



Victory at Pomona College: Union Strategy and Immigrant Labor

Labor Studies Journal

1-24

© 2014 UALE

Reprints and permissions:

sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav

DOI: 10.1177/0160449X14565111

lsj.sagepub.com

Victor Silverman¹

Abstract

Despite the firing of 17 purported undocumented workers and bitter conflicts on campus, Pomona College's dining hall staff overwhelmingly voted for UNITE HERE Local 11 in spring 2013 and approved a good contract less than a year later. Although a labor victory, the Pomona story, nonetheless, illustrates the obstacles to organizing low-wage immigrant workers at powerful institutions opposed to unionization. Drawing on interviews with labor and community activists, media reports, and the author's participant observation, this article finds that campus and community support, while critical, could not prevent years of delays and serious acts of intimidation. This campaign had a transformative effect on the workers and their workplace but raises questions about long-term union strategy.

Keywords

union organizing, Pomona College, UNITE HERE, immigrant, dining hall

In February 2014 Pomona College dining hall workers represented by UNITE HERE Local 11 voted overwhelmingly for their first contract. The agreement marked the successful end of a long and difficult battle for unionization on campus. Union staff hailed it as setting a new standard for contracts by university cafeteria workers. This positive result came after a four-year conflict that burst onto the national scene in December 2011 when the College, one of the wealthiest and most highly-ranked in the country, dismissed 17 immigrant workers who appeared to lack proper work documents. The firings devastated the rank and file. Demonstrations, boycotts, civil disobedience, and occupations on campus garnered national news coverage. Yet one year later the union

¹Pomona College, Claremont, CA, USA

Corresponding Author:

Victor Silverman, Pomona College, Dept. of History, 550 N. Harvard Ave., Claremont, CA 95610, USA.

Email: vsilverman@pomona.edu

reemerged on campus calling for and decisively winning a representation election. The contract negotiation went quickly and smoothly. Out of disaster came a true union victory. How was this success possible?

The years-long struggle to win a union at Pomona by the poorly paid, mostly Mexican and Central American immigrant and second-generation workers became more than an economic fight. Like so many union conflicts it was also about dignity, respect, and the relations of power in the workplace. In this struggle, some of the dining hall workers experienced a personal transformation as they worked to overcome employer opposition, ethnic and interpersonal differences, and social isolation. A few became politically aware and committed trade unionists who now devote themselves to the labor movement and its values. This transformation may be the most hopeful aspect of the campaign. It is a story that deserves to be told.

I was involved in the events at Pomona as a member of the faculty who had long been a supporter of unionization on campus. My intimate knowledge of the institution, the campaign, and the people involved provides a key perspective on the story. To research this article, I identified key organizers and activists among union staffers and outspoken workers in the kitchens. These informants also suggested other people who they believed had played important roles in the campaign. From this group I conducted eleven oral history interviews. Pomona College Board of Trustees members and the College President refused my interview requests citing “attorney-client privilege.” I also relied on published accounts, documents produced by the participants, my notes and writings made during the events as well as my own recollections.

Recent campaigns bringing together community organizations, worker centers, and unions in support of low-wage and immigrant worker organizing have received substantial press. The media success and dynamic spirit of such public, militant efforts have sparked optimistic assessments of the success of Service Employees International Union (SEIU), UNITE HERE, and other unions’ strategies. While some observers remain dubious, a number have written positively of the ability of these coalitions to reverse the seemingly inevitable slide of labor in the United States (Nissen 2004; Milkman 2006; Lichtenstein 2014). Such optimistic evaluations cite the way unions are mobilizing people who had previously been excluded from the labor movement: women, people of color, and notably for this story, immigrants (Avendaño et al. 2014).

For decades scholars and union activists have debated responses to the decline in union power and density—the unionized percentage of workers in an industry or the economy—in the United States and other countries. Consensus answers include moving from a service model to social movement unionism and organizing the unorganized, particularly neglected groups of workers such as immigrants, people of color, white-collar employees, and women. Solutions also include neutralizing employer legal advantages in the courts and legislatures, mounting corporate campaigns to pressure employers, and “rebranding” the labor movement to change worker perceptions. Finally, many suggest building broad political coalitions to rebuild a labor culture and, most recently, working with community organizations such as labor centers to reach new groups (Delgado 1993; Bronfenbrenner 1998; Clawson and Clawson 1999; Soldatenko 1999; Milkman and Voss 2004b; Silverman 2010; Rosenfeld 2014).

This literature suggests that unions win, as Kate Bronfenbrenner has shown, “when they run aggressive and creative campaigns utilizing grass roots, rank-and-file intensive strategy, building a union and acting like a union from the very beginnings of the campaign.” Comprehensive campaigns that also involve pressure on corporate leadership and the construction of coalitions are more likely to lead to victorious certification elections and decent contracts. The broad social movement is important, but key is a focus on the workplace, “to develop leadership and union consciousness and inculcate workers against the employer’s anti-union strategy.” A strong workshop committee, Bronfenbrenner writes, can mobilize workers “around the justice and dignity issues that matter enough to them to challenge the employer and win.” This can occur, she finds, “regardless of the brutality and intensity of the employer campaign” (2003, 41–42). Indeed, the pattern of initial defeat followed by victory at Pomona and a number of other successful campaigns indicates the importance of union commitment to a long-term strategy for organizing even the smallest of workplaces (Bronfenbrenner and Hickey 2004; Lepie 2014).

The success of grassroots drives depends not only on practical organization development but also on creating a union culture, a process that requires a deep knowledge of a workplace and relies on the social connections of organizers and of workers. Karen Brodtkin and Cynthia Strathmann explain that organizers and a strong shop committee can “counter management’s efforts to isolate workers by expanding workers’ social community beyond the workplace” (Brodtkin and Strathmann 2004, 10). Other studies have pointed to the importance of emphasizing not only issues of economic justice in organizing but also the development of strong labor identities that counter the dominance of the company’s “organizational identity” (Blader 2007). Similarly, workers are more likely to unionize when the employer betrays their trust or violates community standards (Zagenczyk et al. 2011). Unions succeed when workers identify with them, have a sense of community in the organization, and believe in their democratic character (Catano 2010). Identification is a key purpose of social movement unions and of community-labor coalitions.

Yet others have uncovered limitations to coalitional strategies and social movement unionism (Osterman 2006; Fine 2007). Kim Voss, for instance, points to the existence of “democratic dilemmas” facing the labor movement. For all the emphasis on social movement unionism since the 1980s, she finds that union growth, even when organizations follow a democratized, social movement model, has come from the “central role of paid union staff in directing and implementing the repertoire of social movement unionism in this hostile institutional environment” (2010, 379). Paul Clark responds—and Voss recognizes—membership engagement and the creation of a “union culture” remain central to union survival at a particular workplace and, by extension, in the society as a whole. The top-down strategy poses a problem when it hinders the development of rank-and-file leadership as well as democratic organizational processes from the local shop to the national union (Clark 2013). Union staff can be disconnected from workers, particularly when divided by race, education, and gender (Crain 1994; Fletcher and Hurd 2000; Milkman and Voss 2004a; Acker 2006; Nissen and Henry 2008). Finally, the emphasis on organizing new workplaces can

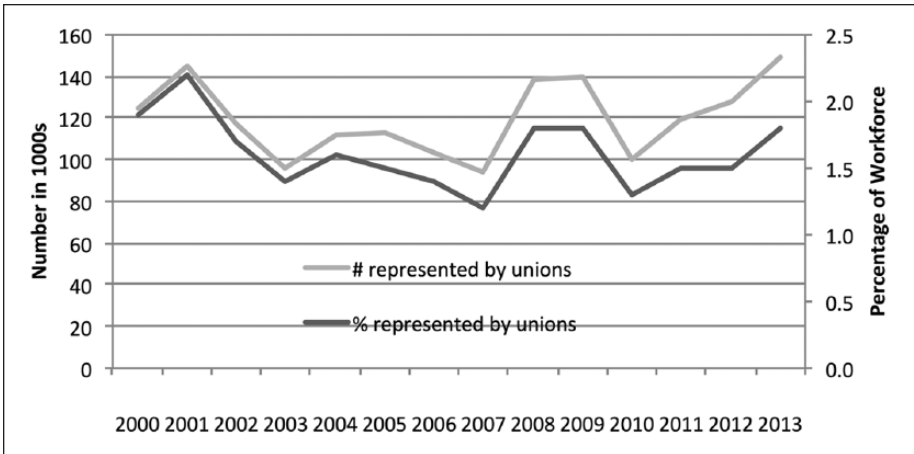


Chart 1. Number and Percentage of Private Industry Food Service Workers Represented by Unions, 2000-2013.

