking they can export their models into Virginia or Iowa. Likewise, people outside or on the periphery of labor think the Justice for Janitors strategy has some kind of universal applicability, missing the point that the cost of settlement, what Luders called the concession costs—meaning how much money the employer has to spend to buy labor peace through a contract—changes with different sectors of workers. And, concurrently, so does the amount of power required to win. Banging on drums in downtown office buildings and staging a handful of symbolic arrests and symbolic, not production shuttering strikes, might work for the lowest wage workers, but not to save the pensions of 30,000 teachers in Chicago. As

Alinsky understood early-on, there is no universal tactic or universal strategy; *strategy is contingent on the specific power analysis of each campaign.*

The limitation in Alinsky's thinking about power was his unwillingness or inability to develop models for keeping it. He assumed our democracy functioned, just as long as every once in a while some people put together an interest group and balanced some other interest group that might be getting away with too much in that moment. Drew Astolfi, Executive Director of Faith Action for Community Equity (FACE), a Gamaliel affiliate in Hawaii, and third generation trained Alinsky organizer, says, "Alinsky really only gave us one set of rules, the rules to fight, we need another set of rules, the rules for what you do when you get to the table."<sup>287</sup> A common Alinsky axiom is that power can only be exercised by building organization. But despite this oft repeated adage, he didn't really believe in building *permanent* organization. Mike Miller, a longtime Alinsky associate, says, "Alinsky was more anarcho-syndicalist than organization builder."<sup>288</sup> Alinsky said himself that he didn't think any of the groups he formed were any good after five years, because they either atrophied or were co-opted. The left continues to cede governing to the corporate class because of our inability to sustain democratic unions, or, large organizations of any kind. Some groups in the Alinsky diaspora "hold politicians accountable," but have rarely embraced running their own and taking over local and state government.<sup>289</sup> Alinsky frequently quotes the French political scientist Alexis de Tocqueville and so does Newt Gingrich. As a result, Alinsky often sounds like a right wing anti-government activist with nothing but contempt and scorn for politicians. This may be one reason Glen Beck, the Tea Party<sup>290</sup> and other rightwing social forces have adopted Alinsky and his *Rules*. Fundamentally, Alinsky wasn't threatening the politicians electoral future, or the structure of the economy nor society.

Alinsky's take on ideology was paradoxical, and, a significant weakness. His most serious dogma—a dogma that he fervently preached—was that no one should have dogma. No one should have dogma, and there was only one ideology, which he repeated in everything he wrote and in every speech. He sums it up on page 11 of *Rules for Radicals*: “In the end [this is] a conviction—a belief that if people have the power to act, in the long run they will, most of the time, reach the right decisions.” But genocide against Native Americans, centuries of slavery, today's mass incarceration of people of color, the fight for gay marriage, debates about taxes and government, and the ongoing denial that unpaid homemaking is as hard as most wage work doesn't easily square with Alinsky's simple “conviction.”

This is one reason why Gary Delgado, founder of the Center for Third World Organizing, and his successor and protégé Rinku Sen, have each written and published solid, constructive, nonsectarian, critiques of Saul Alinsky.<sup>291</sup> Delgado locates his critique of Alinsky in the limitations of the politics of place and race in segregated America. Sen, in her book *Stir it Up*, argues that Alinsky's obsession with pragmatism and non-divisive issues resulted in generations of otherwise good organizing that often undermined the very people who need good organizing the most, the poor, working class and people of color, none of whom have issues that could be easily characterized as non-divisive. For example, with Alinsky groups focused locally and on winnable issues, many reacted to the infusion of drugs into their communities by calling for more police and more prisons. Activists involved in Black Lives Matter and others trying to block and end the mass warehousing and deportation of immigrants today likely would agree with Sen that these simplistic Alinsky politics continue to be highly problematic.

Because Alinsky's center of gravity was the Catholic Church, it necessarily limited what issues could be engaged (though his successors at the Industrial Areas Foundation broadened

from the Catholic Church to first a cross denominational ‘congregational’ model, and later to what they now call a ‘Broad Based Community Organizing’ model, it is all still rooted in the church). Though Mike Miller, a direct Alinsky disciple and longtime community organizer, says, “Few people appreciate the impact he had on American Christendom. Before Alinsky, the church dealt with poverty with food and clothing pantries. Alinsky comes along and says you want to speak truth to power, to do that you have to organize for power. All of a sudden, the Catholic Church and the mainline Lutherans all start moving to build power.”<sup>292</sup>

As put by Steve Williams, long time Executive Director of PODER, a community organizing group in the San Francisco Bay Area whose membership is overwhelmingly people of color, now working with LeftRoots,

“Alinsky’s attempt to strip the organizing model of ideology manifests in various concrete practices. For example, the Alinsky model of organizing insists that groups should only wage winnable fights and that the organizer should refrain from bringing her political views into the organizations discourse. Though this decision is understandable in the context of the state-sponsored repression brought down on left and radical movements in the US, the ramifications render the Alinsky model impotent relative to many contemporary challenges because ideology is a central front of the rightwing, and, therefore the left must contest in this arena. We should retain his tactical audacity, however.”<sup>293</sup>

The rightwing’s methodical, patient, steady ascendancy to power during the past forty years, using cultural issues to wedge workers and the poor against each other in and outside the workplace, requires a significant investment in mass level popular political education and an end

to ideology-less politics. The left sits politics out, liberals engage in threats and Alinsky-like accountability sessions and then routinely endorse the same bad candidate just because they are less evil than the opposition.

But in chapters six and three, in discussing the Chicago Teachers Union and 1199NE, each union is running a not-business-as-usual political strategy. Each have embraced running actually progressive candidates to the left of center inside the Democratic Party system, replacing bad Democrats with good. This is highly unusual in New Labor, just like the fact that they also run strikes. Not covered in the period under discussion in chapter three was 1199NE almost single handedly, and up against the house of labor, recruiting of Lowell Weicker to run as a third party independent candidate for Governor in Connecticut for the exclusive purpose of instituting the state's first income tax. Weiker understood the deal from day one, he was wealthy but liberal in a state with outrageous income disparity in part because despite the wealth there was no income tax. He understood it would take his money and 1199NE's troops to do what has rarely happened in U.S. history, run for major office as a third party candidate and actually win. And, equally rare, follow through on your promise to force an income tax, accepting all along he would be a one term-only governor because after instituting the income tax, he'd never be elected again. That's a little more risk taking than Warren Buffets sweet pronouncements that his secretary should pay less taxes than he does, a sort of frame approach to the tax question when a power approach is required, like that displayed by 1199NE's deal with Weicker.

The *biggest* weakness in community organizing, and, the aspect of the Alinsky legacy that has negatively impacted and deeply penetrated some segments of the union sector, notably the United Farm Workers (UFW), the Service Employees International Union (SEIU)

and the Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union (UNITE-HERE), is his discussion about and framework for organizers and leaders.

Saul Alinsky simultaneously christened a new agent for struggle, the reified outside organizer, and, obscured the issue of organizer strategy in his most well-known book, *Rules for Radicals*. In it, Alinsky declares that there are leaders and there are organizers, and, they are different. In his construction, the organizer is a behind the scenes individual who is not a leader, who does not have anything to do with decisions and decision making, and who must come from outside the community. According to Alinsky, the leaders, who have to come from the base constituency, “make all the decisions.” This is a problematic narrative because, as Sen and Delgado have observed, and many others, the organizers in the Alinsky model ultimately make all key decisions.

A lot of good ink has been devoted to the problems with Alinsky’s view of the “outside organizer,”<sup>294</sup> including in Frank Bardacke’s 2012 book *Trampling out the Vintage*. By denying the organizer is a leader, with substantial influence on the organization, the corresponding accountability of the organizer is left unchecked. Jerry Brown, the long-time leader of District 1199 New England, still one of the most militant and successful local unions in the SEIU, explains it this way:

“I never heard anyone use Alinsky in any way as a model for us. He was always talked about only in the context of community organizing, and how they always had to be behind the curtain—their job wasn’t to speak publicly, their job was to find and recruit – who came closest to this was HERE (the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Union)– because they always had rank and file officers who appeared to be the leaders. The rank and file officers were often wonderful union members who put a lot of work

into the union but they were very seldom the real, strategic leaders. I thought the 1199 model, with all its troubles with staff being members and sharing leadership not just facilitating recruitment, it was 100% more honest to what was going on, and actually who was really leading. I just always felt that the way in which they actually led, and the way in which it appeared they led, were very different realities.”

Given the fact that the local union that Jerry Brown founded and led from the early 1970's to 2005, depicted in chapter three, is well known for routinizing all-out strikes every few years, for setting and maintaining the nation's highest wage, benefit and working conditions standards in their nursing home contracts, and for being the most powerful player in Connecticut politics, it hardly seems that obscuring the real and active role of the organizer impinges high levels of militant rank and file member participation. To the contrary, the role of the organizer in the 1199NE model is transparent, not hidden, and the role of the members is primary, not secondary. Only the rank and file can strike, not the organizers. Majority strikes are evidence that workers are primary leverage and of central importance in any union. And, that successful strikes still exist is evidence that labor leaders make a strategic choice to not strike. It would be hard to have found a political opportunity structure more hostile to a teachers strike than Chicago in 2012.

While the outside organizer pretending not to be the leader but who is really the leader in Alinsky's work is covered in some recent literature, not addressed in the many critiques of Alinsky's organizer v leader theory is a second related but separate question: who is a leader? This may be attributable to the fact that in *Rules*, the only Alinsky book that most people read, he doesn't discuss the concept of what some union organizers call leader identification. The words



and concept don't exist in *Rules*. But Alinsky does discuss leader identification in *Reveille for Radicals*, his first book published in 1946, twenty five meaningful years earlier. Based on the evidence in chapters three and six, I argue that there is a direct and profound relationship between building *powerful* mass scale movements and leadership identification theory. And, I believe that understanding the distinction and relationship between two separate concepts, leadership identification and leadership development, is a prerequisite for a return to power for the Left and progressives. The glaring omission of this discussion in *Rules* has perhaps done the most damage to the subsequent development of community organizing, and, to today's New Labor unions.

In *Reveille* Alinsky has an entire chapter devoted to leader identification, called, "Native Leadership." But he never really explains how to do leadership identification. Perhaps this is because he was never actually a union organizer, but rather a popular front agitator.<sup>295</sup> He simply didn't get this crucial skill embedded in the heart of successful organizing, despite his assertion that he "mastered" the CIO model. And, part of why unions remain the most strategic sector is because workplace union fights draw the foul of the class struggle or what Mead calls the "critical conditions" that make new identity creation happen faster and more broadly than in a non-workplace setting. Alinsky explains most of his theories with stories. Not surprisingly, his *only* stories about understanding leaders in 1946, *before McCarthyism decimated the CIO*, are all references to unions. Alinsky says, "Any labor organizer knows of the Little Joes. When a man is being solicited to join a union he will usually respond along these lines: 'Everything you say sounds pretty good, Mister, but before I sign up I want to know if Joe has signed up.'"<sup>296</sup> Leaders have followers, and the CIO had a method to identify the "Little Joes." But to understand how to

do leadership identification, the heart of the communist's gift to the CIO, Alinsky would have to have done it. And, done it a lot.

As discussed in almost every chapter, because union staff is barred from touching even one foot inside the private sector workplace, including parking lots, the theory of *who* an organic leader is, not just what they do, and persuading them to be pro-union, equates to winning or losing. And, as I earlier described, owing to school shootings and more, public schools are also off limits to outsiders now. This means workers are the agent, not the organizers. This was as true in 1936, when William Z Foster, head of the Communist Party, wrote and published, "Organizing Methods in the Steel Industry,"<sup>297</sup> describing the method of the "Little Joe's" that Alinsky didn't quite master as it is today. Outside paid union organizers, including those in the 1199NE model in chapter three or the CTU in chapter six, given their structured position as legally barred from the workplace, simply can't get sloppy or lazy and go inside and do the work "for the workers," the way community organizers do outside the workplace, including in today's worker centers.

This results in a nuanced understanding of who the organic leader is inside the workplace, something successful union organizers who run and win NLRB elections or lead and win standard setting contracts using the strike weapon call "charting and list work." To understand it, in fact to master it, requires endless repeat application, much like any craft. Smart people can probably get the basics of how to lift an airplane off the ground by reading a book and watching a pilot thrust the throttle to and fro, but to survive a lightning storm or engine failure requires an experienced pilot. The big business consortium in the US is like an endless lightning storm and all Alinsky did was read the book. We've crashed.

Social movement organizations, and now unfortunately unions, too, treat all humans as flat, labelling anyone who shows up at a meeting a ‘leader’ and often interchanging the words activist and leader. It’s an egalitarian impulse, similar to having an aversion to power. Occupy has muddied this discussion even more with talk of “leaderless movements” and “horizontalism.” But in any strategy to build power, all people are not the same. Marx understood this as evidenced by his proclamation that the proletariat alone, not peasants or any other type of poor person would be the agent, so too do successful union organizers. As demonstrated in my cases and as discussed earlier in this chapter in section II, there are workers who are more influential than others because of the ease or difficulty management has in replacing them, there are workers in strategic industries versus non-strategic industries—the ports, or hospitals say, versus McDonalds, and, there are workers who have followers and workers who repel co-workers (even if they are nice or wonderful, respect is an odd thing, better to understand this and win versus not and lose). And, all the aforementioned types of workers exist in all classes, in all races and ethnicities, all genders and of any sexuality identification.<sup>298</sup>

This understanding of workers and people with relative power should not in any way to be construed as saying all people aren’t equally important and deserving as human beings, of course they are. But in community organizing there is an obsession with leadership development, not leader identification. One without the other is like a bicycle without wheels. It severely limits success and scale. Because the organic leaders are often the very ones most capable of being developed as volunteer organizers themselves, magnifying the scale of people with the skill of mass mobilization, the community organizing sectors failure on this front, and now New Labor’s, produces a movement over reliant on paid staff. Even New Labor can’t afford to staff a movement absent developing organic leaders as *the key skilled flank*.

ACORN was the Alinsky influenced group that veered the farthest from Alinsky orthodoxy in two ways, but not all. They were willing to take on national, not just local issues, and controversial, not just safe, issues. They also overtly rejected Alinsky's theory of organization of organizations or priest as leader. This is probably because Wade Rathke was influenced more by Alinsky disciple Fred Ross than Alinsky himself. Ross himself rejected the organization of organization idea and that led directly to the UFW structure of a mass membership base, and, a union with no local union structure, assuring staff and top leader control in the same ways that Rathke controlled ACORN.

Ross and Cesar Chavez at the UFW and Rathke at ACORN unfortunately did embrace the organizer-leader false bifurcation set as creed in Alinsky's model. Seth Borgos, an early and longtime ACORN national staffer now at the Center for Community Change says, "At ACORN, the theory was that leaders of existing organizations were already too compromised, so ACORN decided to grow their own leaders. The approach was too broad, Wade [Rathke] had this idea that everyone could be a leader, if we found them and we developed them into a kind of ACORN brand. I don't think this is actually true."<sup>1</sup> At the extreme other end of the diaspora, Alinsky's disciples at today's Industrial Area's Foundation (IAF) do today have a clear theory of who the leader is, but they stick to narrow issue constraints and rarely if ever play in the movement sandbox with anyone, limiting their potentially positive influence on this crucial method. ACORN and the UFW were key social bases of organizer recruitment for New Labor.

