

# THE PARTY LINE

United Working Families Newsletter | Summer 2020

Union Organizer Lakesia  
Collins Wins State Seat

PAGE 3

Meet the 2020  
Fellows

PAGE 6

Legislative  
Victories

PAGE 7



## RECOVERY & ABOLITION

Local uprisings fight for Right to Recovery and #DefundCPD

# 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 UWF committee members.

Let us know what you think, or submit a piece of your own:  
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## **United Working Families**

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An estimated 20 million people have participated in Black Lives Matter demonstrations this summer, making them the largest protest movement in US history.

## Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Member,

Arundhati Roy and Robin D.G. Kelley have called the pandemic a portal --an opening, a gateway from one world to the next.

The world we are leaving behind has been exposed by the coronavirus pandemic as unbearably cruel and unequal. Children are being shot and killed every weekend in Chicago while the police protect Gucci stores and Tesla dealerships. Entire families--grandmothers, parents, teenagers--have been killed by a virus whose rapid spread was preventable, but denied to our country's poorest Black and brown workers. The family members who remain are staring down at looming evictions, back rents, and medical and funeral debt.

What is the new world that is opening up in this moment? On the one hand, repression and crackdowns have sharply intensified. The police cover their badge numbers so that they can beat demonstrators with impunity. Elected officials who speak up against police violence are receiving death threats and anonymous hate mail. And local law enforcement agencies are collaborating with federal agents dispatched by Donald Trump, who seems increasingly likely to refuse to concede in November.

On the other hand, there are moments of hope, courage, and vision shining through. Since March, UWF members have moved thousands of dollars in mutual aid and supplies to people in need. In June, we convened an emergency Party Committee meeting to endorse the platform of the Black Abolitionist Network and begin immediately moving people to action in support (see page 5). Our elected officials are using their platforms to work together and fight back against police repression. Over 1,000 people registered for our August jail support training.

Like many of you, my politics have been forged and sharpened through the direct experience of mass struggle--from waves of striking teachers and school staff to the brutal beatings of young Black demonstrators by Chicago police this summer. UWF does not have its origins in abolitionist politics, but our leadership has also been radicalized and inspired by these struggles. We thank the frontline Black organizers, many of whom have been beaten and jailed by police, for pushing us to go farther and go harder, to adopt new tactics, and to ready ourselves to fight our way through the portal and to the other side.

In Solidarity,

Emma Tai  
Executive Director



# Union Organizer Lakesia Collins Wins State Rep Race with UWF Support

By Erica Bland-Durosini and Dixon Romeo

After 40 years of one family holding the 9th House District seat on Chicago's west side, one of United Working Families' founding unions, SEIU Healthcare, recruited a rank-and-file nursing home worker and union organizer to run in an open primary--and we won!

Voters in the 9th district, like the rest of the country, were tired of not seeing themselves in their elected representatives. Lakesia's story as a single mother of three, paired with her track record organizing workers for fair staffing and higher wages, was enough to win the trust of voters and volunteers alike. Every weekend, our campaign office was packed with UWF volunteers and union members eager to knock on doors on the west side, even when it was snowing.

On the campaign trail, Lakesia spoke about the issues facing her community in a way that didn't place blame but instead uplifted people's experiences as valuable because she understands that the problems we face are systemic and therefore need to be addressed holistically. I'll never forget as we prepared her for her first candidate forum, she was so nervous. When she got up on stage, the way she addressed the issue of public safety was so different from the rest of the panel of candidates. Instead of relying on police, she was going to target the root causes of violence, like unemployment, housing insecurity, and lack of mental health resources. We recruited one of our most solid volunteers from her performance that night.

What drew me to Lakesia is that she had done the real work--she risked her job, got ahold of the labor contract, joined the union, and organized her coworkers to take on the boss. It was clear that when she gets to Springfield, she will be unafraid and unapologetic and that's exactly what's needed.

*Erica Bland-Durosini is the chair of the UWF Elections Committee. Dixon Romeo is a member of the UWF Elections Committee.*



Photo: Erica Bland-Durosini



Photo: Ryan Kelleher

Left: Erica Bland-Durosini, Lakesia Collins, Jessica Angus, and Dixon Romeo turning in petition signatures to get on the ballot.

Right: Campaign team Terry Johnson, Erica Bland-Durosini, Lakesia Collins, Jackie Anderson, Frederique Desrosiers, and Ryan Kelleher celebrate victory!

