

Organizing and Mobilizing

How Teachers and Communities Are Winning the Fight to Revitalize Public Education



BY LEO CASEY

As winter swept across the United States at the outset of 2018, ushering in the bitterest and bleakest days of the year, American teachers and their unions had little to celebrate. The first eight years of the decade had exacted a heavy toll, and still more trouble was lurking on the horizon.

In the wake of the Great Recession, funding for public education had been slashed across the country, with particularly deep cuts in the red states, many of which were granting massive tax cuts to the wealthy and corporations and thus reducing state revenues. A growing portion of the funds that remained were diverted from public schools to voucher programs for private schools and to charter schools.

For American teachers, the 2010s had been a long, dark night. And at the start of 2018, there had been very few signs that it would end. But, in the words of the old Irish peasant saying, it is always darkest before the dawn.

In those early months of 2018, West Virginia teachers, education workers, and their unions found themselves grappling with one of the state governments that had acquired a deep red political hue over the decade.

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As 2018 began, the salaries of West Virginia teachers were near the bottom nationally, and lagged well behind the surrounding states of Kentucky, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Virginia.¹ The salaries, health insurance, and pensions of West Virginia teachers and education workers were decided by the state, and for a number of years the government had been shifting the costs of health insurance onto teachers and other public workers through increased copays and premiums. These changes cut into real income, as the increased health insurance costs ate away at stagnant salaries. In early 2018, the governor had proposed a token 1 percent raise in teacher salaries in his State of the State address, and another round of cost shifting in healthcare threatened to further plunder teachers' take-home pay.

Four southern counties of West Virginia—Logan, McDowell, Mingo, and Wyoming—had been the center of its coal mining industry and the heartland of the United Mine Workers. It was in these counties, where teachers were often the children and grandchildren of coal miners who had lived and breathed union, that the first rumblings of resistance to the state government's plans were heard.² In January, teachers and education workers from these counties organized meetings to discuss what was happening in the state capital—the inadequate salary proposal, the detrimental changes in health insurance, and the underfunding of public education—and what to do in response. In keeping with their rich labor heritage, they made plans for one-day county walkouts in defiance of the law. On February 2, they conducted a one-day strike and held a protest at the state Capitol. For the first time in West Virginia history, this action brought together members of the three statewide education unions—AFT-West Virginia, affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers; the West Virginia Education Association, affiliated with the National Education Association; and the independent West Virginia School Service Personnel Association, a union of school-related support workers such as custodians, bus drivers, and cafeteria workers.

The February 2 walkouts were reported by state and national media outlets. They quickly became the talk of West Virginia

teachers in their schools and on social media, and they provided inspiration to teachers from other parts of the state.³ A Facebook group of West Virginian teachers that was the center of much of the social media discussion grew to over 20,000 members in the first months of 2018.⁴ In short order, teachers and education workers in additional counties, including Wayne, Cabell, and Lincoln, were organizing their own one-day walkouts. A movement was rapidly taking shape and spreading across the state.

Coming as it did in the doldrums of a decade when American teachers and their unions had been under sustained attack and were expecting more of the same, the dramatic appearance of these walkouts on the political center stage was unexpected. No one—not the state government, not the state unions, not even the teachers who organized the first walkouts—had anticipated that this movement would emerge, much less how quickly it would proliferate. But as soon as the walkouts began, the three state unions began to mobilize, with their national affiliates providing key organizational support. Local leaders were asked to assess the potential support for a statewide strike action, and state leaders organized tele-town halls and took to social media to take the pulse of members around the state. Meetings were organized that brought together the members of all three unions in each of the state's 55 counties, and a vote was taken on whether to call for a statewide walkout, with an overwhelming “yes” response. On February 22, the entire education workforce of West Virginia was on strike and demonstrating at the state Capitol. Their slogan was “55 Strong,” a statement of the solidarity that had been built among teachers and education workers from every county in the state.