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<sup>1</sup> Author Interview, June 2013

*Section IV: Two Models, Distinctly Different:  
Mobilizing and Organizing*

In this section, I will outline the key elements of what have become two distinct models. I argue that the Alinsky-influenced New Labor model is a *campaign*-focused, short-term, transactional *mobilizing* model. By contrast, the high-participation model of the CIO-1199 tradition is a *movement-building organizing* model that places its emphasis on base expansion. “Base expansion” means bringing more and more people who have never participated in any way with activism who don’t consider themselves activists—who have never protested anything or written a letter, into an experience which happens through an interactive process involving direct action and risk. Plenty of mobilizing, such as that with flag-waving marches, happens in the organizing model, but its *primary purpose* is to recruit a constantly increasing number of previously never-involved-in-anything, ordinary people: key to the model is that people’s ideas about themselves and their society transform in the process. In the mobilizing model, paid staff constantly rely on a diminishing number of the already converted to participate in events but after a highly enthusiastic roaring start, they tire of “always being the ones to show up” and burn out and lose interest. To compensate, the mobilizing model then finds new people to tire out—people also *already* converted to the cause—so the base never expands, which makes the whole affair like shoveling sand uphill. There’s a very telling term in the mobilizer-only model: *burnt turf*.

In table #1, the left-hand column consists of Alinsky’s well-known core principles for his “radicals”—the organizers who are the agents of change—which he laid out in *Rules for Radicals*. I contrast this with right-hand column, which are the core principles of an 1199 organizer—understood to be a *teacher* and *coach* to the primary agents of change, the organic

leaders of the workers. The 1199 key postulates are taken from what passes for the “manual” at 1199: a handwritten, dated, single sheet of paper that hangs on the door or pinned on the bulletin board of most 1199 organizers’ office. It is often covered with coffee stains and marker of some kind and is simply called simply “Advice for Rookie Organizers.”<sup>299</sup>

<b>Table #1: Key Postulates</b>	
<b>Alinsky’s Rules for Radicals</b>	<b>1199’s Advice to Rookie Organizers</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. “Power is not only what you have, but what the enemy thinks you have.”</li> <li>2. “Never go outside the expertise of your people.”</li> <li>3. “Whenever possible, go outside the expertise of the enemy.”</li> <li>4. “Make the enemy live up to its own book of rules.”</li> <li>5. “Ridicule is man’s most potent weapon.”</li> <li>6. “A good tactic is one your people enjoy.”</li> <li>7. “A tactic that drags on too long becomes a drag.”</li> <li>8. “Keep the pressure on. Never let up.”</li> <li>9. “The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself.”</li> <li>10. “The major premise for tactics is the development of operations that will maintain a constant pressure upon the opposition.”</li> <li>11. “If you push a negative hard enough, it will push through and become a positive.”</li> <li>12. “The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative.”</li> <li>13. “Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it, and polarize it.”</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Get close to the workers, stay close to the workers.</li> <li>2. Tell workers it’s their union and then behave that way.</li> <li>3. Don’t do for workers what they can do.</li> <li>4. The union is not a fee for service; it is the collective experience of workers in struggle.</li> <li>5. The union’s function is to assist workers in making a positive change in their lives.</li> <li>6. Workers are made of clay, not glass.</li> <li>7. Don’t be afraid to ask workers to build their own union.</li> <li>8. Don’t be afraid to confront them when they don’t.</li> <li>9. Don’t spend your time organizing workers who are already organizing themselves, go to the biggest worst.</li> <li>10. The working class builds cells for its own defense, identify them and recruit their leaders.</li> <li>11. Anger is there before you are—channel it, don’t defuse it.</li> <li>12. Channeled anger builds a fighting organization.</li> <li>13. Workers know the risks, don’t lie to them.</li> <li>14. Every worker is showtime—communicate energy, excitement, urgency and confidence.</li> <li>15. There is enough oppression in workers lives not to be oppressed by organizers.</li> <li>16. Organizers talk too much. Most of what you say is forgotten.</li> <li>17. Communicate to workers that there is no salvation beyond their own power.</li> <li>18. Workers united can beat the boss. You have to believe that and so do they.</li> <li>19. Don’t underestimate the workers.</li> <li>20. We lose when we don’t put workers into struggle.</li> </ol>
<i>Taken from Rules for Radicals by Saul Alinsky, 1971</i>	<i>Taken from the 1199 Organizing Conference, Feb. 6-9, 1985, Columbus, Ohio</i>

Although several of 1199's postulates could be and are embraced by some New Labor staff, people who might call themselves organizers or more recently "campaigners," most cannot be. These postulates are the defining feature that separate an organizing model from a mobilizing model. For example, most people who call themselves organizers would probably adhere to these postulates:

- [1] Get close to the workers, stay close to the workers.
- [11] Anger is there before you are—channel it, don't defuse it.
- [12] Channeled anger builds a fighting organization.
- [14] Every worker is showtime—communicate energy, excitement, urgency, and confidence.

But there are other postulates—the most important ones—in the CIO organizing model that simply cannot manifest in a model that doesn't vest the primary power in the workers themselves. Postulate #2, "Tell the workers it's their union, and behave that way," is significantly worded: *behave*, not *act*. It's a commandment. In the 1199NE tradition, it's a commandment with teeth: an organizer will be fired for not *behaving* that way. Similarly, postulates #17 ("Communicate to workers there is no salvation beyond their own power") and #18 ("Workers united can beat the boss, you have to believe that and so do they") conceive of workers as the primary leverage in their own liberation. Professional organizing staff trying to play Bruce Lee—outmaneuvering the boss in a series of high-flying karate moves—cannot replace the workers' army when it comes to the long march. Real organizers never underestimate the true fighting value of workers; they put them into the struggle, they're not afraid to ask them to build their own union. Organizers play a crucial but distinctly different role in each model. With the kind of endless warfare documented and superbly described by Kate Bronfenbrenner, there's little question that workers in the service economy need coaching on the employer

offensive that they'll face and on how to beat the professional union busters by staying ahead of them. Falling behind the employer's war is usually fatal; as I demonstrate in chapters three, four, and six, it was crucial that the unions knew how to build a majority before the first skirmishes begin, before the union busters really turn up the heat and start firing workers. And for that, you need excellent teachers who can school workers for their role as primary actors and coach them through the stages of the boss fight. If workers didn't need good coaches, about seventy-five percent of all workers in America would be unionized. That's the most consistent percentage of how many say they'd like to be in a union, when they're polled before their employers convert the workplace into a war zone. Once the boss starts firing people, the number drops considerably. Good organizer-coaches—such as those I profile in chapters three, four, and six—circumvent that attrition by preparing workers to face and fight the worst the boss can do.

The workers in the North Carolina Smithfield Foods plant were able to exercise the kind of power that workers in manufacturing plants once could—the kind Marx imagined when he thought about the unique power of the proletariat with his or her hands on the levers of the machines. But when they engaged in production-disrupting wild-cat strikes, they ran a bigger risk by staying out more than four to five hours, which they did several times. The boss could easily fire and replace all of them: unloading hogs from trucks and getting them ready for the kill room isn't a job that requires certifications and degrees. And although it is a horrifically dangerous job, the relatively high pay it commanded gave it a perennial, though temporary, allure in the rather destitute region the employer had intentionally chosen as a site for its factory.

So even in the case today where workers still have their hands on the lever of power (such as the livestock team in rural North Carolina, described in chapter four), they still needed more power and found it through a *combination* of worker power on the shop floor and what



Bronfenbrenner describes as a genuine comprehensive campaign. But a real comprehensive campaign such as theirs is just as rare today as a strike, because New Labor has given up on workers altogether and relies instead on what it calls the corporate campaign. Workers in the Smithfield third campaign stayed as co-primary power with the community campaign, and with the national leverage strategy and they won in a giant manufacturing plant in the right-to-work south in the new millennium. That will not be successful for educators or health-care workers, whose conditions are different and require their own power analysis. Strictly speaking, in the case of Smithfield, a corporate campaign—*without* workers running *massive actions* constantly inside the plant *and making the fight real in the community* in daring and courageous public acts—would have led to a third defeat.

In each of the three cases discussed that involved unions, a set of common traits can be observed that correlate to two distinct models. The cases with the highest impact of success fall under the organizing model (which I call the CIO model), while the cases representing victories of a lesser magnitude correlate to New Labor's mobilizing model. The first Smithfield defeat wouldn't even be considered a fair example of mobilizing; rather, it was simply inept. The second drive at Smithfield, the one undertaken in the Sweeney era, with its attempt to marshal community support barely two months before the election—and a devastating defeat—does fit the mobilizing model.

Three sets of factors distinguish the two models: the purpose of the union, the power analysis defining the fight, and governance methods. I argue that the first factor, the purpose of the union, conditions the other two; and that each of the three factors involves a set of strategic choices individual actors make that determine which of the two models they will adhere to.

<b>Table #2: Two Models</b>			
	<b>Alinsky–New Labor “For” = Low Participation</b>	<b>Choice Point</b>	<b>CIO-1199 “By” = S.I./High Participation</b>
<b>Purpose of Union</b>	Material conditions only Pragmatic, Business Unionism	<b>Purpose of the Union [Ideology]</b>	Workplace and nonworkplace Material and nonmaterial conditions Belief system explicit, anchored in struggle
	Pro-union activists central Training of “authentic messengers” Workers as “flat”; staff-driven “Get Out the Vote” GOTV operation Minority of workers engaged	<b>Role of Workers</b>	Organic worker leaders central Development of organic leaders into organizers Staff organizers work with and help develop skill of organic leaders, who lead workers Majority of workers engaged
<b>Power Analysis &amp; Primary Power Source</b>	Power only calibrated to achieve growth deals Lower concession costs	<b>Goal/Power Analysis</b>	Power is calibrated to raise quality-of-life standards at work and at home High concession costs
	Primary struggle is <i>outside</i> the workplace No/few strikes, mostly ‘symbolic’ No real strike fund	<b>Primary Leverage</b>	Primary struggle is <i>inside</i> the workplace Production-disrupting, majority strikes key Members routinely donate to a strike fund
	Union staff Consultants including pollsters, political operatives, legal, communications firms	<b>Primary Actors</b>	Workers Complemented by organizers
	Workers “The community,” but disconnected from workers and via union staff	<b>Secondary Actors</b>	Workers' own community, Including faith leaders, community orgs, activated and engaged via the workers in struggle Researchers, Lawyers, Communicators
	Corporate campaigns, driving a mostly national focus Amorality in tactics: “anything to get the deal” (serious compromises) Card check Election procedure agreements (EPAs) Bargain to Organize (BTO)	<b>Types of Campaign</b>	NLRB Elections, market-based, driving a mostly local & regional focus Principles in tactics: ethical limits on tactics used <i>to get</i> and, <i>in</i> the deal (if card check) Card check EPAs BTO
<b>Governance</b>	Unimportant Strict limits on bargaining often tied to ‘agreement,’ few or no workers present Negotiators mostly lawyers or ‘Reps’ Narrow, material, issues on the table Standards unimportant	<b>Collective Bargaining</b>	Crucial Achieved through open, transparent, bargaining, lots of workers involved Negotiators mostly organizers Contracts tool for teaching self-governance, all issues on the table Standards crucial
	Narrow shop floor issue reach, if any Contract enforcement follows grievance and arbitration procedures (if allowed by accord, some prevent this)	<b>Representation Model</b>	Broad shop floor issue reach Direct action by workers Grievance and arbitration followed if direct action fails

The first factor, the purpose of the union, produces very different approaches to power analysis and governance. If individual actors believe that the purpose of the union is to enable a majority of workers to engage in mass-collective struggle—for the betterment of themselves, their families and their class, then in the related choice point, the role of the workers—those workers will not be mere symbols; they will be central actors in the struggle. If, however, the purpose of the union is to improve the material conditions of workers by increasing the share of profits they receive, the workers’ role will be greatly diminished; they will function as symbolic actors, not central participants. In his organizing manual for 1199, Bernie Mintor describes a variation of the two models in the section “A Union Can Go in One of Two Directions.”

Direction I: “A small group of top officers decide that they know what’s best for members. They then proceed to make decisions and manipulate the decision-making process on all levels. Their primary concern is total control.” Direction II: “Raising the union-consciousness level of the membership must be the main program. The union is a tool for struggle where workers learn *how to struggle as a class*.”<sup>300</sup> [Emphasis original.]

Alinsky is frequently credited with helping to develop the concept of the corporate campaign. In a 1993 paper on corporate campaigns, the authors claim, “In fact, for those of us in the 40-something bracket, the classic strategic labor campaign of our formative years was the United Farm Workers Grape Boycott of the 1960s... it came from Saul Alinsky and his Chicago brand of community organizing.”<sup>301</sup> Likewise, in an interview Ray Rogers posted on his website, Corporate Campaign Inc., Rogers proclaims the JP Stevens fight from 1976 to 1980 as “the Birth of Corporate Campaigns”; he also references Alinsky.<sup>302</sup> The corporate campaign model directs and trains unions to see the employer from the employer’s point of view, not the worker’s.

There are many examples of flow charts and organograms that outline the corporate campaign's focus on the employer, including on Corporate Campaign, Inc.'s website. The example below, Diagram #1, fairly represents the many in circulation:

**Diagram 1: Typical Corporate Campaign Schematic**  
 This Chart Produced by Andy Banks & Teresa Conrow, 2002



In this graphic,<sup>303</sup> the workers are flat, shown as one actor in relationship to a dozen others; they are a piece of the “available leverage points” used to get the employer to agree to union demands. This power analysis has been widely accepted by New Labor and rationalizes

the shift in focus away from workers as the primary source of leverage against employers to *all other actors as the primary source of leverage*. With workers representing only one of a dozen possible leverage points, it makes sense to rely upon the other eleven just as fervently. There are so many other leverage points besides the “worker piece” that the proportion of union staff devoted to workers has been reduced, while the proportion of union staff that drives toward securing “victory” in card-check and neutrality campaigns and election procedure accords has dramatically increased.<sup>304</sup> The workers also get a twelfth-part consideration when it comes to whose interests are represented in the deal, and rarely, if ever, are they present in negotiations with employers or consulted about the terms when the deal is concluded.

In this now-dominate power analysis, workers play the role of what is often called the authentic messenger. Some workers are needed—enough to be presented to the media and to perhaps testify before legislative bodies—to diffuse and inoculate against an employer’s claims that the fight is not about workers but rather about the “union bosses.” Workers are seen as a largely undifferentiated mass, and the chief criteria for engaging them is the answer to a simple question, do they favor a union or not? From among workers who favor the union, staff select those pro-union activists who are the most telegenic to an elite audience, such as the media, and use them as the public face of the campaign. They will then be called “leaders.” Professional communicators write press and legislative statements for them and prepare them in how to present well in public. In this model, union staff need not engage more than a minority of the workforce, since the real victory is achieved through one or more of the other eleven points of leverage in the corporate campaign and not by workers themselves.

Peter Olney, longtime national organizing director of the West Coast-based International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), said in one interview, “Just before the split at the

AFL-CIO, the conversations [that New Labor was driving] were about how workers really got in the way of organizing. We [the national organizing directors] would actually sit in rooms, in annual meetings about the state of organizing, and the discussion would be that workers often got in the way of union growth deals.”<sup>305</sup> It would be difficult to find a clearer statement of the view of workers by key staff in the New Labor model.

This sidelining of the majority of a workforce, engaging only those already predisposed to support the union—union activists—would be impossible in the CIO-1199 model (the one with which the CTU is aligned) and the leadership of the third Smithfield campaign (where the union is a “tool for class struggle where workers learn how to struggle as a class”). The CIO-1199-CTU model (which won Smithfield) is contingent on winning a *majority* of the workers in a workplace to the cause of the union: class struggle. Majorities are also *practically* necessary, because these unions run real strikes, not so-called symbolic ones. And, as in the case of 1199NE, they expand their base by running and winning NLRB elections, which also necessitates majorities.

