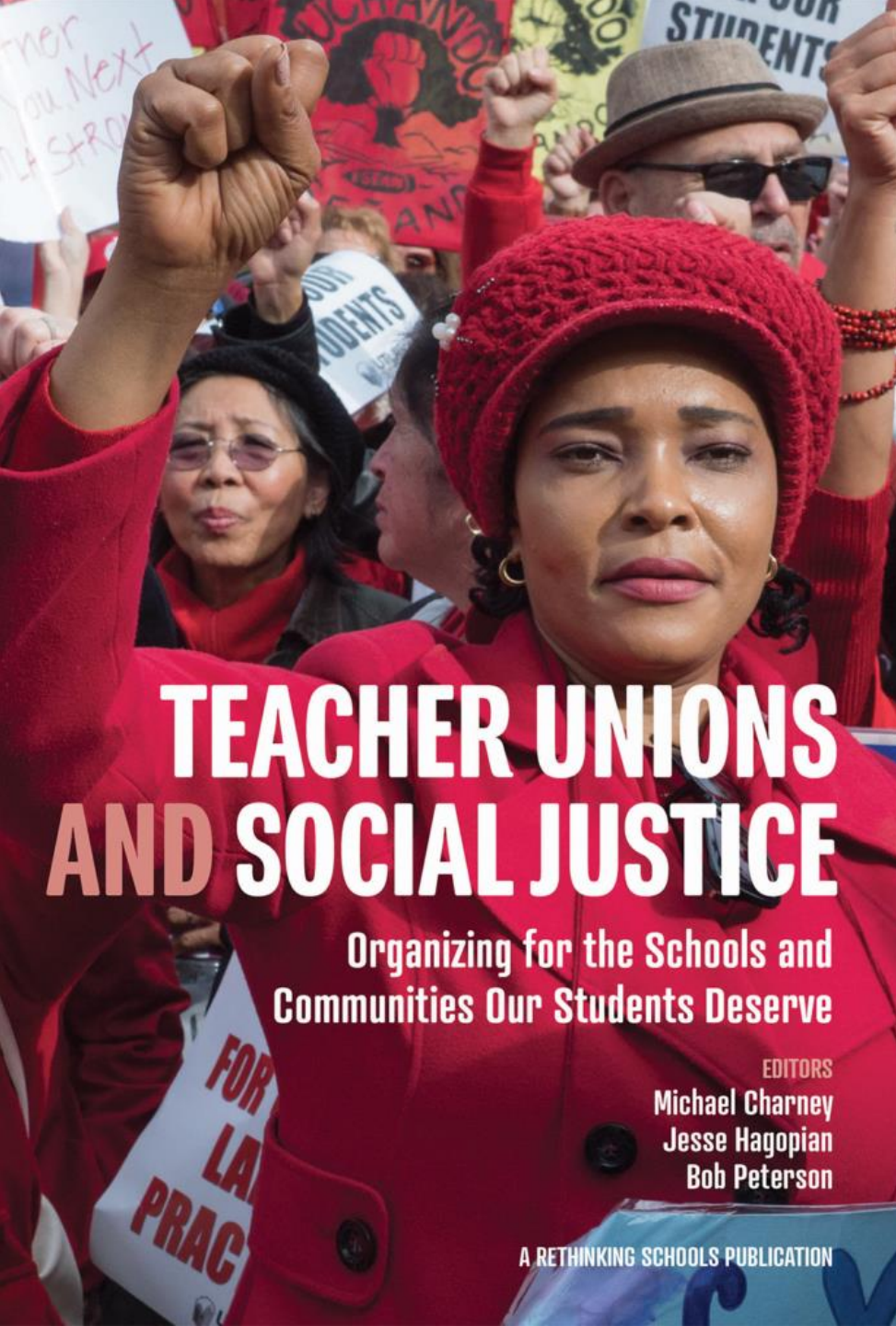




TEACHER UNIONS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Organizing for the Schools and
Communities Our Students Deserve

EDITORS

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A RETHINKING SCHOOLS PUBLICATION

Teacher Unions and Social Justice

Session 2 of 4:

Broadening Union Leadership and Expectation for What
Unions Can Win

Teacher Unions and Social Justice



- Rename Yourself in Zoom
 - Please include:
 - First and Last Name
 - Pronouns
 - State
- Example: Ceaser Chavez(he/him)-Arizona
- What are you looking forward to this weekend?