They remained on strike for nearly two weeks, faithfully walking the picket lines in the dead of winter. Five days into the strike, the governor announced his support for a 5 percent raise for teachers, education workers, and other public-sector workers, and union leaders recommended its acceptance and a conclusion to the strike. But teachers were profoundly distrustful that the state government would deliver on the governor's promise: the Republican president of the state Senate, an outspoken opponent of the strike, had declared his unwillingness to pass the deal advocated by the governor and was doing his best to sow discord between teachers and other public-sector workers and between public-sector employees and the community. Consequently, teachers refused to end the strike and demanded actual legislation. It was only after the full salary increase was signed into law on March 6 that teachers and education workers ended their strike. They had

won their major demand, and they returned to their classrooms the next day.

The West Virginia strike provided a spark, and in the months that followed, it lit a prairie fire of teacher strikes across the United States. On April 2, Oklahoma teachers and education workers began what would become a 10-day statewide strike for improved salaries and increased funding of public schools. On the same day, teachers in several Kentucky counties held one-day walkouts over the governor's efforts to gut their pensions. On April 26, Arizona teachers and education workers launched a weeklong statewide strike, also for improved salaries and increased school funding. And on May 16, North Carolina teachers and education workers held a one-day statewide strike demanding improved compensation and increased funding for public schools. These strikes were signs of the dawn of a new day for American teachers, their unions, and America's public schools.

The West Virginia strike had been focused not simply on the needs of teachers and education workers, as important as they were, but also on the chronic underfunding of the public schools and the fiscal policies that provided tax cuts to corporations and the wealthy while starving schools and other public services. Against efforts to divide the strikers from other public workers and the community, it put forward a broad solidaristic vision that fought for all public-sector employees and for the schools that their communities needed and deserved. In one especially telling illustration, West Virginia teachers organized to make sure that students who relied on public schools for the meals were fed dur-

The West Virginia strike in 2018 focused on the needs of teachers and the fiscal policies that provided tax cuts to corporations and the wealthy while starving schools.



ing the strike. As a consequence, it enjoyed an unprecedented level of public support, as did the subsequent strikes of 2018.

The strikes were all the more powerful for having taken place mostly in states where they were prohibited by law, making them acts of civil disobedience. Moreover, they had mostly occurred in deep red states with extremely conservative Republican state governments. In four of the five states—West Virginia, Oklahoma, Kentucky, and Arizona—teacher salaries, health insurance, and pensions were set centrally by the state government, with only a minimal role for local school districts. This system, which is employed by relatively few states, meant that the strikes were of necessity mostly statewide, a largely unprecedented development in both teacher union history and in American labor history. That statewide strikes were organized

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is all the more remarkable when one understands that in these deep red states, teacher union membership was less dense and teacher union organizational infrastructure less developed than in most parts of the country. The one exception to this rule was West Virginia, where union density is approximately 75 percent, taking into account all three statewide unions.⁵ It is telling that the West Virginia strike had the greatest success in winning its demands.

In 2019, the fire continued to spread, with four particularly noteworthy strikes. In Los Angeles, the second-largest school district in the United States, teachers struck for eight days in January. Teachers in Denver walked out for three days, and teachers in Oakland struck for eight days in February and March. In Chicago, the third-largest school district in the nation, teachers and education workers walked out for 11 days in the middle of October. These four strikes were by no means the only ones in that year; many smaller districts also experienced walkouts.

Unlike the 2018 strikes, many of the 2019 strikes occurred in deep blue states where the governments were controlled by Democrats. (Even the Denver strike in purple Colorado took place after the Democrats had taken control of state government in the 2018 election.) Given the greater likelihood of blue states' public employees having the right to strike, these strikes often took place in the states (only one-quarter of all states) where they were legal.

The spread of the teacher strikes to the blue states indicated that while the issues that generated them may have found their most extreme manifestations in deep red states, they were being experienced across the country. Not content to simply raise traditional union demands on compensation and work conditions, and even

moving beyond educational issues such as class size that teacher unions had always bargained, the 2019 strikes took up issues such as the impact of excessive testing on education, the need for social and health services for students living in poverty, supports for homeless students to ensure the continuity of their education, the impact of the unregulated expansion of charter schools on public district schools, and protections for undocumented students from Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids.