To achieve majority participation, the CIO organizing model relies on the organizers’ ability to correctly identify and develop a network of those workers who are the most respected by their peers, whether they are initially pro- or *anti-union or undecided*. The respected worker leaders are the *key* to this model. The core to this *method* is the ability of the organizer to first identify the most respected workers and then persuade them to support the union, again, be it for a massive strike or for an election. And, in the case of the CTU as discussed in chapter six, the privatization forces had changed the opportunity structure by setting a *minimum* threshold to strike requiring that more than seventy-five percent of all teachers had to vote and had to vote yes to strike before the strike vote would be *legal*. If that were the standard for all U.S. civil

elections to count, we'd never yet have achieved the threshold for any member of Congress or of almost any legislature, anywhere. When has seventy-five percent turnout of *all potential voters* ever been mandated except in anti-union legislation? The point is, the CTU did it—and did it because they followed a real organizing model. Against all odds, among almost 30,000 teachers, it generated more than a seventy-five percent turnout and secured a super majority voting in favor of striking. That's organizing, not mobilizing.

As already discussed, but little understood today and crucial to my argument about a key element to the organizing model, leader identification is the mechanism that allows union organizers (skilled coaches) to connect to worker dynamics in the workplace by analyzing the workers' own preexisting social groups. This is done in conversation with the workers, not apart from them. Organic workplace leaders have followers, and—like the leftist factions of the old CIO, and the 1199NE type union today and others still working in a true organizing model—there is a heavy emphasis on the organizer's mastering the method for identifying organic worker-leaders, which is achieved through many repeated applications, as in other craft. The organizer has to be a master of the method because she or he is teaching the method to the brand new recruits in a high-stakes war—under what Mead would call a critical condition, where the workers' sense of self is being instantly altered by taking on new roles—by seeing the employer and their managers taking on new roles and by an entirely new kind of generalized other being created in the heat of the struggle.

The basic principle behind the method is that the organic leader cannot be identified by union staff or any other outsider, but only by a *majority* of workers who are in the same shift and unit. The process is in stark contrast to the activities commonly called *organizing* in the New Labor model, where professional staff choose and anoint worker activists (who they call leaders)

based on their own observation and preference.<sup>306</sup> In the New Labor mobilizing model, they never have to build majorities, so they can pick pro-union activists who like the union, and from them, the telegenic ones who speak well to TV cameras. In other words, workers as props.

Rarely, if ever, does a worker accurately announce himself or herself as a leader. According to union organizer Kristin Warner, a fourth-generation, trained 1199 organizer, “It’s almost never the workers who most want to talk with us. More often than not, it’s the workers who *don’t* want to talk to us and remain in the background. They have a sense of their value and won’t easily step forward, not unless and until there’s a credible reason. That’s part of the character that makes them leaders.”<sup>307</sup>

In the CIO-1199 model, strikes that cripple production are not only possible, they are seen as the highest “structure test” of whether worker organization in a given shop is at its strongest.<sup>308</sup> What is called a “structure test” in the organizing model is the method used by the organizer to test and assess whether they’ve correctly identified the real organic worker leaders (which happens by having conversations with most workers in the first place). A typical early-on structure test involves assessing how effectively and efficiently organic leaders can get a majority of their shift or unit to go along in a public act, typically signing a *public* petition, having their photo taken for a *public* photo poster, all wearing a sticker or button on the same day or any number of endless structure tests—in which case their manager knows they are announcing they are pro-union. This is an example of a “majority petition,” where a majority of workers in a large workplace publicly sign a petition that becomes a three-by-five-foot poster given to all the decision makers. In the example shown here, management and the elected body that oversaw the management team, called on management to settle their contract:



### Clark County & UMC Management: We are **READY** to Settle!



We, the proud employees of UMC and Clark County, work around the clock every day of the year to provide quality public services and excellent patient care to the residents who live in Las Vegas.

**Our demands are reasonable and we support our negotiators and our negotiating committee and we are ready to settle this contract right now at the table. We urge management to reach a fair and equitable settlement.**



If the organic leaders can turn these types of actions around in one or two shifts only, the organizer knows they've correctly identified an organic leader. On the other hand, even if the worker is demonstrably enthusiastic for the union—if they cannot get a majority in their shift and unit to do anything quickly, let alone engage in high risk actions—it's an immediate clue to the organizer that his ID was incorrect, and its back to the drawing board of talking, again, with all the workers to better assess who they most respect. Majority petitions, majority photo posters, majority sticker days, and majority T-shirt days serve multiple purposes: they are high risk

because they are public, so workers are being socialized to take risk; they are solidarity and confidence building, so workers realize pretty much everyone agrees with them; and they are part of an endless series of assessments of the strength of each organic leader. In a big unit's beginning of an organizing drive or lead-up to a contract-related strike, it might take weeks to achieve this; if the workers can never turn around majority high-risk actions inside their workplace, it's an indication that they will be defeated and a different strategy must be deployed. Should they choose to, organic leaders can lead their coworkers in high risk-action; pro-union activists cannot. One depicts the organizing model; the other, the minority-participation mobilizing model.

In the organizing model, from the opening conversation with a newly formed organizing committee in a nonunion facility—a committee made of the organic leaders, not activists as in the New Labor—mobilizing model—one of the key subjects is being ready to strike for the *first contract*. This conversation about strikes is directly linked to the ability of the workers to win *for themselves* the kinds of contract standards that are life-changing, such as control of their own hours and schedules, the right to a quickly address workplace health and safety issues, the right to increased staffing and decreased workload, and the right to meaningful sick and vacation time. Compared with these gains, a mere pay raise—too often the chief goal of the New Labor model—is a significantly limited win. Semantics are a key symbolic gesture in Mead's analysis of the interactive nature of two-way conversations. And semantics are absolutely key to good organizing. As mentioned in chapter three, the nursing-home case study, a key question in 1199 for generations is are there two or three sides in a workplace fight? Upon learning of a union drive, the employer will usually begin an anti-union campaign by declaring, “We don't need a third party in here”—meaning a union as the third party. In the CIO and 1199 organizing model,

a key to victory is, do the workers see themselves as the union—in which case there are only two sides—defeating the employers message?

Examples from the opening of two separate training workshops in an organizing model union such as the union in chapter three reveals the centrality of Mead’s concept of semantics (emphasis in original):

Introduction

**Everything an organiser does must have a purpose that is about moving the vision and the plan forward in their industry. Conversations are the primary vehicle for doing that.**

**EVERY CONVERSATION MUST INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:**

- **Have a *purpose*** **70% DISCOVERY – worker speaks**
- ***Shift* how the worker organiser speaks** **30% UNION AS SOLUTION –**
- **Have an *ask***

Organising conversations are **not about giving information**, giving updates, and leaving it up to the worker to decide what to do with that information. Good organisers **always have a conversation agenda** which is about how to shift workers in their attitudes, beliefs and commitment to both their workmates and their campaign.”

A second example of “semantics drills,” numbering to fifteen examples of how to say something, were practiced for hours and daily in the organizing department

### **Semantics Training**

- ❖ Why do semantics matter (pose question to the group) 2-3 minute discussion
  - Point = People learn about their union from us and how we talk about it.
- ❖ General Principles
  - DO NOT 3<sup>rd</sup> Party the union
- ❖ Examples: (put up the bad statements on the flip chart and have people discuss why they are not good and then the group comes up with a better answer)
  1. Bad = “Thank you” as a way to end a conversation
    - a. Better = Good talking to you/See you later/Look forward to seeing you soon
  2. Bad = We need you to get a schedule for us.
    - a. Better = It’s important that you and your co-workers know who works at the facility and where to keep track of membership/surveys/COPE etc. The best way to do that is to get a schedule and go through it with me.

The relationship between how central semantics are to Mead and organizers, and that these semantics are used in interactive conversations where “70 percent is the worker talking,” are clearly shown in these two snippets of actual CIO-1199 type trainings. This is what the Advice for Rookie Organizers postulate number 16 means: “Organizers talk too much, most of what you say will be forgotten.” The emphasis is on a two-way interactive conversation in which organizers speak only up to thirty percent of the time.

The conversation about gaining the strength needed to strike continues in the discussion about governance is in last of the three core factors in the model. In a 1199 conversation with workers, contract enforcement does not happen primarily through the power of lawyers and arbitration, it happens on the shop floor, in direct actions led by the organic worker leaders who ideally graduate from the organizing committee to the bargaining team to a delegate’s (steward’s) post. And to cement the idea of “three sides to two”—that the union really *is* the workers and not a third party—a foundational principle of the union is that *all* workers are invited and encouraged to attend *open negotiations with employers*. For Mead, role play is essential. Characteristic of organizing-model unions, in an open-negotiations model, the workers being present in large numbers at the negotiations table is an important form of what Mead considered role play: the workers and top management are learning to view each other in very different roles, as legal equals. Collective bargaining is the only place under U.S. law where workers sit as legal equals to their employer. As such, it’s seen as crucial to the organizing model for reasons that align with Mead’s concept of the development of self and the generalized other.

In contrast, in the New Labor mobilizing model most collective bargaining is handled in top-down, staff-only negotiations with employers. If workers are present at all, there will be fewer than five and they won’t be afforded the right to speak at the negotiations table. In

negotiations for neutrality deals, be they for card-check or election-procedure agreements, it has become routine for union staff alone to prenegotiate certain terms, including how “bargaining” will take place and even the actual contract terms. Alinsky was not known for his governance skills; he famously quipped in the *Playboy* interview (and in documentaries) that none of his organizations were any good a few years after the victory (whatever the campaign was). This Alinskyist tradition, too, has morphed into New Labor.

*Section V: The Missing Power of the Current Organizing Model  
Secondary Power Is In the Community,  
Not Corporations or 1% Stakeholders*

As demonstrated in some form in each case study chapter, the mobilizing model is capable of winning certain kinds of successes. But it has not proven to achieve success in the hardest fights. In the hardest fights, even when the workers are the primary power source—such as the educators and health care workers in chapters three and six and the Smithfield workers in chapter four—today’s hostile climate requires additional power except in the rarest of situations such as airline pilots, Boeing engineers, men who carry guns (police and prison guards), and a handful of other very selective groups of workers. The vast majority of workers in the U.S. now require additional sources of power to *enable their ability* to stage all-out strikes and to win elections and standard-setting contracts. The source of secondary power, like the source of primary power, is a *strategic choice*.

No divine power has blessed the corporate campaign; rather, the mostly male decision makers in the Alinsky-influenced New Labor mobilizing model chose, above all other options, to embrace a strategy of high-level backroom dealing with politicians and corporate power brokers

on behalf of workers. And to be clear, there are almost no comprehensive campaigns. In the same way that people claim to be organizing when few of them actually are, people assert that they are running comprehensive campaigns when they are really only running corporate campaigns—the deciding factor is *the degree of worker participation and worker agency*. Smithfield’s model is highly unusual despite its success, just like running strikes is highly unusual even though they generate the biggest gains for the working class. They are hard, messy, and complicated. And they alone can rebuild the devastated base of this country.

Building on Luders’s thesis about the relationship between disruption and concession costs in the Civil Rights movement,<sup>309</sup> I extend his logic into my dissertation’s overall argument about relative success and which kind of success is possible under the mobilizing model versus the organizing model. In figure#1, Power Required & Disruption Required, [*note to committee, this chart only right below this text, others at end of chapter*] I specify a set of conditions that will generate employer concession costs from low to high. The vertical axis is the cost of settlement—meaning, in real dollars, what the employer has to pay out of its overall expenses and profit to settle a contract with a given group of workers. Importantly, this isn’t just wages or benefits; this is the cost in relationship to the overall expense of running the business.

The horizontal axis is what I call ideological resistance. Drawing on my cases, it is clear there are two types of business leaders: the pragmatic-practical and the diabolically antiunion. There might be an ‘in-between’ pragmatic and diabolical with high-cost employees, but I have found no evidence. Evidence exists in chapter three and in the literature about some employers being in-between but these are employers with lower cost employees and with low demands from the union yet the employer has a large number of employees—they can still be bought if

the union pays for the cost, such as securing higher government subsidies or lower taxes, just as David Rolf does in chapter three.

**Figure #1 Power Required & Disruption Required**

<b>Concession Costs=Power Required to Win</b>			
Cost of Settlement	High	Medium to Higher Wage Workers & <b>Employer Is Pragmatic, Practical Business Type</b> , If Union Finds the Money for Settlement, and Union Raises Market to Level, Neutrality OK, <b>Some Private Sector Hospitals, Some Automakers, Some Democratic Mayors or Governors, Etc.</b>	Medium to Higher Wage Workers & <b>Employer Is Diabolically Antiunion</b> , Hires Top Union-Busting Firms, Under No Circumstances Does Boss Stop Fighting, <b>Most Private Sector Employers, Many Governors and Elected's in Right-to-Work and/or Trifecta Red States/Regions</b>
	Low	Low Wage, Little to No Demand, Small Workforce, No Pension, No Real Health Care, Union Doing Business for Boss on Subsidies and Taxes, Neutrality Fine, <b>Janitors, Fast Food, Car Wash</b>	Low Wage, Small Demands, Perhaps a Wage Increase or Demand for Regular Hours or More Hours, Numbers of Workers Medium to Large, Hires Union Busters but <b>Can Be Bought for Right Price or Corrupt Employer (&amp; deal)</b>
		Low	High
Ideological Resistance			

<b>Disruption Costs=Power Group Can Generate</b>			
Role of Workers Inside	High=Organizing	<b>Single Day or Limited Strike=High Power</b> Majority Worker Support, Organic Leader Model & Either No Secondary Campaign (structurally Powerful Workers), or, a Comprehensive Campaign w/ Staff-Led Community-Labor Alliance on <i>Workplace Issues Only</i> , <b>New Labor Rarely &amp; CIO Common</b>	<b>Unlimited Strike &amp; High Comm. Support=Most Power</b> Majority Worker Support, Organic Leader Model & Workers Leading Community Campaign on Union-Supported <i>Non-Workplace Issues &amp; Workplace Issues</i> =Whole Worker Organizing Model, <b>CIO Unions Can &amp; Do Execute, New Labor Could Choose</b>
	Low=Mobilizing	<b>Symbolic Strike=Low Power</b> Minority of Workers Involved, Activist Model, Corporate Campaign (Workers & Their Community= 1/12 <sup>th</sup> consideration each), <b>Most Common for New Labor</b>	I Have Found No Evidence of This, By definition, Workers Have To Be in Majority for This to Also Be High
		Low=Mobilizing	High=Organizing
Role of Workers in Community			



While ideological resistance is often correlated with the cost of doing business, it is not always so. In fact, the key to most of the high-impact, high-success union strategy for one hundred years has been looking for the pragmatic-practical type *within* the higher cost workforces because this is how unions with high-cost workers make significant breakthroughs. The entire concept of “pattern bargaining” is based on an organizing model union—such as the old United Auto Workers of the 1940s or today’s 1199 New England—the workers have to have the ability to strike; they’ve already “lined up the market,” meaning they have strategically aligned all their contracts in a given geography to expire simultaneously. Then, the union starts the bargaining process with the practical-pragmatic employer to “set the pattern high,” assuring the employer that they have the power to win the same settlements with the next employer with which they will sit across the table days later. Still, striking—or the *credible threat* of a real strike based on recent real strikes—is required to move employers at the high cost of settlement level. As discussed in chapter three, the reason 1199NE can win strong contracts, including neutrality for unorganized nursing homes without any negative consequences in their neutrality agreements, is precisely because they run majority strikes often enough that the employers knows the threat is credible. The threat is a real threat, not a pretend threat.

Ideological resistance can also be relevant to the issue of shop floor rights versus material gains only in contract settlements and concession costs. Kimeldorf discusses this difference when it came to the west versus east coast dockworkers. For the west coast workers, who wanted control of production, they had to strike to win. On the east coast, because the union only demanded lots of money, the boss was willing to settle without strikes being needed (and engage in actual corruption to pay people off). Some employers in the higher cost of settlement category

might accede to increased wages and substantial benefits after a strike but hold out on workers' rights over production decisions for ideological reasons, for employer control of the shop floor.