Teacher Unions and Social Justice

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Honoring This Space

We begin by acknowledging that through a history of colonization and brutality, we are currently on the traditional lands stewarded by generations of indigenous people.

We honor these indigenous people, all elders, past, present, and emerging. We are called to learn and share these learnings about this tribal history, culture, and contributions that have been suppressed in the telling of the story of what we now call the United States of America.



Meet Your Facilitators

Dr. Rachel Tollett

(she/her/hers)

IEA UniServ Director, Service Area HE



Dr. Taraja Shephard Allen

(she/her/hers)

OEA Membership Consultant



Session Objectives:

Who do we need in this work?

How do we expand expectations for what we can win?

What is my role as a staff person?

Our Invitation to YOU

- Be present in this space
- Listen with curiosity
- Take care of yourself
- Be willing to engage in this work with yourself and others
- Leave with a new perspective





Drop in the Chat

Who are the people you need to lead social justice unionism?



Who are the people we need?

What are the leaders and structures we need?

“The terms “social justice” and “social justice unionism” can be watered down or co-opted. Some activists and leaders believe that passing resolutions in solidarity with different struggles (a positive thing) makes a union a “social justice union.” Others label programs “social justice,” but because of top down leadership and a lack of membership involvement, such programs are less effective than they might be. A new leader or leadership team can’t just declare that by virtue of their politics they are now a social justice union. It’s hard work. Real transformation of a union encompasses change in many areas: internal decision making processes, vision, campaigns, addressing race and gender issues, relationships with parents and communities, and much more.” (page 175)

Given this – what is the role of union staff in leadership identification, development, and engagement?



WHO IS TRUSTED AND RESPECTED?

- LEADERS, MOBILIZERS, AND ACTIVISTS ACTIVITY
- NATURAL LEADER ID REVIEW – PAGES 274-282

Definitions for Today

Leaders – Trusted and respected by their colleagues in ways that cut across communities of workers- is connected by values and influential relationships with mobilizers, activists, and those not yet part of the work. Get people to move their thinking and take action.

Mobilizers – Connected to communities of workers in ways that are influential – can convene their community. Get people excited to act.