Source: Current Population Survey (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2014).

come at the expense of serving existing shops, reducing rank-and-file commitment, and thus making union gains fleeting. Though, at the same time, there is some evidence that unions devoted to organizing can maintain greater member loyalty. When it occurs, such loyalty undoubtedly strengthens unions and the labor movement over the long term (Gall and Fiorito 2012; Dawkins 2012; Plimmer and Blumenfeld 2012; Clark 2013).

The unions organizing in food services, which were or are part of the Change to Win Coalition, UNITE HERE, SEIU, United Food and Commercial Workers of America (UFCW), and the Teamsters (IBT), have adopted variations of the comprehensive campaign model. Representation in food services has grown in recent years, up by more than 50% since 2007, reaching 149,000 in 2013. This rapid growth may vindicate union organizing strategies and, more optimistically, could signal a shift in the prospects for labor nationwide. Nonetheless, this growth can also be termed incremental. The current union density, a tiny 1.8% of employed workers, is actually 20% below the levels of 2001. While a substantial recovery from the disastrous lows of the Great Recession when unions represented a mere 1.2% of the workforce, density has declined significantly over the last decade (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2014) (see Chart 1).

Aggressive organizing and comprehensive campaigns do make a difference, but not enough of a difference to reverse the fortunes of labor. UNITE HERE has indeed added 33,000 members since 2010, an increase of nearly 15%. This compares well with the Change to Win unions, which all shrunk over that same period, but UNITE HERE's membership is still below its 2001 pre-HERE-UNITE merger peak (Early 2011; Office of Labor Management Standards 2014). Overall, in 2012, the total

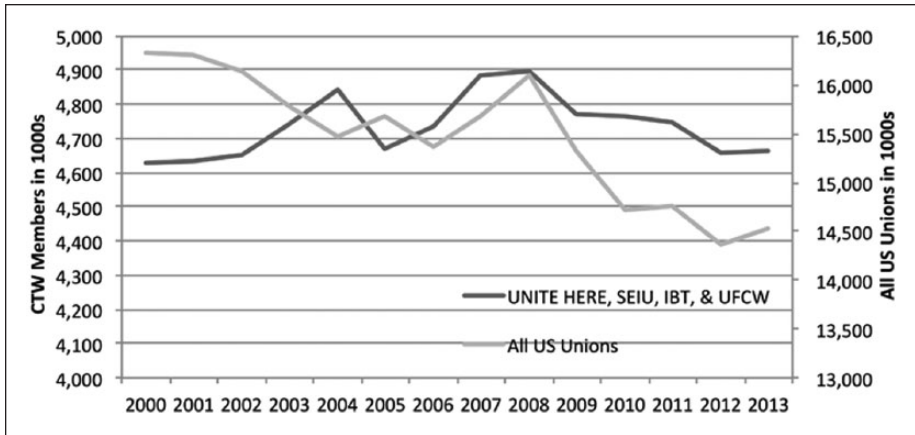


Chart 2. Members, All Unions vs. Select Change to Win Coalition Unions, 2000-2013 (in 1000s).

Sources: Department of Labor (Office of Labor Management Standards 2014); Current Population Survey (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2014).

membership of UNITE HERE and its former Change to Win partners that organize food services remained 200,000 below its pre-recession levels, a drop of almost 5%. This decline may be due to internal causes such as the split-up of UNITE HERE and its conflict with SEIU, but it may as well reveal limitations of union strategies and tactics. Still these unions fared better than most other unions. The overall labor movement shrank even faster—declining nearly 10% since 2008 (Office of Labor Management Standards 2014; Bureau of Labor Statistics 2014) (see Chart 2).

One key to the growth of UNITE HERE has been in campus food services, where union organizers believe a built-in coalition with students, alumni, and faculty can have a positive effect. As a result, in 2010 UNITE HERE launched a national campaign to organize college and university dining hall workers. Since then, they have organized 50 campuses bringing in 3,600 new members. They now represent workers at over 150 institutions of higher education (Skurnik 2014). The Pomona campaign provides a good case study of what worked and what didn't in a social movement coalition conducted as part of a national strategy. Pomona's story, while exceptional in some ways, reveals the challenges UNITE HERE tackled to achieve this growth. It also illustrates how and why the shift of the larger labor movement to a more inclusive and militant model of unionism has had only limited success to date.

Organizing in the Claremont Colleges dining halls began more than 14 years ago with a frustrated campaign. Until 2000 the Claremont Colleges—Pomona, Pitzer, Claremont McKenna, Harvey Mudd, and Scripps—jointly ran their cafeterias by contracting with Aramark, one of the “Big Three” food service companies. The Colleges, located east of Los Angeles in the suburban Inland Empire, are among the richest and most selective private schools in the country. Pomona, the founding college of the

consortium, has the largest endowment and the most students (America's top colleges 2013; *US News and World Report* 2013). Despite this wealth and an oft-stated commitment to "community," great disparities exist between the pay, working conditions, and cultures of the hourly staff and the higher reaches of the institutions. At the same time, immigrant-powered organizing campaigns, most famously Justice for Janitors but also campaigns at airports, hotels, and universities, had mobilized low-wage immigrant and African American workers. The labor ferment had revitalized Los Angeles labor and inspired upheavals around the region (Milkman 2006; Milkman, Bloom, and Narro 2013).

Challenging the schools' self-image as good workplaces, workers in 1999-2000 complained of low pay, abusive management, and difficult working conditions. They petitioned for card check to determine union representation, but the colleges refused. Pitzer College President Marilyn Chain Massey explained: "It is not in my power to pressure Aramark to sign a non-intimidation/neutrality agreement" (*Los Angeles Times* 2000). Benny Avina, a Pomona College chef who participated in that earlier drive, recalled that the activists then were unable to withstand the anti-union tactics they encountered (Avina 2014). HERE Local 11 joined the campaign but relied on local activists, faculty supporters, and students, committing little in the way of resources. Nonetheless, an overwhelming majority of faculty at all the Claremont Colleges signed petitions in favor of neutrality and card check. Militant students marched and rallied, occupying the administration building at Pomona and blockading one at Pitzer by chaining themselves with bicycle locks to the doors. In response, the Claremont Colleges' presidents, who claimed they lacked the power to pressure their contractor, simply cancelled their contract with Aramark and broke up the bargaining unit—each college would now manage its dining halls separately.

Despite the administration maneuvers, workers at Pitzer College affiliated with HERE Local 11 and won a contract in 2002 (Trisi 2002). Yet Pitzer, in contrast to its countercultural image and official commitment to "social justice," continued to resist the union after the contract signing, according to former Local 11 Organizing Director Jennifer Skurnik (Skurnik 2014). At the same time, Local 11 devoted few resources to serve the small shop or the Inland Empire region. In 2005 the workers voted to decertify the union. They now have no representation (Rodriguez 2014; Pitzer College 2014).

As the Pitzer shop faltered in 2004, student activists reconstituted a Workers' Support Committee, which had been the main organization supporting unionization. The new group quickly began publicizing problems in the dining halls at Pomona (Lopez 2004). The Workers' Support Committee became a center for activist students drawn to address the inequities they saw around them. Little open activity took place for years, but some students, though lacking in union experience, developed close relationships with the people who cooked and served their meals (Duberg 2014).

Workers complained to the students of a variety of problems, beginning with low pay. Raises had been few and far between. Benefits were available but quite expensive (Avina 2014). The low pay in the kitchens forced many to have second jobs. Christian Torres, who became a key rank-and-file activist, worked two full-time jobs, rushing

between Pomona and restaurants in neighboring towns (Torres 2014). After years of work at the colleges, some of the employees earned little above the minimum wage, receiving raises of a few cents per hour per year (Duberg 2014). With long breaks for summers and school holidays, workers scrambled in the off season. Worse, they avoided complaining because they needed to curry favor with management to hire them for the few year-round spots (Torres 2014; Araiza 2014; Avina 2014).