Resistance and Rebirth

Social movements and protest movements—including the labor movement—are by their nature dynamic and changing, not permanent and fixed. Movements wax and wane: they are born in bursts of activism, and they wither into periods of inertia and even inactivity. On occasion, they completely expire. But these trajectories are life cycles, so a movement can be renewed and reinvigorated, even reborn. And the life of a movement can be long or transitory, productive or barren. It can be like the civil rights movement, vanquishing de jure Jim Crow segregation and begetting landmark civil rights and voting rights legislation, or it can be like Occupy Wall Street, which, for all the attention it brought to the growth of extreme income inequality, rapidly disappeared without any discernible impact on American economic policy.

In no small measure, these different trajectories are shaped by what the participants and leaders of a movement do. Their actions directly impact how long a movement thrives and what it accomplishes in the way of social, political, and economic changes while it is still vibrant and dynamic. When a movement is young and in the ascendant, as the Teacher Insurgency* that began in 2018 now is, the interventions of participants and leaders are particularly important in shaping its trajectory and life path. Simply put, there is no law of history, politics, or economics that guarantees that the Teacher Insurgency will continue to advance and impact American education in progressive ways: it will happen because teachers and unionists employ sound strategic and organizing approaches, or it will not be.

As teachers and union activists, our strategic approach must be based on a thorough understanding of the relations of power in education politics and American politics more generally, with the knowledge of how to craft interventions on that political terrain to positive

*I use this term to describe the entire movement of strikes in 2018, 2019, and beyond.



effect; our organizing must be rooted not only in the issues that are important to teachers, but in a deep understanding of why they are important to teachers and how they shape a collective “teacher” identity. The issues that motivated the teacher strikes of 2018 and 2019 fall into two general categories: those that ensue from the underfunding of public education, and those that involve the deprofessionalization and deskilling of teaching. Both sets of issues are the product of discrete government policies. In some instances, these policies were long-standing, such as austerity plans that date as far back as the mid-1970s; in other cases they are of a more recent origin, such as the deprofessionalization caused by the expanding role and importance of standardized exams. But all of these policies developed a particularly aggressive intensity in the decade of the 2010s, creating the basis for the Teacher Insurgency. The logic of the Teacher Insurgency is fundamentally a political one, with government choices and policies—and resistance to them—being the driving forces.

In *The Teacher Insurgency: A Strategic and Organizing Perspective*, I explore these forces in detail. Here, I focus on teacher union strikes. There is a productive tension between protest (including strikes and demonstrations) and politics (including election activism); each brings distinct capacities and unique strengths to a social change project, and a strategic approach that employs both in their appropriate context is most likely to be successful. The continued use of the strike as a vital direct-action tactic in the Teacher Insurgency requires a solid understanding of what leads to success, if it is to be replicated.

The Teacher Strike: Conditions for Success

Strikes are not spontaneously born. They are a form of collective action and, like all collective action, must be organized and mobilized. As protest and direct action, strikes can gather energy and acquire momentum from the general tenor of the times. In a period of mass protests such as the 1960s and early 1970s and again in more recent years, teachers and other working people are inspired by witnessing and participating in nonviolent direct action against the exercise of illegitimate and arbitrary authority. Such protests make clear that resistance is possible. But inspiration is the start, not the finish, of effective collective action, and is no replacement for organization.

Strikes are complex operations, involving a multiplicity of critical tasks that must be coordinated: picket lines, rallies, internal union communications, union meetings, media relations, community relations, and negotiations. The better organized the strike and the more fully these tasks are accomplished, the greater its chance of success. In this respect, the 2019 strikes in Chicago and Los Angeles, with their careful and thorough school-by-school and teacher-by-teacher organizing and years of preparing the ground for the actual strike mobilization, stand as exemplars.

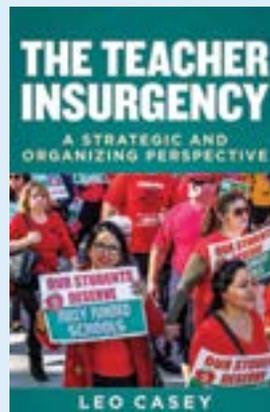
The most essential organizational task is winning and keeping the allegiance of teachers to the strike. Teachers are knowledgeable and discerning political actors. They understand full well that strikes are a high-intensity and high-risk tactic, with the potential both to deliver advances and victories that could not be otherwise obtained and to end in major setbacks and defeats. The risk side of this equation is particularly acute in the three-quarters of all states where teacher strikes are illegal; in these states, striking becomes an act of civil disobedience and can result in severe penalties to teachers and their unions.

