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## Is There A Women's Way Of Organizing? Genders, Unions, and Effective Organizing

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# Is There A Women's Way Of Organizing? Genders, Unions, and Effective Organizing

## Abstract

[Excerpt] Between spring of 2008 and summer 2009, Cornell ILR Labor Programs faculty, staff, and students conducted a project to investigate and analyze several recent examples of women-focused union organizing campaigns. Our purpose was to contribute to the ongoing debates among labor and community activists about how to organize more effectively. We wanted to learn from the actual lived experiences of the women who were organizing about what they felt were effective strategies. We used as a starting point the work done by the Berger-Marks Foundation in their important study, "Women Organizing: How Do We Rock the Boat without Getting Thrown Overboard?" (2004), and the subsequent work outlining successful strategies used in women-focused union campaigns, "*I Knew I Could Do This Work: Seven Strategies that Promote Women Activism and Leadership In Unions*" (Institute for Women's Policy Research 2007).

The intent of the project was to answer the following questions:

1. Is there a successful way of organizing that is unique to women-focused organizing campaigns?
2. Among the seven strategies identified in the Institute for Women's Policy Research report, which strategies are most often used, and how successful are they in ensuring the success of these organizing efforts?
3. Are there other strategies or ideas here that should be assessed, propagated, and perhaps generalized to organizing in other contexts that might help unions increase their success in organizing?
4. Are these new strategies? Or are they rooted in older models that are reemerging to challenge not only the traditional organizing practices of unions, but also the way unions view organizing and organizers' roles?

## Keywords

union, organizing, labor movement, gender, activism

## Comments

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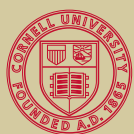
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# Is There A Women's Way Of Organizing?

Gender, Unions, and Effective Organizing



**Cornell University**  
ILR School

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**This project was conducted with the invaluable assistance of students in the Cornell Labor Studies Certificate program in New York City who were enrolled in "Women, Work, and Organizing," in the winter term of 2009.**

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# Is There A Women's Way Of Organizing?

Gender, Unions, and Effective Organizing

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## I. THE PROJECT: INTRODUCTION

Between spring of 2008 and summer 2009, Cornell ILR Labor Programs faculty, staff, and students conducted a project to investigate and analyze several recent examples of women-focused union organizing campaigns. Our purpose was to contribute to the ongoing debates among labor and community activists about how to organize more effectively. We wanted to learn from the actual lived experiences of the women who were organizing about what they felt were effective strategies. We used as a starting point the work done by the Berger-Marks Foundation in their important study, "Women Organizing: How Do We Rock the Boat without Getting Thrown Overboard?" (2004), and the subsequent work outlining successful strategies used in women-focused union campaigns, "*I Knew I Could Do This Work: Seven Strategies that Promote Women Activism and Leadership In Unions*" (Institute for Women's Policy Research 2007).

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Recent data on union organizing has shown that working women and particularly women of color in the United States are more likely than any other demographic group to pursue union representation.<sup>1</sup> Since the 1980s women have accounted for the majority of new workers being organized, especially in the growing service sector. This clearly makes women key to the revitalization of the U.S. labor movement.

While women workers offer tremendous growth opportunities for labor, unions organizing women workers continue to run campaigns and mount organizing efforts that are often unsuccessful. New union organizers are commonly trained on the job, learning from older and more experienced organizers “how it’s done.” Strategies and approaches honed in an era of the centralized industrial workplace are used even when the workforce has changed. The new workplace is often decentralized, and language, culture, and ethnicity are only a few of the elements that seem to call for a rethinking of what “union solidarity” means. Kate Bronfenbrenner in 2005 argued that the failure of much union organizing is due to the shortage of women organizers working on campaigns and women leaders within the organizations. Others offer that there is a particular “women’s way of organizing” that includes unique strategies largely absent in traditional organizing campaigns. These strategies are characterized as paying more attention to the whole lives of workers, with a focus on community alliances. This approach emphasizes efforts to develop organic leadership within workplaces and within the community, with the focus on building organizations that will remain strong and locally-run after union cards are signed or elections are held.

A rich body of experience and scholarship has emerged over the past decade that focuses on the overlapping concepts and practices of *community unionism*, *social movement unionism*, and *coalition unionism* (Tattersall, 2007). This body of work examines the experiences of unions and community groups, especially in the US, Canada, Australia, and Europe, engaged in organizing and mobilizing around issues broader than Gompers’ “unionism pure and simple.” The campaigns studied here used strategies and techniques growing out of that union tradition, moving beyond appeals based solely on economic interests and workplace conditions. Community unionism draws heavily from community organizing traditions used in older social movements, such as the civil rights movement, and is much more focused than traditional union organizing on educating and mobilizing workers around social and political issues, forging links with other community-based advocacy groups, and on creating opportunities for self-expression and self-empowerment.

Based on the campaigns examined here, this approach has been successful at bringing workers, especially women workers from disadvantaged communities in low-wage or informal sectors, into unions. Through this study, we hope to provide evidence and examples of how this organizing was done, and to explore whether it is more likely to be used by, or to be successful among, women. We hope to raise some probing questions about how unions could benefit from these strategies, not just in terms of the tactical or instrumental choices they make, but by seeing how the hierarchical decision-making in unions gets expressed through traditional organizing approaches, and how organizing jobs are structured. We hope to encourage unions to think more about how rank and file leadership can be fostered, and new approaches used.

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<sup>1</sup> Kate Bronfenbrenner (2005). “Organizing Women: The Nature and Process of Union Organizing Efforts among U.S. Women Workers since the Mid-1990s.”

The four campaigns that provide the core of this project represent a variety of organizing contexts, yet all are women-focused, and were predominantly run by women organizers. The UFT/ACORN campaign is an established local union partnering with an established local community organization on a common agenda. The Domestic Workers United campaign is a worker-based organization without formal collective bargaining rights fighting to establish its right to decent working condition, wages, and treatment. DWU uses leverage from community and member support to apply pressure to the political establishment for concessions. The Yellow Rat Bastard campaign of RWDSU was an established union that actually created an auxiliary community organization in order to attract and establish credibility with a young workforce unfamiliar with unions. The fourth campaign was 1199SEIU, which used community mobilizing, pressure tactics and the union's considerable political clout in New York City to win concessions from multiple agency employers simultaneously.



All these campaigns represent creative organizing, success in developing organic local leaders, and an appreciation for building community bridges to win over hesitant allies and potential members. All these campaigns can contribute to our understanding of what constitutes successful organizing in segments of the new workforce that have been either neglected or where traditional union organizing strategies have been successful.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The methodology evolved over the 18 months of the project.

The initial attempt to frame an approach to understanding "women's ways of organizing" began when Cornell ILR Labor Programs faculty hosted a targeted focus group discussion on November 30, 2007 in New York City. The participants were a dozen top-level, seasoned, successful women organizers from a variety of unions and community-based worker organizations across the northeast region. The purpose was to draw on the experiences of these organizers about whether there were strategies unique to women-centered campaigns, or more often used successfully by women organizers.

To prepare the group for the discussion, a number of resources were distributed, including the 2005 Berger-Marks report, "How Do We Rock the Boat without Getting Thrown Overboard?" and Kate Bronfenbrenner's 2005 article, "Organizing Women: The Nature and Process of Union Organizing Efforts Among U.S. Women Workers Since the mid-1990s." During the meeting, the participants identified not only issues they face as women organizers, but key strategies for developing rank and file women and member leaders within their organizations. Many of the strategies identified in the session mirrored those suggested in IWPR's recently released report "I Knew I Could Do This Work," including creating mentoring programs, providing



flexible options for involvement, and providing opportunities for women to strategize together.

From that very rich preliminary discussion, it was clear that there was no consensus on the use of these strategies or the effectiveness of one strategy over another. It was apparent that experiences differed, and were often mediated through the particular style and personality of the woman leading the organizing effort. Several of the women were very adamant that “organizing was organizing” ...A successful strategy depended much more on the type of workers and workplace, the sector, and the skills and sensitivity of the individual organizer. At the same time, many of the organizers lamented the lack of opportunities to share their challenges and explore with other women their own successful approaches. The group requested that Cornell convene more formal opportunities to network together and possibly develop a “model of women’s organizing” focused on best practices in women-centered organizing campaigns. All the participants expressed a keen interest in gathering more data to examine the emerging questions about “a woman’s way of organizing” in a more systematic way. After the focus group, the researchers were particularly interested in tapping the experiences of women actually involved in this work and using those experiences as a basis for analyzing the effectiveness of these strategies.

As a result of that initial focus group, Cornell organized a roundtable discussion in April 2008 based on the successful campaign of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT/AFT) and ACORN in organizing home-based childcare workers in New York City. These workers had recently been granted collective bargaining and representation rights as state

employees through an executive order by their governor Eliot Spitzer. The success of this event encouraged the Cornell investigators to apply for a grant from the Berger-Marks Foundation that supported the research discussed in this report. The UFT roundtable became the prototype for the subsequent series of roundtables convened in 2009 to gather data for the project.

In reflecting on the success of that event, the researchers felt the potential of other roundtables could be enhanced by involving other leaders and activists in organizing the roundtable and generating the dialogue. Cornell ILR Labor Programs was well positioned to create this kind of *action research* experience.<sup>2</sup> For the past thirty years, Cornell has run a unique labor studies night college, called the Cornell ILR Labor Studies Program. The students in this program are all labor union activists and leaders. By using the Labor Studies program as the site for collecting the data for the project, the investigators could involve the case study participants in a dialogue with current union activists and organizers about the strategies under consideration.

A preliminary bibliography and literature review were developed in the summer of 2008 which formed the basis for the development of a course (see Appendix B) that was taught in the spring trimester of 2009 by Pam Whitefield. The class, called “Women, Work, and Organizing,” attracted 14 leaders and activists whose course fieldwork projects consisted of working in small teams to develop four additional roundtables during the term. Three roundtables were based on actual union campaigns in the New York City area. In addition to the UFT (home-based childcare workers) campaign, the ILR labor faculty identified three others: UFCW’s Yellow Rat Bastard retail campaign in metropolitan New

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<sup>2</sup> “Although there are many types of research that may be undertaken, action research specifically refers to a disciplined inquiry done by a teacher with the intent that the research will inform and change his or her practices in the future.” From Action Research by Eileen Ferrance, Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory, Brown University, 2000. [www.lab.brown.edu](http://www.lab.brown.edu)

York, the 1199SEIU homecare workers' campaign, and the Domestic Workers United campaign for a Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights. The fifth roundtable convened by one of the student teams examined the seven strategies as they appeared in women's organizing efforts outside the U.S. context by comparing women's union organizing in the U.S. and the United Kingdom.<sup>3</sup> Each roundtable was organized, researched (through interviews and documentary research), and then facilitated by a group of 3-5 students.

The roundtables were free and open to the public and were publicized among the New York City labor community. Each roundtable had an agenda structured around a set of questions generated by the class out of the seven strategies in IWPR's 2007 report, "I Knew I Could Do This Work." At the end of the term, each team submitted a summary and analysis based on the interviews, research, and outcomes of the roundtable they had organized, and containing their own assessment of the outcomes.

In June of 2009, with the assistance of an undergraduate Summer Research Fellow from Cornell's main campus in Ithaca, the results of the roundtables were analyzed and summarized. Short campaign descriptions were written. Each of the strategies and activities in the campaigns that had emerged in the roundtable presentations were identified with one of the strategies where appropriate, and a grid was created so the investigators could see the relevance of individual strategies across multiple campaigns (see Appendix A). In addition to developing an analysis based on the outcomes of the events, the investigators also expanded the course bibliography and wrote a brief overview of past debates

around women's labor organizing among labor scholars and activists.

