

>> I'm glad to welcome you all here this afternoon, I'm Ruth Milkman and I'm pleased that we have a wonderful panel here of new labor leaders. You know there's a saying in some labor circles that labor leadership in the United States is male, pale and stale, but I'm here to tell you that's slowly changing and even as the traditional labor movement continues to shrink in size, the good news is that there are all kinds of new initiatives underway and a lot of emerging new leadership, not all of it in established trade unions. That is, experimenting with all kinds of innovations, and we are very lucky to have for you here four key figures from that group of new labor leaders. So here's what we're going to do, I'm just going to tell you a little bit now about each of the four and I'll describe them in the order in which they will speak, then they'll each speak for 20 minutes, and if they really stick to that we'll have a little time for discussion at the end. We'll try to make that happen but I can't actually guarantee it. Okay, so our first speaker is Erica Smiley, commonly known as Smiley. She's originally from Greensboro, North Carolina. She went to school at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill and graduated in 2001. She was not a sociology student but a political science major and math minor. Holding it up for the math world here. She became an activist while she was an undergraduate there, working with an organization then called Choice U.S.A., now called URGE, United for Reproductive and Gender Equity, which focuses on youth access to reproductive healthcare and reproductive rights more generally. After she graduated from college she worked at URGE full time and soon became their National Field Director. Among other things, she led a campaign there to improve sex education in the Washington, D.C. public schools. She also has experience with tenant organizing and for a while worked for SCIU in Baltimore. In 2005 she joined the organization where she now is on staff which is called Jobs with Justice, which she serves as Director of Organizing. So those of you who may not know that organization, Jobs with Justice, it's group that, full disclosure, I'm on one of their advisory boards, it works with labor unions, local coalitions and community partners to create campaigns and strategies that help expand opportunities for collective bargaining in the United States. So it's not a union but it is very allied with organized labor. Right now they're involved with campaigns on issues of debt, Wal-Mart organizing, Carrying Across Generations which you'll hear about from another speaker today, and the Fight 15, which you'll hear about from another of our speakers today, among other projects. So if you don't know about Jobs with Justice you're going to learn something there, and Smiley is a much better spokesperson for it than I can be so.

Okay, after she's spoken, our next contribution will come from David Rolf who's based here in Seattle where he's President of the Service Employees International Union Local 775, he's also an International Vice President of that union. David graduated from Bart College in the Hudson Valley in New York state where he recently spoke at a conference which I vividly remember. He sort of was revisiting his alma mater if you will, and the conference was organized by one of his teachers, mentors there. While he was at Bart, he too began his organizing career as a college student. He was an intern at SCIU, and helped organize the janitors at Bart at that time, and then soon after would join the staff of SCIU full time, first in Atlanta, then in Los Angeles, where I happened to be living when he led the pioneering campaign to organize home care workers there. And some of you I'm sure know that story, that was accomplished in part through winning legislation to create an employer of record for these workers who were arguably independent contractors. So that was a very innovative strategy that has since been replicated around the country. In 1999, when it succeeded in L.A., it was the largest national labor relations board election in American history, well since the board began in 1935, and led to unionization of some 70,000 home care workers. After that, David moved to Seattle, here where we are today, and he has been the President of Local 775 here since 2002. He also led a successful campaign among home care workers here in Seattle. More recently he helped lead the campaign for the November 2013, 15 dollar an hour ballot measure in SeaTac, Washington, that's the area near the airport where most of you probably arrived here. And that was Proposition 1 which set the 15 dollar per hour minimum wage for

airport and hotel workers there. And then after that he helped win the nation's first 15 dollar an hour minimum wage law here in Seattle. He's published a book recently, a few months ago I guess, called *The Fight for 15, The Right Wage for Working America*, which offers an overview of the 15 dollar per hour minimum wage debate, it's published by the New Press and very much worth reading. David also advocates for change in innovation within the labor movement, as I was saying before we need more of that, and he's particularly interested in using social networking services within that context. He co-founded and continues to direct a initiative called *The Workers Lab*, which is a business incubator, offering new models for organizing and for worker voice. This is housed at the Roosevelt Institute in New York not far from Bart College actually, and is funded by SCIU and some foundations. In the press recently Rolf described as not your father's union leader, and he is definitely a local hero here in Seattle but also one of the most dynamic leaders in the United States today so, you're in for a treat hearing David. So, first Smiley, then David, and next, this is sort of a who's who of the new labor movement I have to say.

Our third speaker today will be Ai-Jen Poo who directs the National Domestic Workers Alliance, and codirects an initiative called *Caring Across Generations*. Ai-Jen was born in Pittsburgh to Taiwanese immigrant parents. She's a graduate of Columbia University and like the other two I've already described, she became an activist in college. She majored in women studies at Columbia and she was one of a hundred students who occupied Low Library, the main library at Columbia, in 1996 demanding more attention to issues of race and ethnicity, and this led to the founding of Columbia's Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race. She graduated soon after that and has been organizing ever since, mostly focusing on immigrant women workers. She started as staff organizer for the Women Workers Project at the Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence in New York City, that's sometimes called CAAV. She, in 2000, cofounded *Domestic Workers United* in New York City, which was a pioneering organization of domestic workers, and that group, her group, and she led the campaign for the nation's first domestic workers Bill of Rights which was passed in 2010 in the New York State Legislature and extended basic labor protections to over 200,000 domestic workers in New York state. You may know that domestic workers were excluded for most of the basic U.S. labor legislation so this was a very important move. DWU then helped to organize the first national meeting of domestic worker organizations at the US Social Forum in 2007 and that led to the formation of the group Ai-Jen now heads, the National Domestic Workers Alliance. She's been directing that organization since 2010, and in that capacity launched the *Caring Across Generations* campaign whose central concept is to link the interests of domestic workers themselves and the clients they serve who share an interest in high-quality, low-turnover, decently paid, securely employed, that is in terms of immigration status and so on, domestic workers. So it's a very creative initiative that you'll hear more about. I'll just say one more thing about Ai-Jen which is that she's an official genius as per the McArthur Foundation which gave her one of those famous Genius awards just two years ago in 2014. She's received many, many other honors. She was, for example, on *Time's* list of the hundred most influential people in the world in 2012 before getting the McArthur. That same year she was named in *Newsweek's* list of 150 women who shake the world, I like that category. She serves on the boards of directors of various organizations including *Moms Rising*, *Jobs for Justice*, which you heard a minute ago, and *Working America*. And she too has a New Press book published in 2015, which I commend to you, called *The Age of Dignity, Preparing for the Elder Boom in a Changing America*, so that's related to the *Caring Across Generations*.

Finally Stephen Lerner will be our fourth and final speaker today, he's another extraordinary labor organizer who's devoted his entire life to the labor movement, and he's also a labor intellectual. Steve spent most of his career at SCIU here he's best known as the architect of the iconic *Justice for Janitors* campaign starting in the late 1980s. But his organizing career predates that famous initiative. After high

school, Steve left school to become an organizer with the United Farm Workers, worked on the grape and lettuce boycotts. He actually only got his college degree a few years ago, having sacrificed his own education to this work. In my mind Steve is an organic intellectual who's written some of the most brilliant essays on labor I've ever read and I've read quite a few of them. He has a long history in organizing in the hospital industry, healthcare, the garment industry in the south, the communication workers, organizing high tech manufacturing workers, public employees, all of that before joining the SCIU staff in 1986. Besides Justice for Janitors, at SCIU Lerner also directed the SCIU's Private Equity Project starting in 2007, which was a campaign to expose the business practices of private equity firms, something we've been hearing a lot, particularly after the 2008 crash. In this period he was really involved in organizing labor and community groups to fight predatory lending and other abusive practices by the financial industry. Even before Occupy Wall Street he proposed debt strikes as a collective bargaining for homeowners and other debtors. Glenn Beck called him an economic terrorist, I think a badge of honor coming from him.

[applause]

He was very involved in Occupy and some people argue sort of, argued for that kind of organizing strategy, like I said, well before Occupy emerged, and when it did emerge he embraced it. More recently, as you'll hear in his talk today, he's been focusing on what he calls the other half not told. He argues that raising the minimum wage is critical and the other organizing that we're doing is critical in the labor movement but equally critical is to confront the issues of capital and system set, extract and concentrate, well to understand that and frontally attack it, especially, well. And he has an article in the just current issue, I guess it's on the web as well as, I'm not sure if it's in the print edition or not, of Jacobin, coauthored with Saqib Bhatti, called Labor Must Take on Capital. So you'll hear sort of a preview of that here and if you want the details I encourage you to take a look at that article. So that's our lineup, it's an extraordinary one so you are in for a treat, and like I said, each of them will speak for about 20 minutes and then if we have, if they really do that we'll have some time for discussion so, and they are very disciplined so I think that we will have time for discussion. So take it away Smiley, where is she? Here we go.

