

JULY-AUGUST 2021

PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF SEIU 721



**A MESSAGE FROM SEIU 721
PRESIDENT DAVID GREEN**

Sisters and brothers, I'm honored to announce the selection of Simboa Wright to the office of Vice President of SEIU 721 and Adolfo Granados to the office of Treasurer. Both were approved by a unanimous vote of our union's Executive Board.

Read this issue to learn more about the decades of organizing, advocacy, and leadership development experience Simboa and Adolfo bring to their new roles in our union. While we mourn Linda Dent, we remain committed to fulfilling her vision for a just future for our members. Here's how we'll do it:

Strengthen our union through 21st century campaigns that win better wages, benefits and long-term security for members

For years, SEIU 721 has led the nation in developing groundbreaking, cutting-edge campaigns that win for our members and their families. As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, we're reminding local governments of the sacrifices made by SEIU 721 members, and we're using our top-notch organizing, legal and government relations teams to win long-term investments in the frontline services we provide.

Use "common good" strategies to win stronger contracts for members while improving our communities

If we've learned one thing in the past 10 years of contract campaigns, it's that public workers win better contracts by joining with community allies on common good strategies. One example, the Fix LA Coalition that won a strong contract for LA City workers and created a local hiring program that lifted 2,000 Angelenos out of poverty.

Give member leaders the training and tools to fight and win

Our union attracts a lot of attention for our massive street actions to pass important legislation and win good contracts, but some of the most important work we do is quiet, behind-the-scenes advocacy for individual workers. Excellent representation means no fight is too big, no fight is too small.

Expose and defeat the Freedom Foundation and other ultra-Right Wing groups trying to bust unions like ours

Every time SEIU 721 members get a mailer urging us to "give yourself a raise" by dumping our union membership, you can be sure it was sent by a sleazy union-busting organization like the Freedom Foundation, which is funded almost exclusively by the Koch family and other ultra-right billionaires. We will continue to expose these groups and their donors.

Fight for racial, environmental and social justice

Our union will work closely with our community partners to address the most pressing issues facing our members and the residents we serve. In the streets, at our worksites, and at the ballot box, our union is a powerful force for justice in our communities. Make no mistake: the Fight For \$15 proved that our unity can transform the impossible into reality.

Win justice for gig workers

More than 30 million Americans now earn their primary income from gig employment, such as driving for Uber or making deliveries for DoorDash. These companies are laser-focused on cutting compensation and gutting worker protection laws, but we're leading the effort to protect good jobs in the private and public sectors.

Grow our union by demonstrating the value of union membership to traditionally excluded workers

The case for union membership is overwhelming. By growing our union and helping workers in other sectors form their own, we create more leverage to secure good contracts for our own members and win big fights for racial and economic justice across the country.

Sisters and brothers, we have a lot of work ahead of us. But I know that, with the leadership of our officers and Executive Board and the courage of our rank-and-file members, we will meet this moment, confront these challenges head on and win.

David Green



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SEIU 721 LA County Members Fought Hard and WON BIG!

Thanks to the Collective Effort of SEIU 721 LA County Members — Including More than 150 Actions and Thousands of Messages to County Supervisors — We've Won a Ground-Breaking 6-Month Deal!

Thanks to months of collective action, and over 150 actions by thousands of SEIU 721 members across LA County, we've secured a groundbreaking, 6-month tentative agreement with Heroes Pay for All, healthcare cost coverage increases, and a new Juneteenth paid holiday.

While other unions simply rolled their contracts over for another year, SEIU 721 members fought tirelessly for a meaningful investment in the vital services we provide — and we won.

6-Month Agreement: Oct. 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022

The LA County Bargaining Team focused on a short, 6-month agreement for several reasons:

- It makes Heroes Pay bonuses more valuable — a \$1,500 bonus is worth far more over 6 months than over a multi-year contract;

- We can negotiate new COLAs and other improvements early next year, instead of waiting until October 2022; and
- The short agreement puts us back at the table first, so we can't be undermined by weak, early deals cut with other unions.