After looking at the results of the cases, investigators were especially interested in whether the strategies identified as successful in women's campaigns were also reflected in the treatment of young women organizers as they took jobs with unions, were trained as organizers, and worked on these campaigns. Developing and mentoring women leaders, providing training, being responsive to their issues, acknowledging women's contributions, providing opportunities for them to strategize together, etc., all seem to be reasonable strategies for developing a strong core of women organizers. We were interested in finding out to what extent the seven strategies were reflected in the lived experiences of women union organizers. To gather data on this question, a final component of the project was a focus group organized and run by Cornell Summer Research Fellow, Yasmin Emrani, in July of 2009.

This report presents the summary findings and analysis of the four campaigns, the one roundtable on the U.K. experiences of women in unions, and the young women organizers' focus group. A set of recommendations for future research follows, along with suggestions for additional effective strategies for union organizing based on the experiences articulated through this project.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Concurrent with this Berger-Marks project on women and organizing, Cornell faculty were involved with a team from London University who were comparing women's union leadership trajectories in the U.S. and the U.K. Students were very interested in gaining an international perspective and were able to access the UK experiences by organizing a roundtable with those researchers to discuss the seven organizing strategies identified by the IWPR report and their relevance to the U.K. experience.

<sup>4</sup> An interim project report was presented and discussed at the annual United Association of Labor Educators' (UALE) conference in Silver Spring, Maryland in April, 2009. One of Cornell's summer research fellows presented a part of the research project at the Northeast Regional Union Women's Summer School in August, 2009. A presentation was made at Rutgers University in October, 2009, at a conference of the International Federation of Workers' Education Associations. In addition, this publication will be disseminated to the larger labor community via the Cornell ILR website and Digital Commons, and at various Cornell ILR Labor Programs and Berger-Marks-sponsored events.

### III. THE DEBATE IN CONTEXT

For over 20 years, there has been a spirited debate among labor scholars and activists about the role of gender in labor revitalization and organizing efforts. These questions became particularly salient in the late 1980s when researchers found that the win rates for NLRB election campaigns in the non-manufacturing sector were highest among workplaces with a majority female workforce. (AFL-CIO Department of Organizing and Field Services, 1989) Suddenly the question of how to organize women workers was central to growing the U.S. labor movement.

Restructuring in the economy, changes in the workforce, and globalization have posed major challenges to the nature and role of labor organizations in the United States. Key to these challenges is the increase in women's permanent employment in the waged labor force and participation in labor unions. Women's work is no longer an informal or invisible element in the way the U.S. economy functions, and women workers are no longer temporary additions

to the workforce, especially in an expanding service economy. Debates about whether women were even possible to organize persisted until the 1980s, according to Cornell's Lois Gray, whose research in labor leadership among women provides some of the early background to this controversy.<sup>5</sup>

For over two decades, in response to precipitous declines in union density, particularly in the private sector and building trades, the labor movement has been debating whether and how to revive organizing as a core activity. Many unions had virtually stopped organizing altogether, and organizers often held the lowest-prestige positions on staff with the fewest resources. In 1995, with the ascent of John Sweeney and the New Voice slate to the leadership of the AFL-CIO, organizing and growth were formally articulated as the central priority of the labor movement. While the importance of organizing was reflected in the Federation's rhetoric, and in its own realignment of resources, in the affiliated unions pitched battles occurred over allocating money and staff to organizing. Shifting focus and resources to organizing has meant huge organizational change for unions; a difficult, painful, and not always successful process. Complicating that debate has been an emerging awareness that women are an important and fruitful target for organizing, and that perhaps the traditional approaches to organizing are less effective than they should be. After fourteen years of renewed effort, and continuing decline in union density, labor scholars, union leaders, and activists have rightly questioned whether unions might need to reexamine the old approaches (Yates 2006).



<sup>5</sup> Interview with Lois S. Gray, August 4, 2009, New York City. See Bibliography for several of Professor Gray's many contributions to this debate.

The current project addresses four major questions around which this debate has emerged in the past 30 years:

(1) Is there a particular "women's way of organizing" that, if understood and implemented, would lead to major successes in organizing women workers? (2) Is the key to organizing women simply focusing on particular issues that are critical and unique to women workers? (3) Is the key to success understanding the nature and structure of the work environment that is particularly prevalent among workers in these women-dominated sectors? (4) Can any of these aspects be successfully addressed unless the internal institutional nature and culture of unions are reformed to make them more meaningful and welcoming for women to join and become active, making it possible for women to take positions and work successfully as organizers?

### Critiquing the Traditional Approach

For most of the last century union organizing in the United States occurred in a growing private sector industrial economy, where the sites for greatest success were large centralized workplaces, with mostly full-time work, and a predominantly blue collar, male workforce. For organizing, industrial unions in the U.S. traditionally relied on a strategy in which a union identifies a workplace (often through a tip from an employee or employees), sends in professional union organizers and runs an intense campaign culminating in a federally supervised secret ballot election. In theory, the fast pace of the traditional campaign reduces the amount of time employers have to respond with anti-union tactics and plays on a crescendo-like momentum of the campaign (Galanga, 1983). In reality, employers have increasingly derailed these efforts through legal maneuvering, and stalling, often coupled with illegal tactics like harassment, intimidation and firings, frequently under the coaching of highly paid "union avoidance" consultants.

While some union leaders still regard this strategy as the best way to organize workers in the U.S., others have questioned it as short-sighted and incapable of building a strong, sustainable labor movement. The tactical logic of the approach is based on its speed. Once employers were able to stymie the speed of the union in forcing an NLRB election, the tactical advantage, dubious at best, was lost. The military metaphor de-emphasized the importance of relationship building with workers as foundational to persuasion, and often prevented the development of organic local leadership to guide the union after the organizing staff had packed up and left town. The result was too often a long, drawn out "war of attrition" after the election, as the employer set about discrediting the union, punishing the supporters, alienating the new members from the union, and staging a pitched battle against the union's efforts to win a first contract. Kate Bronfenbrenner's latest study of intensified anti-union tactics by employers bent on thwarting the unionizing of their employees cites the following statistics:

In 2007 there were only 1,510 representation elections and only 58,376 workers gained representation through the NLRB. Even for those who do win the election, 52% are still without a contract a year later, and 37% are still without a contract two years after an election (Bronfenbrenner, 2009).

Critics of the traditional approach were first particularly vocal in the late 1980s, as the service sector began to eclipse industrial production as a primary engine of the U.S. economy. Critics claimed service work and service workers were fundamentally different from industrial work and workers and urged unions to rethink their approach to organizing (Green and Tilly, 1987). Their data, along with the dramatic changes in structure of the economy and workplaces challenged the labor movement to rethink the best strategies for organizing women workers.

## Is There a Women's "Way" of Organizing?

Focusing on the successes of "pink collar" organizing efforts, such as the Harvard clerical workers campaign of the late 1980s, some researchers claimed that there was indeed a distinct approach that could be described as a "women's way of organizing" (Hurd, 1993; Rondeau, and Mckenzie, 1990; Sacks, 1988; Hoerr 1997). This approach was very different from traditional organizing models. It included collective decentralized decision-making, non-hierarchical meeting models, and a slow building of interpersonal worker-to-worker networks. It also often included a less confrontational approach to the employer, with a tendency toward partnership models of labor relations. Proponents of this approach also noted that a key strength of the model was its strong appeal to affinities based on gender, and power building among women workers (Hurd, 1988; Sacks, 1988; Rondeau, Mckenzie, 1991; Hoerr 1997). Skeptics argued that this approach was likely to be successful only among white collar workers.

Clearly, if there were a unique "way" of organizing that could be especially effective in organizing women workers, it would benefit the labor movement to study, analyze, and implement that approach in certain cases. But other voices questioned whether it was a matter of gender alone, or at all, suggesting it was more likely to be an interaction of other elements in a campaign, workplace, or union.

## Focusing on Issues Relevant to Women

While agreeing different models of organizing may be appropriate for men and majority female workplaces, others argued that there was not a gender-specific model but rather that successful organizing of "pink collar" workplaces required understanding the particular issues faced by women in a given workplace. These issues extended beyond the traditional "bread and butter" economic concerns over wages and benefits

to a focus on discrimination, pay equity, respect, dignity, work and family issues, and sexual harassment. Concentrating on the latter issues, some argue, is more likely to engage women workers in organizing efforts (Roby and Uttal, 1993; Roby, 1995; Leary, E, and Alonso, J, 1997; Nussbaum, K, 1997; Cobble, 1999).

## The Nature and Structure of Women's Work Environments

It was also argued that organizing models are not related specifically to gender but rather to occupation and the particular nature of the workplace. For example, a decentralized work environment (which is not uncommon in the service industry) tends to isolate and alienate workers. Therefore, when organizing, unions need to pay particular attention to fostering worker networks to articulate common interests, and build solidarity and union consciousness (Green and Tilly, 1987).

Also noted in the literature on women and organizing is that occupations in the service sector, particularly care work, create unique connections between workers and their consumers, or receivers of care, which increases the importance of having the union play a visible role in issues like product quality or voice on the job, in order to create common ground between the workers' interests and their clients' (Green and Tilly, 1987).

## Institutional Nature of Unions

Beyond focusing on particular issues, some identify the institutional nature and philosophy of a union as a critically important element when it comes to organizing women workers. While every union is different, in general, unions' internal structures and leadership culture are often noticeably male-dominated, and predominantly white. Staffs and leadership are heavily male, reflecting the male hierarchy of the workforce, past and present, and the early history of unionization.

This internal structure is problematic in efforts to organize women, and not just in appearance. The organization should look from the outside consistent with the values it is espousing. For example, if a commitment to diversity is part of a particular union's philosophy, this commitment should be reflected in its organizing staff, its organizing outreach to women, and its institutional culture (Milkman, 1989). Others propose that serious institutional and organizational change needs to occur within the U.S. labor movement: change that acknowledges and prioritizes the important role and power of women workers within the movement (Bronfenbrenner and Warren, 2007).

Women organizers have also raised the issue of whether the internal structure and traditions of unions hinder them in attracting women members, activists, or staff. If women organizers are more successful in organizing women, it makes sense that unions would prioritize identifying, training, hiring and retaining women organizers. The Berger Marks report, "Women Organizing Women: How do we rock the boat without getting thrown overboard?" highlights many of the difficulties faced by female full time union staff. Grueling schedules, demands for out-of-town travel, and lack of resources for childcare or family leave in a union culture that emphasizes individual accomplishment rather than teamwork, all contribute to burnout and turnover among women organizers (Berger-Marks Foundation 2004).

Hard evidence in the literature is sparse that there is a particular "women's way of organizing." As these debates among academics and activists show, many elements go into making a campaign successful, and the wisdom of being responsive to issues, building relationships with workers, understanding the unique features of a workplace and workforce, and

building a more responsive union culture are not ideas that pertain only to women. They are elements in effective organizing in any context, both union and community.

Many unions have taken these debates seriously and have begun implementing alternative approaches to organizing, especially in women-dominated sectors. SEIU's Justice for Janitors campaign in the late 1990s is only one example of organizing that has taken seriously the connection between the community and the union. Many unions have gotten involved in local struggles for living wage ordinances, protections for immigrant workers, and community benefits agreements, representing some of the brightest spots in labor's recent history. The campaigns studied here offer compelling evidence that organizing new members can be successful when innovative approaches and serious attention to the issues and concerns of workers' lives are used. A thorough understanding and analysis of these approaches can provide important insights to assist unions in developing more successful strategies among all workers and sectors.

Rather than posing the debate as *is there or isn't there a particular "women's way,"* it seems more useful to ask *why,* in spite of the constant rhetoric about the importance of organizing and growth for unions, it has taken so many labor leaders so long to pay attention to the data about organizing among women and implement lessons learned from its analysis.

