

The Road to Mobilization

By Jacqueline Pon

When trying to educate and mobilizing students, it is important to find methods that will appeal to the student population. The first step is education. Through a forum, students can listen and learn from guest speakers. For example, with the Assi campaign, the guest speakers can include members of KIWA, the IWU, and others who have been treated unfairly by the Korean supermarket owners. At the forum, these speakers should pick an event or a story to share with the audience to give a clear example of the injustice that happened to them. And there are many methods of sharing experiences with others. Obviously, someone could give a speech and people would listen, but telling a story through spoken word, a poem, or a song can enhance the listening and understanding process. For instance, there was a rally in Westwood Plaza last year, and as the spoken word artists took their turns, the crowd in the plaza got progressively bigger. Sharing personal experiences is the best way to relate to others. Students listening to a spoken word performer are drawn into the life of the performer, and might be able to think of a family member or friend who has gone through experiences similar to the performer. By making the issue somewhat personal, the students can then work on the campaign with passion and drive.

Student solidarity is another key step. Finding student groups to endorse the Assi campaign will reinforce the sense of solidarity and working for a common goal. But it also has to be emphasized that the students are part of the campaign to assist the worker's

agenda and not to create their own student agenda. The goals have to be created by the workers because that is the only way to be sure that the goals will be beneficial to the lives of the workers and their families like. An example would be the struggle of the garment workers in Boston in the 1980s. The women wrote their own proposal in their native language.

Finally, participation in a rally and picket line will give students an opportunity to show the local community how strongly they support the campaign. The picket line will bring the public's attention to the issue and, hopefully, attract others to support the market workers.

Reading excerpts of David Werner and Bill Bowers' book, *Helping Health Workers Learn*, made me realize that the first step to educating the market workers is to increase their self-esteem, and to let them know that they deserve more than the bare minimum that they were receiving. It sounds so simple and basic, but after years receiving the minimum you begin to believe that you do not deserve better because you are not worth it. The workers are all hard-working people who are members of the community, and they deserve to be treated with the same respect that some hard-working members of the community command, such as the Assi market owner. Another significant point that the authors made was the fact that the workers need to have their immediate problems solved first before the larger problems can be tackled. With the success of having the more immediate issues solved, the workers can then realize their link from the local economy to the national economy and the global economy, and their impact on the world. The

lives of the Assi market workers have an impact on the lives of other immigrant workers in the United States and on the lives of workers in third world countries. With their success, the Assi market workers can eventually set precedent for the future of immigrant workers in the U.S.