

# UN TED

## WORKING FAMILIES



2016  
Platform &  
Points of Unity

# United Working Families Platform & Points of Unity – 2016

Adopted by UWF Members at the United Working Families Platform Convention, October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2015

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<b>Politics and Independent Political Action</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Public Education</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Safe and Strong Communities</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Public Services, Public Assets and Progressive Revenue</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Housing</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Jobs and Wages</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Racial Justice</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Gender Justice</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Environmental Justice</b>	<b>11</b>

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United Working Families affiliate members:

Action Now, Chicago Teachers Union, Cook County College Teachers Union, Grassroots Illinois Action, SEIU Healthcare Illinois & Indiana, Workers United Chicago Midwest Regional Joint Board, 22<sup>nd</sup> Ward Independent Political Organization, 33<sup>rd</sup> Ward Working Families

# United Working Families Platform & Points of Unity

1. **Politics and Independent Political Action:** We believe that the two party political system in the United States is undemocratic, dominated by the wealthy and their corporations, and fundamentally ignores the voices and needs of working class communities, especially people of color. We support expanding voting rights and access to the political process for working people and our organizations and encourage all to register and vote.

United Working Families aims to be a political organization led by working people. We aim to take the political action needed to win the demands of our communities and coworkers, affect social change, and challenge the control of politics by corporations and the major parties. We do not believe it is possible for working communities to win the progressive changes we need without our own political organizations. UWF will recruit and develop our own candidates out of progressive social movements and use a broad array of electoral strategies to fight for working people's political power. We condemn cutbacks to public services and attacks on organized labor, whether from Republicans or Democrats. We call for a system of public campaign financing that enables democracy to help level a playing field tilted in favor of billionaires and corporations.

We declare our commitment to form a new political party, independent of corporate control, with a grounding in working-class communities and leadership from the emerging American majority – Black, Latino and Asian, female, queer, and young. We see the recognition and support of black leadership and engagement in independent politics as

primary in building a successful progressive political movement in this country and commit ourselves to popularizing the need for independent organization and action in our communities and workplaces.

2. **Public Education:** Children in all communities have a right to free, high quality, well-resourced public education. We believe in real democratic voice and fair representation in our schools and district wide. We demand an elected representative school board. Schools are pillars of thriving communities. Organized parents, students and educators are essential to improving schools, attacking racial disparities in education and winning the resources we need to have truly great, sustainable community schools.

Private interests and profit motives have no place in public education and are opposed to students' interests. We call for an immediate stop to the expansion of charter schools, privatization and high stakes standardized testing and oppose the racism of the school-to-prison pipeline by demanding equity, restorative justice and social supports in our schools.

We stand for universal access to early childhood education and childcare. Free, full day childcare, preschool and early childhood programs must be available to all families and communities.

Higher education is a public good that contributes to the economic development, political participation, and cultural enrichment of the community. We call for tuition free, high quality, well-resourced, and sufficiently staffed public community colleges and universities. We call for elected boards of trustees for all community colleges and universities across Illinois so that these boards are accountable to the people they represent. We call for mandating that at least 75% of all courses taught at public universities and community

colleges be taught by full-time and tenure-track faculty. We support unionization and living wages for all adjunct faculty and staff.

- 3. Safe and Strong Communities:** We believe that everyone has a right to live in vibrant, safe and strong neighborhoods. We believe that our elected leaders at all levels have a responsibility to help build communities where all of our people can live and thrive – and that human needs and democratic self-governance must always come before corporate greed and profit. Sustainable community schools can be a center of fulfilling larger neighborhood needs – including but not limited to after-school programs, ongoing adult education, and summer programs for youth. We demand investment in community building – not only programs that nourish the mind and body, but real restorative justice and resources to build community networks that can allow all of our people to have a voice and a say in how their communities are built and rebuilt. We need to fully fund summer jobs programs for our youth, and ensure that parents and families in all of our neighborhoods have access to a full, birth to 12<sup>th</sup> grade network of care, education, after school care and recreational programs to allow our communities to live up to their greatest potential.