Activists – Supportive and willing to act if invited



Leaders, Mobilizers, and Activists

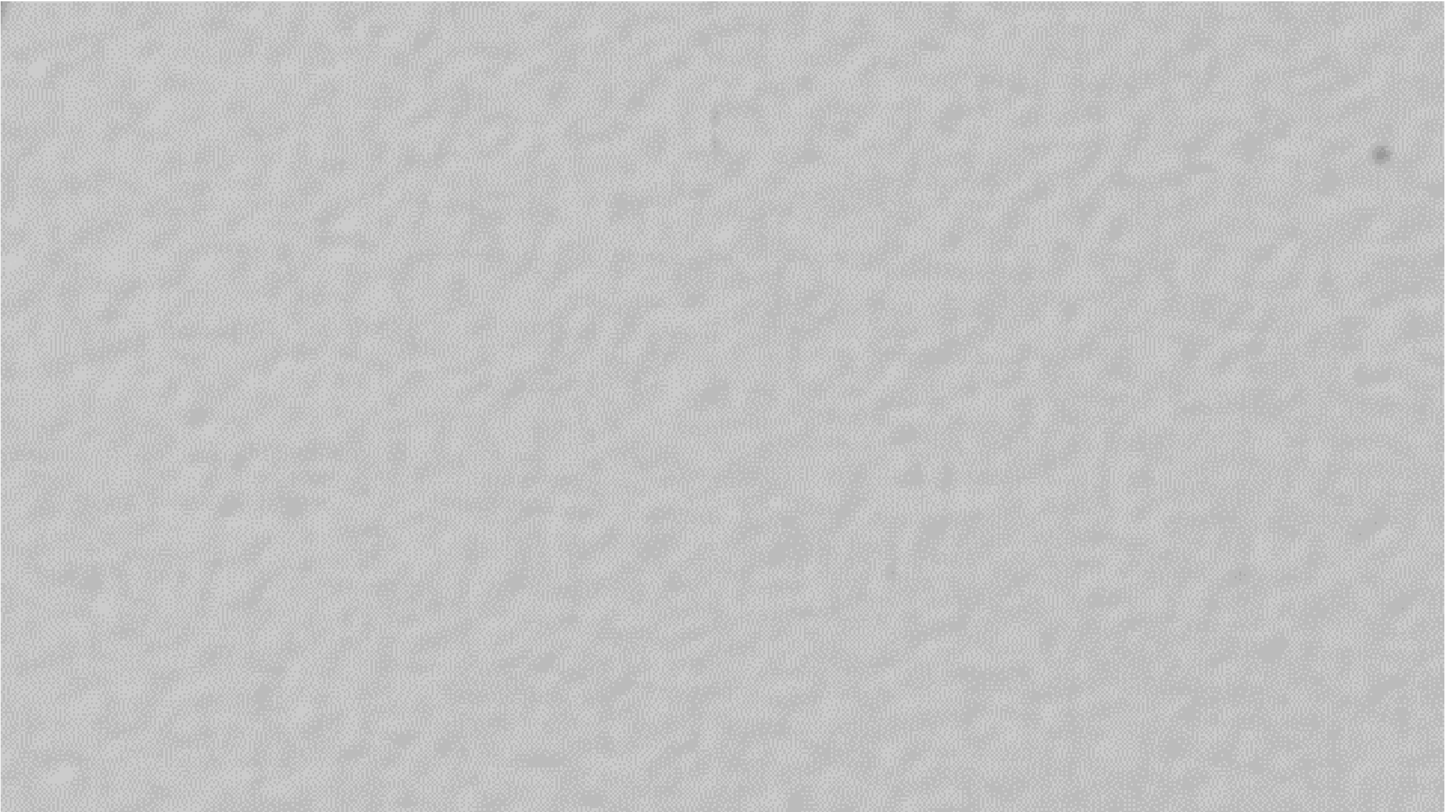


Leaders, Mobilizers, Activists

- Who are your identifiable leaders at the local or state level? How does your state facilitate leader identification? What is your role as staff?
- How do you see activists operating in your state? Are they elected officers? Heads of constituency groups? How do your state or local identify them? What is your role?
- Are mobilizers identified by staff? Local leaders? Statewide organizations and institutions?
- In your work do you use these categories when you think of the way members/governance interact with each other and with the statewide organization?
 - If not, would thinking about these are differing skill sets help you?



How do we win more?



Why could Bargaining for the Common Good be a strategy for expanding leadership and expectations for our unions?



7 Elements of a Common Good Campaign

Pages 107-112



1. Expand the scope of bargaining beyond wages and benefits
2. Go on offense in your campaign by identifying, exposing and challenging the real opposition
3. Engage community allies as partners in issue development and the bargaining campaign
4. Center racial justice in your demands
5. Strengthen internal organizing, membership and member engagement
6. Leverage capital in our campaigns
7. The campaign doesn't end once the union settles its contract

Why do we run Common Good Campaigns?

- Builds Power through Leaders and Structures from the bottom up
- This is the best way for us to WIN more for all!
- Unions and community groups share a common powerful opposition, and we need each other in order to win
- Unions win more and community groups win bigger and broader campaigns when we work together in this way