## IV. THE FINDINGS

### Campaign Summaries

#### **United Federation of Teachers (UFT) UFT/ACORN Homebased Childcare Providers**

In 2005, UFT began an organizing drive to gain collective bargaining rights for home-based childcare providers in New York City. As the city's largest education union, UFT represents over 200,000 teachers and educators. The union wanted to represent childcare providers because of their important yet overlooked role in the education system. Providers receive government subsidies to care for infants, young children, and children needing after-school care from low-income families. They play important educational roles with these children, as they read to the children, supervise safe play, prepare meals, and attend to all their routine needs. They provide referrals and support to the low-

income families and women whose children they care for. The care these workers provide during children's early development years prepares them for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten. New York State is home to approximately 60,000 childcare providers and the workforce is mostly women of color. According to UFT, over fifty percent of these workers earn poverty-level wages. They also lack health benefits, overtime pay, pension plans, and paid vacation time.<sup>6</sup>

After a two-year campaign, UFT successfully organized 28,000 city childcare providers. In July of 2009, the UFT reached a two-year contract agreement with New York State and the NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) ensuring a standard market rate for reimbursement, access to the state healthcare plan, professional development funding, and a fund to upgrade facilities. The victory came after providers won the right to unionize in New York through Executive Order 12, signed in May 2007 by then-governor Eliot Spitzer granting providers the right to negotiate with the state for higher pay, health insurance, improved working conditions, and better training.<sup>7</sup> Before that point, providers could not unionize because they were defined by state law as independent contractors. Independent contractors are considered employers and do not have collective bargaining rights. UFT lobbied state lawmakers and rallied outside of the Governor's office in support of legislation which extended collective bargaining rights while they maintained their independent contractor status.

The union collaborated with the New York City chapter of the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) to launch its largest organizing campaign in four decades. ACORN is a



<sup>6</sup> UFT Providers Home Page. 1 July 2009. <http://www.uftproviders.org/>

<sup>7</sup> Spitzer, Eliot. Representation of Childcare Providers Executive Order 12 of May 8, 2007. 25 June 2009. [http://www.ny.gov/governor/executive\\_orders/xeorders/12.html](http://www.ny.gov/governor/executive_orders/xeorders/12.html)

community organization committed to social and economic justice for historically disenfranchised groups.<sup>8</sup> Organizers recognized that reaching providers would be difficult because they worked out of their own homes all across the city. In response, the union launched a citywide door-knocking campaign, first to get providers to sign union cards, and then to mobilize them for the union election. Working together, UFT and ACORN members and staff ultimately collected 17,000 union authorization cards. Rallies and meetings helped to get providers, elected officials, clergy members, and community leaders to help with the campaign.

The UFT and ACORN waged a campaign to fight for changes in the payment system and in health inspections, lobbying the city health department and the city's Agency for Child Development. During these actions providers learned the power of collective action even though the union was not yet recognized. Leadership was developed and victories realized (over \$300,000 in back pay won). Protests were organized regarding the state's failure to notify workers about a recent statewide market rate increase. The UFT also launched a campaign to change the market rate system. The market rate determines the level of government subsidy paid to childcare workers to cover the cost of care. The city's Human Resources Administration pays providers, and the State Office of Children and Family Services sets the market rate. UFT rallied outside both offices, mailed workers information on the market rate increase, and testified before City Council. The union's efforts eventually paid off when it collaborated with the State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) and the city Agency for Child Development to develop a new market rate notification system.<sup>9</sup>

For more information about this campaign, visit UFT's website at [www.uftproviders.org](http://www.uftproviders.org)

### **Domestic Workers United (DWU)**

In 2004, DWU drafted the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights campaign to amend existing labor law and establish basic labor standards for domestic workers in New York State. DWU is a New York area organization of over 2,000 Caribbean, Latina, and African domestic workers committed to building power, raising the level of respect for domestic work and workers, securing fair labor standards, and helping to build a movement for social change. As nannies, elderly caregivers and housekeepers, domestic workers care for the most important elements of their employers' lives: their homes and families. Their work helps make all other work possible. Despite the important work they do to care for New York's families, they are some of the most vulnerable workers in the labor market. According to DWU, there are over 200,000 domestic workers in the greater New York metropolitan area and over two million nationwide. The workforce is predominantly immigrant women of color, over half of whom are primary income earners for their families.<sup>10</sup> According to DWU founder Ai-Jen Poo, over one third of these women have endured mental, physical, or sexual abuse by their employer. Most make less than minimum wage and work long hours without paid sick days, vacation time, or other basic protections.<sup>11</sup> To date, domestic workers do not have collective bargaining rights because neither the state nor the federal government considers them "employees."<sup>12</sup> This fact is a remnant of the original debate over the National Labor Relations Act in the 1930s. Conservative Dixiecrat politicians refused at that time to allow the inclusion of either domestic workers or agricultural workers in the nation's labor laws to deny federal protection to the mostly black workforce in the South who toiled in these occupations.

<sup>8</sup> Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN). Home Page. 1 July 2009. <http://www.acorn.org/>

<sup>9</sup> "UFT/ACORN Roundtable." Cornell Labor Studies, New York City, April 2, 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Domestic Workers United. Home Page. 24 June 2009. <http://www.domesticworkersunited.org/>

<sup>11</sup> Statement from Ai-Jen Poo. "Domestic Workers United Roundtable." Cornell Labor Studies. New York City, April 9, 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Terri Goodman, Dyanne A. Norris, and Cynthia Rivera. "Report on Domestic Workers United Roundtable." Cornell Labor Studies. Spring 2008.



The Domestic Workers Bill of Rights, first introduced in Albany in 2004, guarantees basic work standards for this largely invisible workforce. It provides a limited number of paid sick days, vacation days, overtime pay, notice, severance, and health benefits. It also eliminates language excluding domestic workers from the definition of “employee” and provides protection from unfair firing and discrimination. In early summer 2009, the New York State Assembly approved a bill, based on the Bill of Rights, to provide domestic workers with overtime after 40 hours per week, one day of rest per week, inclusion in state human rights and collective bargaining laws, and inclusion of part-time domestic workers in disability laws. It also mandates the Commissioner of Labor conduct a study on the feasibility of domestic workers achieving standards and benefits like those in the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights in the absence of law. As of fall 2009, the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights is still awaiting consideration by the New York State Senate.

DWU partnered with other domestic worker groups through the Domestic Workers Justice Coalition, including Andolan Organizing South Asian Workers, Adhikaar, Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees, and Unity Housecleaners of the Workplace Project. Together, the Domestic Workers Justice Coalition represents over 10,000 domestic workers in New York. Organizers helped workers find lawyers and fill out paperwork for pending wage and overtime and harassment lawsuits. Since its founding in 2000, DWU has helped workers recover over half a million dollars in back wages and overtime. Members have traveled to Albany and met with legislators to lobby for the Bill of Rights. They have also marched and rallied outside of the Governor’s Office in New York City. To raise community awareness, a DWU member wrote and acted in a play about the world of domestic work, entitled “Exit Cuckoo.” Through the campaign, DWU

has built a broad-based coalition representing groups in the women’s movement, labor movement, faith-based movement, and immigrant rights movement who have come together to organize and host statewide vigils, rallies, marches, and phone-ins to Albany.<sup>13</sup> DWU has also organized together with a community-based organization, Jews for Racial and Economic Justice, to raise consciousness among employers. JFREJ has set up an Employers for Justice Network that boasts a membership of about 200 families.

For more information about this campaign, visit DWU’s website at <http://www.domesticworkersunited.org/>.

### **Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU) Young Retail Workers**

In 2005, RWDSU launched a campaign to organize workers of the seven-store youth fashion retail chain Yellow Rat Bastard (YRB) in Manhattan. RWDSU organizes workers in the retail industry, which is characterized by low wage work and extremely low unionization rates. Retail workers, including YRB’s workforce, are almost evenly split between male and female. YRB employees complained that they were paid below minimum wage, denied overtime, endured sexual harassment, and worked in unsanitary conditions.

The YRB campaign was started through the Retail Action Project, a community-labor partnership of the RWDSU and the Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES). RAP is dedicated to improving the working lives of New York City retail workers. RAP was created through the efforts of RWDSU as a way to reach out to young NYC retail workers, spark organizing campaigns, and establish a worker-community base. In the spring of 2009, YRB ratified its first contract, giving them wage increases, scheduling rights, job security, and guaranteed fulltime hours.

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<sup>13</sup> “Domestic Workers United Roundtable.” Cornell Labor Studies. New York City, April 9, 2008.

During the campaign, organizers reached out to workers by meeting them at worksites, during lunch breaks, and after work. They helped the YRB workers take their case to the State Attorney General's office for its investigation of the wage and hour violations at the retail chain. Due in large part to RWDSU's efforts, the Attorney General's office filed a lawsuit and won \$1.4 million in back wages for YRB workers. To draw attention to the campaign, RWDSU built a diverse community coalition including the performance artist, Rev. Billy and the Church of Life after Shopping, and rallied in front one of the chain's Soho stores on a busy shopping day in December 2006. The Retail Action Project also has a cultural program called the Common Threads Art Collective, which uses art to engage retail workers and community allies and draw attention to workers' experiences in low-wage retail jobs. Common Threads produced an art exhibit entitled "Common Threads: Artists in Spite of Retail" and is currently working on a public art project called "Retailing 14th Street."

For more information about this campaign, visit RAP's website at [www.retailactionproject.org/](http://www.retailactionproject.org/).

#### **1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East Homecare Providers**

In 2004, 1199SEIU began a campaign to win higher wages and better benefits for home health aides in New York City. As the nation's largest healthcare local, 1199SEIU represents more than 200,000 homecare, hospital, and nursing home workers in New York City. It is also the largest local union of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), which represents two million workers in healthcare, public services, and building services.<sup>14</sup>

Home health aides care for elderly, disabled, and recently discharged hospital patients. They care for patients by administering medicine,

doing household chores, and helping with daily activities. There are 30,000 home health aides in New York City and over two million nationwide. The workforce is comprised largely of immigrant women of color. Home health aides are employed by private agencies that work with hospitals to provide home care. The agencies are reimbursed by Medicaid and Medicare. According to 1199SEIU, many aides earn the minimum state wage, \$7.15 an hour, with no benefits.<sup>15</sup>

During the campaign, the union held a rally at Madison Square Garden attended by 5,000 homecare workers and public officials including Governor Paterson and Senator Charles Schumer. They also marched in lower Manhattan to protest their exploitation by the private agencies. Workers picketed the offices of some of the private agencies and even the Long Island home of one of the agency's owners. At rallies, they distributed leaflets urging people to contact the agencies and demand better treatment for home health aides. As a result of their efforts, 4,500 aides won union contracts in late 2008. The new union contract provides raises on minimum rates, health benefits, sick leave, and holiday pay.<sup>16</sup>

For more information about this campaign, visit 1199SEIU's website at <http://www.1199seiu.org/>.

<sup>14</sup> Helen Foreman-Hines, Audrey S. Russell, and Sarah Williams. "Women and the Labor Movement: Report on the 1199SEIU Roundtable." Cornell Labor Studies. Spring 2008.

<sup>15</sup> 1199SEIU. Home Page. 23 June 2009. <http://www.1199seiu.org/>.

<sup>16</sup> "1199SEIU Roundtable." Cornell Labor Studies. New York City. April 16, 2008.

## A Comparative International Perspective from the U.K.

Researchers and students were extremely fortunate in the spring of 2009 to have access to scholars conducting a comparative analysis of women in trade union leadership between the U.S. and the U.K. In their two year study, "Women's Union Leadership: Examining the Experiences in the U.K. and USA," Dr. Gill Kirton and Dr. Geraldine Healy of Queen Mary University of London are examining and comparing the role of women's leadership in U.S. and U.K. unions. They are studying how unions influence women's lives outside the union and why women pursue union leadership roles. They are comparing women's union career in the U.S. and the U.K., and analyzing the factors that promote or hinder female union leadership. While the U.K. project focused on leadership rather than organizing, the roundtable gave the students an opportunity to think outside the U.S. context about the role of women in unions.<sup>17</sup>

The greatest similarities between the U.S. and U.K. exist in the areas of relative number and influence of women and women leaders in the two countries. Women, and particularly women of color, are the fastest organizing sector in the U.K. (similar to the U.S.). Issues of family responsibilities competing for the time of women activists, and the hierarchical structure of unions creating barriers for women leaders were similar. The greatest differences and the differences that surprised the attendees at the panel presentation, were the features of a "social safety net" that exist in the U.K. and that are taken for granted by British workers: single-payer government-funded health care, paternity and maternity leave, and other assistance available to families. Mandatory vacation, pension, and unemployment benefits were far superior in the U.K.

