

aft UNION SPOTLIGHT

AFT Washington, AFL-CIO

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October 2023



Whole Person Unionism Takes Many Forms

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A Whole New Administrative Support Team!

By Cortney Marabetta, Communications Specialist

As many of you know, we have seen full turnover on the Administrative Support Team this year. Following the very well-deserved retirement of Christine Landon and Geno Amador's departure, plus hiring a permanent staffer for Rosalinda Aguirre's temporary position, we have filled all three roles, and are delighted to welcome our brand-new Administrative Support Team!

Briseida Sanchez, Data Manager



Briseida is incredibly excited to be joining AFT Washington as the Data Manager! Being a transplant from Oregon, she has some learning to do about the Washington education system but is excited to jump in and get started. She holds a degree in Ethnic Studies from the University of Oregon and brings previous experience working as a classified staff member at her alma mater, as well as internship experience with the farmworker union Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN) in Woodburn, Oregon. Outside of work, Briseida enjoys listening to podcasts, learning languages, and trying new recipes.

Somma Rath, Financial Manager



Somma Rath is joining the Administrative Support Team as our new Financial Manager at AFT Washington. Holding a degree in Business Management and Hospitality & Tourism, her experiences

will bring forth new insights in strategic planning and directing her organization's financial activities. Outside of the workplace, Somma enjoys outdoor activities (hiking, biking), reading and exploring new restaurants!

Tammy Fouts, Administrative Support Specialist



Tammy Fouts is excited to be joining AFT Washington as the Administrative Support Specialist. Tammy comes to us from SPEEA IFPTE Local 2001 with over

20 years administrative experience. Outside of the workplace, Tammy enjoys spending time with her family and friends and volunteering.

We're very excited to start this new chapter at AFT Washington, and we look forward to your opportunity to meet each of the new team members!

75th Anniversary

This December 10th will mark the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was originally proclaimed by the UN General Assembly on December 10, 1948. Please save the date and plan to participate in any commemorative events in your area. If you are interested in joining AFT Washington's Human Rights Committee, please contact Ray Carillo at RCarillo@aftwa.org.

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Board meetings are usually held on the first Saturday of the month except for holidays and summer months. Board members are elected to two-year terms. AFT Washington represents over 6,500 members and prospective members in early childhood education, K-12, and higher education in Washington State and is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, which represents 1.7 million members nationwide.

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Karen Strickland

President's Column

I'm writing this article just as the school year is kicking off and Labor Day has marked the end of summer. The changing seasons prompted memories from my early school days, and I found myself reflecting on "what I did on my summer vacation." Instead of going away on vacation, I took a few days off here and there and stayed local, giving me time to truly slow down and be present in my community in a more relaxed way than usual. My summer highlighted how we are all connected to each other and to our communities – the idea behind *total person organizing*, as discussed by our guest writer Bob Bussel in this issue, as well as touching on a few of the (many) reasons organizing is on the rise, as discussed by guest writer Adair Damann in our summer issue.

I live in Seattle, an economically privileged city, and this summer I had a deep appreciation for the rich array of opportunities here, everything from bike lanes, beautiful parks and public beaches at several lakes, to free plays, concerts and movie nights ... even free public outdoor yoga classes! Admittedly, I haven't gotten used to the idea of doing yoga in public but those who are, go for it! Seattle is *also* a city struggling with consequences of wealth inequality, the climate crisis, and gun violence. Far too

many people can't afford housing, and there's simply not enough of it. Many residents are struggling with addiction and mental health challenges, but we don't have enough treatment for either of those issues. People are harmed by the effects of the climate crisis and the gun violence crisis, particularly those without adequate resources and with health vulnerabilities, but public health continues to be underfunded and understaffed, alongside the other obstacles to healthcare that many people face.

These experiences paint two scenarios of Seattle, one we don't want and one that we do. What does this have to do with organizing, you might ask? A recent AFL-CIO poll showed that 88% of workers under 30 in our country value unions. This is an extraordinary shift and bears asking, why? As Adair Damann pointed out in our last issue, young people see clearly the failures in our society. Many are saying NO! This isn't good enough! They also recognize the power of organized labor to do something about it and increasingly want to join unions who embrace total person organizing like the Teamsters did in the 1960s – see Bob Bussel's article to learn more.