Workers had to please supervisors in a situation of confused authority that resulted from a complicated management structure. Pomona had hired the existing staff as its own employees in 2000 but contracted with Sodexo for managers to run the service, who in turn used an organizational structure inherited from Aramark. In late 2010, in the midst of the organizing drive, the College fired Sodexo, brought in a consulting firm, and directly hired new management. Yet this change to self-operation hardly simplified things. The dining hall workers gained new multiple layers of management above them, including direct supervisors, “sous chefs,” an Executive Chef, a General Manager, human resources staff, an Assistant Director of Campus Services, an Assistant Vice President of Campus Services, an Assistant Vice President of Human Resources, a Vice President Treasurer, the College President, and, ultimately, the Board of Trustees (Sisson 2011).

The economic crisis of 2007-08 brought renewed tensions as the College looked for ways to cut expenses as the endowment plummeted. In 2008 it appointed a new Vice President and Treasurer, Los Angeles Administrative Officer Karen Sisson, a Pomona alumna (Helfand 2008). Under Sisson’s management the College avoided making any layoffs, despite losing a quarter of its endowment value in one year (*Pomona College Magazine* 2009; *Chronicle of Higher Education* 2013). Still, the College froze wages and benefits and cut summer hours.

Rogelio Bobadilla, who had worked at Pomona since 1990, recalled that economics were a root cause of the organizing: “When we started as Pomona employees, we were guaranteed 240 hours of work in the summer,” he told a researcher from the Food Chain Workers Alliance. “The people decided to organize because [the College] didn’t want to give us the hours of work in the summer and they wanted to take away the holidays that they had always paid us for. We also organized because the health insurance was very expensive. For me, I paid \$326 per month for my family [of four]” (Food Chain Workers Alliance 2012, 44). Although they were spared lay-offs, Christian Torres recalls administrators proudly announcing new construction on campus: “They were going to [spend] I don’t know how many millions of dollars for this new project ... right in front of Frary [dining hall].” This was information the administrators apparently thought the kitchen staff would be happy to hear, but he recalls complaining, “Here you are telling [me] there is no money for my raise, for my job during summer, for my holidays” (Torres 2014).

The workers had also gotten upset at worsening conditions in the kitchens—a speed up that came with the introduction of more organic and natural foods, stressful relations with supervisors, unpredictable hours and schedules, continuing injuries, and a sense of isolation despite the College’s much-touted commitment to “community.” Torres, whose parents also worked at the school, recalls, “my mom, my dad, they

would get tired and say ‘God, this job is crazy!’ ... But they never felt there was a way to fix it. ... People would be like ‘God there is a crazy amount of work’” (Torres 2014). Social isolation of the lowest-paid workers on campus contributed to their sense of alienation from the institution. Student-turned-organizer Katie Duberg recalls that at one of the first actions, when students boycotted the dining halls, one of the cash resister operators told her, crying, “I didn’t know the students cared about us that much” (Duberg 2014).

A core group of workers began meeting in 2008-09 with the help of a few activists. By the spring of 2009 Workers Support Committee members Duberg and Paul Waters-Smith had begun talking with UNITE HERE staffer Noel Rodriguez, a College alumnus. Following UNITE HERE organizing techniques, Duberg and Waters-Smith provided support for a rank-and-file committee and accompanied workers on house visits and at meetings. The committee, notably Benny Avina, Maria “Jo-Jo” Garcia, Rogelio Bobadilla, and Rolando Araiza, however, took on most of the work by building on their pre-existing social networks. These networks, aided by work processes in the dining halls that required close cooperation in stressful conditions, fostered a sense of cohesion (Duberg 2014; Araiza 2014; Avina 2014). This cohesion, along with enthusiastic student support, may have led some workers to overestimate their group’s strength. Rogelio Bobadilla and a group of other long-term workers, however, were wary because of their experience in 1999-2000 (Duberg 2014; Araiza 2014; Avina 2014). Still they went along when the group created an independent union, Workers for Justice/Trabajadores para Justicia.

UNITE HERE staff, other than Noel Rodriguez, felt dubious about the independent union, organized with inexperienced volunteer students and lacking strong internal leadership. They were unwilling to put resources into the fight because organizing hot shops, workplaces where workers are already pursuing unionization, does not fit the union’s standard organizing procedure (Getman 2010). “We don’t do hot shop organizing: we make strategic decisions about who we organize and why,” UNITE HERE Local 11 Organizing Director Robin Rodriguez told me. The union leadership “advised Noel to tell the students, no don’t do this, don’t take these workers public because we can’t promise you that the union is gonna be there to back you up. This is gonna be a nasty fight. ... Don’t do it” (Rodriguez and Rodriguez 2014). Further the experience of 1999-2000 and other private university campaigns reinforced the staff’s suspicion that the College would oppose unionization. Jennifer Skurnik, UNITE HERE International Organizing Director, had been involved in the Pitzer fight. That bitter experience, along with memory of the protracted battles to organize Yale University that launched the modern history of HERE and fights at other elite private institutions, convinced Skurnik and Robin Rodriguez that Pomona would be a drawn-out struggle (Skurnik 2014; Rodriguez and Rodriguez 2014). Indeed, private colleges and universities have a pattern of being bitterly anti-union (Wilton and Cranford 2002; Getman 2010).

Workers for Justice moved forward nonetheless. On March 1, 2010, the group presented a petition, signed by an impressive 92% of the dining hall workers, asking for the College to agree to card check unionization. College President David Oxtoby

responded that the College would only accept a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB)–supervised election. Moreover, it would not remain neutral, although he added it did not oppose unionization *per se*. (This equivocal stance became the College’s official position on the unionization process for the rest of the campaign: it was not opposed to unionization but would need to “respond” to union claims.) In a public letter to the kitchen staff, Oxtoby wrote that the College supported a “process to decide whether to unionize . . . that is fair and free of intimidation.” Yet he added that he wanted “an honest conversation about the advantages and disadvantages of unionization” (Oxtoby 2010a). Top administrators never explicitly opposed unionization, but as President Oxtoby asserted, nonetheless, “the question remains whether a union is necessary” (Oxtoby 2010b).

The initial mobilization on campus, faculty letters, student petitions, meetings, and demonstrations for card check led nowhere. The College did meet fitfully with Workers for Justice and Local 11’s Noel Rodriguez through the remainder of 2010, but the parties made no significant progress. Frustrated, Workers for Justice gave up on the card check process in May, instead proposing a mail-in ballot. The College again refused. Vice President/Treasurer Karen Sisson insisted with apparent even-handedness that such a procedure “still leaves room for intimidation, from either side” (Gallogly 2010). The College proposed as a compromise an expedited NLRB-supervised election. When the students returned in fall 2010, however, little had changed. A series of protests kept workers and students engaged as the administration began implementing an active response to the campaign (Selsing 2010).

While drawing out negotiations over card check, the mail-in ballot, and neutrality, the College engaged in a series of reforms in the dining halls. They ended their contract with Sodexo, becoming a “self-op.” The College directly addressed employee complaints by raising wages and improving benefits, offering year-round employment, and hiring new workers to ease the pace of work. It proudly displayed its pay and benefit rates on the College web page. To carry out these reforms it hired Dining Services Manager Glenn Graziano in late 2010. The College also implemented new management techniques, adopting a “mission statement,” and establishing a “Facilities and Campus Services Advisory Committee” with staff representation. It even attempted to hire an ombudsperson to “listen to visitor’s concerns” (Pomona College 2013, 2014). The campus food services’ new “Mission Statement” emphasized community and “a climate of caring” in a “collaborative organization.” Apparently, a caring and collaborative mission was not enough for the dining services management since they also produced a “Values Statement” and a “Vision Statement” (Pomona College 2009).

While the Pomona campaign stalled, UNITE HERE’s grand strategy had kept it on the sidelines. The vast majority of schools contract out their dining services to one of three major companies, Sodexo, Aramark, or Compass. When the union leadership launched a dining hall campaign in 2010, organizers decided they needed to target these contractors directly. “Self-ops,” schools that run their food services on their own, were not on the union’s agenda. Within a year, however, international staff realized that a self-op fight could advance their goals by pressuring the contractors through the clients. They began looking for a campus where they could expect a dramatic public

confrontation with a recalcitrant institution, a fight that would stand as an object lesson to the contractors and the schools of the price they would pay for aggressively opposing unionization (Skurnik 2014; Rodriguez and Rodriguez 2014). Robin Rodriguez explains: “The clients of the subcontractors were always the biggest obstacle, potentially. [We needed] to demonstrate very publicly that we would take down a client” (Rodriguez and Rodriguez 2014). Robin Rodriguez became convinced by Noel Rodriguez that because Pomona “is progressive and liberal and puts itself out there as such ... it’s conceivable that we can find a path to victory there” (Rodriguez and Rodriguez 2014). Fighting Pomona now fit with UNITE HERE’s national program.

