



# THE EMERGING ROLE OF **WORKER CENTERS IN UNION ORGANIZING**

An Update and Supplement

JAROL B. MANHEIM



**U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**  
Workforce Freedom Initiative



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## ABSTRACT

In November 2013, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce published a Working Paper, *The Emerging Role of Worker Centers in Union Organizing: A Strategic Assessment*, which examined the complex relationship between worker centers and traditional labor unions, and delineated the extensive funding of the worker center movement by activist foundations during the period 2009-2012. The present essay reviews that analysis in the light of subsequent developments, and, using data from public filings and reports covering the period 2013-2016, brings forward our examination of the mechanisms by which the labor movement and the philanthropic community support this form of organizing.

## THE AUTHOR

Jarol B. Manheim is Professor Emeritus at The George Washington University, where he developed the world's first degree-granting program in political communication and was the founding director of the School of Media and Public Affairs. He received his BA degree in political science and economics from Rice University, and his MA and doctoral degrees in political science from Northwestern University, the latter in 1971. He is a past chair of the Political Communication Section of the American Political Science Association, and played the lead role in establishing the journal *Political Communication*. In 1995, he was selected by CASE and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching as the District of Columbia Professor of the Year.

Professor Manheim has been described as one of the world's leading authorities on campaigns against business, and as "one academic who truly understands the real world, the tough world of business and the rougher world of advocacy." His 1994 book, *Strategic Public Diplomacy and US Foreign Policy*, remains influential in shaping both scholarship and practice in that field. Reviewers characterized his 2001 book, *The Death of a Thousand Cuts: Corporate Campaigns and the Attack on the Corporation*, as the definitive work on contemporary union strategies. And his 2010 book, *Strategy in Information and Influence Campaigns*, a comprehensive analysis of strategic communication techniques, has been termed "authoritative," "elegant," "masterful," and "a classic." Manheim's research on strategic communication has appeared in the leading journals of political science, journalism and mass communication. He has held editorial or editorial board positions with *Journal of Politics*, *International Journal of Press/Politics*, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, and *Political Communication*. His work has been translated into Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Spanish.

## The Emerging Role of Worker Centers in Union Organizing: An Update and Supplement

In November 2013, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce published a Working Paper, *The Emerging Role of Worker Centers in Union Organizing: A Strategic Assessment*, the objectives of which were to characterize and quantify the development of these community-based, labor-oriented organizations; to locate them within the context of U.S. labor history; to illuminate their strategic and tactical significance in the context of contemporary labor relations; and to speculate as to the then-extant, and the potential, relationships between worker centers and the established unions. One key to this analysis was understanding the role played by activist, change-oriented foundations in supporting the worker center movement, with particular emphasis on the period 2009-2012.

It is the objective of the present essay to bring this analysis forward by updating the data on foundation support and examining the further evolution of the union-worker center relationship during the subsequent four-year period, 2013-2016.

### The Expanding Role of Worker Centers

In our initial report, we argued that the worker center movement was an amalgam of community, labor, and political organizing, and that the centers

themselves tended to be hybrid organizations with some, but not all, of the attributes of traditional unions. In particular, they played a role in organizing workers, and sometimes recruiting them for established unions, but typically did not engage in negotiating contracts. That characterization still holds today, though the shift toward worker-center unionism per se may be on the uptick, with more attempts to deal with employers regarding the terms and conditions of employment. As one leader of OUR Walmart, once an organizing project of the United Food and Commercial Workers union but now on its own, put it, “Emerging worker movements are winning hard fought victories with the painful recognition that the [traditional, union-based] methods for organizing don’t work inside America’s broken system of laws and traditions. New, emergent forms of organizing are gaining power despite the fact that corporations have unprecedented control over workplaces, politics, laws, and the economy.”<sup>1</sup> Arguably, they appeal to their members in part because these centers are able to connect with them in ways that unions cannot, and in part because, operating beyond the boundaries of established labor laws, they have more degrees of freedom in the types of activities they undertake than are available to their more traditional counterparts.



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Worker centers do sometimes coordinate closely with traditional unions. For example, in 2014 the faith-based worker center Arise Chicago organized the workers at Golan's Moving and Storage, and then essentially gave them over to the Teamsters Union.<sup>2</sup> In that same year, the Laundry Workers Center helped warehouse workers at B&H Photo and Video to organize and frame their grievances against management, then facilitated their joining the United Steel Workers union.<sup>3</sup> And similarly, in 2015, the *Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en Lucha* (CTUL), which organizes janitors in Minneapolis and St. Paul, partnered with SEIU Local 26 to obtain a card check-neutrality agreement with one contractor that services big-box retailers, with plans to do the same with others. The likely ultimate target? Target.<sup>4</sup> As documented below, CTUL was compensated by the SEIU in the amount of \$300,000 during 2015-2016 for its organizing services.