UTLA Bargains for the Common Good



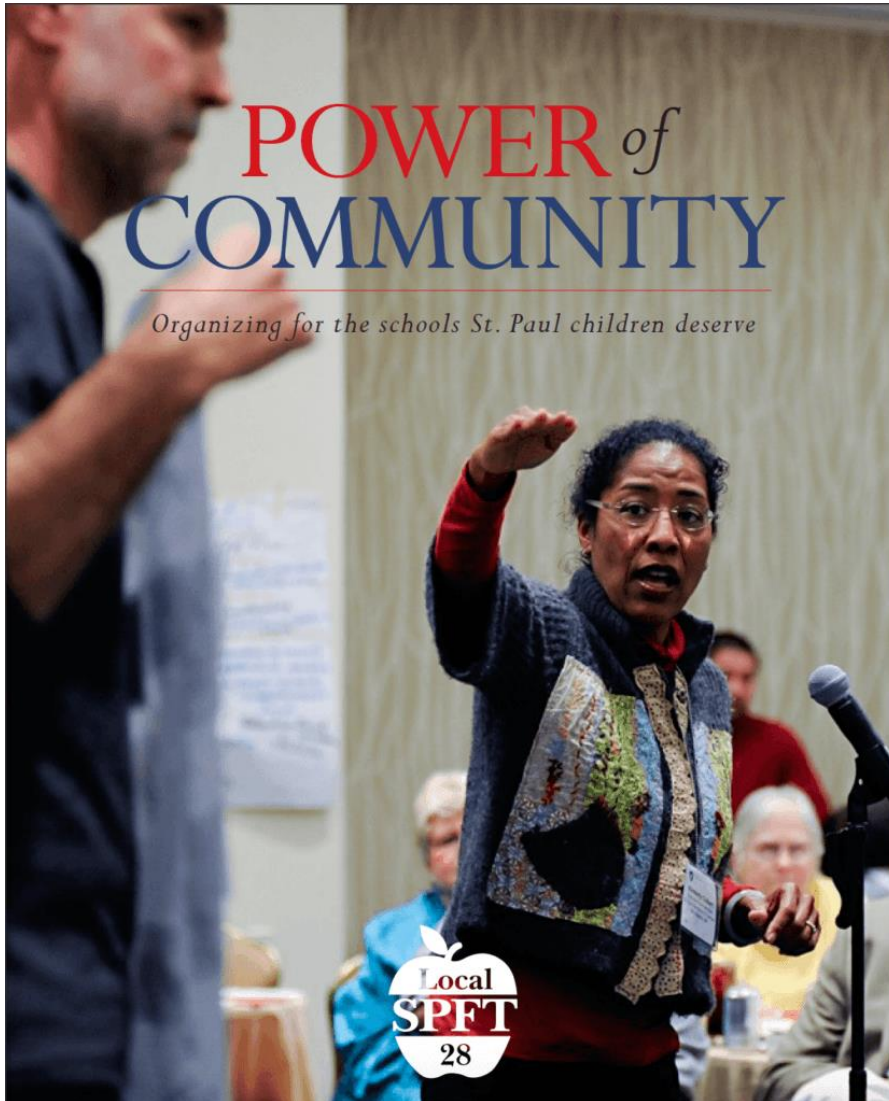
Parents, teachers, students, school staff and community members. Join us for the launch of Campaign for the Schools LA Students Deserve. Join community and labor groups to fight the crisis in public school funding!

CAMPAIGN FOR THE SCHOOLS L.A. STUDENTS DESERVE

Location: Trinity Street Elementary School
Address: 3736 Trinity St, Los Angeles, CA 90011
Date: Wednesday September 6, 2017
Time: 11:30AM



