



Union Advantage

Published by the American Federation of Teachers Guild, Local 1931, AFL-CIO • Volume 20, Number 3 • MAY 2017

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A SPRING OF ACTIVISM



A SPRING OF ACTIVISM



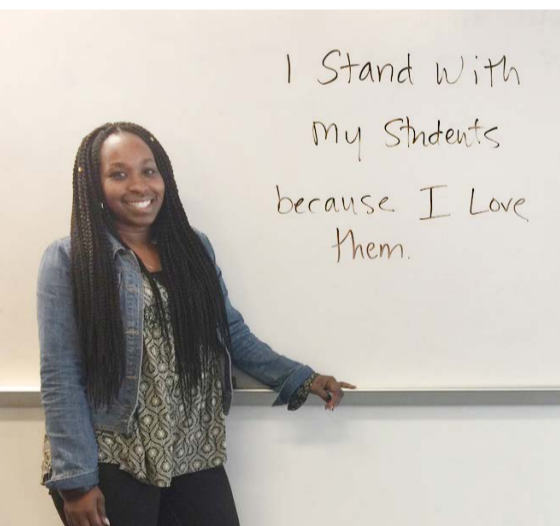
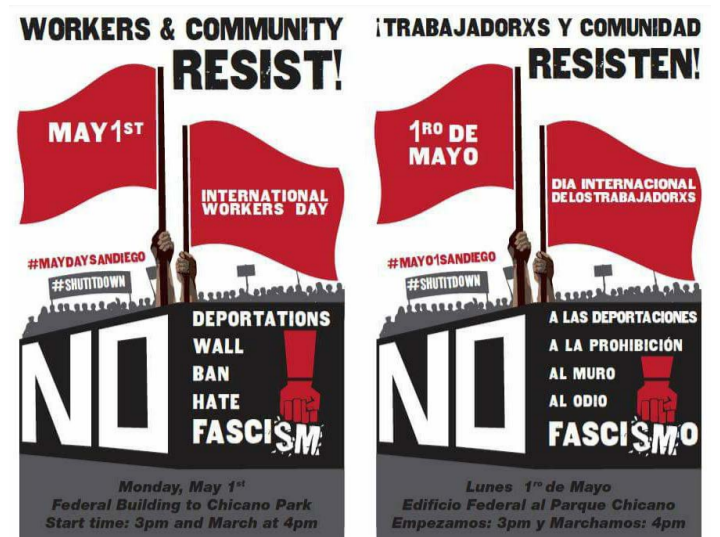
WHILE there has been plenty of bad news on the political front during the early Trump era, from horrible education policy to threats to our health care system, the environment, workers' rights and more, the one big positive has been the wave of activism and resistance it has inspired. And AFT members and the students we serve have been at the heart of much of the activism that has characterized this spring in San Diego.



Whether it be the big contingent of our members who participated in the March for Science, the students and educators who were part of the People's Climate March, or the 2,000 or so who took part in the May Day teach-ins on our campuses and the rallies in the community, AFT members have been very active.

In addition to these large events, folks have been engaged in writing letters to their representatives, attending town halls, standing up for our immigrant students with our DACA committee, lobbying for legislation in Sacramento, and mentoring a new generation of


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◀ AFT members at May Day and Peoples' Climate March.



student activists across our campuses with advocacy events, educational presentations, and more.

Some may have thought that the Women’s March in January was a one-hit wonder, but it has been followed up by small and large scale acts of resistance to the Trump agenda and the accompanying threats to our union, public education, and our democracy that come with it. The bottom line is that in these perilous days, it is heartening to see that many of us have come to understand that we need to be consistently involved and raise our voices like never before.

This is the silver lining at the heart of these dark times: the rebirth of a new solidarity based on a desire to protect what we most cherish about our profession and the communities we serve.

We need to maintain this energy, be in it for the long haul, and continue to embody the ethos of the old labor slogan that “An injury to one is an injury to all.” 

Top row: Speakers Gerry Vanderpot and Jim Miller (center) on May Day. Second row: AFT Guild join forces with the Environmental Caucus. Third row: The Stand With Students Project on Facebook ([@istandwithstudents](https://www.facebook.com/istandwithstudents)). Bottom: May Day speaker Jim Mahler, President, AFT Guild, Local 1931.

WHERE WE STAND:

MAKE MAY DAY A RECOGNIZED HOLIDAY

By Jim Mahler

President, AFT Guild, Local 1931



MAY 1st, or MAY DAY, is an internationally recognized holiday celebrating the labor of the working class throughout the world, except in the country where the event occurred that the holiday commemorates: the United States.

The origin of May Day dates back to the mid-1860's, to the struggle to win the eight hour day. Legislation was first enacted in Chicago

granting workers a limitation on the number of hours they could be forced to work in a day, and was scheduled to take effect on May 1, 1867. Workers celebrated that day to savor their victory, but their celebration was short lived. The next day, employers refused to accept this new rule, and in response a general strike was called which was then broken within a few days by the state militia.