[applause]

>> Hey, good morning everyone, good afternoon. Thanks for having me and I want to thank Ruth for hosting this important and exciting discussion and this conference which seems to be coming to an end. Jobs with Justice is the national network of permanent community labor coalitions made up of unions, worker centers, community and neighborhood organizations, faith institutions and youth and student groups. And at Jobs with Justice, our vision of a world where everyone makes it is anchored in our belief that all workers should have collective bargaining rights, expanded to meet the needs of a 21st century economy we live in, employment security and a decent standard of living. Now, I'm originally from North Carolina like Ruth mentioned, and I held several jobs before leaving North Carolina in 2001, none of which were represented by a union. In maintaining low union density in that state, which I think is two percent or even less at this point, even public sector workers who come together to form unions had thwarted by the state which has even made it illegal for them to negotiate a contract. And it's actually for this reason that I'm a part of this movement, not simply to obtain the same kind of collective bargaining rights those outside of the U.S. south has managed to win, but actually to expand collective bargaining to meet the new context that we live in, regardless of what the law actually permits or not. The first lesson leaders learn at the Jobs with Justice national training is to never give your power away. And while easier said than done, it does compel us to remember how change happens. While we need

labor law reform, we should not wait for it to build a movement to expand the scale and scope of collective bargaining. Early industrial unions were bargaining long before the Wagner Act codified the practice, leveraging their ability to halt production when necessary, and it's only through exercising their power, and even breaking some rules, were they able to win the legal protections to back up workers' ability to bargain equally with employees. This is ultimately going to be the theme of my remarks to you today. Only through exercising our power, through our ability to organize new individuals in order to position them to bargain, to bargain, to vote, to disrupt, only through doing that can we build an economy that works for all of us.

If we really want to build a new economy, we must directly confront corporate power, white supremacy, and all of the systems of exploitation that allow a smaller number of individuals to benefit from the rest of us. There's no other shiny red ball to solve the problems of working people in our current economy without doing this. Consider, from our experience at Jobs with Justice, what we call the Justice for School Workers campaign in Atlanta. In the spring of 2012, the Georgia Labor Commissioner Mark Butler cut off access to unemployment benefits for contracted school workers in the state, the majority of whom were black women. These jobs, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, school support staff, even some charter school teachers, had once been considered good jobs based in the public sector. In fact, it was public sector jobs like this that created many pathways out of poverty for African-American workers, but by 2012 these same jobs had been contracted out to companies like Sodexo, to Aramark and others, and limited the state's responsibility for these workers, introducing a level of flexibility that helped a set of corporations but ultimately devastated workers. Butler's action sent thousands of workers, again, primarily African-American women, into crisis. Atlanta Jobs with Justice took it on with both organized union workers and unorganized workers. They fought a battle with the Georgia State Department of Labor and the Georgia State Legislature to prevent the cuts from being permanent and restore the benefits which had previously been denied. But instead of developing a short-term, give us our employment back kind of transactional strategy, the coalition took a very different worker-centered approach. By framing the issue not simply as an attack on the social safety net, but as an issue of wages and income that contingent school workers in Georgia depended on, and by uncovering the real systemic problems regarding the nature of work in Atlanta, asking whose city is it, ours or Sodexo's, the coalition was indeed able to win back eight million dollars previously denied unemployment benefits paid directly to those workers. They were also able to establish an organizing hub for Justice for School Workers, that functioned across several existing unions, again, including non-union workers, and that positioned workers to counter future attacks, while setting an agenda to redefine the value of workers in Atlanta and throughout Georgia.

Some of these workers were ultimately able to go on to traditional collective bargaining agreements with the companies that they worked for, and others are still organizing, trying to identify new opportunities to collectively confront the powers that be in Georgia's education sector. Collective bargaining at its best is a system by which workers are able to exercise power in a way that directly confronts the owners of capital, in a way that reclaims portions of that capital back to working people in our communities. It has served as a direct mechanism to fight for a fair return on the labor we put into building, operating, servicing or moving something, and the Atlanta case study demonstrates how and why it must be expanded and reimagined in ways that allow modern workers to confront their bosses and the owners of capital in new and creative ways. Here in the heart of the tech industry, in the so-called gig economy, the needs are no different. And this next statement will likely come up unpopular for those of you who live on the west coast, but I cheered for the Cleveland Cavaliers in the NBA final.

[laughter]

And despite many of the tech industry's claims that their special algorithms for calling plays and what got Golden State to the finals, Cleveland's victory proved that you cannot discount the role of human capital.

[laughter]

In this case in the name of LeBron James. Anyway, contrary to the smart recent grad coffee shop image worker image we are often inundated with, we should actually be tracking the women who today, as staffing company employees, clean the exact same hotel rooms that they cleaned yesterday as Hyatt employees, just with less pay, and less ability to come together and negotiate the terms of their work. We should talk to the warehouse employees who move goods for Wal-Mart, and at the direction of Wal-Mart through its supply chain, but get their paychecks from a subcontractor. They work the same job, but no one claims ultimate responsibility for their conditions. And so therefore, I am not ready to concede that the business practices of the tech industry, the basis of this gig economy, are unchallengeable just because of the latest new app, as if the algorithms coming out of Silicon Valley are the end products as opposed to a new means for getting things done. Tech innovation should not be used to disorganize worker organization and squash the self-determination and collective voice workers have over their conditions and their environment. In fact, if new innovations are actually increasing productivity, the benefits of that should be shared by workers themselves instead of the executives at the top. Workers should benefit with more paid vacation, shorter work hours with the same or higher annual pay rates, more time for training to support the next set of innovations right, and if innovation makes work more flexible, working people should benefit from that flexibility, to negotiate more time with their families, engaging in civic and community activities, not just flexibility for top executives at the expense of workers. Whether individuals work in a context where the employer-employee relationship is clearly defined or many times blurred and removed, the ultimate goal is to increase opportunities for workers and their communities to benefit from increased productivity, and have more platforms to collectively negotiate over their present and future conditions.

The gig economy is neither new nor massive. Many working people across the world, and in the U.S., have long been forced to operate in the gig economy. Being flexible, not for the sake of planning their lives, but to simply be available on demand to their many bosses. And in actuality, the on-demand workforce is actually quite tiny in comparison to the many other ways that workers organize. Many workers still know who their boss is, or can at least trace a path up the chain to the person in sectors where the corporate class has reorganized production to limit their responsibility. These strategies have included misclassifying employees as independent contractors, not counting gig workers, temp workers hired directly by the employer or supplied by a temp agency, on-call workers, workers supplied by a contract firm, workers who work part time for economic reasons, and self-employed workers who do not have employees. And we don't want to forget the 29 million workers who work in industries that are characterized by subcontracting and disguise employment relationships, which would add to this list workers in construction, building services, hospitality and care. In these industries, and in many others, we can still identify who the ultimate boss is, where the power is, and thus outline a creative and applicable strategy that mobilizes workers to collectively bargain with them effectively. Our best weapon to combat wealth inequality in this day and age is still a strong union contract, a collective bargaining agreement. And in sectors where we still have the power to win these in their current form, we should not give it up. But, our success as a movement will be based on our ability to build new and creative strategies to confront corporate owners in this period. Now I want to distinguish here that I'm talking about our success as a movement, I'm not just talking about the institutions of organized labor.

Our success as workers in a broad base labor movement will be based on our ability to build new and creative strategies to confront corporate owners in this period. And in doing so, we will ultimately seek to change the very nature, the very nature of what the contract covers, broadening what workers can negotiate over and who they can negotiate with, from their direct boss to the individuals with concentrated power in their sector.

When I say boss, I'm not just referencing some vague person sitting in the corner of a factory building. In order to understand what we're up against, we have to talk about the individuals who own these various enterprises, and thus hold significant positions of power in our economy. They are not simply vague systems to analyze or generic companies to be angry at, they are people making decisions that ultimately benefit a small, select few at the top to the detriment of everyone else. There simply is no winning plan to build a shared prosperity without confronting these individual owners and their corporate power directly. For example, the Walton family, that controls 48 percent of Wal-Mart, is worth more than a hundred billion dollars, greater than the combined wealth of the bottom half of the population. Wal-Mart directly employs 2.2 million workers, but also has its tentacles stretched throughout our economy. Greg Penner, an individual at Wal-Mart, Wal-Mart's Chairman, and the son-in-law of Rob Walton, has his own investment firm, sits on the Board of Wal-Mart and Hyatt hotels, funds anti-public school initiatives through a set of nonprofit organizations. If we try to trot out all the workers Greg Penner touches, whether or not they're directly employed by one of these companies, the list is massive. It would include, for example, the 2.2 million Wal-Mart associates, as well as the Louisiana and Maryland seafood workers who employ or supply exclusively to Wal-Mart. Whether or not they are directly employed to Wal-Mart, these would all be Wal-Mart workers. The list would also include subcontracted workers in Hyatt in Los Angeles, the guest workers on visas at the Hyatt in Colorado and the temporary construction workers building the new Hyatt in New Orleans, whether or not they are employed by Hyatt, they are all Hyatt workers. It would include the janitors in the Silicon Valley building of his investment firm and yes, also the teachers and the staff at the charter schools he funds. It would include these workers and many, many others. Together all of these workers are Greg Penner's workers. So why not organize these workers into a new wave of bargaining units to negotiate with Greg Penner? Bargaining with the .01 percent at the top of all of our food chains, as Steven has popularized [inaudible].

