

Teacher Unionism in America

Lessons from the Past for Defending and Deepening Democracy

BY JON SHELTON

In 2017, I published *Teacher Strike! Public Education and the Making of a New American Political Order*.¹ The book was my scholarly attempt to understand how the hundreds of teacher strikes in the United States in the 1960s, '70s, and '80s affected American politics. I argued that, even in an era more favorable to public employee unions than ours is today, teachers' activism still collided with misguided labor law, institutional racism that sometimes pitted teachers against the communities in which they taught, and a tragic wave of fiscal crises. Activist teachers' critics—mostly on the Right but sometimes on the Left—often used these conflicts to try to discredit teacher unions. I used historical examples to develop my conclusion, where I argued that to transcend these legacies, organized teachers must forge powerful connections between their interests in the classroom and the needs of the broader community.

I made my final edits in October 2016. When I wrote the conclusion, I did not yet know what would transpire on November 8. Given President Trump's first year in office, it is not hyperbole to say our democracy faces its biggest crisis since at least the Great Depression, and perhaps since the Civil War.*

In a deeper sense, however, the forces behind Trump's election have simply exacerbated the efforts by the Right over the past 40 years (the roots of which I document in *Teacher Strike!*) to undermine broad economic opportunity, workers' rights, and

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public education. Had Trump lost the electoral college vote, I would still have argued that forging member-driven unions and a broader coalition with our communities is more important than ever. As we face the racism, sexism, and unmitigated class warfare of the Trump administration, however, it is quite possible that teachers' efforts to wage successful political action represent the fulcrum through which we will either revitalize our democracy or slip even more drastically into authoritarianism.

To rebuild our democracy, working people must organize. And teachers, as professionals central to instructing our future citizens, share a special responsibility. By becoming more active in their own unions, they can build alliances with other working people in their communities.

Unfortunately, the framework in which most teachers have organized over the past half century—a framework that was already under threat—is likely to be dealt a severe blow as a consequence of Republicans' theft of a Supreme Court seat. For years, the National Right to Work Committee (NRTWC) and other shadowy organizations have tried to stop public employee unions from negotiating "fair share fee" or "agency fee" arrangements in which workers contribute to the costs of representing them. This argument has often been in the name of the First Amendment rights of a handful of workers who oppose the union (even though these workers only pay for representation costs and not for the campaigns of politicians).² Indeed, outlawing fair share fees would be like making federal income taxes optional. The conscientious would pay them out of a sense of obligation, but many others

*For more on this topic, see "Hope in Dark Times" and "History and Tyranny" in the Summer 2017 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/summer2017.



would receive the same benefits of citizenship without contributing.

In 2016, the Supreme Court seemed poised to overturn the constitutionality of agency fees in the case of *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association*, but when Justice Antonin Scalia died, the court was left deadlocked. In spite of the long-standing custom of moving forward an opposition party's nominee for the high court (Ronald Reagan's nominee Anthony Kennedy was confirmed, for example, by a Democratic-controlled U.S. Senate in his last year in office), Senate Republicans refused to allow President Obama's nominee even a hearing. Trump instead nominated ultra-conservative Neil Gorsuch to fill the seat. With Gorsuch in the fold, the NRTWC and another right-wing group—the Center for Individual Rights—have fast-tracked a similar case, *Janus v. AFSCME*, in the hopes that the court will eliminate agency fees.³ Unless teachers redouble their efforts to organize and build membership, teachers and communities alike will suffer the consequences of weaker teacher organizations.

Trump's vision for public education, reflected in his appointment of Betsy DeVos as secretary of education, is singularly threatening, too, as DeVos represents the most anti-public-education figure to occupy



The Chicago Teachers Union on strike in 2012. Inset: Margaret Haley, a leader of the Chicago Teachers Federation.

Democratic politicians not doing nearly enough to arrest it, a trend scholars have referred to as “neoliberalism”—organized teachers, as unfair as it might be to expect it, must do even more. I concluded in the book that “two examples of teacher unionism, one hundred years apart ... show that teacher organization is at its best when it is part of a larger social movement and when it can show how intimately related are teacher working conditions, student learning conditions, and social equality.”