During the roundtable, the student researchers posed questions about each of the seven strategies to Drs. Kirton and Healy. The usefulness or success of each of the strategies being studied here seemed to resonate with the experiences of union women in the U.K.:

1. U.K. unions succeeded in involving women when they addressed their real priorities, especially around work-family balance issues, respect, and prevention of sexual harassment.
2. U.K. unions typically offer both formal and informal mentoring programs for women leaders, though these need to be strengthened for underrepresented groups such as ethnic minorities.
3. Many unions have women-only spaces and committees that provide opportunities to strategize together, though just as in the U.S., there is a debate about whether these tend to marginalize or empower women.
4. Kirton and Healy were somewhat critical of the lack of attention and resources given by U.K. unions to identifying women leaders, and training and promoting them *as leaders*.
5. Many, though not all, U.K. unions provide opportunities to highlight and celebrate women's accomplishments.
6. Flexible opportunities for involvement seemed to be a challenge, but given the more generous maternity and child care benefits available to women in the U.K., some of the barriers to involvement faced by U.S. women seemed to be less problematic in the U.K.
7. Kirton and Healy felt that most of the union training available in the U.K. was either in vocational areas, or where training was controlled by the union, in day-to-day union operations, rather than in leadership skills such as *mobilizing women*.

<sup>17</sup> Fallon Ager, Stephen Barracato, and Quin Chia. "Glacial at the Top: Report on the U.K. Women's Research Roundtable." Cornell Labor Studies. Spring 2008.

In the background research conducted for their project, Drs. Healy and Kirton reported on data and identified five barriers preventing women in the U.K. from joining or becoming active in unions. These barriers resonate strongly with many of the elements identified in the current debate around the factors in U.S. unions that hinder greater participation for women (Healy and Kirton, 2008).

**1. The gendered nature of domestic work:** The difficulty many women activists have in balancing home responsibilities with union work is well documented in both countries.

**2. Organization of women's work in the workplace:** The structure of male leadership in unions parallels the dominance of men in the workplace. The marginalized nature of some of women's traditional work like childcare or domestic work makes it less likely women will develop some of the conventional leadership skills such as public speaking or strategic campaign skills. It diminishes the likelihood that women will step up to leadership roles when the possibility arises.

**3. The way trade union leadership activities/responsibilities are structured is not woman-friendly:** Work schedule, travel responsibilities, and lack of flexibility for family priorities are all challenges for women union leaders in both countries.

**4. Women lead with a transformational style that is not the traditional male style dominant in unions:** Male union leaders in the U.K. are more conventionally seen as confrontational or competitive. Women tend to lead with a different, more mediational style that may affect how others see their potential as leaders.

**5. Trade union agendas in the U.K. don't tend to address "women's issues":**

This is defined as a barrier in the U.K. and it resonates with the assertion that addressing "women's issues" in the U.S. is a strategy for success in organizing women. The definitions of "women's issues" is unclear in both contexts, and an examination of these issues may reveal a lot of intersection with class and ethnic issues as well as gender.

The input of the U.K. researchers deepened our appreciation of how these gender issues resonate across cultures. At the same time, the U.K. example helped clarify the possible role of government and political power in addressing issues of concern for workers, suggesting that collective bargaining and traditional union activity is only one way to pursue workers' interests. This resonated with the new creative strategies on the part of the Domestic Workers United and (UFT) home-based childcare workers to pursue legislative strategies for their campaigns.

For more information on this project, go to [http://www.leverhulme.ac.uk/news/Awards\\_in\\_Focus/Kirton/](http://www.leverhulme.ac.uk/news/Awards_in_Focus/Kirton/)

## Focus Group: Young Organizers' Perspectives

As the researchers studied how unions used certain organizing strategies to encourage women's activism, they became interested in the specific issues facing women organizers and leaders themselves. In July 2009, the researchers brought together a group of nine women organizers from the New York City metropolitan area to discuss the impact of gender on their work as organizers and leaders. Seven of the nine participants were under 35, and all were experienced full time union organizers, though they differed in family status, years of union experience, sector, and union affiliation. They represented 8 different unions, six from the private sector, three from the public sector. Five were women of color, four were white. Questions used for the focus group appear in Appendix C.

During the two-hour discussion, the participants emphasized that part of promoting women's activism is continuing to support them once they reach leadership positions. Their experiences seemed to closely parallel the debates over the traditional way of organizing versus a more community based approach used in the campaigns studied here. The findings also paralleled the recommendations put forward by the participants in the Berger-Marks Report: use a team-based approach to lead a campaign; base campaigns and organizers locally; and allow flexible schedules and adequate time off between organizing campaigns. The following observations came out of the focus group, supported by direct quotes from the participants.

Every participant agreed that their unions do not give enough resources to their organizing departments. Some suggested that the traditional organizing model needs to change because organizers feel isolated and unsupported. While they all expressed

tremendous commitment to the work, they emphasized that organizing is a difficult job which is often not given the respect it deserves.

*"[Organizers] drive by themselves to visit pin factories and gun factories in the middle of nowhere where people deserve representation. They're by themselves. I think that model needs a lot of changes."*

*"It's still a model where you get dropped off. After ten days, you might get to go home, and you're by yourself."*

*"We were a new organizing department. It was three of us and a director, and it was completely impossible. We were doing 700 person campaigns and home visits. We worked to the point where I had almost all my vacation from the year before backed up. I had scheduled a vacation and they were like, 'Well that's nice. We'll see you tomorrow.' They expect your life to stop. It's difficult working in an organizing position or any labor positions [while] going to school or maintaining a personal life. You have to figure out what gives and what takes."*

*"[People would ask,] 'Why are you standing in front of a nursing home at three in the morning?' Because that's when the workers get out. I don't like hanging out in front of nursing homes, but it's part of what my job entails."*

*"I think we always have to fight to overcome stereotypes about the job. We need to stand up for it. It's not something that any college kid can just do without a serious skill set."*

Participants described how gender expectations made them feel conflicted about how to act as leaders. Some felt pressure from other union leaders to conform to stereotypes about the way women "should" lead. Others felt pressure

to “compensate” for their gender by taking on multiple tasks and doing everything perfectly. They felt conflicted about coming across as “too mean” or “too masculine.”

*“We have to be careful about not being pigeonholed by other people’s perceptions of what a woman in labor is. We as women bring certain skills to the table. Don’t try to ‘out man’ the man because at the end of the day, you’re a woman. You’ve just got to be yourself, do the work you’ve got to do, and know that you know what you’re doing.”*

*“My leadership is still heavily male-dominated. They always reserve the recording secretary position for a woman because it has the word ‘secretary.’ One very proactive woman wanted to run for a vice chair position and the two guys kept [encouraging her] to run for secretary.”*

Some of the participants noted that gender expectations can lead to negative experiences with female leaders.

*“Our executive director is male, and all of the local presidents are female. It’s almost like high school. Because he’s in the position that he’s in, all these presidents are like, ‘Oh my god. It’s a man.’ They get so excited to be around a male that they end up fighting with each other.”*

Others felt that their female leaders demonstrated approaches that could be uniquely effective:

*“They’re incredible.... I’ve watched (Leader X) take down some really unpleasant people in some really bad situations. She has to deal with some obnoxious men on the west coast. And my favorite example is that one day somebody was arguing with her and she was very calm. She’s very prim, and he finally got – his head blew off, and he said, ‘Well, what do you – you’re not even a lawyer!’ And she goes, ‘Oh, but I am’....”*

*“And (Leader Y) is sort of fiery next to her. They make a great team in a room, and they’re terrific in a negotiation because they just play off each other wonderfully. (Leader Y’s) got an encyclopedic mind for labor, and a chess player’s mind for how (our union) can position itself moving forward. We took a full seat at the (major labor federation) two years ago, and that was purely her decision. She’d come up with the idea, and she worked it for a couple years before she convinced everybody that this was a good idea, and she just saw where the country was going and where our industry was going...”*

Many participants felt their voices weren’t being heard by other leaders in their union. Some noted that their unions were vocal about supporting women’s leadership, but did not take steps to actually promote women’s activism.

*“I felt really crazy because I’d be in these meetings with men and women, and I’d say something and people were like, ‘Oh, okay.’ Then a man repeats exactly what I’d said, and it was the new campaign. I went to my mentor once and asked, ‘Do I need to take speech classes? Because I feel like people are not understanding me.’ It was heartbreaking. I had self-esteem issues for so long. I thought there was something wrong with me.”*

*“I think it’s a fear of women. They know that women can do it better. Women can multitask. In unions, you’ve got to be able to multitask. I think it’s an age thing too, because you see it with young men. It’s not just women. It’s new ideas. If the ideas come from a group that was previously underrepresented, they’re scared.”*

One participant reported that the kinds of community-based and collective organizing that seemed natural to women were ridiculed by men in leadership, until the efforts began to pay off.

*"I've seen the difference (in who gets heard) in terms of coalition work. We do a lot with health groups and women's groups. I proposed the idea two years ago, and the two male bosses thought it was ridiculous. But now we got all this traction, and so all of the sudden it became the thing to do."*

As discussed in the Berger-Marks report, "Rocking the Boat," many participants noted the unique qualities that women bring to organizing and the importance of mentors and role models in bringing out those qualities.

*"We bring a level of compassion, understanding, and clarity. We're natural negotiators. Where can we find the compromise? How can we make everyone happy?"*

*"It's so important that women are in these positions. My hope is that as each one of us moves up and takes positions, we set new rules. We start to change jobs to make them more amenable. It doesn't have to be by those structures. There's a better way of doing this. We have to be those people."*

*"It's important for women to have female role models on the job at every level: activists on the shop floor, organizers, and officers."*

The young women organizers recognize the importance of recruiting and mentoring new leaders, especially among women and people of color, and they are encouraged to do it. And this effort doesn't seem always to be restricted to women leaders.

*"We have a union right now that is run by a female national president and a female national executive director. They have a directive to the board members. We are required to go out and recruit new committee members, particularly women and women of color."*

*"Our executive director and field director, both men, actively search out female leadership, and really want to develop female leadership in the union."*

*"Right after the strike was resolved, someone from the board approached me on the bus and said, 'We would like you to run for our board.' I said, 'I don't know anything about running for a board.' She goes, 'We have an active policy that we have to recruit for board members. I'm a woman, and you're a woman, and I've been watching you for the last year. I think you'd be perfect.'"*

*"I was eased into [organizing], but had someone not said, 'I think you should try this,' I would have thought, 'No, organizing is definitely not for me.'"*

*"There's this one organizer who used to work in the legal department. She decided one day that she was tired of working in the legal department and decided she wanted to be an organizer. You would have never thought that she would be a good organizer but she's actually one of the best that we have, and it's because she learned how to be an organizer and was very open to just trying something new."*

Many of the challenges these women organizers faced were not specifically related to gender, but rather to age or parenthood. For example, some young participants described a sense of "burn out" among their young colleagues working as organizers.

*"Unfortunately, because I'm young and I apparently have some energy that nobody else has, (they feel) they can just kind of shuffle me around the whole union."*

Many participants described the challenge of balancing family life with working as an organizer.

*"[The organizing director] made the decision to not have children. She's made some decisions in her life that are rewarded by getting her to the position she's in, but she's had to make difficult choices."*

*"The ones that move faster up the chain are the ones that don't have children. They simply have more time for the union."*

*"Once I had my daughter, it took me away from the union activist role because I went back to work so soon after she was born, and I had great guilt about that. I didn't want to spend extra time with the union or with anything else. I wanted to make up all the time with her."*

*"I feel that since I have kids- it's like the Ginger Rogers, Fred Astaire thing. She had to do it backwards and on heels. I have to work extra hard to prove myself. It's not as much overcoming gender as just overcoming being a parent."*

*"We make a lot more sacrifices than the men do. I see that on my job the men will work crazy hours and be super dedicated. It's not because their passion is greater, but they don't have to worry about everything else. Women can become officers and we can be involved, but we still have to go home and do those other things that a lot of men are still not doing."*

Interestingly, some participants felt their unions took advantage of the fact that they did not have children.

