

North Bay Jobs with Justice Dinner

June 9, 2017

Greetings Sisters and Brothers:

Thank you to Marty Bennett and all of your leaders for building a labor/community and Faith-based movement in this area.

Shout out to Wei Ling Huber, President UNITE HERE Local 2850 and Chris Rak, President UNITE HERE Local 49 - our Unite Here leaders. Leaders that are committed to training rank and file organizers, and building broader connections to our community.

On behalf of Unite Here, thank you for your support of the Rohnert Park Graton Casino workers, who, after 3 years, have won Union representation! After the 2<sup>nd</sup> hotel is built, 1400 more families in the area will not have to beg; they will negotiate with their Employer on the issues that matter to them.

Thank you for your work in defense of immigrant families. Glad to see the Sonoma County Dems also joined with you to strengthen our position that ICE must not collaborate with local law enforcement.

I understand your work was important to 400 waste workers at North Bay Corporation, where workers voted overwhelmingly to join the Teamsters. Imagine the good collaboration between Teamsters and environmental organizations to develop a “good jobs and zero waste” policy. We all win when we don’t fall into the trap of fighting each other, with false choices.

Also, thank you to the honorees for your dedication to the values of our labor movement. It takes time, it takes courage, it takes sacrifice.

Gervacio Peña: Graton Day Laborers, Board President

Congratulations to the Sonoma County Superior Court workers, represented by SEIU 1021, who carried out a three day unfair labor practices (ULP) strike in January 2017, and won!

Organizing for Action - Sonoma County for helping to pass the Living Wage Ordinance.

Hyatt Vineyard Creek Hotel workers went public this week in their organizing campaign. Here is to say a few words is Organizer Lian Alan and several worker leaders from the Hyatt.

I am so blessed.

I feel that I live a privileged life. Because every day I get to work with remarkable people. Their jobs – cooking, cleaning, washing dishes - may seem quite ordinary but their stories, their dreams, their willpower are absolutely extraordinary.

There are few experiences more powerful than watching an immigrant who walked across the desert to get to the U.S....walk door-to-door in a political campaign....and then walk into her polling place to vote.

When we started building the labor movement in Los Angeles, we started with a simple premise...the new immigrant voter had a deep appreciation for civic obligation, deeper, many times, more than those of us who were born here and that they, therefore, represented the best hope for the future.

It was the early 1990's. And the clock was ticking. Because it was soon going to be five years since President Reagan signed his amnesty law... and millions of immigrants would begin to qualify for naturalization. It was a moment in history. I was blessed to be with a small group of people who saw it coming and prepared and prepared and prepared.

But none of our work would prove as impactful as the 1994 ballot-box assault on immigrants – Proposition 187.

Just as we were working to inspire newly eligible immigrants to become citizens and engage in civic life and politics and become a force for change, for good, for their kids...along come our opponents with a gift...Proposition 187 was about the politics of fear and exclusion...it's fundamental message to the hardest-working people in California was "you came here to get free stuff."

Some of our opponents have learned over the last 20 years...you don't try to insult and intimidate the bravest people in this country...

The refugee from violence and deprivation...

who jumped onto a freight train...

was confronted by thieves...

who carried his child...

who went without food...

who walked through the nights...

who didn't know a soul...

couldn't speak the language...

who started as a day laborer...

and then washed cars...

and then dishes...

and joined our union...

and became a leader where he worked...

an activist where he lived...  
a citizen whose vote has changed California.

Few people understand...that man or woman I just described isn't some story...it's millions of stories...and those stories led to electing a Latino Mayor, a progressive Governor and an African American President.

We recognized that labor's future was tied to the fate of the growing Latino community--immigrant and native born--in coalition with African American sisters and brothers, and union members and progressives. LA led the American labor movement in standing up for immigrant worker rights, and forged an alliance between immigrants and trade unionists.

We staged the largest march against Wal-Mart in the nation.

And our Local voting power led to a change statewide. We passed 2 versions of the Dream Act, to give undocumented youth equal access to public higher education. We passed the Trust Act to begin separation of local law enforcement from Immigration detentions. We passed laws strengthening rights for farmworkers—the best labor laws in the country. We strengthened laws to protect predominantly immigrant truck drivers at our ports who were being exploited as “independent contractors.”

If we could do it in California, I don't see any reason why we can't do it anywhere.

We duplicated this organizing model in Las Vegas, NV, the only swing state to go blue last November. In Arizona, we started the same process about 6 years ago. The result: in November, we threw out the racist Sheriff Joe Arpaio, who hosted Trump when he made his presidential announcement last year. The backbone for change in all 3 states were immigrant workers.

That, ladies and gentlemen, is civic engagement. That is social change.

But it is also yesterday.

A past Governor of California, Pat Brown said, “Nostalgia has never been a way of life in California...we have always been pioneers, a vigorous, dynamic people who respect tradition, but scorn the status quo.”

I love that... **scorn the status quo**. Today's debate about a \$15 minimum wage...about wage theft...about good paying union jobs...isn't happening because of some new

enlightenment...it's because the immigrants who make less than \$15, whose wages are being stolen... have become voters and organized voters to win.