As a union of educators, it's really not a stretch to incorporate community building into our collective bargaining or general advocacy efforts because we can see so clearly how students and families are affected when the social contract is breached. We see that when students at all levels of education can't get healthcare or don't have enough to eat, they struggle. Students and our members alike miss out when their communities lack safe and healthy places to recreate or to simply be – they don't experience the benefits of spending time outside the home or workplace, interacting with nature, in community, and "as we will."

And we mustn't fool ourselves into thinking we can't afford to invest in communities. Besides the fact of great wealth in this country, the costs of not investing show up in human suffering and in dollars, whether it's people waiting until they're sick enough to go to the ER because they don't have healthcare, students needing to re-take classes because they didn't have the support they needed the first time through, or money used to deal with forest fires and other disasters resulting from fossil fuels, thus not available for investments in community enrichment.

You may have heard the phrase "social determinants of health" (SDOH) in recent years. The concept is a recognition that health is not solely the result of genes, individual choices and good or bad luck. Our health is influenced by the characteristics I described earlier...the fact that I can easily find a public beach and jump into a lake for fun and exercise contributes to my health, as do the bike routes designed to keep me a little safer when I'm on two wheels. Going to a free play in a local park brings family and community members together and strengthens both the feeling and the reality of safety. And there are thousands of people in my community whose SDOH mean they have different opportunities ... the bus doesn't go close enough to their home to take them to the swimming pool, the library is on reduced hours, or their neighborhood is simply unsafe. These disparities exist across nearly all communities. Given the relationship between learning and health, SDOH is a concept that makes the importance of total person organizing more clear. It's easy to see how SDOH explains the interrelationships of the various facets of our lives and lends weight to the value of total person organizing.

What does all of this mean for you, a
(Continued on pg. 7)

WSLC Recognizes AFT Washington with Mother Jones Award

By AFT Washington Staff

AFT Washington's Retiree Chapter has long been active in defending Social Security and Medicare, so it's no surprise that the chapter took an active role in the Public Employees Benefits Board Stakeholders' Medicare Coalition, with retiree Jim Howe, former AFT Washington Legislative Affairs Vice President and Lake Washington Tech local president, taking the lead. The work of the coalition was recognized at the Washington State Labor Council's July 2023 Convention with the Mother Jones award. You may know Mother Jones by a famous quote – mourn for

the dead and fight like hell for the living!

Jim made sure that both the Retiree chapter and AFT Washington had a voice at the table as the coalition advocated with Washington's healthcare commission in navigating the hyper-commodified world of healthcare. He also represented our membership at the Healthcare is a Human Right Coalition, a collective seeking universal healthcare while advocating for improvements to our existing systems.

Congratulations to Jim and the coalition, which consists of Retired Public Employees Council of Washington, Washington Education Association-Retired, AFT Washington Retiree Chapter, Washington State Alliance for Retired Americans, Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action, the Washington Federation of State Employees, Social Security Works, Healthcare Is a Human Right, and the Washington Senior Citizens Lobby!

AFT Washington Resolutions Supported At WSLC Convention

By Jacqui Cain, Vice President for Contingent Faculty

AFT sent three delegates to the 2023 Washington State Labor Council's Convention in SeaTac, and submitted two resolutions for adoption by the AFL-CIO affiliates. Both passed on the floor without controversy in unanimous votes.

The first resolution asked WSLC to add strengthening the unemployment insurance program for contingent faculty to its policy work and legislative agenda. The second resolution asked WSLC to prioritize fulfilling the legislative intent to achieve pay equity for part-time/contingent CTC faculty workforce during the next two legislative sessions. Both resolutions will benefit from the support of the larger labor community, and

help to fulfill AFT Washington's own resolution work on the same topics.