Organized teachers must forge powerful connections between their interests in the classroom and the needs of the broader community.

The two examples I used were both from Chicago: Margaret Haley and the Chicago Teachers Federation (CTF—a founding union of the American Federation of Teachers in 1916) in the early 20th century, and Karen Lewis and the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) in the early 21st. In this article, I explain what we can learn from each and share what my union (situated just a bit north of the Windy City) is doing locally to follow in their footsteps.

A Feminist Union Fights for Chicago Children

Margaret Haley was born in 1861, the daughter of an Irish immigrant mother and Irish American father. Like many working-class women at the time, she sought the relatively stable wages of a public school teacher. In 1884, Haley took a job teaching sixth grade in Chicago. Her school was in “Packingtown,” the neighborhood made famous by Upton Sinclair’s fictionalized account of the brutal conditions immigrant workers faced in the meatpacking industry.⁷

Haley taught classes of 40–60 students, many of whom were malnourished and often sick, spoke little English, and would leave at age 11 or 12 to go work in the packinghouses. By 1897, the vast majority of

elementary teachers (virtually all of whom were women) “were working under practically the same salary schedule that had been in force in 1877,” while the salaries of male administrators had been increased significantly.⁸ Female teachers in Chicago were discouraged from marrying. And without any retirement provisions, they typically relied on charity when they stopped working.

Teachers first organized for a pension plan and, in 1897, formed the Chicago Teachers Federation, the nation’s first real teachers union.⁹ Haley and another teacher, Catherine Goggin, emerged as leaders. Goggin was appointed the CTF’s first president

and, concerned with both their own welfare (the new pension provision immediately faced political threats) and their students’, about half of the city’s 5,000 elementary school teachers signed up for the union in its first six months. Haley, the firebrand who would soon be dubbed “Labor’s Lady Slugger,” was elected vice president in 1898.

Teachers had no collective bargaining rights or professional organizing assistance at this time. In this climate, two key things made them effective: members themselves did the hard work of organizing, and they worked with the broader community when they did it.

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the top post in the Department of Education’s 40-year history. Since her confirmation, DeVos has proposed diverting an enormous amount of federal funds to private schools.⁴ What she (and by extension Trump) threatens is perhaps the most important innovation in American history: public investment in common education.⁵

The good news is that, in spite of the many things working against democracy nationally, politics is still mostly local. In my book, I document some astounding efforts by teachers across the country to build and wield collective power. One of the most important reasons for these successes (and why DeVos has been mostly frustrated so far in radically overhauling public education)⁶ is that our education system is still highly decentralized. Further, schools—from elementary schools to public universities—are highly visible institutions that form a crucial piece of a city’s or town’s identity, and thus give teachers a phenomenal amount of political agency.

Indeed, as I began to consider my book’s conclusion, I couldn’t help wondering about the present and future of organized teachers. Given the grander scheme of American history—in which corporate America undertook an assault on working people beginning in the 1970s, with most

Just a year into its formation, the CTF presented a 3,500-signature petition for increased pay to the school board, which convinced the board to provide salary increases. In 1898, a commission was established by the mayor to look into reforming the education system. Headed by William Rainey Harper, president of the University of Chicago—a university founded by the nation’s wealthiest person, John D. Rockefeller—the commission opposed blanket salary increases for teachers and instead recommended merit pay and much more control for administrators. The state legislature introduced a bill based on the recommendations.

In 1899, the CTF held a series of community meetings to explain how schoolchildren would be affected by the new law, and teachers amassed signatures from parents opposing the bill. Haley deftly tied the reforms to Rockefeller in ways teachers today must do with proposed education reforms. As historian Kate Rousmaniere explains, “By highlighting Harper’s link to the millionaire Rockefeller and to moneyed interests, the debate over restructuring the city public school system was deflected to a debate about power and class interests in a democratic society.”¹⁰ The legislature voted down the bill.