Underneath all the noise, all the posturing, all the so-called "debate" about immigration reform is a struggle for power.

So there are those who prefer a status quo, where they can eat the food harvested by the undocumented farm worker but never have to worry about farm workers voting to take over an irrigation district.

They prefer to fly to Washington to lobby for their tax breaks, sleep in a hotel room that was cleaned by one of the 147,000 immigrant housekeepers and eat a business lunch or dinner prepared by the 600,000 immigrant cooks... but never have to worry about those immigrants voting on their business...their tax breaks, their loopholes, or their off-shore accounts.

Those of us on the other side of this power struggle have much more to do. Yes, we should be proud of how far we've come...yet ready to admit how much we have yet to do...

There are 8.8 million immigrants in the U.S. who are eligible for citizenship TODAY.

IF they were **citizens** today, maybe we wouldn't have Donald Trump in the White House, signing executive orders...

to build another wall,

to further militarize our communities along the border with Mexico, and

to ban Muslims.

Demographics are said to be destiny. And given that every month, every single month, for the next 20 years...50,000 Latino kids will turn 18, it is easy to fall into the trap of believing that all we have to do is wait.

I don't believe that. There's no autopilot for social change.

Recently, much attention has been given to California for the changes in demographics and in the political environment.

When I read and hear news and analysis of the growing strength of Latino political power in California, I am offended by the simplification of that reporting.

The storyline is usually something like - "Their population has grown, so things have changed." It's as though they are reporting on the weather. And that changes in society are as natural and normal as changes in the weather.

Change hasn't come from growth in population. Change has come from growth in people. Inside people.

The immigrant hotel housekeepers who have spent tens of thousands of hours walking door-to-door talking to other immigrants...Showing them how to vote...showing them why to vote...showing them the power of determination.

The DREAMERS who built the largest and most effective national movement of young immigrants in history. using technology to put people on the streets. They had the courage to take on the status quo.

People have figured out that what's great about America is that it belongs to anyone who acts like it's a country they, in fact, own.

People who have come to understand that they have the power to stand up, push back, work harder, talk longer and won't take "no" for answer to their demands for equitable wages, equal opportunity and a fair share.

And while I am pleased and proud to see and experience growing Latino political strength - Latinos aren't the story and neither are Latino immigrants.

In fact, Latino candidates are winning more white votes than Latino votes.

Yes, some populations are growing, but it's the growth inside people that changes things.

Today, a strong majority of white working class voters in the Central Valley agricultural part of California, where I grew up, support the DREAMERS, support the path to citizenship, support comprehensive immigration reform. Their population numbers aren't growing, they are growing as people.

Do you know that all of the Black members in the California Legislature have been elected in black minority districts? The number of African American voters hasn't grown... but African Americans have...grown beyond the idea that they shouldn't run and can't win in areas where their numbers are small. The fact is that African American candidates are getting more Latino votes than ever before.

35<sup>th</sup> Sen Steve Bradford: 21% Black/53% Latino

59<sup>th</sup> AD Reggie Jones-Sawyer: 20% Black/75% Latino

30<sup>th</sup> Sen Holly Mitchell: 28% Black/50% Latino

54<sup>th</sup> AD Sebastian R-T: 30% White/30% Latino/25% Black

62<sup>nd</sup> AD Burke: 22% White/25% Black /43% Latino

9<sup>th</sup> AD Cooper: 34% White/13% Black/26% Latino

64<sup>th</sup> AD Gipson: 25% Black/62% Latino

41st AD Holden: 8% Black/46% White/30% Latino/13% API

7<sup>th</sup> AD McCarty: 43% White/11% Black/27% Latino/15% API

15<sup>th</sup> AD Thurmond: 39% White/16% Black/22% Latino/20% API

79<sup>th</sup> AD Weber: 33% White/11% Black/34% Latino/19% API

Populations aren't all growing...but all kinds of people are. Growing beyond bigotries and ghettoization.

And what about immigrants from Asia? Do you know that the Asian Pacific Islander caucus in the Legislature is the largest in the country?

Do you know that some of the best legislators are in the growing LGBT Caucus? Do you know that it was a gay man who won new employment rights for domestic workers this year? A Jew and a Filipino who teamed up this year for farm workers from Oaxaca? A woman legislator who won policies for building trades workers?

Why? Because people have organized people, broken from the past, embraced one another and the future we are building together.

The way we have been able to win in California and how it is being done in other states is by building a coalition of labor and Latinos; African Americans and environmentalists, LGBTQ, Faith groups, and progressives.

It's what we have done and it works.

It's a Hotel Housekeeper, working with housing advocates to regulate Airbnb and stop it from destroying good union jobs.

It was Margarita Castro, a waste sorter who was organizing with the Teamsters, while standing side by side with the Natural Resource Defense Council, to say "Somos Humanos, no somos basura."

It was Pedro Guzman, a car wash worker organizing with the Steelworkers Union picketing outside his car wash with a college student to stop wage theft.

The only majority that matters today is the majority of working families who can't make ends meet...that majority make Los Angeles the low-wage Capitol of America.