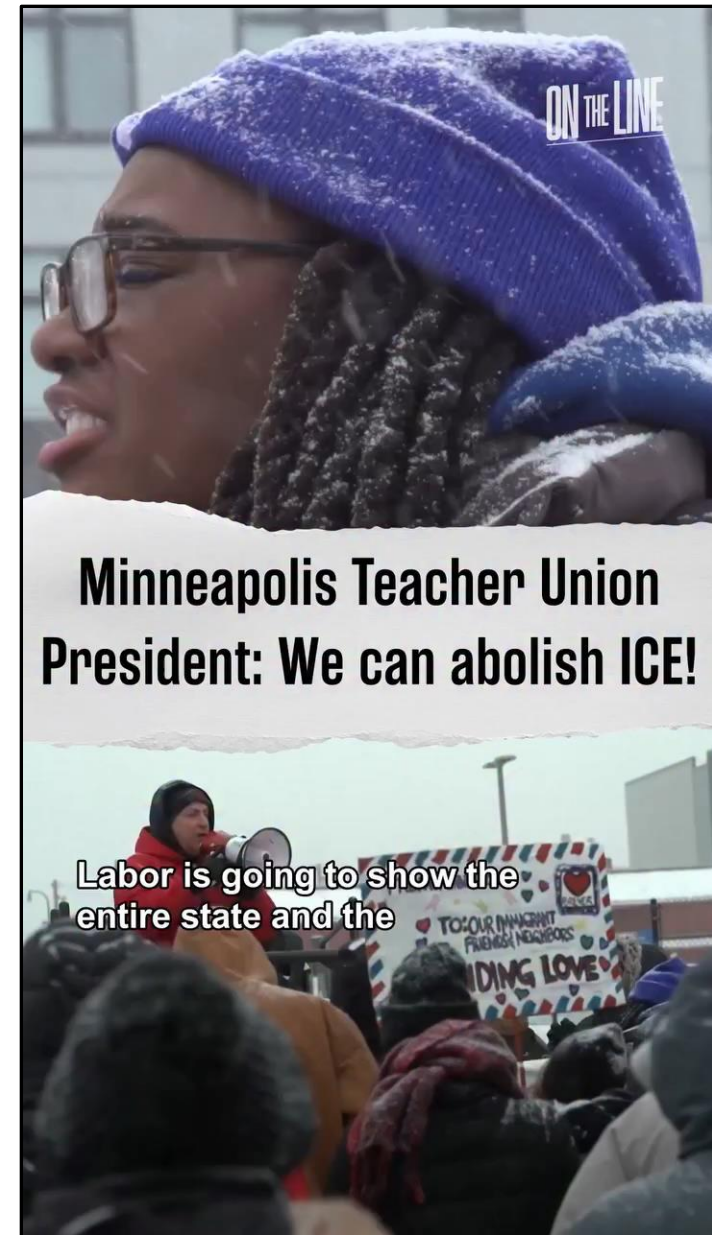
- Smaller class size
- Hiring of nurses, librarians & counselors
- An end to “random searches”
- Green space
- Immigrant defense fund
- Community schools
- Charter school cap



St. Paul Federation of Teachers

- ❑ Smaller class sizes
- ❑ Family engagement
- ❑ Placing teaching before testing
- ❑ Wage and benefit increases
- ❑ Culturally relevant education
- ❑ High quality professional development for teachers
- ❑ No foreclosures

Minneapolis Teachers



Group Discussion: Resource Guide pages 9-45

- What stands out to you about this approach?
- What are the opportunities that this strategy COULD provide your affiliates?
- What are the potential challenges this strategy could provide your affiliates?





What is your role?

What do we mean... Pages 248-251

Advocacy

“Advocacy is the work of creating change through the actions of professionals or technical experts—lobbyists, pollsters, lawyers, communication specialists, researchers. Advocacy relies on the expertise, status, and know-how of these groups of people to make change. Advocacy usually happens in a closed-door room; ordinary people play a small to nonexistent role in its efficacy. Advocacy has become a dominant strategy for unions and liberals.”



What do we mean... Pages 248-251

Mobilizing

“Mobilizing, by contrast, activates an already-convinced membership. Mobilizing encourages those who already support a cause or a mission to take action to defend their belief—for example, by attending a protest, wearing a button, or signing a petition.”



What do we mean... Pages 248-251

Organizing

“To organize is to build mass support and strength among ordinary people. Organizing draws its power from working people’s biggest strength: our numbers. The work of organizing is systematic and rigorous: It requires connecting with every single worker in a shop, every educator in a building, every building in a district. At its core, it asks people to understand their own agency and to make choices about how they will exercise it.”