But Haley and the CTF did not stop there. When, later, city officials told them Chicago did not have enough money to increase teacher salaries and pensions, Haley spent four years investigating the city’s finances. She consistently updated the public on the investigation, crafting a common understanding in Chicago around why school finances were so dire. The investigation ultimately revealed that some of the city’s largest and most prosperous corporations had been dramatically underpaying their taxes. Teachers ultimately won pay increases, and Haley and the CTF made a powerful argument that education represented a key part of a modern American city. As Rousmaniere puts it, “Haley saw the economic advancement of teachers as an intrinsic part of broad social reform. Improving the education of future citizens would lead to an improved society, and improving the working conditions of teachers would help improve that education. If teachers gained, all society gained.”¹¹

Though it faced opposition from the Chicago Board of Education, the teachers

union continued to build power, and teachers across the United States wrote to Haley and Goggin asking them for help organizing their own locals. The CTF forged connections with the wider labor movement in the city, joining the Chicago Federation of Labor in 1902, and in 1916, the Haley-led CTF became a charter local of the AFT. Haley and the CTF were important advocates for women’s suffrage, too, arguing that the troubles teachers faced stemmed from limits to their political agency.

In thinking about Haley’s legacy, we should note that she “resolutely ignored” the needs of the African American community that had begun to grow in Chicago in the early part of the 20th century. Even though such a stance was typical of some of the most progressive Americans at the time, historians must nonetheless acknowledge this important limitation.¹² Still, the example of Haley and the CTF is instructive: it shows that by building strength through membership, and allying with the community (even though Haley, clearly, did not include *all* members of the community) against corporate reformers, teachers could improve their own lives in addition to the lives of many of their students and their families. Just as importantly, Haley’s work provided a critical example for teachers elsewhere, building the foundation for a national movement of teacher unionization.

Chicago Teachers Organize a Movement against Neoliberalism

Chicago teachers eventually gained bargaining rights in 1966, getting much improved salaries, benefits, and working conditions in the two decades that followed. Unfortunately, since that time, efforts to weaken the rights of working people and public education in the name of market forces have changed the trajectory of public education and other public services in Chicago for the worse.¹³

Chicago’s history illustrates how recent Democratic politicians have seen their own political assumptions shifted by the growth of neoliberalism. Though Harold Washington (1983–1987), the city’s first black mayor, was elected by a multiracial coalition with strong roots in labor, in the years since, Chicago has been administered by Democratic mayors—Richard M. Daley (1989–2011) and Rahm Emanuel (2011–present)—who have mostly favored corporate development. School “CEOs” appointed by Daley and Emanuel have closed neighborhood schools, especially in African American and Latino neighborhoods, while opening scores of charter schools, which are less accountable to the public.¹⁴

Haley and others calling for the resignation of John D. Shoop, superintendent of the Chicago Board of Education, in December 1913.



DN-0061817, CHICAGO DAILY NEWS NEGATIVES COLLECTION, CHICAGO HISTORY MUSEUM



AFT President Randi Weingarten, left, and CTU President Karen Lewis, right, stand together during the CTU strike.

35,000 teachers and their supporters marched through downtown in a massive show of solidarity.²⁰ Given the longer history of teacher strikes in the United States—particularly the relative unpopularity of the last Chicago strike in 1987—the well-documented public support for teachers in September 2012 was staggering indeed.²¹ After seven days, Mayor Emanuel and the school board agreed to a deal in which teachers won raises and defeated efforts to curtail tenure and increase the use of test scores to evaluate teachers. The effort became a model for other unions across the country.

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Perhaps the most iconic example of Chicago's shift toward a more unequal city is the dramatic increase of what is known as "tax increment financing." In order to subsidize downtown development for wealthy investors, Chicago has siphoned off tax dollars from public education, leading to the justification for closing schools and reducing services for the city's neediest children.¹⁵ Given this financing scheme, combined with the fact that the state of Illinois subsidizes every other school district at far higher rates (particularly regarding pensions; until very recently, the state contributed almost no funding for Chicago teachers' pensions while significantly funding the pensions of teachers everywhere else in the state),¹⁶ teachers in Chicago increasingly felt they lacked the necessary resources to teach the city's children.¹⁷

In the late 2000s, a chemistry teacher named Karen Lewis worked through a group of insurgents called the Caucus of Rank and File Educators (CORE) to fight the school closures and ally the union's goals more closely with the goals of families in the community. The result: in May 2010, CORE's slate of officers successfully won election to lead the union (a reminder that unions remain one of this country's most democratic institutions). The newly elected leaders started listening more to parents and pushed back against the neoliberal order that deprived their schools of funds. In 2012, Chicago teachers went on strike and won labor's most important victory in the past quarter century.

