



## LABOR CENTER REPORTER

Institute of Industrial Relations • University of California, Berkeley

### Community-Labor Alliances

### The Citizenship Project: A Labor-Based Citizenship Movement Organization

by Paul Johnston

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The Citizenship Project is a Mexican immigrant labor/community-based organization dedicated to expanding citizenship, broadly defined. The focus of all our organizing revolves around a single question: what does it mean to be a citizen? Our efforts to answer that question resulted in the Project's adoption of an ideology of citizenship as a social/political cause, as "more than just papers." It also refers to rights that belong to everyone, not just to citizens of the United States. As we became involved in different kinds of struggles for inclusion, we found ourselves arguing that citizenship includes a variety of different kinds of rights — civil, social, political, economic, educational and cultural — and that they are not real unless people have the knowledge and the organization they need to exercise them.

The Project was launched in response to the passage of Proposition 187 in 1994, by a circle of members and staff at the Salinas-centered Teamsters food industry Local 890. At peak season, that union

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### In the Fast LAANE: The Elements of Success for the Los Angeles Living Wage Coalition

by Howard Greenwich

Begun in Baltimore as an innovative community-labor campaign in 1994, the living wage movement has grown to include thirty-five active city campaigns that have pushed for the passage of twenty-five local government ordinances. In the last four years, the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE) has become the movement's standard bearer, achieving unprecedented policy changes and direct agreements with various industries to improve compensation and security for low-wage workers. More significantly, LAANE has transformed the economic growth debate in Los Angeles and put the concept of living wages at the center of public policy.

Organized by local groups with national affiliations, including ACORN, the New Party, Jobs with Justice, and various unions, living wage campaigns call for firms doing business with local governments to pay a wage sufficient for a worker to support a family of three or four. Arising during a booming economy with growing income inequality, the concept has evoked popular support and has gone virtually undefeated in

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# LABOR CENTER NOTES

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The Labor Center Reporter welcomes suggestions for future issues as well as submissions. Submissions should be 500-1000 words in length.

The articles in this issue do not necessarily represent the views of the Center for Labor Research and Education, the Institute of Industrial Relations, or the University of California. Each author is solely responsible for the contents of his or her article. Labor organizations and their press associations are encouraged to reproduce any LCR articles for further distribution.

Labor-community alliances provide the focal point for this issue of the LCR. The issue explores and analyzes the different ways unions and community organizations identify common interests, develop strategic alliances, and maintain and nurture those alliances long-term. The articles in this issue demonstrate that the one predictable aspect of labor-community alliances is that they are not predictable at all. Indeed, labor-community alliances have many different catalysts, develop along varied trajectories, and survive and thrive, or fail, due to innumerable factors.

This issue of the LCR provides analyses of different types of labor-community alliances, from local living wage campaigns to health and safety advocacy networks that cross the U.S.-Mexican border. The alliances we feature have a variety of goals, from increasing union membership and improving workplace health and safety conditions, to expanding citizenship and political participation. They also have diverse strategies, from creating worker centers and independent nonprofit organizations, to enlisting the support of local politicians, and invoking legal protections through the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Although the particular labor-community alliances we highlight are innovative, labor-community alliances are not a new phenomenon. They can be traced back to the nineteenth century when the Knights of Labor, by developing vibrant community alliances between skilled and less-skilled workers, succeeded in organizing local assemblies in every state. The tragedy of the Triangle shirt-waist fire in the early twentieth century inspired a labor and community movement to demand and fight for the improvement of health and safety conditions. The alliance's efforts laid the foundation for the creation of federal health and safety standards and protective legislation. Perhaps the most famous model of labor-community organizing is the United Farmworkers' 1960's struggle for worker and civil rights. The UFW built the union from its community roots, providing a model for almost seamless labor-community partnerships.

The labor-community alliances we analyze in this issue of the LCR add to the historical legacy, providing historical continuity. Recent increased interest in and attention to labor-community alliances therefore either reflects a resurgence in this model of strategic organizing, or labor's realization that the failure to create these alliances will hamper its progress and undermine its success. Labor Center programs seek to foster these alliances through innovative programs and initiatives. The Labor Immigrant Organizing Network, initiated by the Labor Center, brings together over twenty unions and community groups to participate in actions and policy discussions. In addition, the Port and the SFO projects join community organizations and unions in strategic alliances to revitalize the Port of Oakland and raise the job standards at San Francisco International Airport. For more information on these Labor Center projects, call us at 642-0323, or browse our website at:  
<http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~iir/clre/clre.html>.