*"The switch is that my union allows men to be good fathers at the expense of people that are childless. Because I don't have a child, it becomes my responsibility to make parenting [easier] for parents."*

Many of the findings in the focus group paralleled the practices identified in the campaigns: these young organizers expressed love for their work, but frustration with the way the work was organized, supported, and rewarded. They recounted some of the unique qualities that women bring to organizing, but were not at all convinced that gender determined whether one was a good organizer or leader.





## V. ANALYSIS

Data from the four campaigns, the input from the young women organizers' focus group, and the perspective shared in the roundtable on the research in the U.K. contribute to answering the questions raised in the introduction to the project:

Is there a way of organizing that is unique to women-focused organizing campaigns?

Among the seven strategies identified in the Institute for Women's Policy Research report, which strategies are most often used, and how successful are they in ensuring the success of these organizing efforts?

Are there other strategies or new ideas that should be assessed, propagated, and perhaps generalized to organizing in other union organizing efforts that might help unions increase their success in organizing?

Are these new strategies? Or are they rooted in older models that are reemerging to challenge not only the traditional organizing practices of unions, but also the way unions view organizing and organizers' roles?

### A. How Successful Were the Seven Strategies in Ensuring Each Organizing Victory?<sup>18</sup>

#### i. Address Women's True Priorities

Across all the campaigns, organizers encouraged a high level of activism among women workers by responding to women's concerns. In addition to higher wages, women wanted to upgrade their skills, stop sexual harassment, and gain respect for their work. As immigrants, mothers, and women of color, they also wanted to address immigrant rights, healthcare reform, and other issues affecting workers outside the workplace.

As suggested by the Berger-Marks report, addressing these "whole life" issues inspired personal involvement and investment in the union.

*"In order for unions to continue to wage successful organizing campaigns, they must properly acknowledge the needs of those they wish to organize, in this case, women."*

*1199SEIU: "Our organization is predominantly women. We're always having group discussions about what it is that we as women and members of the union need. We do not ignore men because we do have men that are single parents and they get the benefits too, but our union is majority women. So we have these discussions and that's how the Childcare Fund started out."*

A recurring theme across the campaigns was the desire for better training and job advancement among the women. In response, 1199SEIU offered home health aides access to ESL classes, certified nursing and LPN, RN, Alzheimers and computer training. UFT provided a capitalizing college credential program to increase members' employability. DWU offered ESL training, GED classes, and a Nanny Training Program in association with Cornell Labor Studies. The Nanny Training Program teaches domestic workers basic pediatrics and negotiation skills. RWDSU partnered with Consortium for Worker Education and LaGuardia Community College to offer a ten-hour customer service training workshop. DWU and RWDSU also created "unemployed workers groups" to offer computer literacy and resume-writing workshops.

*RWDSU: "People want opportunities to advance their careers. Our resume-writing and customer service training is really important right now with the way the economy is going. These workshops are a great support strategy to bring people together. We help people with unemployment insurance and resume-writing. A lot of our members are unemployed and we help them upgrade their skills and get jobs."*

<sup>18</sup> Quotes in this section are from the campaign roundtables.

*RWDSU: "Our customer service training is led by our members from Macy's through LaGuardia Community College and Consortium for Worker Education. It's a ten hour program, and the participants get a certificate for customer service skills. It's a great recruitment tool for us and it upgrades their skills. It's led by union members for nonunion members and it's open to anybody."*

*1199SEIU: "We have seminars and workshops on domestic violence, housing, and women in leadership roles. Whether it be informal meetings or formal meetings, it's all an education process."*

Another recurring concern expressed by the women in the campaigns was respect and dignity for women's work, which each campaign emphasized. By defining domestic workers as "employees," DWU's Bill of Rights sought to extend the rights afforded to most employees to domestic workers. One of UFT's goals was to show the public that childcare providers play an integral role in the education system. It brought providers to meetings with school administrators to make providers a part of the dialogue on public school education. Since many home health aides are immigrant women, 1199SEIU created a citizenship program to put workers in contact with immigration lawyers and to help them prepare for the citizenship exam. Since many workers endured sexual harassment on the job, 1199SEIU and RWDSU provided support groups and sensitivity trainings to teach workers and managers about sexual harassment laws.

*RWDSU: "We work on creating a workplace that's free of sexual harassment, especially for younger women. You have managers that aren't trained and don't know the law. There's no training, so there's a lot of sexual harassment. We educate the women that we work with on their rights surrounding sexual harassment."*

The campaigns focused on the economic hardships faced by the women, not waiting for a collective bargaining agreement before tackling specific injustices. Many women worked full-time yet could not afford childcare or medical coverage. 1199SEIU offered access to its Childcare Fund, medical coverage, and mortgage assistance programs. UFT fought for a new market rate notification system to ensure that childcare providers were paid accurately. RWDSU informed members about minimum wage, commission, and overtime laws by visiting with workers at the retail stores.

## **ii. Create and Support Formal and Informal Mentoring Programs**

The campaigns clearly prioritized identifying and developing new leaders through mentoring and informal networking. The organizers addressed the non-traditional context of much of this women-centered work by building informal networks among women to support and encourage activism. With no central workplace to communicate with workers, organizers met with workers at playgrounds, parks, and shopping centers. UFT and DWU relied on "nanny networks" and RWDSU tapped into a similar "retail workers network." Networking was especially important to organizing hesitant workers. Workers reported feeling less reticent about joining a union after speaking informally to a friend about it. Workers informed each other about the union and attended union events together. For example, members of RWDSU broke into "RAP Street Teams" to tell friends working in other retail stores about RAP. Organizers at 1199SEIU routinely introduced home health aides that lived and worked near each other.

*RWDSU: "We're trying to create a network of people that support each other. We're always introducing people and connecting people. Members with jobs get other people jobs. You can establish credibility because you know the same people. Our RAP Street Team is about connecting people. You're a part of*

*the Street Team if you talk to your friend about RAP or if when you go shopping, you give the person that helps you a flier about RAP.”*

*1199SEIU: “We nurture women and men. It’s about observing and seeing potential in members and nurturing them to promote themselves to higher positions. We make recommendations that these are the people that we see as being leaders in our union. I may see something in you that you’re not comfortable with. I can develop what I see in you through trainings and seminars. The organization makes space to do this.”*

*RWDSU: “We have regular membership meetings with people that are unionized and not unionized. We are trying to tie the link between organized and non-organized members.”*

The campaigns used personal contacts to encourage participation. 1199SEIU established an “Under Thirty Committee” to mentor and train young members. UFT and DWU used phone banks to call and invite workers to events. Every union also had translators at meetings to facilitate better communication at meetings.

*1199SEIU: “We have an ‘Under 30 Committee’ which seeks out the younger workforce. People walk into the union with all these wonderful benefits, so it’s a matter of teaching people why they have these benefits. It’s a fight to keep what you have.”*

*“...formerly disenfranchised women are being made aware of their importance, the support on which they can rely, and the avenues available to them for education and elevation.”*

### **iii. Provide Opportunities for Women to Strategize Together**

Each campaign differed in the extent to which it provided formal “women’s spaces.” 1199SEIU’s Women’s Committee opened its

events up to both women and men. It hosted a Breast Cancer Awareness Program and a Women’s Lunch for International Women’s Day. Similarly, organizers at RWDSU offered open meetings for anyone to attend and voice their concerns. They recognized that RAP was still too small to create a formal women’s network and found that members identified as young retail workers more so than as women workers.

DWU held retreats for members to network and plan, and hosted open houses, brunches, and social forums.

*1199SEIU: “There’s the Women’s Committee which deals with a lot of issues related to women. We have Breast Cancer Awareness and we bring in female artists to perform dances and poetry. We never keep men out of whatever we do.”*

*RWDSU: “We have open meetings for anyone to come and say what they want in their contract. We were meeting with workers and talking to them about what the campaign is, how to get involved, what a union is, and what problems we’re organizing around. During the negotiations, every store had a representative that was on the negotiating committee that came to the negotiation with the owner and sat around the table and reviewed every step of the contract negotiation. We were very careful to have as much representation of women as men.”*

### **iv. Put Women in Leadership**

Organizers’ emphasis on power-sharing and collective decision-making cultivated a tremendous amount of personal investment in the union. Organizers embraced training members to become leaders. Indeed, they included members in all aspects of the campaign. Members attended and planned meetings, organized rallies, and participated in phone banks and door-to-door canvassing.

Each campaign had a method of identifying, training, and promoting potential leaders. Organizers at 1199SEIU identified workers with leadership qualities and encouraged them to become delegates and organizers. Members participated in strategy meetings, led general membership meetings, and hosted committee events. Doorknockers at UFT identified workers with leadership potential while they went door-to-door to workers' homes. Organizers then followed up with those workers and trained them to run borough-wide meetings. "Shadow leaders" at DWU were senior members who provided direct training and mentoring to members. DWU rotated leadership responsibilities at meetings and promoted internally when positions became available. RWDSU let members run meetings and set their own agenda. They also trained a media team of workers to talk to the press.

*RWDSU: "It's a priority for organizers and workers to make sure there is a gender balance in representation for contract negotiations. [Retail] is an industry with a lot of women working in it. We have the staff of the union be representative of the membership. We recruit 95% of the staff from the membership."*

*DWU: "We shadow our members. We have 17 steering committee members and each person on the steering committee has a group of members. You follow me around and see the work I'm doing and whatever I know, I transfer to you because your role will be to step up one day. We hire our leaders from within our membership. We do it through rotational facilitation. Even when a steering committee member is facilitating, a general member is always part of that. We have the entire meeting facilitated by two members and a shadow leader in the back. We support them if there are any questions they can't answer. We get them that sense of confidence [to enable them] to speak up to the employers."*

*DWU: "The way we expand is from within our membership. If we have a vacancy, we put it to the membership. They have first priority. If they don't have the skills and they're interested in the position, we train them for the position."*

*1199SEIU: "My organizer saw something in me that I didn't see. She wanted me to be a delegate and I didn't want to be. I promised her I would, so I became a delegate and I was very involved. It was because someone saw something in me that I didn't see. So now, I'm always looking for people. The key is to be involved in the union."*

#### **v. Highlight the Importance of Women's Contributions**

Each campaign had different methods of highlighting women's contributions. 1199SEIU hosted award dinners to recognize active members and women in top SEIU positions. It also held luncheons to acknowledge supportive politicians and leaders outside the union. It rewarded active members with a special gift based on the points they earned under the "points system." DWU taught members about famous female leaders. Members celebrated domestic workers by performing the *Domestic Slide* (an adapted version of the *Electric Slide*) at the Capitol in Albany. DWU also highlighted the diversity of its membership by asking members to read poetry and perform skits about their cultures. One member wrote and produced a play entitled "Exit Coo-Coo" about families who leave their children for paid domestics to rear.

*1199SEIU: "There are promotions. We take you from member to delegate. Many VPs and the President were delegates once. We have award dinners, luncheons, and we send people on special campaigns as a reward. We organized a Women's Luncheon where we honored women and women's work.."*

DWU: "We look at women who have played important roles. We look at Shirley Chisholm, Rosa Parks, Fannie Lou Hamer. As a diverse group of people, we [recognize women] through culture from our own countries. We try to keep people knowing that their culture is important to the country. At every general membership meeting, members do poetry or skits and we even had a calypso."