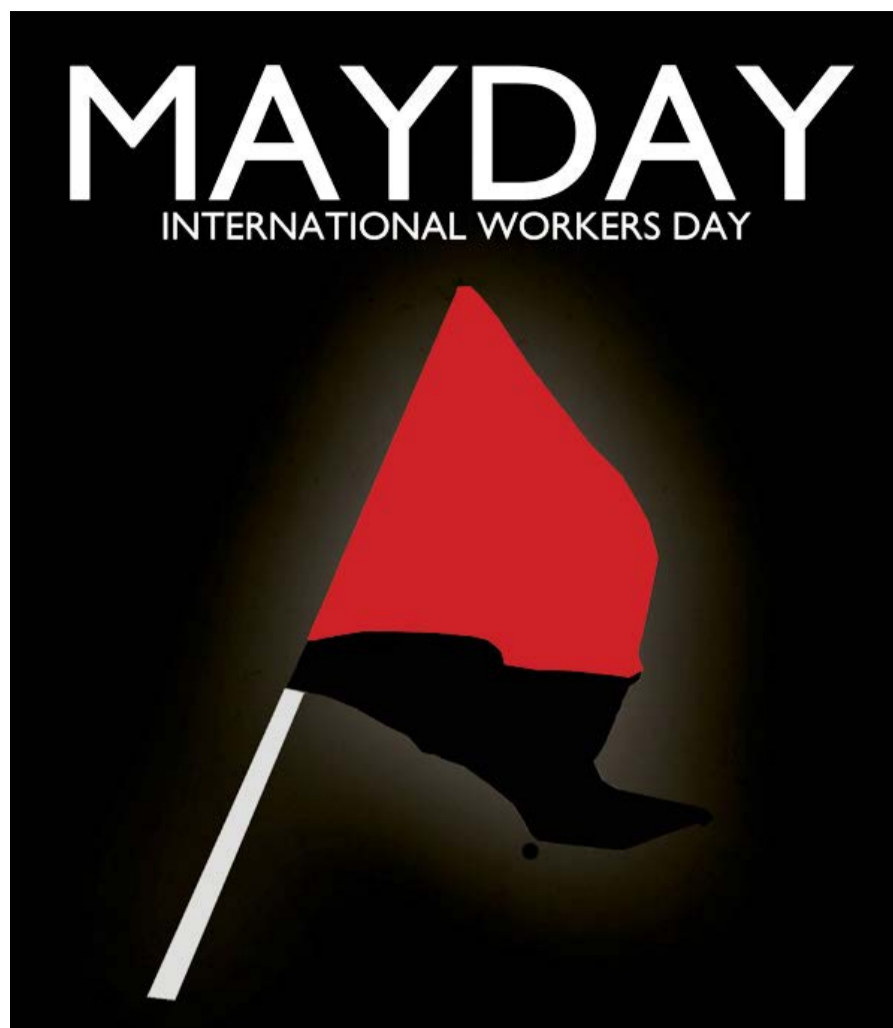
The memory of the significance of May 1st, however, lived on. In 1886, again in Chicago, workers called for a general strike on May 1st to force an acceptance of the eight-hour day. Two days later, police shot to death six strikers, and beat many others. The next day, in Haymarket Square in Chicago, a rally was called in protest of the police shootings. As the police moved in to disperse the peaceably assembled speakers and supporters, someone in the crowd threw a bomb at the police, and the police responded with force, with many deaths of both strikers and police occurring that day. As a result, the leaders of that rally were convicted and sentenced to hang, despite there being no evidence any of them had initiated the violence.

While it would not be until 1938 that workers in the United States were finally granted an eight-hour day, other countries soon began celebrating May 1st in memory of the Haymarket Square martyrs. Beginning in 1889, May 1st was identified as International Workers' Day, and since that time over 100 countries recognize it as a holiday celebrating workers, and workers' struggles.

In the United States, the significance of May 1st has always been downplayed by the government in the hopes that people would forget about the Haymarket Square martyrs, and the other countless struggles where workers gave their lives to achieve the working conditions and freedoms that we enjoy today.


Now that we find ourselves living in the dark shadow of #45 and company, it's imperative that we unite and find our collective voice as workers if we hope to survive the onslaught of anti-worker legislations that awaits us from #45 and his fellow oligarchs. The forces of the Right are aligned to attack unions and destroy our collective bargaining rights, dismantle the public sector, and undercut or end living wages, Social Security, Medicare, and a host of other working people's rights, while rolling back both environmental quality and occupational safety and health controls, as they seek to push us back to pre-New Deal conditions.

Most Americans have never learned about the incredible struggles workers undertook to win



basic labor rights and build the American middle class; nor do they have any idea what working conditions were like before the New Deal. Thus, the time has come for us to reclaim May 1st on behalf of the workers upon which it was founded, and to formally and forcefully recognize that this country has been made great by the labor of its workers.

At the last California Federation of Teachers Convention we passed a resolution that called on CFT to seek legislation in the upcoming legislative session to recognize International Workers' Day—May 1st—as an official state holiday dedicated to the civic remembrance of the heroism and sacrifice of American workers in pushing for economic and democratic political and social rights for all Americans.

As our recent May Day actions demonstrated, there is a lot of support from among our members and our students to celebrate May Day. We hope you will stand with us during the year to come to ensure we successfully begin the process of celebrating May Day nationwide with the same vigor and respect as workers in other countries already do throughout the world. 


My Experience as an Intern for AFT Local 1931



B EING an intern for the AFT Local 1931 was an incredible experience that has not only made me more passionate and aware of labor rights and social justice, it

has also made me a more politically engaged and conscious member of society as a whole. As a young student at Grossmont College, getting involved on campus is a struggle itself, and off campus I found myself working even harder to get a foot in the door professionally. The AFT welcomed me with open arms, helping me get more involved in my school and find leadership opportunities in the community.

Over this past semester, we learned about labor rights and the history of the labor movement through the Labor Law class at City College, and I saw the issues I studied in the classroom play out before my eyes in union meetings and weekly intern sessions. It gave me a taste of what it's like to be a professional organizer, and the opportunity to apply those skills first hand through political outreach events. Not only were we learning, we were making a difference—while getting paid! It felt like a dream come true.

This internship has given me valuable skills that I will apply as I continue my studies at the University of California, Berkeley this fall. Thank you AFT, especially my mentors Jim Miller and Gregg Robinson, for an amazing semester! 



Workers, Students and Adjuncts as Disposable People in the Trump Era

This is a transcript of the speech Christy Ball delivered at the 2017 May Day Teach-In at San Diego City College.

THESE PAST TWO WEEKS, my Introduction to Literature class has been studying *A Raisin in the Sun* written by Lorraine Hansberry in 1959. In it, Walter, the main protagonist of the play, explains to his mother the following. He says:

Talking 'bout life, Mama.... Mama, you know it's all divided up. Life is. Sure enough. Between the takers and the "taken." I've figured it out finally. Yeah. Some of us always getting "taken."

Six decades later, Walter's words still ring true.

I am a former Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) student here at City College and, as an adjunct professor over the last eight years, I have discovered that my story is not unique. So many students can relate to my struggles and many have endured far greater challenges than I have had to face due to systemic racism.

I come from a working-class family. My dad Charlie—who adopted me so I could have his last name—was in the Army until a training accident took the feeling out of his left leg. He then worked as a drafter until a non-violent felony conviction took away his employment options. Afterwards, he worked in construction until he got hurt on the job in an accident that took away his physical strength.

Now, my once playful pops lives with degenerative disc disease in his back, a hernia in his belly, and is wheelchair-dependent because of the loss of his legs. Like Walter discovers in Hansberry's play, my dad too found that capitalism was happy to take his labor. But now the Veterans' Administration does whatever it can to deny him full disability benefits with endless red tape.