The current mood towards organized labor power showed throughout the convention, in its theme of "Better Jobs, Stronger Communities," and in comments made by labor leaders. "This is an important moment for unions in Washington and across the nation," said WSLC President April Sims. "Unions are more popular and more active than ever, and many more workers are hoping to join together to negotiate for better wages and working conditions. We need to make sure we are meeting the moment so our existing and future members can build better lives for

themselves and their families."

Throughout the convention, the delegates attended informative and inspiring sessions and workshops and were able to hear from many state and labor leaders including Karen Kaiser, Senate President Pro Tempore and chair of the Senate Labor & Commerce Committee; Attorney General Bob Ferguson; Commissioner of Public Lands Hilary Franz; Teresa Romero, the first Latina and immigrant woman to be President of the United Farm Workers Union; and Chris Smalls, Amazon Labor Union President.

The Other Sixteen Hours

By Bob Bussel, University of Oregon

As many commentators have observed, unions are having a “moment.” This moment is marked by high levels of public approval, notable organizing successes, an increased number of strikes, an NLRB eager to empower workers, and the willingness of workers themselves to fight and show solidarity.

The union movement is now poised to go on offense after years of playing defense. Capitalizing on this moment will hinge in part on the ability to rally community support, a key element behind many of labor’s successes throughout history. For guidance on how to establish more effective relations between labor and the community, we can draw on the concept of “total person unionism” developed by Teamsters Local 688 in St. Louis, Missouri following World War II. This concept is especially relevant as we seek to build a broad social movement that can improve the lives of workers and their communities while defending democracy from those attempting to subvert it.

Total person unionism was the brainchild of Harold Gibbons and Ernest Calloway, an interracial duo who led Teamsters Local 688 during its heyday in the 1950s and 1960s. Gibbons and Calloway used Local 688’s bargaining power within St. Louis’s distribution industry to erect what they called a “wall of security” for their members. Before they organized, Local 688’s members, many of them either Black or female, had been low-wage workers. Teamsters’ contracts provided good wages, excellent health care, and strong pension benefits. Nonetheless, Gibbons and Calloway insisted that unions not forget the “other sixteen hours,” the time that workers spent living in their communities. They argued that even the best workplace conditions could not offset inadequate education, housing,

transportation, and public health systems that diminished the quality of community life in St. Louis. Portraying workers as “total persons” with both workplace and community lives, they encouraged Local 688 members to “broaden their horizons beyond the shop and into the communities in which they lived.”

Acting as “total persons” assumed several forms. Even before the 1954 Brown v Board of Education decision, Local 688 members crafted a plan to support school desegregation in St. Louis. In the 1950s the union created a “community stewards” program, recruiting member-leaders who would solicit grievances regarding neighborhood issues and seek to resolve them with the city. Besides addressing concerns such as broken streetlights, cracked sidewalks, and abandoned homes, the community stewards took on systemic problems that affected all St. Louisans. They agitated for improved mass transit, programs for youth, upgrades in public housing, and a free four-year city college to make higher education more accessible. These efforts sought to establish what one Local 688 leader called a “community bargaining table” where the community stewards and allied groups would negotiate with city leaders to improve the quality of life in all of St. Louis’s neighborhoods. The work of the community stewards reinforced Local 688’s reputation as a union that “believed human rights and the basic protection of government belonged to all people, regardless of their economic position in the community.”

In the late 1960s, Local 688 launched another community initiative, a “trade union-oriented war on the slums.” Through an organization called the Tandy Area Council, Local 688 organizers and members supported campaigns for racial justice that sought increased

social spending, expanded tenants’ rights, greater employment opportunities, and better treatment of the city’s Black citizens by police. In 1969, these efforts culminated in Local 688’s support for the first ever public housing rent strike in U. S. history. Fully supported by striking tenants, Local 688 leader Harold Gibbons mediated the final settlement which rescinded proposed rent increases, provided for a strong tenant voice in managing public housing, and tapped Local 688 to administer public housing programs in St. Louis. Again, Local 688 leaders and members recreated the community bargaining table and demonstrated what could be accomplished when workers acted as total persons and successfully engaged with their communities.