#### **vi. Provide Flexible Options for Involvement**

Flexible meeting options were particularly important because most women were busy with work, school, childcare, and multiple other responsibilities. Accordingly, every campaign offered evening and weekend meetings. Organizers also made phone calls to update members after meetings. Organizers at 1199SEIU and DWU even went to workers' homes to conduct meetings. 1199SEIU held borough meetings to accommodate members living in different areas of the city. RWDSU "rolled" meetings through the day, over coffee, during "sidewalk chats," or during breaks. DWU reached out to workers in parks, buses, and subways. It also reimbursed members for cab fare to and from meetings. RWDSU provided childcare during meetings.

1199SEIU: "We as staff are always working because our members work different shifts. Our meetings are always in the evening or weekends. We have to reach the worker and we have to reach them when they're not working. Nothing is going to replace one-on-one talking. We still need that one-on-one with that member or individual we're organizing."

RWDSU: "When you're organizing a fragmented workforce, how do you bring people together? We go to people's houses to have an organizing meeting with them. We meet at lunchtime or on their break, we travel with them on the train when they are going home. The internet is also a way for people to feel connected."

RWDSU: "Because people work different shifts, our meetings happen during the course of a day. We'll do meetings as late as 9 p.m. Those are often our biggest meetings. We do a lot of rolling meetings."

Organizers also brought workers together at cultural events, parades, picnics, and political events. RWDSU hosted an art exhibit called "Common Threads: Artist in Spite of Retail" for workers to express workplace injustice through art. 1199SEIU and DWU brought its members to Albany to lobby state lawmakers.

1199SEIU: "We have an art gallery that holds art exhibits of many artists, including women in photography. We participate in cultural events, dances, family picnics, the Caribbean and Puerto Rican Day parades, and political campaigns."

#### **vii. Provide Training on Mobilizing Women**

Several organizations provided formal training for leaders and organizers. Through training, members were given the tools necessary to lead, organize, and expand the organization. Even more training was done through informal, on-the-job training. Members of 1199SEIU and UFT gained hands-on organizing experience by going door-to-door to recruit members. Members of DWU learned leadership skills by observing shadow leaders and participating in phone banks. RWDSU used "cyber-training" through MySpace and Facebook, and text messaging to teach members how to communicate with each other. On-the-job training prepared members to become future union leaders.

1199SEIU: "Basically we get our training on the job. I just got thrown out there. Believe it or not, I was a shy person. I was not used to being around crowds of people. But people saw things in me that I didn't know I had."

*RWDSU: "For members of RAP, we do trainings, one-on-one stuff with people, over the phone, email, coffee breaks, texting, MySpace, Facebook. We've learned to train more casually. We have our priorities of what we need to communicate and it's the organizers' responsibility to communicate that whichever way."*

Each union also provided formal training on mobilizing women through its Education Department or by partnering with outside organizations. 1199SEIU provided seminars on mobilizing women through its Education Department. DWU offered retreats on organizing and community outreach. It also formed the Domestic Workers Congress at Barnard College. DWU plans to create a human rights clinic after the passage of its Bill of Rights to teach members how to mobilize more people. RWDSU offered workshops on how to talk to workers and overcome fear.

*RWDSU: "With our Member Volunteer Organizing Training, we are trying to develop the leadership of RAP so they can get involved in organizing. We do workshops so they can build their skills and can step up. [We have workshops on] how to do outreach, how to talk to your coworkers, how to motivate them, how to deal with excuses, overcome fear, listening skills."*

## B. Other Strategies Suggested by the Findings

The seven strategies were present in every campaign studied here. They provide important guidelines for success in attempting to organize women workers. The significance of these strategies seemed to be heightened because they were not "tactics" or "practices" or parts of a "rap" that organizers used to persuade someone to join a union. They occurred in a framework of intersectionality of the many different aspects of these women's lives: gender, ethnicity, family, community, culture, age, education level, class, etc. This was reflected in the richness of the partnerships, formal and informal, that the campaigns developed with other community groups in the course of the organizing.

It was helpful for workers to see groups which they perceived as having their best interest in mind supporting the union. For example, RWDSU encouraged workers to form coalitions based on geographic or identity-based groups like race, age, and sexual orientation. It partnered with gay rights groups, the Lower East Side Girls Club, and ethnic organizations. UFT created the Hispanic Leadership Committee in the Bronx. It also partnered with ACORN, a community organization committed to social and economic justice for historically disenfranchised groups. 1199SEIU united its younger members by creating an "Under Thirty Committee." DWU celebrated the cultural diversity of its membership and acknowledged that people from different cultures may respond to unions differently. It collaborated with many immigrant rights groups and domestic worker groups.

*RWDSU: "We see an opportunity to connect people and get people interested in organizing. We have a community coalition called the RAP Community Coalition. We reach out to community groups, ethnic groups, gay rights*

*organizations, and groups around the area where we're organizing. We get them to sit down with employers and they come to rallies and meetings. There are not as many workers identifying as women."*

*RWDSU: "Identity-based organizing is exciting. We've been trying to build trust with workers. Our art collective is amazing. It started with a group of young workers who like art. They were motivated and put on an art exhibit. It really built ties between community allies who are artists and retail workers who are artists. They meet monthly and facilitate their own meetings. They have a poetry group working on an art project that will draw attention to retail workers."*

It seems clear that many of the women involved in the campaigns were using networks and tactics generated by their previous activism in their communities. Women activists and leaders frequently emerge around community issues like school quality, crime, or housing. They develop skills by building networks door-to-door in their neighborhoods, identifying targets for pressure campaigns and marshalling their allies – particularly political allies – and resources through persuasion. This wealth of experience was an important element in the success of the campaigns studied, especially since all the campaigns used innovative political tactics in some way to pressure government officials for concessions that contributed to their victories. It may be effective to put greater emphasis on identifying and using these community networks and skills to build coalitions. In addition to this benefit, it also seemed likely that involving community organizations in these union struggles was instrumental in defusing resistance and early discomfort from women unaccustomed to unions, but familiar with community, church, or neighborhood groups.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The postindustrial economy has created many new challenges for unions. Recruitment drives have moved away from traditional union strongholds like manufacturing and toward the service and healthcare industries. The fastest-growing occupations in these industries are in the informal and low wage sectors, which are characterized by high turnover, low unionization rates, few legal protections for workers, and a largely female workforce. A large proportion of workers in these industries are immigrant women of color. Organizing these sectors can be difficult because being seen as a union supporter can cost a worker her job or status in the U.S. Organizing is further complicated by the fact that so many of these workers work in their own or their employer's private home. There is no central workplace for organizers to communicate with workers. Nevertheless, organizers are finding creative ways to mobilize this diverse and fragmented workforce. What has emerged is a social justice organizing model aimed at improving worker's whole lives as workers, parents, caregivers, and community members.

As women become a larger presence in the workforce, their concerns and demands are challenging the traditional assumptions of many unions and union leaders. They are redefining what it means to be a union member, highlighting issues of family and workplace fairness, and embedding unions into the identity of the community. Each campaign studied here tied unionization to larger social justice issues in the local community. Unions are still mechanisms to bargain for better wages, but are also community partners in efforts such as housing initiatives, immigrant rights, healthcare reform, and public school education. Unions collaborated with community groups, politicians, immigrant organizations, and religious congregations. Doing so legitimized the union in the eyes of otherwise wary workers. When the union reached out to the community, the community in turn felt invested in the union and saw an interest in helping it succeed. The community itself, in tandem with the union, advocated for the workers. The hope of organizers in these campaigns was that establishing this type of investment in the union would ensure its vitality long after the organizing campaign was over.

*1199SEIU: "As women came into the organization, the institutions began to change. With 30,000 homecare workers, we didn't want to be run by a boys' club. We wanted to change that. We took on a struggle."*

*DWU: "...the impersonal traditional model...that provides services but creates de facto disenfranchisement, versus that 'one-on-one' coalition-building, severs the ownership of decisions and therefore the impetus to promote the organization."*

*UFT: "The organizing campaign influences the level of investment and ownership by the members in the organization."*

The seven strategies in the IWPR Report that were identified as effective in this study could theoretically occur in any traditional union organizing campaign. Why don't they, if they work? The testimony provided by the





young organizers' focus group seems to indicate that women's approaches and ideas, even when backed up by experience and evidence, are not given the weight they should be given. The barriers identified in the U.K. study that prevent women from rising in union leadership are also heavily gender-specific. Unions have to learn to organize women more effectively. What does this study show us that might help unions recognize and overcome some of these barriers? The findings generated by the project led us to the following observations:

First, successful woman-centered campaigns tend to address priorities of women that are broader than wages, benefits, and working conditions, such as immigrant rights, public school education, healthcare reform, and respect for personal care work.

Second, woman-centered campaigns recognize that age, culture, and class may all affect women's decision-making and their view of unions. Workers are not just an undifferentiated mass of potential members to add to the collective voice: they are approached as individuals with a multiplicity of identities that intersect. Organizers build links among women based on these identity-based subgroups in order to make unionization more relevant and engaging. They partner with religious congregations, social networks, ethnic organizations, and political organizations that different women identify with.

Third, woman-centered campaigns build personal investment in the union through power-sharing and internal leadership development. Organizers equip members with the skills and motivation to sustain and expand the union in the future. The organizers in these campaigns were explicitly operating out of a leadership development framework. They were very focused on developing organic leaders out of the groups of workers, and saw the emergence of new leaders as true victories worthy of recognition and celebration. They were not particularly interested in maintaining an "expert" status in relation to the women they were organizing.

Fourth, the campaigns did not rely on traditional union structures and locations; they accommodated busy schedules and fragmented workforces by communicating and meeting with workers on an individual basis at different times and locations. They offered a variety of creative opportunities for women to socialize as well as strategize together.

Fifth, each campaign created a new image of what a union is: non-hierarchical, open to input, diverse, and willing to partner with other groups. This new image, whether the actual union behind the image is consistent with it, was compelling and different enough to draw these women in and organize them around their own interests and the interests of their communities. The challenge now will be whether the union will adapt to fit the image: how will traditional unions change in response to these new members? If U.S. unions find it impossible to change, workers will build (and already are building) new structures and organizations to fight for their interests. As one talented young organizer said: "We're not interested in reproducing the same top-down structures internally that out there in the world have kept working people at the bottom."

Women-centered campaigns offer new insights into organizing all workers. As demographics shift, and as work becomes more informal and less geographically defined, women-centered campaigns are developing new ways to reach out to workers. The centralized structures and gender biases of the old industrial economy, workplaces, *and unions* helped normalize a way of organizing that has failed to produce the results the labor movement needs.

The young women organizers in the focus group were unequivocal about some of the challenges posed by a new era of workplace relationships. Younger women activists were outspoken in their criticism of unions as not being responsive to the lives and concern of women on staff, particularly women with families. Attracting and retaining a talented activist core of organizers who understand what it takes to organize women is not

optional for the labor movement; it's essential. Union leaders of both genders and all ages need to listen to these voices.

In our view, it is too narrow to label this new approach as a "women's way of organizing." It is not that these tactics succeed only in organizing women or can only be executed by women. Some of them are geared toward women, but the focus on community and workers' whole lives is important to organizing all workers, male or female. These organizing strategies are in large part a response to the changing composition of the workforce and nature of work. It may be more useful to argue that women-focused organizing campaigns shed light on the drawbacks of the traditional union organizing model and offer new ways to organize all workers.

In the 1950s, with the advent of a new social compact between U.S. capital and a labor movement "cleansed" of its leftist influences, American unions deliberately rejected an older vision of social movement unionism. We now seem to be coming back to these same lessons, gleaned from campaigns such

as the ones studied here, and reintroduced as community unionism, that are organizing a diverse and dynamic generation of workers in a decentralized, low-wage, post-industrial workforce.

We began with the question, "Is there a particular women's way of organizing that can help the larger labor movement organize more effectively?" This didn't seem to be the right question by the end of the project. Clearly, there are strategies that work better with these kinds of campaigns, and among low-wage workers in these vulnerable and disenfranchised populations. But the promise of these strategies seems not to be whether they can generate successes based on gender or class or ethnicity alone, but with their connection to that older vision of labor as a social movement that attempts to mobilize and educate workers by being responsive to all the many dimensions that make up their lives. The more important question seems to be, "Why is it taking so long for U.S. unions to respond to these lessons and change in response to this promise?"