Yet even when Local 11 finally adopted the Pomona campaign in May of 2011, it failed to commit substantial resources. Robin Rodriguez admits, “we were not particularly focused or successful in the organizing in the campaign” (Rodriguez and Rodriguez 2014). They did hire students Duberg and Waters-Smith for summer internships but didn’t assign a full-time, experienced organizer. With the College moving dynamically to counter the drive, Robin Rodriguez worried that although Workers for Justice had gotten 92% of the workers to sign a petition a year earlier, “it’s not near victory” (Rodriguez and Rodriguez 2014; Skurnik 2014).

With UNITE HERE on board in spring 2011, Workers for Justice gave up on their demand for a mail-in ballot election and agreed to management’s proposal of an expedited election. They also asked that management sign a neutrality agreement before they would accept the College’s offer. This proved a new impediment. Negotiations over the details of a neutrality agreement took place a few times over that spring and summer, but the College refused to agree to full neutrality.

Officials explained that campaigning against the union was crucial to the College’s academic mission. Vice President Sisson reasoned: “We are an educational institution: we believe in the free exchange of views, and we believe it’s important for people to make decisions with complete information, and so we have wanted to make sure our speech during any kind of union campaign was not prohibited” (Booth 2011b). One senior administrator told me (incorrectly) in August of 2011 that neutrality would have prevented her from talking about unions or the unionization campaign in her classes (Silverman 2011a). Nonetheless, President Oxtoby promised the College would not hire union-busting firms or retaliate against activists. Instead, they would only campaign during the actual run-up to the election and have only a limited number of meetings to inform the workers of the management side. He described this as “partial neutrality” (Booth 2011b).

From the union point of view, “partial neutrality” was a non-starter. In the organizers’ experience the biggest anti-union push came during the final weeks before an election (Rodriguez and Rodriguez 2014). UNITE HERE organizers and the workers were adamant that they could not proceed without full neutrality. They worried about retaliation, company propaganda, and other efforts to undercut their organizing. Management refused to budge. Negotiations stalled that spring and did not resume until the fall.

Through 2010 and 2011 College initiatives wore away at Workers for Justice support. The hiring of new managers, particularly Glenn Graziano, got a mixed reaction

from many long-term employees: “That’s when the situation got really hard,” Rogelio Bobadilla explained, “The new manager came in very much like a despot. No one liked him” (Food Chain Workers Alliance 2012, 44). Christian Torres recalls being called into Graziano’s glassed-in office, in the full view of the back of the kitchen in February 2011. He felt Graziano was trying to buy him off with offers of promotion and with critical talk about unions. But Torres recalls: “I was being protected. . . . I talked to people. . . . He could see that if he would hit me, I would hit him back” (Torres 2014). Afterward, Torres and Rolando Araiza led a delegation to complain about the meeting to President Oxtoby (Gordon 2011). After that protest, Graziano left Torres alone, but “I would be working and I would notice that he is staring at me. And afterwards people would be: ‘Hey did you see Glenn?’ ‘No, what is it?’ ‘He was just there watching you. Man, he hates you’” (Torres 2014).

The workers I interviewed consistently complained of harassment and intimidation by managers, both long-term and ones newly hired as part of the reorganization of the dining halls. One of the well-documented effects of anti-union campaigns has been fear of reprisal among workers along with implicit or explicit efforts to buy off activists (Logan 2006; Mellor and Kath 2011). This was certainly the case at Pomona where workers already felt cautious about publicly discussing their grievances. The atmosphere was poisonous, Benny Avina told me. He recalls being “written-up” for exclaiming that he felt like he was working in a concentration camp because of excessive supervision (Avina 2014).

In response, Local 11 brought unfair labor practices charges against the College in the summer of 2011 for what it claimed were a series of anti-union activities: the firing of a pro-union worker, the denial of a promotion to another for wearing a union button, and the enforcement of a policy of preventing workers from talking with students during working hours. While the firing turned out to be defensible, the other issues were more problematic for the College to defend, particularly the “gag rule,” as student activists and the union called it. The College had posted a policy in July that “non-employees may not interrupt nor visit with employees while they are working” (Pomona College Dining Services 2011). The NLRB General Counsel saw enough merit in the claims to call for a hearing (Case 21-CA-064171 2011). In the end, Pomona and the union settled, with the College agreeing to limit its policy on work interruption and to post information on labor rights (Maltese 2011).

Despite the campaign’s responses, the College’s strategy began to show results in 2011. Perhaps most significantly, after the management changes and benefit and wage increases in 2010 and 2011, the organizing committee lost key activist Benny Avina. A talented chef who had worked at the College since 1985, Avina had been a prominent speaker at Workers for Justice events and in negotiations with the College. He quit Workers for Justice in January 2011. Avina told a student reporter that the reforms had won him over: “I think it’s going to be a lot better,” he said in late 2010 after the college replaced Sodexo (Valerio and Zalesin 2010). His change of heart about unionization, Avina further explained, came because “the union is not necessary anymore. . . . Things are getting better, because we’re getting what we want from the administration” (Gallogy 2011). Avina received special training and met with management

several times in what may have been illegal negotiations—though management denied such talks took place (Duberg 2014). Avina recalls presenting management with a petition for better pay, improved benefits, and more respect—but not a union. “They got very happy for that,” he told me. Avina thinks that management took advantage of his change of heart by moving aggressively against the union: “I feel very guilty about it. . . . I was a traitor” (Avina 2014).

At the same time, the union lost Maria “Jo-Jo” Garcia, one of the key worker-organizers. According to Duberg, it was Garcia who had been the emotional core of much of the organizing: “Jo-Jo was the person who would go and get in people’s face and her coworkers loved that, and she was bilingual and she would translate for them” (Duberg 2014). Then her pregnancy and the intense work in the kitchens exacerbated an old knee injury—which itself had been caused by an accident while working for Pomona. Unable to return to work for months, she was fired in February 2011. One student activist described the dismissal as “typical, and it’s totally unacceptable” but College spokesperson Cynthia Peters asserted, “There is no connection between Maria Garcia’s role with Workers for Justice” and her dismissal (Duesenberry 2011; DiMartino 2011). Vice President Sisson expressed frustration: “I see these statements that people are being threatened with being fired or terminated, [and] I think the way the College has operated speaks for itself” (Duesenberry 2011). Duberg recalls, “people were really demoralized” (Duberg 2014).

Workers for Justice lost members through the summer and into the fall of 2011. Although affiliation with UNITE HERE in the spring had brought new resources, it may have been too little, too late. Further, the Committee, encouraged by the organizers, decided to refuse the College’s “partial” neutrality proposal, further stalling the process. These delays allowed the management strategy to take effect. A year and half after the union had signed up 92% of the shop, Robin Rodriguez thought they no longer had a majority of the workers behind them (Rodriguez and Rodriguez 2014). Avina observed in early 2011: “It looks like just a few workers want the union, and they don’t have the support” (Gallogly 2011).

While the drive faltered, the College soon took a calamitous step for the organizing campaign, for the community, and for sixteen dining hall workers. Sometime in August 2010, a College employee supposedly wrote a letter alleging that President Oxtoby and Vice President Sisson had a policy of not checking work documents relating to immigration status, particularly the Federal I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification form. The whistleblower also supposedly claimed that the College had never checked work authorization (Lindt and Cohen 2011). (I write “supposedly” because despite repeated requests from students and faculty, the letter has never been released in any form.) Board of Trustees Chair Paul Efron, a Goldman Sachs partner, received the letter some months later and launched an investigation. The Board Audit Committee hired the law firm Sidley Austin to conduct the investigation. (Sidley Austin, an old “white shoe” law firm with ties to the College through alumni, has extensive “union avoidance” as well as immigration law practices; Sidley Austin 2013.) The College Human Resources Office quickly demonstrated that it did indeed collect the forms properly. Sidley Austin’s attorneys, nonetheless, insisted they must “re-verify” the

documents used to substantiate the I-9 forms (Oxtoby 2011a; Lodise et al. 2012). The Board of Trustees then authorized an investigation of the immigration status of every person employed at the College over the last decade. The attorneys, assisted by Human Resources staff, conducted “an I-9 audit” and asked for additional documentation from eighty-four employees, including faculty. Of these, they found seventeen whose documents proved problematic (Lodise et al. 2012). Sixteen of them worked in the dining halls, including several members of the organizing committee.