Total person unionism requires several elements: a long-term commitment to build community relationships; a willingness to train and develop local leadership to function as effective citizens; and an expansive view of politics as a year-round activity that is not confined to just elections, political parties, and individual candidates. Education unions are especially well-suited to embrace a total person approach. They know that students do best in communities with a strong social infrastructure, including childcare, mental health services, mentorship, job opportunities, and other supports for public health. We see echoes of total person unionism in current bargaining for the common good strategies where unions submit demands for enhanced investments and services that make their communities better places to live and work.

The late Karen Lewis, who helped lead the Chicago Teachers Union’s emergence as a political force, offered a rationale for

(Continued on pg. 7)

Is Your Local Powerful?

By Richard Burton, Administrative Support Assistant

This past August, nearly 50 leaders and activist members from 15 different AFT Washington local unions participated in our three-day Powerful Locals training.

The Powerful Locals training is an annual event put on by AFT Washington, featuring in-depth classes on contract bargaining and union building, with supplementary afternoon workshops on topics such as race & labor, greeting and organizing newly hired employees, analyzing administration finances, working with special education students, and organizing contingent faculty. AFT Washington has been offering this three-day training for a number of years now. A significant number of local leaders have been through the training, and we plan to continue refining it and offering it in the future, including next summer.

Becoming a Powerful Local is best understood as an ongoing aspiration. As our labor movement has developed over time, certain elements comprising what makes a union Powerful have made

themselves apparent. In recent years, the rise of anti-union and anti-public education forces in our country makes building our locals to meet these criteria all the more pressing. Some elements of a Powerful Local are:

- A strong shop steward or unit representative structure;
- A good contract and committed union teams ready to defend it through member mobilizations, labor management meetings, and grievances;
- Frequent, varied and informative communications;
- Effective member-based political advocacy, working for favorable legislation and adequate budgets;
- Transparency regarding internal finances and decision-making procedures;
- A commitment to democracy, and a clear opposition to bigotry and

institutionalized inequities

AFT Washington's leaders and staff are committed to helping our affiliated locals become Powerful Locals. Toward that end, we've compiled a very detailed list, i.e., beyond the listed items above, to help guide and inform local leaders. We've come to call this list our Powerful Local Assessment Tool. You can see it on our website, under Resources.

We plan to have a more detailed discussion of this Tool on November 4th. If you are in an elected leadership position in your local, please plan on attending this November 4th event. You can register for it here: <https://leadernet.aft.org/webform/2023-powerful-locals-assessment-tool-workshop>

While the summer event is the key event of becoming a Powerful Local, the learning and the work continue through the year, so watch for more opportunities to come, and join us for next year's training!

Tracy Lai Honored With Philip Vera Cruz Lifetime Achievement Award

By Cortney Marabetta, Communications Specialist

In August, the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA) held its biennial convention in Seattle. Among its other work, the convention recognized the Seattle chapter's powerful work. Board member (and AFT Washington member) Tracy Lai, of Seattle Colleges Local 1789, received the Philip Vera Cruz Lifetime Achievement Award.

The Philip Vera Cruz Lifetime Achievement Award is given to an outstanding Asian American and Pacific Islander union organizer whose career honors the memory of the historic labor

and community leader, Philip Vera Cruz. In his 50 years in the labor movement, Philip Vera Cruz fought for the rights of all farm workers and helped create the United Farm Workers Union, where he served as the highest-ranking Filipino officer.

Tracy's work, in teaching, research on the history of Asian American labor struggles, and her work on human rights, is infused with a deep commitment to labor and to its power to elevate workers. She has been justly honored, and we congratulate her on this award.

Also serving on the APALA National Board are Eunice How (UNITE HERE), Jason Chan (IAM), and the Seattle chapter appointees: Ligaya Domingo, Tracy Lai, and Gabby Ibanez-Dacruz. At the convention, Lai received the Philip Vera Cruz Lifetime Achievement Award and Chan was awarded the Art Takei Leadership Award. Seattle chapter staff lead organizer Amy Leong and fellow Paul Ryan Villanueva were recognized for playing key roles in the convention's success.

2023-2024 AFT Washington/Barnard Iglitzin Lavitt Scholarships Awarded!

