

# THE PARTY LINE

UNITED WORKING FAMILIES NEWSLETTER / WINTER 2020

Our 2020 Primary Slate  
PAGE 3

Meet Our New Staff  
PAGE 6

Fighting For a #BudgetForTheMany  
PAGE 7



# WORKER STRIKES AND POLITICAL POWER

# THE PARTY LINE

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Let us know what you think, or submit a piece of your own:  
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Front cover: UWF aldermen join striking workers outside of City Hall prior to the Mayor's budget address to demand a city budget that taxes the rich, invests in public services, and divests from policing and corporations. Photo credit: Sarah-Ji (Love and Struggle Photos)

## Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Member,

In September, I attended a conference in the UK for rank-and-file members of the Labour Party, where I was struck by the importance of erecting party-line alternatives to an unconscionable status quo.

Our aldermen did the hard work of erecting alternatives in the fight over the 2020 city budget, introducing ordinances that would tax the wealthy and re-open the city's mental health clinics (see page 7). Their ability to articulate an alternative vision--and to take a unified stance against any budget that didn't include their core principles--is an inspiring departure from the recent history of Chicago City Council.

This work is directly connected to the struggles of the workers who have gone on strike in recent years. Most recently, the Chicago Teachers Union and SEIU Local 73 won momentous victories not just for themselves but for our schools, students, and communities--including a nurse and a social worker in every school, every day, and enforceable class size limits for overcrowded classrooms (see pages 4-5).

And so as we think about what's next I want to share with you one more lesson from my visit to the UK this fall. It was the idea of the "Shadow Cabinet," in which Labour Members of Parliament serve as the Shadow Ministers for various departments (Energy, Labour, Education, Health, etc.) where they are responsible for developing actionable agendas under the assumption that they will be the governing party again.

The UWF Elections Committee talked about the example of the Shadow Cabinet when discussing our 2020 primary endorsements (see page 3). Endorsement conversations can get stuck in two equally unappealing visions: do we endorse only the small set of candidates who embody our highest ideals, or do we cast a wider net in order to get to the number we would need to pass legislation? The idea of the Shadow Cabinet helps us break out of these limited options by setting us on the right time horizon, with the right goal. We don't erect alternatives to wage theoretical arguments, but because we think that's how we win. And though we may not have the governing majority we need to pass our agenda right this moment, we aim to--by fighting, and by winning.

In Solidarity,  
Emma Tai  
Executive Director

# A 2020 Primary Slate

## #ForTheMany

By Dixon Romeo

United Working Families' goal is to expand the landscape of what's possible for racial, social & economic justice in Chicago and Illinois. One of the ways we do that is by using elections to run and elect our own members to office as a slate on a bold platform #ForTheMany. At UWF, our bread and butter has been running first time candidates of color that come from the rank and file of our movements and investing in them early (when others don't), with campaign staff, infrastructure, and volunteers. We are excited to announce our 2020 first-time candidates are Lakesia Collins and Nidia Carranza.

Lakesia Collins is running for State Representative in the 9th House District and is a healthcare worker, union member-turned-union organizer, and a mother of three. She has a track record of fighting for worker protections, affordable health care, and a \$15 minimum wage as well as taking her fellow workers out on strike. It's an open seat; the person who held it previously is dropping out to become a full-time lobbyist. He and his father are trying to hand the seat off to his brother and keep it in the family dynasty. Lakesia is rejecting corporate contributions and will be a much-needed working-class, Black, left voice in Springfield. The 9th District includes North Lawndale, Garfield Park, Tri-Taylor and the Gold Coast (formerly Cabrini Green).

*Continued on page 6*

# United Working Families 2020 Slate

- Nidia Carranza for 3rd District State Representative
- Lakesia Collins for 9th District State Representative
- Cook County State's Attorney Kim Foxx
- 11th District State Senator Celina Villanueva
- 13th District State Senator Robert Peters
- 1st District State Representative Aaron Ortiz
- 2nd District State Representative Theresa Mah
- 4th District State Representative Delia Ramirez
- 39th District State Representative Will Guzzardi



Sign up to help elect our slate at [bit.ly/UWF2020SLATE](https://bit.ly/UWF2020SLATE)

Photo Credit: Eddie Rivera.

# WORKER STRIKES AND



1.



2.

## 2019 Strike: Moving from Defense to Offense

By Norma Noriega

When CTU went on strike in 2012, we were on the defensive in order to survive, to keep our schools open, and to be heard by the public. Then-Mayor Rahm Emanuel was intent on gutting the education system. Our mighty union walked away from that fight with a new invigoration that our union activism held power.