*Tamara Kay is a Ph.D. candidate in Sociology at the University of California, Berkeley.*

*Labor Center Reporter Issue Number 307, Summer 1999*

# Building Alliances Across Borders: The Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras and the Maquiladora Health & Safety Support Network



by Garrett Brown

June 1999 marks the tenth anniversary of a unique coalition of labor, environmental, religious, women's and community organizations in Canada, Mexico and the United States, that works together to improve working conditions and community life on the US-Mexico border. The Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras (CJM), based in San Antonio, Texas, now includes more than 175 organizations led by grassroots Mexican groups on the border. It has greatly expanded from the initial group of Washington, D.C.-based AFL-CIO organizers and various national religious groups based in New York City. By internal statute, CJM's Board of Directors must be 50% Mexican, and the past ten years have witnessed an off-border organization become firmly rooted in community and labor organizations along both sides of the US-Mexico border.

The Coalition's mission is to publicize and aid the efforts of the one million Mexican workers in the 4,000-plus "maquiladora" (foreign-owned) assembly plants on the border to improve conditions inside the plants, and to assist border community-based organizations' efforts to curb environmental pollution generated by the maquila plants. The community groups are also fighting for essential services like electricity, sewage, drainage, drinking water and paved streets in poor, worker neighborhoods which have exploded in number in border cities along with the growth of maquilas.

CJM's activities in recent years have included corporate campaigns against giants such as Zenith, Hyundai and General Motors, complaints filed under the NAFTA labor side agreement, solidarity tours, and campaigns for striking workers and environmentalists.

The Health & Safety Committee of the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras met in Mexico City in late January 1999 to launch an integrated workplace health and safety campaign with substantial support from the United Auto Workers (UAW), the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW), and other organizations. The campaign will include multi-level training workshops for maquiladora workers, an action component focused on the failure of the Mexican government to protect maquila workers, and technical assistance by health and safety professionals who will conduct occupational health studies jointly with maquila workers. The multi-tiered nature of the trainings is designed to produce maquila workers and community organizers capable of conducting their own trainings and local campaigns.

The campaign will also assist worker organizations in filing complaints with the Mexican government's workplace health and safety

## Labor Center Calendar

**June 3** - Building and Construction Trades Multi-Trade Organizing planning meeting.

**June 7 - 8** - The Workplace Institute Presents: Making the Workplace Work: A Best Practices Conference. For more information call (916) 567-9915

**July 1** - Classroom materials available for the *Golden Lands, Working Hands* labor history project. For more information contact Fred Glass at (510) 832-8812

**Aug 15 - 20** - Summer Institute for Union Women hosted by the Center for Labor Research and Education, UCLA. For more information contact Julie Monroe at 310-794-5981

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## Living Wage Campaigns Across the Country

Hayward, CA (1999)  
Madison, WI (1999)  
Dane County, WI (1999)  
Hudson County, NJ (1999)  
San Jose, CA (1998)  
Detroit, MI (1998)  
Multnomah County, OR  
(1998)  
Boston, MA (1998)  
Pasadena, CA (1998)  
Cook County, IL (1998)  
San Antonio, TX (1998)  
Portland, OR (1998)  
Oakland, CA (1998)  
Durham, NC (1998)  
Duluth, MN (1997)  
Milwaukee, WI (1997)  
New Haven, CT (1997)  
Los Angeles, CA (1997)  
Minneapolis, MN (1997)  
St. Paul, MN (1997)  
New York City, NY (1996)  
Jersey City, NJ (1996)  
Santa Clara County, CA  
(1995)  
Baltimore, MD (1994)

Source: Association of  
Community Organizations for  
Reform Now (ACORN).

For more information on these  
and other living wage policies  
go to [www.acorn.org](http://www.acorn.org)

## Building New Coalitions: The SEIU Local 616 Homecare Worker Campaign

By Mila Pefianco Thomas

Homecare workers care for the frail, elderly, blind, and people with disabilities in their homes. They perform light housekeeping, personal care and paramedical services so that their care consumers can remain independent members of their communities. For this work, they are paid minimum wage and receive no health benefits, sick leave or vacation benefits. Approximately seventy-five percent are African American, ten percent are Asian, and eight percent are Latina. Many have low literacy skills or are not native English speakers, and most are women.