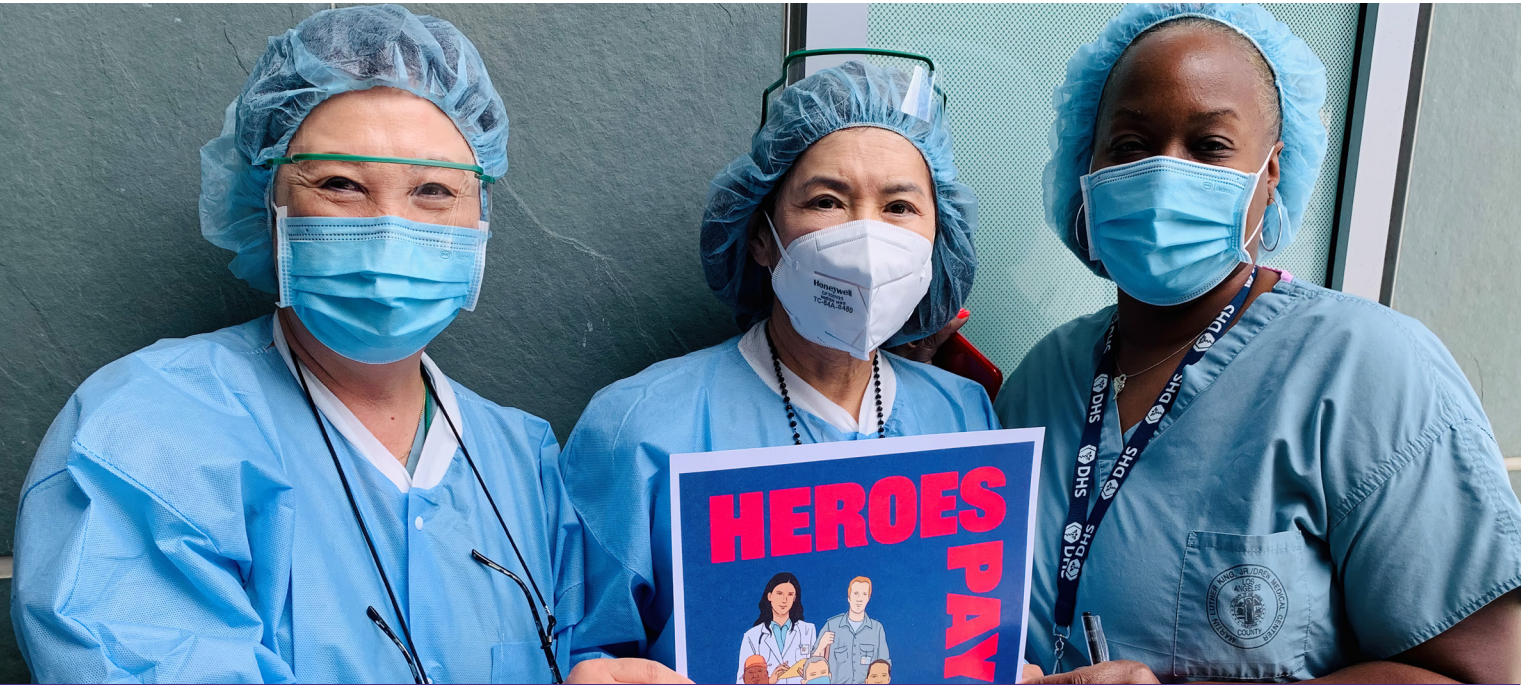
Heroes Pay for All

Nearly all SEIU 721 members will receive Heroes Pay bonuses ranging from \$1,500 to \$2,150 — the largest general bonuses in the history of LA County:

- \$1,500 for any SEIU 721 member whose assignment required them to be within six feet of a co-worker or the public during the pandemic — that's almost everyone.
- An additional \$650 — for a total of \$2150 - for SEIU 721 members

YOUR LA COUNTY BARGAINING TEAM RECOMMENDS A YES VOTE ON THE TENTATIVE AGREEMENT

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LA County Bargaining Team Recommends YES on the TA

WHAT'S IN THE NEW TENTATIVE AGREEMENT? Heroes Pay for All, healthcare cost coverage, and a new Juneteenth paid holiday – All in a short-term deal that sets up even bigger wins in 2022!

in the Department of Health Services, unless they were teleworking 100% of the time during the pandemic.