But, true to their nature, worker centers also range into a host of other community-based issues. Here is a greatly abbreviated catalog of some worker center activity just since January 1, 2017, that illustrates the point:

**January 2017.** UNITE HERE helped to launch the Baltimore Black Worker Center, one of nine established to date by the National Black Worker Center Project to empower black workers in the workplace and in the community.<sup>5</sup>

**February 2017.** In anticipation of a different approach to labor law enforcement in the Trump

Administration, the aforementioned Arise Chicago, with the support of several aldermen, called on the city to establish its own office of labor standards, modeled on similar offices in San Francisco, Seattle, Los Angeles, and New York City, to facilitate both policymaking and enforcement.<sup>6</sup>

**March 2017.** A group of worker centers led by the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) and including Texas' Labor Justice Committee, *Adhikaar*, *Damayan* Migrant Workers Association, *CASA de Maryland*, *Matahari Women's Workers Center*, and *Mujeres Unidas y Activas*, released a report, prepared by the Institute for Policy Studies, detailing human trafficking and indentured servitude, particularly as they impact domestic workers. The report pointed to an alleged conflict of interest for the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Service (ICE), which is charged with enforcing *both* immigration laws *and* those against human trafficking, and positioned the worker centers as an alternative locus of protection for workers.<sup>7</sup>

**March 2017.** The NDWA partnered with the Internet networking company, Meetup.com, to coordinate rapid-response organizing against actions of the Trump administration. The collaboration, known as “#Resist,” was facilitated when Meetup hired the former digital organizing director of the Hillary Clinton campaign to coordinate the new platform.<sup>8</sup>

**March 2017.** Several worker centers, including the Restaurant Opportunities Center (ROC), OUR Walmart, and the NDWA, joined with

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National Nurses United, Jobs with Justice and others under the banner “Women Workers Rising” for a demonstration at the Labor Department centered on pay equity, a living wage, and rights at work. In the words of the campaign director for the NDWA, “Every day, we see the Trump administration’s attack on women’s bodies and lives, especially immigrants and women of color.... That is why we endorsed A Day Without Women – as a way of showing opposition to the terrorizing and criminalizing of our communities.”<sup>9</sup>

**March-April 2017.** A coalition including the Food Chain Workers Alliance (FCWA), *Movimiento Cosecha*, an organization focused on expanding the rights of illegal immigrants, the Rural Community Workers Alliance in Missouri, SEIU, MoveOn.Org and Fight for \$15, announced plans for a nationwide “Day Without Immigrants” on May 1.<sup>10</sup> Another worker center, *Voces de la Frontera*, as well as Black Lives Matter, were also on board. Saru Jayaraman, of the Restaurant Opportunities Center, another participant in the initiative, suggested in an interview that worker centers like ROC are better able to call their members out on strike than are the unions. Striking, she said, in a clear illustration of the boundary issue we raised above, is “a legal term for them, and it isn’t for us. It’s not part of collective bargaining agreements that our members can or cannot strike, so it’s not the same.” SEIU

official David Huerta effectively agreed, noting that “there’s always been tensions between institutions and movements.”<sup>11</sup>

*“[Striking is] a legal term for them, and it isn’t for us. It’s not part of collective bargaining agreements that our members can or cannot strike, so it’s not the same.”*

**May 2017.** Fast Food Justice, a project of SEIU Local 32BJ in New York City, lobbied for passage of the Fast-Food Worker Empowerment Act, which would require employers, upon request, to deduct funds from workers’ paychecks as voluntary payments to not-for-profit organizations, which is to say, worker centers.<sup>12</sup>

**June 2017.** The NDWA released a white paper prepared by the Institute for Women’s Policy Research at The George Washington University titled “The Status of Black Women in the United States.” The report included several policy recommendations ranging in focus from wages and paid leave to access to health care, criminal justice reform, reducing the number of black women in prison, and fighting racism and sexism.<sup>13</sup>

**June 2017.** Illustrating the intertwining of the worker center and immigrant rights movements, activists rallied to prevent the deportation of one of the leaders of the CTUL organizing campaign mentioned above, who had returned to Minnesota after a 2010 deportation, a felony.<sup>14</sup>



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**June 2017.** The Governor of Maine signed legislation, passed overwhelmingly by the legislature, to overturn the results of a November statewide referendum that would have raised the minimum wage for tipped restaurant workers by 200 percent over eight years. The referendum had been advanced by the ROC, but its reversal was demanded by a campaign organized by the workers themselves, who argued it would actually reduce their pay as customers tipped less and less. The tipped wage is a national issue, with debates underway in Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, and the District of Columbia, and ROC is a leading advocate for raising it.<sup>15</sup>

**June 2017.** The worker center Workers' Dignity, with support from the Laborers union, marched through Nashville to deliver petitions to management at six of the city's hotels demanding that they adopt the group's Cleaning Workers' Bill of Rights. The march followed the earlier publication of a white paper, "Hotels Shouldn't Hurt: A Preliminary Report on the Health and Human Rights Crisis in Nashville Hospitality," prepared by researchers at Vanderbilt University on behalf of the group in 2016.<sup>16</sup>

**July 2017.** The National Day Laborer Organizing Network (NDL) and the SEIU, through its United Healthcare Workers West local, joined as plaintiffs in a discrimination lawsuit intended to force Medi-Cal, the health insurance program serving low-income Californians, to increase payments to providers so fewer would refuse to participate in the system.<sup>17</sup>

**August 2017.** A recently formed group, New River Workers Power, staged a strike at a Virginia Target store over complaints of alleged abuse by the store manager. They also launched a boycott among students at nearby Virginia Tech, and held a rally on the campus. Their demands were two: removal of the manager, and "recognition of their independent workers committee to mediate between Target workers and management." Consistent with the worker center model, this activity originated in an effort to generate activism over landlord-tenant relations in local trailer parks, but evolved into a job action against Target, where many of the residents worked.<sup>18</sup>

If worker centers were worthy of attention and study in 2013, their importance and their influence have only grown in the years since. It would seem, then, that updating and supplementing our early report is well justified.