As soon as CORE took control of the CTU, it began to mobilize for upcoming contract

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negotiations. The legislature passed a law in 2010 that forced Chicago teachers to garner the incredibly high threshold of 75 percent of all teachers to authorize a strike. Assuming that teachers would have very little leverage in the upcoming contract negotiations, the school board unilaterally canceled a scheduled pay raise.

The board next sought concessions from the teachers: increasing the school day while effectively cutting teachers' pay by forcing them to contribute more to their benefits, limiting tenure, and tying teachers' performance even more closely to student test scores. The CTU had expressed its demands in a report released in February 2012 called "The Schools Chicago's Students Deserve." The report outlined the need for smaller class sizes, wraparound services for students, professional development, and an end to institutional racism in Chicago schools.¹⁸ In addition, the teachers sought a modest pay raise, limits on student standardized test scores in teacher evaluations, and improved physical spaces in which to teach.

With an impasse on the horizon, the union got 90 percent of all teachers (and 98 percent of those who submitted a ballot) to authorize a strike.¹⁹ On the strike's first day,

The CTU's success stemmed, as it did for the CTF in the late 19th century, from members putting themselves on the line to organize and mobilizing the community behind them. As sociologist Jane McAlevey points out, CORE's most important innovation was devoting its efforts to organizing—among the teachers and in the community—and doing so in a way that forged a broader argument about the undermining of public education: "If the labor movement's instinct has been [in the recent past] to reduce demands in order to sound reasonable, the new CTU took the opposite approach: they led every meeting with school-based discussions of billionaires, banks, and racism. (*Note to other teachers unions: they got reelected.*)"²²

Certainly the timing of the strike mattered: striking during the 2012 presidential election campaign motivated Emanuel, a key ally of Obama, to negotiate in order to end the strike. But the strike was clearly also successful because the union had worked hard to mobilize members; with contract negotiations on the horizon, the CTU held a "structure test"—a mock vote—in order to ensure it could meet the high threshold needed to authorize a strike.²³ Further, the



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In February 2011, thousands protested inside the state capitol in Madison against Governor Scott Walker's Act 10, which hobbled public employee unions in Wisconsin.

The fight to reclaim our country and restore democracy must come from the bottom up. Those who teach represent the crucial linchpin in this struggle.

final contract negotiations serve as a model for democratic unionism. In spite of a push from the school board to end the strike as soon as Lewis and the negotiating team had agreed to a deal, union officials postponed the strike vote for two days so that all members could read the entire contract before voting.²⁴ It is also important to note that the union garnered the support of the community by organizing around the issue of school closings and making student needs a substantial part of its contract demands.

The CTU has continued to be an outspoken critic of neoliberalism in Chicago since 2012. Lewis became so popular that many urged her to run against Emanuel for mayor in 2014, and she planned to do so until being diagnosed with brain cancer. Lewis ultimately chose not to run, and Emanuel was reelected in a very low-turnout election. The battle is far from over for the CTU, but the union successfully leveraged its widespread popularity to defend its gains in contract negotiations in 2016.

Teacher Unions as Central Agents of Modern Democracy

The overarching lesson from Chicago's two pioneering unions is that what works in organizing, especially in teacher unions, transcends time. Haley and the CTF won collective victories in the face of a hostile city government around the turn of the 20th

century, as did Lewis and the CTU in 2012.

In both cases, however, these wins required patient and sustained effort. Educators must play the long game, meaning that we should think carefully about how to organize and build power in our locals, especially since it is widely expected that the Supreme Court will rule in the upcoming *Janus* case to impose "right to work" on all of America's public sector workers.