To be willing to go on strike and stay out until a settlement is won, therefore, teachers need to be convinced on a number of different counts: first, that they are fighting for important, worthwhile objectives; second, that those objectives cannot be achieved through other means that are not as high-intensity and high-risk as a strike; third, that the strike has reasonable prospects of success; fourth, that the strike objectives have strong support in the community; and fifth, that the solidarity among teachers, which is essential to a strike’s success, is strong and will hold. In significant measure, the last of these points is dependent not simply on the organization and mobilization of the strike, but also on the four antecedent conditions. If teachers become doubtful on any of these points, it will become difficult to mount or sustain a successful strike.

Given these conditions, what political reasoning do teachers employ to make the difficult decision to strike?

The Civic Traditions of Labor

Adapting the precepts of the civic republicanism expounded by Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln, among others, the 19th-century American labor movement saw the strike as a fundamental right of citizenship.⁶ According to this perspective, the strike was not simply an expression of the collective power of working



The purpose of *The Teacher Insurgency*, from which this article is drawn, is to identify the strategic and organizing approaches that will best situate us to build and sustain collective power—power that is capable not only of defending public education and teaching from those who seek to dismantle and diminish them, but of realizing their rich democratic promise. With the right strategic and organizing approaches, a new day is possible.

The strategic challenges posed by the Teacher Insurgency strikes of 2018

and 2019 are questions of what we teachers should collectively do to build our power, especially through our unions, so we can change our schools and our society for the better. What is the work of mobilization and the work of organization, and in what ways are both forms of work central to collective action? What is the relationship between mobilization and organization, and what role does social media play in that relationship? What is the relationship between protest and politics? How and when should we use the two different forms of collective action—direct action and electoral politics? What does each form of action accomplish, and how can synergy between them be optimized? How should we organize our strikes to maximize their success? And how should we work in partnerships with community? These are the strategic challenges we face, and each requires choices on the political roads we will take.

Edicts delivered from on high do none of the hard work that must take place in schools, and they can even be counterproductive when they provide none of the supports or resources necessary for such change. Real democratic change in education is demanding, but possible when teachers take the lead and engage in collective action. That is the most important lesson of the Teacher Insurgency.

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people, but also a manifestation of the republican liberty of free labor—an assertion of the freedom from domination that is the necessary foundation for the self-rule of the citizenry in a republic.⁷ Workers must be able and willing to withdraw their labor through a strike, 19th-century unionists contended, or they will no longer be their own masters, but powerless subjects in a system of wage slavery. Much as elections and voting were understood to be the means for the civic reenactment and renewal of the social compact on which the republican government was based, strikes were viewed as public affirmations of the dignity and civic worth of the citizen-worker. The often-elaborate pageantry of

workers can be fired for nothing more than their sexual orientations or gender identities—only 22 states provide full employment protection for LGBTQ employees. If workers in nonunion workplaces wear buttons supporting candidates for public office opposed by their employers or have bumper stickers on their cars supporting causes opposed by their employers, they can be fired with no remedy in law.

As Alexander Hertel-Fernandez has thoroughly documented, US employers in nonunion settings use their unchecked power over their workplace to compel political action on behalf of candidates, legislation, and causes that promote the interests of the business and its owners.¹⁰ When economic domination is turned into political coercion in these ways, it collides directly with the foundational republican idea of the self-rule of citizens. This is why the founding slogan of the AFT—“Democracy in Education, Education for Democracy”—focused on the vital connection unionists saw between teachers’ ability to exercise the rights of citizenship inside the educational workplace on the one hand, and their work to promote democracy through their teaching on the other.