### A Brief Reprise

We began the earlier study by outlining the stages of development of the American labor movement from the 1870s forward. The outcome of that development to the moment is well known: The American labor movement is in an advanced stage of existential crisis. Union density (the percentage of the workforce belonging to unions) has experienced a decline, year by year, from circa 1954 through 2016, a period of more than sixty years, by the end of which time only 10.7 percent of all workers,<sup>19</sup> and a mere 6.4 percent

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of those in the private sector,<sup>20</sup> counted themselves as members. By 2015, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reported that the United States ranked thirteenth out of fifteen selected member countries in the percentage of union members in the workforce. All of Europe, Australia and Mexico ranked higher; only South Korea and Turkey ranked lower.<sup>21</sup> The crisis is real and well known, and it is the subject of much attention and some action by labor leaders, labor-friendly politicians, and workers, among others. But the steps by which the unions reached this point are still worth recounting.

In our initial report, we identified eight stages, or eras, of labor relations that have led to the unions' current dilemma. They included:

- 1870-1910, a period of early confrontations;
- 1911-1935, dating from the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, a period of legitimation culminating in the passage of the National Labor Relations Act;
- 1936-1980, a period of growing, and ultimately very significant power, both economic and political, but one that also featured a growing sense of hubris among leaders of the movement, as indicated for example by a propensity to engage in major strikes with virtual impunity, as well as the beginnings of the coming decline in influence;
- 1981, a year of overreach centered on the illegal strike of the air traffic controllers, their mass firing by President Reagan, and the shifting of the underlying public narrative from a pro-union to an anti-union bent;
- 1982-1995, during which time both the interpretation of labor laws and public sentiment shifted against the unions, whose aggressive strikes at a Phelps Dodge mine and at Hormel Foods led, in the former instance, to (acceptance of) the increased use of permanent replacement workers, and in the latter, to a growing sense among grassroots union members that their leaders were more concerned with the business, and the power, of the unions than with the needs of their members;
- 1995-2005, a time during which organized labor found itself on a slippery slope, forced to expend more and more resources on signing up new members through pressure campaigns against employers at the expense of serving their existing members, as a result of which labor leaders came to see the world in ways divorced from what many members believed to be the true core purpose of the union;
- 2005-2010, years that saw a conflict emerge both within and among the unions, with grassroots activism taking root in some, like the Teamsters, and splits verging on



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open warfare occurring elsewhere, whether affirmatively as in the establishment of the Change to Win Federation as a prospective rival to the AFL-CIO, or negatively as in the open warfare between UNITE HERE and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), which resulted in the partial dismemberment of the former; and finally

- 2010 and beyond, during which time the unions have sought a variety of lifelines, including some moves to reorganize themselves and to revitalize their leadership, pursuing regulatory changes to facilitate organizing and protect their remaining prerogatives, and opening themselves to new ways of rebuilding the labor movement from the ground up.<sup>22</sup>

Among its other effects, the decline in union density in the private sector has produced an historic shift in the balance of influence within the labor movement. For while private sector density has shrunk, public sector unionism is alive and well, at least in relative terms, particularly at the state and local levels.<sup>23</sup> Right-to-work laws and other challenges are beginning to erode union membership even here, but in point of fact, the government employee unions now account for the larger share of overall membership. That is consequential because, on such policy-based matters as taxation, health care, and the like, public employees are systematically differentially positioned than are their private sector cohorts.

Policy outcomes that are good for one group may not necessarily be good for the other. Consider a simple example: One's preferences as to the optimal level and nature of taxation may well depend on whether one is paying the taxes or being paid (or pensioned) by them. Members of private sector unions understand this basic math, which may have contributed to their shift toward the Republican Party in the 2016 election, and their leaders are coming to appreciate it as well. So for them, finding large numbers of new workers to join the labor movement is a way forward, not only to restore the health of the labor movement per se, but to restore their relative influence within it.

That is where the worker center movement comes to the fore.

As we noted in the earlier study, worker centers represent something of a marriage between labor organizing and community organizing. While some of them focus on the rights and interests of workers as a primary function, others are more broadly based social organizations that also incorporate a focus on workers' concerns. But not just any workers. For many of these centers (farmworker organizations and groups such as the National Domestic Workers Alliance are obvious exceptions), the defining characteristic of their concern is not participation in a particular line of work, and certainly not working for a specific employer, but rather, membership in the "community" whose interests they seek to represent. Unions exist

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to organize workplaces; worker centers exist to organize workers. Demographics (especially those of race, ethnicity, and class) are of vital importance to many of these organizations, and a great number of them are focused on the interests of immigrant workers in particular.

*“Unions exist to organize workplaces; worker centers exist to organize workers.”*

Worker centers can attract constituencies that traditional unions cannot, or at least cannot with the same effectiveness. They operate from storefronts. They literally speak the language, whether it is Spanish or Chinese or Filipino. They exude a cultural awareness that attracts members, and then turn that into an awareness of the value of collective action within the context of identity politics. They legitimize that collective action in the eyes of the community. And they help workers pursue collectively a variety of social, economic, and political goals.

But for the most part, these are not government workers. They are employed, often at entry or near-entry levels, in the private economy. They tend not to be highly skilled, though they are often hard-working and highly motivated. In a sense, some of these workers are interchangeable, and some are marginal in the context of the larger economy. But they are not marginal in the context of its fastest growing segment, the *service*

economy. To the contrary, they are often vital to the success of service-based employers. And where once the industrial unions – the Steel Workers, the Auto Workers, and the like – were the linchpins of private sector unionism, today and for the foreseeable future, that role has transferred to the unions of service workers.<sup>24</sup> Even the industrial unions recognize this and have moved to attract (and compete for) healthcare workers, educators, writers, clerks and the like.