Christy Ball

My mother—who raised me on her own for three years after my birth father returned to Iran—worked as a secretary until carpal tunnel and tendonitis took away her typing skills. For most of her life, my mother, like many of the women in my family, worked the second or third shift as a server and another job during the day until she too became too disabled to work any longer.

Both of my parents worked until they could work no more. And do you know what they have to show for all of their labor? Pain. Lots and lots of pain. In their backs, in their necks, in their hands, in their chests.

When I look back on my life, my parents were always working, two or three jobs, or looking for work, to support our family of five. That meant that I, as the eldest in the family, assumed more responsibilities in our home: taking care of my two younger sisters, making sure they got their homework done, walking them to school, doing the dishes and the laundry, fixing dinner...the list goes on and on.

And, yet, my family was always one job loss or illness or accident away from losing our housing. In fact, we spent many a day and night in shelters—including St. Vincent de Paul right here down the street—welfare offices, and food lines at the local church.

My parents were always working, but it was never enough to fully stabilize our lives. And is it any wonder? Nobody can support their family on a single salary in America. Right now, according to 2016 data from the National Low-Income Housing Coalition, to rent a modest 1-bedroom apartment in California at the current minimum wage, a person needs to work 89 hours a week. And to afford a two-bedroom apartment? You need to make at least \$28.90 an hour! How many jobs can working-people find that pay that? How many hours can we be expected to work just to get by?

Like many white Southerners, my parents were duped by the myths of meritocracy and bootstrap theory. They bought into the idea that if you worked hard enough, you could get out of poverty, you could move beyond living paycheck to paycheck, you could change your circumstances. And yet, here I am, a sure sign of success for all of their sacrifice—a working professional, the supposed outcome of the American Dream ideal. But the reality is that I am \$90,000 in debt for an education that is completely free in other countries.

As an adjunct instructor, I have zero job security. I have the same or more education as full-time faculty and as much experience in teaching, but I earn half of the pay. I can lose my healthcare insurance at any time because it is tied to the number of classes I am assigned—which as an adjunct, is never certain. I must scramble from campus to campus, spreading my time and self so thin that sometimes I forget which campus I am supposed to be on.

My folks listened to the promise of capitalism—that those who worked would find material success. But what we found was debt and a safety net traded to give the top 1% more of the pie. Under Trump, we have just swapped student loan [default protections](#) for higher

fees because the Trump administration cares more about protecting banks than protecting students from predatory lenders. My whole life capitalism has told workers that we are disposable people, threatening us at every turn. It told us that a [livable wage](#) was too much to ask for. It told us that we just needed to try harder.

In other words, it straight up lied to us.

As Trump's administration [fills with billionaires](#) with little to no political experience in their assigned office or policy area and his family members occupy positions they are not qualified for, there can be very little doubt that our leaders are driven by corporate interests and cronyism.

For a very long time, too many of our political leaders have been on short-term borrows from the corporate world. Now, with the election of Trump, they are not even trying to hide it. These so-called leaders go into office, make policies that favor their corporate friends; then they leave office and return to the private sector. They are not in office to serve the People.

For them, our aching bodies are just a means for more production. And when we need protections, when we need a livable wage to raise our families, when we need subsidized daycare so we can work, and when we ask for universal healthcare like every single other developed nation in the world, they have the nerve to label us as LAZY. They say we want HANDOUTS. That we feel “ENTITLED” to something that does not belong to us. That we must be “SOCIALISTS.”

But guess what, friends? At the end of the day, that is OUR money. That is OUR labor that makes the company function. Our fingers that type the memos. Our backs that break making the beds in the hotels. Our innovative ideas that grow the business. That is OUR money that buys the products that benefit stakeholders. And I am sick and tired of billionaires born into wealth calling the hardworking people who make this country actually function LAZY. We have been working from the start. OUR labor starts in the home and continues until we can work no longer. Our labor produces the money you hoard when you don't pay your fair share of taxes.

When green rules everything around you, it is no wonder that the land of the free is really the land that incarcerates the most people. It is no wonder that the finest city in America is really home to the 4th largest homeless population. It is no wonder that 1/3 of

community college students in this state—the world’s sixth largest economy— “face uncertain housing and homelessness while 12% aren’t sure where they will get their next meal.” And it is no wonder that when we delve deeper into that data, that we find black and southeast Asian students face food and housing challenges at a higher rate. It is no wonder that adjunct faculty make up 83% of departments of community colleges on a national scale and yet must work at two, three, four campuses to earn the same compensation as their full-time colleagues.

It is no wonder because the bait and switch promise of capitalism has led us to a place of hypocrisy and contradiction.

We have been led to a place where we don’t take care of our students, the poor, the hungry, or any of our most vulnerable populations. We have been led to a place where we don’t care about the environment, a place where congressional leaders and oligarchs in the highest offices are completely out of touch with everyday people and want to cut programs like Meals on Wheels and after school lunch programs because “there is no evidence” that these programs work. They need “evidence” because they know nothing about our lives because they’ve never needed these programs.

In today’s America, billionaires like Betsy DeVos who have zero public school or political experience can buy their way into positions of power that have a direct impact on our lives. We are living in a white supremacist capitalist patriarchy where a racist misogynist who can’t even spell “precedent” can become president.

We are living in the time of inversions and reversals and this is why our unity and vigilance matter more than ever.

In Trump’s America, his nominee for Secretary of Education didn’t know at her confirmation hearing that the Individual with Disabilities Education Act is a federal law that must be enforced in all 50 states. Instead she wanted to leave it to the states to decide how to enforce it.


As the aunt of a beautiful non-verbal boy with blindness and autism, and two nephews with ADHD who depend on IEPs and specialists, I can tell you this ignorance terrifies me. And worse, when given a chance to clarify her statement, DeVos completely ignored



May Day Teach-In Speakers and Doc Rivera’s band

the majority of students with disabilities who attend public institutions but instead focused on programs that promote the privatization of education, further showing that working-class families with children with disabilities just don’t matter in her vision for privatized education in this country.

In Trump’s America, we have seen the uptick of white supremacy and racism in every corner of society. From craft-making Michaels to hipster Starbucks to high school sporting events, racists have become emboldened, terrorizing people of color, chanting obscenities, verbally assaulting and taunting people based on their perceived race. Just last week, a judge ruled that a mostly white suburb in Birmingham, Alabama could secede from a school district despite a clear racial motive in order to keep their schools white. In this movement for “local control of schools” segregation has re-emerged masked as parental concern. One can’t help but see the similarity between their push for local control and the restrictive covenants Lorraine Hansberry writes about in her play, agreements signed by “concerned” whites in the North to keep black people out of white neighborhoods after the Great Migration.