President Oxtoby gave the 17 little more than three weeks, until December 1, 2011, to fix the problems with their documents or be fired. The College never provided a justification for that deadline, and Oxtoby freely admitted that the December 1st date was arbitrary. There was no legally required time limit (Silverman 2011b). In the face of widespread protests, faculty and student resolutions, and lobbying by alumni and elected officials the College would not postpone or cancel the firings. President Oxtoby justified the short three-week window for correcting documents as an act of concern: “we were worried about taking too long because the concern was that if this received attention, which it now is—it is now out in the news media and so forth—that we have potential for the [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] ICE to come in and intervene, and that would be much more dangerous to anyone possibly working here who does not have proper documentation” (Booth 2011a). On December 1, the College dismissed the 17 amidst a moving demonstration that included a symbolic 17 civil disobedience arrests as well as a tributes organized by UNITE HERE Local 11. Despite the emotional support, Christian Torres, one of several committee members fired, recalls, “it was the worst day of my life” (Torres 2014).

Afterward the Board investigated itself and found, “the ultimate decision to conduct the full I-9 investigation as it was conducted was a proper one” (Lodise et al. 2012) Oxtoby also insisted that his hands were tied: “This is a very sensitive issue especially in Southern California, and many of our students and faculty are immigrants themselves or are descendants of immigrants. . . . The law is very unforgiving, and unfortunately we have to obey the law even though it really hurt the community” (Medina 2012). The fault lay with a “broken immigration system,” as spokesperson Mark Wood put it; “we can all criticize the law that compels the College to take action” (Woods 2011, 2012). Jeanne Buckley, who later became Board of Trustees Chair, wrote an open letter to staff lamenting “the unforgiving nature of U.S. immigration laws” for what “Pomona has been through.” Buckley added that all the members of the Board “were deeply moved by” the plight of the fired workers (Buckley 2012). The College offered the 17 severance pay according to a formula based on how many years they had worked for Pomona. According to organizers, this formula did not include the years working for contractors on campus, thus limiting the amount given. The College even offered free legal counseling—in downtown LA and Santa Monica—to the workers (Oxtoby 2011b). (I know of no workers who met with the College-supplied attorneys. The Santa Monica office is nearly 50 miles from Claremont.)

The decision to conduct immigration checks and then fire the 17 workers bitterly divided the campus. It convinced the staff, students, and workers that the administration would stop at nothing to prevent unionization (Roller 2012). All the union

members and staff I spoke with were convinced the firings were retaliation. It certainly looked bad. The 16 who worked in the kitchens constituted almost one-fifth of the workforce and included key committee members Torres and Bobadilla. Workers and organizers unanimously saw the immigration checks as retaliation against the union campaign.

Board members and administrators, however, consistently asserted that the immigration checks were unrelated to the unionization drive (Booth 2011a; Medina 2012). The US Supreme Court and the NLRB have made it easy for management to retaliate against union activists by setting a narrow standard: prohibited “retaliation” occurs only in the rare cases where employers explicitly “act with anti-union animus.” Since the College never stated it was acting against the union it was not clearly violating the NLRB’s anti-retaliation Section 8(a)(3) according to this standard (*Sure-Tan, Inc. v. NLRB*, 467 U.S. 883, 892 [1984]). Workers for Justice’s decision not to seek an election also limited legal options since retaliation during an election campaign is easier to demonstrate legally. The message from the College leadership was that their sympathy for the workers’ plight and their criticism of immigration laws along with the severance package proved that they were not firing the workers to intimidate them from unionizing. Indeed, before the firings, President Oxtoby told me and other faculty members that he knew the firings would inflame the campus—but the fact that he was going ahead with the decision anyway, he claimed, was actually evidence that the actions weren’t meant in an anti-union way (Silverman 2011b). Similarly, Oxtoby told a reporter from the *Chronicle of Higher Education* after the firings: “We’re trying to be supportive without breaking the law. ... It’s really ironic. ... This is the last thing we would have wanted” (Roller 2012).

Overall, however, the public response was powerfully negative, holding the administration and trustees responsible. Students camped out in front of the administration building. Several launched a hunger strike. Undocumented and other Latino students, many of whom had stayed on the sidelines, more actively joined the campaign (Ortiz 2014). Pomona’s faculty overwhelmingly passed a resolution condemning the firings. The resolution further asked that the College pay for reasonable expenses for the workers to regularize their status. Faculty introduced, but did not vote on, a resolution of no confidence in the Board (Pomona College Faculty 2011). Letters and phone calls poured into the President’s office. Dozens, perhaps hundreds, of alumni stopped giving donations. Activist alumni and workers crashed holiday parties organized by the trustees. National coverage in the *New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (the leading academic newspaper), as well as television and web news sources, brought unwanted attention. Claremont was in turmoil.

It was a desperate and depressing moment for the fired workers, for their colleagues in the dining halls, and for the organizers. Before November 2011, the anti-union efforts and improved wages had stalled the drive, but the firings devastated the campaign, creating an atmosphere of fear and resentment in the dining halls. Several of the fired workers returned to Mexico. Couples broke up. Rogelio Bobadilla, whom the College fired after more than 20 years of service, explained he “felt humiliated. ... It was the only job I ever had since I came here. ... I feel that they don’t appreciate [me],

that your sweat that you put in there is not worth anything. It's hard. I have my family, and it's hard to find a job now because of the economic crisis" (Food Chain Workers Alliance 2012). One was so depressed that she would not talk with anyone from Pomona. In the dining halls, many of the remaining workers blamed the union for causing the firings (Torres 2014). The committee was left with one member: Rolando Araiza.

The workers and organizers uniformly recall the time with painful emotions. Several began crying in the interviews. "It was an awful time," Robin Rodriguez recalls. "No one felt we could win the union. People were hopeless. And when they did that [the firings], they took away the last shred of hope that people had. ... And it was hard, when you are the organizer to not get sucked into that feeling" (Rodriguez and Rodriguez 2014). Benny Avina posed the problem to himself: "How am I going to tell someone let's keep fighting? How? ... because nobody's going to believe in the organizers anymore. They're gonna say 'you're doing this so another 16 people get fired again?' It was really hard" (Avina 2014). The best the organizers and activists could think to do was to protest and to try to provide some support to the fired workers. As to organizing and winning a union in the dining halls, it was unclear how the campaign could recover. "I remember sitting in my office," Rodriguez recalls, "and Noel came to me and said 'what are we gonna do, what are we gonna do?' and I said 'I don't know. Give me a minute, I don't know'" (Rodriguez and Rodriguez 2014).

Eventually, Robin Rodriguez realized that this shift marked a turning point: "We had this idea, this glimmer, it wasn't like a clear path, but we had this glimpse of the fact that our victory somehow lay in the fact of what they had just done. ... We have to take this moment and really go after them in this moment. Even though we don't have any workers right now" (Rodriguez and Rodriguez 2014). During 2012 the organizers and activists slowly rebuilt the committee and then reconstructed a network in the dining halls. Some of the newly hired workers, Crystal Flores in particular, became key participants. Importantly, Benny Avina returned to take a leading role after a series of intense conversations with Rolando Araiza, Christian Torres, and the organizers. To him, the College had shown its true colors (Avina 2014).