We demand an end to discriminatory and inequitable policing practices – with full transparency of policing data and an end to stop and frisk and other forms of racial profiling as first steps. We need to fully embrace restorative justice as a framework for keeping our neighborhoods safe – to emphasize the “justice” in the criminal justice system. We demand a juvenile justice system that works to defuse conflict and provide opportunity for our young people, and not one that locks up and criminalizes far too many of our black and brown youth for no crime more than their existence. We demand local, democratic supervision of police through

elected civilian police boards – with real power to set priorities and enforce practices.

- 4. Public Services, Public Assets and Progressive Revenue:** We believe that the protection and expansion of public assets and services is a necessary building block of democracy. Government plays an essential role in making society function fairly and equitable – and attacks on the public sector are attacks on all of us. Privatization takes from communities that are hurting the most, and limits the options for meaningful voice and self-determination for working people. We not only must stop cuts to vital programs, but fight for dramatic expansions of services like mental health, childcare, and other programs necessary to meet pressing and growing needs.

When public jobs are lost, our neighborhoods and communities as a whole suffer the consequences. We demand an end to public sector privatization and layoffs that only serve to displace and damage our neighborhoods, particularly in black and brown communities.

Attacks on public resources through austerity, defunding and privatization serve to place more and more decisions about the public good into private hands. These actions reduce the influence of working people, especially people of color, over social decisions – the services, infrastructure and economy that impact all of our lives

For decades the wealthy and their corporations have used their political influence to slash their tax obligations and drain profit from public programs and assets, then call for us to “live within our means.” While the ultra-wealthy are making the decisions that determine what resources are available for the common good, we cannot start from a discussion of “what we can afford.” We will call for public services that meet real human and social needs. We will demand that our economy,

tax system and public resources must be reorganized to meet those needs.

It is impossible to provide the schools students deserve, the safety and stability communities need, or the housing, jobs and healthcare that should be a human right without a dramatic redistribution of wealth. We need a tax system that redistributes wealth, challenges those profiting from human suffering, works against growing income inequality and expands democratic voice on the economy. Our demands include: a progressive income tax, a financial transaction tax, and an end to corporate subsidies and loopholes that provide no tangible benefits for our communities. We must reign in the financial sector, whose increasing power in politics has gone hand in hand with increased profits – profits made off of the tax money paid by working families everywhere. We support the establishment of a single payer healthcare system – “Medicare for All” – in Illinois and across the country. We believe in the right of women to the healthcare options of their choosing, and full funding for programs that provide reproductive health options for all.

- 5. Housing:** We believe that housing is a right and must be affordable and fair for all. We support streamlining and opening up processes for access to affordable housing, such as open voucher programs for more recipients, ending lotteries for affordable housing, advocating for transparency in the Chicago Housing Authority, holding banks accountable for foreclosed properties, and pushing for more community investment. We need accountability in the Chicago Housing Authority and other public housing authorities – including oversight by democratically elected leaders.

Funding for public and affordable housing must be increased – including expansion of revolving loan funds for low-income

homeowners, support for cooperative housing, and community land trusts. Community interests, needs and decision making must be at the center of development and planning, rather than prioritizing the desires of wealthy developers. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) programs must be drastically reformed, taking money from corporate development plans and putting them at the service of neighborhoods truly in need of investment and infrastructure. We oppose development and taxation policies that destabilize our communities and increase racial disparities through gentrification. We need community driven processes around development – with stronger requirements for affordable housing and an end to incentives for teardowns, condo conversions, and other development that destroys affordable housing in our neighborhoods.

6. **Jobs and Wages:** We demand a \$15 minimum wage and the right to form a union for all workers. Our economy has shifted dramatically over the last forty years – we need policies to address the “new economy,” and to ensure that all workers regardless of industry, immigration status or criminal record have an affirmative right to bargain collectively and earn a living wage. The expansion of contract, temporary and contingent work has devastated workforces and destroyed jobs in the name of expanding employer rights and profits – workers in all sectors need the protections of strong legislation to safeguard minimum standards of wages and benefits. All workers need paid sick days, paid parental leave, healthcare for their families, fair workweeks and scheduling, a secure retirement and a safe workplace. We stand against any and all efforts to weaken the rights of workers to organize and bargain collectively – whether under the guise of “right to work” or attacks on public workers’ unions, the backbone of many of our neighborhoods. We support workers’ organization at the workplace, the strike as a tactic to



empower labor, “non-traditional” union drives, and the broader fight for workers’ rights.