- Even those who were teleworking will receive a basic bonus ranging from \$1,000 to \$1,150.

More Money for Options Health Benefits

The Agreement includes more money for our health benefits beginning in January 2022. In fact, it includes more than enough money to fully cover any premium increases in 2022 with no out-of-pocket costs, regardless of which HMO you choose.

New Juneteenth Paid Holiday

Beginning in 2022, we will celebrate Juneteenth as our 13th paid holiday, the second new holiday that we have won in three years!

Juneteenth is still not a paid holiday for state employees or most city employees in California. But we were determined that L.A. County should show leadership on this issue, which was proposed by SEIU 721 DPSS member Vincent Malone.

What Happens Next?

Our Bargaining Policy Committee overwhelmingly recommends a YES vote on the Tentative Agreement, and voting starts online, at our worksites, and by mail on August 2nd.

Details about the Tentative Agreement and the ratification vote are available at seiu721.org. In the meantime, be sure to text "SEIU" to 721721 for the latest news and important updates.

VOTE TODAY TO LOCK IN THE BIG WIN!

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Simboa Wright Named SEIU 721 Vice President “I believe unions can be a force for positive change.”

SEIU members have been a part of Simboa Wright's life literally from birth. Wright was delivered by SEIU healthcare workers at Martin Luther King, Jr. Hospital. When he was a baby, SEIU social workers guided him through the foster system to his adopted family. Now, after 20 years working for the City of Los Angeles as a Wastewater Collection Worker II and as an active SEIU member, he's stepping into his new role as Vice President of SEIU 721 as a living example of how unions change lives.

“Getting a union job with the city was a tremendous relief and weight off my shoulders. I knew that I wanted to be a good father and being a provider is essential to that. Being a union member gave me security and peace of mind that most young fathers don't enjoy. If I didn't have a union, I don't know how I would've made it. I want everyone to have the opportunity that I did.”

Wright's commitment to his community runs deep. Before working for the City of Los Angeles, he served on the Los Angeles Conservation Corps as a teenager, where he got an early education in both the environment and the way public service can lead to a stable, fulfilling life. Decades later, he now serves as a member of the LA Conservation Corps board.

“You don't forget where you came from. I want to give back. I love having a hand in the program that made a difference in my life and continues to help the youth of Los Angeles and open their eyes to the environment.”

The power of unions to improve not just the lives of workers and their families, but also the surrounding community guides Wright's vision for Local 721. He knows that by fighting not just for strong contracts, but also for the common good, our union can be a force for change.

“I've always championed the Targeted Local Hire program because it creates a positive cycle. The people that we serve get good union jobs and then start serving themselves. If you give people an opportunity, most people will take it. We need to give people that opportunity — especially people who are usually shut out of stable, well-paid jobs, like the poor or formerly incarcerated.”

In addition to the Targeted Local Hire program, Wright has championed the **Fight for \$15**, which won the \$15 an hour wage in California, **1,000 Strong**, a labor-led project that helps Black workers find jobs with public works, and other programs designed to help underserved groups access good jobs and higher education.

“I met a young woman at an NEO who had just been hired by Animal Services through Targeted Local Hire and she was so excited to join our union. She called me and said, ‘Thank God the union fought for this program. I'm not homeless anymore.’ That's why I'm so proud, this young woman has a future. She's building a life and it's because SEIU 721 members fought for her.”

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Adolfo Granados Named SEIU 721 Treasurer **“This is a member-driven union—the members run it.”**

“It’s all about the members.”