In Trump’s America, wait—you know what? No way—this is NOT Trump’s America! He may be the avatar of capitalism and white privilege. But WE the People, are made ONE by our commitment to intersectional justice. WE the Union—the mighty, mighty Union—are the lifeblood, the heartbeat, and the voices of true greatness in America, and together we will defy hate politics, defend rights, demand justice, and co-create the world we believe in. 

On Solidarity:

May Day Address to Mesa College

TODAY I'VE BEEN ASKED TO SPEAK to you about solidarity. For those who don't know the meaning of the term, it refers to the support within a group, carrying with it the basic premise of "we're all in this together." It is perhaps the most quintessentially American of ideas, as reflected in the first national motto adopted by the 13 colonies in 1782, "e pluribus unum"—the one out of many.

In our nation's history, it has been solidarity that has helped us prosper, and by contrast, it is either when we have lost that notion of solidarity, or have chosen not to extend it to others out of fear, prejudice, or a general lack of empathy, that we have created our greatest conflicts, sufferings, cruelties—from slavery and sexism, to racism and exploitation.

We have only risen above these self-made obstacles through the embrace of empathy. Thus if we, as a society of many, aspire to be prosperous, not simply in economic terms but in terms of community and general well-being, we must continue to do so empathetically, for this is what can make America great.

But to speak of solidarity in such general and abstract terms is too easy. True enough, it is easy among friends and those with whom we readily and easily identify that solidarity is found. But the fact of the matter is that in a nation of many which, at its best, necessarily allows for and cultivates diversity, it becomes all too easy in hard times to find differences rather than seek commonalities, to harbor resentments rather than seek opportunities, and embrace fear and anxiety over camaraderie.

Today I'm going to take you on a trip and you might be surprised where it starts, but I hope you'll be happy where it ends. Two years ago, when my mother passed, I returned to her home of Deer Lodge, Montana, a town of perhaps 2,000 people which has quite frankly seen better days. Over half a century ago, the community

was thriving, in part due to the Butte Mine once known as the "Richest Hill on Earth." This, along with a local strong farming and ranching industry made up of independent farmers, and a timber industry further West, meant strong revenues. The Deer Lodge area was itself the home of Montana's institutions, from its state mental and alcoholism hospitals, to the state prison itself. It was at the state alcoholism hospital that my mother found sobriety, which ultimately saved her life, free of charge. Five years later she returned to the hospital as a counselor and brought thousands to sobriety, saving their lives, and their families. Along with the miners, all of these workers, my mother included, had good union jobs, and were paid living wages with benefits. Deer Lodge itself, while a small town, boasted many restaurants, several dry goods stores, furniture stores, auto dealerships, etc.

Now, the auto dealership and most of the restaurants are gone, what clothing stores there are now are thrift shops. As younger people have left the area, Deer Lodge's main street is blessed with several struggling antique shops whose stock is from the estate states of the older folks who've passed on. Those who've stayed on are a hardy people of sorts, committed to a community that grew and nurtured them in better times. As I was there, clearing my mother's estate, I actually got asked, by one of the antique store owners if I had thought of staying on. I didn't, but even if I had, the opportunities are not there.

In the early 1980's Butte's mines played out, so some degree of economic collapse was inevitable, but this didn't explain away cuts by the Reagan administration to federal farm programs which put out one out of six farmers in Montana out of business, most of them independents, while larger corporate entities moved in. It also didn't explain why, in spite of increased revenues from coal and oil extraction, that monies for Montana's

institutions were cut, leading to the closure of both the state mental and alcoholism hospitals, with patients deferred to underfunded community outpatient programs, or to private vendors where patients would now increasingly be forced to pay out of pocket. It also doesn't explain how, when Montana built a new prison again in Deer Lodge and even took in prisoners from out of state, that its prison guards, who risk their lives daily, would be paid the lowest wage of any prison guards in the US—a wage which barely sustains even a single guard, let alone one with a family.

Clearly, at the level the federal and state government, there has been this loss of empathy, but where did that come from?

Now this may surprise you, but part of it came from us.

Consider that over the last 30 years, while much of rural and industrial America's economy foundered, the economies of the coasts prospered. Consider, that

as we grew more sensitive to the cultural differences around us, we allowed if not encouraged the media, to characterize the people in these declining communities as anachronistic at best, or racist Neanderthals at worst, and simply chose to see their communities' demise as inevitable. By contrast, they were fed a media-driven image of us as decadent, self-indulgent, permissive, sanctimonious, and ultimately alien to their existence.

Consider a Montana Prison guard I talked to, who spoke to me of her day-to-day economic struggles. In spite of her struggles, and her clear sense that she was being exploited, her main anger was directed at the ACLU for defending the right of a Satan worshipper to have a cross removed from the prison chapel. The issues of faith and religious freedom aside, to me, it seemed clear that what had happened is that in the midst of all this suffering, the issue with the cross was a kind of final indignity, and one far easier to respond to than the evil really facing her. To fight for better wages in a



struggling community against the mighty and abstract power of the state was something that seemed a bridge too far. Couple this with a media in which she exists only as caricature--if at all--and you'll know why she, as did the majority of rural working class Montanans, voted for a man who promised a wall.

I tell you this because, whatever you may think, if you want a society that embraces solidarity, it's not about what you make others do--it's what you do yourself. You need to find the solidarity with those who you do not see and do not hear before you can expect them to find solidarity with you.

Now you're not in Montana, you're in San Diego, and so perhaps before you take that trip, you might want to start with embracing solidarity at home. Look around you and think of your community.

As a teacher, this is what I need to consider: The student who works two or three jobs, sometimes the night before class, often at companies that could afford to pay him or her better. I need to think about the mother in my class whose son, having Asperger's syndrome, has had an episode at school which means she suddenly needs to leave. I need to also think about the student who has left Mexico, having lost his/her father to a drug war fueled by the American demand. And when I see how they struggle, I think of how these students, as workers, need better wages, and as parents, how they need more special ed. programs, and how as immigrants coming from dangers I cannot imagine, need understanding. What success can I have as a teacher if I, not having enough appreciation of their struggles with an assignment, call them out for being lazy, undisciplined, or unfocused? How dare I.