Leading up to 2019, we took that power to dictate our terms to the board, to make it very clear that our collective power would be used to improve learning conditions inside and outside of the classroom for all of Chicago's public school students.

Lori Lightfoot advanced her campaign using the union's platform and once elected decided to renege on her promises. But the people held her accountable. We mobilized our

member base to be reflective of our students needs. This meant advocating for improved policy, using our contract as a means to do so, supporting political candidates that are for the people, in partnership with community organizations, and organizing our member base to contribute to the work, especially as it concerns contract and legislative violations within schools.

We were no longer struggling to survive, but now using our collective force to thrive! We came together with SEIU to take the streets, to point directly where the money was going, and to make it very clear that the city was choosing to send the money to luxury developments instead of investing it into students and schools.

We got a lot of contract wins, but the fight is far from over. CTU will continue to fight for an elected school board, to

eliminate the racist practices of student based budgeting and the flawed school rating system of School Quality Rating Policy (SQRP), and to regain our collective bargaining rights to get the schools our children deserve.

*Norma Noriega is a member of CTU and UWF. She teaches bilingual middle school math at Stevenson Elementary School on the southwest side.*



3.

# D POLITICAL POWER

## Aldermen Join the Picket Lines in Building Worker Power

By Ald. Rossana Rodriguez Sanchez

Along with my fellow UWF Aldermen, I was honored to support to CTU and SEIU picket lines this fall.

The strike was an amazing example of the movement solidarity we need. From the joint CTU and SEIU 73 demands and picket lines to the work of community and political organizations, the fight for a fair contract points our way forward. Along with our staff members, we joined the picket lines each morning and worked with our IPOs and Chicago DSA's Bread for Ed to provide lunch for students out of our Aldermanic offices and breakfast for striking educators on the picket lines. The energy and camaraderie was overwhelming and inspiring.

For many of us, the roots of our

election campaigns can be found in the 2012 teacher's strike. We know how transformative the bargaining for the common good model is and, as legislators, we are now part of it. In addition to solidarity on the picket line, it was especially inspiring to see the work and solidarity built around the common good demands. We joined members of organizations working to end homelessness and bring back the public mental centers out in the streets for actions and marches. As a part of our work around the city budget, we introduced an ordinance demanding the maximum number of TIF dollars be returned to the schools. The work of creating vibrant, public, community schools that root our communities takes all of us.

From students, to parents, to teachers; from social service advocates to radical political organization; from Springfield to City Hall, we need to continue to build on the solidarity created this fall and use it to continue to demand the resources that belong to us.

*Rossana Rodriguez Sanchez is the Alderwoman for Chicago's 33rd Ward.*



4.



5.



6.

1. & 5. Striking workers and community supporters lead picket lines outside of City Hall. Photo: Sarah-Ji, Love & Struggle Photos. 2. Ald. Rossana Rodriguez Sanchez joins striking workers before the Mayor's budget address. Photo: Sarah-Ji, Love & Struggle Photos. 3. & 4. UWF has endorsed two first-time candidates, Nidia Carranza and Lakesia Collins, for State Representative in the 2020 primary elections. As women of color who come from the labor movement, Lakesia and Nidia understand the power of the strike. Lakesia led workers out on strike at the Mado Buena Park Facility (Photo: Aaron Cynic), while Nidia helped lead strike actions at her school in Belmont Cragin (Photo: Nidia Carranza). 6. UWF organized strike solidarity canvasses for incumbent State Representative and early-endorsed UWF member Delia Ramirez to collect petition signatures and build community support for the strike. Photo: Ryan Kelleher.

# Staff and Committee Updates

By Emma Tai

This summer, UWF underwent some significant staff restructuring based on our success in the 2019 elections and our analysis of what would be needed from us in the next phase of our work.

As part of that restructuring, staff members Ryan Kelleher and Kate Barthelme have stepped into new roles as the Elections Director and Campaign Director, respectively. We also made two new hires: Kennedy Bartley as Legislative Coordinator and Rocío García as Membership Director.

I'm thrilled with what both Kennedy and Rocío have added to UWF in just a few short months. Rocío led our strike solidarity work, coordinating with UWF members to visit picket lines and volunteer as marshals, and facilitated our largest-ever New Member Orientation in October. Kennedy jumped into the 2020 budget fight, writing legislation for our aldermen to introduce and creating fact sheets and other materials to support our vision.

Emma Tai is the Executive Director of United Working Families.