That’s the mantra of Adolfo Granados, who started his SEIU 721 activism as a Shop Steward while employed as an Eligibility Worker at the LA County Department of Public Social Services and recently became our union’s new Treasurer.

His focus? Consistently reminding all of us that “this is a member-driven union, that the members run it,” he said.

“The members need to understand that, when they say, ‘The union did this,’ we are the union,” Granados explained. “The pay, the benefits, the bargaining, the vacations, the holidays, Cesar Chavez Day at LA County — the union did this. And the members are the union. With new members, I ask them, ‘What brought you to the job?’ Usually, it’s the good pay and the benefits. I educate them on how it wasn’t the county that did that for you — that was union bargaining. That’s why the most important thing is the education of the members.”

Granados first became more deeply involved in SEIU 721 activities when he began working for LA County as a Clerk at DPSS’s West Valley Office in Chatsworth 22 years ago, soon becoming an Eligibility Worker.

“There were all kinds of issues in the office with management,” Granados recalls. “I saw what management was getting away with. I have high expectations, so I became a Shop Steward myself.”

After moving to the DPSS Florence Office, Granados soon resumed his Steward duties and began working closely with staff from SEIU 721 to better get to know the union and better serve the members.

“That’s where I met Hugo Camacho,” Granados remembered, referring to one of SEIU 721’s most dedicated worksite organizers. “He would go to my house, pick me up, and take me to events. That’s when I really got to know the union.”

Granados’ experience as a steward eventually led to deeper union involvement, including Regional Council membership, Executive Board membership and more.

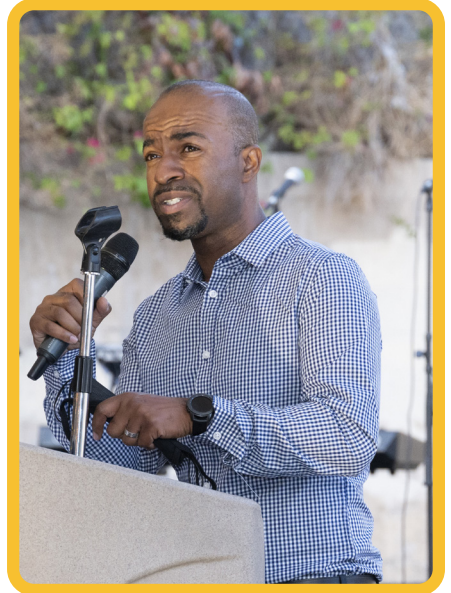
“Environmental Justice, the Fight for \$15, Fix LA — anything that was happening, I was happy to be there,” he said.

Now, he’s hoping to encourage more members to get involved.

“The goal is to build up the leadership, to let our members know what the union is all about,” Granados explained. “When I hit the field, there are a lot of members who don’t know what the union is all about. They think they’re OK because they’re not in trouble. I start by breaking it down for them. There are things happening in our union that our members don’t know about — our members need to know. The union is run by members. They need to understand that and be a part of it.”

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SEIU 721 CELEBRATES LINDA DENT



SEIU 721 President David Green and Vice President Simboa Wright and other leaders from our local hosted a July 24th memorial service for SEIU 721 President Linda Dent, who passed away after a battle with cancer. President Dent was eulogized by Pastor William Smart, Jr. of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference at a service attended by a host of elected leaders, including LA City Councilmembers Mark Ridley-Thomas and Gil Cedillo, City of Long Beach Vice-Mayor Rex Richardson, CA Assemblyman Reggie Jones-Sawyer and LA County Supervisor Holly Mitchell.

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LAHSA MEMBERS ARE ON THE FRONTLINES OF LA'S HOMELESSNESS CRISIS



Steven Elias

LA's homelessness crisis is making national headlines and SEIU 721 members, like Michael Williams and Steven Elias, are on the frontlines.