# Fighting for our Right to Recovery

By Jesse Connor



Photo: Sarah Ji | @loveandstrugglephotos

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare gross inequities and the failure of our social safety net. In the wake of a skyrocketing death rate for Black Chicagoans, mass unemployment, and a looming housing crisis, UWF worked to bring together the Right to Recovery Coalition this spring, totaling over 50 organizations and 15 elected officials.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated Chicago's existing housing insecurity, and inadequate government response has led us to the precipice of an unprecedented eviction crisis. From the outset, housing organizers have responded in proportion to the crisis's scope, demanding the cancellation of rent and mortgages, closing of eviction courts, and housing of houseless people. A petition articulating these demands cosponsored by 48 grassroots Chicago organizations and elected officials garnered over 17,500 signatures, ensuring that the eviction moratorium, already lifted in many states, was strengthened and extended multiple times. Additionally, the Illinois Supreme Court closed loopholes that had allowed federally prohibited eviction filings to continue.

During the emergency session in Springfield, UWF State Rep. Delia Ramirez introduced a bill that would have canceled rent and mortgage payments and halted all eviction filings and foreclosures for the duration of the pandemic

and for 180 days after, as well as create a statewide housing relief fund. The bill garnered unprecedented popular support - despite social distancing measures forcing public comment to be replaced with a complicated procedure requiring one to create and submit a PDF, quick-thinking organizers created a system allowing about 500 recorded testimonies and over 3,000 electronic witness slips in favor of the bill, representing a vast majority all public comment registered during the legislative session.

Despite this massive push, the real estate lobby used its political clout to prevent the bill from being called to the floor for a vote. However, because of our organizing work, Representative Ramirez was able to secure \$396 million for a rental assistance fund.

We know our work is far from over. Organizers across the city under the new banner of the Chicago Tenants Movement are actively building up the infrastructure to shut down eviction courts and keep families in their homes once the moratorium is lifted.

*Jesse Connor is a member of the Autonomous Tenants' Union, one of the early endorsers of the Right to Recovery campaign.*



# Defund the Police

By Ken Barrios and Emma Tai

The demand to defund police and fund our communities combines anti-racism and anti-austerity politics in a way that has mobilized millions of people across the country. The movement has grown out of the anger at the government's refusal to provide relief for workers while it has eagerly unleashed racist police against Black people.

This has been made clear over and over again in Chicago, where police have been dispatched to beat protestors at the Christopher Columbus statue and defend Gucci and Tesla retailers while children in Chicago's poorest neighborhoods are being shot nearly every weekend.

UWF has connected our members to jail support networks to keep comrades aware of what jails people were being taken to and help them when they were released. The danger of police violence at our protests also led to the development of marshalling training on how to manage crowds, de-escalate situations, and de-arrest. The marshals are a layer of activists who are accustomed to danger and can help lead in self-defense against federal agents and fascists.

We have also worked closely with our elected officials to coordinate a political response to the police crackdown. UWF officials have been issuing statements aligned with the movement, critical of the CPD and the Fraternal Order of Police, and opposed to cooperation with Trump's federal agents. At the June city council meeting, the UWF alderpeople introduced an ordinance to cancel the CPD contract in Chicago Public Schools, providing further momentum to the fight for police free schools.

[Story continued on page 7]

**"Breaking the cycle of violence means that the city must invest in jobs, housing, schools, and healing, not prisons and police--and definitely not cooperation with a dangerous, racist, and repressive Presidential administration."**

Open Letter to Mayor Lightfoot & Sheriff Dart  
July 24, 2020

Photo: Ald. Rossana Rodriguez-Sanchez speaks at protest this summer  
Credit: Sarah-Ji | @loveandstrugglephotos

The Black Abolitionist Network

# #DEFUNDCPD



WE DEMAND...

- 1 THAT CITY COUNCIL DEFUND CPD BY 75% AND INVEST THOSE FUNDS INTO NON-CARCERAL SOCIAL SERVICES AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMS
- 2 IMMEDIATE CPD BUDGET CUTS, INCLUDING STOPS ON NEW HIRING, WEAPONS PURCHASES, AND FIRING COPS WITH MULTIPLE MISCONDUCT COMPLAINTS
- 3 THAT CITY COUNCIL PASS CPAC
- 4 CPD OUT OF CPS
- 5 CPD OFF OF CTA, AND OUT OF OTHER PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS
- 6 A STOP TO THE WEST GARFIELD PARK COP ACADEMY
- 7 THAT CPD DECOMMISSION THE RACIST AND ARBITRARY GANG DATABASE AND ELIMINATE THE CRIMINAL ENTERPRISE DATABASE
- 8 THE CLOSURE OF HUMAN SQUARE AND ALL OTHER CPD BLACK SITES
- 9 THAT CITY COUNCIL CEASE ALL NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE (FOP)
- 10 A STOP TO ASSET FORFEITURE, ENDING CPD'S ABILITY TO SEIZE PEOPLE'S PROPERTY
- 11 THAT PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS THAT DEFEND BLACK LIVES IMMEDIATELY CUT TIES WITH CPD AND DISBAND THEIR PRIVATE POLICE AND SURVEILLANCE FIRMS

SIGN ON TO #DEFUNDCPD TODAY AT  
[bit.ly/DemandDefundCPD](https://bit.ly/DemandDefundCPD)

On June 23, the UWF Party Committee convened an emergency meeting to vote on an endorsement of the Black Abolitionist Network's campaign to #DefundCPD.



