

# THE PARTY LINE

United Working Families Newsletter / Summer 2019

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## VICTORY!

Ten UWF members headed to Chicago City council

# THE PARTY LINE

*The Party Line* is published by United Working Families, an independent political organization by and for the 99%. *The Party Line* is published twice a year with content from the member communications committee.

Let us know what you think, or submit a piece of your own:  
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*Cover Photo:* Desmon Yancy  
2019 Movement Leader Fellow Parrish Brown celebrating our electoral victories at the UWF Inauguration Bash in May.

## Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Member,

This spring, our electoral victories stunned the city and the nation. The Chicago City Council now contains ten United Working Families members, including six Democratic Socialists.

As we discussed at our New Member Orientation in June, these victories were years in the making—from the Chicago teachers' strike to Occupy Wall Street to the fights against closing schools and mental health clinics. These struggles crystallized the need for us to run our own people, to challenge complacent incumbents, and to build our own party.

We're using five basic principles that to guide us in what it means to build a party:

We don't have many good models for what it means to build a party in the U.S. At our New Member Orientation, we offered five basic principles that we're using to guide us:

- **We believe that our struggles need a political home.** Democrats have closed schools, shuttered public housing, and helped the rich get richer with corporate subsidies (pages 4-5). Instead, we want public schools, services, and housing for all—funded by taxing the wealthy.
- **We recruit, run, and elect our members to political office.** We train and recruit our members to run for office, and we start early to provide money, staff, and infrastructure (see pages 4-5).
- **We fight for a bold platform and recruit people to our politics.** Whether it's sending elected officials to the border to protest family separation, blocking the streets in protest of mega-TIFs, or running as a slate that spans the city, we raise expectations for what politics can and should deliver (page 8).
- **We use political office to build long-term organization.** Our Movement Leader Fellows recruited volunteers and donors during election season, and now—win or lose—they are building people-powered organization across Chicago (page 3).
- **We are built by our multi-racial, working-class membership.** Our members fund, build, and drive the day-to-work of our party. See pages 6-7 for updates on what our member action committees have been doing.

The Chicago elections made headlines around the country. But the measure of our success isn't the headlines—it's whether we can win the power we need to turn back the attacks on working-class people of color. We're on our way.

In Solidarity,

Emma Tai

*Executive Director*

# Meet the 2019 Class of Movement Leader Fellows!

By James Muhammad

Since 2018, UWF has built a pipeline of over 180 working-class candidates, campaigners, and organizers of color. Our Movement Leader Fellowship has been central to these efforts.

Through the fellowship, UWF trains people of color from the rank and file of grassroots social movements. Fellows are embedded in a UWF campaign where they play lead roles in organizing or fundraising, honing their skills on what it takes to run for office or run a campaign. Alumni of the program include 33rd Ward Alderwoman Rossana Rodriguez Sanchez, Party Committee members Anna Green and Kerry Lockett (members of SEIU HCII and CCCTU Local 1600, respectively), and labor organizers Rigoberto Campos and Alejandra Avila.

The eleven 2019 Movement Leader Fellows did powerful organizing and fundraising work this cycle. In this newsletter we feature two of their stories.

## Fellow Profile: Hope Pickett says UWF feels 'like home'

Chicago was a different kind of political animal for Hope Pickett, a professional fundraiser who worked in Seattle, Washington. Getting a fellowship with United Working Families (UWF) was the blessing she needed to help find her way around Illinois politics.

"I wanted to learn more," she said. "Politics here looks different but my job is to be in the room and be involved."

UWF offered Hope a fellowship in December 2018. She had never heard of the organization and was introduced to it by then aldermanic candidate Maria Hadden.

People in Chicago seemed complacent about politics, like "things are the way they are" and not much will change, she said, and people seemed to be ok with the "layers of corruptness."

The UWF program helped Hope hone some of the skills she already had and gave her new ones. The program taught techniques in analyzing data, how to

identify sources of money, the role of Political Action Committees (PACs), and generally how to build a successful campaign.

"I had never had a fundraiser host incorporate a personal story," she said. "Their story tells the 'why' of what they're trying to accomplish. One host actually told me they appreciated that I helped them to tell their personal story."

Hope established friendships with other fellows participating in communications, organizing, fundraising.

She said grassroots fundraising is hard but rewarding. Working for campaigns that get huge corporate donations don't fit Hope's style because "big donors always want something in return."