These targeted workers are beginning to sound just like those – the immigrants, the upwardly mobile working class, the hard working – who formed the core of the labor movement of a century ago. They have numbers, and their numbers are growing. They have a sympathetic appeal to the public because of the types of work that many of them do. They are inclined toward organization, at least at the grassroots level, but their success in organizing is dependent on resources, training, and leadership, which are generally scarce in the lower-income, often immigrant communities that are home to most. They need assistance. In what they offer, then, and in what they lack, they are, potentially, the building blocks of organized labor’s renewal.

But the same things that make these workers so interesting to the established unions also add to the challenge of recruiting them to the mainstream



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labor movement. True, the unions are still centers of influence and can still offer access and support that are otherwise unavailable to these workers, either on their own or through worker centers. And true, the worker centers attract members, focus on organizing them for collective action, and even perform some of the functions of unions. So the *concept* of collective action is an accepted one. But the worker centers derive much of their perceived legitimacy from a sort of outsider status, and the communities they serve have a distrust of mainstream institutions. The layering of these constraints keeps the established unions at arm's length. How to bend the elbow?

*“The same things that make these workers so interesting to the established unions also add to the challenge of recruiting them to the mainstream labor movement.”*

Enter the activist foundations. In the 2013 study, we found that foundations provided vast amounts of financial support, together with training, strategizing, data, and other forms of support that greatly facilitated the rise of a vibrant worker center movement. Examining the records of a limited number of foundations selected for their demonstrable grantor focus in this area, a limited array of worker centers that were the principal grantees, and a subset of the infrastructure and advising community that served the two as well as the broader labor movement, we found that

worker center initiatives received more than \$57 million in grants during 2009-2012. This third-party money far outweighed the resources devoted to worker centers by the unions themselves, though cooperative models were emerging that showed some promise of converting worker center members into union members.

An argument could be made, as it was in the earlier study, that the worker center movement was, in fact, less an autonomous, self-generating phenomenon than it was a creature of the progressive foundations that encouraged and supported it. We saw this, for example, in the

emergence of the Food Chain Workers Alliance, which was formed at the suggestion of a foundation program officer and built its coalition and agenda based on data and

strategy developed by specialized consultants who were themselves compensated through foundation grants.<sup>25</sup> In many ways, it is the foundations, even more than the unions, that are key to understanding the worker center movement. Or at least so it appeared in 2013. The question before us now is whether that is still the case.

### The Scope of Inquiry

To answer that question, we will essentially replicate portions of the 2013 study, making

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some adjustments as we go along in order to accommodate the dynamics of the worker center phenomenon (and of the foundations). We will provide more detailed information on foundation grants activity than in the initial report, and we will look as well at movement-associated expenditures by the principal service-industry unions. There will be many numbers, and even some comparisons. But the reader is cautioned that some elements of the mix of grantors and grantees have changed, that there are, as before, missing data and other possible problems that should be considered in reaching any conclusions, that we have taken a more extensive look at union activity this time around in order to test our earlier conclusions, and that at least one union has itself evolved in its efforts to compete, in effect, against the appeal of independent worker centers. As a result, the data reported below are best viewed on their own merits, as a snapshot of the current state of affairs, and should be compared to the 2013 data only in general terms. Two sequential data points of mixed heritage, if consistent, can establish a pattern, but they do not constitute a trend per se.

We will begin by examining the total value of grants issued to worker center and movement-related entities by a slightly adjusted list of twenty activist foundations plus the Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program. This list is very similar to, but not identical with, that employed in the initial study. We will then break these grants into two broad categories, *direct* grants to worker centers

and *indirect* grants to movement-supporting infrastructure providers. Next, we will examine the patterns and preferences of each foundation and list their respective grantees. This will be followed by a general survey of their support for the infrastructure of organizing, and a comprehensive listing of worker center grantees as well as funding profiles of some of the more significant among their number. We will then look at the engagement of established labor organizations, specifically the AFL-CIO and five service-industry unions, with the worker center movement, where we will find that matters have continued to evolve since 2013. Finally, we will revisit the question of whether unions are effectively integrating the new workers in ways that can help them address their institutional concerns.

## Show Me the Money

Foundation activism is not a new thing. Some occurs on the political right, but the models for engagement in social policy were developed, and the practice set in motion and refined, by foundations with a progressive-left activist bent tracing to the programs of the Tides Foundation in the 1970s.<sup>26</sup> Much of this activism is infused with the language of social justice, human rights and community organizing, which serves as both the public personal of the funding agencies and the guiding light of their programmatic decisions. For most, support for worker centers is by no means their sole, nor even their principal, endeavor, but it is in every way consistent with their collective sense of mission. Many of these foundations



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have relationships, or at least high levels of comfort, with the labor movement as well and surely understand the value to that movement of facilitating the development of these centers.

Table 1 below lists our focus list of funders, and for each reports the data on 2009-2012 giving from our earlier study, and the total value of grants reported by each for the following four-year period: 2013-2016. This latter amount is then broken out into two categories, direct grants to worker centers and other dedicated entities, and indirect grants to a variety of infrastructure providers. The figures for grants to worker centers are accurate to the extent the public record (in the form of annual reports, IRS Form 990 filings, and Internet postings by the foundations) are clear, consistent, and correct,<sup>27</sup> but they are likely understated in the following sense. There is a close alignment of purpose in many instances between the worker center movement and the immigrant rights movement, and many of these same foundations support the latter as well as the former. In preparing this report, we have attempted to distinguish between the two based on the degree or explicitness of a worker center focus, and we have excluded the grantees regarded as primarily focused on immigration policy as opposed to workers. But this determination is inherently judgmental and arbitrary. Similarly, the figures for indirect support of the worker center movement are likely overstated in one sense – it is impossible to separate out the effort of these entities devoted to worker centers as opposed to

other programs and objectives – and understated in another, as there is a very large number of other labor-movement and progressive entities that receive support from foundations and provide regular or occasional peripheral support to worker centers but that have not been included here.