In 1992, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 616 began a Homecare Worker Campaign. Given the nature of the work and the workforce, organizing homecare workers was a challenge. Workers were scattered throughout thousands of private homes, making contact difficult. Language barriers also posed a significant obstacle.

Local 616 developed a set of strategies to overcome these obstacles. The two most successful were: 1) working in coalition with consumers of homecare — seniors and people with disabilities — towards common political and legislative goals, and; 2) establishing a community-based Worker Center which creates solidarity and develops leadership. As a result of these efforts, today SEIU Local 616 represents about 7,000 homecare workers in Alameda County.

### Coalitions with Care Consumers

At the inception of the Homecare Campaign, Local 616 forged a coalition with seniors and people with disabilities to bring to the attention of the Alameda County Board of Supervisors problems associated with In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS). IHSS funded low-income consumers for their home care, and the consumers had many complaints about it. The union therefore focused its efforts on creating an Employer of Record for homecare workers. In 1993 the Coalition was successful — the Public Authority for IHSS (also known as the Board of Supervisors), became the Employer of Record for homecare workers. The Employer of Record mandated the inclusion of consumer participation and worker representation through collective bargaining. This benefited both workers and care consumers by enabling workers to negotiate improvements in working conditions, which then translated into better care for consumers. Other achievements included a mandatory worker training which has improved the quality of the provider pool, and a centralized computerized job registry which helps consumers find homecare workers.

Recently, workers and consumers have expanded their coalition statewide to pass legislation that improves workers' conditions and enhances the IHSS program. This year, state regulations were changed so that counties receive reimbursement for more consumer services, and so that consumers

*Continued on next page*

can use IHSS hours when they are recovering from medical emergencies. Every year, the Coalition holds a conference to discuss and reach consensus on legislative priorities.

### Worker Center

Creating a drop-in Worker Center where homecare providers could come together was crucial because homecare workers do not have a common worksite. Local 616 spent three years developing and testing various models for the Worker Center. The form the current and most successful Worker Center takes has three essential features: 1) it offers valuable programs; 2) it is accessible to homecare workers, and; 3) it builds union participation, worker empowerment, and supports a sustainable union structure.

The Worker Center offers programs that directly benefit workers, such as job referral, assistance with late paychecks and time sheets, and in-service training. Although participating in these programs means that the workers must pay transportation costs and arrange childcare and other personal matters, they make considerable sacrifices to do so because they feel that the Worker Center offers programs of value to them.

The Center also helps workers find work through a worker-run registry. Workers are referred to other resources such as the IHSS Registry and the East Bay Express, among others. Workers give presentations to low-income seniors about the job referral services. The Center takes calls from social workers and consumers looking for workers, and match their needs with the most appropriate worker.

Monthly speakers are invited to the Center to give in-service training. Trainings have included a computer class, a speaker on caring for the elderly with diminished mental capacity, and a speaker on filing taxes and the Earned Income Credit. SEIU also gave a seminar on protecting workers from blood and air born diseases. Oakland Adult School offered CPR certification and First Aid at the Center. The Healthy Families Program sent a speaker and trained staff to enroll members. Training improves the homecare skills of workers and allows them to participate in nontraditional career ladders.

Homecare workers have a sense of ownership of the Worker Center. Member-Organizers staff the Center. Before a worker is put on the list for job referrals, she must contribute two hours of volunteer service to the Center. By emphasizing participation, the Worker Center empowers workers and creates the foundation for the development of a sustainable structure for the union. Through the Member-Organizer Program, leaders attend a 16-week intensive, eight hour-a-week training. They learn to assist workers to fill-out application forms and screen workers to go on SEIU's union member job referral list, which is sent to consumers.

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Member-Organizers learn the power of coming together and acting collectively, and of forging a common agenda with consumers. As one worker poignantly explained, "from the union I got to sit at the negotiating table with the boss and demand fair treatment for myself and co-workers. I'd never done anything like that before. Now no one can push me around because I know how to stand up for my rights." And as one of the first graduates of the Member-Organizer Program revealed, "Before I got involved with the Union, I was ashamed to say I was a homecare worker. I'd lie and tell people I was a nurse. Now I'm proud of what I do. The union has given me a sense of dignity and self-respect."