"UWF aligns with the things I value. It's an organization that feels good to me, like home. It's a brilliant group of people that has opened doors for me. It's infectious how much they believe in their mission," she said. (profile of Victor Negrete on pg. 7)



Photo: Desmon Yancy

The Class of 2019 Movement Leader Fellows, left to right: Erik Martinez, Anthony Driver Jr., Parrish Brown, Hope Pickett, Marissa Arrez, AK Alilonu, Katrina Ezejiyi, and Victor Negrete. (Not pictured: Ken Barrios, Honni Harris, Egypt Watson)



Photo: Desmond Yancy

**Our aldermen are headed to City Hall. Our members and movements are going with them.**

Maria Hadden  
Daniel La Spata  
Matt Martin  
Carlos Ramirez-Rosa  
Michael Rodriguez

Rossana Rodriguez Sanchez  
Susan Sadlowski Garza  
Byron Sigcho-Lopez  
Jeanette Taylor  
Andre Vasquez

## Beyond Election Day

By Kate Barthelme

While we are thrilled to celebrate the inauguration of our 10 new alderman to the Chicago City Council, we know it's just the beginning. Our 2019 victories were built off years of the hard work and deep organizing that comes between elections and this is the work we're returning to now.

We're continuing to build our power by organizing in our neighborhoods, our workplaces, and in our streets. We're ready to work with our champions in City Council to push a bold agenda that wins real change for working families and recruits more members to our party. We're ready to work with our members to build a democratically-governed political home that is funded by and for the many. And we're ready to recruit, run, and train those members to run for office and organize for change.

Here are just a few examples of the work we're doing to keep building a powerful vehicle for working-class politics:

- Organizing Fellows are continuing to deepen and build in wards across the city. We're planning a summit on August 3 for all the members and volunteers who want to start an Independent Political Organization or UWF chapter in their community.
- Members and staff organized two Policy Schools for our slate during the election season, and a Governing School for incoming aldermen the week after the election in order to hit the ground running in fighting for the issues we campaigned on.
- We organized our first New Member Orientation for all the folks who became a part of UWF through the elections.

Want to get involved? Contact us at [info@unitedworkingfamilies.org](mailto:info@unitedworkingfamilies.org).

# Our 100 Day Plan to Reimagine Chicago

By Ald. Susan Sadlowski Garza and Ald. Maria Hadden

For the past eight years, the political status quo has enriched tech investors, Wall Street financiers, and real estate moguls while black and Latinx Chicagoans lost their jobs, their homes, and their lives.

But 2019 was a change election. Across our city, voters ousted the corrupt political dynasties of old and opted instead for the promise of change.

Now it is time to make good on that promise. That's why, together with our progressive colleagues, we released a set of legislative priorities for the first 100 days of the new City Council.

Our plan includes:

- Addressing skyrocketing rents and widespread homelessness with three ordinances: "Homes for All," "Development for All," and "Bring Chicago Home." These ordinances will rebuild affordable family housing, restore public housing stock, and begin the process of raising taxes on the sale of multi-million dollar properties.
- Curtailing reckless TIF spending with an ordinance to return annual TIF surplus funds to our public schools.
- Limiting the impact of the city's unjust and inaccurate gang database with amendments to the Welcoming City Ordinance.
- A community benefits agreement ordinance for the Obama Presidential Center to preserve affordability, create jobs, and prevent displacement on the South Side.
- Raising the minimum wage to \$15 by 2021.

This plan is just the beginning. There is much more work to be done to make our city a peaceful, just, and abundant home for all of us. But these ordinances will immediately begin to improve the schools, jobs, safety, and housing conditions in our neighborhoods.

It's a new day in Chicago. We look forward to working with the new mayor and City Hall to make a Chicago for the many a reality.

*This piece was originally published as a Letter to the Editor in the Chicago Sun-Times. For the full 100 Day plan, please visit [bit.ly/UWF100days](http://bit.ly/UWF100days)*

33rd Ward Ald. Rossana Rodriguez Sanchez speaking at our press conference to release a plan for the first 100 days of the new City Council.



Photo: Aaron Cynic

## 2019 Elections...

by the numbers

**489,000**

doorknocking attempts

**111,855**

texts sent

**11**

Movement Leader Fellows trained and placed on campaigns

**\$58,000**

raised in grassroots fundraising

**35**

members trained in GOTV

**99**

new sustaining members

# Organizing Committee Spotlight: Meet Christine Dussault!

By Brenda Kissane

Chicago Teachers Union member Christine Dussault has been organizing in Chicago for about three years. She is currently an active member of the UWF Organizing Committee, which organized canvasses, phonebanks, and house parties for endorsed candidates this year. Christine emphasized the importance of organizing a “Get Out the Vote” (GOTV) bootcamp for volunteers a week before the election, so that volunteers had the skills to be effective through election day.