The way to combat the likely loss of fair share fees is to ensure we undertake the hard work of engaging every new teacher in a one-on-one organizing conversation. But we can't stop there. The best way to inoculate our workplaces against right to work is to organize those who are already members to become activists—both at school and in the broader community. It may be unfair to ask our colleagues to add these tasks to their already full plates of work and home life. But developing scores of new activist teachers is the only likely way to combat the efforts of DeVos and the many "reform" organizations out there hoping to privatize public education.

Further, as our economy has moved toward the centrality of service and education (and as many industrial jobs have been either outsourced or made obsolete by technology), schools and universities are the places around which we must build political organizations that ensure everyone

has access to economic security and the chance to have a fulfilling life. Education is now the pivot point on which our identity as a people is connected: it is foundational both to the civic knowledge necessary for a democracy to function and to the skills necessary for economic opportunity in a global economy, as well as a key driver of jobs in its own right.

And, above all, education is accessed locally. Teachers *not only* must organize but also should work to ensure that everyone in their town, city, county, and even region has equal access to jobs, education, healthcare, and the other opportunities—like museums and other cultural activities—that make life fulfilling.

In my home state of Wisconsin, we've been dealing with our version of Trumpism for some time now. Republican Governor Scott Walker, elected to represent the state's wealthiest citizens, used collective bargaining rights for public employees as a political wedge, revoking them in 2011, while slashing taxes for the wealthy and defunding public education. Not only did teacher unions in Wisconsin lose the possibility of fair share agreements (the subject of the *Janus* case), but Act 10 went even further. Also known as the Wisconsin Budget Repair Bill, Act 10 hobbled public employee unions in Wisconsin. We no longer even have the option of negotiating automatic dues deduction for members, and unions are not allowed to legally bargain for salary or wage increases higher than the cost of inflation. University faculty members are barred from any collective bargaining at all. These stipulations represent massive challenges to organizing strong educator unions.

The legislature also has diverted funds from K-12 education to expand the state's voucher scheme, and has gutted public higher education by imposing nearly \$800 million in cuts since Walker took office. Walker and the legislature also went after private sector unions, forcing right to work on the rest of the state's workers in 2015. Finally, Walker has provided a preview of what Trump's new tax law will do to our country, as he has offered massive tax credits to the wealthiest manufacturers in the state.

Walker no longer even restricts the giveaways to local millionaires. His recent deal to convince the manufacturer Foxconn to open a facility in Wisconsin currently offers the largest corporate subsidy any state has ever offered a foreign company in American history: \$3 billion in direct payments to a company led by a Taiwanese billionaire.²⁵ Each of the next 10 years, the taxpayers of Wisconsin will pay Foxconn around \$250 million—the same amount the legislature cut from higher education in a drastic round of cuts in the 2015–2017 biennial budget that has devastated our university system.

Predictably, unions in both the public and private sectors have lost members in our state, and the economy has largely stagnated. But we are fighting back, and we are using the model Haley and the CTF pioneered in the first Gilded Age. I know because I serve on the executive council of my own AFT local, UW–Green Bay United, which represents University of Wisconsin–Green Bay faculty and staff, and I’m also vice president of higher education for our state federation, AFT–Wisconsin. Last year, AFT–Wisconsin, led by President Kim Kohlhaas, committed to a long-term member-to-member organizing plan. Our overall membership has now stabilized, and locals that have committed to organizing are growing their memberships and exercising greater power in their communities.

Here are a few examples: The Hortonville Federation of Teachers responded to intimidation from administration by working with community members to elect two new school board members in April 2017. Of

course, AFT locals have been working to elect school board members who support public education for decades, but this effort is particularly inspiring since it took place in the shadow of the infamous National Education Association local-led strike of 1974, when the school board fired and replaced 88 teachers.²⁶ The Milwaukee Area Technical College local, AFT Local 212, annually recertifies, most recently with 98 percent of those who voted affirming it as the bargaining agent²⁷ (under Act 10, public employees can still certify a union as a bargaining agent, and doing so continues to give workers a more unified voice). However, each year, the deck is stacked against the union, since under Act 10, to maintain bargaining rights, a local must receive 51 percent of the votes of the entire bargaining unit, not just those who turn out to vote. How does the local do it? Its union activists commit to organizing other members, and they have built a reputation on campus as advocates for their students by facilitating programs to support them. For example, Local 212 raises money for a program called Faculty and Students Together (FAST). FAST gets money into the pockets of students when they have a financial emergency so that they can stay in school, filling the void left by federal and state austerity.²⁸