As students, you should consider the people I've mentioned are your classmates, or that some of what I've discussed applies to you. You should also consider that perhaps that custodian, lab tech, or librarian you encounter are often being asked to take on greater work duties as other employees leave and their positions are not filled. It may explain the unclean corner, the sometimes terseness even when they try to do their best, and not without economic struggles of their own. You should also consider that your teacher is more than likely an adjunct, and in many cases, they rush from job to job on pay so low that nationwide one in four are on some kind of government assistance. They might not be so quick with papers, so available for conferences,




LABOUR'S MAY DAY
DEDICATED TO THE WORKERS OF THE WORLD

but they endeavor to do their best, and hope that when their children go to community college, as my son will next year, they won't become overwhelmed with balancing work and school.

As community members, we should all consider that the struggles we face are not overcome by the embrace of policies which serve only to enrich those who already have great wealth at the expense of all workers, or the cutting of programs that help children learn and parents to gain the skills necessary to support them, or the targeting and exclusion of people based on fear. To embrace such policies is to accept that the common state of society is to be one of alienation and anxiety.

The better way is to see the common interest in a life not driven by desperation and resentment, but by security and opportunity. It is harkening to a solidarity that has been in the past, can become a solidarity of the present, and remain a solidarity forever.

Start now, start now, rise up and change the equation. 

The Science March

Why the Physical and Biological Sciences Departments Were There

WHEN ASKED about why the science department attended the Science March, well, it seemed rather obvious. We're scientists. And, we have Dr. Lorenza Levy, Astrophysicist, and adviser to the City College campus branch of SACNAS (Advancing Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science), who organized us to all join in the Science March. She handed out flyers, put up signs, and emailed us relentlessly. She didn't need to—we were on board from the start. Why?

Philosophers seek truth. Scientists, through observation, experimentation, and analysis, seek reproducible results. Through the process of peer review, scientists winnow out the results until only the facts remain.

What do we want? Science.

When do we want it? After Peer Review.

That pretty much says it all. We don't want to rush to judgement until all the data are in. We take time to parse through stacks of information, until a statistical pattern is observed, and then we redo the experiment to make sure that this was not an outlier, or an error somewhere in the original experiment: reproducible results. It's this amazing walk into discovery, honesty, and bravery that we, as Scientists, are looking for the simple facts, no matter where that leads us. Evidence first and foremost.


Throughout the history of America, leaders have sought the counsel of, and obtained evidence from, scientists. We have, as a nation, advanced humanity through this process with each successive generation. Yet, the current administration denies our counsel on everything from vaccinations to climate change.

The trend toward denial of expertise is dangerous, still this administration continues to base decisions on internet and television news, and creates "alternative facts" which are merely opinion and not fact.



The removal of funding in the proposed budget for climate change research and education and from NASA is a continuation of this dangerous trend that the faculty in the sciences could no longer abide without response.

Our response has been to organize, resist, participate in the protest marches for science and climate change, and to write and call our congressional representatives. As scientists, as educators, we stand in unity against this anti-science, anti-expertise trend that is so prevalent in America.

We will continue to resist as environmental protections are removed, parklands are threatened, species decline ignored, climate change denied and evolution pulled from public school curriculum. Falsehood and lies must not be left unchallenged. For these things, the faculty marched and will continue to protest, call our representatives, and write emails/tweets/posts to make sure that it is well known that we are Scientists and we stand for Facts and Evidence. 

Race & the Labor Movement

Coming to Terms With the Meaning of Past Struggles for the Present

EXPLAINING THE EVOLUTION of the labor movement in the United States requires an examination of the ways that race and ethnic consciousness have been woven into the history of American society and have shaped the history of unions. While the language of inclusiveness and democracy is explicit in the charter documents and authorized records of twenty-first century unions and of the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), such has not always been the case, as this short article will illustrate. This leads to the question of what changes within and from outside the union movement proper effectively led to the eventual diversification of the membership base and even leadership of today's unions. Still, readers may wonder what, beyond some general academic concern about labor history, occasions inclusion of this article in the AFT Guild's Union Advantage? Why does this history matter?

In the larger political arena, at this time of great instability midway through the second decade of the 21st century, most leaders of both dominant national political parties have shown ambivalence, if not outright hostility, to public and private-sector labor unions, pushing organized labor further into a defensive mode. Meanwhile, 1960s Civil Rights-era federal protections of voting rights exercised by African Americans have ended and voter suppression tactics seem to be reducing voter turnout selectively to the disadvantage of union voters. President Donald Trump and his congressional allies regularly voice anti-immigrant political rhetoric, while championing immigration restriction and the erection of a border wall between the United States and Mexico, estimated to cost at least \$2 billion. Such views resonate favorably with the president's supporters. So, by highlighting ways in which race and class have intersected in the history of organized labor throughout

American history, I seek to shed light on how we position ourselves to address some of the challenges in promoting an inclusive union movement in our time.

The history of the nation has been steeped in race consciousness. From the time a loosely configured group of English colonies along the Atlantic coast of North America was established, race-based hierarchy shaped work and workplace dynamics. A mere 11 years after the settlement of Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619, African Americans arrived in chains and were sold into labor. By 1641, the Massachusetts colonial legislature enacted the first law of slavery among the English colonies. Virginia's colonial assemblymen followed suit, beginning in 1661, defining dark-skinned people as slaves and slaves are dark-skinned people. By the 1680s, similar laws were promulgated in every English colony in North America. From this point through the Civil War, free colonists and, later, European Americans generally viewed people of African heritage as being of a race of slaves. In contrast, based on their phenotypical attributes, people of European heritage—even those who were servants, but with prospects of freedom—had higher status. This ideology of white racial supremacy persisted, despite the end of slavery and ratification of the 14th and 15th Amendments to the US Constitution which affirmed the citizenry of African Americans and proscribed racial bars to voting by the freed slave men.

Meanwhile, in the new republic, white males who worked in craft production began, during the late 18th century and on into the early 19th century, to form local journeymen's associations in the respective crafts so as to challenge the control of the masters who had dominated the craft guild system that carried over from England. From these journeymen's societies emerged early craft unions in such trades as printing, shoe making, blacksmithing, carpentry, iron molding and puddling, and eventually railroading. Notably,

in these lines of work, the qualities of whiteness (presumably identified as physiological, mental, and moral attributes), masculinity, and craft pride were central to the identity of the tradesmen. The categorical exclusion of African Americans (as well as all women), followed since any prospective intrusion by these outsiders would have threatened the dignity of the skilled craftsmen. Across the North, following national independence and the gradual emancipation of slaves in the region, racial segregation filled the vacuum.