Christine organizes with UWF because we are working to create multi-racial coalitions to address the ways families and students have been failed by our elected officials. She pointed out how the housing crisis in Chicago poses a threat to public education.

“If we don’t start talking about public education and housing as linked we will be in trouble,” she said. “If students and their families cannot afford a place to live, public education will disappear.”

“We are at a pivotal moment in our city and if you’ve been contemplating getting involved or how to get involved, this is the time,” she continued. “UWF is an organization that is truly fighting for what is important to working-class people.”

Christine is looking forward to continuing the momentum built among UWF members after the election, and to growing as an organization.



Christine, far right, leads discussion at our New Member Orientation in June.

Photo: Emma Tai



Photo: Erica Bland-Durosinmi

UWF members celebrate at Jeanette Taylor's victory party in the 20th Ward.



Photo: Aaron Cynic

In February, the UWF Organizing Committee organized a south side canvass (pictured) and a north side phone bank for our endorsed slate.



Movement Leader Fellow Marissa Arrez makes a fundraising ask at the UWF Inauguration Bash.

Photo: Desmon Yancy

## Fundraising Committee Spotlight: Meet Minnie Bandy!

By Yesenia Lopez

Minnie Bandy joined the United Working Families (UWF) Fundraising Committee a year ago. She currently works for SEIU Healthcare as a home care provider and enjoys cooking during her spare time.

Minnie was born in Mississippi and moved to Chicago when she was three years old. She grew up on the south side of the city.

Minnie believes that everyone should be treated fairly and this has led her to get involved with numerous campaigns and UWF. Minnie describes UWF as a wonderful group with positive energy and is inspired by their unity.

Minnie is extremely proud of the Fundraising Committee's accomplishments in the last year, including the Holiday Party and Inauguration Bash. She is excited to continue the work with UWF and the opportunity to meet other passionate individuals like herself.



Minnie, back row, third from left, with the UWF fundraising committee. Photo: Ryan Kelleher

## Fellow Profile: Victor Negrete is doing 'great things' with UWF

*continued from page 3*

Victor Negrete worked on the 2016 Bernie Sanders presidential campaign. He also worked on the recent campaign of Rafael Yañez for alderman of the 15th ward. While on the Yañez campaign Victor accepted a United Working Families Organizing Fellowship, and that had a big impact.

"The fellowship was an opportunity to get involved and learn about UWF," he said. "There aren't many organizations like UWF in Chicago that's building relationships with other organizations to build political power."

While already working with Yañez, the campaign manager told him about the UWF fellowship opportunity. Participation would offer additional resources, training, mentoring, and a small stipend.

Victor, who works with the City Colleges of Chicago, attended a one-day UWF orientation in December 2018 at the start of the fellowship. He was teamed with other organizers and the relationships became "like family." He learned additional techniques and approaches to organizing work he was already doing.

Victor said he put his "heart and soul" into the campaign and the skills he got from UWF made the work even more rewarding. He learned skills in organizing fundraisers, canvasses, door knocking teams, organizing meet-and-greet socials, and training volunteers in a host of other campaign roles.

"Every campaign operates differently and I did a little bit of everything," he said, adding that he even did social media work.

Victor was especially impressed by the number of progressive aldermanic candidates UWF endorsed who won. And he's hopeful about the future of progressive politics in Chicago.

"The entire UWF experience was great. I would recommend it to anyone interested in political organizing," said Victor, who continues to volunteer as a UWF Organizing Committee member.

"I was happy to see the UWF membership take a lot of initiative in being leaders. It shows that when people come together and work together, you can do great things."

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## **SAVE THE DATE! SAVE THE DATE! SAVE THE DATE! SAVE THE DATE!**

**July 25, 2019**  
**August 2-3, 2019**  
**August 21, 2019**  
**October 5, 2019**

*Trivia for the People*  
*Training for Chapters and IPOs*  
*General Membership Meeting*  
*New Member Orientation*

In May, incoming UWF aldermen joined members of the Grassroots Collaborative in the streets to protest the massive "mega-TIF" giveaways to the real estate developers behind Lincoln Yards on the north side, and the 78 in Pilsen and the South Loop.