This glimmer of hope involved the passionate support of a wide coalition that began to extend beyond students, faculty, and alumni. One of the key people in the coalition was Elizabeth Russell, a staffer for Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE), a faith organization that worked with Los Angeles labor justice campaigns. She coordinated the efforts of local faith leaders and religious students, while mobilizing faculty support. Despite the religious leaders' gravitas, they failed to get negotiations started (Russell 2014). While the outside pressure appeared unable to shift the position of College administrators, the larger coalition provided a sense of support for the remaining workers. The biggest example of such support came when José Calderon, a retired Pitzer College professor and labor activist, and Maria Elena Durazo, formerly of Local 11 and then head of the LA County Labor Federation, helped organize a Cesar Chavez Day "Dining Hall in the Streets" in Claremont. Sponsored by the LA Fed, the event drew hundreds, perhaps thousands, to what became the largest demonstration and march in Claremont's history. Torres, who became the main spokesperson for the

Pomona 17, and Araiza spoke. It was an emotionally powerful moment that highlighted the broader coalition that the union was building with community groups, pro-immigrants rights organizations, labor, students, faculty, clergy, and alumni. "That was the moment we set the public tone of the campaign that was to follow," Robin Rodriguez explains; "we are the high road. You have done nothing but low road to us, whether that's daily inside the workplace on the job, whether that's firings—We're above that" (Rodriguez and Rodriguez 2014).

Yet for all its success in getting people in the streets and setting a high tone, the Cesar Chavez Day "dine-in" also revealed the weaknesses of the campaign in the dining halls. Benny Avina had cautiously joined the meal, but just 5 or 6 other current workers felt brave enough to go with him. The campaign was now completely underground at the workplace. There were no committee meetings for at least nine months, until fall 2012 (Duberg 2014). Eventually, the rebuilt committee convinced the fearful yet angry dining hall workers to sign up. It now included veteran Benny Avina, Rolando Araiza, and newcomer Crystal Lopez, among others.

A year after the firings and three months after the first new committee meeting, Workers for Justice delivered a petition requesting that the College remain neutral during an election. It didn't have quite the enormous majority of the 2010 card check petition, but it was signed by more than two-thirds of the workforce. Robin Rodriguez felt good: "When we went public again we had this feeling that alright, we've won. This is the apex of this campaign. The workers who had been crushed are now public again with [a] majority in December, December 2012, one year after people had been fired" (Rodriguez and Rodriguez 2014).

While Rodriguez, the workers, and the other organizers felt good about the reconstituted organization, the College made no movement toward compromise with them. Paul Efron, the Board Chair, had resigned in the summer of 2012, but despite the shift in the hierarchy, management avoided talking. Robin Rodriguez recalls trying multiple times to get Karen Sisson to return her calls. Tom Walsh, Local 11 President, made several attempts in the late summer and fall of 2012 but also got no response. Some faculty, including the author, carried messages back and forth, but to no avail. By spring 2013, Noel Rodriguez told me, the organizers expected a breakthrough: "We've got a majority public. We've won. We are just gonna hammer 'em now. Just hammer them and eventually someone in there is gonna pull their head out of their ass and pick up the phone and say 'Ok, how do we stop this?' And they never did" (Rodriguez and Rodriguez 2014). The UNITE HERE staff interpreted the College's non-communication as stonewalling. In contrast, various top administrators at the time told me they wanted to settle but were frustrated by divisions among the executives and within the Board.

The continued stalemate led the union organizers to seriously consider a strike. They set up a strike committee, prepared a strategy, and trained the rank-and-file leaders for a walkout. Then abruptly UNITE HERE researchers suggested a new direction: an election. They would accept the College's offer of an expedited vote to come before the end of the spring semester and the departure of students from campus. The researchers pitched the idea to International Organizing Director Jennifer Skurnik who recalls

being dubious: “Researchers always want an election” (Skurnik 2014). Robin Rodriguez also found it difficult: “Look I was schooled in the world [where] you have this long nasty fight and you have to do a card check. You can’t do an election in that context. It was very hard for me personally to get out of that mindset.” Yet she came around, though “it felt very risky when we made the decision” (Rodriguez and Rodriguez 2014). Duberg recalls her own response: “Are you f***** kidding me? No!” (Duberg 2014).

Yet the logic of an election—which many union sympathizers on campus including the author had been pushing for for some time—began to make sense to the organizers. Duberg worried at first: “What are we going to tell people? We were asking for neutrality the whole time.” She came around quickly: “If we are strike ready, then the organization can withstand an election” (Duberg 2014). The committee agreed readily. In my interviews, none of the workers seemed to think it was as dramatic a change as the organizers did, perhaps because they weren’t as steeped in UNITE HERE’s organizing culture. After several meetings with the administration to work out details, the union filed for an election on April 2. The College made no objections to the bargaining unit, and the election was scheduled for the end of the month—a remarkably short 28 days from filing to election, ten days less than the median for NLRB elections that year (NLRB 2014).

UNITE HERE committed a significant amount of resources for the election period. Organizers, workers, and students from California schools that recently had successful campaigns such as Loyola Marymount University, St. Mary’s College, Whittier College, and the University of La Verne, spent time on campus. Elizabeth Russell of CLUE brought faculty and community leaders to share meals with workers during their breaks. Local priests and ministers opened committee meetings with prayers. Student activist spent hours in the dining halls, showing support for workers and letting the supervisors know they were observed. Dozens of faculty signed a letter advising management against acts of intimidation. Hundreds of alumni wrote urging neutrality. Robin Rodriguez and the other organizers trained committee members on how to deal with captive audience meetings, harassment, or other anti-union actions.

The College made little effort to oppose the union in the final weeks. Someone put up anti-union flyers in a break-room. A few supervisors made anti-union comments. Managers tried a half-hearted attempt at captive audience meetings at a couple of carefully scripted sessions just days before the election. Committee members stood up to supervisors, telling them, “you can’t do this,” then walking out of the meetings (Duberg 2014; Rodriguez and Rodriguez 2014; Araiza 2014).

The intense efforts, the constant presence in the dining halls, the careful training of rank-and-file leadership, the mobilization of community support, and the large staff commitment paid off. On April 30, 2013, workers voted by a large margin for unionization—57-26, or 69% (Pomona College 2013). The atmosphere after the vote was positive, as I wrote to a network of concerned Pomona alumni:

A group of dining hall workers, students, UNITE HERE organizers, faculty, clergy and other supporters watched the vote count. Key committee members delivered emotional

speeches afterward and the atmosphere was celebratory—people cried and hugged. Lots of chants—*si se pudo* (yes, it could be done!). Pretty amazing to reach this point after the firings last year, all the protests and conflicts, the three and half years of the campaign and the more than 14 years since organizing began here on campus. It is a victory, undoubtedly, and should be savored by the labor movement and here on campus. But that it took so long, was so hard, resulted in people losing their jobs and the College losing respect in the community shows the challenges that labor faces in recovering its dynamism and making this a better country (Silverman 2013).

The College's behavior during the election supports administrators' claims that they were neutral about the workers' choice. However, the organizers offer a different explanation. "They had given up," Robin Rodriguez reasoned, "because if they had not given up, they would have made a run at this in some way. And they made no run" (Rodriguez and Rodriguez 2014). Yet the organizers had not realized they had won before the election. "One of the tests of whether or not you've beaten a company is they start talking to you," Noel Rodriguez explained more explicitly. "In this case, they didn't have their sh** together enough to start talking" (Rodriguez and Rodriguez 2014).

The College made no objection to the election, and the NLRB certified the results quickly. Contract negotiations began in the summer of 2013. "It didn't take us long to get a great contract, by the way," Robin Rodriguez exulted, "a really great contract" (Rodriguez and Rodriguez 2014). A little over two years after a concerted anti-union effort that included the firings of 17 immigrant workers, Pomona College dining hall workers voted overwhelmingly for their first union contract.

While there are still conflicts and unresolved issues in the dining halls, there have been significant changes. Manager Glenn Graziano left the College shortly after the contract agreement. Other changes are less visible but still important. Chef Rolando Araiza told a student reporter, "They're talking with us more now. ... After we signed [the contract] all this pressure was lifted on both sides. And it has changed the environment a lot. There's a lot more openness now" (Haas 2014). Although management and workers are still fighting over staffing levels and safety, Chef Vinnie Gamalinda told me that he felt he was now treated with respect and that after the contract signing the atmosphere in the kitchens had "completely changed" (Gamalinda 2014).

Causes of Victory

What then accounts for the course of the Pomona campaign? Was it the community activism, the student demonstrations, alumni pressure, and faculty resolutions that manifested the widespread outrage at the College's treatment of its workers? Was it the dedicated work of an active rank and file in a hot shop campaign? Was it the strategic decisions of a national organization following a top-down model? Was it the experience and creativity of the professional organizers? Was it the mobilization of the connections of Latino workers? Were the many years of the campaign and its multiple near defeats just the price of organizing in anti-union times, or were they the result of union mistakes? These factors all contributed.