Just last spring, the higher education local at UW–Madison, United Faculty and Academic Staff (UFAS), led a successful “fair pay” campaign to properly compensate faculty assistants, a small category of campus instructors underpaid relative to their workloads. In their campaign, UFAS activists stressed that instructor working conditions *are* student learning conditions. When administrators declined to renew the contracts of several of the activist faculty assistants, UFAS organized a statewide petition drive to reinstate them.²⁹

Finally, on my own campus, UW–Green Bay, our local voted in the AFT as the bargaining representative just before Act 10 rescinded the rights of university faculty and staff to collectively bargain in 2011. Since then, our union has become a visible advocate for all workers and students on campus and in our community.

More than 70,000 public employee union members and protesters took part in a February 2011 rally in Madison.

Working with other locals through our state Higher Education Council, we led a state-level campaign to “Fund the Freeze” last year, arguing that while the tuition freeze the legislature has imposed since 2013 benefits our students, it must also be accompanied by the restoration of state funding that has been stripped from the University of Wisconsin System. In the most recent state budget, Walker proposed, and the Republican-dominated legislature passed, a modest increase in funding. It does not go nearly far enough to compensate for the savage cuts made since he took office in 2011, but it is a start. In just the past few months, our union has also worked with the local-led racial justice group Black Lives United to march for women’s and indigenous people’s rights and to run a back-to-school backpack drive so that all of our community’s schoolchildren can have the school supplies they need.

We have also invited members of the Somali community to campus in an effort to combat the toxic speech they sometimes hear from those who hold anti-immigrant views in Green Bay. Most recently, activists from our local collaborated with activists across the state to craft a member-driven UW Worker Bill of Rights.³⁰ The Bill of Rights envisions a university that works for all; it includes demands for academic freedom, pay equity, access to high-quality health-care and child care, and stable working conditions for adjunct faculty and other contingent workers. Our higher education locals are successfully using this powerful statement as an organizing tool.

This work is far from over in Wisconsin, and it won’t be easy to advance our democratic vision. But to do so, we must tread the path of Haley, Lewis, and others who have been on the front lines of advancing the notion that everyone is entitled to a good job, a good education, healthcare, and a fulfilling life. We must also ensure that no one is excluded from this vision based on race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, immigration status, or other characteristics.

Our nation is at a crossroads. The fight to reclaim our country and restore democracy must come from the bottom up and must be rooted at the local level. Those who teach, now more than ever, represent the crucial linchpin in this struggle. □

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lack of knowledge about public schools during her confirmation hearings was truly astounding, as she had no idea about a number of different features of the American education system. AFT President Randi Weingarten perhaps best summed up DeVos's inappropriateness for the office, highlighting her "antipathy for public schools, a full-throttled embrace of private, for-profit alternatives, and a lack of basic understanding of what children need to succeed in school." Quoted in Emmarie Huettelman and Yamiche Alcindor, "Betsy DeVos Confirmed as Education Secretary; Pence Breaks Tie," *New York Times*, February 7, 2017.

6. Tim Alberta, "The Education of Betsy DeVos," *Politico Magazine*, November/December 2017.

7. To tell the story of Margaret Haley, I rely on two excellent accounts of her life and the history of the Chicago Teachers Federation: Marjorie Murphy, *Blackboard Unions: The AFT and the NEA, 1900–1980* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992); and Kate Rousmaniere, *Citizen Teacher: The Life and Leadership of Margaret Haley* (Albany: State University Press of New York, 2005).

8. Rousmaniere, *Citizen Teacher*, 45.

9. The National Education Association was formed in 1857, but it was not the union that it has become. Rather, it was an organization devoted to advocating on behalf of public education. It was led almost exclusively by male principals and superintendents in the late 19th century.