We believe that our communities deserve and need full employment – and that the public sector needs to be an engine for creating the jobs necessary to rebuild communities that have been devastated by decades of neoliberal experiments in austerity. We need the resources to prepare our communities for the jobs of the future: green technology jobs, to create sustainable neighborhoods that can turn the tide of environmental devastation that has an outsized impact on communities of color; infrastructure improvement, to improve our crumbling roads and public spaces; neighborhood development, to reverse the blight that years of disinvestment and racially motivated banking practices have brought to our communities. We must create real opportunities for those caught in the damaging web of the criminal justice system to provide for themselves and their families – expanding job training programs and employment opportunities to those re-entering our neighborhoods after incarceration. To that end, we support local hiring and training, and access for minority-owned business to municipal contracts.

We commit to fight for an economy in which all work is valued, and where economic security for our families is a fundamental right.

7. **Racial Justice:** Centuries of exploitation leave a legacy of labor, lives, and wealth stolen from African Americans and has stunted the development of our society, economy, and political systems. These distortions are central to the experience of working people today. United Working Families places the struggle for racial justice at the center of our work and politics and understanding the white supremacy at the core of our nation’s founding is key in our fight to win that

justice. A successful, progressive political movement for working people is only possible with self-determination for people of color and movement leadership by black and brown leaders indigenous to their local communities playing a central role.

The devaluing of black and brown lives and contempt for the voices of communities of color in this country is used to justify poverty, state-sanctioned violence against black bodies, cuts to public services and austerity, and the destruction of public education opportunities. The expansion of property foreclosures, budget cuts, divestment, layoffs and elimination of housing are doled out disproportionately to communities of color.

We commit ourselves to fight for the rights of immigrants – not only for comprehensive immigration reform and an end to deportations, but for equity in public services, legal protections, economic access and democratic rights to representation. The divisions between and hierarchy imposed on black and brown communities are a product of white supremacy, a power structure that seeks to maintain its hegemony through economic, social and cultural domination. UWF will prioritize campaigns with the potential for building Black/Brown unity, and sees that as a key step in the struggle for racial justice and political power.

UWF endeavors to work collaboratively with black and brown communities in all areas of our work to win more power and equitable opportunities. Together we will confront the legacy of slavery, Jim Crow and segregation while struggling against the prison-industrial complex, school-to-prison pipeline, the closing of schools in black and brown communities, the foreclosure crisis and the elimination of public housing, and for restoration of justice and reparations for the descendants of enslaved Africans.

UWF stands in opposition to Islamophobia, and challenges irrational fears of people in our communities based on religion, ethnicity, and national origin.

8. **Gender Justice:** UWF recognizes the intersectionality of gender, race, class, sexual orientation, national origin and faith in the ideologies and policies that we struggle against. Women and children are disproportionately impacted by poverty, service cuts, and a whole host of other issues. We stand for control and agency over our own bodies, and the free expression of such.

Every person, regardless of gender identity, is entitled to live in dignity and without fear. We are committed to fighting against discrimination in the workplace, in housing, and in public space, and to protecting access to healthcare and public services that should be a right for all.

9. **Environmental Justice:** The United States is a leader in world pollution and destruction of our natural environment. We oppose the control of environmental policy by governments acting in the interests of multi-national corporations and the protection of profit over the health and viability of our people and the earth. We stand in solidarity with working class and marginalized communities, generally composed of people of color, who are victims of environmental racism which threatens their health and well-being. We believe that communities and workers must control the policies and actions that determine the future of our planet if we are to reorganize our economy in ways that make it possible to protect and sustain our environment and society.

# UNITED WORKING FAMILIES

## Fight for political power for working people!



Our political system and both major parties are dominated by the rich. To challenge their racist, anti-worker program and win the political power to put the needs of our communities ahead of profit, we must build *our own* political organizations.

Join UWF and help build an independent political organization that can organize for political power and recruit, train and run progressive candidates that come from our communities and movements!

United Working Families is bringing together working families, community organizations, union members, and progressive activists into a common political organization to fight for racial, social and economic justice.

For more information:

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