But within the 1199 case, I have found evidence that employers will even surrender production issues when two conditions are present: the union can effectively strike, and, the employer comes to understand that the workers might actually make better decisions than line managers, particularly ones that can positively impact the employer's bottom line. The present day example is that the new Medicaid and Medicare reimbursement rules under Obamacare tie higher reimbursement rates to better patient outcomes. Nurses often do have better ideas than management regarding what will heal the patient better and faster so if the employer is the pragmatic-practical type, they might even grant production decision making to a high power generating union.

On the other hand, janitors, for example, are low-wage workers and they represent a tiny fraction of the overall cost to the corporations whose buildings they clean. If the demand on the part of the union *is also low*, a mobilizing model with only a minority of workers and a handful of not-very-powerful community allies can "win." This is a typical Justice for Janitors campaign model, one I argue is based on that of the United Farm Workers. In this model, essentially all the employer needs is the union's guarantee that it will negotiate a "trigger agreement," meaning the small wage increase to the workers—fifty cents per hour or even one dollar per hour—won't take effect until it succeeds at getting all cleaning contractors in the area to agree to the terms. Because the cost is so low, the settlement is so cheap to the corporation as a ratio of cost to overall expenses, it's easy to shift even a conservative corporate owner to invoke his more practical business side and simply settle the workers' demands. I argue that little real power is developed from this version of mobilizing. Few worker leaders are developed, rarely are new

community leaders developed (they tend to be the already activist types), but the union expands its membership.

In terms of the disruption power of the organizing model, the missing element today is a more systematic approach to the community, using the same Mead-like strategic interaction principles embedded in the organizing tradition *inside* the workplace. With the exception of the Chicago Teachers Union, most organizing unions today rarely systematize their brilliant approach with workers on the inside by using an equally brilliant approach to the workers' own organic community on the outside. The Chicago Teachers Union, as I describe in chapter three, learned from the British Columbia Federation of Teachers that to win a massive and illegal strike, it had to have staunch support—active support, tested and well prepared for support—from parents. The Chicago teachers voted in a new leadership in 2010 that already met the first criteria for the organizing model; they believe the purpose of the union is to enable workers to radically change their lives in all aspects: the union as a tool for class struggle. As CORE (the caucus in the union before they won the 2010 election), the teachers had built “strong ties” to key community-and neighborhood-based groups throughout Chicago. But they saw the relationship with parents as something different from an alliance; the leadership understood that parents would be somehow decisive if they had to strike. They were right, and they had just enough of a direct rapport with parents directly and indirectly through their many community allies to beat Rahm Emanuel and save their union by *rebuilding it through a strike*.

The most profound success of the Chicago teachers strike was the building of powerful solidarities among and between teachers *and* among and between teachers and the whole of Chicago's working class. That their leader, Karen Lewis, an African American high school

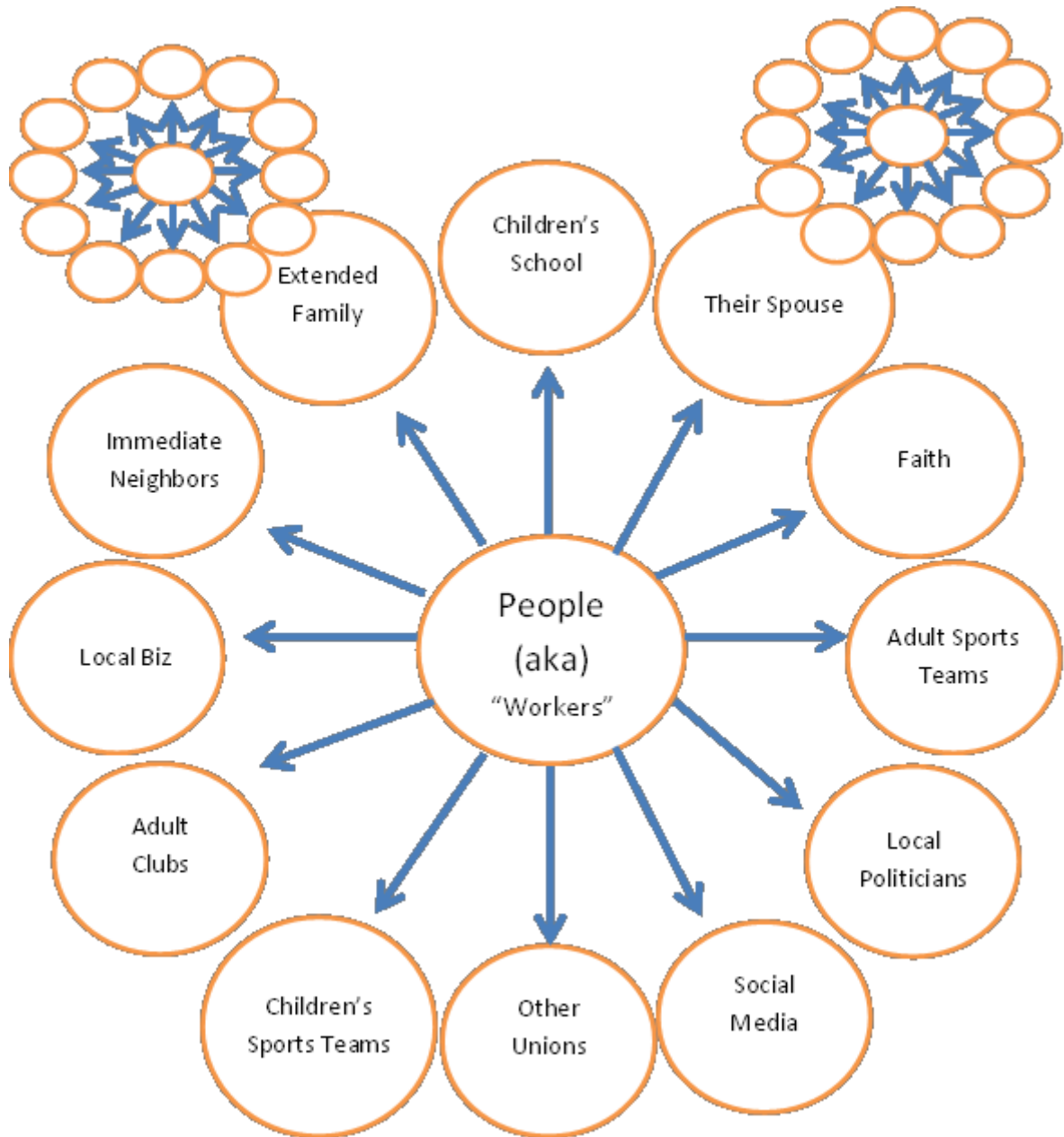
teacher, would go on to poll consistently as the most popular person in the city to challenge the incumbent in the mayoral race would have been utterly unimaginable before the strike.

The success of the national war on America's teachers has been pretty thorough going. The average "good liberal" will say he or she support unions, but not a teachers union. In Chicago, the teachers showed that Mead's concept of the generalized other can be transformed for the whole of the class when it is brought into the fight as partners, not merely through some self-interested community-labor coalition. Chicago changed—not just the teachers, not just the parents, not just the students—and its working class was given agency in an all-out fight for the right to have public schools in its neighborhoods, taught by teachers interested in staying with their kid. The working class also changed its view of teachers, schools, racism, neoliberalism, and the city's slick mayor. That doesn't happen through a messaging campaign or a mobilizing model.

The 1199 organizing locals are struggling to catch up to the CTU community aspect of this model, if they are struggling. The dominant power of the SEIU in their lives is pushing hard for these local unions to see minority-worker strategies and corporate campaigns as secondary power *if* they need more power in a given fight—this is presently *in contention* and there is not yet a decision. But the pressure is on as even the mighty 1199 locals feel the pain of the full-frontal assault on labor. To be more specific, their employers smell blood in a way they haven't in years: a combination of one state after another's falling to right-to-work laws, the results of the *Harris v. Quinn* Supreme Court case, and the relentless pressure of a parent union wedded to a mobilizing model filled with high-paid consultants peddling their services, which are certainly not about organizing deeply in the broader community.

There is enough evidence from Chicago and from experiments and test cases involving 1199 in the period under discussion in chapter three (namely, the Stamford Organizing Project) that when the community is strategically engaged in Mead-like interactions and enlisted as a partner in struggle—not an afterthought or rent-a-collar model—broad pressure can enable strikes and have a seriously constraining effect on employers, thereby creating conditions for workers in their own communities to win. This goes far beyond what’s commonly called labor-community-alliance building and even beyond what’s sometimes called social-movement unionism. This is an organizing model in the community, where time-tested methods of the best unions inside the workplace get put to work *outside* the workplace. This means the workers, not staff, are the primary agents of change. Where “chain and list work” are developed to unearth the organic leaders—the powerful among the nonelite forces in a given community—and where these forces are brought in as partners in struggle, not distant allies whose backs are scratched at award dinners and with occasional or constant donations from labor unions. Diagram #2 depicts the boundless relationships which workers can best access themselves in an organizing model extended from their workplaces into their communities.

**Diagram 2: Whole Worker Campaign Model, Networks**



Two recent books reinforce the potential influence of one of the most powerful forces left in American communities, the religious community, though neither author deploys an understanding of the organizing versus mobilizing model.

In Adam Reich's book *With God on Our Side*,<sup>310</sup> he argues that unions need to embrace the noneconomic and value-based motivations of health care workers. I agree, but Reich does not attend to why or how workers themselves—particularly health care, education, and other mission-driven workers, and *not* professional union staff—can and *must* be the agents. In Reich's single case study (the Santa Rosa hospital fight), staff, not the workers, lead the outside strategy. This may be a factor in why the employer was successful, for several years, in outmaneuvering the union's attempts to undermine the employer's credibility among religious players. Alinsky, writing about his first organizing campaign in the Back of the Yards, shows that he understood what today's labor leaders fail to: "It is obvious that the membership of this union is very closely related to the membership of the Catholic church. It is quite common to find that a steward or member of the Packinghouse Workers Organizing Committee is also an official of a Holy Name society or another religious organization."<sup>311</sup> I ask, had the tens of thousands of rank-and-file members of the union that Reich profiles—surely many of them members of houses of faith themselves—been tapped to use their own organic connections to the various churches, would it have been harder for the employer to set the union up as an outside third party?

Given the lack of moral authority of today's unions—especially but not exclusively as up against an employer viewed as having higher moral authority than organized labor, the progressive nuns who ran the hospital in Reich's case study—the union needs to systematically map their membership's connections to the many social forces and community ties among the rank and file. The strongest ties produce the strongest bonds, and those will *invariably exist*

*between the workers and their faith and community leaders, not between strangers, aka paid staff.* To blunt employers, the rank and file members' strong ties must replace today's pattern of paid staff doing the work the workers themselves can do. 1199's own Advice to Rookie Organizers needs to be directly extended to the model of engagement done with the broader community—including understanding how to tell the workers it's their community and then *behave* that way, and the postulate about not underestimating the workers. In Chicago, the results were stunning.

The second book, Jake Rosenfeld's *What Union's No Longer Do*,<sup>312</sup> makes several points with which I don't agree, namely those in his discussion of the public sector. He misses what motivates people to go to work for the public sector and almost falls prey to the right's message about the public sector as faceless, bureaucratic workers. He doesn't see the motivations of most public sector workers: the quiet beauty of public health nurses saving babies and mothers in county maternal health clinics; or stories of success, not tragedy, when social services workforces try and do rescue children from horrors in abusive households; or accounts of the guys who lay the baseball diamonds perfectly and on time each day so neighborhoods kids can enjoy sports in well-kept parks and engage in Mead's "Me" development stage. And the overall gestalt in government service where many workers feel a kind of pride to be serving their communities in the way soldiers feel pride in serving their nation. We don't treat our soldiers well, but we sure respect them more than nonsoldier government workers—ironically, soldiers are government workers too.

Rosenfeld's entire analysis about the wage gap not being as significant in the public sector simply misses the mark. Workers know they don't get *wage* gain from working for the government—for equivalent work, it's well known to be considerably less in the public than in



the private sector. Workers understand their lower wage will be made up for by significantly better benefits. He then analyzes the “retirement plans” of each sector and remarkably arrives at a similar close-to-equal-benefits-to-workers calculation and he declares them ‘not much different.’ Rosenfeld is dead wrong here too, even just factually. He says he didn’t have access to the *content* of the plans, so he simply did statistics on the percentage of employers who “offer” retirement plans. The vast majority of plans in the private sector don’t pay anywhere near enough to actually let people retire. They *do* in the public sector, which is why it’s top on Rauner’s hit list in Illinois.

But what Rosenfeld gets right—aside from overall message, which is good—is his discussion of religion. He has impressive regression analysis, which basically says there are only two forces in all society that have an equal and high rate of influence on how ordinary people vote: unions and religion. He describes how well the right has plied this, an intentional power move to build an evangelical base of voters, steadily growing while leftists in unions say, “I don’t like religion, I do class, that’s why I am not building relationships with *them*.” That’s an actual quote from an extremely successful organizer in an interview for this dissertation.

A good point Reich makes in his book is that a reason why unions should enter the moral values arena is of central importance: *it matters to the workers themselves*. If it matters to the workers, that is supposed to be enough for *good* union organizers. If faith matters to workers, I argue it has to matter to unions. Otherwise, the union remains a third party in the church—not of the member, but apart from. As Reverend Nelson says in the conclusion of chapter five—when the relationship is congregation member to faith leader and it’s a personal conversation about their congregation member—labor wins many new and often more powerful religious leaders to the cause of unions. That’s why this work is so much more important than devoting time to

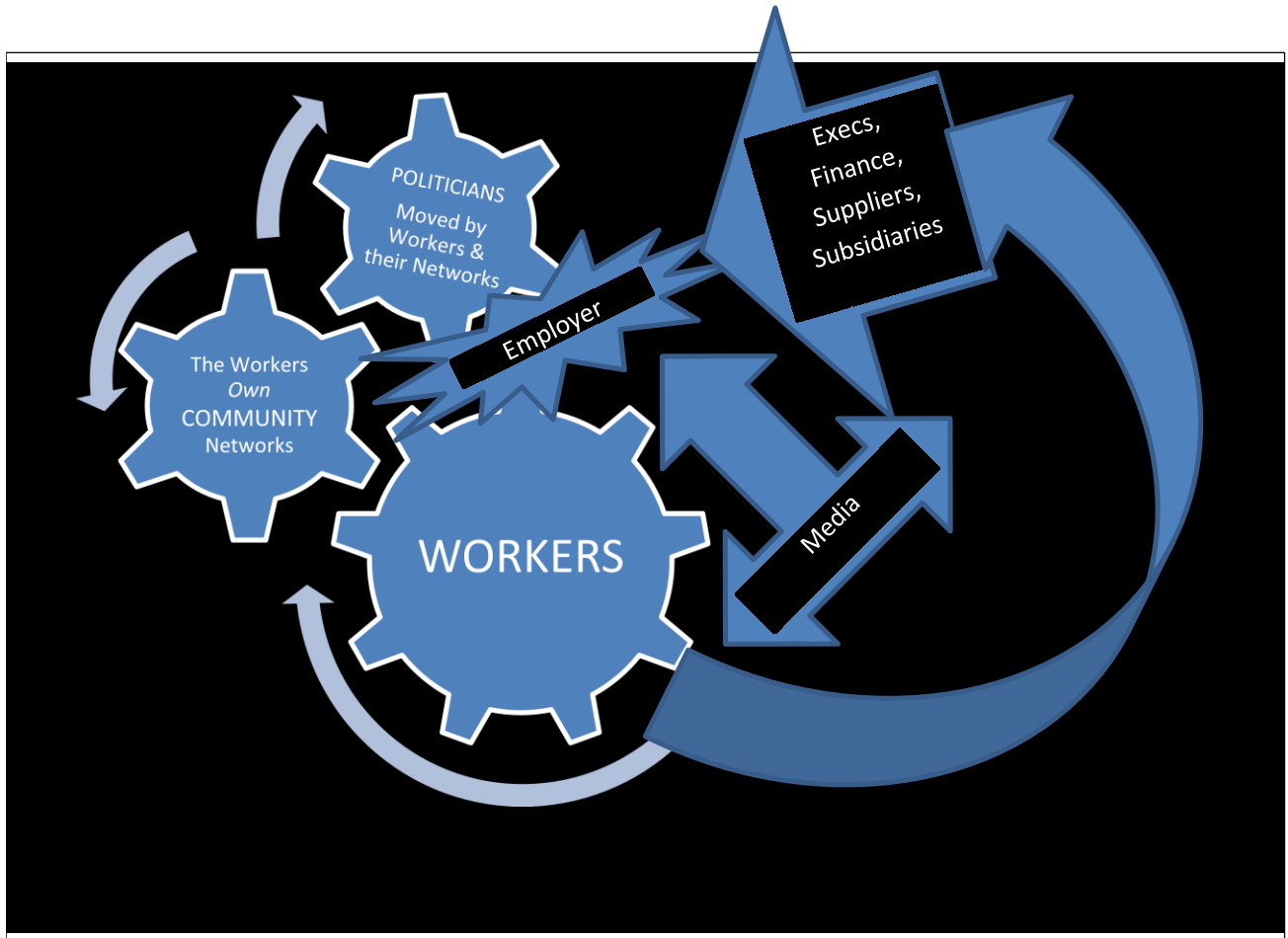
tactical maneuvers with one percenter shareholders or businesses in the supply chain of a corporate target.