Read Kennedy's story in her own words here: [bit.ly/meetkennedy](https://bit.ly/meetkennedy)

Read Rocío's story in her own words here: [bit.ly/meetrocio](https://bit.ly/meetrocio)



Right: UWF members in the 15th Ward carried the energy from Rafa Yañez's campaign for alderman forward into the fall, knocking doors in Back of the Yards and Englewood in the lead-up to the strike to help build community support. Photo: Victor Negrete.



UWF Membership Director Rocío García with members of United Neighbors of the 10th Ward at the picket line at Orville Bright Elementary School on the southeast side. Photo: Rocío García.

Continued from page 3:

Nidia Carranza is running for State Representative in the 3rd House District and is a bilingual Pre-K teacher, a CTU Latinx Caucus member, and the daughter of immigrants. Nidia has worked full-time since she was 16 years old, including putting herself through community college and going on to get her master's in education. She is running against a utility executive who was appointed by the outgoing State Rep (who stepped down after being indicted on corruption and bribery charges), and who oversaw Daley-era deals to privatize parking by Midway Airport and seize homes in Englewood. Nidia will be an accountable voice to the working families of the 3rd District, not political insiders and the wealthy few. The 3rd District includes Logan Square, Belmont Cragin, Hermosa, Montclare, Dunning, and Austin.

Dixon Romeo is a 2020 Movement Leader Fellow and a provisional member of the UWF Elections Committee.

Legislative Coordinator Kennedy Bartley (right) leads a debrief of the 2020 budget campaign with UWF Party Committee delegates Marcos Cenicerros and Candis Castillo (left). Photo credit: Emma Tai.



UWF members at the Harper High School picket line. Photo: Rocío García.



Ald. Byron Sigcho-Lopez speaks at a City Hall press conference in support of the Reimagine Chicago budget demands. Photo: Nathan Ryan.



Activists demanded a budget that would invest in mental health and affordable housing, divest from police, and tax the wealthiest few. Photo: Kate Barthelme.

## Fighting for a #BudgetForTheMany

By Kennedy Bartley

The fight for this year's budget was a concerted effort by many, for the many. UWF, with our community allies that sit at the Reimage Chicago table, structured a budget framework that would center Chicago's Black, Brown, working class, hyper-policed, over-surveilled communities. We focused on three tenets to guide our fight, and to hold us accountable to our organization's key purpose of being a political party for the people: investment priorities to re-open public mental health clinics and fund affordable housing and homeless; divestment from failed policing and corporate welfare; and progressive revenue streams like the Corporate Head Tax, Real Estate Transfer Tax and PILOT program. This was a critical stand to take in a protracted struggle against austerity, against Chicago's budget being balanced on the back of the poor, working class, and working poor, and against a long history of privatization, safety netting for CPD, and investments in developers that displace our neighbors.

While the City of Chicago 2020 budget still includes a property tax hike, taxes that will disproportionately affect poor communities, and an increase to police spending by over \$121 million, the campaign unapologetically shifted the conversation in Chicago and demonstrated what true progressivism looks

like. United Working Families' bold and principled members in City Council voted as a bloc at the end of the campaign, with a majority of them giving floor speeches to powerfully support their NO votes. This majority-freshmen group of elected officials stayed true to their campaign promises of remaining accountable to the people, and negotiated for about 5 months in good faith; they made their ultimate decisions through a democratic and participatory process of Budget Town-halls with their constituencies.

This movement is challenging the structure that dictates who holds power and how communities are governed, and this budget fight exemplified what true people-powered politics look like. As we've moved into 2020, we are sharpening our analysis, broadening our membership base and democratic processes, and building out the expertise to continue to be an effective, politically-charged organizing vehicle #ForTheMany. Kennedy Bartley is the Legislative Coordinator for United Working Families.

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

February 3, 2020 Membership Meeting  
February 8, 2020 Fair Tax Campaign Kickoff  
February 17, 2020 Volunteer Night  
March 17, 2020 Election Day

For more upcoming dates, visit: [unitedworkingfamilies.org/upcoming-events](http://unitedworkingfamilies.org/upcoming-events)



The 2020 Class of Movement Leader Fellows participated in a two-day orientation on December 6-7, where they learned more about UWF and the basics of political organizing. The UWF Movement Leader Fellowship trains people of color from the rank and file of social movements in electoral organizing, member organizing, and strategic communications. Back Row: Emma Tai, Jesus Martinez, Alexandra Desrosiers, Lanessa Young, Dixon Romero, Rocio Garcia. Front Row: Irene Lopez, Anais Donald, Ryan Kelleher, Citlalli Bueno, Jonathan Wilson. Photo Credit: Dixon Romeo