

Activist reports

Labor Rising Against Trump, Bay Area

Jack G.

Last week I went to the initial meeting of Labor Rising Against Trump Bay Area. There were a little over 30 people there. Below are notes from the meeting, from which you can get some idea of what transpired.



Dear union comrades,

I am sharing some of the notes I took at yesterday's meeting. I will try to be short, so we don't clog each other's mailboxes with long tirades, but of course feel free to add, edit or correct anything that you might judge a misrepresentation.

First of all thank you for coming; we had more than 30 people coming for our first and modest meeting!!! We are all thrilled about that and want to keep growing.

We know all of us came out of mutual and equal interest, yet it is important to acknowledge and build such a cross-sectoral and cross-generational organizing space to rethink together how we are going to build/re-build a rank and file, radical, independent, anti-racist/sexist, and democratic labor movement that stands for mass action and solidarity.

1) The Kind of Labor Base and Alternative We Want to Build

A) We discussed our **emphasis on rank and file participation and involvement** to revitalize our labor movement, which is what is lacking. Our organizing spaces and our campaigns are geared toward rank and file workers and towards developing our/their agency through collective discussions and organizing.



B) We began a discussion, which is not closed yet, regarding the role of staff. It is important to distinguish staff employed in a union from elected leadership. And among elected leadership is important to distinguish *really* elected leadership (through real, ideally contested elections) vs. virtual elections or appointed leadership. One of the first agreements we are trying to reach is that ***staff and leadership are welcome to attend as long as they share the common point of our vision for the labor movement and our emphasis on rank and file involvement and participation.***

Another important point is that we are hold to the collective decisions we make as a group and not to the "vetoing" of some union leaderships that might not agree with what we do. We want to win the majority but for that we must protect our independence. We do not want to be sectarian, but we do want to be very much aware of this problem of the existing mainstream labor movement.

C) Some basic points of our initial discussion we could discuss later on folks brought up:

a) The new labor base we need to build needs to have a strong emphasis on **rank and file democracy**

b) We need to be absolutely **independent of the 2 corporate parties**, including and especially the Democratic Party



c) We do **rely, as a strategy, on the mass mobilization of the workers**, and our ultimate goal is to build a **general strike** against Trump. We are not there yet, of course, but our organizing steps are geared toward building a base, confidence, and a real labor strategy that will make such a strike action possible (and not just abstract propaganda)

d) We do want our labor base to be **actively anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-homophobic, anti-Islamophobic and inter-generational** so we can connect the more experienced generation of union and political activist with the younger one. This requires political education but also increased participation from and targeted outreach to folks rather absent at our first meeting: black and Latino workers, LGBT, women etc. It also requires that we create a space where younger folks do not feel intimidated to speak, where racial and gender dynamics feel ok to everybody etc. We will work on that together, we just need to be aware and committed to it.

e) We also want our labor base and mobilization to be able to talk about and target **political campaigns of solidarity**, like the campaign to free Mumia Abu Jamal, the campaign against NAFTA with Mexican workers, the campaign against police brutality and the reactionary protections enforced by police "unions", the campaign

to divest from Israel etc. All of these discussions, which are usually shut down in bureaucratic/business unions need to find their way into a new labor movement, through patient education and action.



2) Initial Actions We Agreed On:

A) We agree to come out an **support the strike of SEIU 1000 on Monday Dec 5th**. Will send more on an email soon.

B) We agree to participate in the **January 20th** demonstrations with:

a) **A visible contingent of Labor Rising Against Trump**, through which we will mobilize to get workers and locals out for the day of action and be visible the day of, so more workers and unionist will join us

b) Call and **organize an action through Labor Rising Against Trump on January 20th**, we are thinking of an action that would help our long-term strategy. 2 options were proposed at the meeting; maybe this is something we can decide on more specifically once we have all of the information of what is being planned for J20.

C) To **keep mobilizing and building our base after J20** as we want to build a base that could call for/participate in the upcoming strikes, defend workers under attack and build for a general strike.

3) Next Steps

A) We are meeting again **next Thursday Dec. 8th, from 6.30 to 8.30 am at the UAW 2865 local** (2030 Addison St., Suite 640a, Berkeley). We want to bring more rank and file workers to the next meeting, and more unions that were not represented. We want to bring especially Black and Latino workers.

B) **Coordination/Mass rally:** Michelle, Tova, Matt, Julia and Blanca are going to go to/check in with the other organizing spaces for J20 (AFTP, Educators Against Trump etc) and report back to the next meeting so we can have an idea of what is going on in the Bay Area.



C) **Draft/share J20 Resolutions for unions/labor council:** Tova, Steve and others are going to share existing J20 resolutions for action and calls that can be introduced by rank and file members in their respective unions.

D) **Solidarity with SEIU 1000:** Blanca and John will put together a simple flyer to pass out next Monday to support our comrades from SEIU.

I hope I did not miss any major thing; in any case we will meet next Thursday and continue the fight!

In struggle,
Blanca Missé
(CFA, San Francisco State University, rank and file member)

Blanca,

Thanks very much for getting the minutes out so quickly. Very well done.

I spotted one omission: there was some discussion of the need to push back against the coming intensified assault on working class living standards, the looting and the environmental destruction, as well as against the atmosphere of terror and bigotry. And to find slogans to frame the fightback, in the spirit of "An injury to one is an injury to all!"

Solidarity,
Jack Gerson

Defend Immigrants!

All,

I've been in contact with several Bay Area teachers (from Oakland, San Francisco, and Richmond) about organizing against the very likely escalation of actions against immigrant students. I'm going to send two emails with attachments on this subject.

The first is a "Know Your Rights" PowerPoint presentation developed earlier this month by teachers at San Francisco's Mission High School that I've been forwarding to Oakland teachers who want to use it as well. I know that there are teachers and ex-teachers on this email list (I'm a retired Oakland high school teacher), but non-teachers may find this useful too. (If there's a Spanish language version already, I'll get it and forward it along. Otherwise, we'll probably develop one up here.)



The second is a motion from Class Struggle Educators, a (small) caucus in the New York City teachers' union. They have the politics of the Internationalist Group, which split from the Spartacist League more than thirty years ago. That notwithstanding, I think that this is an excellent motion. To save time, you can cut to the chase by reading the last two paragraphs, calling for establishing committees in every school and organizing so that if immigration authorities detain students or their families the schools will be shut down and the union will launch citywide actions.

I'm discussing the above with teachers I collaborate with in Oakland, San Francisco, and Richmond. Any observations on this or on the preceding email would be welcome.

Solidarity,

Jack