For people in labor who say they don't like religion or, as I heard it, "I don't do religion, I do class," then they ought to at least view doing the work with religious leaders via their members *defensively* because as Rosenfeld points out, the right continues to expand into this base. And this base is voting for Walker and for Snyder and for the many Trifecta Red State power structures that promise to cut taxes by gutting public pensions to "give the little people, the hard workers in our state, a raise." The many statistics about religion and voting are the most important numbers in Rosenfeld's book because they don't tell us about the past, they tell us about the future. They hint loudly toward the strategy I am describing, after studying relative success and observing New Labor's twenty years of missed chances.

For the entire climate to change the way it did in Chicago, good unions need to engage the broader community in the fight so that the entire community, of which the workers are an organic part, transforms too. This would be an organizing model with a bottom-up strategy capable of movement building, not moment actualization. The large numbers of women in today's workforce—saddled with wage work and endless nonwage work—don't separate their lives in the way industrial era mostly male workers could, with one life beginning when they arrived at work and punched the clock, and another starting when they punched out. The pressing concerns that bear down on most workers today are not divided into two neat piles, only one of which should be of concern to unions, while the other pile gets divvied up among a dozen other weak interest groups. To effectively challenge neoliberal capitalism in the present moment, to successfully challenge the excessive corporate power that defines our era, organizing unions must create a whole worker organizing model that facilitates, not retards, large numbers of

Americans to make the connections between corporate domination of their work lives, their home lives, and political structures. Diagram #3 offers an illustration of what Chicago after 2010, Smithfield in the third round attempt, and Connecticut sometimes looks like when the whole union brings the whole community into the fight.

**Diagram 3: Whole Worker Campaign Model**  
**Workers as *Primary Lever* Drive All Other Parts of Strategy**



Original diagram made for this dissertation

## CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION: PRETEND POWER VERSUS ACTUAL POWER

The core argument of this dissertation is that for movements to exercise maximum power, the power required in the hardest campaigns, there is no substitute for a real, bottom-up organizing model. This argument involves a set of associated questions aimed at understanding the common elements of the most successful strategies in my case studies. The first common element involves movement actors correctly assessing the power required to win their demands. The second element involves developing good strategy. The third rests on whether a group can execute the strategy: in effect, can the approach chosen generate the power required to win?

My cases clearly demonstrate successful strategies being deployed in the new millennium, a period that is generally considered hostile to workers and especially to unions. I selected a range of cases that allowed an investigation of power, strategy, and collective action method, examining them against different levels of power required to achieve the group's demands. All cases involved workers making demands for change. Outside a union context, I examined low-wage immigrant workers trying to get their employers to pay them money owed. I analyzed two distinct approaches to nursing-home workers' forming unions between 2000 and 2014, the model of governance deployed by the unions once the workers were unionized, and the relative outcomes of the two strategies for the workers themselves. I examined one local teachers union over two decades—discussing their success before and after a major leadership change—to gage the relative success with the same group of workers under even more difficult circumstances but with different kinds of leaders. Similarly, I interrogated the different strategies of one union in its three attempts at helping manufacturing workers: in this case, the formation of a union in a meat-production factory in the state considered the most hostile to unions and with

the lowest percentage of unionized workers. I compared the strategies of the two defeats and the one big success.

Because production-crippling *majority* strikes were deployed in all three cases with the most success— Chicago’s teachers after 2010, Connecticut’s nursing-home employees, and North Carolina’s meat-production workers—I conclude that in order for workers to win substantial gains, the strike weapon is essential. More importantly, in chapter seven, I examined what is necessary for workers to deploy the strike again today on a mass scale. I conclude, drawing on the analysis in my cases, there are two clear and distinct models in and outside unions in the New Labor era, *only one of which can enable majority strikes*. I name these distinct models a mobilizing model and an organizing model, and I conclude they produce different levels of success. What I defined as a mobilizing model places primary agency on *staff* and is only capable of winning under certain restrictive conditions: those that do not require high levels of power. An organizing model, however, which instead places the primary agency for success on an *ever-expanding base of ordinary people*, can win even in more difficult circumstances, those requiring high levels of power. In each model, staff plays a very significant role, but the agent for building power is the key delineator.

Although my cases offer evidence of the superior power of the organizing model, its effects are not ubiquitous. It does not work under all circumstances at all times, but it does work considerably better than the mobilizing model when up against powerful opponents. In situations of total repression, organizing will not work. In the case of workers who had decades of bad experiences with unions, it will be harder but not impossible to gain success (Steve Lopez showed us how, even under the conditions of workers with bad union experiences, good organizing did succeed). In the case of a benevolent employer—where workers are given agency

and respect, and where the employer meets or exceeds the pay and benefits of unionized workers—it is unlikely to work (given typical employer behavior, this is not a threat to the organizing model).

Paying close attention to today's conditions and looking at which sectors in the U.S. economy are expanding or at least stable, with little or no threat of exit, and being mindful of the workforce of these sectors, I suggest that success is contingent not only on the organizing model as it has been deployed by a handful of successful unions inside the workplace, but that for even these unions to keep winning, the model must be expanded to into the community *via the workers* themselves. The agency for labor's community actions to be as successful as the best workplaces' must rest with workers, not staff. Today's good organizing unions face a choice: see the community their members live in (and unorganized workers) as their secondary power strategy, or, surrender to overpaid consultants who promise perfect messaging, high quality consumer data as strategy, and slick but fake community-labor alliances.

Drawing on my case studies, I conclude that this expanded vision of the organizing model, one that bridges the workplace and the community via the workers, is more capable of winning in the hardest fights than labor's chosen weapon of the past twenty years: the corporate campaign. I explored the roots of the corporate campaign model and linked them to the legacy and the ideas most closely linked to "organizing" from the early 1970s on, those of Saul Alinsky. I argue that in 1995, despite the promise of bold new organizing, the Alinsky-influenced New Labor leaders ushered in an era of election-less unions, workerless unionization growth deals, and contracts settled by national agreements between union and corporate lawyers rather than by actual committees consisting of actual workers. They converted a tactic, mobilizing, into a model.

Ironically, Alinsky's brilliant understanding of power, strategy, and tactics has morphed into New Labor's grossly disproportionate emphasis on the corporate campaign—good rope twisted into a noose. It is not that unions do not need smart research; they do. But smart research should augment, not replace, workers as the primary source of leverage against employers. Smart union research departments could shift from corporate-focused research to geographic power structure analysis, involving workers themselves in the research methods. With workers as research partners in the community, the strategy of understanding who holds power, how and why, and, how to change it, can be arrived at for less money than high paid consultants, and, this process can teach the workers about power in their own community.

In the latest effort to avoid engaging workers in their own liberation, during interviews conducted for this dissertation, organizers described the latest schema: flowing directly from the Obama campaign's data driven success in 2008 and again in 2012, the consultant industrial complex that straddles national unions and the national Democratic Party is now persuading unions that they can spend tens of millions “purchasing” consumer data bases, meaning data gathered and aggregated by search engines like Google, and develop predictive models for which workers might be inclined to vote yes for a union. This is incredibly expensive, and, like polling and pollsters, it derives this ‘data’ outside the context of an employer fight, rendering it as absurd as the promise of framing-alone for the past two decades. Data, like messaging, can be useful but not when the people driving the data and driving the polling are also driving transactional one-time get-out-the-vote efforts. Transformational experiences come through high risk collective action, not computer geeks crunching data.

Some of the misunderstanding of the promise of the corporate campaign, which is characterized by minimal worker involvement, stems from which kind of sectors, what type of



workers, and what the relative concession costs will mean to the employer. A handful of so-called authentic messengers and a minority of workers engaged might work for a Justice for Janitors campaign, where concession costs are a *tiny* fraction of those in a hospital workers' campaign, or of the pension plan that actually facilitates a real retirement still enjoyed by 30,000 teachers in Chicago. High concession costs require high power. The Koch brothers and the power elite today require high power if progressives are to reclaim the country from the corporate right.

The greatest damage to our movements today has been the shift in identity of the agent of change: workers and ordinary people, or cape-wearing, sword-wielding, swashbuckling staff. It's not that having fulltime paid organizers isn't important. It's how they understand their role, and, the emphasis on the identification and development of the real organic leaders in the base that is missing. Without this reorientation in focus, today's movements can't get to scale. Scale comes from seriously skilling up the organic leaders among the masses of ordinary people.

As discussed in detail in chapter seven, Alinsky obscured the issue of agency by declaring that there are *organizers* and there are *leaders*: the organizer is a behind-the-scenes individual who is not a leader, who does not have anything to do with decision making, and who must come from *outside* the community; the leaders must come from the base constituency, and they make all the decisions. Yet near the beginning of his chapter "The Education of the Organizer," Alinsky writes, "Since organizations are created, in large part, by the organizer, we must find out what creates the organizer." He then reveals his real point:

"Those out of their local communities who were trained on the job achieved certain levels and were at the end of their line. If one thinks of an organizer as a highly imaginative and creative architect and engineer then the best we have been able to train on the job were skilled

plumbers, electricians, and carpenters, all essential to the building and maintenance of their community structure but incapable of going elsewhere to design and execute a new structure in a new community.”<sup>313</sup>

By “on the job,” he means grassroots leaders. Outsiders are “imaginative and creative architects,” and community members are “plumbers and electricians.” This inviolable Alinskyist principle relates directly to a core strategy of the New Labor era, the distinction between organizer and leader, and the corollary between external organizing and servicing. External organizing is the supreme driver, and existing worker-leaders and the shop floor are relegated to the backseat (maybe even the trunk). The result is the kind of ineffectual contract “negotiated” for Washington’s nursing home workers, which stripped them of shop-floor rights, of real negotiations, and of the right to strike, and resulted in marginal material gain at best.

New Labor’s efforts at developing a more robust political program, considered a hallmark of the post-1995 era, have not made matters better, and for the same reason: the focus has been away from the shop floor. The union’s chief priority was massively increasing the *money* unions raised and coordinated for the Democratic Party. But while labor unions ponyed up more and more for election coffers—mostly at the national level—big-business groups working with right-wing forces got busy on two frontal salvos that would obliterate union hopes of competing in the election-spending game. They plotted a legal strategy in the courts that resulted in the Citizens United and McCutcheon decisions, blowing the doors open on campaign spending. And they developed their own evangelically antiunion candidates and ran them in local and state races, an effort culminating in the 2010 election cycle—a disaster for workers and their communities (and repeated in 2014). Tellingly, in the wake of the 2010 election, Wisconsin’s new governor, Scott Walker, provoked a showdown with the state’s public-sector unions. After

stripping these workers of their collective-bargaining rights, Walker faced a union-financed recall campaign and he won. Yet in the vote, fully thirty-eight percent of union households voted to retain Walker. The margin of victory for a recall existed well within Wisconsin's union households; unfortunately, all the union financing in the world will not matter if the union's rank-and-file members do not understand who is causing their problems, or why, before they go into the voting booth. Walker's re-election in 2014, like Michigan's Rick Snyder's re-election after instituting right-to-work rule, feels as if someone is hitting the replay button over and over again. Data geeks may have mobilized enough first time voters in a Presidential election cycle, but obviously, each mid-term election cycle produces bigger and bigger disasters. Mobilizing is not a substitute for organizing.

The community-organizing sector today is weak, and labor is weak—and weak plus weak does not add up to the strength that can stem the antilabor tide. Forty years of Alinsky-inspired community organizing have not done it, seventy years of business unionism have not done it, and the past twenty years of what amounts to a mobilizing model veneered as a robust organizing plan to revitalize unions, centered on relegating workers to one of a dozen points of leverage, have not done it either. It is pretend power and it is not fooling the employers.

At this point there is almost no organization left among private-sector workers, and if the corporate right succeeds, this will soon be true among the public sector too. Sprightly strategy and cunning tactics matter, but labor cannot “jijitsu” its way out of its demise. Furthermore, it is time to acknowledge that growth strategies and theories that rely on giving workers *less* say in the workplace only compound the problems of unaccountability that put New Labor and its promises of reform in power in the first place. New Labor desperately needs to return to bottom-up base-building as its core strategy: organizing, not *merely* mobilizing.

Given the differences in relationship to the broader community implied by service workers versus factory production workers today, the organizing model must systematically extend charting and list work into the broader community. By first identifying organic leaders in the workplace and by enabling workers to sharpen their understanding of how to win tough fights, labor can grow an army that will meaningfully engage with its own organic network in the broader community and in the political arena. Given that the low-to-no exit workplaces with strategic power are heavily female, imagine producing hundreds of Karen Lewis' in every community across the United States? Karen Lewis was one of hundreds of top tier mostly women leaders who was developed in struggle, *through a strike*. The Whole Worker model offers a way to overcome the silos brilliantly analyzed by Ira Katznelson in *City Trenches* because it *structures* class into the community via rank-and-file union members. This is a considerably different approach from today's labor-community coalitions, which reinforce rather than resolve the Katznelson divide.

Unions are under pressure from extraordinary external forces. But unions are also dying from the inside out. Although many of the external factors would be difficult for unions to change, deciding to return to a bottom-up organizing that encourages and equips workers to resist the multifaceted assault on their interests inside and outside the workplace is within the decision-making control of today's unions.

There are no shortcuts.

## NOTES &amp; WORKS CITED

<sup>1</sup> Which unions constitute New Labor? I combine a few: CTW is short for the Change-to-Win Federation. Technically, the UMC and the UFW were also on the CTW list initially. Another commonly used list was developed by Kate Bronfenbrenner and Roger Hickey in Ruth Milkman and Kim Voss's 2004 *Organizing and Organizers in the New Union Movement* (Cornell ILR), accessed here through the digital commons. I also factored in the list of which unions in 1995 initially voted not to back Kirkland in the AFL-CIO election, and then the slightly different list of which unions ultimately backed Sweeney in the election. In the end, I blend them to arrive at a rough list of the most common unions that might be called New Labor.

	CTW	Bronfenbrenner-Hickey
SEIU	X	X
UNITE HERE	X	X
AFSCME		X
UAW		X
CWA		X
UFCW	X	
LIUNA	X	
IBT	X	

<sup>2</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, January 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Labor Research Review, *Planning to Win, Taking a Comprehensive Approach to Labor's Corporate Campaign* (Cornell ILR, 1993). The authors declare the UFW Grape Boycott as the first; the website of Corporate Campaign Inc., Ray Rogers firm, declares the start as 1976; for an interesting view with heavy emphasis on Alinsky as the originating influence, see also Manheim, Jarol B, *Trends in Union Corporate Campaigns: A Briefing Book* (Washington, DC Chamber of Commerce, 2005)

<sup>4</sup> Getman, Julius G., *Restoring the Power of Unions* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010); Richard Hurd, "The Failure of Organizing, the New Unity Partnership, and the Future of the Labor Movement," *Working USA*, Vol. 8, September 2004, pp 5–25.