To put a fine point on it, it was this methodology that made the victory of a very small number of guest workers in Louisiana inspire organizing on a national scope in 2012. Instead of targeting a small supplier, their technical boss, C.J. Seafood, they targeted the end of the supply chain, they targeted Wal-Mart. Unfortunately people may expect abuse at all of these small southern suppliers. What are 11 guest workers going to do to change Wal-Mart? But when The New York Times article came out on forced labor on American soil, it changed the scale and scope of the fight, demanding justice for Wal-Mart workers. And I think Saket, who's the Director of the Guest Worker Alliance, is going to be here later and it would be good to ask him about this story because the point is they essentially created a small bargaining unit to negotiate directly with the .01 percent at the top of their food chain. And those loosely-documented workers in Breaux Bridge, Louisiana got Wal-Mart to the table.

Again, our success will be based on our ability to build new and creative strategies to confront corporate owners in this period, broadening what workers can negotiate over, and who they can negotiate with, from their direct boss to the individuals with concentrated power in their sector. The idea that tech is the future of our economy, and thus all of the ways working people exercised power previously is dead, is nearly as bad, in my opinion, as the myth that the digital camera was the end of print photography, or that E-readers would end our desire to buy hard copy books. Neither has proved true. If anything,

people take more pictures and identify the best of them to print. Many read more books and chose the best of them to buy hard copies. The innovations of the tech industry, these automated robots that are coming to take our jobs, should not be viewed as the end of employees, and thus the end of our ability to collectively bargain over our conditions. In fact, to the contrary, tech innovations that increase productivity with less human individuals having to work for it, should actually represent new opportunities to expand who working people can negotiate with and what we can negotiate about. Instead of filling the pockets of the .01 percent, these gains in productivity and material wealth should fund and expand its social safety net, portable benefits and mobility, guaranteed income, universal family care, more leisure time to live, not toil, but to live with dignity. In other words, through bargaining, working people in this sector can transform tech innovations into a more shared prosperity. Imagining the future of bargaining may seem like a difficult thing to do, and to ask of you in this current moment. A tax on collective bargaining have never been sharper. We dodged a few bullets in the Supreme Court, but companies are more emboldened than ever. Everywhere we look, workers are on defense, and yet, it is in moments like this that working people throughout our history have won some of the boldest of victories. The activist being radicalized by today's Movement for Black Lives are often the same individuals struggling to piece together a part-time job, or driving for Uber in order to make ends meet. Our movement must engage these individuals in our shared fight for collective bargaining and against racist state violence. It is all of our responsibility to build a society where black youth do not fear violence on their way to school, and where black men and women do not fear death on the way to work.

Unions have long relied on National Labor Relations Board elections to get to the bargaining table. And the new rules that allow elections on a shorter timeline can only help. But that has never blazed the strongest path to negotiations. While we will ultimately have to reform the existing law to make it work better for unions, that will never be enough. Even in the heyday of the National Labor Relations Act, statistics in 1967 showed that while only 262,000 workers won union recognition through the electoral process sanctioned by the National Labor Relations Act of 1935, over 700,000 workers won union recognition by striking. Direct action always won more. If we are to build the kind of bargaining power we need in order to position this ailing economy on a path to providing the protections, the safety net, the quality of life we all deserve, then we need to re-familiarize ourselves with the creative, direct action strategies that mobilize our shared power, regardless of if they are legally protected, while expanding the framework in which workers come together to collectively negotiate their conditions. We have a lot to learn from movements like that of the Movement for Black Lives.

A couple of the specific innovations, additional innovations I'll share just before wrapping here. One of the more exciting innovations coming out of Jobs with Justice that I want to share with you is the idea of a bad business fee, a strategy that attempts to win back the resources workers lose when companies insist on maintaining practices that are damaging to workers, and refuse to negotiate about changing them. Those practices constitute the basis of defining bad businesses, practices that workers are lifting up in the context of their campaign. And they are in turn, the companies are then in turn defined as bad and are fined in order to take back the costs they forced on workers and the surrounding community through those bad practices. And then ideally those impacted collectively negotiate with the government over how to reallocate those funds. So, the idea is one such a fee is implemented, these employers can negotiate directly with workers over wages and conditions of the industry, so providing an onramp for collective bargaining directly or, they can pay the bad business fee, a significant fee, that workers would then appropriately come together and negotiate with the state in order to allocate. And the hope is it will expand workers' ability to collectively define industry standards, either directly with employers or around them, via smartly crafted state interventions. But also we want to be sure that it

can only happen if the fee itself is significant, and can be leveraged versus just being the cost of business, we aren't trying to subsidize low wages and bad practices at these companies.

And part of the way this has been used, one example that I'll share in San Francisco recently, up until recently workers in low-wage sectors and housing rights advocates in San Francisco were using this theory and applying to push what they called a displacement fee, directly targeting the tech industry for its role in making that city unaffordable to working people via rising rents, undermining public transportation, avoiding taxes. There, working people would create a displacement fund to support affordable housing, public services, and to support the families who have been displaced due to the demands of the tech industry. So this was another example of turning the success of the industry into something that benefits working people and, if successful, increase, it would increase their ability to negotiate with the owners of capital in the tech sector, while expanding what they could also negotiate about, in this case, housing, so it doesn't always have to apply to wages or low-wage employers in particular, but to the practices of a sector, and in ways that allow workers in the sector to directly negotiate with them or, workers around the, in the surrounding community, in this case housing advocates, to negotiate with the sector as well. All those different channels of negotiation then get opened up and legitimized.

Jobs with Justice is not the only organization thinking about bargaining in this way. The Restaurant Opportunity Center has never waited for permission to engage workers in some of the most difficult industries to organize. They're exploring new ways for workers to collectively confront employers at an industrywide level in the private sector, to reshape standards for workers long overlooked. They have managed to reimagine some of the same tech innovations that some companies use to exploit their employees, into something workers use to negotiate better conditions for their work sites and in the industry as a whole. So from scheduling to eliminating tips or sharing tips, companies now seek to negotiate with restaurant workers in order to improve their own businesses. So at some point, from a movement standpoint, we have to stop seeing groups like ROC simply as national worker center networks, but actually come to recognize them as new kinds of bargaining units for an entire sector of previously invisible workers. Another example in Brooklyn, the Crown Heights Tenants Union, is combining the efforts of large apartment building staff, and the tenants of those same large apartment buildings, to negotiate with the billionaire owners of those buildings. And how else frankly do you expect them to take on the residential real estate industry in the largest city in the country? Just because they have the best tenants' rights laws doesn't mean they have to wait for the unfunded mandates to implement them. They want a contract directly with building owners, and working together I think they might actually get it. One would be a more traditional collective bargaining agreement for the staff, for those owners, right, the other a different kind of agreement between tenants and the building owners. Both will be contracts, both will be binding, both will ultimately expand what is possible in that industry.

And frankly, not all of this has to be outside of a traditional union's experience. Sometimes we just need a minor adjustment to improve on what we're already doing in a way that increases the number of workers who are organized and positioned to bargain collectively. At Jobs with Justice we've experimented with some tried and true campaigns, making minor adjustments to bread and butter strategies, in order to increase the future potential of workers to bargain. So for example, consider a campaign to stop wage theft. Good campaign. Many have won local ordinances that push contractors to pay workers back for stolen wages. It's a shame we have to legislate that but it is what it is. In any case, imagine that same campaign crafted in a way that makes the contractors' boss, or the multinational company buying from that supplier, ultimately responsible for those stolen wages. Doing

so would set new precedents for who workers can or should negotiate with. Or imagine that same wage theft craft in a way that makes wage theft an actual crime or felony of the employer, carrying more than fine and back wages but punitive action for bad employers.

For undocumented workers, often the victim of such crimes, it carries the potential of winning protection to stay in the country, to continue to fight with other workers for dignity and respect on the job. And certainly, last but not least, the Chicago Teachers Union bargained for the common good in 2012, expanding what workers traditionally bargained for in their existing contract negotiations. They looked beyond the scope of their immediate workplace demands, incredibly important demands, to also incorporate the needs of their community, the people who need a strong public education system in Chicago. See minor adjustments can be all that's needed to open the door for workers to organize and bargain better. So to summarize the key points, if we really want to build a new economy, we must directly confront corporate power, white supremacy, and all of the systems of exploitation that allow a small number of individuals to benefit from the rest of us. Secondly, whether individuals work in a context where the employer-employee is clearly defined or, many times, blurred, the ultimate goal is to increase opportunities for workers and their communities to benefit from the increased productivity, and have more platform to collectively negotiate over their present and future conditions. Here on the west coast in particular, tech innovations that increase productivity with less human individuals having to work for it should actually represent new opportunities to expand who working people can negotiate with, and what we can negotiate about. And finally, direct action always wins more. The unions and organizations I've referenced and many others have demonstrated that laws only change after the emergence of a robust movement of newly-organized workers willing to break them in order to exercise the collective power we have, even at the risk of reorganizing some of the very institutions we have built over the last century. Many workers, particularly disproportionately exploited black and immigrant workers, many in my home state of North Carolina, are not waiting for union recognition to begin acting like a union, even when the path to a traditional American union is mired with dangerous, even deadly barriers. Instead they have tapped into the very power of work organization, and demonstrated the new institutions and new laws to support what they are already doing. We must have a bold vision that keeps us focused, and that reminds us we can in fact combat white supremacy and bargain with the most powerful corporate owners in the world, in order to win real bargaining power for workers, in an economy that is worth the well-being of the many over the profits of the few. Within the crisis that workers and communities face today are many opportunities for us to make powerful, strategic interventions that pave the path toward new approaches, new models of organizing, and policy remedies that help us truly build a 21st century labor movement and an economy that works for all of us, thank you very much.