In this new order, African Americans generally found only unskilled laboring positions and domestic service employment. From these early beginnings, national craft unions formed by white male skilled workers emerged. In a political and judicial climate which favored the interests of propertied employers, the nascent national craft unions struggled just to build and hold membership, while their affiliated locals tried to win concessions from management on wages, hours, and working conditions. All the while, employers used every legal device and their considerable economic advantages to contain and even to crush the unions. The boom-bust economic cycles of the 19th century also took a toll on the craft unions.

Following the Civil War and the economic devastation of the first national industrial-era depression in the 1870s, and in the afterglow of the nationwide Great Railroad Strike of 1877, many workers became inspired by the prospect of joining a new union, the Knights of Labor, launched in 1879. This union, however, was distinctive in its organizational form. In contrast with craft unions organized by tradesmen in specific industries who had particular skills, the Knights organized horizontally, forming an industrial union which incorporated workers of all trades in trades assemblies, as well as unskilled workers who formed mixed assemblies. As a union, the Knights was distinctive in organizing women and blacks, though these members were included in separate mixed assemblies. The Knights embraced radical goals of the eight-hour day, abolition of child labor, equal pay for equal work, and the graduated income tax. The ultimate vehicle for the transformation of the emerging industrial capitalist order was to be the establishment of a cooperative commonwealth.

Even with this broad vision of reform, however, the Knights did not organize Chinese laborers, who had come, in the 1850s, with labor contractors, to work in California's gold fields. Eventually they and other Chinese laborers who had followed

hired on for railroad construction and agricultural labor. For the Knights, the issue was simply that of opposing exploitative contract labor; hence, the organization supported the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. Accordingly, the Knights did not challenge the hysterical Yellow Peril arguments which animated discourse in the halls of government and which were highlighted in general circulation newspapers. Indeed, of American labor unions of the era, only the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), another industrial union formed in 1905, would take the bold steps both of opposing racially inspired Asian exclusion legislation and of organizing Chinese and Japanese workers in the West into the One Big Union, a position consistent with its internationalism and class consciousness. From the IWW perspective, "an injury to one is an injury to all."

By championing the idea of the eight-hour day to be secured through a nationwide general strike, on 1 May 1886, Samuel Gompers and the American Federation of Labor (AFL) seized a bold initiative, in the process eclipsing the Knights of Labor, which as a union, had been losing momentum due to both internal and external factors. Whereas the Knights had been an industrial union, the AFL was a federation of national craft unions. In its very nature, therefore, the AFL represented only tradesmen. Across the South, a minority of slaves had mastered specific crafts necessary for the operation of plantations where they had been forced to work. After emancipation, though, they generally were precluded from using those skills in the labor force by policies of exclusionary craft unions. Since craft unions controlled apprenticeships, southern union locals also effectively blocked younger African Americans born after the Civil War from learning trades. Across the South, skilled work in industry was the preserve of white craftsmen. Many craft unions, during the 1890s, in fact, adopted racially exclusionary provisions in their constitutions, and included explicit color bars in their initiation processes.

In hindsight, since these practices violated the AFL constitution that barred discrimination on the basis of race, such explicit barriers were removed, during the early 20th century, only to be replaced by informal and unwritten exclusionary procedures which AFL President Samuel Gompers ignored so as not to offend the national unions and to secure their allegiance to the federation. Meanwhile, in the 1890s and afterward, the AFL picked up where the Knights had left off, lobbying hard for passage of the Geary Act (1892) that extended

the Chinese Exclusion Act, and then promoting a ban on Japanese immigrant labor and the eventual passage of the Oriental Exclusion Act of 1924.

In practice, only a few national unions—most notably the United Mineworkers—accepted black members. Adopting still a different approach, the American Federation of Teachers, founded in Chicago during 1916, authorized the establishment of separate locals of African American teachers assigned to racially segregated schools in areas where white teachers would not tolerate racial mixing. By the mid-1930s, with the support of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the AFT reversed direction, integrating all locals and pressuring for equal facilities for students in the racially segregated schools.


Facing such institutional barriers, some African Americans formed their own unions. Washer women in Atlanta organized in 1879 and conducted a strike for better pay and working conditions, in 1881. Seeking employment outside of manual labor in agriculture and domestic service, some African American men found employment as porters on Pullman cars. To improve the wages and working conditions and to raise the dignity of these porters, A. Philip Randolph and associates launched the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, in 1925. This union was composed exclusively of African American Pullman Car porters through 1968, when it ceased existence.

In the West, beginning in 1903, farmworkers of Mexican heritage formed short-lived ethnically-based unions and conducted strikes against agribusiness owners. Over the next decades through the 1930s, these farm workers, toiling in what journalist Carey McWilliams called “factories in the fields,” broadened their efforts, forging coalitions with Japanese and Filipino field workers and packing house employees to win higher wages and some improvements in working conditions. Some of these strike actions engaged both Chicano and Chicana farmworkers. In the expanded scope of their activities, the farm workers occasionally affiliated with the AFL, or eventually with the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), a confederation of industrial unions. The transitory nature of such seasonal employment and the unrelenting opposition of growers, who routinely used the threats of deportation to hinder farmworker organization, limited the prospect of sustainable gains, even in the face of some notable victories in various strikes, over the decades.

These portrayals of racially segregated unions are at odds with the ethnically diverse composition of labor union membership and even leadership ranks in the early 21st century. What were the catalysts of change? Several factors were essential, principal among them being the rise of the CIO, which had emerged within the AFL only to be purged in 1936. The industrial form of organization brought all workers—regardless of race and gender—in a production unit under one union. Membership in the CIO surged just as the National Labor Relations Act affirmed, for the first time, the federal government’s guarantee of the rights of employees to organize unions and engage in collective bargaining. (Subsequently, in 1955, the CIO and the AFL reunited as the AFL-CIO.)

Also of high impact was President Franklin Roosevelt’s issuance of Executive Order 8802, in 1941, banning racial discrimination in the national defense industry, just on as the US entered into World War II. The creation of the Fair Employment Practices Committee, under this order, also promoted equal employment opportunity nationwide, a vision for which A. Philip Randolph had pushed without ceasing.