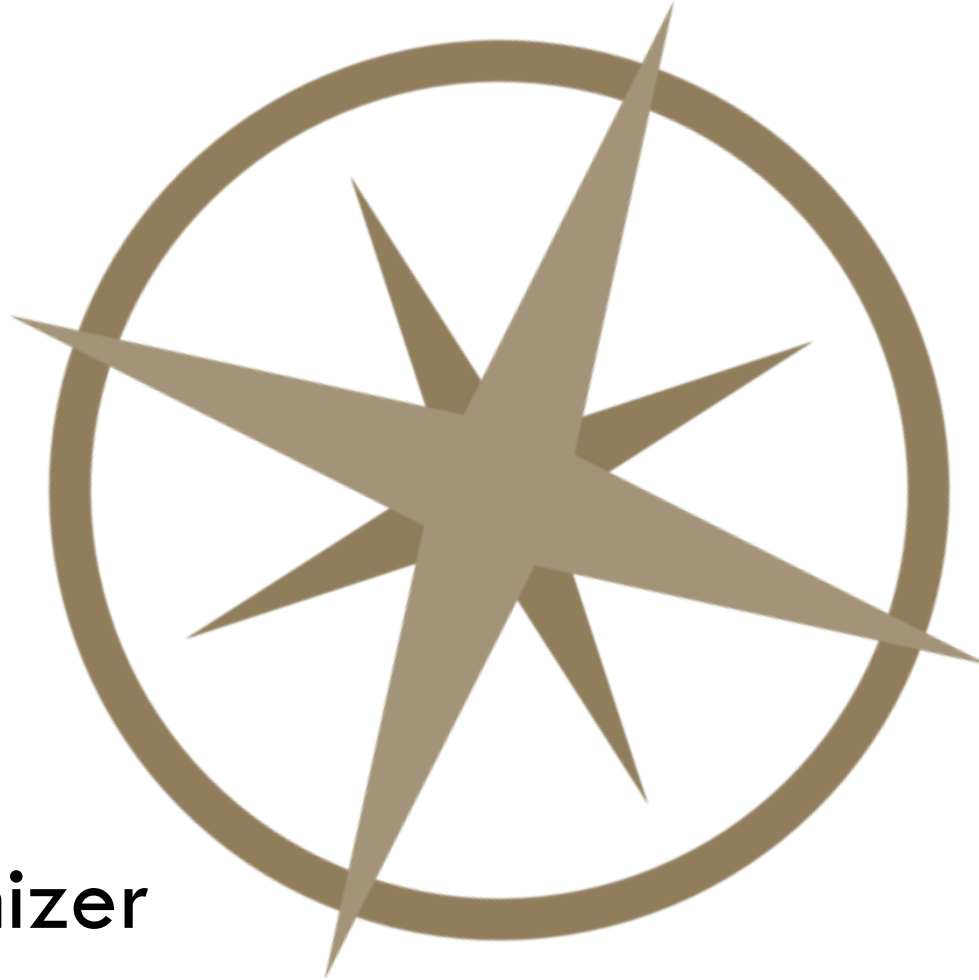
Advocacy, Mobilizing, Organizing

Pg 248-251 Book or Pg 49 Resource Guide

Advocate

Mobilizer

Organizer



Group Discussion:

Select the compass point that best answers where you are for each of the following questions -

- What role do you see yourself in?
- What role does your manager, leadership, locals expect you to play?
- What tensions exist because of discrepancies between your role and your expected role? How do you deal with these tensions?
- What would your role look like if you were working with a local focused on Social Justice Unionism?



What changes would you need in your work to be able to cultivate more social justice unionism among members or in locals ?

How do you think your locals primarily view your role?

- Social Justice Advocate
- Contract Manager and Problem Solver
- Leadership Coach and Developer
- Campaign/Organizing Leader