10. Rousmaniere, *Citizen Teacher*, 52.

11. Rousmaniere, *Citizen Teacher*, 90.

12. Kate Rousmaniere, "Being Margaret Haley, Chicago, 1903," *Paedagogica Historica* 39 (2003): 10. As Rousmaniere puts it, "This was not an unusual stand, even for otherwise progressive white people [at the time]."

13. Pauline Lipman, *The New Political Economy of Urban Education: Neoliberalism, Race, and the Right to the City* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

14. For this account of Chicago teachers and their fight against neoliberalism, I rely primarily on Steven K. Ashby and Robert Bruno, *A Fight for the Soul of Public Education: The Story of the Chicago Teachers Strike* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016); Jane F. McAlevey, *No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); and Micah Uetricht, *Strike for America: Chicago Teachers against Austerity* (London: Verso, 2014). On school closings and charters, an excellent overview can be found in Uetricht, *Strike for America*, 1–15.

15. Lipman, *New Political Economy*, 34–36. See also, Norreen Ahmed-Ullah, "School Closing Protesters March along Michigan Ave.," *Chicago Tribune*, November 12, 2012.

16. See "Chicago Public Schools Fiscal Year 2017 Budget," Chicago Public Schools, accessed December 30, 2017, <http://cps.edu/fy17budget/Pages/pensions.aspx>.

The state of Illinois also has one of the least equitable funding structures in the country. See Bruce D. Baker and Sean P. Corcoran, "The Stealth Inequities of School Funding," Center for American Progress, September 19, 2012, www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2012/09/19/38189/the-stealth-inequities-of-school-funding.

17. Ashby and Bruno, *Fight for the Soul*, 46–52.

18. Chicago Teachers Union, *The Schools Chicago's Students Deserve: Research-Based Proposals to Strengthen Elementary and Secondary Education in the Chicago Public Schools* (Chicago: Chicago Teachers Union, 2012), www.ctunet.com/blog/text/SCSD_Report-02-16-2012-1.pdf.

19. Uetricht, *Strike for America*, 2.

20. McAlevey, *No Shortcuts*, 136.

21. Anecdotal evidence, from observers Micah Uetricht and Tom Alter, respectively, supports this contention. As Uetricht also points out, public polling on the strike in Chicago showed that "63% of African Americans and 65% of Latinos—in a city where 91 percent of the public school district is made up of children of color—supported the strike." See Uetricht, *Strike for America*, 70; and Tom Alter, "'It Felt Like Community': Social Movement Unionism and the Chicago Teachers Union Strike of 2012," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 10, no. 3 (2013): 11–25.

22. McAlevey, *No Shortcuts*, 122.

23. McAlevey, *No Shortcuts*, 131.

24. Uetricht, *Strike for America*, 72–74.

25. Tom Kertscher, "Would Wisconsin's \$3 Billion to Foxconn Be Largest Ever 'Gift' by Any State to a Foreign Company?," *PolitiFact*, August 15, 2017, www.politifact.com/wisconsin/statements/2017/aug/15/one-wisconsin-now-wisconsins-3-billion-offer-foxconn-gift-and-it-lar.

26. See Adam Mertz, "The 1974 Hortonville Teacher Strike and the Public Sector Labor Dilemma," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 98, no. 3 (Spring 2015): 2–13.

27. Local 212 home page, accessed November 16, 2017, www.local212.org.

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2. See Jon Shelton, "'Compulsory Unionism' and Its Critics: The National Right to Work Committee, Teacher Unions, and the Defeat of Labor Law Reform in 1978," *Journal of Policy History* 29 (2017): 378–402.

3. Sochie Nnaemeka, "Labor Movement vs. SCOTUS: The Bleak Future of Labor Law," *New Labor Forum* 26, no. 3 (2017): 44–49.

4. Emma Brown, Valerie Strauss, and Danielle Douglas-Gabriel, "Trump's First Full Education Budget: Deep Cuts to Public School Programs in Pursuit of School Choice," *Washington Post*, May 17, 2017.

5. Indeed, Betsy DeVos has almost no experience working with public schools, instead building a career spending her inherited fortune trying to siphon public tax dollars for religious schools in the name of school choice. Her

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