*Mila Pefianco Thomas is the Lead Organizer for the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 616.*

*“Citizenship”, continued from page 1*

represents approximately 14,000 cannery and field workers, concentrated in the garden valleys south of San Jose, but also stretching down to the rural California-Mexico border where the same companies hold their winter harvests. Most of the union’s members are Mexican citizens, long-term legal permanent residents of the United States, and eligible to become U.S. citizens. Other Latino-led unions like the United Farm Workers, the Hotel and Restaurant Employees and the Service Employees janitors’ unions had similar compositions, and during these years they also took steps to help members become U.S. citizens. Local 890 was unique among these, however, in the breadth of its agenda: not simply to promote naturalization, but to promote expanded participation by members in public life, in elections, and in the union itself.

**Local 890 was unique among these, however, in the breadth of its agenda: not simply to promote naturalization, but to promote expanded participation by members in public life, in elections, and in the union itself.**

At first, the single staffer hired to work on the Project adopted the service delivery model common to other naturalization programs. Late in 1995, however, our action research project triggered a reassessment which led the group to adopt instead an “organizing” approach. We moved into a storefront office donated by the union, and began to conduct campaigns connecting expanded citizenship to the defense of immigrants’ and workers’ rights.

This work attracted volunteers and donations from the Mexican immigrant community, and additional funding from foundations interested in immigrant political empowerment. Over the next few years the organization expanded into San Jose, and the staff grew to ten employ-

broaden the focus of the project — to serve whole immigrant communities. As a result, the project formed partnerships with a variety of other unions — including the United Farm Workers, Service Employees, and Hotel and Restaurant Employees — in addition to churches, schools, labor camps, social service agencies and other groups. Through the project, the union became the main resource for immigrant rights throughout the region.

Much of the Project’s work in the period from 1996 through 1998 consisted of community-based “citizenship days.” These events aimed to tap and strengthen existing networks of support for aspiring citizens, and in the process to build a network of leadership. Typically, they would be sponsored by an immigrant community-based organization like a church, union, labor camp or school. Citizenship Project staff recruited and trained volunteers from within the organization, assisted them in conducting outreach to their members, residents, parishioners or clients, and organized and supervised their work on the citizenship day. They would then help them follow up with applicants to ensure that completed application packets were submitted, and to provide other assistance to ensure that applicants were prepared to pass their citizenship interview.

**As the demand for naturalization assistance increased with the passage of new exclusionary welfare and immigration laws in that period, our board decided to broaden the focus of the project — to serve whole immigrant communities.**

Volunteers would be drawn mainly from among the ranks of those applying for citizenship. The same networks, then, would also mobilize in union organizing or election campaigns or against other attacks on immigrant rights (in contrast, most other organizations provided naturalization assistance either through one-on-one client services at an office, or through very large-scale mass processing at central locations.)

ees, who trained more than 1200 volunteers to help more than 14,000 immigrants through the naturalization process.

As the demand for naturalization assistance increased with the passage of new exclusionary welfare and immigration laws in that period, our board decided to

In early 1996 at a flower ranch outside Salinas, several women began to study together in preparation for their citizenship test. Others joined in. Soon twenty-eight workers were studying together. They went together to take their citizenship test, and nearly all passed. By the time this self-organized school entered its third cycle, the growing season was at an end, and so they moved into the

*Continued on next page*

Citizenship Project offices. Over the next several months attendance swelled to over 130 students, the majority of whom were farm workers who failed to meet the language and literacy requirements or were unable to navigate the registration bureaucracy at the local public adult school. The school took the name "Escuela de Libertad," or Freedom School, and became a base for organizing.

The Project has conducted a variety of other campaigns as well. When President Clinton visited Salinas in August 1996, the project conducted the first demonstration in the U.S. protesting his just-announced decision to sign the Republicans' new welfare and immigration laws. When legislation banning bilingual education appeared on the June 1998 ballot, we conducted educational meetings on the impact of the legislation at scores of school sites. When the major employer in Hollister sought to impose huge wage cuts on its workforce of immigrant women, threatening to close the plant if their union did not agree, we organized a community coalition which led marches on city hall and won wide public support for the workers and their union by framing the issue as one that affected the whole community. Most recently, all of our different local projects have joined together in our Youth Amnesty campaign, which seeks to change state laws that prevent undocumented immigrant youth from attending state and community college.