By Cortney Marabetta, Communications Specialist

Every year, AFT Washington and Barnard, Iglitzin and Lavitt award scholarships to applicants connected to AFT Washington, as members in their own right, or family members of our members. This year, you may recall that we made a strong push in April and May for fundraising, and the response was so generous we were able to award five scholarships, including one that, for the first time, was reserved for an applicant active in Communities For our Colleges.

Ian Coates-White, whose parents are

both members of AFT, is continuing his Associate in Business transfer degree at Centralia College. Joanna Ochoa will be starting her first year in the Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction at Central Washington University. Irina Roybal is continuing her Bachelors Of Environmental Science at UC Santa Barbara, and Sunny Simmons is completing her Bachelors in Mathematics this year at Portland State University. From C4C, Angelita Cervantes is continuing her education in the Bilingual Administrative Office

Assistant AAS at Yakima Valley College.

Congratulations to this year's recipients!

The AFT Washington/Barnard, Iglitzin and Lavitt Scholarship was initiated in 2005. To date, over 50 scholarships have been awarded. If you'd like to support more students through a donation to the scholarship fund, please visit aftwa.givingfuel.com/scholarship-fund.

Presidents Message

(from pg. 3)

member of AFT? It means that you have the chance to bring your union and your community together when, for example, you see a problem that needs fixing, or you imagine a "value-add" you'd like to see in your neighborhood. It means that members who may not see the union as a place for them may do so when they see a union that participates in the community and tackles issues outside the traditional "wages, hours and working conditions." I think of the climate crisis as an example. We have many members active in climate justice work, but they may not have thought of their union as a way of furthering that work. Or consider the three members

from our Cascadia College local active in gun safety advocacy and worried about how safe they, their students and their co-workers are. They brought their concerns and ideas to our Legislative Affairs Committee and now we're looking at how we can address this serious issue in coalition with others in the 2024 legislative session.

Whether we're helping workers organize a new union, engaging our existing members, bargaining a contract or advocating for policy, broadening our lens and recognizing the power of our collective voice to improve quality of life both inside and outside of the workplace is in every one of our members' interest.

Our convention themes over the last several years work well to convey where who we are and what we stand for – *Standing Together, We Move Forward, Fighting for Justice – We Won't Back Down, Big Dreams, Bold Action and The Future is Union Made*. We have some wind in our sails to help us realize our aspirations, including the deeper understanding that Social Determinants of Health reflects, meaning the increasingly holistic view of what individuals, families and communities need to thrive conveyed in Total Person Organizing. I look forward to this upcoming year and invite you in to do this work together.

Sixteen Hours

(from pg. 5)

total person unionism that Teamsters Local 688 most certainly would have approved: "While unions have been busy advocating for the rights of our members, we have made a mistake by forgetting to relate to and advocate for everyone else. Yes, unions must first be sure they are taking care of the

basics. However, to survive and grow, we must reposition ourselves and take our place in the public square."

By adopting a total person unionism approach and "taking their place in the public square," unions can take full advantage of this historical moment. We should not squander this rare opportunity to connect with our

communities and build a better world for all workers.

Bob Bussel is professor emeritus of history and the former director of the Labor Education and Research Center at the University of Oregon. He is the author of *Fighting for Total Person Unionism: Harold Gibbons, Ernest Calloway, and Working-Class Citizenship*.

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Reading Opens The World

AFT Washington was proud to join with other Labor partners to help give away books at Lochburn Middle School's family night on September 28th. This was part of a national project co-sponsored by AFT entitled "Reading Opens the World."

Lochburn Middle School, located in the city of Lakewood, WA and part of the Clover Park School District,

has a student body comprising 85% students of color, and 88% students eligible for free and reduced lunch. AFT Washington President, Karen Strickland and AFT Washington staffers, Somma Rath and Richard Burton worked with activist members from the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA), the A. Philip Randolph Institute (APRI), and the Labor Council for Latin American Advancements (LCLAA) on this joint

project, an effort to demonstrate our commitment to the communities in which our members live.

Collaborative community endeavors such as this are opportunities through which we can continue to help our members and members of other unions see that the well-being of workers, students and families are connected.