## VII. AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This project was only a small contribution to the work that needs to be done to identify a more effective approach to organizing. The relationship between sectoral, industrial, and political/legislative strategies needs to be examined, as more workers in the informal economy are appealing to government to recognize their status and intervene in their relationships with employers. Some may argue that several of the campaigns studied here and elsewhere have been successful because they adopted a legislative strategy. They may see a strong appeal to the government as a more important factor in these campaigns than community-coalition building. Unions that have responded to these needs and opportunities (e.g. SEIU, AFSCME, AFT, UFCW) should study, analyze and publish their findings to challenge other unions to think flexibly about these new approaches.

As the workforce changes and the nature of employment becomes more informal and transitory, many of the benefits that unionized employees have expected from their employers may need to be won from the government as part of a broader social safety net covering all workers. There are no institutions other than unions in the U.S. positioned to lead this effort.

The labor movement can learn from the approaches of community organizations, workers centers and other advocacy groups. The approaches used by these groups are consistent with the most recent research by organizational behavior scholarship about the importance of joint activities and common projects in cementing loyalty to a social network (Lawler 2009). The labor movement has often failed to use the important insights gained from scholarly studies of organizing and related activities.

We need to conduct more comparative studies with other countries to understand where best practices exist in organizing and building workers' power in a new globalized economy. The U.K. study we looked at is instructive, but it also involves a country that is economically and culturally more similar to the U.S. than many others that might be studied. As the world economy becomes more interdependent, (the recent economic meltdown notwithstanding), unless labor organizations can share analyses and strategies and coordinate bargaining approaches, we will continue to operate in a rearguard, defensive fashion.

A lot of the work that remains to be done is about the intersections of all these elements: gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability. Generational issues compete with gender issues when it comes to understanding how to make organizing more effective. Unions should take seriously the dangers of ignoring the new generation of workers and assuming they will come around to the same way of thinking once they get a few years of work under their belts. We are in a new era with new rules governing the workplace and economy. "Union solidarity," always an ephemeral and difficult concept, needs a new and creative approach. The way young people think about their lives, their responsibilities to others, and the way they build the social networks that used to occur at work and now occur in completely different—sometimes virtual—ways, is completely different. As young people come into positions of influence in their unions, their experiences in a more diverse society and less traditional workplaces are part of the awareness they bring. As a result, some of the resistance to including more diverse voices may weaken.

*RWDSU: "The young people get really energized and it's been interesting to see how it trickles up to the older workers. It's an interesting intergenerational thing going on."*

*"The real value may very well be a cultural change that responds to women's needs in relation to not only their gender difference but also age, class, ethnic, and sexual orientation. [These] differences [are] manifesting into coalitions built among diverse groups of people."*

If women, young people, and people of color were to collectively design their preferred union, it might look very different from the traditional union. That's the work that needs to be done. Until we have a labor movement that women and young people and people of color want to belong to, and want to own, the labor movement may well remain in a crisis of "density" with few insights into how to build a better future for all working people, including the ones who lead our unions today.

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## XI. APPENDICES

### Appendix A • Campaign Grid: How were the Seven Strategies Implemented?

	1199SEIU	DWU	RWDSU	UFT
<b>Features of the workforce/ membership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home health aides</li> <li>• Paid by private agencies funded by state through Medicaid/Medicare</li> <li>• Predominately older immigrant women of color</li> <li>• Fragmented workforce (no central job sites)</li> <li>• Have CB rights</li> <li>• Female-dominated union</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domestic workers</li> <li>• Privately paid</li> <li>• Immigrant women of color</li> <li>• Fragmented workforce</li> <li>• No CB rights</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retail workers</li> <li>• Many young immigrant women</li> <li>• Highly gendered work: men dominate shoe store jobs, which generally pay better</li> <li>• Low unionization rates</li> <li>• Have CB rights</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home-based childcare providers</li> <li>• Paid through government subsidies</li> <li>• Majority women of color</li> <li>• Fragmented workforce</li> <li>• CB rights recently conferred by state government</li> </ul>

Appendix A • How were the Seven Strategies Implemented? (continued)

Strategy		1199SEIU	DWU	RWDSU	UFT
1. Address Women's True Priorities	Pay and Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negotiate for better wages, wellness program, child care fund, medical coverage, mortgage assistance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bill of Rights establishes base pay, working conditions, benefits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide info on minimum wage levels and overtime pay through newsletters and meetings</li> <li>Negotiate for higher pay and job security</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distribute newsletters about market rate increase</li> <li>Negotiate for higher wage and benefits</li> </ul>
	Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sensitivity training to address sexual harassment</li> <li>Seminars on domestic violence, women in leadership</li> <li>Citizenship Program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bill defines domestic workers as "employees"</li> <li>Bill covers both documented and undocumented workers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support groups to help young workers cope with sexual harassment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emphasize to the public that providers play an important role in education</li> <li>Direct action meetings with UFT staff, providers, and parents to discuss general issues (gangs, childhood development)</li> </ul>
	Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ESL classes, certified nursing, LPN, RN, Alzheimers and computer training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unemployed workers group computer literacy and resume-writing workshops</li> <li>"Nanny course" at Cornell: learn basic child psychology, rights as a domestic worker</li> <li>ESL training, GED classes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unemployed workers group: resume-writing workshops</li> <li>Customer service training through Consortium for Worker Education and LaGuardia Community College</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training, career ladders, college credential program</li> </ul>
2. Create and Support Formal and Informal Mentoring Programs	Informal Networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workers are fragmented but often live and work near each other. Organizers build informal networks by introducing workers to each other and giving them someone to attend events with</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nanny networks: members mentor and support each other</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members help each other by networking with friends. They all identify as retail workers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workers network with and support each other</li> </ul>



Appendix A • How were the Seven Strategies Implemented? (continued)

Strategy		1199SEIU	DWU	RWDSU	UFT
<b>2. Create and Support Formal and Informal Mentoring Programs (continued)</b>	<b>Personal Outreach and Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Under 30” Committee to mentor and train young members</li> <li>• Leaders speak multiple languages at meetings, translations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phone banks: members call workers to invite them to events and support their involvement</li> <li>• Translations at meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizers share their experiences with new members during meetings and support groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phone banks: call providers and encourage them to come to meetings</li> <li>• Translators at meetings</li> </ul>
<b>3. Provide Opportunities for Women to Strategize Together</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women’s Committee sponsors events to support and inspire members (female artists, musicians), Breast Cancer Awareness Program, Women’s Lunch for International Women’s Day</li> <li>• Cultural events, parades, family picnics, political events, art galleries</li> <li>• Home picketing to get workers together and involved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members can join several committees</li> <li>• Retreats to plan strategy sessions</li> <li>• Open house brunches and social forums</li> <li>• Members travel to Albany together to lobby</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Common Threads: Artist in Spite of Retail”: art exhibit bringing workers together to discuss workplace injustice through art</li> <li>• No women’s network: open meetings for anyone to come and say what they want in their contract</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring members to meetings with the mayor and the health department to voice their concerns</li> </ul>

Appendix A • How were the Seven Strategies Implemented? (continued)

Strategy	1199SEIU	DWU	RWDSU	UFT
<p><b>4. Put Women in Leadership</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizers identify workers with leadership potential and encourage them to become delegates and organizers. Potential leaders plan during strategy meetings, host committee events, etc.</li> <li>• Hire staff internally through points system: members get points for attending rallies/grievances and are promoted based on points</li> <li>• Leadership workshops, seminars, and trainings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Shadow leaders”: senior members who provide direct training and mentoring</li> <li>• Members lead meetings and defer to “shadow leaders” for help</li> <li>• Rotate duties and leadership responsibilities at meetings</li> <li>• Hire and promote internally</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young members run meetings, set agenda, discuss what problems they face and what they want in their contracts</li> <li>• Train media team of workers to speak to media and at public events. Members are the face of the union and the leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doorknockers identify workers with leadership potential. Organizers follow up with those workers and encourage them to lead meetings</li> <li>• Hire and promote internally</li> <li>• Organizers train workers to run borough meetings (set the agenda, answer questions, etc.)</li> <li>• Members lead and organize everything, but ACORN and UFT help by bringing in politicians, getting people to rallies, sending out all mailings, getting lists of providers</li> </ul>

Appendix A • How were the Seven Strategies Implemented? (continued)

Strategy	1199SEIU	DWU	RWDSU	UFT
<p><b>5. Highlight the Importance of Women's Contributions</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retreats and award dinners to recognize active members</li> <li>• Dinners and luncheons to acknowledge helpful politicians and leaders outside the union</li> <li>• Recognize women in top 1199 and SEIU positions</li> <li>• Reward active members through points system: members with many points get a special gift at the end of the year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach about Shirley Chisholm, Rosa Parks, Fannie Lou Hamer</li> <li>• Recognize actions of active members</li> <li>• Highlight cultural diversity of members through plays, poetry/dramatic readings, cultural events</li> <li>• Celebrate workers through dance (the <i>Domestic Slide</i>) and music (adaptation of Bob Marley's <i>Get Up, Stand Up</i>)</li> <li>• "Exit Cuckoo": produced one member's play about families who leave their children for paid domestics to rear</li> </ul>		
<p><b>6. Provide Flexible Options for Involvement</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evening and weekend meetings in each borough</li> <li>• Home visits</li> <li>• Phone calls to update those who cannot attend meetings</li> <li>• Paid time off for union duties</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evening and weekend meetings</li> <li>• Outreach in the field: parks, buses, subways, sidewalks, members' homes</li> <li>• No dues: DWU is supported by grants and donations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evening meetings</li> <li>• Roll meetings throughout the day, over coffee, in parks, "sidewalk chats" at worksites, members' homes, mall, lunch, break time</li> <li>• Reimbursement for cab fare/car service</li> <li>• Childcare during meetings</li> </ul>	

Appendix A • How were the Seven Strategies Implemented? (continued)

Strategy		1199SEIU	DWU	RWDSU	UFT
7. Provide Training on Mobilizing Women	On-the-Job Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organizers come from the membership. As members, they learn about organizing by participating in every aspect of the campaign</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organizers come from the membership. As members, they learn about organizing by observing shadow leaders and participating in phone banking and nanny networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Cyber-training” through MySpace, Craigslist, Facebook, and text messaging</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organizers come from membership. As members, they learn about organizing through door-to-door canvassing and leading meetings</li> </ul>
	Formal Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seminars and workshops on mobilizing women</li> <li>Leadership training for delegates and organizers to prepare for higher executive positions</li> <li>Training through Education Department: Women’s Institute, Women’s Summer</li> <li>Cornell Labor Studies Institute</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Retreats about organizing, community outreach, and leadership</li> <li>Human Rights Clinic to teach members about the Bill and how to inform others (planned for after the Bill’s passage)</li> <li>Domestic Workers Congress at Barnard College: training on outreach and organizing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workshops on outreach, how to talk to coworkers, how to deal with excuses, overcoming fear, listening skills</li> </ul>	
	Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Under 30” Committee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teach organizers how cultural identity could impact view of the union</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workers form community coalitions based on geographic/identity groups (race, age, sexual orientation)</li> <li>RAP (Retail Action Project) as a community group to reduce the fear of unionization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hispanic Leadership Committee in the Bronx</li> </ul>

## Appendix B

### **Women, Work and Organizing**

**(3) credits**

**Spring 2009**

**Cornell University ILR Extension Labor  
Studies Certificate Program**

### **Syllabus**

This course will examine the work experiences and labor organization of women workers. The course will begin by briefly exploring the history of women as wage earners and unpaid laborers in the United States. We will then seek to explain why most women have not been organized by examining the postwar social and economic conditions, the sexual division of labor, and the obstacles as well as opportunities women face in the workplace as well as the labor movement today. We will explore different strategies for organizing women workers, and current efforts of working women to organize themselves. Among the goals of this course are: to analyze specific problems facing women workers, to develop an understanding of the social processes creating and perpetuating those problems; to evaluate the efforts of the labor movement and other organizations in meeting the needs of women workers, and to develop strategies for change.