Civic republicanism was the source of another central concept in American labor’s understanding of the 19th-century strike: the duty of solidarity. The first truly national labor union in the United States, the Knights of Labor, articulated a labor-republican vision of the future society it sought to establish, the cooperative commonwealth. At the center of that vision was the idea that government should promote the common good: “The best government [is one] in which an

injury to one is the concern of all.”¹¹ For the Knights of Labor, this principle of seeking the common good—what classical republicans called *civic virtue*—defined not only how government and society should function but also how working people themselves should act with respect to each other.¹² Contemporary American unionists will recognize the Knights of Labor formulation as an early version of an axiom of labor solidarity that has continued to this day: “An injury to one is an injury to all.”

At the heart of republican citizenship and civic virtue is the willingness to make personal sacrifices: citizens in a republic exercise civic virtue through a myriad of sacrifices, great and small, from putting their lives at risk to defend their nation from attack to paying taxes that support government goods and services that do not personally benefit them. Going on strike and practicing solidarity entails sacrifices ranging from the loss of one’s income to the loss of one’s job. When strikes are prohibited by law, rank-and-file unionists can incur fines and union leaders can go to jail. Yet American teachers have demonstrated again and again that they are prepared to make such sacrifices if going on strike means that they can secure a better future not only for themselves and their families, but also for the students they teach and nurture, the schools in which they work, and the communities they serve. By their very choice of vocation, entering an occupation with modest pay and benefits in order to make differences in the lives of young people, teachers have demonstrated that they are prepared to make sacrifices for a greater good.



19th-century strikes—the marches, demonstrations, rallies, and picket lines; the songs and dramatic performances; and the banners, garb, and regalia of the unions—would symbolically stake this public claim on a republican citizenship for working people. Successful teacher strikes often highlight an analogous theme of the dignity and civic worth of teachers and the value of the work they do, and that powerful symbolic statement is one of the less appreciated motivations for teachers when they go on strike. It has been a theme in the strikes of the Teacher Insurgency.

If this discussion of the republican liberty of working people seems like an exercise in antiquarian history and political philosophy, it is worthwhile to consider that under current American labor law, workers surrender most of their rights of citizenship—freedoms of speech, of press, of peaceful assembly, and to petition to seek redress of their grievances; rights to due process; rights to fair and equal treatment—at the door of a nonunionized workplace. The legal protections for workers organizing a union have been whittled away over seven decades, and they are now very weak and mostly unenforced by government.⁸ American law allows nonunion workplaces to be “private governments,” or what philosopher Elizabeth Anderson calls “dictatorships in our midst.”⁹ Under the doctrine of at-will employment that governs such workplaces, workers can be fired for any reason or no reason at all, save those instances where a firing involves documentable discrimination against a member of a protected class under civil rights law. In jurisdictions with incomplete civil rights protections,

Building Power Through Direct Action, Politics, and Community

Since the early 1980s, the decline in the use of the strike has been as much an effect of the decline of the power of the American labor movement as it has been a cause. A successful strategy for the revitalization of unions must be more multifaceted and more dialectical than a simple focus on mounting strikes. At its height during the 1960s, the civil rights movement engaged in constant tactical innovation and experimentation, with the insurgency peaking again and again as new forms of direct action were introduced. As Doug McAdam explains in his study of the “Black insurgency,” this creativity was key in keeping the Jim Crow regime off guard and off balance; no sooner did white supremacist authorities adjust to one tactic, finding ways to respond to and check it, than they would find themselves confronted with a new strategy.¹³

The point here is not to retreat from the use of direct action, with its capacity to disrupt the existing balance of political forces, but to expand its use—to not become dependent on just one tactic, even a tactic as potentially powerful and important as the strike. To the extent that teachers and their unions have a

wide repertoire of direct-action tactics, every action in that repertoire—including the strike—will be more effective.

In the United States, politics have always been central to the outcomes of strikes, both in victory and defeat. The refusal of President Franklin Roosevelt and Michigan Governor Frank Mur-

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Learn More About Teacher Unions, Organizing, and Mobilizing

Inspired by teachers’ activism—especially their demands to provide the schools that all youth deserve—several scholars have written recently about teacher unions, bargaining for the common good, strikes, and more. Here are two new books that complement Leo Casey’s *The Teacher Insurgency*.