*Paul Johnston is a sociologist with the Citizenship Project and at the University of California, Santa Cruz.*

*This account of the Citizenship Project is drawn from a work in progress called "Citizens of the Future: the Emergence of Transnational Citizenship among Mexican Immigrants in California." That paper is accessible at <http://mail.cruzio.com/~johnston/>. For more information on the Citizenship Project or to join the Youth Amnesty Campaign, please visit the website at [www.newcitizen.org](http://www.newcitizen.org).*



At the Henning Center induction. Seated at table from left to right: Peter Olney, Kirsten Snow Spalding, John F. (Jack) Henning, Art Pulaski, Prof. James Lincoln and Katie Quan



## **UC Berkeley Announces the Henning Center for International Labor Relations John F. Henning Named Distinguished Labor Leader-in-Residence**

On March 8, 1999 at UC Berkeley's Institute of Industrial Relations (IIR), the Center for Labor Research and Education (CLRE) formally announced the creation of the John F. Henning Center for International Labor Relations.

Named for Hon. John F. Henning, former Ambassador to New Zealand, Undersecretary of Labor, UC Regent, and longtime Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the California Labor Federation, the Henning Center will focus on strategies for global unionism, a lifetime passion for Jack Henning. "Organized labor must find new ways to respond to the forces of globalization" declared Henning.

The programmatic work will include promoting international relationships of labor researchers and labor activists, as well as supporting policy research on the global economy and its impact on working Californians. The CLRE staff will coordinate research, publications, convenings, and trainings in partnership with labor unions and other interested parties.

John F. Henning was also named Distinguished Labor Leader-in-Residence at IIR, and is the first labor leader to be honored as such by the University of California.

"It is indeed an honor to have the Henning Center based here at the Institute," remarked James R. Lincoln, Director of IIR. "We see this collaboration between the labor movement and the University as a key step to addressing one of the most critical issues of our time—globalization and its impact on workers around the world."

*“LAANE” continued from page 1*

any city (although, when expanded into city-wide minimum wage proposals, as attempted in ballot initiatives in Houston and Denver, substantial business opposition defeated the initiatives.) Mandated living wage levels average about \$8.50 per hour at a time when the minimum wage is only \$5.15. Recent living wage policies also include required health benefits, days off, worker retention, and incentives for collective bargaining.

One key to such widespread success in a post-welfare political climate is that living wage ordinances affect only a small number of businesses in any given city. The flip side of the living wage’s low fiscal profile, however, is its narrow effectiveness at helping the working poor. In some cities, as few as 100 jobs are covered, and, in most cities, delayed implementation has resulted in far less workers covered. Boston estimates have disappointed proponents at only 1,500 workers covered, Baltimore estimates are 1,500, and Oakland are only 400. Even in Los Angeles, the maximum estimate, 10,000, is less than one half of one percent of the county’s workforce.

For LAANE and many other living wage proponents, however, the number of workers covered is less important than building a sustainable, city-wide coalition to address growing economic inequality and low-wage poverty. LAANE views legislation as a tool for organizing, rather than organizing as a tool in the service of legislation.

LAANE originated as the Tourism Industry Development Council (TIDC), founded in 1992 by Hotel and Restaurant Employees (HERE) Local 11 to address labor issues in the hotel and other service industries. In turn, TIDC began the L.A. Living Wage Coalition in the summer of 1995. Using existing networks of labor, clergy and community activists, the coalition crafted an inclusive campaign that gave everyone an equal place at the strategy table and appealed to a broad set of economic interests. This evolved into a multi-faceted umbrella organization, LAANE, that now includes the Living Wage Coalition, Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice, and the Subsidy Accountability Project.

LAANE’s greatest success has been giving the living wage concept political currency on par with “economic growth” and “private investment.” Executive Director Madeline Janis-Aparicio boasts, “Any company thinking about doing anything with the city now has to think about living wages.”

The coalition’s first major victory was winning a city worker retention ordinance in 1995 that requires contracted employers to retain workers from previous contracts. This was followed in 1997 by the passage of a city living wage ordinance which covers an estimated 4,000

to 5,000 workers. In 1998, the coalition beat back a substantial effort by some city officials and LA International Airport airlines to block living wage coverage for airport employees. According to LAANE, this action may have expanded the number of covered workers to a total 10,000.

