



The National Sexual Assault Coalition Resource Sharing Project

ReShape Newsletter

Working together to end sexual violence.

Organizing for Worker Justice

“What do we want? Justice! When do we want it? Now!”

This familiar refrain is chanted on picket lines across the country. Unfortunately, for too many women and gender non-conforming people, workplace injustice often includes sexual violence. This violence ranges from verbal harassment to rape.

To change this, many in this #MeToo moment are looking to worker-led campaigns for inspiration.

In this edition of ReShape, we lift up examples of worker-led campaigns, including those fighting back against sexual violence within unions themselves. To deepen our understanding of this tactic, we also include links about historical worker-led efforts to end sexual violence.

For coalitions wanting to strengthen relationships with survivors of color and those on the margins, these campaigns offer opportunities for collaboration. Many of these groups make connections between sexual violence and other forms of marginalization such as sexism, transphobia, and racism.



Organizing at the Intersections -- the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) and Lideres Campesinas

When asked why domestic workers are so vulnerable to sexual violence, Ai-jen Poo, executive director of NDWA notes, “Back in the 1930s when the New Deal was being

negotiated, Southern members of Congress refused to support the labor law provisions of the New Deal if they included farm workers and domestic workers who were largely African-American at the time. So in the context of those negotiations they made a concession to those Southern Dixiecrats. And to this day, farm workers and domestic workers are excluded from the National Labor Relations Act [and] the Fair Labor Standards Act, although many generations of activism have forced the inclusion of domestic workers under different provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act.”

This understanding shapes all of NDWA’s campaign work. In addition to fighting for fair wages, NDWA tackles working conditions and sexual violence.

<https://www.domesticworkers.org/release/domestic-workers-farmworker-women-announce-unstoppable-day-action-dc-take-sexual-harassment>

<https://www.instyle.com/news/sexual-harassment-widening-gender-wage-gap-equal-pay>

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/ai-jen-poo-domestic-workers-exploitation>

<https://www.domesticworkers.org/bill-of-rights/new-york>

“In 1995, Lideres Campesinas developed a folk art/teaching tool in the form of theatrical presentations (dramas or teatros) to communicate sensitive information in a visual, engaging manner to low-literacy (and Spanish-dominant) Latina farmworker women. These theatrical presentations are scripted and performed by the campesinas themselves and are designed to establish confianza (trust) among the audience in order to later engage them in frank and open dialogue (What is meant by "sensitive information" varies by the issue and/or problem being depicted, but generally it refers to cultural values and beliefs, and behavior patterns detrimental to the quality of life/health of the individual, family, and community). The skits dialogue reflects the actual vocabulary and idioms of the Latina/o farmworker community, and the topic they are targeting. Similarly, theatrical presentations are frequently used to sensitize service providers (for example, community clinic staff or law enforcement representatives) about the stereotypes, misconceptions, and myths that they may have about working with immigrants.”

<http://www.liderescampesinas.org/english/>

<http://www.liderescampesinas.org/english/theaters.php>



Alianza Nacional de Campesinas



Two Approaches to Organizing Farm Workers – Alianza Nacional de Campesinas (Alianza) and The Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW)

Alianza is an international organization created and led by farmworking women. They engage in advocacy and survivor support. And they connect issues such as pesticide use on farms to reproductive justice struggles. As a women-led organization, their campaigns have always reflected the need to end sexual violence in the fields.

<https://www.alianzanasionaldecampesinas.org/taking-action-against-violence/>

CIW uses relationships with people who purchase produce for fast food restaurants and their consumers to create better working conditions. Their Fair Food Program (FFP) provides an example of organized workers creating accountability.

<https://ciw-online.org/blog/2018/02/an-open-letter/>

<https://wsr-network.org/resource/now-the-fear-is-gone/>



Coalition Collaboration -- ¡Ya Basta!

The ¡Ya Basta! Coalition is led by janitors working to “end rape on the night shift.” And they are partnering with CALCASA to do it. The coalition also includes legal advocates and community partners. Several [workshops](#) at NSAC featured their work this year. Each group brings their unique strengths to amplify the effectiveness of this survivor-led group.

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/a-group-of-janitors-started-a-movement-to-stop-sexual-abuse/>

<http://www.calcasa.org/2017/09/ya-basta-honoring-workers-this-labor-day-by-collaborating-to-address-workplace-sexual-violence-every-day/>

<https://worksafe.org/news-events/newsroom.html/article/2016/12/21/ya-basta-coalition-ending-sexual-violence-against-janitors>



Sexual Harassment in the Restaurant Industry

Workers who rely on tips are also vulnerable to sexual violence. Though they are protected by labor policies, those policies are often not enforced. A report by Restaurant Opportunities Center (ROC) and Forward Together documents their experiences. And a new campaign by McDonald's workers is hoping to change some of those conditions.

<http://rocunited.org/publications/the-glass-floor-sexual-harassment-in-the-restaurant-industry/>

<https://newfoodeconomy.org/mcdonalds-workers-metoo-strike-against-sexual-harassment/>

Contradictions – Organizing Against Sexual Violence in Labor Unions

Though worker-led organizing movements provide safety, they are not immune from perpetuating sexual violence themselves. Some of the biggest unions, such as the AFL-CIO and SEIU, continue to struggle with how to address organizational cultures that fight for better working conditions for their members, without tending to their own employees. This article highlights some of the work being done to address sexual assault and gender discrimination against union organizers today.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-11-07/u-s-labor-leaders-confront-sexual-harassment-in-their-top-ranks>

Historical Perspectives

One of the earliest ways women organized to end sexual violence was through their union locals. Before we had consciousness-raising groups and sexual assault centers, these women fought against floor managers, bosses, and co-workers facing incredible odds without any guarantee of change. May their resilience, courage, and tenacity be an inspiration to us all, as we continue the fight to improve conditions for survivors of all genders today.

http://bcw.barnard.edu/archive/workforce/Sexual_Harassment_at_the_Workplace.pdf

<https://www.lib.umd.edu/unions/social/womens-rights>

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