

What Resources Do Students Have That They Can Use to Support Workers' Campaigns?

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Student solidarity for immigrant workers' struggles is important for several reasons.

Students can provide time and resources that may not be available to others. Also students have a large constituency that they can mobilize and their involvement sends a message to others, which challenges them to question their own values. The one thing that must be realized is that the immigrant workers' struggle is one that is shared — all of us were once new to this country. When people are being dehumanized because of others' irrational fears, it becomes a community issue.

Students at prestigious institutions such as UCLA have resources readily available to them. These resources include access to facilities, funding, well-stocked libraries, etc. These resources can be redirected in a number of ways. A recent example is the Student Workers Front campaign to remove Taco Bell from campus. Taco Bell participates in unfair labor practices by purchasing tomatoes from a company that exploits their workers. By aligning themselves with the Immokalee workers, the students are sending a message that the mistreatment of human beings will not be tolerated. Another way resources can be redirected to the struggle is that students have the ability to write proposals to acquire funding and they can provide direct services such as language and life skills.

An obstacle that student organizers at UCLA often face is the elitist attitude of the students that is perpetuated by the institution and its affiliates on a daily basis. Many of the students that attend the university are ignorant to their privileges. They are constantly bombarded with messages that convey that they are “the cream of the crop.” One way that organizers have overcome this obstacle is by educating others through experience. Many of the students at UCLA have not witnessed the iniquities that plague our country. By demystifying the myths that have been told to use we can begin to acknowledge our privilege and join in solidarity.