

How Can We Gain Support from Other Students for the Assi Workers' Campaign?

By Alejandro Lopez

In order to gain the support of UCLA students towards the Assi worker struggle the process of educating and mobilizing needs to take effect. Consequently, the following steps should be taken so that the Assi worker struggle can keep the momentum going. I believe the first thing that one should take is to get informed on the issue(s) at hand. Many times activists know the issues well, however are ill-informed on the pros and cons of an issue especially when dealing with legislation, bills, measures, propositions, etc. The more one is informed on the issue, the more you are able to defend your beliefs and establish legitimacy. Once the research has been done, another type of research should be done. If I want to know about Assi workers on a personal level and get an in-depth account of what it is like to have worked there, then I would go directly to the site. I must stress the importance of approaching an immigrant worker in an effective manner. It is important to be friendly and to address "who, what, why" — for example, if I approach an Assi worker, I would first introduce myself. I would state my name, that I am a student at UCLA and that I am studying about the injustices that occur at the workplace. I would also inform the person that the reason I want to assist immigrant workers is because I believe that we can change working conditions for the better. I would also say that I am willing to help in their struggle to fight for their rights as contributing members of society.

It is also imperative that we communicate successfully. When we ask questions we listen, then we proceed to speak. Many of these exploited workers (if not all) are there for the reason that they are not heard, they are neglected and undervalued. Exposure is important so that awareness can occur. Attend a UCLA campus organization meeting where the issue can be proposed and where progressive groups will assist Assi workers. Campus organizations are a valuable resource they can provide support (financial, social, and moral) and assistance in many areas. Campus organizations can also help with distributing flyers, making copies, introducing you to other supporters as well. Coalitions can be formed on campus so that widespread awareness can take place. Using the internet is also an important tool, making a list serve and sending mass-emails can be done to generate more Assi worker backers at UCLA.

Many creative and fun ways of informing students and mobilizing them would be to include their individual skills in order to fuel the struggle. In other words, if for example the person is an artist, let's have this artist make posters, stickers, t-shirts, or banners that would help in organizing. Attending other immigrant worker-related organization meetings and functions in order to bring focus to Assi worker issue would be beneficial. Additionally, working with community organizations that support immigrant worker rights such as CHIRLA (Coalition of Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles) would provide a great deal of knowledge and assistance.

One of the biggest challenges in organizing is being able to persuade those students who are not interested in your convictions. I think that we need a hook for them they need to

see, hear, and feel the atrocities that are committed against humanity on a daily basis. I think that if these students learned the reality of being an immigrant worker for a day they would appreciate their life. The students should meet the workers and talk to them. If they are not willing to do that, a film should be made about the lives of the Assi workers and how their lives have been affected by their former employers.

According to Werner and Bowers, sometimes community leaders tend to speak in a scholarly fashion or use a figure of speech that the general public is not familiar with this can cause a detachment from the group. I think this is true because I know of a UCLA professor who teaches Chicana/o Studies courses and he speaks like a scholar; he uses an extensive vocabulary and his attitude sometimes reflects arrogance. When speaking to him in person, I realized that many people do not relate to him and feel a bit of distance. Thus, I believe it is important to be knowledgeable with terms; however, it is also important to speak on a common ground. Werner and Bowers also state that the teacher/learner function plays an important role. Community leaders have to realize that we do not have all of the answers. We share what we know, and the process of teaching and learning is reciprocal. We teach but we also learn from each other.

The *promotoras* piece inspired me to want to empower other students to replicate their success in healthcare, and in their respective communities. It is interesting how through self-reliance and self-empowerment these amazing women were able to create social change in Honduran society by challenging gender roles and patriarchy. I think that the changes I need to make in organizing are to become more familiar with gender issues.

Perhaps by taking a course on women's studies, I will be more informed on the contributions of women to the world. The story on the Chinese immigrant garment worker made me realize that we must persevere in spite of the fact that the fight for social justice is many times fought inside and outside of the home. This makes life more difficult because one clashes with his/her family members and it can be emotionally overwhelming.