# The Movement Leader Fellows Class of 2020

By Citlalli Bueno

When I was asked to write about my experience as a UWF Fellow, I thought about my way of thinking about organizing before UWF. I realized that the biggest highlight during this fellowship came from building relationships with people who understand what social justice is and understand the systems keeping us down. Organizing to its core is about relationships and before this fellowship I saw relationships as a one-way street where there had to be one big issue uniting people in a fight.

After meeting the people who make up UWF, including the other UWF Fellows, I learned that there's more to creating a strong movement. We are fighting against the systems of oppression that impact us in various ways. Organizing as a collective is what moves targets. People power wins and through different issues we can all find overlaps to work together in solidarity.

UWF is about the many and in building relationships within UWF I was able to see this first hand. This fellowship taught me not only new skills in organizing and electoral campaigns but it also gave me role models that I can feel confident organizing with to continue to grow as a person.

*Citlalli Bueno is a UWF member who lives on the southwest side of Chicago.*



## Congratulations to the 2020 Class of Movement Leader Fellows!

Brenda Bedolla  
Citlalli Bueno  
Alexandra Desrosiers  
Anais Donald

Irene Lopez  
Dixon Romeo  
Jonathan Wilson  
Lanessa "Ling" Young



# Leadership in Action: UWF Elected Officials Secure Major Wins

By Emma Tai

UWF elected officials are standing with the young Black and indigenous organizers in Chicago who are rising up against white supremacy, demanding that we defund the police and fund the public education, housing, and mental health services our people need. Their leadership and victories are proof that we can and should do politics differently--and that we need more public officials like them! Read on for some of the major achievements they've secured recently.

## Justice for Black Lives Resolution

Cook County Commissioner Brandon Johnson successfully passed a resolution calling on Cook County Board to divest from policing and jails, and reinvest in Black and Brown communities most impacted by violence and mass incarceration. It is the first significant step taken by local government that heeds the call to defund the police and to #DefundCCJ.

## Cash Assistance to Renters

On top of the \$396 million in state funding for rental and mortgage assistance won by State Rep. Delia Ramirez and State Sen. Robert Peters this spring, Cook County Commissioner Alma Anaya has co-sponsored a resolution for an additional \$40 million in rental and mortgage assistance from Cook County.

## Protecting Communities from Eviction and Displacement

Ald. Byron Sigcho-Lopez, Ald. Rossana Rodriguez and Ald. Daniel LaSpata strengthened the Fair Notice Ordinance to curb evictions during the pandemic. Working with the Obama CBA Coalition, Ald. Jeanette Taylor has introduced a Community Benefits Agreement housing ordinance to protect long-term Woodlawn residents from displacement.



## Defund the Police, continued from page 5

By Ken Barrios and Emma Tai

Although many of our elected officials have received anonymous hate mail and threats, this summer has proved that there is a massive, fearless, multi-racial army that is ready to take direct action behind abolitionist demands that will save Black lives, and save all of our lives. UWF has endorsed the demands of the Black Abolitionist Network (see inset on page 5) and is moving in solidarity with the movement to win as much as we can from this moment.

*Ken Barrios is a member of 33rd Ward Working Families and Emma Tai is the Executive Director of United Working Families. Ken and Emma are both members of the Right to Recovery Communications Working Group.*



## United Working Families

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## Delegate Elections

By Jonathan Wilson

It is election time at United Working Families, as the newest round of members are being nominated to be at-large delegates for the Party Committee. Once delegates are elected, they have the privilege to vote on endorsements for city, county and state officials and also community-based campaigns like the Right to Recovery. Delegates on the Party Committee also decide on UWF's annual budget, which supports the powerful activism and leadership development we foster.

Attend a candidate forum:

**Sat, September 12 at 10:00-11:30** (General Membership Meeting)

**Mon, September 14 at 12:00-1:00**

**Thurs, September 17 at 6:00-7:30**

The voting link will be sent out on September 25, 2020 and voting will close at 11:59pm CST on Sunday, September 27.

*Jonathan Wilson is the Co-Chair of the UWF Membership Committee.*

Photo: Jonathan Wilson presents to UWF's latest affiliate organization, the National Association of Letter Carriers Branch 11.

Credit: Rocío García