The county's homeless population — which rose by 13% to 66,436 people in 2020 — has exploded since the pandemic. But despite the risks, workers from Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) members are in the field finding housing for the unhoused. That means combing through encampments and climbing into ravines and riverbeds to help people unable to help themselves.

LAHSA employees' critical work is transformative and driven by a compassion for the least amongst us.

Now Williams and Elias are leading the charge for a fair contract for their co-workers as members of the LAHSA bargaining team. They're ramping up to fight for an across-the-board pay increase, additional paid time off, bilingual pay, extra training, a boot allowance, and additional tools to help LAHSA workers tackle one of LA's toughest jobs.

The focused efforts of LAHSA workers — not politicians' speeches and pointless crackdowns — are the solution to the LA homelessness crisis. It's time to back up LAHSA workers to get the tools they need to do the job right.



Michael Williams

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MOBILE WORKERS ALLIANCE DRIVERS RALLY AT MEXICAN CONSULATE IN SOLIDARITY ACTION

CITY OF RIVERSIDE MEMBERS WIN \$250,000 IN FURLOUGH ULP SETTLEMENT



Rideshare and delivery drivers organizing with Mobile Workers Alliance took to the streets outside the Mexican consulate on June 24 to demand justice for food delivery workers around the world who have lost their lives on the job. The drivers specifically called out rideshare and delivery companies who habitually abandon workers who are injured or killed on the job. The California action mirrored others taking part all over the world as part of Alianza Unidos World Action (AUWA). MWA drivers specifically chose the Mexican consulate because drivers and delivery workers in

Mexico have been experiencing a spike in dangerous working conditions, with drivers being robbed, assaulted and killed while on the job.



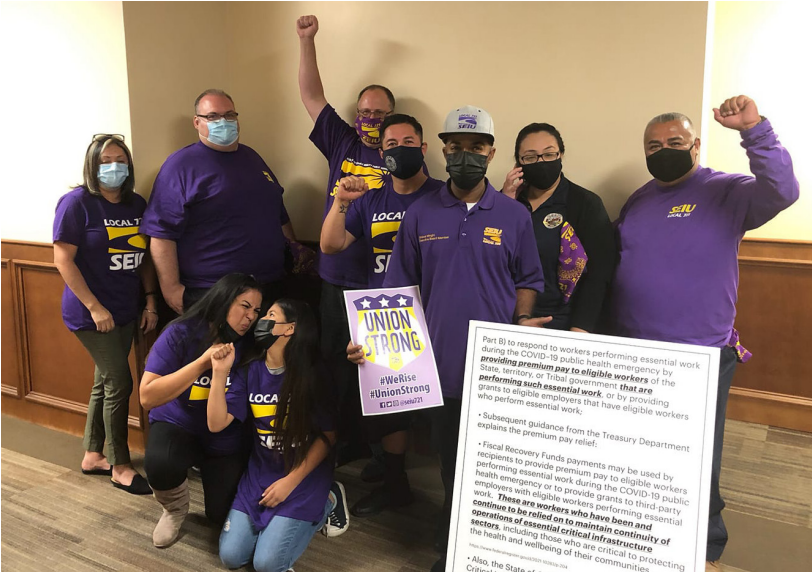
SEIU 721 recently won reinstatement and a \$250,000 in back pay for City of Riverside members improperly furloughed early in the pandemic.

In May 2020, the City of Riverside unilaterally furloughed 136 SEIU 721 members without proper notice, claiming budget constraints, despite having passed a budget that supported full staffing.

We didn't let them get away it. SEIU 721 attorneys filed a grievance and an unfair labor practice charge on behalf of the furloughed workers with the Public Employee Relations Board (PERB). PERB eventually ruled in the workers' favor.

As a result, nearly all of the workers were back on the job by October, and the City agreed to restore a portion of the leave used and back pay totalling \$250,000.