Strike for the Common Good: Fighting for the Future of Public Education

Edited by Rebecca Kolins Givan and Amy Schragger Lang

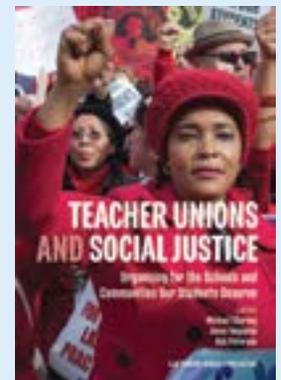
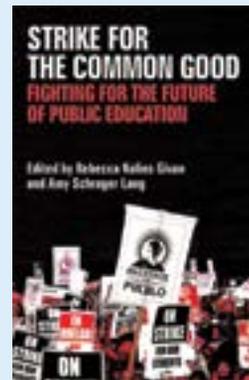
Although amplifying collective voice and being heard are central to any strike, relatively little of the writing about the recent Teacher Insurgency strikes has been by the teachers, students, and parents at the center of the action. *Strike for the Common Good*, published by the University of Michigan Press, stands out for prioritizing the voices of these essential strikers and supporters. Through personal essays, and some contributions by analysts, we better understand the motivations and aspirations of educators and the families they serve. From the inadequate resources directed toward schools in communities of color to the devaluing of women’s work, many longstanding, urgent

issues are examined—and it’s clear that systemic inequities are preventing public schools from fulfilling their promise. To truly educate for democracy, we must address the deplorable conditions of far too many school buildings, rampant school violence, structural racism, and neoliberalism’s weakening of public education. This volume shows that there is much to celebrate in teachers’ recent victories and also much more to be done. To learn more, visit press.umich.edu/11621094/strike_for_the_common_good.

Teacher Unions and Social Justice: Organizing for the Schools and Communities Our Students Deserve

Edited by Michael Charney, Jesse Hagopian, and Bob Peterson

Published by Rethinking Schools, this comprehensive anthology includes more than 60 articles and offers insights into social justice unionism past and present—all for the purpose of helping students reach their potential. Educators are sure to be inspired reading “Why Teachers Should Organize,” a speech Margaret Haley, vice president of the Chicago Teachers’ Federation, gave at



the 1904 National Education Association convention.

As Haley said, “It is the public school teachers whose special contribution to society is their own power to think, the moral courage to follow their convictions, and the training of citizens to think and to express thought in free and intelligent action.” In recent years, and especially through the Teacher Insurgency, our nation’s teachers have displayed that moral courage. And with this anthology, today’s activists are sure to learn new strategies, from mobilizing to establish more community schools to organizing through site-based engagement and social media to fighting privatization and student debt. Tying social justice unionism to social justice teaching, a section is devoted to bringing issues like anti-racism, equity, and climate change to the classroom. To learn more, visit rethinkingschools.org/tusj.

—EDITORS

phy to use troops to suppress the 1936–37 Flint sit-down strike was decisive in forcing General Motors to recognize and negotiate with the United Auto Workers, thus generating the breakthrough of industrial unionism in the United States that followed the unionization of the largest corporation of its era.¹⁴ President Reagan’s willingness to break the 1981 air traffic controllers’ strike destroyed their union and was a significant factor in the decline of strikes as a direct-action tactic of unions in the following decades.¹⁵ Different elected officials with different relationships to labor would most likely have produced different outcomes.

What is true of strikes in general is doubly true of teacher strikes and other public-sector strikes, as the employer is the government. By their very nature, these strikes are political. The 2018 strike in

Politics have always been central to the outcomes of strikes, in victory and defeat. This is doubly true of teacher strikes, as the employer is the government.



West Virginia had the most success of the strikes that year precisely because the unions in that state were well established, with strong union density and a real and active political force; they were able to use their political capacity to move the state legislature and governor to act on those demands. The 2019 Los Angeles strike brought to public attention the question of how charter school expansion had a negative impact on district schools, but it still required the organized political presence of the state’s teacher unions to pass legislation that reformed, for the very first time, the process by which new charter schools were authorized. A reliance on the strike alone would not have achieved either of these victories.