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**Table 1**  
**Foundation Grants to Worker Centers and Related Entities, 2009-2012 and 2013-2016**

Foundation	2009-2012 Total <sup>1</sup>	2013-2016 <sup>2</sup>			
		Total	Worker Center Direct	Infrastructure/ Indirect	% Direct
Ben & Jerry's Foundation	230,000	1,317,000	1,108,500	208,500	84
Marguerite Casey Foundation	3,450,000	10,505,000	5,665,000	4,840,000	53
Ford Foundation	26,127,000	44,003,000	19,639,000	24,364,000	45
General Service Foundation	789,000	1,955,600	816,800	1,138,800	42
Hill-Snowdon Foundation <sup>3</sup>	370,000	1,058,500	755,500	303,000	71
WK Kellogg Foundation	4,110,000	13,695,000	8,990,000	4,705,000	66
Kresge Foundation	2,970,000	5,173,000	760,000	4,413,000	15
Mertz-Gilmore Foundation <sup>3</sup>	320,000	1,261,000	671,000	509,000	53
Moriah Fund <sup>3</sup>	370,000	1,073,000	460,000	613,000	43
Nathan Cummings Foundation	865,000	6,420,000	3,360,000	3,060,000	52
Needmor Fund <sup>3</sup>	350,000	439,500	368,000	71,500	84
New World Foundation <sup>3</sup>		1,088,500	675,000	413,500	62
New York Foundation	658,000	1,032,500	1,026,500	5,000	99
Norman Foundation	420,000	1,060,000	850,000	210,000	80
North Star Fund	260,000	620,000	459,000	161,000	74
Jesse Smith Noyes Foundation <sup>3</sup>	320,000	535,000	470,000	65,000	88
Public Welfare Foundation	5,535,000	5,747,500	1,495,000	4,252,500	26
Rockefeller Foundation	2,965,000	800,000	275,000	525,000	34
Solidago Foundation <sup>3</sup>		1,227,000	656,000	571,000	53
Surdna Foundation <sup>3</sup>	3,263,000	5,912,000	1,647,000	4,265,000	28
Unitarian Universalist Veatch Grants <sup>4</sup>	2,026,000	1,410,000	670,000	740,000	51
<b>Aggregate</b>	<b>55,398,000</b>	<b>106,333,100</b>	<b>50,817,300</b>	<b>55,514,800</b>	<b>48</b>

NOTE: The columns for "Totals" for the two periods as reported here are not directly comparable. Both reflect judgments regarding the selective inclusion of indirect support for the worker center movement, and all of these figures are likely to represent over-estimates. That is the case because relatively few of the expenditure reports on which the table is based specify in any detail the purpose of a given grant. Rather, these figures should be taken as generally indicative of support for the programs and/or operations of entities that themselves provide direct or general support for the worker center movement. Similarly, the list of worker centers included in the most recent data is more detailed and more comprehensive than that employed in the original report.

<sup>1</sup> The total reported here has been adjusted from the 2009-2012 data to reflect the removal from this list of two foundations, the Discount Foundation, which ceased operation during this period, and the Open Society Institute, which made only minimal donations during this period to the listed recipients.

<sup>2</sup> The figures reported here include two foundations that were not included in the 2009-2012 analysis, the New World Foundation and the Solidago Foundation. The basis for including each is provided in the accompanying text.

<sup>3</sup> Data were available only for the years 2013-2015.

<sup>4</sup> Data were available only for the most recent year, 2016.



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A few adjustments have been made to the roster of foundations included in our analysis, and they merit mention before we consider the data.

After 2012, the Discount Foundation, which we had included in our original analysis, elected to spend down its principal and cease operation. That foundation accounted for \$340,000 of 2009-2012 giving but is not included here. The Open Society Institute was credited in our initial study with grants totaling \$1,276,000, but in the 2013-2016 period it awarded only a single related grant of \$2500 that fell within our parameters. It, too, has been excluded from the present analysis.

On the other side, two foundations, the New World Foundation and the Solidago Foundation, have been added to the roster. Though overlooked in our first study, both were identified in a recent publication as having played important roles in supporting the worker center movement, an assertion that we have since verified.<sup>28</sup> Together, they add approximately \$2.2 million to the total.

Finally, there is this. As noted in the table, the data available for several foundations covered only three of the indicated four years, which was similar to our experience four years ago. These data are likely, then, to understate the total of grants by each of the affected foundations. But most significantly, pre-2016 data for awards made by the Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program are no longer accessible online. The Veatch Program is a substantial source of funding for both worker

centers and infrastructure providers, and it is likely that our unavoidable dependence on a single year's data substantially understates the program's activity, probably by two-thirds or more.

One conclusion does emerge clearly from Table 1, even allowing for the changes in the sourcing of data and the range of inclusion. Foundation grants in support of the worker center movement increased dramatically after 2012. It is not fair to say, as the data appear to suggest, that such giving has roughly doubled, because the data are not directly comparable. But the fact that *direct* grants in 2013-2016 alone nearly equaled the reported figures for adjusted *total* grants in the earlier period, before one takes into account any of the indirect grants, makes clear that aggregate support for the movement in the more recent period was materially higher than previously.