<sup>5</sup> Many of these accords include language that constrains future action by workers and their community, for example, in a particularly well-publicized agreement between SEIU and nursing home operators in California, the union leaders agreed to surrender the future union member's right to arbitration or strike, and the union agreed to block workers from testifying or speaking about poor conditions inside California nursing homes.

<sup>6</sup> Foster, William Z., *Organizing Methods in the Steel Industry* (New York, NY: Workers Library Publishers, 1936)

<sup>7</sup> Alinsky, Saul, *Reveille for Radicals* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1946)

<sup>8</sup> Huare, Quinton; and Nowell Smith, Geoffrey, edited and translated; *Antonio Gramsci: Selections from Prison Notebooks* (London, UK: Lawrence and Wishart, 1999)

- <sup>9</sup> Thompson, E.P., *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York, NY: Random House, 1966) p 11
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 189–190
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p 198
- <sup>12</sup> Durkheim, Émile, *The Division of Labor* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1997)
- <sup>13</sup> Gerth, H.H.; and Mills, C. Wright, *From Max Weber* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009) pp 180
- <sup>14</sup> Brecher, Jeremy, *Strike*, (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2014) and Payne, Charles, *I've Got the Light of Freedom, The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995)
- <sup>15</sup> This narrative, like most, serves to maintain the legal fiction that we don't have to honor the many treaties signed with the various tribes, for if the tribes won, huge swaths of western lands would no longer be available for massive corporate welfare in the form of grazing rights for big agricultural multinational interests.
- <sup>16</sup> de Tocqueville, Alexis, *Democracy in America* (New York, NY: Penguin, 2003)
- <sup>17</sup> Thompson, op. cit., p 198
- <sup>18</sup> Gary Alan Fine, "The Sad Demise, Mysterious Disappearance, and Glorious Triumph of Symbolic Interactionism," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 1993. 19:61–87
- <sup>19</sup> Mead, George Herbert, *Mind, Self and Society, From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1934); Part III, 18. The Self and the Organism, p 174
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 119, 120, 151, 184
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 22–23
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 25, 189
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 191, 192
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p 409
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p 189, 393, 409, 438
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p 196
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p 207
- <sup>28</sup> Hoare, op. cit.
- <sup>29</sup> Piven and Cloward, "Rule Making and Rule Breaking," in Janoski, Thomas; Alford, Robert; Hicks, Alexander; and Schwartz, Mildred A., *The Handbook of Political Sociology* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005)
- <sup>30</sup> Mills, C. Wright, *The Marxists* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1962) p 12
- <sup>31</sup> Horwitz, Sanford D., *Let Them Call Me Rebel, Saul Alinsky: His Life and Legacy* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1992)
- <sup>32</sup> See Donald C. Reitzes and Dietrich Reitzes, "Saul Alinsky: An Applied Symbolic Interactionist," *Symbolic Interaction*, 15(1): 1–24, 1992; and Donald C. Reitzes and Dietrich Reitzes, "Alinsky in the 1980's: Two Contemporary Chicago Community Organizations," *The Sociological Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (Summer 1987), pp 265–283
- <sup>33</sup> Stepan-Norris; Zeitlan, Maurice, *Left Out: Reds and America's Industrial Unions* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2002)
- <sup>34</sup> Eric Norden, "An Interview With Saul Alinsky," *Playboy*, March 1972, p 14
- <sup>35</sup> Andie Collier and Daniel Libit, "Conservatives use Liberal Playbook," *Politico*, September 18, 2009, <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0909/27285.html>: "And the 1971 agitator's

handbook *Rules for Radicals* — written by Saul Alinsky, the Chicago community organizer who was the subject of [Hillary Clinton's](#) senior thesis and whose teachings helped shape Barack Obama's work on Chicago's South Side — has been among Amazon's top 100 sellers for the past month, put there in part by people who 'also bought' books by Michelle Malkin, [Glenn Beck](#), and South Carolina Republican Sen. [Jim DeMint](#). Yes, the same folks who brought you Obama the socialist have been appropriating the words and ways of leftists past — and generally letting their freak flags fly.”

<sup>36</sup> Alinsky, Saul, *An Unauthorized Biography of John L. Lewis* (GP Putnam & Sons, 1949)

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, page ix

<sup>38</sup> Fox Piven, Frances; and Cloward, Richard, *Poor Peoples Movements, Why They Succeed, How They Fail* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1977)

<sup>39</sup> Brecher, Jeremy, *Strike* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2014)

<sup>40</sup> Piven and Cloward, *Rule Making and Rule Breaking*, op. cit.

<sup>41</sup> Piven and Cloward, *Rule Making and Rule Breaking*, op. cit., p 51: “Our argument about interdependent power may provide a conceptual bridge between social structure and the self-conscious and purposeful actor. We think the ability of human agents to invent new interpretations and action strategies in the face of dominant interpretations, including strategies that defy authoritative rules, may be rooted in their experience in social life and specifically their own contributions to the web of interdependencies that constitute social structure.”

<sup>42</sup> Fox Piven, Frances, *Challenging Authority, How Ordinary People Change America* (Maryland, Rowman and Littlefield, 2006)

<sup>43</sup> Judith Stepan-Norris and Maurice Zeitlin, *Left Out, Red and America's Industrial Unions* — (Cambridge University Press, 2002)

<sup>44</sup> J. Craig Jenkins and Charles Perrow, “Insurgency of the Powerless: Farmworker Movements (1946 to 1972),” *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (April 1977), pp 249–268

<sup>45</sup> John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, “Resource Mobilization and Social Movements, A Partial Theory,” *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 82, No. 6 (May 1977), pp 1212–1241

<sup>46</sup> Marshall Ganz, “Resources and Resourcefulness: Strategic Capacity in Unionization of California Agriculture, 1959–1966,” *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 105, Issue 4 (January 2000) pp 1003–1062. Reference here is to pp 1014–1015.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p 1013

<sup>48</sup> Piven and Cloward, *Rule Making*, op. cit., p 43

<sup>49</sup> Fantasia, Rick, *Cultures of Solidarity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988)

<sup>50</sup> Kimeldorf, Howard, *Reds or Rackets: The Making of Radical and Conservative Unions on the Waterfront* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985)

<sup>51</sup> Leon Fink and Brian Greenburg, *Upheaval in the Quiet Zone, A History of Hospital Workers Union, Local 1199* (University of Illinois Press, 1989)

<sup>52</sup> Barry Hirsch, Georgia State University, and David Macpherson, Trinity University; UnionStats.com, which compiles statistics from the Current Population Survey database

<sup>53</sup> The Union Membership and Coverage Database (unionstats.com) is a resource providing private- and public-sector labor-union membership, coverage, and density estimates compiled from the monthly household Current Population Survey using BLS methods. Its economy-wide estimates begin in 1973; estimates by state, detailed industry, and detailed

occupation begin in 1983; and estimates by metropolitan area begin in 1986. The Database, constructed by Barry Hirsch (Andrew Young School of Policy Studies, Georgia State University) and David Macpherson (Department of Economics, Trinity University), was created in 2002 and is updated annually.

<sup>54</sup> Kimeldorf, op. cit., p 15

<sup>55</sup> Stepan-Norris and Zeitlan, op. cit.

<sup>56</sup> Fantasia, op. cit, p 233

<sup>57</sup> See Stepan-Norris and Zeitlan, and Nelson Lichtenstein

<sup>58</sup> Steven Greenhouse, “Some Union Organizers Object to Tactics,” *New York Times*, November 18, 2009

<sup>59</sup> Teresa Sharpe, “Union Democracy and Successful Campaigns: the Dynamics of Staff Authority and Worker Participation in an Organizing Union,” in Milkman, Ruth; and Voss, Kim, *Rebuilding Labor, Organizing and Organizers in the New Union Movement* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004)

<sup>60</sup> Evelyn Pringle, “Beverly Enterprises—Poster Child of Fraud And Neglect in Nursing Home Industry,” Lawyers and Settlements.com (retrieved Nov. 28, 2014):

[http://www.lawyersandsettlements.com/articles/nursing-home-abuse/Beverly\\_Enterprises\\_Fraud-00210.html](http://www.lawyersandsettlements.com/articles/nursing-home-abuse/Beverly_Enterprises_Fraud-00210.html)

<sup>61</sup> Rosenfeld, Jake, *What Unions No Longer Do* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014)

<sup>62</sup> Sam Gindin, “Rethinking Unions, Registering Socialism,” in Panitch, Leo; Albo, Greg; and Chibber, Vivek, *The Question of Strategy, Socialist Register* (Wales, UK: Merlin Press, 2012). Doogan, Kevin, *New Capitalism? The Transformation of Work*, (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2009). McCallum, Jamie, *Global Unions, Local Power, The New Spirit of Transnational Labor Organizing* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013)

<sup>63</sup> Gindin, op. cit.

<sup>64</sup> Fine, Janice, “Community Unions and the Revival of the American Labor Movement,” *Politics and Society*, Vol. 33, No. 1, March 2005, pp 153–199

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Milkman, Ruth, *LA Story: Immigrant Workers and the Future of the US Labor Movement* (New York, NY: Russell Sage, 2006)

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Fine, op. cit.

<sup>70</sup> Milkman, Ruth; and Ott, Ed, *New Labor in New York, Precarious Workers and the Future of the Labor Movement* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), p 185

<sup>71</sup> Clawson, Dan, *The Next Upsurge: Labor and the New Social Movements* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003)

<sup>72</sup> Jihye Chun, Jennifer, *Organizing at the Margins, the Symbolic Politics of Labor in South Korea and the United States*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009)

<sup>73</sup> Fletcher, Jr., Bill; and Gapasin, Fernando, *Solidarity Divided, The Crisis in Organized Labor and a Path Forward*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009)

<sup>74</sup> Tattersal, Amanda, *Power in Coalition, Strategies for Strong Unions and Social Change* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell ILR Press, 2010)



<sup>75</sup> Putnam, Robert, *Bowling Alone, Collapse and Survival of the American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000)

<sup>76</sup> Gindin, op. cit.

<sup>77</sup> Gabriel Hetland and Jeff Goodwin, “The Strange Disappearance of Capitalism from Social Movement Studies,” in Colin Barker, Laurences Cox, John Krinsky, and Alf Gunvald Nilsen, *Marxism and Social Movements* (Leiden, Brill; 2013)

<sup>78</sup> Joseph Luders, “The Economics of Movement Success: Business Responses to Civil Rights Mobilizations,” *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. III, No. 4 (January 2006), pp 963–998

<sup>79</sup> Because private election accords such as Local 775’s conduct unionization outside the National Labor Relations Board framework, and therefore outside government reported or publicly available data, I relied on an email from the local union as well as conversations with former staff of the local.

<sup>80</sup> Taken from Ballotpedia, an interactive almanac of US politics, retrieved Nov. 28, 2014: [http://ballotpedia.org/Washington\\_In-Home\\_Care\\_Services\\_Initiative\\_775\\_%282001%29](http://ballotpedia.org/Washington_In-Home_Care_Services_Initiative_775_%282001%29)

<sup>81</sup> I was directly involved in the tail end of these machinations as National Deputy Director for Strategic Campaigns for the Healthcare Division of SEIU. Specifically, I was sent to address what was considered a rough transition of the non-nurses into the nurses union in Seattle. I was privy to many background briefings and memos, etc.

<sup>82</sup> Harold Meyerson, “The Seeds of a New Labor Movement,” *American Prospect*, Fall 2014

<sup>83</sup> Internal memos and PowerPoint presentations in author’s possession

<sup>84</sup> Sal Rosselli’s refusal to go along with this deal is widely considered a key reason for the national union’s subsequent trusteeship of United Healthcare Workers West, UHW.

<sup>85</sup> Ralph Thomas, “Union, Nursing Home Alliance Team Up,” *Seattle Times*, March 20, 2007; and portions of the agreement in author’s possession.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Author interview with Paul Kumar, August, 2014

<sup>88</sup> Extracted from Local #775’s Collective Bargaining Agreement with Avamere Georgian House of Lakewood, 9-1-2013 through 8-31-2015. Available on the union’s website. Retrieved Aug. 17, 2014.

<sup>89</sup> Zach Schonfeld, “Seattle Adopts \$15-an-Hour Minimum Wage,” *Newsweek*, June 13, 2014

<sup>90</sup> Foster, op. cit.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Author interview with Jerry Brown, who apprenticed under Davis and Godoff, May 2013

<sup>94</sup> In author’s possession

<sup>95</sup> Find and Greenburg, op. cit.; and Bernie Mintor’s manual, in author’s possession

<sup>96</sup> In author’s possession

<sup>97</sup> Author interview with Campaign Director Jonathan Rosenblum, the winning SEATAC (Seattle Airport) Campaign, and former organizer for 1199New England (his early training) and later an organizer who toggled between Local 775 and local 1199North West.

<sup>98</sup> Training materials developed by and in the possession of author while working for SEIU

<sup>99</sup> Federal Mediation and Conciliation Services, FMCS, Work Stoppages Data, 2000 to 2013

<sup>100</sup> Contracts in author’s possession

<sup>101</sup> Author interview with Jerry Brown, May 2013

<sup>102</sup> Minimum wage in CT=\$8.70 in Oct. 2014 and \$9.15 in Jan. 2015; Minimum wage in WA=\$9.32 in October 2014 and \$9.47 Jan. 2015.

<sup>103</sup> Ralph Thomas, "Union, Nursing Home Alliance Team Up" *Seattle Times*, March 20, 2007

<sup>104</sup> Author interview with Brendan Williams, December 2014

<sup>105</sup> All statistics here were taken from "Quick Facts, US Census" website (retrieved June 8, 2014).

<sup>106</sup> Until September 2014, when customer service agents at American Airlines voted to unionize, the Smithfield win was the largest in decades. For the American story, see Jad Mouawad, "After American Airlines-US Airways Merger, Agents Vote to Unionize," *New York Times*, September 16, 2014.

<sup>107</sup> BLS January 2014 news release of the most recent numbers of the 2013 Current Population Survey

<sup>108</sup> Author's email consultation with economist Dean Baker, who crunched the math for this article (dated May 27, from Dean Baker).

<sup>109</sup> Bob Herbert, "Where the Hogs Come First," *New York Times*, June 15, 2006

<sup>110</sup> Louis Compa, "Blood, Sweat and Fear, Workers Rights in US Meat and Poultry Plants," <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2005/01/24/blood-sweat-and-fear>, January 25, 2006, (retrieved June 7, 2014).

<sup>111</sup> Website searches conducted June 2014, United Food and Commercial Workers Union. The other three unions that merged with the PWOC to form the modern union are the Barbers, Beauticians and Allied Industries International Association; Boot and Shoe Workers Union; and the Retail Clerks International Union.