As part of the course the class will host a series of public roundtable discussions that focus on specific organizing campaigns. The roundtables will be documented and analyzed by student work groups in an effort to develop new ideas, share successful strategies and tactics, and develop an analysis for organizing campaigns that are focused on women workers.

### **Required reading:**

#### **Week 1: Introduction to course**

Cobble, D. S. (Ed.). (2007). *The Sex of Class*. Ithaca: Cornell ILR Press. 1 – 12.

Bronfenbrenner, K. & Warren, D.T. (2007). "Race, Gender and the Rebirth of Trade Unionism." *New Labor Forum*, (16) 3-4. pp. 142-148.

Clawson, D. (2003). *The Next Upsurge: Labor and New Social Movements*. (2003) Ithaca: Cornell ILR Press. Chapter 3 (51-89)

AFL-CIO. (2008). *Ask A Working Woman Survey Report*  
<http://www.aflcio.org/issues/jobseconomy/women/speakout/>

Bronfenbrenner, K. (2005). *Organizing women: The nature and process of union organizing efforts among U.S. women workers since the mid-1990s* [Electronic version]. from Cornell University, School of Industrial and Labor Relations site:  
<http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/articles/3/>

Needleman, R. (1998). Women Workers: Strategies for Inclusion and Rebuilding Unionism. In G. Mantsios (Ed.), *A New Labor Movement for a New Century?* (pp. 175-196). New York: Garland Publishing, Inc.

Hartmann, H. & Spalter-Roth, R. (1994) "What Do Unions Do for Women." *Challenge*, July-August, pp.11-18.

Luce, S. & Weinbaum, E. (2008) "Low Wage Women Workers." *New Labor Forum*, 17 (2). pp. 20-33.

#### **Week 2: Working women in America: Colonial America to Civil War**

*Paid and unpaid work*  
*Servitude*  
*Factory life*

Wertheimer, B. M. (1977) *We Were There: The Story of Working Women in America*. New York: Pantheon Books. 62-85.

Kessler-Harris, A. (1982) *Out to Work: A History of Wage Earning Women in the United States*. New York: Oxford University Press. 3-74.

**Week 3: Working women in America:  
1865-1920**

*Women in industry*  
*Migrant and immigrants women workers*  
*Early organizing*

Wertheimer, B. M. (1977) *We Were There: The Story of Working Women in America*. New York: Pantheon Books. 151-208.

Kessler-Harris, A. (1982) *Out to Work: A History of Wage Earning Women in the United States*. New York: Oxford University Press. 75-216.

**Week 4: Working women in America:  
1920 – 1955**

*Economic crisis*  
*State responses*  
*War time production*

Cobble, D. S. (2004) *The Other Women's Movement*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapters 1-3.

Kessler-Harris, A. (1982) *Out to Work: A History of Wage Earning Women in the United States*. New York: Oxford University Press. 217-249.

**Week 5: Working women in America:  
1955- present**

*Deindustrialization*  
*Second wave feminism*  
*New Initiatives*

Cobble, D. S. (2004) *The Other Women's Movement*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapters 6-8

Kessler-Harris, A. (1982) *Out to Work: A History of Wage Earning Women in the United States*. New York: Oxford University Press. 250-300.

**Week 5: Wages**

*Gender gap*  
*Comparable worth*  
*Pay equity*

Cobble, D. S. (2004) *The Other women's Movement*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 4

Coleman, M. S. (2000) Undercounted and underpaid heroines: The path to equal opportunity in employment during the twentieth century. *Working USA* (3) 5-37.

Hallock, M. (2000) Pay Equity: What is the Best Union Strategy. *Labor Studies Journal* (25) 1.

Hallock, M. (1993). Unions and the Gender Wage Gap. In D.S. Cobble (Ed.). *Women and Unions* (pp. 27-42). Ithaca: ILR Press.

Hartmann, H., Ross, J., Steinberg, R., Bergmann, B. & Padia, A. (1993). Roundtable on Pay Equity and Affirmative Action. In D.S. Cobble (Ed.), *Women and Unions* (pp. 43-69). Ithaca: ILR Press.

**Week 6: Work and Family**

*Childcare*  
*Flextime/Overtime*  
*Welfare*

Cowell, Susan (1993). Family Policy: A Union Approach. In D.S. Cobble (Ed.). *Women and Unions* (pp. 115-128). Ithaca: ILR Press.

York, Carolyn (1993). Bargaining for Work and Family Benefits. In D.S. Cobble (Ed.). *Women and Unions* (pp. 129-143). Ithaca: ILR Press.

Cobble, D. S. (2004) *The Other Women's Movement*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 5

Firestein, N. & Dones, N.(2007) Unions Fight for Work and Family Policies- Not for Women Only. In D.S. Cobble (Ed) *The Sex of Class* (pp. 140-154) Ithaca: Cornell ILR Press.

## **Week 7: Discrimination**

*Workplace discrimination*  
*Sexual harassment*

Baker, C. N. (2008) *The Women's Movement against Sexual Harassment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 1-7.

O'Brien, Ruth (Ed). (2008) *Telling Stories Out of Court*. Ithaca: ILR Press. Introduction, pp 1-17.

Crain, M. (2007) Sex Discrimination as Collective Harm. In D.S. Cobble (Ed) *The Sex of Class* (pp. 99-116) Ithaca: Cornell ILR Press. 1-12.

## **Week 8: Women workers and the global**

*economy*  
*Global production*  
*Changing nature of work*

### **CASE STUDY #1: Comparing the UK union experience**

Moody, K. (1997). *Worker's in a Lean World: Unions in the International Economy*. London: Verso. Introduction, pp.1-9.

Ontiveros, Maria L. (2007). Female Immigrant Women and the Law: Limits and Opportunities. In D.S. Cobble (Ed), *The Sex of Class* (pp. 235-252). Ithaca: Cornell ILR Press.

Quan, K. (2007). Women Crossing Borders to Organize. In D.S. Cobble (Ed), *The Sex of Class* (pp. 253-271). Ithaca: Cornell ILR Press.

Vosko, L.F. (2007). Representing Informal Economy Workers: Emerging Global Strategies and Their Lessons for North American Unions. In D.S. Cobble (Ed), *The Sex of Class* (pp. 272-293). Ithaca: Cornell ILR Press.

Frank, D (2005). Women's Power is Union Power: Banana Workers Union in Latin America. *New Labor Forum*, (14) 2, pp. 85-97.

## **Week 9: Women and labor leadership**

### **CASE STUDY # 2: Organizing home based child care workers in New York City**

Briskin, L. (2006) Victimization and agency: The social construction of union women leadership. *Industrial Relations Journal*, (37) 4, 359- 378.

Cobble, D.S. (1993) *Women and Unions*. Ithaca: ILR Press. Introduction, 3-18.

Dickerson, N. T. (2006) "We are a force to be reckoned with": Black and Latina women's leadership in the contemporary U.S. labor movement. *Working USA* (9) 3. pp. 293-314.

Caiazza, A. (2008) "I Knew I Could Do This Work": Seven Strategies That Promote Women's Activism and Leadership in Unions. Institute for Women's Policy Research

Gray, L. S. (1993) The route to the top: Female union leaders and union policy. In D.S. Cobble (Ed). *Women and Unions* (pp. 378-393) Ithaca, ILR Press.

Roby, P. & Uttal, L (1993) Putting It All Together: The Dilemmas of Rank and File Union Leaders. In D.S. Cobble (Ed). *Women and Unions* (pp. 363-377). Ithaca, ILR Press.

Kahn, S. (1991) *Organizing: A Guide for Grassroots Leaders*. Washington D.C.: NASW Press, pp. 21-50.

Berger-Marks Foundation (2004) *Women Organizing Women: How Do We Rock the Boat without Getting Thrown Overboard?* <http://www.bergermarks.org/resources/reports.html>

Chaison, G. (1989) An Analysis of Barriers to Women Becoming Local Union Officers. *Journal of Labor Research*, (10) 2. pp. 149-162.

**Week 10: Women and Organizing I**

**CASE STUDY # 3: *Organizing in the retail sector***

Hurd, R.D. (1993) Organizing and Representing Clerical Workers: The Harvard Model. In D.S. Cobble, *Women and Unions* (316-337). Ithaca: ILR Press.

Leary, E. & Alonso, J. (1997) The Women Who Organized Harvard: A Feminist Model of Labor Organization. *Monthly Review* (49) 7.

Crain, M. (1994) Gender and Union Organizing. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* (47) 2. pp. 227-248.

Milkman, R. (1993) Organizing Immigrant Women in New York's Chinatown: Interview with Katie Quan. In D.S. Cobble (Ed.) *Women and Unions* (pp. 281-298) Ithaca: ILR Press.

**Week 11: Women and Organizing II**

**CASE STUDY # 4: *Organizing home health care workers***

Milkman, Ruth. (2007) Two Worlds of Unionism: Women and the New Labor Movement. In D.S. Cobble (Ed), *The Sex of Class* (pp 63-80). Ithaca: Cornell ILR Press.

Boris, E. & Klein, J. (2007) "We Were Invisible Workforce": Unionizing Home Care. In D.S. Cobble (Ed). *The Sex of Class* (pp. 177-193) Ithaca: Cornell ILR Press. 1 – 12.

Ness, I. (1999). Organizing home health care workers: A New York City case. *Working USA* (3) 4.

Bronfenbrenner, K. (2005, March). *Union organizing among professional women workers: A research study commissioned by the Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO*. Paper presented at the DPE Conference on Organizing Professionals in the 21st Century, Crystal City, Virginia.

Fiona, C. & Ledwith, S. (2000) Diversity, Identities and Strategies of Women Trade Union Activists. *Gender Work and Organization*. October (7) 4. pp. 142-169.

Leigh, D. E., Hills, S. M. (1987) Male-Female Differences in the Potential for Union Growth Outside Traditionally Unionized Industries, *Journal of Labor Research*, 8 (2). pp 131-42.

Schur, L. A. and D. L. Kruse (1992) Gender Differences in Attitudes Towards Unions. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, (46) 1.

**Week 12: Women and Organizing III**

**CASE STUDY #4: *Organizing domestic workers***

Lucero-Mead, Jerry. (2007, October) Domestic Workers Emerge as a New Front in the Non- Traditional Labor Movement. *Labor Notes* (343) 3-4.

Fine, J. (2007) Worker Centers and Immigrant Women. In D.S. Cobble (Ed). *The Sex of Class* (pp. 211-230) Ithaca: ILR Press.

Nathan, D. (2007) Nannies in New York. *New Labor Forum* (16) 2 p 97. (7 pages)



## Appendix C

### Young Women Organizers

#### Focus Group Questions

July 2009

1. What inspired you to initially get involved? As a young woman, what attracted you to the labor movement? Did you always know that you wanted to go into organizing?
2. What was your experience of being mentored? Did you feel you had the support of someone mentoring you along the way if you needed it?
3. Are organizers self-selecting? Is there something exceptional about a quality that you have? Or can an organizer be trained? Can unions seek out and mentor people to be organizers?
4. How has your gender affected your organizing, activism, involvement?
5. In your experience, do you think women in those leadership positions or the women you work with have a different style than men? Or is it just the same?
6. How does age factor in to your experience as a female organizer? Are there more differences between younger and older organizers, or between women and men?
7. Do you think it's important to see more women in leadership and get more young women involved? Is that something the unions need to do a better job of? How could they do that?
8. Do you feel that your voices and ideas are accepted equally when compared to men's? How can unions make sure that that your voices do not get lost? What kinds of things can they do?
9. Is there anything special that you feel that young women, young female leaders bring to the table?
10. If women bring something different and valuable in style or substance to the role of organizing, how do we bring out these unique characteristics?
11. Do you think we're over-conscious of our gender?
12. Is it good to have the women-only spaces or committees? Do you think that spaces for women-only bonding are needed in unions?

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