Let us now turn to a closer examination of the data on philanthropic support for worker centers. Table 2 reports on the same grant activity as in Table 1, but ranks the twenty-one funders in the order of their *total* awards, both direct and indirect, in 2013-2016. The Ford Foundation remains far and away the largest single funder of worker center efforts, having awarded more than three times as much as either of the next two contenders, Kellogg and Marguerite Casey. But a rising tide appears to have lifted all boats – all except the aforementioned Veatch Program, which probably did rise in actuality, and the Rockefeller Foundation. During the 2009-2012 time-frame, Rockefeller

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was sponsoring awards under what it termed a “Campaign for American Workers.” In 2013, it awarded a grant of \$31,000 to Abt Associates, a research firm, to assess the impact of that campaign.<sup>29</sup> Whether as a result of that assessment, or simply because the program had run its course, total funding by the foundation in this arena fell

by nearly two-thirds from the prior period, and actually trailed off significantly: \$650,000 in 2013, \$150,000 in 2015, and zero in 2014 and 2016. In effect, a major player in supporting worker centers was removing itself from the board much as had the Open Society Institute.

**Table 2**  
**Foundations Ranked by Total Grants to Worker Centers and Related Entities, 2013-2016**

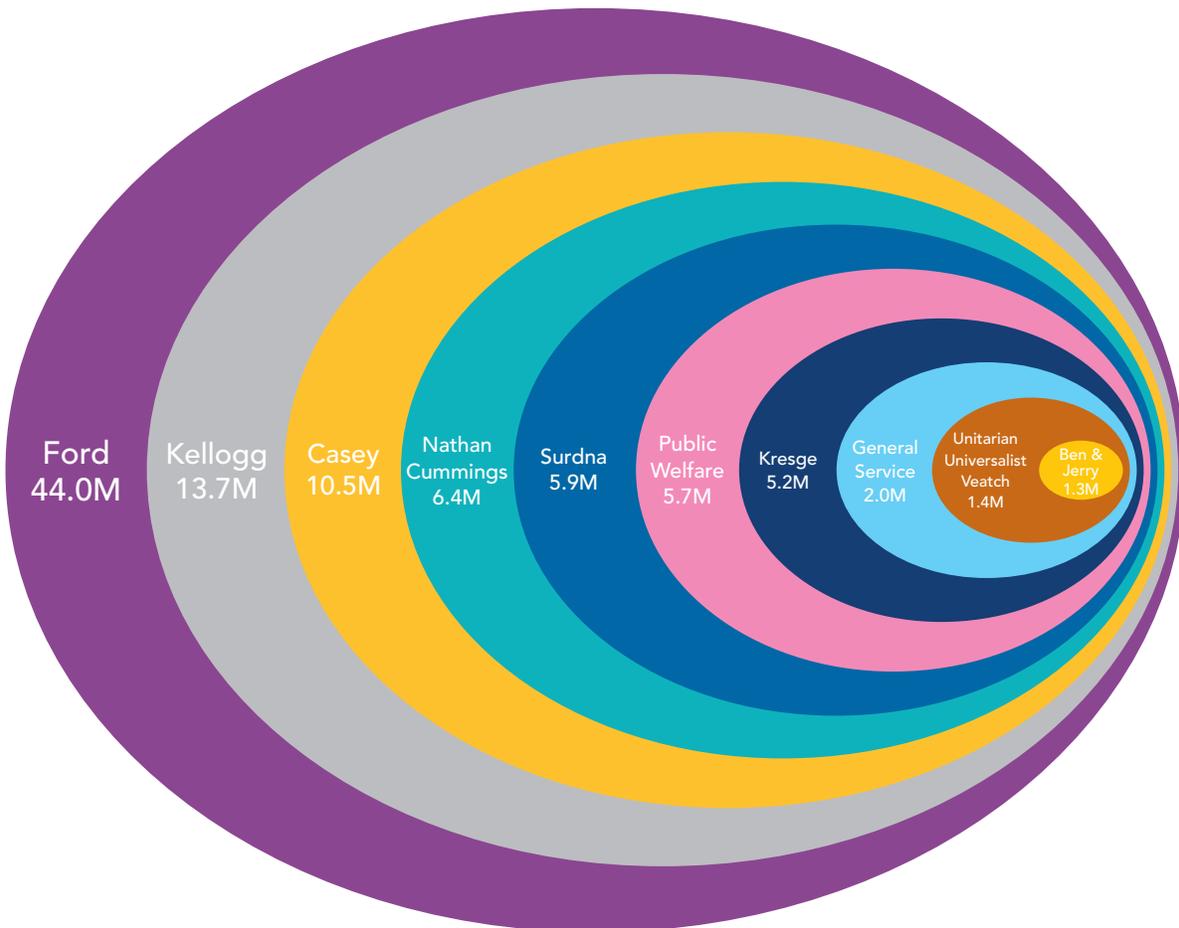
Ford Foundation	44,003,000
Kellogg Foundation	13,695,000
Marguerite Casey Foundation	10,505,000
Nathan Cummings Foundation	6,420,000
Kresge Foundation	5,912,000
Public Welfare Foundation	5,747,500
Surdna Foundation	4,422,000
General Service Foundation	1,955,600
Veatch Program	1,410,000
Ben & Jerry's Foundation	1,317,000
Mertz-Gilmore Foundation	1,261,000
Solidago Foundation	1,227,000
New World Foundation	1,088,500
Moriah Fund	1,073,000
Norman Foundation	1,060,000
Hill-Snowdon Foundation	1,058,500
New York Foundation	1,032,500
Rockefeller Foundation	800,000
North Star Fund	620,000
Noyes Foundation	535,000
Needmor Fund	439,500

# THE EMERGING ROLE OF WORKER CENTERS IN UNION ORGANIZING

For a more visual take on the same data, consider Figure 1, which illustrates in very general terms the comparative “market share” of relevant grant-making by the ten funders that are the most active. For purposes of visual clarity, the share of the grants space assigned to each of the ten is not

strictly proportional. But the relative significance of each of the ten is nevertheless clearly suggested by the figure, as is the likely degree of understatement of the influence of the Veatch Program resulting from the absence of three years of data.