<sup>112</sup> Stepan-Norris, Judith; and Zeitlin, Maurice, *Left Out, Red and America's Industrial Unions* (Cambridge University Press, 2002)

<sup>113</sup> Saul Alinsky, "Community Analysis and Organization," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 46, No. 6 (May 1941), pp 797-808

<sup>114</sup> Sinclair, Upton, *The Jungle: The Uncensored Version* (Amherst, MA: Seven Treasures Publications, 2011)

<sup>115</sup> The National Labor Relations Board, Decision and Order, The Smithfield Packing Company, Inc, Tar Heel Division, and the United Food and Commercial Workers Local 204, AFL-CIO, CLC, December 16, 2004. In author's possession. Also available: [http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CB4QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fapps.nlr.gov%2Flink%2Fdocument.aspx%2F09031d458018d57a&ei=IPI5Vf3jGYHdsAW554CYBQ&usq=AFQjCNEcFNb\\_69cjK\\_9AXu5ZA4izKSm1Tw&vm=bv.91427555,d.b2w](http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CB4QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fapps.nlr.gov%2Flink%2Fdocument.aspx%2F09031d458018d57a&ei=IPI5Vf3jGYHdsAW554CYBQ&usq=AFQjCNEcFNb_69cjK_9AXu5ZA4izKSm1Tw&vm=bv.91427555,d.b2w)

<sup>116</sup> Vote tallies from "Key dates in fight to unionize Smithfield plant," Associated Press Financial Wire, December 5, 2008, via LEXIS

<sup>117</sup> Author interview with Roz Pellas, May 2014

<sup>118</sup> This aspect of Smithfield actually encouraging illegal migration over the border is covered extensively in David Bacon's *The Right to Stay Home: How US Policy Drives Immigration* (Beacon Press, September 2014). The author profiles and documents migrant Mexican hog farmers who lost their livelihoods when Smithfield relocated workers from Mexico to North Carolina.

<sup>119</sup> NLRB decision, op. cit.

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<sup>120</sup> FAST is a semi-autonomous department within the AFL-CIO, a vestige of the merger between the CIO and the AFL in the 1950s. It was established by the constitution of the AFL-CIO, and, it represented the ten unions in food-related industries. Its two top directors, Jeff Fieldler and Gene Bruskin, were elected constitutional officers of the AFL-CIO.

<sup>121</sup> Getman, Julius, *Restoring the Power of Unions* (New Haven: CT: Yale University Press) 2010

<sup>122</sup> Kate Bronfenbrenner has written extensively about comprehensive campaigns.

<sup>123</sup> Author interview with Gene Bruskin, June 2014

<sup>124</sup> He stayed at FAST, was its payroll, and on loan to UFCW directly. UFCW paid FAST the salary that FAST paid Bruskin. Technically, FAST at that time had actually morphed into Research Associates of America because of the Change-To-Win breakaway from the AFL-CIO, which ruptured both money flow: the AFL-CIO was refusing to allow breakaway unions to work with FAST, since it was an AFL-CIO constitutional body.

<sup>125</sup> Bruskin, op. cit.

<sup>126</sup> Author interview with Keith Ludlum, May 2014

<sup>127</sup> United States Court of Appeals, District of Columbia Circuit, Case No 05-1004; argued March 9, 2006; decided May 5, 2006. In author's possession.

<sup>128</sup> Sherri Bufkin, former manager, Smithfield Packing Company, Tar Heel, North Carolina; U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee Hearing, June 20, 2002

<sup>129</sup> Charlie LeDuff, "At a Slaughterhouse, Some Things Never Die," *New York Times*, June 16, 2000

<sup>130</sup> Jerry Kammer, "Immigration Raids at Smithfield, How an ICE Enforcement Action Boosted Union Organizing and the Hiring of Americans," The Center for Immigration Studies, Washington DC, July 2009; <http://cis.org/SmithfieldImmigrationRaid-Unionization>.

<sup>131</sup> Author interviews with workers and organizers, all of whom confirmed these percentages, May 2014

<sup>132</sup> John Ramsey and Sarah A. Reid, "Race and the Union," *Fayetteville Observer*, December 2, 2008; Kristin Collins, "Raids Aided Union in Tar Heel Plant," *Raleigh News and Observer*, January 1, 2009

<sup>133</sup> Kate Bronfenbrenner on the PBS *Newshour*, February 26, 2014. Transcription available at <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/unions-offer-american-workers-today/>

<sup>134</sup> LeDuff, op. cit.

<sup>135</sup> From the NLRB's investigation into Ludlum's firing: "Respondent's former employee Keith Ludlum testified that on January 26, 1994, he was in the locker room on break getting employee Steve Ray to fill out a union authorization card; that Ray asked him if he could get fired or harassed for filling out the card and he told Ray that he was protected by National Labor laws; that Supervisor Tony Murchinson walked into the locker room while Ray was filling out the card; that Murchinson said to Ray, '[H]ey I wouldn't do that. You will get fired'; that he [Ludlum] told Murchinson that he just violated the Labor laws and it was illegal for him to say what he just said; that Murchinson told him that he could not do it on company time and he told Murchinson that he and the employee were on break; that Murchinson told him that he could not do it on company property and he told Murchinson that he could as long as they were on break; and that Ray then tried to give him the card back."

Later, in the same NLRB investigation report: “Respondent’s former employee Keith Ludlum testified that on February 2, 1994, while he was handbilling employees with union representatives at the front of the plant, he saw Danny Priest, who is in charge of security at the plant, and Kevin Peak; that they were parked on the grass about 15 to 20 feet away from the handbillers; and that whenever someone in a vehicle accepted a handbill he saw Peak looking at the back of the car, say something and Priest appeared to be writing something. On cross-examination Ludlum testified that Priest and Peak stayed there for about 30 to 45 minutes; that he could not see what Priest was writing on; that he saw a pen in Priest’s hand; and that he had seen them parked out there before.”

<sup>136</sup> One indication, of many, that the employer did not intend to honor its promise to follow the 1997 order was that it was refusing to put illegally fired workers back in the plant. Why the union missed these clues underscores its incompetence.

<sup>137</sup> NLRB report, op. cit.

<sup>138</sup> Author interview with Ollie Hunt, May 2014

<sup>139</sup> Ironically, this issue of just how long it took workers to get to work, including to where the employer stationed their time clock, would become an issue in the first contract negotiations. The Livestock workers won the right to a parking lot in the back, and, saved over one hour each day of walking the plant in unpaid status. These same workers now had the legal right to walk through their own factory anytime, often in paid status, to conduct union building efforts post contract settlement.

<sup>140</sup> LeDuff, op. cit.

<sup>141</sup> Author interview with Gene Bruskin, May 2014

<sup>142</sup> Author interview with Terry Slaughter, May 2014

<sup>143</sup> Steven Greenhouse, “Hundreds, All Non Union, Walk Out at Pork Plant,” *New York Times*, November 17, 2006; Al Greenwood, “Smithfield Workers Return,” *Fayetteville Observer*, November 19, 2006

<sup>144</sup> Greenhouse, op. cit.

<sup>145</sup> The following year, with the threat of actions once again and the percentage of African American workers having grown, Smithfield Foods granted workers in *all* nonunion Smithfield Foods plants a paid Martin Luther King holiday.

<sup>146</sup> Kevin Maurer, “Latinos Walk off the Job,” *Fayetteville Observer*, January 28, 2007

<sup>147</sup> Author interview with Rev. Nelson Johnson, May 2014

<sup>148</sup> Johnson, op. cit.

<sup>149</sup> Baldemar Velasquez founded and a 501c3 nonprofit mutual aid and community organization called the Farm Labor Organizing Committee. FLOC represented the only real organizing among Latinos in North Carolina, starting mostly as a migrant workers organization because when it began, almost none were immigrants. Rather, they were migrants moving in for the harvest season and back out again.

<sup>150</sup> Author interview with Sarita Gupta, May 2014

<sup>151</sup> Author interview with Rev. William Barber, May 2014

<sup>152</sup> [http://www.htadgroup.com/legacy/Our\\_Journey/index.html#/20/](http://www.htadgroup.com/legacy/Our_Journey/index.html#/20/)

<sup>153</sup> <http://www.indyweek.com/indyweek/tar-heel-pinkertons/Content?oid=1195248>

<sup>154</sup> Author interview with Bob Geary, May 2014

<sup>155</sup> <http://www.ufcw.org/about/>

<sup>156</sup> Author interview with Sarita Gupta, May 2014

<sup>157</sup> “Jobs with Justice Support for the Justice@ Smithfield Campaign, a Case Study,” an undated internal six-page report evaluating Jobs with Justice’s role and effectiveness in the campaign. Paula Deen information is from page 5. In author’s possession.

<sup>158</sup> Kevin Pang, “Deen Appearance Has Lots to Chew On,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 19, 2007

<sup>159</sup> Memorandum in Support of Defendants Motion to Dismiss Under Rule 12 (b)(6), Fed. R. CIV. P., Civil Action #3:07CV641, Smithfield Foods Inc., and, Smithfield Packing (Plaintiffs) v United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW). In author’s possession.

<sup>160</sup> Steven Greenhouse, “Crackdown Upends Slaughterhouse’s Work Force,” *New York Times*, October 12, 2007

<sup>161</sup> Kristin Collins, “Smithfield Suits Targets Union,” *The Charlotte Observer*, November 28, 2007

<sup>162</sup> op. cit., G. Robert Blakey, consultant to the Congressional committees that devised RICO, and, at the time, a professor of law at Notre Dame

<sup>163</sup> In many ways, this fishing expedition by Berman can be seen as his examination of exactly how community groups and allies were supporting unions, and how the corporate campaigns were being run.

<sup>164</sup> <http://www.shopfloor.org/wp-content/uploads/smithfieldopinion5302.pdf> (retrieved June 9, 2014).

<sup>165</sup> Several top staff at UFCW and Change to Win had all recently left SEIU.

<sup>166</sup> The Interfaith Campaign for Worker Justice in Chicago helped with this action too.

<sup>167</sup> Laura Barron-Lopez, “Union Threatens Retribution for House Dems Opposed to Keystone,” *The Hill*, April 11, 2014

<sup>168</sup> Author interview with Gene Bruskin, February 2014

<sup>169</sup> Steven Greenhouse, “After 15 Years, North Carolina Plant Unionizes,” *New York Times*, December 13, 2008

<sup>170</sup> Author interview with Patrick O’Neil, May, 2014

<sup>171</sup> Juan Bosch was the first democratically elected president of the Dominican Republic. Exiled both before and after his brief presidency—which lasted only seven months in 1963—he was known for his plain words.

<sup>172</sup> The organization’s name mirrors a phrase in a 1912 poem by Antonio Machado entitled “Proverbios y Cantares”: *We make the road by walking*. It is also used in the title of an article by Jennifer Gordon, *We Make the Road by Walking: Immigrant Workers and the Struggle for Social Change*, *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Law Review*, 1995; and in the book title *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change* (Temple University Press, reprint 1990), which includes the reflections of Myles Horton, a radical educator and the founder of the Highlander Research and Education Center, in conversation with Brazilian educator Paulo Freire.

<sup>173</sup> Youth members are not charged dues until they turn twenty-one. Adult members who cannot afford to pay \$120 up front can borrow that sum from a local credit union, which is paid back in installments over the course of the following year.

<sup>174</sup> Author Interview with Deborah Axt, April 19, 2015.

<sup>175</sup> Interview on Eldridge & Company, April 27, 2007: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07l4vy3yEc8> (retrieved April 12, 2011).

<sup>176</sup> [http://www.maketheroad.org/AnnualReport\\_06.pdf](http://www.maketheroad.org/AnnualReport_06.pdf).

<sup>177</sup> IRS form 990 for the tax year 2006

<sup>178</sup> The research for this chapter on MRNY was conducted during 2011 at leadership development trainings, fund-raising events, regular weekly meetings, get-out-the-vote door-knocking operations, and in the hallways of the bustling Bushwick and Jackson Heights offices. The leaders of MRNY were incredibly generous and open about sharing internal documents such as strategic plans, grant proposals, leadership development curricula, staff and leader development plans, campaign plans, and board of directors' reports. I reviewed media coverage of MRNY activities over the past decade. Just after I completed my research, some of the leaders created the Center for Popular Democracy, an attempt to nationalize the MRNY model. I have not researched CPD and do not comment on them.

<sup>179</sup> Laura Braslow and Ruth Milkman, "The State of the Unions 2011: A Profile of Organized Labor in New York City, New York State and the United States," The Murphy Institute for Worker Education and Labor Studies, Center for Urban Research, September 2011

<sup>180</sup> Freeman, Joshua, *Working-Class New York: Life and Labor Since World War II* (New York, NY: The New Press, 2000)

<sup>181</sup> Ganz 2000, op. cit., p 1017

<sup>182</sup> Polletta, Francesca, *Freedom is an Endless Meeting, Democracy in American Social Movements* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 2002)

<sup>183</sup> Deborah Axt and Andrew Friedman, "In Defense of Dignity," *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review*, 45 Harv. C.R.-C.L. L. Rev. 577, Summer 2010

<sup>184</sup> Annual Reports 2007–2010

<sup>185</sup> Multiple author interviews with Deborah Axt and Andrew Friedman, Spring 2011

<sup>186</sup> Albor Ruiz, "Governor Cuomo Signs New Legislation Making it Easier for Workers and the State Labor Department to Fight Wage Theft," *Daily News*, Jan. 4, 2015

<sup>187</sup> Author interview with Javier Valdes, December 2, 2011

<sup>188</sup> The coalition included the American Civil Liberties Union; ACLU of NJ; American Friends Service Committee of NY; American Immigration Lawyers Association of NY; Cardozo Immigration Justice Clinic; Center for Constitutional Rights; Families for Freedom; Immigrant Defense Project; Legal Aid Society; NYU Immigrants Rights Clinic; NY Immigrants Rights Coalition; Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice.

<sup>189</sup> Author interview with Steve Jenkins, SEIU 32BJ staffer, interviewed 4-11-11; and also from public remarks made by SEIU 32BJ President Mike Fishman, at MRNY awards reception, 11-16-11

<sup>190</sup> Courtney Gross, "City Council Crafting Bill to Remove ICE from Rikers," *NY1*, October 2, 2014

<sup>191</sup> Friedman's grandparents were part of the early twentieth-century wave of Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe.

<sup>192</sup> Ganz 2000, op. cit., p 1014

<sup>193</sup> The proposal also states, "Make the Road New York's members, Board of Directors, and staff are all representative of the low-income, communities of color within which we work. All of these bodies [listed in the table] are comprised of at least seventy-five percent people of color and fifty percent women. A majority of our staff, as well as our Board of Directors live in the communities within which we work. Having a constituency comprised of neighborhood residents enables Make the Road New York to address directly the community problems identified by the membership."



<sup>194</sup> Source: MRNY Proposal to the Ford Foundation, January 15, 2011. Copy in author's possession

<sup>195</sup> Polletta, *op. cit.*, pp 2–3, 7

<sup>196</sup> Additional documents available to members (all of which are regularly updated) include By-laws, an Employee Manual, Leadership Team Criteria and Responsibilities, Employee Evaluations, Leadership Development Plans, and a Board of Directors Goal Review. Copies in author's possession.

<sup>197</sup> December 9, 2011 Dream Act press conference at City Hall. Groups in attendance included the Chinese Progressive Association, DREAM Scholars, Hispanic Federation, Make the Road New York, Minkwon Center for Community Action (see McQuade, this volume), the New York Immigration Coalition, New York State Youth Leadership Council, and the Professional Staff Congress (the union of CUNY staff and faculty).

<sup>198</sup> Jenkins, Steve, "Organizing, Advocacy and Member Power, A Critical Reflection," *Working USA*, Vol 6, No 2 (2002), pg 56-89

<sup>199</sup> Author interview with Steve Jenkins, April 4, 2012

<sup>200</sup> Lopez, *op. cit.*

<sup>201</sup> Jonah Edelman, recorded in a talk at the Summer 2011 Aspen Institute of Ideas elite gathering. The entire fifty-two-minute video was uploaded onto a website on YouTube, and some teachers edited it down to a shorter fourteen-minute clip with Edelman's highlights. The clip went viral among teachers, and shorter clips were also shown on Chicago television stations. Edelman was forced to apologize to Illinois Speaker Madigan, who was made to look almost as foolish as Edelman. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kog8g9sTDS0>

<sup>202</sup> Ravitch, Diane, *The Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools* (Vintage Books Edition, August 2014); Goldstein, Dana, *The Teacher Wars: A History of America's Most Embattled Profession* (Doubleday, 2014)

<sup>203</sup> Uetricht, Micah, *Strike for America: Chicago Teachers Against Austerity* (Verso Press, 2014)

<sup>204</sup> Natasha Korechi, "Exclusive Poll: Karen Lewis Could Give Rahm Run for His Money," *Chicago Sun Times*, August 8, 2014; Rick Pearson and Bill Ruthhart, "Support for Mayor Emanuel Falling Fast," *Chicago Tribune*, August 14, 2014

<sup>205</sup> Brecher, *op. cit.*

<sup>206</sup> Tom Alter, "It Felt Like a Community: Social Movement Unionism and the Chicago Teachers Strike of 2012," *Labor Studies in Working Class History of the Americas*, Vol. 10, Issue 3, 2013

<sup>207</sup> Smith, Sara R., "Organizing for Social Justice Rank-and-File Teachers' Activism and Social Unionism in California, 1948–1978," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California at Santa Cruz, June 2014, pp 12–14.