The Pomona case supports Voss' insight about top-down unionism, Bronfenbrenner's description of successful campaign tactics, and Milkman et al.'s explanation of the social movement coalitions that mobilized immigrant workers in LA (Bronfenbrenner 1998; Voss 2010; Milkman, Bloom, and Narro 2013). Skilled and talented organizers devoted many years to forge a group of strong, competent rank-and-file leaders. An extensive corporate campaign pressured the Board of Trustees and President. The alumni effort to freeze donations to the College, the national and regional publicity, and the involvement of public figures and faith community required substantial coordination and resources. The pickets, marches, boycotts, civil disobedience, resolutions, forums, and other public manifestation were not as closely coordinated but, nonetheless, required intense organizational investment. Such a broad campaign could not have happened without the passion of dedicated organizers and the resources of a major union. The leadership of Avina, Torres, Araiza, Flores, Garcia, and the others on the committee played a central role. Solidarity in the cafeterias and larger community support, however weak at times, were also key to the success. Had the careful work of building up a shop-based committee of worker-organizers not been the core of the strategy, it is doubtful the campaign would have been able to survive management's charm offensive in 2010-2011, let alone the firings.

Still the limitations of the campaign and mistakes by the workers and the union made the process longer and more painful than it might otherwise have been. Workers for Justice took a great risk going public as an independent union. It manifestly lacked the resources to take on one of the wealthiest colleges in the country, one that had avoided unionization for more than a decade. UNITE HERE's resistance to hot shop organizing and its fixed national strategy delayed its entrance onto the scene. Union staff misread the College repeatedly, first as the school resisted unionization and then when it gave up the fight. Both sides repeatedly missed chances to compromise. Ironically, the College's appalling attack on the immigrant workers gave the union campaign new life. But for that disastrous step, the campaign might well have been lost.

The lessons for the larger labor movement and for UNITE HERE should be clear: this victory reconfirms that there is no easy panacea for labor's ills. It demonstrates that even in the most favorable circumstances there is no substitute for the development of strong rank-and-file leadership, the nurturing of existing social networks among workers, the savvy building of a broad coalition, the steady involvement of skilled organizers, and the commitment of resources to a campaign for the long run. Even the smallest campaign—this battle was over a bargaining unit of fewer than 100 workers—requires a major effort to counter employers' resistance and to build a labor community among today's workers. Yet the Pomona campaign also holds out the possibility that, even when employers engage in the most egregious anti-union behavior, there can be a path forward.

In the end, the dining hall workers at Pomona won their union and their contract. This victory came despite mistakes on their part and that of UNITE HERE. It came in the face of intimidation by a powerful and privileged institution. The victory has not changed everything, but it had a profound effect on many who participated. The

campaign transformed some of the rank-and-file workers into confident, outspoken people, not just at work but also in the rest of their lives.

Their empowering experience stands as an example of what makes the labor movement a movement. Benny Avina has pledged to continue to work for immigrant rights and for the people Pomona fired: "Even if we got the union it still makes me feel bad. ... We still miss them and we fight for them. And they are going to have an opportunity to come back in the future" (Avina 2014). Rolando Araiza is contemplating local politics in his home town of Montclair, CA. Crystal Lopez has learned how to assert herself in important ways: "Now I'm not afraid to speak my mind. I'm not apologetic for it because I have a right just like anybody else does and if somebody is scared I'm going to help him to not be scared or I'll speak for him if need be" (Flores 2014). Christian Torres put it in personal and political terms:

For me especially, it was a changing life issue. Now I see my life before Pomona and after Pomona. Before the union and after the union campaign. ... I definitely was the guy who didn't care about stuff. ... I would just find the easiest way. ... On my day off just sit in the house watching tv, not doing something productive for my life. After the firings, I pushed myself to not only do more stuff for myself, but for my coworkers. ... When you're in trouble the easiest way is not always the best way to go. If you want something, you have to work hard or work in order to get it. I'm not only talking about only the union stuff, but for other stuff. If it wouldn't be for the organizing, for me being involved in this, getting to know more people and to expand my world, I wouldn't get the DACA [Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals], honestly. ... Before, when I heard [of DACA] I was telling myself, no that is not for me. That's for the dreamers. But I didn't realize myself that I was a dreamer. (Torres 2014)

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to the interviewees for their openness and to Sid Lemelle, Gilda Ochoa, Miguel Tinker Salas, and Lowell Turner for their ideas and suggestions for revisions. The audience and panel at the United Association for Labor Educators 2014 Conference and *LSJ*'s reviewers also provided helpful comments. Bob Bruno waited patiently for the manuscript.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

References

- Acker, Joan. 2006. Inequality regimes gender, class, and race in organizations. *Gender & Society* 20 (4): 441-64.
- America's top colleges 2013. 2013. *Forbes*. <http://www.forbes.com/colleges/pomona-college/>.

- Araiza, Rolando. 2014. Unpublished Interview. Victor Silverman. Claremont, CA.
- Avenidaño, Ana, Lee H. Adler, Maite Tapia, and Lowell Turner. 2014. *Mobilizing against inequality: Unions, immigrant workers, and the crisis of capitalism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Avina, Benny. 2014. Unpublished Interview. Victor Silverman. Claremont, CA.
- Blader, Steven L. 2007. What leads organizational members to collectivize? Injustice and identification as precursors of union certification. *Organization Science* 18 (1): 108-26.
- Booth, Maya. 2011a. Faculty resolve to support workers; students, staff protest document checks. *The Student Life*, November 18.
- Booth, Maya. 2011b. WFJ accepts NLRB election for union. *The Student Life*, April 28.
- Brodkin, Karen, and Cynthia Strathmann. 2004. The struggle for hearts and minds: Organization, ideology, and emotion. *Labor Studies Journal* 29 (3): 1-24.
- Bronfenbrenner, Kate. 1998. *Organizing to win: New research on union strategies*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Bronfenbrenner, Kate. 2003. The American labor movement and the resurgence in labor organizing. In *Trade unions in renewal: A comparative study*, edited by P. Fairbrother and C. Yates, 32-50. Abingdon, UK: Taylor & Francis.
- Bronfenbrenner, Kate, and Robert Hickey. 2004. Changing to organize: A national assessment of union strategies. In *Rebuilding labor: Organizing and organizers in the new union movement*, edited by R. Milkman and K. Voss, 17-61. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Buckley, Jeanne. 2012. To the Pomona College staff. Claremont, CA, January 17.
- Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2014. *Current Population Survey: Household data, Table 3. Union affiliation of employed wage and salary workers by occupation and industry*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- Catano, Victor M. 2010. Union members' attitudes and perceptions about their union: Winning a representational election following a merger of four hospitals. *Economic and Industrial Democracy* 31 (4): 579-92.
- Chronicle of Higher Education*. 2013. Year-by-year comparison of college and university endowments, 2007-12. February 1.
- Clark, P. F. 2013. *Building more effective unions*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Clawson, Dan, and Mary Ann Clawson. 1999. What has happened to the US labor movement? Union decline and renewal. *Annual Review of Sociology* 25:95-119.
- Crain, Marion. 1994. Gender and union organizing. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 47:227-48.
- Dawkins, Cedric E. 2012. A test of labor union social responsibility: Effects on union member attachment. *Business & Society* 20 (10): 1-32.
- Delgado, Héctor L. 1993. *New immigrants, old unions: Organizing undocumented workers in Los Angeles*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- DiMartino, Mediha Fejzagic. 2011. Motive for pending termination of dining hall employee questioned at Pomona College. *Inland Valley Daily Bulletin*, January 19.
- Duberg, Katie. 2014. Unpublished Interview. Victor Silverman. Los Angeles.
- Duesenberry, Lisa. 2011. Voluntary termination of employee fuels pro-union efforts. *The Student Life*, February 11.
- Early, Steve. 2011. *The civil wars in U.S. labor: Birth of a new workers' movement or death throes of the old?* Chicago: Haymarket Books.
- Fine, Janice. 2007. A marriage made in heaven? Mismatches and misunderstandings between worker centres and unions. *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 45 (2): 335-60.