[applause]

>> Our next speaker is David Rolf.

>> Good afternoon, I have some slides, I apologize, you'll see when we get to the economic data that some of them are a few years old and are in need of updating but, I'm just going to start, because we're in a Presidential election year, by asking us all to collectively remember a moment from earlier in our country's Presidential history, a time when I was a boy, when we were celebrating our bicentennial and there were fireworks and we were also having a Presidential election between a Republican from Michigan and a Democrat from Georgia, who were campaigning in 1976 to be the President. If you could imagine if one of them, either one of them, had given a speech that predicted the future and said, you know, my fellow Americans in the next 30 years we're going to see no more lines for gas, no more

double-digit inflation and unemployment, we're going to see the Berlin Wall fall down, the end of Communist totalitarianism in Europe, the end of the Cold War, no more foreign military threats to U.S. soil. We're going to see tremendous productivity and we're going to give birth, on our own soil, to new industries that in the next 30 years will create more wealth than has been created in all of human history up until now. That would have been a pretty incredible speech. What if the speech had gone, it would have been hard to believe, truly. But what if the speech had gone on to predict that 93 percent of the gains of that wealth were going to go to the top one percent, that seven percent will go to the next nine percent, zero percent for the bottom, 90 percent of the bottom, 50 are going to have to take a pay cut. What if we in fact said we're going to eliminate private sector pensions, shift healthcare costs onto consumers, shred public education funding, make debt-free college a thing of the past, export the manufacturing sector, import third-world wages, bust the unions, deregulate, de-tax, globalize, privatize to the point that there will be no, that the net impact of women doubling their work force participation between 1977 and 2012 will be zero dollars in take-home pay for the bottom 90 percent of income earning households, and the average family that could afford a little house and a station wagon and an annual trip to Disney World or Yellowstone would need three such incomes to pay for the same lifestyle a generation from now, no one would have voted for that candidate. In fact I suspect that person not only would have lost the election, a wave election would have catapulted the opposition parties and the majority and that party would have been out of power for years to come. That is in fact what we got through malice and negligence of members of both political parties.

And when we look at the labor movement, my movement, we have seen the life and now the death of a collective bargaining model based in the principal of exclusive representation between one union and one employer negotiating wages, hours and working conditions at the firm level. Peaked in the 50s, has been on decline ever since then and particularly in the private sector. Bargaining has actually been cut in half. This is probably a more deeper and more depressing statistic today than it was when the slide was written, but has been cut in half in the private sector just within our lifetimes. This is what private sector coverage looked like in 1983, which was already three years into Reagan, but this was the first year that the Labor Department tracked public and private state-by-state all together. So this is what a map of collective bargaining looked like on our enterprise model in 1983, by 2014 it looked like that. So, just take a look at that again, a number of states, including this one, greater than 25 percent union representation in the private sector, very few under ten, none under five. Today, none over 25, none over 20, one over 15 percent, four or five between ten and 15 percent, and the most either between five and ten percent or between zero and five percent.

To pick a couple of examples, well no obviously our strength is growing in zero states, it is shrinking in all 50 states over time, and even in 1983, when New York had I think 27 percent private sector union density and Tennessee had 15 percent union density, by 2014 New York was below where Tennessee was in 1983 and Tennessee itself was down to 2.8, essentially no one in the private sector who didn't work at a railroad, an airline or a grocery store or a UPS delivery facility, all of which were collective bargaining agreements, bargained somewhere else, and applied within Tennessee. As recently as 2011 this is what the map looked like of right to work state versus free states. Then we had another three, now it would be four with West Virginia, states flipped the wrong direction a number of other states like Ohio and Montana and Missouri at constant risk on this map. And the media and public narrative on unions essentially suggest we are weak, ineffective, selfish, self-interested, internally-focused, adversarial, anti-business, anti-innovation, irrelevant, pale, male, stale, sometimes in jail, partisan and corrupt. The, it would be, it's unfair, it's a caricature, it would also be difficult to spend a life in the labor union and not find real-life, living, breathing examples of each of these sort of behaviors and caricatures in our union halls every day.

We, these are accelerated by right-wing attacks, the union-busting industry, the vicious campaign against the Employee Free Choice Act, corporate spending versus union spending in our federal and state elections, dozens if not hundreds of anti-union think tanks and foundations, media outlets times the hundreds and Chambers of Commerce and Business Associations that viscerally promote anti-union views and policy. You know, historically anti-union Republicans as well as erosion of Democratic Party support for unions as we dry up and weaken within their own geographies. Laws discourage organizing and make our labor laws inaccessible to most workers. Right now there are five times more workers who have no legal right to join a union in this country than there are workers who are covered under union contracts. Five times. That's not just the Uber drivers, it's everything from misclassified low-level supervisors to contract workers to temps, part time agriculture in 49 states, public employees in most of the south, southwest, and mountain states. People have no legal right at all to join a union. Then there's all the other problems with our union representation election process.

When we were growing, if you look at those unique periods of time, we had a vast industrial economy, forest production, large centralized factories, inter-union competition and jurisdictional strikes, you know, workers acting against the wishes of national union leaders and seizing factories, World Wars and Cold Wars and Depressions making the government want to intervene to facilitate collective bargaining as a means of stabilizing industrial production, as well as ensuring equitable growth during periods of economic stress. We also had a Communist party to train disciplined anti-capital organizers, and a Mob that was looking for new profit centers after the repeal of Prohibition, looking to extort, using unions to extort employers and loot their treasuries. None of those factors present today. And when we think about who advocates for whom, even if you disagree, as I do passionately, with some of the organizations on the screen, no one really doubts that the Sierra Club is a legitimate voice for people who care about the environment, that the NRA is a legitimate voice for whacko Second Amendment gun nuts, that the Chamber of Commerce is a legitimate voice for large, multinational corporations, the corn growers for the corn growers, the AARP for the seniors, etcetera, etcetera, the AMA for doctors, but would anyone really say that the AFLCIO or Change to Win are a legitimate voice for workers, or are they just trade associations of union leaders advocating primarily for the institutional interests, not the underlying interests, of workers?

This could all be something we went to sleep and did not worry about, because if the functional death of the institutional labor movement of the 20th century were a certainty, perhaps everything else could go along just fine, the only problem is the number of capitalist democracies that have built, achieved and maintained a large, stable, and prosperous middleclass without a labor movement, is a set of zero. Quickly, you know these statistics, this is what happens when, I'm going to run through the economic stats really quickly, when unions were strong, most of the nation's income went to the middleclass, when they are weak it mainly goes to the wealthy. When unions were strong, the economy grew for all five quintiles of income earners, when unions got weak only the top gained. When you look at competitor nations, the less unionized they are the more income inequality you have. Once unions started getting weak we delinked, for the first time in the history of capitalism, the joint rise of worker compensation and productivity on the same graph. The majority of gains since the late 70s have gone to the super rich, a couple different slides that show that, five percent control 73 percent of the wealth. Income inequality is obviously more, wealth inequality both are more, far more extreme for workers of color. We've seen the rules written to benefit the one percent and transfer of tax responsibility away from corporations on individuals. An explosion in educational debt, 43 billion of which is now held by people collecting Social Security checks. A minimum wage that is now earned, 80 percent of it by adults, and paid 66 percent of the time by large, profitable, multinational corporations who pay their executives

close to ten million dollars a year, and have returned close to 200 billion dollars to shareholders since the end of the recession.

In '08-'09, during the depth of the recession, 24 percent of workers were employed in a low wage job, by 2020 that's predicted to be 48.2. Today, 43.8 percent of American workers make less than 15 dollars an hour and half make less than 17 dollars an hour. I mean this is a complicated slide but when you look at the job projections, it tells you all that stuff about the high tech, high skilled jobs of the future if you just got a STEM degree, might be true in a lot of individual cases but economy wide, what the economy is producing is low wage jobs that don't require more than a high school education. Retail clerks, food prep, laborers, nursing aids, cashiers, receptionists, groundskeepers, janitors, homecare aides, personal care aides, etcetera, etcetera. That's where the majority of jobs are, and they're paying wages that are all under 15 dollars an hour. Now you would think, I should just say by the way, on the last slide this doesn't even get into the emerging trends about the future of work. You think about the fact that essentially all of the jobs created since the end of the recession are non-stater jobs, they're one or more of part-time, contingent, contract, temp, or on demand, lacking in most of the formal legal rights that full scope employees have under our sort of hybrid employment and social contract system in the United States.