**Figure 1**  
**The Ten Largest Donors to the Worker Center Movement, 2013-2016**



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Tables 3 and 4 break out the grants awarded *directly* to worker-centers and related entities, which together represented just less than half of all movement-related giving. Table 3 ranks the donors by their total amount of direct grants during the period 2013-2016. As was the case with respect to overall giving, Ford, Kellogg, Casey, and Cummings occupy the top four slots,

though in a slightly different order, with Surdna displacing the Public Welfare Foundation in fifth. Perhaps most interesting, however, is the fact that the Kresge Foundation, which awarded extensive direct funding to worker centers in the 2009-2012 period, awarded far less in such grants, a drop off of nearly 75 percent, during the subsequent period.

**Table 3**  
**Foundations Ranked by Total Direct Grants to Worker Centers, 2013-2016**

Ford Foundation	19,639,000
Kellogg Foundation	8,990,000
Marguerite Casey Foundation	5,665,000
Nathan Cummings Foundation	3,360,000
Surdna	1,647,000
Public Welfare Foundation	1,495,000
Ben & Jerry's Foundation	1,108,500
New York Foundation	1,026,500
Norman Foundation	850,000
General Service Foundation	816,800
Kresge Foundation	760,000
Hill-Snowdon Foundation	755,500
New World Foundation	675,000
Mertz-Gilmore Foundation	671,000
Veatch Program	670,000
Solidago Foundation	656,000
Noyes Foundation	470,000
Moriah Fund	460,000
North Star Fund	459,000
Needmor Fund	368,000
Rockefeller Foundation	275,000



## THE EMERGING ROLE OF WORKER CENTERS IN UNION ORGANIZING

As these data suggest, foundations tend to have particular “styles” of giving, which can vary through time. Some seek to generalize their points of impact, others to specialize. We see that reflected in this arena by the balance between direct and indirect giving. These style preferences operate independently of the value of grants awarded by any particular foundation, though

those that possess more substantial resources will doubtless have greater flexibility to meet what they may see as a variety of needs. To better identify such preferences while controlling for the level of resources, consider the data in Table 4, which rank the same funders based on the proportion of their worker-center related grant-making that is direct in nature.

**Table 4**  
**Foundations Ranked by Direct Grants as a Percentage of Total Support for Worker Centers, 2012-2016**

New York Foundation	99
Noyes Foundation	88
Ben & Jerry's Foundation	84
Needmor Fund	84
Norman Foundation	80
North Star Fund	74
Hill-Snowdon Foundation	71
Kellogg Foundation	66
New World Foundation	62
Marguerite Casey Foundation	53
Mertz-Gilmore Foundation	53
Solidago Foundation	53
Nathan Cummings Foundation	52
Veatch Program	51
Ford Foundation	45
Moriah Fund	43
General Service Foundation	42
Rockefeller Foundation	34
Surdna Foundation	28
Public Welfare Foundation	26
Kresge Foundation	15

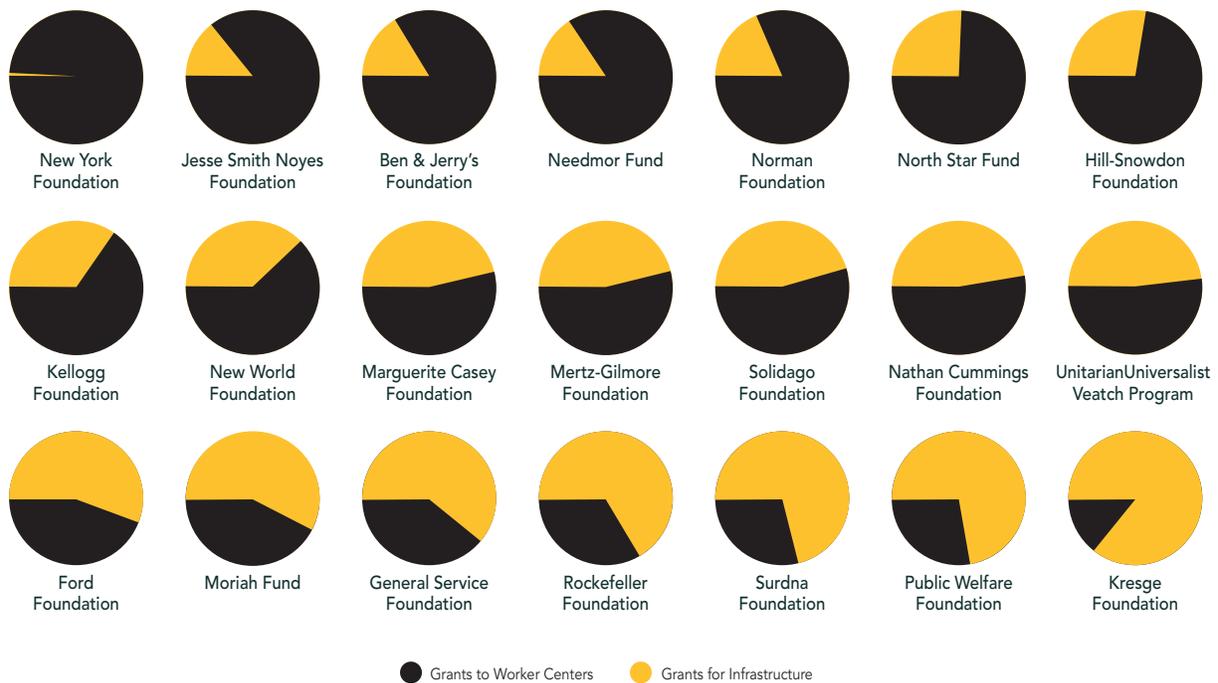
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At the top of the table we find the most specialized *direct* donors, epitomized by the New York Foundation, which eschews grants to infrastructure providers, while at the bottom we find the most specialized *infrastructure* donors, like Kresge. We can perhaps think of these opposite styles as populist in the first instance, centered on the workers at a retail level, and institutionalist in the second, centered on data, strategy, implementation and the like. Among the purest populists are Noyes, Ben & Jerry’s, Needmor and Norman, while the purest institutionalists include Public Welfare, Surdna, Rockefeller, and the General Service Foundation. The remainder of the funders array themselves between the two styles, with the