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SEIU 721 EL MONTE WORKERS BLAST CITY COUNCIL FOR SHORTING FRONTLINE WORKERS

NONPROFIT WORKERS AT HEALTHRIGHT 360 WIN NEW TWO-YEAR CONTRACT WITH RAISES



SEIU 721 workers in the City of El Monte turned out in force at the July 20th City Council meeting to blast Councilmembers for lying about the City's financial condition and trying to balance their budget on the backs of dedicated frontline workers.

El Monte workers accepted furloughs and deferred raises with understanding they would be made whole when the City received federal bailout funds. But now the City is reneging on its promise, arguing incorrectly that American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds can't be used to support their own municipal workers.

The City is crying poverty, despite recording a surplus for FY 2019/20 and collecting more than half of the \$42 million of ARPA funding — money that SEIU organized and mobilized to help pass. We won't let this stand.



We did it!

Nonprofit workers at HealthRIGHT 360 have won their first union contract — an historic victory for our union and non-profit workers in California!

This victory is the result of a several years' long organizing and bargaining campaign collaboration between three SEIU Locals: 721 (Los Angeles & surrounding areas); 1021 (Northern California) and 221 (San Diego). We secured a strong two-year agreement with significant improvements for workers, including bringing all members to a base wage rate of \$18/hr, a 6 percent raise for all workers over the term of the contract, job security protections, a paid Juneteenth holiday, and more. HealthRIGHT 360 is Better Together. When we fight together, we win together!



Protecting Our SEIU 721 Stewards

FEDERAL LABOR LAW PROTECTS STEWARDS ON UNION BUSINESS FROM DISCRIMINATION OR PUNISHMENT

When a Shop Steward is dealing with management on Union business, the steward is equal to management. This principle is found in many labor laws, such as the National Labor Relations Act, the Meyers-Milias Brown Act, and local employee relations ordinances. Labor law specifically protects Stewards from punishment or discrimination by management because of Union activity, and it's unlawful for them to discriminate against you!

What is an Unfair Labor Practice?

A simple definition of an Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) is that it is any act by an employer (or labor organization) that violates a right or protection established by labor law. When a Union files a ULP charge with the appropriate labor board, it is alleging that the employer committed a labor law violation. It is unlawful for employers to retaliate against stewards in any way.

Among other things, an employer may not:

- Order a steward to perform greater or more difficult work
- Segregate a steward from other employees
- Deprive a steward overtime
- Enforce rules more strictly against a steward

Let's look at a hypothetical scenario:

A unit of workers demand to meet and confer with management due

to changes in working conditions. During the meeting, a Shop Steward passionately advocates against the changes. Subsequently, management issues discipline against the steward because they didn't like his speech. Were the Steward's rights violated? Yes.

A Union Steward must be free to speak and act for the Union, consistent with good faith and free of employer interference, restraint or coercion. Stewards have significant latitude with their speech and conduct to resolve disputes and conflicts, and the Union would file a ULP to protect the Steward to have the discipline reversed.

Other Steward Rights:

- You have the right to a reasonable amount of time to investigate and process grievances during working hours
- You have the right to interview witnesses in the process of your grievance investigation
- You have the right to access bulletin boards to post official Union business
- You have the right to access other departments and facilities to investigate grievances
- You have the right to inspect an employee's Personnel file with their signed permission

If you want help with an issue at work, talk to a Shop Steward, or call the Member Connection at 877-721-4968.

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SEIU 721 City of Santa Paula members unanimously approved a new TA with a 2% COLA increase effective in July 2021.

The agreement also includes:

- A one-time lump sum payment equivalent to a 2% base salary increase.
- A \$500 contribution to employees' deferred compensation account.
- An additional 2.5% COLA in July 2022

The agreement also includes improvements in health benefits, an additional Christmas Eve paid holiday and boosts to Standby Pay, Uniform Allowances and Bi-lingual Pay Premiums.

SEIU 721 members in the City of Santa Paula are mourning the death of Public Works employee David Brown and dedicate the contract win to his memory.