<sup>208</sup> Lee Sustar, "Will Chicago's Teachers Keep Moving Forward?," *Socialist Register*, May 7, 2013

<sup>209</sup> Technically, teachers and support staff walked the picket line for nineteen days, just as technically in 2012 they walked the picket line for seven—not nine—days. Some people use the workweek in describing the teachers' strikes, but I include the weekends for one primary reason: the teachers themselves are in a state of duress while in high-risk status all weekend, as well as the parents and the employer. So while officially some people count only the

workweek days, I find that silly, given the unbelievable pressure to force the workers off the picket line by each Monday.

<sup>210</sup> Author interview of George Schmidt, editor of *Substance* (an alternative teachers union paper) and former candidate for union president, September 2014.

<sup>211</sup> Leviis Haney, "The 1995 Chicago School Reform Amendatory Act and the Cps CEO: A Historical Examination of the Administration of Chicago Public School's CEO's Paul Vallas and Arne Duncan," 2011,

[http://ecommons.luc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1061&context=luc\\_diss](http://ecommons.luc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1061&context=luc_diss)

<sup>212</sup> Author interviews with Sue Garza and George Schmidt, September 2014

<sup>213</sup> Michels, Robert, *Political Parties, A Sociological Study of the Oligarchic Tendencies of Modern Democracies* (New York, NY: The Free Press, soft cover edition, 1968)

<sup>214</sup> Interview with George Schmidt, February, 2015

<sup>215</sup> Illinois State General Assembly, Chicago School Reform Amendatory Act, Public Act 89-0015, 1995

<sup>216</sup> Although the idea was set up in the Amendatory Act, it would take one more year and some specific enabling legislation before the first charter schools in Illinois could open.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Author interview with George Schmidt, October 2014

<sup>219</sup> <http://www2.ed.gov/news/staff/bios/duncan.html>

<sup>220</sup> CPS Stats & Facts, produced annually by the Chicago public schools.

<sup>221</sup> Tracy Dell Angela, "South Side Faces School Shake Up," *Chicago Tribune*, July 14, 2004

<sup>222</sup> The schools could also be "independent contract" schools or small schools, which, like charters, were placed outside the union's purview.

<sup>223</sup> Maureen Kelleher, "Rocky Start for Renaissance 2010," *Catalyst Chicago*, October 1, 2004

<sup>224</sup> Angela Stich, "School Spirit," NewCity Chicago blog, November 22, 2004

<sup>225</sup> Author interview with Amisha Patel, the Grassroots Collaborative; and Madeline Talbot, the long-time leader of the Chicago branch of ACORN, September and October, 2014.

<sup>226</sup> Bradbury, Alexander; Brenner, Mark; Brown, Jenny; Slaughter, Jane; and Winslow, Samantha, *How to Jump Start Your Union: Lessons from the Chicago Teachers* (Labor Notes, 2014)

<sup>227</sup> Klein, Naomi, *The Shock Doctrine* (Picador, a division of Henry Holt Books, 2007)

<sup>228</sup> The initial community partners to GEM included KOCO, the Pilsen Alliance, Blocks Together, Parents United for Responsible Education (PURE), Designs for Change, Teachers for Social Justice, and a mix of random Local Schools Council (LSC) activists. Bradbury et al., op. cit.

<sup>229</sup> Author interview with Kristine Mayle, September 2014.

<sup>230</sup> Author interview with Jackson Potter, October 2014.

<sup>231</sup> Uetricht, op. cit.

<sup>232</sup> Author interview with Sarah DeClerk, staff member with the Canadian Union of Public Employee, May 2014, CUPE was the only union in British Columbia to support the BC teachers; it represents noneducation staff in the British Columbia schools; author interview with Kevin Millsep, Vancouver school board member during the teachers strike, May 2014.

<sup>233</sup> CTU Union website biography

<sup>234</sup> Author interviews with George Schmidt, October 2014 and January 2015



- <sup>235</sup> CTU Union website biography
- <sup>236</sup> Author interview Jesse Sharkey, September 2014.
- <sup>237</sup> Author interview with Jackson Potter, October 2014; see also Uetricht, op. cit.
- <sup>238</sup> Author interviews with Madeleine Talbot, September 2014 and January 2015.
- <sup>239</sup> Uetricht, op. cit. The exact numbers were given in a CORE press release on May 22 at 11 AM as follows: “At the time of this corrected release based on 17,797 tabulated votes and verified by CORE’s on-site representative on the Canvassing Committee charged with CTU election vote counting oversight, the preliminary vote count stands at UPC 6,283, CORE 5,970, PACT 3,144, CSDU 1,273 and SEA 1,127.”
- <sup>240</sup> <http://www.coreteachers.org/video-save-our-schools-rally-may-25-2010/>
- <sup>241</sup> <http://www.coreteachers.org/karen-lewis-ctu-president-elect-acceptance-speech-2/>
- <sup>242</sup> In author’s possession
- <sup>243</sup> Chicago Teachers Union By-Laws and Constitution, Article V, Section 1, Letter E
- <sup>244</sup> Interview with Keith Kelleher, January 2015
- <sup>245</sup> Interview with Matthew Luskin, September 2014.
- <sup>246</sup> Interview with Jesse Sharkey, September 2014.
- <sup>247</sup> <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2010/09/07/chicago-mayor-daley-seek-election/>
- <sup>248</sup> Author interview with Amisha Patel, October 2014
- <sup>249</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>250</sup> Jonah Edelman, in a YouTube video taken at the Aspen Institute of Ideas in the summer of 2011
- <sup>251</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>252</sup> The mechanism for this take-away was that in that five-year contract, the union had allowed a loophole that stated, in part, that if there weren’t sufficient funds in the final year, the board could reconsider. The union alleges the money was there, but the CPS board manufactured this crisis. This comes from deep financial work conducted by Substance News editor and other CTU leaders and staff, taken from my several interviews with George Schmidt.
- <sup>253</sup> Talbot, op. cit; Jason Zengerle, “Rahm Emanuel’s Nemesis Might Just Take Him On,” *The New Republic*, July 14, 2014; Ben Javorsky, “Won’t You Be My Friend?” *The Chicago Reader*, September 9, 2013; unattributed, “Rahmbo’s Toughest Mission,” *The Economist*, June 14, 2014.
- <sup>254</sup> A video was posted on the CORE blog in December 2011: <http://www.coreteachers.org/mic-check-at-the-board-of-ed-2/>
- <sup>255</sup> Author interview with Jesse Sharkey, September 2014
- <sup>256</sup> Carol R. Caref and Pavlyn C. Jankov, primary researchers, “The Schools Chicago’s Students Deserve.” This forty-page report remains on the union’s website and is also in the author’s possession.
- <sup>257</sup> Talbot interview, op. cit.
- <sup>258</sup> Constitution, op. cit.
- <sup>259</sup> Bob Peterson and Jody Sokolower, “A Cauldron of Opposition in Duncan’s Hometown, Rank and File Teachers Score Huge Victory; An Interview with Karen Lewis and Jackson Potter,” *Rethinking Schools*, Fall 2010
- <sup>260</sup> Although technically the new bargaining process still included some version of the older gag rule, the new union leadership largely ignored it in terms of the bargaining team

engaging members, and eventually the media, too—but in the latter case because the management team decided to attempt to “bargain in the press” first.

<sup>261</sup> <http://clas.wayne.edu/Multimedia/lsc/files/collectivebargaing.pdf>

<sup>262</sup> Schmidt, op. cit.

<sup>263</sup> According to the theater’s website, the venue seats 3,901.

<sup>264</sup> <http://chicago.cbslocal.com/2012/05/23/mayor-chicago-teachers-deserve-a-pay-raise/>

<sup>265</sup> substance.net, September 2012

<sup>266</sup> Lee Sustar, “Will Chicago’s Teachers Keep Moving Forward?” *Socialist Register*, May 7, 2013.

<sup>267</sup> Piven and Cloward, *Poor People’s Movements*, op. cit., pp 2, 6

<sup>268</sup> Bellah, Robert N.; Madsen, Richard; Sullivan, William; Swidler Ann; and Tipton Steven, *Habits of the Heart, Individualism and Commitment in Public Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996)

<sup>269</sup> By a large margin, voters rejected a ballot initiative to enshrine the right to bargain collectively in the State Constitution. Union leaders pushed the measure, which lost fifty-eight percent to forty-two percent, with the aim of preventing Michigan’s legislature from curbing government employees’ bargaining rights. Results 57.4 against, 42.6 for; it only won in two counties, Genesee and Wayne County, despite the \$23 million spent by unions.

<sup>270</sup> Interview with Talbot, op. cit.

<sup>271</sup> Bardacke, Frank, *Trampling Out the Vintage, Cesar Chavez and the Two Souls of the United Farm Workers* (New York NY: Verso Press, 2012)

<sup>272</sup> Author interview with Steve Williams, May 2013

<sup>273</sup> Lawrence J. Engel, “The Influence of Saul Alinsky on the Campaign for Human Development,” *Theological Studies*, 59 (1998), p 637

<sup>274</sup> Shaw, Randy, *Beyond the Fields: Cesar Chavez, the UFW, and the Struggle for Justice in the 21st Century* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008); see also several chapters inside Ruth Milkman and Kim Voss (editors), *Rebuilding Labor: Organizing and Organizers in the New Union Movement* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press/ILR Press); Bardacke, op. cit.; Hurd, op.cit.

<sup>275</sup> Mary Anne Clawson, 2013 Annual Meeting ASA paper

<sup>276</sup> Engel, op. cit., p 59

<sup>277</sup> Ibid., p 637

<sup>278</sup> Alinsky, Reveille for Radicals, op.cit

<sup>279</sup> Eric Norden, “An Interview with Saul Alinsky” (*Playboy*, March 1972); also organizing training manuals I have used and analyzed. At age 18 I was recruited to attend the Midwest Academy of Organizing in Chicago, where I received my first formal training in Alinskyist methods. Alinsky’s *Playboy* interview is an essential read.

<sup>280</sup> Foster, op. cit.

<sup>281</sup> Saul Alinsky, “Community Analysis and Organization,” *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 46, No. 6 (May 1941), pp 797–808

<sup>282</sup> Horowitz, op. cit., p 174

<sup>283</sup> Author interview with Marshall Ganz, June, 2013

<sup>284</sup> Today it’s big business, the Tea Party, and the conservative movement that seem to best embody Alinsky’s teachings about the use of wedge issues to divide and conquer, not the left.

<sup>285</sup> Alinsky 1946, op. cit. pp 21–22

<sup>286</sup> Author interview, off the record, with several staff members of New York City’s various SEIU unions.

<sup>287</sup> Author interview with Drew Astolphi, June, 2013. Gamaliel is one of several offshoots of the original Alinsky organization, the Industrial Areas Foundation.

<sup>288</sup> Author interviews with Mike Miller, June 2013

<sup>289</sup> Although I find Heidi J. Swarts book, *Organizing Urban America*, a valuable resource, I disagree that the reason Alinsky groups haven’t engaged in politics is because of their 501c3 charitable IRS status. Any group can set up a 501c4 with relative ease. Most Alinsky groups choose not to engage in politics, thus limiting their impact.

<sup>290</sup> In a casual web search conducted January 8, 2013, next to the Wikipedia entry on Alinsky, the top three websites are all right wing, including Glen Beck’s, where he “urges” anyone interested in toppling Obama and gaining power to read Alinsky.

<sup>291</sup> See Gary Delgado’s *Beyond the Politics of Place* (1997) and Rinku Sen’s *Stir it Up, Lessons in Community Organizing and Advocacy* (2003).

<sup>292</sup> Author interview with Mike Miller, June 2013

<sup>293</sup> Author interview with Steve Williams, May 2013

<sup>294</sup> See Delgado 1990, Sen 2003, and Cryan 2008

<sup>295</sup> Herb Marsh was a key Communist Party insurgent in the drive to organize the packing-house workers, situated inside the biggest employer’s facility, Armour. Marsh, according to Sanford Horowitz’s *Let Them Call Me Rebel*, worked closely with Alinsky. He describes Alinsky’s work with the CIO as “developing united front” groups.

<sup>296</sup> Alinsky 1946, op. cit, p 158

<sup>297</sup> Foster, op. cit.

<sup>298</sup> I emphasize this to underscore a key point in my conversation with Rinku Sen, “In part I think the Alinsky model did follow established leaders and elevated them, it didn’t attempt to identify new leaders. I agree with you that we need to redefine the character of and a new set of criteria for identifying leaders. And it’s particularly important in organizing because we are up against a mainstream leadership model that would dismiss the agency of all of our people.”

<sup>299</sup> The handwriting belonged to the scribe David Pudlin, an organizer at 1199NE, who would later be elected to the Connecticut legislature. The ideas belonged to many organizers during a 1985 brainstorming session in a conference in Columbus, Ohio.

<sup>300</sup> Mintor, op. cit.

<sup>301</sup> [Author(s) not listed] Labor Research Review, *Planning to Win, Taking a Comprehensive Approach to Labor’s Corporate Campaign* (Cornell ILR, 1993, Cornell Digital Commons)

<sup>302</sup> [http://www.corporatecampaign.org/media\\_working\\_papers\\_1982.php](http://www.corporatecampaign.org/media_working_papers_1982.php)

(retrieved Aug. 17, 2014)

<sup>303</sup> Teresa Conrow and Andy Banks, PowerPoint presentation, “Introduction to Strategic Corporate Research,” National Labor College, December 1, 2008. These authors and the many like them are surely *not* to blame for the national union leaders decisions to accept the corporate-campaign strategy while downgrading the worker organizing.

<sup>304</sup> Searches on union jobs websites and internal documents

<sup>305</sup> Author interview with Peter Olney retired Organizing Director, International Longshore Workers Union, March 20, 2014

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<sup>306</sup> Community organizing groups today typically have something called leadership ladders that include gradations of commitment of a member a member they are hoping to convert into a leader. These leadership ladders typically list a progression of steps that more reflect either the stewardship the member ‘leader’ takes over the organization. In author’s possession.

<sup>307</sup> Author interview with Kristin Warner, Organizing Director, the Vermont State Employees Association, May 2013

<sup>308</sup> In nursing-home strikes, like hospital strikes, crippling production equates to ninety percent or more of the regular workforce walking off the job, the employer choosing to employ an expensive, second full set of contract staff, management working regular staff shifts, often round the clock, state inspectors in the facility to monitor the situation, and families often on hand twenty-four hours a day to care for loved ones because they mistrust the temporary, union-breaking specialist firms.

<sup>309</sup> Luders, op. cit.

<sup>310</sup> Reich, Adam, *With God on Our Side, The Struggle for Rights in a Catholic Hospital* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell ILR Press, 2012)

<sup>311</sup> Saul Alinsky, “Community Analysis and Organization,” *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 46, No. 6 (May, 1941), pp 797-808

<sup>312</sup> Rosenfeld, Jake, *What Unions No Longer Do* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014)

<sup>313</sup> Alinsky, Saul, *Rules for Radicals*, pp 65



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