Since passage of living wage legislation, LAANE has monitored and organized workplaces affected by the ordinance to ensure compliance and encourage union membership. LAANE has also engaged in deal-by-deal negotiations with publicly subsidized developers to create living wages and employer neutrality agreements that could affect thousands of additional workers. In one of these deals, LAANE crafted an innovative employee health benefit pool for workers at the new Academy Awards commercial complex. The coalition is currently pushing for a living wage ordinance at the massive, debt-ridden Community Redevelopment Authority.

While TIDC/LAANE staff provided the core research, media and networking backbone for its campaigns, the power and credibility of the coalition came from four cornerstone participants: unions, religious leaders and institutions, community groups, and a key city council member. Unions were the most instrumental group in LAANE’s creation, their commitment reflecting new union emphasis on organizing and involving community members in the fight for economic justice. LAANE initially tapped into pre-existing community-union networks and framed the policy as a community issue to garner support beyond the usual labor groups.

**LAANE’s greatest success has been giving the living wage concept political currency on par with “economic growth” and “private investment.”**

Twenty-five unions endorsed the campaign at its inception in 1995, including the powerful Los Angeles County Federation of Labor. Many locals have used the living wage campaign and ordinance to organize workers and leverage agreements from employers not covered by the ordinance. For example, as part of a larger “Respect at LAX” campaign, HERE recently pressured Host Marriot Services to adopt living wages for 700 food concession workers six years before a new city contract would have triggered application of the ordinance.

Religious leaders and institutions, the second cornerstone group, provided both a foundation of moral legitimacy and broader public support through congrega-

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tional networks. A group of "deeply committed progressives" brought together by the campaign in January 1996, became so involved that by that summer, they founded Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE), which now has a core of fifty members and 700 participants. Linda Lotz, CLUE's executive director, stresses, "It's really important that everyone is at the table to develop strategy. We want to avoid the 'rent-a-collar' syndrome and create long-term neighborhood coalitions. By being partners, clergy feel a deeper connection to the campaign."

CLUE's campaign efforts have included enlisting congregational support from affluent and low-income communities, staging interfaith processions, conducting home visits to workers, developing pastoral relationships with elected officials, and participating in campaign events. In the summer of 1996, CLUE members worked their respective faith networks to obtain letters to the editor from Methodist and Episcopal Bishops supporting the living wage; influential Muslim and Jewish leaders soon followed. Just before the City Council vote, Cardinal Roger Mahony also issued a statement in support of the ordinance. Several regional and national church and ecumenical councils adopted their own living wage policies as a result of CLUE's work.

The third key group, community-based organizations, gave the campaign a boost by putting pressure on elected officials. Organizations involved included neighborhood-focused groups such as the Korean Immigrant Workers Association and Esperanza Community Housing Corporation, as well as broader-based associations such as Action for Grassroots Empowerment and Neighborhood Development Alternatives (AGENDA), Communities for a Better Environment, and Coalition L.A.

The final critical element of LAANE's success, City Council member and veteran civil rights activist Jackie Goldberg, served the campaign as a dogged proponent who carried the ordinance's torch and kept up pressure on her Council colleagues to counter business opposition. Goldberg and her staff worked closely with the coalition to develop strategy, draft legislation and monitor implementation. She also has helped LAANE and its union members leverage agreements from developers benefiting from subsidies in her district, which includes Hollywood.

Without Goldberg's inside support, the ordinance would have taken much longer to pass, and it probably would have been significantly weakened by numerous hostile amendments. Goldberg's influence was evident at the final vote when three fence-sitting councilmembers shocked everyone by withdrawing their amendments and two opponents left in order to make the vote unanimous.

Hany Khalil and Sandra Hinson, who documented the living wage campaign, attribute the campaign's success to efforts to sustain the involvement of community groups. They write, "Campaign organizers framed their demands for higher wages and increased job security as a neighborhood as well as a workplace issue.... Steve Cancion, director of Coalition '96, argued that past efforts by community groups to organize around jobs in poor neighborhoods failed because it is difficult to translate the anger over lack of good jobs into concrete demands."<sup>1</sup> The living wage campaign provided a tangible goal for these efforts.

**"We want to avoid the 'rent-a-collar' syndrome and create long-term neighborhood coalitions. By being partners, clergy feel a deeper connection to the campaign."**

LAANE's living wage campaign has become a national example not only because the four key groups worked together, but also because coalition members strategically developed cooperative long-term relationships with each other, and viewed legislation as a tool to achieve broader goals. This kind of broad-based coalition building now underpins major worker-oriented campaigns being waged by other organizations, such as AGENDA for a New L.A. and Metropolitan Alliance. By holding developers and corporations accountable to community and labor standards, LAANE has paved the way for a new progressive movement in Los Angeles that foregrounds organizing and promotes economic equality.