- Fletcher, Bill, Jr., and Richard W. Hurd. 2000. Is organizing enough? Race, gender, and union culture. *New Labor Forum* 6:58-67.
- Flores, Crystal. 2014. Unpublished Interview. Victor Silverman. Claremont, CA.
- Food Chain Workers Alliance. 2012. *The hands that feed us: Challenges and opportunities for workers along the food chain*. <http://foodchainworkers.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Hands-That-Feed-Us-Report.pdf>.
- Gall, Gregor, and Jack Fiorito. 2012. Union commitment and activism in Britain and the United States. *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 50 (2): 189-213.
- Gallogly, Ian. 2010. Workers for justice at standstill with administration. *The Student Life*, September 24.
- Gallogly, Ian. 2011. Pomona cuts employee insurance premiums. *The Student Life*, November 4.
- Gamalinda, Vinnie. 2014. Unpublished Interview. Victor Silverman. Claremont, CA.
- Getman, Julius G. 2010. *Restoring the power of unions: It takes a movement*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Gordon, Sam. 2011. Oxtoby's e-mail illustrates unchecked power of the administration. *The Student Life*, April 7.
- Haas, Wes. 2014. Union contract settled between Pomona, workers. *The Student Life*, February 7.
- Helfand, Duke. 2008. L.A. official to join Pomona College. *Los Angeles Times*, March 26.
- Lepie, Jonathan. 2014. Is there a winning formula for union organizing? *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal* 26 (2): 137-52.
- Lichtenstein, Nelson. 2014. Two roads forward for labor: The AFL-CIO's new agenda. *Dissent* 61 (1): 54-58.
- Lindt, Marketa, and Ronald C. Cohen. 2011. To: The Pomona College community. Chicago, December 6.
- Lodise, Margaret, Jeanne Buckley, Paul Eckstein, and Stewart Smith. 2012. *Pomona College board of trustees: Report of board review committee on work authorization investigation*. Pomona, CA: Pomona College.
- Logan, John. 2006. The union avoidance industry in the United States. *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 44 (4): 651-75.
- Lopez, Andres. 2004. Worker's support committee. March 11.
- Los Angeles Times*. 2000. Students take over Pitzer College office. April 28, p. 4.
- Maltese, Michael. 2011. Workers file unfair labor practice charges against Pomona. *The Student Life*, September 15.
- Medina, Jennifer. 2012. Immigrant worker firings unsettle a college campus. *New York Times*, February 1.
- Mellor, Steven, and Lisa M. Kath. 2011. Fear of reprisal: Assessing the effectiveness of perceived anti-unionism. *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal* 23 (2): 117-29.
- Milkman, Ruth. 2006. *L.A. story: Immigrant workers and the future of the U.S. labor movement*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Milkman, Ruth, Joshua Bloom, and Victor Narro. 2013. *Working for justice: The L.A. model of organizing and advocacy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Milkman, Ruth, and Kim Voss. 2004a. Introduction. In *Rebuilding labor: Organizing and organizers in the new union movement*, edited by R. Milkman and K. Voss. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Milkman, Ruth, and Kim Voss. 2004b. *Rebuilding labor: Organizing and organizers in the new union movement*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

- National Labor Relations Board. 2014. *Median days from petition to election*. <http://www.nlr.gov/news-outreach/graphs-data/petitions-and-elections/median-days-petition-election>.
- Nissen, Bruce. 2004. The effectiveness and limits of labor-community coalitions: Evidence from South Florida. *Labor Studies Journal* 29 (1): 67-88.
- Nissen, Bruce, and Sherman Henry. 2008. The legacy of racism: A case study of continuing racial impediments to union effectiveness. *Labor Studies Journal* 33 (4): 349-70.
- Office of Labor Management Standards. 2014. Union reporting history. In *Online public disclosure room*. Washington, DC: Department of Labor.
- Ortiz, Diana. 2014. Unpublished Interview. Victor Silverman. Claremont, CA.
- Osterman, Paul. 2006. Community organizing and employee representation. *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 44 (4): 629-49.
- Oxtoby, David. 2010a. Response to petitions. March 3.
- Oxtoby, David. 2010b. To the Pomona College community. March 12.
- Oxtoby, David. 2011a. Fwd: Legal resources. November 9.
- Oxtoby, David. 2011b. To the Pomona College community. November 8.
- Pitzer College. 2014. History and mission. <http://www.pitzer.edu/about/>.
- Plimmer, Geoff, and Stephen Blumenfeld. 2012. Trade union delegate leadership and membership commitment. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* 33 (8): 750-62.
- Pomona College. 2009. Facilities and campus services [mission statement]. <http://pomona.edu/administration/communications/special-features/unionization-efforts/files/facilities-and-campus-services-mission-statement.pdf>.
- Pomona College. 2013. *A report on unionization efforts in Pomona College dining services: Summary update*. <http://pomona.edu/administration/communications/special-features/unionization-efforts/index.aspx>.
- Pomona College. 2014. Ombuds roles and functions. <http://www.pomona.edu/administration/ombuds-office/role-functions.aspx>.
- Pomona College Dining Services. 2011. Dining services policy on non-employees: Implemented summer 2011. <http://www.pomona.edu/administration/communications/special-features/unionization-efforts/files/policy-on-non-employees-nov2011.pdf>.
- Pomona College Faculty. 2011. Minutes of the Pomona College faculty meeting, December 7, 2011. In the possession of the author.
- Pomona College Magazine*. 2009. The downside: Finances/Pomona and the economic downturn. winter.
- Rodriguez, Noel. 2014. Unpublished Interview. Victor Silverman. Claremont, CA.
- Rodriguez, Robin, and Noel Rodriguez. 2014. Unpublished Interview. Victor Silverman. La Cañada, CA.
- Roller, Emma. 2012. Firing of workers who failed to provide documents divides Pomona College. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 12.
- Rosenfeld, Jake. 2014. *What unions no longer do*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Russell, Elizabeth. 2014. Unpublished Interview. Victor Silverman. Claremont, CA.
- Selsing, Justine. 2010. Workers for Justice rallies support. *The Student Life*, October 22.
- Sidley Austin. 2013. *Labor management and union avoidance*. <http://www.sidley.com/en-US/labormanagement/>.
- Silverman, Victor. 2010. Whither or wither global labour? *Labour/Le Travail* 65:149-60.
- Silverman, Victor. 2011a. Notes of conversation. In author's possession.
- Silverman, Victor. 2011b. Notes of meeting. In author's possession.
- Silverman, Victor. 2013. Re: Oxtoby's letter, word from an expert, May 2.

- Sisson, Karen. 2011. Under new management! The transition to Pomona College dining services, January 14.
- Skurnik, Jennifer. 2014. Unpublished Interview. Victor Silverman. Los Angeles.
- Soldatenko, Maria Angelina. 1999. Made in the USA: Latinas/os, garment work and ethnic conflict in Los Angeles' sweat shops. *Cultural Studies* 13 (2): 319-34.
- Torres, Christian. 2014. Unpublished Interview. Victor Silverman. Claremont, CA.
- Trisi, Danilo. 2002. Fwd: Boicot del dining hall de Pitzer, April 4.
- US News and World Report*. 2013. Pomona College.. <http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/pomona-college-1173>.
- Valerio, Lauri, and Jeff Zalesin. 2010. New unionization efforts by workers for justice as dining halls change hands. *The Student Life*, November 19.
- Voss, Kim. 2010. Democratic dilemmas: Union democracy and union renewal. *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research* 16 (3): 369-82.
- Wilton, Robert D., and Cynthia Cranford. 2002. Toward an understanding of the spatiality of social movements: Labor organizing at a private university in Los Angeles. *Social Problems* 49 (3): 374-94.
- Woods, Wes, II. 2011. Pomona College rally criticizes demanding of dining hall workers to produce proof of legal residency. *Inland Valley Daily Bulletin*, November 5.
- Woods, Wes, II. 2012. Pomona College agrees to settlement with NLRB over dining hall workers issue. *Inland Valley Daily Bulletin*, February 11.
- Zagenczyk, Thomas J., Ray Gibney, W. Timothy Few, and Kristin L. Scott. 2011. Psychological contracts and organizational identification: The mediating effect of perceived organizational support. *Journal of Labor Research* 32 (3): 254-81.

Author Biography

Victor Silverman is a labor historian with extensive union experience. He is the author of multiple books and articles, an Emmy-winning filmmaker, and past chair of the History Department at Pomona College. He was active in faculty efforts to ensure a fair outcome of the union campaign and to defend worker and immigrant rights at the College.