The aspirations for democratization of American society which informed many aspects of the subsequent Civil Rights and cultural protest movements of the 1950s and 1960s, and on into the early 21st century, also have challenged structural inequalities and promoted a vision of a more equitable society. These ideals have informed the labor movement in recent decades, including the Justice for Janitors organizing drive of the Service Employees International Union, the Fight for \$15 campaign of recent vintage, and the efforts of our own AFT Guild to promote inclusion and active environmental and social justice unionism right here in San Diego. Of course, these organizational efforts occur in a climate where the very legitimacy of the labor movement is challenged by anti-union groups such as the National Right To Work Committee and the Center for Independent Rights, in alliance with some of our current elected officials who are committed to curbing unions in the name of free market capitalism.

Why is this history important? Through this review of past struggles, it is clear that the union movement, over time, has gained strength in its inclusiveness and commitment to progressive values. It is equally true that the members must sustain the fight for union with the goal of advancing toward a more just and sustainable world for all. 

What's Wrong with the DeVos Agenda?



By Gerald Vanderpot

Classified Staff, City College

For those who believe America's public schools still serve a greater good, namely to prepare our nation's youth for participation in a democratic society by educating the local populace, Betsy DeVos's confirmation as Secretary of Education was gut-wrenching. The historic vote affirming DeVos could be just as detrimental to the future of San Diego as any of the other incipient controversies plaguing the nascent administration.

In her former life, citizen DeVos was a conservative Republican booster preaching the virtues of school vouchers for Michigan's public school students. The controversial school choice program allows public

dollars to be applied towards the tuition of students attending private academies and/or religiously affiliated schools. This idea of a "free market" approach to public education was first devised by the economist Milton Friedman in 1955. Friedman's divisive doctrine was proposed just one year after the Brown decision declared separate facilities in education inherently unequal and forced schools to integrate. Secretary DeVos's comments on Historically Black Colleges and Universities being "fine examples of school choice" exemplify her complete lack of understanding of the racist legacy of our educational system.

The San Diego Unified School District is facing a \$125 million dollar deficit caused by two divergent forces: rising costs and diminishing funds. The latter is largely the result of the steady decline in


student enrollment in traditional public schools. This phenomenon is undoubtedly linked to charter schools' proliferation. Charters receive their funding directly from the state and are not held accountable to the same government oversights as traditional public schools. Currently, some 20% of SDUSD's approximately 130,000 students attend charters and predictions are that this number will rise to almost a third in the next decade.

In response to a system already experiencing financial troubles nationwide, the current administration is not only proposing potentially ruinous cuts to educational funding, but under the guise of school choice, is promoting the diversion of desperately needed public dollars to private entities. An administration steeped in big business is looking to cut \$9 billion in public school funding at the national level. Yet the plan calls for some \$1.4 billion to be invested in school choice programs, including an additional \$168 million for charter schools and \$250 million in new funding for an unspecified private school choice program. \$1 billion of this education travesty would be paid for by disguising privatization as a separate program under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. This new program would allow public dollars to "follow the student" to his or her school of choice. Title I has traditionally been used to fund schools serving low-income students and therefore federal money has remained within the local communities of need.

With about 9% of SDUSD's \$1.3 billion annual budget coming from the federal government,

Secretary DeVos now has great influence over the \$100 million earmarked for the embattled district. Even if only a fraction of these funds is diverted to some reputed choice panacea, the negative impact would further exacerbate SDUSD's financial woes and certainly contribute to additional enrollment losses by encouraging more students to enroll in charters. These effects could seriously impede the district's ability to serve its neediest students.

The reality of the school choice movement is that charter schools and voucher programs have produced very mixed results. In fact, a recent report on the only federally funded voucher program, Washington DC's Opportunity Scholarship Program, found that the students that used vouchers to attend private academies scored lower on standardized tests than their counterparts remaining in traditional public schools.

Sadly, the number one indicator of a student's academic achievement here in the United States remains family socio-economic level. In 2015, the Center on Policy Initiatives found that 38% of all children in the City of San Diego live in economic hardship, \$48,000/year for a family of four. As American cities like San Diego "rejuvenate" with the return of white affluence, and corporate Democrats as well as Republicans promote the privatization of public education by embracing programs like Secretary DeVos's school choice stratagem, the potential for recidivism to a system that supports separate and unequal access to our nation's educational facilities becomes very real. 

For those who believe America's public schools still serve a greater good... Betsy DeVos's confirmation as Secretary of Education was gut-wrenching.

In Brief

Gender Gap in College Student's Political Views

“According to findings of the Freshman Survey, an annual study of first-year college students administered by UCLA’s Higher Education Research Institute, political polarization on campuses is the most extreme it has been in the study’s 51-year history. The 2016 report is based on responses from 137,456 full-time, first-year students at 184 U.S. colleges and universities.

Just 42.3 percent of freshmen characterized their political orientation as middle of the road — the lowest figure since the survey began in 1966. Meanwhile, 35.5 percent considered themselves liberal or far left and 22.2 percent said their views are conservative or far right.

The report also reveals the survey’s largest-ever gender gap in terms of political leanings. An all-time high 41.1 percent of women identified themselves as liberal or far left, compared to 28.9 percent of men. Women also were more likely than men to agree that addressing global climate change should be a priority of the federal government (82.4 percent versus 77.6 percent) and to favor stricter gun control laws (75.4 percent versus 58.8 percent).

The survey also pointed to differences in students’ views of their own empathy for others. For example, 86.6 percent of students who called themselves left-of-center said their tolerance of people with



In 2016, an all-time high of 41.1 percent of freshman women identified themselves as liberal or far left, compared to 28.9 percent of men.

different beliefs is ‘strong’ or ‘somewhat strong,’ compared 82.0 percent of centrist students and 68.1 percent of right-of-center students.”



**UCLA Higher Education
Research Institute, 5/5/17**

Public Sector Infrastructure Investment at Risk?