SEIU 721 CITY OF SANTA PAULA MEMBERS VOTE UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE TA

SEIU 721 AREA HOUSING AUTHORITY MEMBERS BRING HOME A STRONG CONTRACT



SEIU 721 Area Housing Authority members voted by a unanimous YES vote to approve the Tentative Agreement with Ventura County Area Housing Authority.

The agreement includes a 10.85% cost of living allowance for all employees, with a 7.62% boost effective on July 1, 2021. After that, employees will receive annual 3% step increases until they reach the top of the salary band.

These increases put AHA back on track to restore services and to help

Ventura County's most vulnerable residents find safe and affordable housing.

The agreement also includes improvements in Medical Insurance contributions, longevity bonus amounts, and a new paid Juneteenth holiday! When we stand together, WE WIN!

For questions, contact a bargaining team member or Regional Director Danny Carrillo at danny.carrillo@seiu721.org, (805) 901-0799.

WE NEED NEW TOOLS TO KEEPING WINNING FOR WORKERS IN THE TIME OF COVID



Here we go again. As the super-contagious coronavirus delta variant races across the U.S., we're all struggling to adjust to a tsunami of news, rumors and sometimes contradictory public health guidance. Mostly, we're beaten down by the notion that the pandemic is far from over.

That's how I felt. Then I read "Lost on the Frontline," an exhaustive investigative report by the Guardian newspaper that attempts to tally the number of U.S. healthcare personnel who died in the first 12 months of the pandemic. The Guardian was able to verify 3,607 deaths, which they readily admit is an undercount. Nurses make up 32 percent of the total; healthcare workers, 20 percent. More than a quarter were Black. About 10% were Californians.

We can't let this happen again. We need to pick ourselves up, evolve our activism, adapt our tools to the pandemic and mobilize workers in ways that overcome physical distance. Here's how we're making that happen.

Super Stewards: The Special Forces of Union Representation

For workers who are ignored, used, mistreated, and forgotten, there's nothing like taking the streets with an army of thousands of union brothers and sisters. The pandemic and social distancing rules have robbed us of the joy and the power of mass actions.

But if we can't have an army in the street, we're going to need special forces in the trenches. That's why we've invested in a new generation of member leaders and Stewards. Workers deserve their own "Seal Team Six" — small teams of fearless, highly trained union activists able to jump in at a moment's notice to solve workers' problems with training, tactics and smarts.

We teach our stewards how to understand and enforce contracts and how to use key federal state and local laws to protect union members.

State of the Art Tools

We're using the Internet to expand our reach and increase our power to organize workers and win good contracts:

Internet New Employee Orientation — Every year, Southern California cities and counties onboard tens of thousands of workers and SEIU 721 engages them at new employee orientations and other functions to ensure they understand the rights and benefits afforded by union membership. During the pandemic, this engagement has gone virtual through targeted Facebook advertising, email campaigns and person-to-person welcomes through texting platforms like Hustle. The results are spectacular.

Virtual Contract Campaigns — LA County SEIU 721 members won a 6-month contract with the largest general bonuses in County history through a largely virtual campaign that reached 40,000 members, including tele-townhalls with more than 22,000 participants, tens of thousands of personalized member-to-member emails and text messages to LA County members, and thousands of individualized messages urging the Board of Supervisors to approve a fair deal.

Socially Distanced Action — When we do hit the street, we're using new strategies to keep workers safe while delivering a punch. Instead of a 10,000-member march, we fanned out in small groups for 150 actions at worksites and County Supervisors' offices. Gig workers get behind the wheel for car caravans. University adjuncts use theater projectors to blast their message onto the sides of buildings. We use our creativity and the tools at hand to make workers' voices heard.

SEIU 721 members and other frontline workers are the heroes of the pandemic. We owe it to the fallen and to ourselves to keep up the fight and evolve to win.

Gilda Valdez, Chief of Staff



**Digital
Union
Voices**

To organize during quarantine, we need Digital Union Voices. Text VOICES to 721721 today!