This understanding of strikes as part of a broader strategic approach is especially important when one considers a critical factor in the decline of the potency of teacher union strikes in the late 1970s and 1980s—the divisions that had opened up between the unions and the communities they served. The austerity conserva-

tism that emerged out of the fiscal crises of the mid-1970s—known as Reaganism in the United States—had as its primary objectives the gutting of the public sector and the evisceration of the social welfare safety net. It thus set its sights both on the workers and the unions that provided public goods and services on the one hand, and on the working-class and poor communities, disproportionately of color, that relied on those public goods and services on the other. Attacks on public-sector employees as lazy, incompetent, and overcompensated were matched with attacks on racialized “welfare queens” and the “undeserving” poor, and both were condemned as “parasitical” on the “taxpayer.” To have had any realistic hope of blunting the assault of this austerity conservatism, it would have been necessary to develop a common front between the workers who provided public goods and services and the communities that relied on them. Like any political alliance, this front would have to be actively built and organized. But as much as the logic of joint opposition to attacks on the public services and goods was clear, there were also deep-seated suspicions and distrust on each side.

One of the most positive aspects of the strikes of the Teacher Insurgency has been the strong support the teachers and their unions have received from their communities. That support did not simply appear. It was the product of a decade and a half of work on the part of teacher unions to build deep, long-lasting ties to communities. Far too much of what passes for thinking about strikes in the United States—including teacher strikes—rests on a “field of dreams” theory: call it, and they will come. We must go beyond such romantic notions, which are recipes for disaster, and consider the different conditions and approaches that have led teacher strikes to victory and defeat, to find a way forward that will continue the success of the strikes of the Teacher Insurgency. □

Endnotes

1. M. Will, “See How Your State’s Average Teacher Salary Compares,” *Education Week*, April 24, 2018.
2. There are a number of published narratives of the West Virginia strike, often combined with the other strikes of 2018. Steve Greenhouse’s recent book *Beaten Down, Worked Up: The Past, Present, and Future of American Labor* (New York: Knopf, 2019) contains an informative chapter (chapter 20) on the subject. See also Diane Ravitch’s *Slaying Goliath: The Passionate Resistance to Privatization and the Fight to Save America’s Public Schools* (New York: Knopf, 2020), chapter 15. While it will become clear over the course of this book that I disagree with the theoretical framework that informs Eric Blanc’s *Red State Revolt: The Teachers’ Strike Wave and Working-Class Politics* (New York: Verso, 2019), his account of the strikes of 2018 should also be read. I have found particularly useful a collection of first-person accounts written by West Virginia teachers themselves: E. Catte, E. Hilliard, and J. Salfia, eds., *55 Strong: Inside the West Virginia Teachers’ Strike* (Cleveland: Belt Publishing, 2018). The collection allows the reader to see the events from different teacher vantage points in different parts of the state, while many other published narratives are seen through the eyes of only a small number of teachers.
3. For national coverage, see J. Delk, “Hundreds of Teachers Hold Walkout, Protest in West Virginia,” *The Hill*, February 2, 2018.
4. Jay O’Neal, “Jay O’Neal, Stonewall Jackson Middle School, Kanawha County,” in *55 Strong*, 22.
5. Personal communication with Bob Morgenstern, an AFT regional representative with responsibility for West Virginia.
6. On the strike and republicanism, see J. Bartlett-Lambert, “If the Workers Took a Notion”: *The Right to Strike and American Political Development* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005). For a more general consideration of labor and republicanism, see A. Gourevitch, *From Slavery to the Cooperative Commonwealth: Labor and Republican Liberty in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); and D. Montgomery, *Citizen Worker: The Experience of Workers in the United States with Democracy and the Free Market During the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994). For an appreciation of the influence of civic republicanism on trade union and then Socialist Party leader Eugene Debs, see N. Salvatore, *Eugene V. Debs: Citizen and Socialist* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1984).
7. For an exposition of civic republicanism based on the idea of freedom as nondomination, see P. Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
8. Human Rights Watch, *Unfair Advantage: Workers’ Freedom of Association in the United States Under International Human Rights Standards* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2000), [hrw.org/reports/pdfs/u/usa/uslbr008.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/reports/pdfs/u/usa/uslbr008.pdf).
9. E. Anderson, *Private Government: How Employers Rule Our Lives (and Why We Don’t Talk About It)* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017).

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Supporting Students Who Are Experiencing Homelessness

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