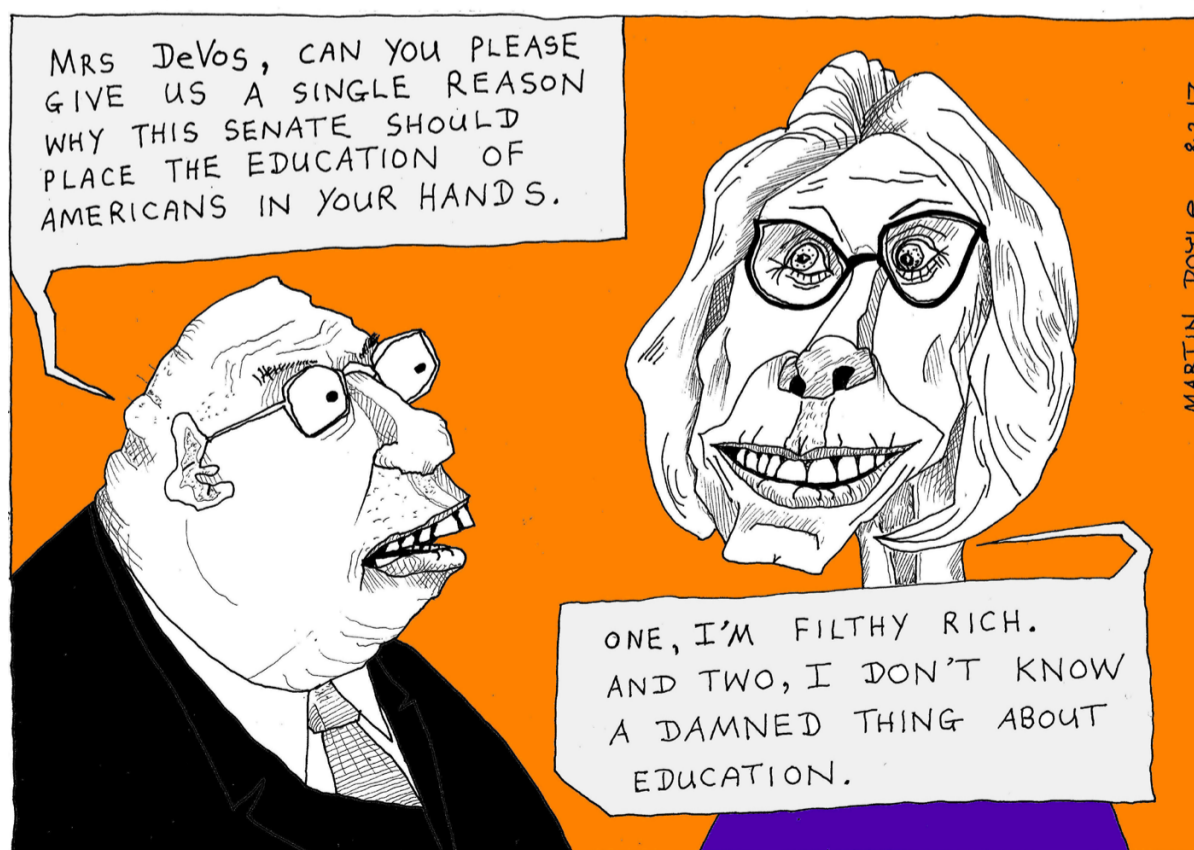
“Have you ever walked by your local public school and wondered, how’d we pay for that? The answer is most likely a municipal bond. State and local governments and other public entities like school

districts and water authorities use the bonds to borrow money to build the infrastructure we rely on. Last year, state and local governments issued more than \$400 billion of municipal bonds to build roads, water systems, schools, mass transit, parks, and other infrastructure.

What makes municipal bonds so special is their tax-exempt status. The federal government doesn't tax earnings made by investors that hold them, allowing local governments to pay a lower interest rate compared to private financing.

Congress exempted municipal bonds in 1913 hoping to spur public investment in infrastructure across the country, especially in rural areas. Their bet has paid off: roughly 75% of all U.S. infrastructure was built with municipal bonds.

But there are powerful forces that would like to see the exemption axed. Private equity investors and multinational financial firms are increasingly trying to convince local governments to take their money to build infrastructure. Through public-private partnerships, also known as 'P3s,' corporations like Australia's Macquarie and Spain's Cintra team together to loan the public cash. They tack on a high interest rate and often demand to operate and maintain the infrastructure and rake in revenues, like tolls and fees...



Tax-exempt municipal bonds are essential to this investment. They're as American as apple pie—we have the largest municipal bond market in the world. If Trump really wants to make America great, he shouldn't touch the exemption.”



In the Public Interest, 5/4/17

Are Charter Schools the Next Enron?

“In September 2016, the Education Department's inspector general released the findings of an audit of several dozen charter schools detailing significant problems with related-party transactions.

The report also made several recommendations for additional oversight. Such protection could come at the state level (e.g., providing guidance to states regarding charter school contractual agreements with EMOs) or at the federal level (e.g., improving the Department's own monitoring of charter school-EMO relationships).

However, Trump has generally expressed a dislike of federal regulations, and DeVos, who played a major role in the development of Michigan's charter school law, has successfully fought attempts to increase oversight of Michigan's charter school sector. With such anti-regulatory stances, it seems unlikely that Trump or DeVos will support the kind of oversight that's needed to protect charter schools.



This aversion to regulation at the federal level could cost taxpayers millions of dollars and could result in the closing or disruption of schools—potentially damaging the education of students they serve. Since charter schools are growing fastest in low-income and minority communities, these children stand to be hurt the most.”

THE CONVERSATION

The Conversation, 4/27/17

Time to Investigate DeVos?

“Journalists have already begun identifying new members of the Education Department staff—beachhead or otherwise—whose backgrounds raise strong conflict-of-interest questions. In March, The New York Times reported that Robert Eitel, a vice president for regulatory legal services at for-profit college operator Bridgepoint Education Inc., is on leave from

the position to work as a special assistant to Secretary DeVos. Ethics experts told the Times that Eitel’s connections to Bridgepoint, in particular his legal work while the company faced several government investigations, could ‘bump up against federal rules involving conflicts of interest and impartiality.’ Eitel was recently granted written permission from ethics officials to work on regulations specifically affecting student loan repayment; under his legal leadership, Bridgepoint paid out ‘a settlement of more than \$30 million over deceptive student lending.’

Another early member of DeVos’ staff, Taylor Hansen, also has significant financial ties to the for-profit higher education world; he’s both a for-profit college lobbyist and the son of the former CEO of a student loan guarantee agency. As Bloomberg News reports, Hansen resigned from his role at the Education Department in mid-March, just one day after the department announced a reversal on an Obama-era directive related to fees that loan guarantee agencies can charge some students who default on their loans. The change, Bloomberg explained, ‘is almost certain to hand... a victory’—and possibly \$15 million in additional revenue—to the company that, until very recently, was operated by Hansen’s father.”



Alternet, 4/11/17

The Guild

Local 1931 of the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO

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The American Federation of Teachers Guild, Local 1931, CFT/AFT, AFL-CIO, is an open, active, vital, member-driven organization serving college and continuing education faculty, classified staff, and military education instructors in the San Diego Community College District, the college faculty of the Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District, and military education instructors of Florida State College.

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