You might think that if there were a group of people who had the privilege to be elected and paid to represent the interests of American workers, that they would at this point be in some emergency meeting in an underground bunker trying to figure out how to reverse the 50 or 60-year decline of America's middle class and our labor movement. Instead, they seem to be exhibiting the definition of insanity attributed to Einstein, doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result. If you look at what labor spent their not insignificant resources on in the late 1950s, I would argue five activities, we collectively bargain and administer contracts, we support our own internal democracies. We elect Democrats, we lobby them to keep their campaign promises and then we, a few unions still organize in the old-school bargaining units. And, you know, this is an example locally of an average, a typical teamster local, a typical SCIU local and how they allocate resources, but it all comes down to essentially to the same five functional activities that we've been doing through the entire period of our decline. This becomes a little more understandable when you realize that essentially the entire revenue source of the American labor movement is, the institutional labor movement, is collective bargaining, that is exclusive agreements with employers wherein they deduct compulsory union dues to the collective bargaining agent to the union. Then we have upon us a set of demands and expectations, some legal, some cultural, some political, some behavioral, some financial, by members, the media, politicians, regulating agencies, employers, other unions and allies, that can strain the behavior of labor leaders. We have formal legal restrictions and requirements on what we can and cannot do, including limiting most of the effective union tactics employed in the 30s, 40s and 50s under law. And then we've got, this is controversial to say but our own democracies at the local union level where only members in standing have the right to vote. There is no one whose job is to think about future members or noncore strategies for innovation, but only how to keep the current group fed. It's an even less appealing situation in international union democracies where votes are held by geographic and industrial barons within each international union, and the people controlling the most votes are increasingly from the pockets of labor strength where the perception of decline is the lowest and the illusion of strength is the highest.

Now, let's not even talk for a, or we can talk for a moment about how you become a labor leader. You get lucky enough to either be a straight white guy in a traditional union from the rank and file, or a lefty college grad who's anything but a straight white guy in a progressive union, and work in a heavily

unionized state, a heavily unionized industry. You spend years putting out tomorrow's fires, tomorrow's grievance, tomorrow's picket, tomorrow's legislative hearing, tomorrow's election. You learn to distrust change, to fight any initiative coming from the employer as a visceral attack on union rights, you do what you're told and respect your elders within the institution. In the year 2000 someone came up to me and I asked what she was working on, she told me it was a grievance, and I said why are you doing it that way? She said well that's how they taught me when I started here back in 1972. You learn parliamentary procedure, you learn the arcane arts of collective bargaining and mandatory versus permissive subjects and inter-union jurisdictional battles, and you run for vacant and uncontested offices within your union structure. You help elect Democrats. You rally behind any corporate campaign to save union jobs no matter how much it flies in the face of your other values, build a national network of friends and allies within your union, and if you do that for 15 or 20 years straight, congratulations now you have my job, you're a labor leader.

[laughter]

By which time the chances that every potential for innovation or disruptive change have been completely bleached and washed out of you are incredibly high, because this is the only way you become a leader within the institutional American labor movement. We had a different theory at SCIU, we thought if we built it the rest of the labor movement would come, we said we'd spend 50 percent of our national resources on growth, 20 percent of our local union resources on growth, it had some success, we more than doubled the size of the international union, but we didn't grow as fast as the employment in our own industry so density sank. Fewer than five other unions in total followed suit, and our big bet to expand the old collective bargaining model through faster elections was crushed while Democrats held the Presidency and super majorities in both Houses of Congress. So what exactly should we do? Our friends, maybe some of you, from left academia have lots of suggestions for what the labor movement should do differently. We should remove internal corruption, build a better internal democracy, ensure more diverse leadership, embrace 1930s style militancy, or work more cooperatively with cooperative management, elect Democrats because Republicans are worse, stop electing them if they won't vote with our interest, provide better member services, organize, do industry-focused organizing, build member leadership, lead social movements on behalf of all workers, build regional solidary, there's at least ten Ph.D. theses and one published book about every one of these ideas.

[laughter]

I would argue that many of us, especially in places like the northwest, actually run local unions that look like a lot of these suggestions and built them from scratch, designed to work with the good bosses and be militant against the bad ones and do all the things that our friends in the academic left have suggested but still, when I come to work every day, there are not 10,000 workers waiting in a line outside of my office to ask for a union card. And these locals have not grown any faster than any other within the American labor movement. I also like to read some business analysis of what's happened to us and there's this scholar named Jim Collins who mainly spends his life researching how companies become really successful. You may have read *Built to Last* or *Good to Great*. He also wrote an interesting book called *How the Mighty Fall* where he studies publicly traded companies that either get acquired or go bankrupt or go out of business entirely. And he found four, in fact five common stages of organizational decline, hubris born of past success, undisciplined pursuit of more, denial of risk and peril, grasping for salvation, and capitulation to death. It would be hard to work in the labor movement, as I've done for a quarter century, and not see daily examples of every one of these behavior patterns

within our institutions. I also appreciated the work of a guy named Andy Grove, may he rest in peace, who was one of the cofounders of Intel, became its Chairman and C.E.O. in the 80s and part of the 90s, and he introduced, he was a Hungarian-born mathematician and introduced this idea of a strategic inflection point in the life of a company or country or geopolitical situation, where there's essentially a 10x factor of change that impacts a company or an institution, and within that is contained the possibility of navigating so the enterprise grows to new heights or, failure to navigate in such a way that the business declines and cannot recover. He points out that most strategic inflection points appear slowly, are often identifiable only through the rear view mirror, and in his book about this phenomenon called *Only the Paranoid Survive*, he says that smart business leaders listen to the Cassandras who say the sky is falling, that debate has to include those from outside of their organizations, that fear should be used to counter complacency, that organizational power doesn't equal knowledge power, in other words the people in the corner offices are often the last to know about the changes implicating a company or organization. That senior managers tend to repeat strategies that worked earlier in their careers, Generals studying the last war, but to get through the Valley of Death you have to focus on what's the other side not what's behind you. That the key to transformation is the wholesale reallocation of resources away from the old model to what's next. You can't hold on to an old business model too long. Don't act too little too late and don't say one thing but do another.

Now I went to see Andy Grove and asked him what his advice would be for someone trying to simultaneously combat the decline of the labor movement and the concomitant elimination of the American middle class. He said, well first of all I'm not arrogant enough to think I can solve this problem, which coming from the Godfather of Silicon Valley was a little intimidating to hear. But he also said, you really need to focus on the outcomes you're seeking and treat everything else as secondary. Laws, business practices, strategies, organizations, leaders, think of all that as completely secondary to your outcomes and solve for your outcomes and think backwards, and then with a little mischief in his eye he said, I have a feeling that you're going to have to fund the projects that everyone else wants to bury.

[laughter]

So I thought about that, and I thought about this idea of strategic inflection points in companies. And of course not only did I think about Intel, which famously overcame a flood of cheap Japanese memory products in the early 1980s by pivoting and investing in their micro-processing business where to this day they remain the world leader, but also of Apple when Steve Jobs returned or of IBM under Louis Gerstner, all famous examples of a company undergoing and surviving a strategic inflection point by fundamentally betting the farm on the next model, not on the old one. And that of course made me think we too in the labor movement had been here before, and that the birth of industrial unionism, which started in the earliest moments of the 20th century but really accelerated sharply in the 1930s, was an example of a labor leader, John L. Lewis, and a group of colleagues, who understood the strategic inflection point undergoing craft unionism at that time, and betting the farm, 90 percent of their talent and resources and assets on a new model called industrial unionism, not yet proven to most skeptics, but which ended up creating a workers' movement in this country that involved tens of millions of people and lifted the American working class out of poverty for the first and only time. We now face our John L. Lewis moment in the American labor movement today. Are we going to try to keep going back to the new deal, keep trying to patch up old enterprise based bargaining laws, attempt to turn back the clock as if we could somehow repeal refrigeration, the transistor, the internet and globalization? Or are we going to learn the right lessons from our history and learn to find the right ideas and then fund the right ideas, in our quest for the next labor movement, not the resurrection of the old one?

Now, as I think about this, I live here in the northwest, I love it here, within, you know, you have the water a few blocks from here and you go out in the water and enjoy the summer. You can also go hiking in Old Grove Forest less than an hour away in one of two other directions. And there is a term in forest ecology called a nurse log. And that's when a tree falls, could be because of disease, could be because of lightning, could be because of wind, and it lays there decaying on the forest floor and it does so for years. And as it decays seedlings fall upon it, and the nurse logs provide protection and nourishment to the seedlings of the next forest as it grows up. And this is what I like to think of the role of today's institutional unions as being, is how do we provide sustenance and nourishment and support for the next labor movement, because we are not going to bring back the old one. Here in Seattle, you know, I think well all around the country, Occupy had this saying that I use and quote repeatedly in my book, "It wasn't always this way and it doesn't have to be this way." We didn't always have a shrinking middle class, we didn't always have declining wages, we did not always have record high income inequality and we did not always have a decaying and dying labor movement. Just because we do now does not mean it has to be that way. And here in Seattle I like to think that some of what we're doing is proving that point precisely. The 15 dollar campaign in SeaTac became the domino that fell, next knocked down 15 dollars in Seattle, the first major metropolitan area, major U.S. city to adopt 15. 15 dollars laws now cover 20 million Americans across the country as a result of a domino that fell right here in this media market less than three years ago.