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<sup>1</sup> Hany Khalil and Sandra Hinson. "The Los Angeles Living Wage Campaign." *Public Subsidies, Public Accountability: Holding Corporations to Labor and Community Standards*. Grassroots Policy Project, Sugar Law Center for Economic and Social Justice and Sustainable America, 1998, p. 22

agencies, including the Departments of Labor and Health on both federal and state levels. These complaints will be coordinated with support from outside Mexico (religious, investor and labor groups) to maximize pressure on the Mexican government to fulfill its legal obligations to protect maquila workers and to focus attention on the US corporations operating these plants.

Complaints under the labor side agreement of NAFTA will also be part of the campaign. A new health and safety complaint is expected to be filed with the U.S. National Administrative Office (NAO) this spring based on hazards faced by auto parts workers in Matamoros and Valle Hermoso, Mexico. A report on the impact of NAFTA on workplace health and safety in Mexico is planned to coincide with and contribute to other evaluations of the first five years of the trade agreement.

**For more information about the Maquiladora Health & Safety Network go to : [www.igc.org/mhssn](http://www.igc.org/mhssn)**

The campaign will also involve the development of several brochures on health hazards in the workplace, including reproductive health hazards for the majority female workforce, and on Mexican health and safety regulations and workers' rights. Also slated to be circulated by CJM is a draft text of a proposed national workplace health and safety law for Mexico; Mexico currently lacks an equivalent to the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Act passed in 1970.

The UAW and CAW will provide substantial financial, logistical and staff support over several years for this campaign. Other funding and support is coming from the MacArthur Foundation, the Labor Occupational Safety and Health Program (LOSH) at UCLA, and the Labor Occupational Health Program (LOHP) at UC Berkeley. Additional support from North American unions, such as the United Steel Workers union, may be forthcoming as well. LOSH was the lead professional organization in a series of trainings conducted on the border in 1998.

One of the older CJM affiliates is the Berkeley-based Maquiladora Health & Safety Support Network. Founded in 1993, the Support Network is a volunteer network of 400 occupational health and safety professionals who have placed their names on a resource list to provide information, technical assistance, and on-site instruction regarding workplace hazards in the maquiladora plants along the U.S.-Mexico border. Network members, including industrial hygienists, occupational physicians and nurses, and health educators, among others, donate their time and expertise to create safer and healthier working conditions for the maquiladora workers employed by primarily U.S.-owned transnational corporations along Mexico's northern border from Matamoros to Tijuana. The Support Network is not designed to generate, nor is it intended to create, business opportunities for private consultants or other for-profit enterprises. On the contrary, Network participants donate their time and knowledge pro bono to border area workers and professional associations.

Support Network activities have included two-day health and safety courses and "training of trainers" with grassroots groups on the border, provision of Spanish-language information on chemical, ergonomic and safety hazards, and assistance with studies of occupational and environmental exposures and adverse health effects.

The ability of CJM and the Support Network to have a positive impact on the border region by providing workers with tools to assist them in their efforts to improve their work environments and communities, demonstrates not only the incredible potential of cross-border alliances, but also the importance of creating more alliances in this post-NAFTA era.

*Garrett Brown is Coordinator for the Maquiladora Health & Safety Support Network. The Support Network has a website at "[www.igc.org/mhssn](http://www.igc.org/mhssn)" which includes copies of its quarterly newsletter, a Reading & Resource List and border contact information. Information is also available from 510-558-1014.*

# Eyeing the Port Pie

by Kate Beddall

Heads up, Oakland. The Port of Oakland has launched a five-year capital expansion program, involving all three of its business lines and costing at least 1.4 billion. In other words, Oakland's economic engine is revving up.

And a cutting-edge coalition of labor unions and community groups is rallying to ensure that everyone gets on board.

Sweeping changes are in store for the Oakland Airport. The two existing terminals are to be transformed into one big terminal, twelve new gates will be added, and the roadway to the terminal will be two-tiered, with one level for departures and one for arrivals. New baggage carousels, ticket counters, concessions spaces and parking structures will ease congestion in an increasingly popular launch pad - the Port estimates 13.8 million passengers will use the airport next year.

