Unite, Inspire, Lead
Our Students, Our Union, Our Future

Social Justice Teacher Unionism:
Why we need it
and the story of one local’s transformation

Bob Peterson and Amy Mizialko
• NEA Strategic Goal
  – Goal 1: Strong Affiliates for Educator Voice and Empowerment
  – Goal 2: Empowered Educators for Successful Students

• NEA Organizational Priority
  – Early Career Educators
  – Institutional Racism/Racial Justice in Education
NEA Leadership Competency: Advocacy

NEA Leadership Competency progression level(s).
Foundational, Mobilizing & Power Building, and Agenda-Driving.

Competency themes:
• Leverages advocacy practice
• Engages community to support student learning
• Interprets and acts on social justice issues
• Leads public education policy reform
• Acts as a political advocate
Agenda for this workshop

• Brief history of social justice unionism and the struggle in Wisconsin.
• The MTEA’s SJU in practice today
• Questions/Comments
• Table discussions
• Whole group discussion
• Closing
Milwaukee Wisconsin is ground zero for:

The New Jim Crow
Privatization of public services
Attacks on teacher unions

How should a teachers’ union respond?
MILWAUKEE #1 BLACK / WHITE RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION

Worst in the nation of 102 largest metro areas.
MILWAUKEE #1
RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION BASED ON POVERTY

Worst in the nation among major metro areas, #2 in all metro areas
Wisconsin

#1 Worst Incarceration Rate for Black Men

12.8% of the state’s African American men are behind bars—twice the national average and well ahead of 2nd place Oklahoma where 10% of black men are incarcerated.
Milwaukee

#1 Black / White Employment Gap

Men 32.4 percentage points
Women 20.6 percentage points — widest racial gap in the country.
LARGEST VOUCHER PROGRAM

Largest voucher program of any U.S. city, over one billion public tax dollars spent on schools that are not obligated to serve all children.
SCOTT WALKER

Koch Industries Inc

Nobody's governor but theirs.
Wisconsin’s Act 10 of June 2011:

• Ended collective bargaining for almost all public sector unions.
• Outlawed interest-based arbitration.
• Prohibited “agency” shop.
• Ended payroll deduction.
• Requires an annual “recertification” vote of 51% of eligible members voting yes.
• Mandatory increases in employee payment for pensions & health insurance.
MPS teachers care about the kids
Despite the massive and inspiring protests....

Act 10 passed.

Walker made the largest cuts to public education in Wisconsin’s history.

Walker expanded the Milwaukee’s private school voucher program state wide.

Walker signed voter ID legislation potentially disenfranchising 200,000 voters, (9% of total).
How should unions respond?

• Collective bargaining is gone.
• Contracts are history.
• Grievances procedures gone.
• Dues must be collected voluntarily-EFTs.
• Annual recertification elections.
• Union power and $ lessened.
• Teachers discouraged, frightened and overwhelmed with assault on the craft of teaching.
Why reimagine the MTEA?

*Times have changed. We need to...*

- Move from collective bargaining to collective action
- Reclaim our classrooms and reclaim our profession
- Build collaborative public schools that serve all students
- Work with parents and community to promote democracy and justice
- Improve our union’s internal communication, public relations, and our capacity to organize and mobilize our members

And Reimagine MPS too!
The Three Legs of Social Justice Unionism
Bread and Butter Issues

Replace collective bargaining with collective action.

Use “meet and confer” process.

Build influence with the board members.

Build close ties with parents, students and community.
Professional issues

Center for Teaching, Learning & Public Education – professional development assistance, workshops, book circles, inservice by practicing teachers.

Advocating and organizing to reclaim the profession and our classrooms.

Collaborating at school level, labor management committees and district to improve public schools.

Go-to-organization on ed issues in community.
Social justice in the curriculum, the community and world

• Promotion of anti-racist social justice curriculum.
• Coalition work on ed issues at school and community level.
• Solidarity with issues not directly related to schools.
• International solidarity.
Classrooms as laboratories for social justice

- Grounded in the lives of our students
- Critical
- Multicultural, anti-racist, pro-justice
- Participatory, experiential
- Hopeful, visionary
- Activist
- Academically rigorous
- Culturally and linguistically
Rethinking Schools

Rethinking Columbus
The Next 500 Years
Resources for teaching about the impact of the arrival of Columbus in the Americas.

Rethinking Our Classrooms
Teaching for Equity and Justice
Volume 1
New Edition – Revised and Expanded
A Rethinking Schools Publication
EDUCATION,
NOT
DEPORTATION

VOCES
DE LA FRONTERA
“Privatization of essential infrastructure is essentially undemocratic.”

Arundhati Roy
ESCUELAS Y COMUNIDAD UNIDAS
Still separate. Still unequal. Fulfill the promise.
Fulfill the Promise
The schools and communities our children deserve

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Milwaukee, WI
May 17, 2014
Fulfill the Promise

The schools and communities our children deserve

It is time to fulfill the promise of Brown v. Board of Education and of equal opportunity for all.

We commit ourselves to a revitalized civil rights movement, recognizing the inherent links between strong public schools, healthy communities, and a multiracial democracy.

Sixty years ago, on May 17, 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court issued the most important decision...

Jump to page 2
Our Schools! Our Solutions!
the
STUDENT BILL of RIGHTS

Written by the students of
Youth Empowered in the Struggle (YES)
Freedom School 2014
Testing is not teaching.

Kids and teachers are not numbers.
Las vidas negras importan
Current Challenges and Activities
DONALD TRUMP

Make America GREAT again!

or

Make America WHITE again!
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
A Part of the Solution
Don’t Privatize!
Our schools are not for sale.
Table Discussion Directions

• Introduce yourselves
• Each person draw a card and think:
  – which of the legs of social justice unionism that scenario fits under.
  – How would you as a local leader deal with that scenario.
• Share/discuss as many cards as you can get through.
• Choose a person to share one “aha,” concern or question.
Session Outcomes

• The content from this session can be used in the following ways in your current position/role:
  – Reimaging the purposes of your union to be prepared for the anti-union attacks
  – Building union power & advocacy at school levels
  – Building multiracial coalitions
• Please complete the evaluation for this breakout session!
• Please visit the Leadership Development Resources website at [www.nea.org/leadershipdevelopment](http://www.nea.org/leadershipdevelopment)

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