And so when we think about the work that's happening now with the Fight for 15, the work in developing worker centers, the work in online reputation and review sites and the work we're doing at the Workers Lab to provide seed stage capital to new models of, again, power, scale, sustainability, the real DNA of the 20th century labor movement that Andy Grove got me thinking about a few years ago, I'm actually an optimist. And although my message is pretty ruthless and pretty direct, that the old models are dead and not coming back, it now falls to us, because the hour is so late, to be the experimenters and the rapid prototypers of the next labor movement. And I'd just like to close by saying, you know, I ask these questions to Governors all the time and to CEOs and to Senators like, who was in your seat a hundred years ago, who had your job? And, you know, rarely does a Governor or a U.S. Senator get that answer correct. And I like to just acknowledge that a hundred years, most of us, outside of our own descendants, people will not remember the names of any of us. Unless you're the first black President of the United States and your name is Barack Obama, or maybe Bill Gates or someone else who can put your name on a library or laboratory, the chances of being remembered in a hundred years are pretty low, but what we always remember are the key social movements that power us forward. We can name only two or three abolitionists but we remember abolition. We can name only two or three antisweat shop crusaders but we remember the crusade against sweat shops. Only two or three suffragists but we remember suffrage. Only two or three civil rights leaders but we remember the civil rights movement. Only two or three key labor leaders from the 30s but we remember that movement as well. What people will remember a hundred years from now isn't your name or my name, it's not going to be whether we bargained a great contract or organized workers one enterprise at a time, it's going to be whether, when the American dream was at its greatest level of risk, a handful of people had the courage to invent the next labor movement to do something about it. Thank you very much.

[applause]

>> And next Ai-Jen Poo from the National Domestic Workers Association.

>> What he said.

[laughter]

I actually just want to take a second to recognize Ruth Milkman for her leadership and for bringing us together.

[applause]

You're amazing, we love you, thank you for everything you do. So I am an organizer and I have been organizing with domestic workers since 1998, and wanted to share with you, in the context of everything that David just laid out, where we are as a movement and what we're doing, what we're up to, and all of it is, in fact, an experiment to try to get us towards the next iteration and generation of the labor movement we need to truly realize the hopes and dreams of working people in this country. We, in many ways, see ourselves as kind of an advance team, testing and experimenting and learning such that we can actually bring it back and inform the kind of risk taking that needs to happen in this period. And one of the reasons why we feel we're really well positioned to do that is when you think about who the work force is that I work with, that's domestic workers, and by domestic worker I mean the people who go to work every day in our homes, caring for the most precious elements of our lives, our kids, our aging loved ones, and our homes, the spaces that are nearest and dearest to us, and it's a work force that's growing rapidly, more than 90 percent women, disproportionately women of color and immigrant women, many undocumented. And despite the incredibly important work that this workforce does, it's some of the most vulnerable and undervalued work in our entire economy. Many of you know that there's been a long history of exclusion from basic labor protections and recognitions of this workforce that's rooted in a level of slavery in this country, on top of the fact that large concentrations of the workforce are undocumented, on top of the fact that the work itself, is associated with women's work, which is often not considered real work. There's lots and lots of forces and factors that create a condition of heightened levels of vulnerability and an average, or an annual median income of between 15,000 and 18,000 dollars per year depending on whether you do cleaning, childcare, or elder care. And it's in that context that we've been organizing for about 25 years, starting in big cities around the country, and in the last ten years or so the organizing has really expanded and spread to different cities. Today we are organizing in 38 cities around the country, we have 55 affiliate organizations, organizing domestic workers in all three sectors of our workforce, cleaning, caregiving, and childcare, elder care and childcare. And we've been able to have some significant policy breakthroughs, beginning with the passage of the Bill of Rights in New York, and most recently in the state of Illinois two weeks ago Governor Rauner just signed our seventh domestic worker Bill of Rights in the country.

[applause]

So there's been, there's certainly been real progress but it has been far, far, far from sufficient and what's necessary, and particularly in this moment, what we're seeing is that what used to be kind of a marginal shadow of our economy, as David really comprehensively laid out, the conditions that define domestic work, high levels of vulnerability, no job security, low wages, no access, or very limited access to benefits and career pathways, these conditions increasingly define more and more of our, of the American work force as a whole. So what used to be considered somewhat exotic is now increasingly the norm. And, what we're realizing is that the larger context for domestic work today is that this workforce actually sits at the intersection of some of the major crises that define our time. A crisis in our economy with inequality and the rapid expansion of low wage work, a crisis in our democracy where

more and more segments of our population are disenfranchised from actual participation, and money increasingly dominates the world of politics, and also a crisis in care, where the changing demographics are driving a huge increase in the need for elder care and childcare at the time and moment when our social safety net and systems are nonexistent, or actually the default system that we once had, which was that women would stay home and care for family members, actually no longer exists in the same way.

So a major crisis in care that we're at the center of and what we're feeling like is actually needed first and foremost is really what David just laid out, which is power. That if we are to change the reality for this workforce and actually do it in such a way that opens up more possibility for working people and the people at the bottom of our economy to shape the future, that we actually fundamentally need to be serious about power, in a totally new and 21st century way. And we have to figure out how to do it in a way that's sustainable and scalable, that allows us to shape the future of the care industry, which is our sector, which is transforming by every second, and I'll say more about that, with the increase of demand for care, but also there's an opportunity here to shape the future of our economy and democracy as so much change is afoot on both fronts. And so how are we doing that, what are the experiments we're attempting now? In the field of power, scale, and sustainability, we have traditionally operated through an affiliate model where we've supported local affiliate organizations that are organizing domestic workers at the local level, like Casa Latina here in Seattle, a great organization that is really on the front lines working with domestic workers every single day, really supporting them to be as powerful and sustainable and scalable as possible. Setting up membership systems, supporting organizational developments, thinking through dues structures, voluntary dues structures, really supporting those affiliate anchor organizations for our movement to be as strong as possible. And what we realized is that even if they were to max out the level of possibility in terms of the strength of those affiliate organizations, that they still wouldn't actually aggregate to the scale of being able to represent the millions of workers who are in this sector, particularly because they're concentrated in very progressive cities and localities. And that what we actually really need to do is figure out a model, a new organizational form that can bring in and engage with the millions of isolated domestic workers who are working in Tuscaloosa and Nebraska and all over the country, that are working in incredibly isolated conditions. And so what we've just launched is a new national voluntary member association where you can essentially sign up to join the Domestic Workers Alliance, pay dues and get plugged into the movement, also receive services and benefits, and looking at sort of layering on top of the kind of activist organizing that our affiliates do, a large scale, functional organizing model that's both like an AARP for domestic workers, as well as leveraging some of the network theory that has been developed over the last few years in certain circles, and looking at models in the, global models for organizing domestic workers, and we in fact learned a lot from the small circle-based models of Kenyan domestic workers that are now scaling and organizing in Kenya exponentially.

So we've just launched that membership program this month, and we're continuing to do the kind of transformative leadership development that invests in the leadership of workers as visionaries, strategists, and as symbols of the kinds of leaders we need to democratize this economy for the long term. And one of the programs that we have that is creating a kind of a bench or a pipeline of worker leadership for our movement is the Dorothy Boldin Fellowship that is allowing workers across different sectors of our work force to work full-time for the movement and learn aspects of the industry and the advocacy work that we're doing. I can say more about that. But all of this work is really anchored in trying to shape our sector, which is the care sector. The millennial generation is starting to turn 35 and having children, it's the largest generation in history and they're having families and that's driving the demand for childcare. And then the baby boom generation is starting to reach 65, actually 70 now, at a

rate of 10,000 people per day and people are living longer than ever before, driving up the demand for elder care. We think this is a huge moment to think boldly about the kind of 21st century care infrastructure we need to support the changing care needs of American families, in a way that elevates working families and supports their care and elevates the care workforce, which by 2030 will be the single largest occupation in our economy. These are the jobs of the future and we've got to make them good jobs, and we've got to get every single person in this country invested in these being care jobs. And so Caring, being good jobs. And so Caring Across Generations is our vehicle to try to build a mass popular movement that we call the caring majority, which is multigenerational and multiracial, to try to boost our investment in a care infrastructure, making these jobs good jobs, and also allowing for the kind of access to good care that families need for the 21st century, and there's workforce development programs that are embedded in that. So this is like the way that we're trying to align the right political constituencies and the right sense of a movement energy toward a broader vision of a future for this country that has, where the interests of both workers and consumers are really clearly reflected back.