Meanwhile, the Port plans to build four new shipping terminals on 450 acres that used to be the Naval Supply Center in West Oakland. A new rail facility immediately adjacent will reduce the distance cargo containers must travel between ship and train. The Port will modernize terminals built three decades ago, when Oakland's Port became the first container cargo handler in the country, and dredge the Harbor Channel an additional eight feet. All these changes are needed to meet customer demand, according to Port CFO Fred Rickert, and to preserve the Port's position as one of the country's five busiest container ship ports.

Oakland residents can expect to see some changes along the waterfront, too, flowing from a joint city-port plan to improve waterfront use and access from the Coliseum to Adeline Street in West Oakland.

"The theory is, the more economic vitality we can create, the more jobs we create," Rickert says. The Port has generated more than 25,000 jobs in the Bay Area - according to Port statistics - with a combined payroll of \$1.23 billion. It says that expansion will bring some 13,500 new jobs to the Bay Area. But what kind of jobs will they be, and who will get them?

Five labor unions, two labor councils, and ten Oakland community groups have formed the Coalition for an Accountable Port (CAP) to help shape the answer to that question. Go to any Port meeting, and you'll see members of CAP making their demands heard.

Hotel and Restaurant Employees (HERE) Local 2850 wants Oakland's \$8 living wage instituted at Port retail businesses. Longshoremen and Teamster's unions want to influence the restructuring of rail and truck access to the Port to preserve union jobs. And the building trades want a Project Labor Agreement -- a pre-hire collective bargaining agreement between the Port and the trades that would guarantee union hires for the duration of the project, with carve-outs for local contractors.

Community groups want jobs for residents of Port neighborhoods. "We want to see better access to union apprenticeship programs, and a project labor agreement that mandates local hiring and a unionized level of protection for workers, whether or not the contractors that actually win the bids are non-union," says Bill Chorneau of the Coalition for West Oakland Revitalization (CWOR) and ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now.)

**The labor movement is doing a very good job of democratizing and transforming itself, and opening up to coalitions.**

Each member of CAP is working for all those goals, says HERE Local 2850 President Jim DuPont, "because that's what a coalition does. We're working for a Project Labor Agreement because we think the PLA is good for the community and good for the labor movement. So we support the PLA, we support the longshoremen, we support the community's job access demands. We're all in this together."

"There's been a perception," says Brian Kettenring, Oakland ACORN's head organizer, "that unions are all white guys, that unions are not environmentally friendly. The labor movement is doing a very good job of democratizing and transforming itself, and opening up to coalitions. The environmental justice movement has been historically perceived as white and middle class, and that's starting to change because of a realization that people of color are disproportionately hit by toxic waste, for example. And community groups that have had a reputation of not working together are starting to change."

"What's going on," says Kettenring, "is all of us are realizing that none of us have the power, and a lot of us share the same issues."

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Oakland's community-labor alliance was forged in 1997, when ACORN began rallying for a living wage ordinance, and HERE Local 2850 got involved. In March 1998, the Oakland City Council unanimously passed a regulation requiring companies and non-profits hired or subsidized by the City of Oakland to pay \$8, plus \$1.25 in medical benefits, per hour. Federal minimum wage is \$5.15.

But the Port - Oakland's biggest employer -- was exempt. An autonomous city department since 1927, the Port is an "enterprise fund" under the state-tidelands trust law, which means, according to Port CFO Rickert, that it is run exactly like a business, though instead of paying dividends to share holders, the Port must reinvest its profits in operations or expansion.

"The Port in the past has basically done whatever it wanted, and didn't really bother to consult the community," Chorneau says. "I think the major problem is that the benefits of the Port as an economic engine have really not come down to people in Oakland Port neighborhoods." He says the Port has been making a concerted effort to build community support for its five year expansion, but the verdict is still out.

On May 4, the seven Port Commissioners voted unanimously to negotiate a Project Labor Agreement, and pledged to include concerns about local job access as well as local minority business participation. CAP has also asked the Port to require its tenants to comply with Oakland's \$8 living wage. Commissioners had not voted on the living wage issue as of this writing.

*Kate Beddall received her Master's degree from U.C. Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism in May 1999. A musician by training, she entered journalism after working in arts management for six years. This summer she is conducting an investigation in Indonesia for Human Rights Watch, under the auspices of U.C. Berkeley's Human Rights Center. Her article on CAP and the Port of Oakland also appeared in the East Bay Express.*

IR-35

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