The single biggest group isn't Latino, or Asian, or white or Black. It's men and women who work hard. Sometimes in 2-3 jobs. And are still living in poverty, or one step away from poverty.

They will vote for one another. They will educate each other's kids and care for the sick. They will build houses for each other.

Our job is to organize their strength, guide their energy and trust their judgment.

I grew up in a farm worker family in the Central Valley. And I was coming of age as Cesar Chavez was coming into prominence.

His message – Si se puede – Yes we can – inspired us.

But there was something he said more often than Si se puede... he said it when he trained organizers, he said it when he registered voters, he said it when he boycotted grapes...

One by one by one.

One by one by one.

You move people by respecting each individual, each "one." You build a movement; you turn workers into a union, immigrants into citizens, citizens into voters...one by one by one.

Who is fed up with Trump and republicans pitting women against immigrants, and men against Muslims and trans against straight?

Who is ready to stand up and fight back?

I know I am!

That's why I'm a union organizer!

I have had the privilege of organizing side by side with housekeepers and dishwashers, who say enough, ya basta! They take the risk of getting fired. They take the risk of getting deported and separated from their families.

Our union, UNITE HERE, is led by women. Tough. Brave women. They know their worth. They know they serve this country with their hard work.

They know they have power when they take action together. They know they have power when they vote together. That's what the housekeepers did in Trump's hotel in Las Vegas. They voted for a Union one day and then they voted against Trump on election day!

Trump is trying to give uncontrolled power to those who take liberty with our environment, take liberty with our right to vote, take liberty with our job security, take liberty with our bodies.

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I read an interesting study that was done after the election. It said that in red Midwestern counties, where Trump outperformed both George Bush and Mitt Romney, his margin was largest where suicide and drug addiction rates were growing.

People and places in pain. Desperate for something. Willing to take anything...to numb that pain.

So, as I watch Trump's first 100 Days, I can't help but think that he figures the more he can grow the number of people in pain, the bigger his base will grow.

His deportation threats are pushing millions of fearful immigrants underground...and in the underground economy, those immigrants will work for less and suffer more. And we all hurt.

Donald Trump says he wants to “create more jobs for American workers.”

Yet he hired guest workers from Romania to work at his multimillion-dollar Mar-a-Lago Club in Palm Beach, Florida.

Over 1,300 people in Palm Beach applied for server, chef and housekeeping jobs.

Since 2013, Trump had only hired 4 locals out of a total 250 seasonal job openings.

45 is a hypocrite. He should have hired local workers at Mar-a-Lago Club instead of importing guest workers. So why did he didn't he? Because he knows the temporary guest workers would be too fearful to demand the wages and rights of American workers.

Trump's determination to strip sick people of their health care will grow the number of people in pain.

His tax plans will hand the desperate some crumbs as their exploiters get millions.

The only college students he's given any financial aid to are the ones he defrauded at his bogus university.

The only part of his empty infrastructure promise he's keeping is his stupid wall...except the part about who's paying for it.

He's actually building a wall that will keep misery in.

The only thing he's improved is his golf game.

The only thing warm in his cold blooded Presidency will be the globe. He has no improvements to brag about. Only more pain.

A week ago, Donald Trump admitted that being President is harder than he thought it would be.

WE, all of us, are the reason it's harder than he ever imagined!

Remember when he said that immigrants were quote 'bad hombres'?

Well, now he's getting a taste of 'mujeres bravas.'

We are going to make it harder than Trump ever planned. We are his worst nightmare.

We will crush his deportation machine.

We will fight his attack on our healthcare.

We will stop his tax breaks for billionaires.

Trump was born a millionaire. He doesn't know what real work is. We do.

Housekeepers know what real work is.

Janitors know what real work is.

Cooks know what real work is.

Teachers know what real work is.

Construction workers know what real work is

We've worked, sacrificed and fought for everything we have and we aren't going to let some spoiled son of a . . .millionaire, take anything away from us.

But no matter what Trump does, we are free people. His cynical calculation isn't going to work.

Sisters and brothers, Trump is our opportunity...to reconnect with those we drifted away from...Trump is our opportunity to reconnect to those who should feel welcome and valued...reconnect to those who are realizing they've been had.

When we organize, We resist Trump.

When we resist Trump, we show our love for America.

When we march, sit-in, sit down, or strike---we honor Dr King and Cesar Chavez. We honor Lucy Parsons whose demand for an 8-hour day led to the world's first International Workers' Day and...

We will lock arms and build a wall around our families, to protect our nation's children;

We will defend Muslims and lesbians, Mexicans and queers, white America and black America, Women and men.

We will awaken America's better soul...We will be a true leader in the world.

Remember:

**WHEN WE RESIST TRUMP, WE SHOW OUR LOVE FOR AMERICA.**

1. Jessica Garrison, Jeremy Singer-Vine, and Ken Bensinger, "Trump Seeks More Foreign Guest Workers For His Companies." BuzzFeed News. 2016.

2. US. Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2016.

3. Drew Griffin, Scott Bronstein, Curt Devine, and Adam Mintzer, "Trump's Mar-a-Lago hires hundreds of foreign workers." CNN Money. 2016.