At the same time we're trying to build a global movement through our International Domestic Workers Federation and there's a lot of traction around the country, around the world, as the global supply chain continues to unfold and more and more countries are dealing with the same kinds of generational and demographic challenges that we are, the demand for care continues to increase, and the migrant work force in particular that's moving around the world to meet the demand for care is increasingly vulnerable and increasingly important. And so looking for opportunities globally to organize the care sector in such a way that uplifts this work force is something that we're all starting to talk about around the world. And then we've decided we actually really need to understand how the care market is changing in a new way in order to intervene, and look for opportunities to build power, scale, and sustainability for this workforce. And so we have created an innovation lab called the Fair Care Lab where we've recruited design experts, entrepreneurs, and others who have different kinds of private sector experience, to help us both understand what's happening, how is technology in Silicon Valley transforming care, aggregating the workforce in new ways, allowing for this industry to reshape itself as the demand for care increases, and what are the intervention points for workers to organize, for there to be sustainable revenue strategies, and also for new partnerships that can create good jobs in this industry? So the innovation lab that we've created is our attempt at trying to divert some significant percentage of our resources toward those kinds of experiments with expertise in the private sector.

And one thing that we've really remembered as we're doing all this experimentation is that every kind of uptick in the organizing of workers has happened in the context of a vibrant social movement that wasn't about work. So the last big wave of domestic worker organizing happened in the late 60s and early 70s, when the National Union of Domestic Workers was formed under the leadership of a woman named Dorothy Boldin, and it was very much in the context of the civil rights movement that that organization formed and at its peak it was about 50,000 workers strong, dues-paying members. This generation of organizing really exists or emerged in the context of the immigrant rights movement in this country and so, to really look at how we are so deeply intersectional with these social movements that are, actually when you look at the Movement for Black Lives, really transforming the conversation about how we value life and work in this country, there's great opportunity within that to bring these issues and these solutions together in such a way that actually allows us to shape the future of democracy.

So we've been focused on also allocating good resources toward supporting, organizing in the black community among black workers, through our project called We Dream in Black, particularly in the south, and also strengthening the organizing of immigrant women, undocumented women in particular,

and all of that is feeding towards an election year intervention that we're making, talking to 500,000 low income women about their experiences in the economy, to shape a women's economic agenda and have a women's summit in September that launches that agenda and projects the power, and also energizes these segments of our economy to participate, to get to the polls in November but to organize far beyond that. So we're trying to experiment in different ways with energizing this base that we know needs to be energized and needs to be protagonist. And I think that goes to some of the lessons, I would agree with David, that we haven't yet created the movement that we need, and there's incredibly important experiments going on that are starting to teach us what we need to learn in order to build the kind of power we need for the future, and I think that we have to, it's not only about letting a thousand flowers bloom, but it is about taking the best of what we know and leaving the rest, and there is a process we have to go through to let go of the past and really embrace the future, and so much change is happening in our industry in care alone but really across the economy, that I think if we don't get really sharp about how we're looking at the future and really try to focus on the future, we're actually going to be way, way, way behind. Way further behind than we already are. And so I think things like looking at new centers of power and influence, it used to be Wall Street and Washington, D.C. as major centers of power and influence, and today Silicon Valley and Hollywood are equally as important centers of power and influence. Do we as a movement have strategies? Do we know how to contend in those arenas? Do we have the right partnerships to be able to leverage and build power? All of these questions are questions that I think we need to be asking ourselves if we're to get where we want to go.

But I, like David, am incredibly hopeful, and part of the reason why I'm hopeful is because of the people I'm sharing this stage with here, and because of all of you, and just to say that we actually need the kind of academic scholarship that helps us look ahead to the future, helps us understand what's really happening in the economy, what's to come, so that we can find our points of leverage and build our power collectively out of that space of really good expertise and knowledge so, we really hope to have your partnership in that, and know that we can't do it alone as workers. So thank you.

[applause]

>> And now we'll hear from Stephen Lerner.

>> So I'm setting my clock because I know time is, my little timer, 'cause time is short here. So, I don't have a PowerPoint and I don't know how to turn on my clock and I didn't, I had prepared remarks but much of what I was going to say has been said, so I'm going to jump around a little bit here but let me just, the basic points I want to make, let me summarize them because I'm going to do it quickly, is, one, that something else is cooking in addition to what everybody talked about here which is that, what some people call the financialization of the economy. And it's a system based on extraction of wealth sucking to the top so I want to come back to that. I'm going to talk a little bit about what everybody talked about which is how we follow the money, who really has power. I want to talk about this idea called bargaining for a common good, which is where we change bargaining from just being about workers to being about workers and community bargaining with those who have power about a whole array of things which has been talked about. I'm not going to talk a lot about this but I want to just stress this argument that everything that works for workers is either illegal or will be made illegal, is incredibly important, because it means we have a movement that is willing to break the law as a fundamental starting point. And then I want to talk about how we exercise greater control of capital, so I'm going to all do that in about ten or 15 minutes. That sound all right to you?

So let me first ask this group a question to make this participatory because I see some people sneaking out and that's not allowed. So pretend this is an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting and I know none of you have been to that but you have to be honest. And, so I'd like to see a raising of hands of who,, based on life is optimistic that the labor movement in five years will be bigger, stronger, more powerful than it is today? Who, put your hand up if you believe that. Okay, we have some hopeful folks, good. And who's pessimistic, who thinks the downward spiral that's been described is going to continue? Okay. Who is optimistic about social movements that are growing and being birthed, that those are really going to help lead to transformative change? And who is sort of pessimistic democracy is dead, the world is coming to an end, we all ought to go live in a cave somewhere and try to survive? There's moments where I feel like that, I wrote a piece a couple years ago called Love, Hope and Strategy in the Time of the Zombie Apocalypse, and it was really, what I declared at the end of the thing was I have no skills that are useful besides writing propaganda, so I couldn't, you know, become a survivalist because nobody would want me 'cause you don't need the survivalist stuff but anyway, I digress.

So let me just start with the point I'm going to try to synthesize, that everybody said, is I am profoundly hopeful about what's possible, and I think we live at this very funny moment where the fragility of boom and bust capitalism offering an incredible opportunity and, you know, Ruth talked about it in her remarks, it's been a theme of the conference, that something's cooking out there that we don't quite understand or control but it's going to create something, create incredible opportunities. And on top of that, that we have to think counterintuitively, that our instinct in a time of weakness is to do what? It's to demand less. It's to narrow our vision. And that we have to do the exact opposite. That a good friend of mine always says we never get what we want but if we don't ask for a lot we know we won't get a lot. And so I think as a starting point that this is a moment where a big, bold, grand vision of what we're trying to do is critically important. Or otherwise, it's not worth having this battle if we just, as some people say, try to create the past or try to move to a future that isn't worth moving to. And so, I want to talk a little bit about this idea of the other half that Ruth mentioned, about not, I want to talk not about income inequality, I want to talk about wealth inequality, that there's something else cooking here and that in the labor movement, really for most of our existence, we've talked about income not wealth, we've focused on how to raise the bottom but not how to stop concentration at the top. That we deal with our direct employers, which we beat to death here already, but we don't deal with the folks who really have power. And that we really don't engage or battle those who have broader control over what's happening in the country, and so it feels a little silly to come to a meeting and say that labor must take on capital, when the article came out a bunch of people said there's an original idea.

[laughter]

You know, it's sort of like, it's embarrassing to say that. I think people have written about that, as a matter of fact, people sent me all these notes saying did you ever read this? They didn't understand there was a little bit of sense of humor in this but anyway. But the point being that maybe sometimes, yes we need to innovate but there are certain basic truths. And the folks that have control of all the money and the capital of the country are running the show. And maybe the way I think about summarizing what's going on with that is we have two trends at once, which is we have concentration and monopolization at the top. Simple way to say it is fewer people own more stuff right? And then we have disaggregation at the bottom, which is what people have described, which is that workers rarely are paid by the entity that controls their life. But this is a wonderful thing for rich people, or as we call them the super-rich, because they have maximum control and then no responsibility for what they do. And I think it's really important to focus on that, that it's really a good deal. You control everything but then you're not responsible for what you do. And I'll give you an example, anybody ever hear of the guy

Ken Griffin? He's the head of Citadel Capital in Chicago. He made 1.7 billion dollars last year. That's one year. He's the biggest supporter of the right wing, he doesn't pay, he avoids taxes through the carried interest loophole etcetera, but what I love about him is he bought two paintings last year and they, a Jackson Pollack and another abstract artist I'd never heard of but that's just my, you know, ignorance. But he paid 500 million dollars for these two paintings. And when I think about that what's amazing, it may be coincidental, that's the school budget deficit in Chicago, is 500 million dollars. And so what I keep thinking about is, there is not a shortage of wealth, it's a matter of who has it, and the question of how we get that money from him to where it needs is at the core of, where it needs to be, is at the core of what we need to do. There was a great action in Chicago that the Grassroots Collaborative, the teachers did, they had kids finger paint, and then they marched on his office saying that they had abstract art and wanted him to buy it for 500 million dollars. So I'd also add in all of this we need to have a sense of humor.

