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How and why is the role of a student important in alleviating the struggles of the immigrant workers?

In the summer of 2001, 20 workers walked out of their jobs at the Assi Market. They had worked there for minimum wage and their hours were going being cut. They felt that it was not fair and decided that something must be done. The workers turned to the Korean Immigrant Workers Advocates (KIWA) that was one block away from the Assi Market. A worker committee was formed and the workers were given advice. Presently, the workers have been fired, and the Korean Immigrant Workers Advocates have been trying to help them find jobs. They have also been doing community outreach work to help these workers. The campaign has been going on for about 3 years, and many supporters for these workers have dedicated a lot of time to right the wrong that the Assi workers faced. Supporters include college students who use their college resources and knowledge and apply it to community struggles.

Current and former students from the higher education system have an advantage to those who do not have to opportunity to attend college. They have gained knowledge and numerous resources that are provided in and around their campuses. Even workers at the Korean Immigrant Workers Advocates were former students that have chosen the path to dedicate their time using the undergraduate degree they gained from a university. With many immigrant struggles come a history and a foundation that not many people are aware of. UCLA students, and college students in general, have an advantage, because

they take classes that allow their minds to understand the history behind the many struggles of today. By learning about other immigrant groups who faced the same unfair treatment in history, students can enlighten current victims and help them to understand what choices they have in gaining their rightful justice.

There is power in numbers, and student solidarity for immigrant workers' struggles is very important in making change. Getting involved in a campaign like the Assi Market campaign gives students who only have read about social movement in classrooms hands-on experience outside the classroom. Not only that, but their involvement shows that education can be used actively in the community. Students have access to resources that can only be used by them to help others, because they have the advantage of being a student. Students also have life experience and the compassion for another human being in need of a better life.

By getting involved in their community, students at elite institutions can overcome the arrogance promoted by the institution and influence other students to get involved with issues that involve the community they live in. Students can share their similar struggles with immigrant workers' struggles and develop a bond that can help to further the success of a campaign like the Assi Market campaign. The application of what is learned in the classroom can give more meaning to the knowledge that was gained, because the knowledge that the student grasps would be applied to the community. In this way, they would see their knowledge put into action. The guidance of the Korean Immigrant Worker Advocates is important because it has members who have more experience with

campaigns like this and they would help students to be better involved. The alliance between students, the immigrant workers, and members of organizations such as KIWA could help to better a community whose struggles can only be alleviated through the help of each other.