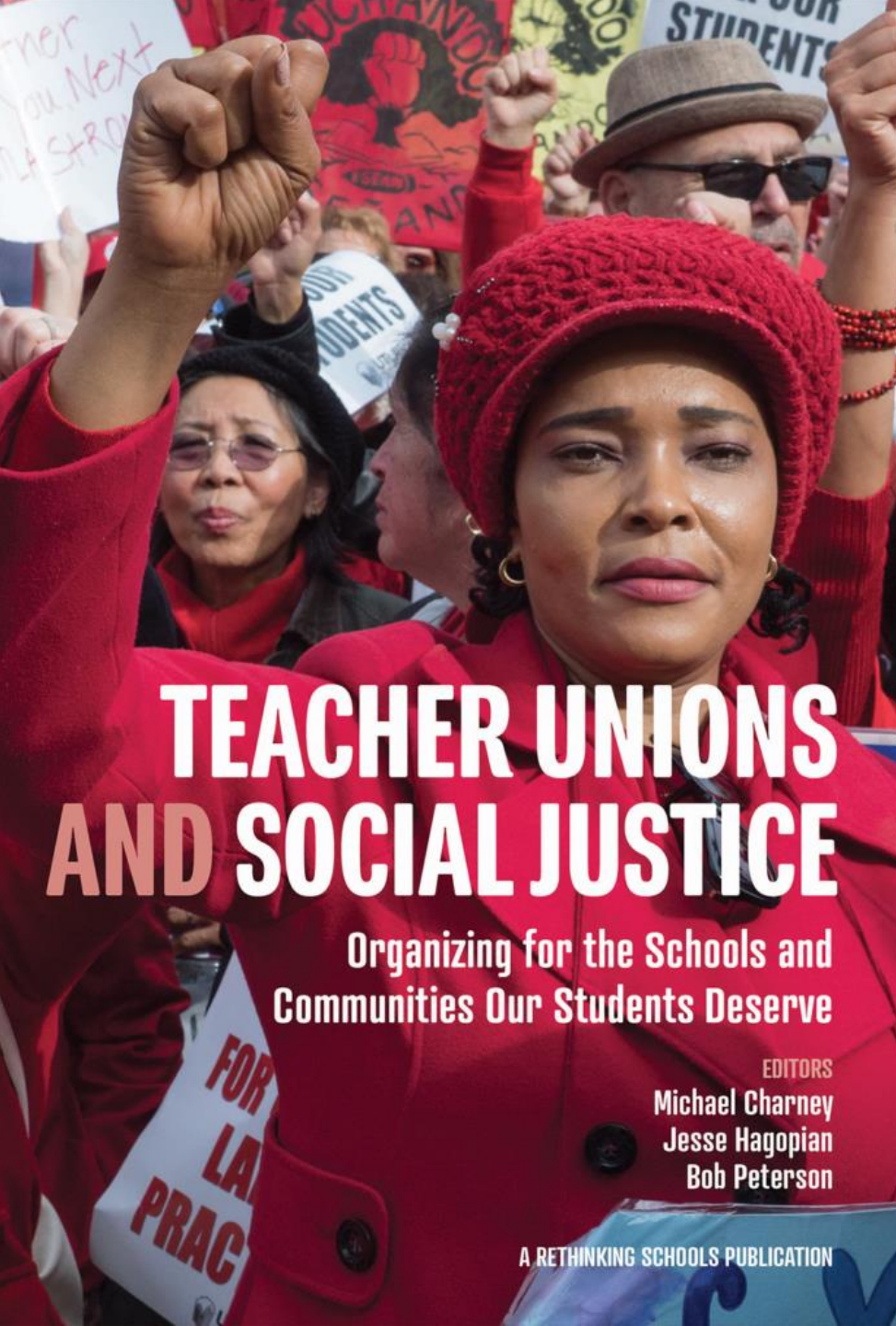
What is the role of staff?

- What are the types of work Staff people are engaged in that support and cultivate the types of leaders and structures in this book?
- What changes in your work/expectations would you (and your leader/manager) need to make room for to cultivate social justice unionism as presented in this book?

Teacher Unions and Social Justice:

Upcoming Sessions 3 -4

- **Wednesday, January 28, 2026 @ 2:30PM Eastern**
- **Thursday, January 29, 2026 @ 2:30PM Eastern**



Get Your Copy of the Book: Teacher Unions and Social Justice

- Send an Email: Shephardallent@ohea.org
- Include:
 - Name
 - State Affiliate
 - Address
 - How do you plan to use this resource in your work?

Teachers Unions and Social Justice



Teacher Unions and Social Justice

This learning event was designed to provide a foundational experience of the key concepts and methods needed to move members towards organizing around social justice issues and bargaining for the common good. The purpose of the four-session series is to both model a way to begin this work and build an urgency within you to continue this work.

Please let us know how we did.