But what I want to just talk about a second is the system of extraction. Extraction, which is financialization which is a terrible word, because a lot of times we act like these are forces that just sort of naturally happened versus are designed, and sort of a quick summary would be, is the super-rich got rich by pushing wages down right? But they weren't content with that. After they pushed wages down they said, I have a payday loan, I have a subprime mortgage, I have this financial scheme where I can make money off of your debt, meaning they created their own market. They impoverished people and then they say have I got a deal for you, I'll give you a 30 percent or a 300 percent loan. So part one is that workers of both profit centers because you lower their wages and then you make money off of loaning them money. And in fact they've done the same thing to government, which is they defund government through tax. Oh there goes a crew they're leaving, okay I'm doing the best I can guys, I'll speed it up. They defund government, and then they say to the government, we'll loan you money in these extraordinary, extractive schemes, so people know about the Puerto Rican debt crisis? We just did, my colleague Saqib Bhatti, just did a report that said they borrowed four billion dollars and the interest is 30 billion. That the majority of Puerto Rico's deficit is actually interest not principle. So meaning you bankrupt government, and then you turn around and you say ah-ha, have I got a deal for you, and you make more money that way and then, the next system is after you've destroyed the government, you say well government doesn't work so what do we need to do? We need to privatize it. And so that, but the point I want to make is there's a group of people, they're real life human beings, that do this on purpose, I mean, this is their strategy and this is how they suck wages, how they suck wealth to the top.

And so what I want to just briefly do is talk about some campaigns that are taking this on, some of which have been mentioned already. But we have this campaign called Bargaining for Common Good and it's the idea that community groups and unions, going back to what some folks said, we don't care about permissive or mandatory, we use the bargaining table to have a political fight with the elites. Minneapolis, St. Paul teachers, they bargained that the school districts should not do business with any bank that forecloses during the school year, because what's worse for education outcomes than losing your home? Again, it redefined the movement by saying we're not just thinking narrowly about workers' wages, we're saying who has power and how are they destroying us? In L.A. there was a campaign called Fix L.A. where the whole campaign was built around the city pays more in fees to Wall Street than it does to fix its streets. And so the whole theme became money for our streets not Wall Street but the fascinating thing is they went from a concession environment, the key thing in addition to no concession is the city agreed to hire 5,000 new workers, mainly from disadvantaged communities. It's sort of extraordinary but it's because they redefined the fight, not about how do I protect my pension, but how do you change Los Angeles in a big way?

You know there was a really spectacular event the other day where, at the AFT Convention, they marched on US Bank, and basically said the school to prison pipeline is killing our, is killing people and they talked about, they laid the death of Philando Castille on the bank, because it was impoverishing people and leading to that. So I guess what I'm trying to describe in all this is how do we think bigger and grander about who the bad guys are, and then how do we engage them in a very different kind of way? And so part of that is this idea that Smiley talked about, is how do we follow the money? How do we figure out who's really on top and who's really controlling people? And that's both in the public and the private sector. You know one example, have people heard of a company called Blackstone, biggest private equity company? They are now the biggest, the largest owners of private homes in the country. They also own a big equity office building and they also own Hilton hotels. So imagine if instead of just approaching them on the workers side, we said we're going to organize Blackstone and not just demand that workers' wages are better, but we're also going to demand they have reasonable rents in the properties that they control. How do we redefine the union and collective bargaining by what we do, not just what we say? And, sorry I'm jumping around here, I have x's all over my remarks where somebody said it already so I'm jumping over the x's here late in the day. Give me one second here. And the other part I just want to stress on financialization is the idea behind financialization is that the finance sector, which is now 30 to 50 percent of corporate profits, demands endless higher returns to shareholders. No matter, and the only way they can do that is by driving down wages, avoiding taxes, and destroying the globe in terms of climate change, so that we have a basic problem about what is going on with capital, and what we think a lot about is this is like an abstraction, how do we actually engage capital, what are some of the things we could do that would really make a difference in both democratizing capital and gaining greater control over them? So, has anybody heard of the Hedgeclipper campaign? Okay. So it's hedgeclippers.org, I feel like, I don't have a PowerPoint but I do have a website. And the Hedgeclipper campaign is based on a really simple idea, which is three trillion dollars of capital is now invested in hedge funds. They do nothing productive. They make their money on high fees, on high fees, avoiding taxes and extracting wealth. So we said instead of just talking generally let's look at who these guys are like Ken Griffin, like Dan Lobe, like Paul Singer, let's name their names and let's go after them, one to tell the story of what they're doing, but then also let's start costing them money, and we're running a campaign around the country to get pension funds to divest from hedge funds, it's based on a simple idea, it is assisted suicide for workers' capital to be invested in companies whose mission is to destroy unions and a decent standard of living. And something incredible has happened, which is I think we're up to 15 billion dollars in the last three months, that's been divested from hedge funds, including in New Jersey under Chris Christie just divested four billion dollars 'cause we have this sweet spot where people are mad at them, they're actually not making any money, and we're able to start cutting off capital. And then part of the argument is we actually don't need these guys, that if you invested, if you just invested in an index fund you'd make more money than if you invest in these characters, so part of what we're saying is not only let's not give the money to the bad guys, let's talk about just managing the money ourselves and getting better returns without letting them rip us off.

Another thing we're raising is this idea of collective bargaining for cities. New York, Chicago and L.A. jointly do 600 billion dollars a year of business with Wall Street. I think that's greater than the gross domestic product of Sweden. So we can either say we're just victims of the market and they can charge us whatever they want, or what would happen if cities said, actually, if you want our business, you have to lower interest rates, you have to get rid of predatory loans, you have to do these kinds of investment. So I guess part of what I'm raising is let's think about how we expand the notion of collective bargaining, it's not just for workers, it's for, it is how we deal with concentrated power. And so, again in the student

debt world, Smiley mentioned it, there is the beginnings of a student debt strike, but how do we say to students, you owe all this money. What's the number now, who remembers? It's over a trillion.

>> 1.4 now.

>> What? It's \$1.4 trillion but it's actually much, much higher because middleclass families fund the debt through second mortgages on their house and all that so it's much, much, I mean that is the official number but it's much bigger. But again, what would happen if students just refused to pay it and we talked about collective bargaining for students, we talked about collective bargaining for cities, we talk about going right after the people at the top. How am I doing on time, I'm almost done I think. And so, and in Puerto Rico, we're now we're organizing a global movement to actually challenge the actual debt saying most of it's actually illegal.

[applause]

Yes. It's actually pretty amazing if you want to really get, well let me go back to Puerto Rico a second. What's happening in Puerto Rico is not an accident either. I met with a guy, I'll say his name, you can Tweet it if you want to, there's a guy named Jim Milstien who used to work for Lazard, then the government and now he's the work expert for Puerto Rico, and I met with him three years ago and he described to me plan for Puerto Rico. I mean, and this isn't a conspiracy, this is what he said and why people say these things I have no idea. He said, Puerto Rico has to be forced to be competitive with the Dominican Republic, it is not really part of the U.S. economy. And he said, we're going to run up the debt, we're going to refuse to pay it, we'll force Congress to act, then we'll privatize most of the island, we'll cut the minimum wage, he had a whole long list, and guess what, all of that is happening. And I think what's really important about what is going on in Puerto Rico is this is actually capital's model of what they want to do in the United States, which is what they did in the developing world already, which is use structural adjustment not only to extract the wealth, but then on top of that, to eliminate democracy altogether, like in Flint and all these cities where you have emergency managers. So there's, I guess what I'm trying to get to is there's something much bigger cooking here than they don't pay us enough money, which is crucially important, I've spent my life on how to raise the wages of poor workers, that we have to go to the heart of where people have money and capital, and unless we can take that on, whether it's through state and municipal banks, whether it's through collective bargaining with them, whether it's getting control of our pension capital, whether it's closing all the various tax loopholes. I don't know if people know about the carried interest loophole where they pay less tax, it's 180 billion dollars over ten years they avoid. And so without going through it all I guess what I want to end with, is that we need to really think about how we regain some level of Democratic control as capital, to make all these other things people are talking about possible.

And I guess I'd wrap up, 'cause I know we are all running late, in saying that there's something extraordinary possible here. And I think all of the other speakers have spoken to it. But when the world's going through these kinds of gigantic changes, that's where things get much better or much worse. And we're not going to stay in the middle. We don't have an option on staying in the middle. Some of you who know your, there was a famous quote I think from, some of you may have heard of her, Rosa Luxemburg, who said the choice is socialism or barbarism. It's a little outdated but it feels like it's sort of coming back in the sense that I really think we face barbarism if we don't do, and I hope I don't get killed in a week but anyway, for those who don't know the history, she's, I'm adding a little humor as I wrap up 'cause I know everybody's hungry but, you know, she said the choice is socialism or barbarism and then she was killed so, anyway. But what I'm getting to here is that let's not focus just, the bad side is the motivation, but the good side is that I think if we dedicate ourselves to this, if we

think big and boldly, we're willing to break the law, we're willing to take incredible personal and institutional risks, that this is the moment that together we can do something extraordinary. This is a moment we can change this country and the world, this is a moment where we can do something to really rewrite how the economy works, and to do that, we need to think about who has wealth, who has capital, how do we take it away from them, how do we redistribute wealth and power, and how do we create the kind of world that we all want to live in and we want our kids to live in so, thanks a lot.

[applause]

>> Thank you. Unfortunately we're out of time so the promised Q&A is not going to happen but I think our speakers are able to hang around for a few minutes if you have individual questions for them and please, let's put your hands together and thank them all together one more time.

[applause]

And thank you all for being here.

[applause]