Veatch Program occupying the midpoint between the two.

As before, a graphic may assist us in visualizing these data. This is accomplished in Figure 2, which arrays the twenty-one donors left to right and in ranks in order of their demonstrated style in the 2013-2016 period based on the data in Table 4. In the figure, the black area represents the proportion of each foundation’s “pie” that was awarded in *direct* grants to support worker centers, while the yellow area represents the proportion that was awarded in *indirect* grants. The “pies” have not been adjusted to reflect the total amount given by each funder in the interests of simplicity.

**Figure 2**  
**Styles of Grant-Making by Funders of the Worker Center Movement, 2013-2016**





# THE EMERGING ROLE OF WORKER CENTERS IN UNION ORGANIZING

## The Infrastructure of Organizing

Who are these so-called “infrastructure providers” and what is the nature of the support they receive from our roster of funders? We begin to suggest the answers in Table 5.

Table 5 identifies five distinct classes of support for the worker center movement that we have combined under the heading of infrastructure.

The first is providing subsidies and encouragement to place the worker center issue on the public agenda in a supportive way. This typically comes in the form of grants to media organizations “to support the coverage of” one or another issue of

choice, a phrase that will be familiar, for example, to regular viewers of public television. Indeed, established commercial media organizations are coming to see such “philanthropy” as providing a new business model. In August 2017, for example, the British newspaper, *The Guardian*, established a nonprofit venture in the United States to solicit subsidies for issue-specific coverage, and *The New York Times* announced its plan to explore doing the same.<sup>30</sup> With respect to worker centers and other labor-related issues, such subsidies are provided by several foundations and also by the unions themselves. It is not possible, based on the available information, to argue that any one or another of these subsidies is specific to the worker center movement, but it

**Table 5**  
**Foundation Grants for Infrastructure and Indirect Support, 2013-2016**

Infrastructure and Indirect Support, By Type	2013-2016 Total
Subsidize Media/Encourage Coverage	1,370,000
Planning, Training, Research, Strategy, Implementation	32,581,500
Issue Support, Coordination, Movement Integration	16,226,000
Fiscal Sponsorship Pass-Through	4,793,300
Direct Support to Unions	544,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>55,514,800</b>

See the accompanying text for a list of the components of each category of recipient and for related discussion. Note in particular the discussion of media subsidies, as the figure reported here represents, on the one hand, grants to a single media entity, *The American Prospect*, which will significantly understate the use of this form of influence, but on the other hand, grants that cannot generally be tracked specifically to coverage of the worker center movement, per se, which would tend to overstate them. The figure reported in the table, then, serves as something of a placeholder.

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is possible to argue that such subsidies are related to labor coverage in general and reasonable to argue further that some significant portion of that coverage does portray, relate to, or impact worker centers and the public perceptions of them. For inclusion in Table 5, we have selected *one* media outlet, *The American Prospect (TAP)*, a progressive-left magazine and website, which is subsidized by both foundations and unions, the latter support providing ample evidence of labor-related content.<sup>31</sup> In this four-year period, the magazine received well over \$1 million in funding from foundations, plus an additional \$300,000+ in union contributions (see Table 7 below). Since we cannot be more specific as to donor intent or outcomes here, we have included the *TAP* grant as a sort of place-holder.<sup>32</sup> It is the case, however, that the magazine does cover worker center and related issues, as for example in its June 2017 story of the unionization of Sakuma Brothers Farms by a worker center cum union, *Familias Unidas por la Justicia*.<sup>33</sup>

The second and largest category is perhaps the purest play in supporting infrastructure. The grantees in this category provide a wide range of technical planning assistance, training, research and data analysis, strategy formulation, and implementation – the core needs of many worker center-type organizations. Examples would be the Berlin Rosen public relations firm or the National Employment Law Project. We described this phenomenon in our 2013 report as an “exoskeleton” of support, which contrasted with

the “endoskeleton” of infrastructure that *is* the typical established labor union. We continue to believe this an apt analogy.

The third category in the table is less technical, and more political, in nature. Left to their own devices, as highly localized, demographically defined, inwardly oriented community organizations, most worker centers would probably remain more or less isolated, both from one another and from the labor movement in general. For that reason, efforts that are aimed at integrating these centers, coordinating their actions, and generating and demonstrating broad support for them do constitute a form of infrastructure, and one on which the funders spend a very great deal of money. An example of this style of support would be that afforded by New York Communities for Change.

The fourth category is fiscal sponsorship. This takes the form of grants from one foundation, or sometimes from a union, to another foundation that operates a program of interest, often in the role of fiscal sponsor. This is an arrangement, pioneered in many ways by the Tides Foundation, in which a foundation takes on the responsibility for operating the nuts and bolts of a project or entity without engaging directly in its advocacy activities. In this way, it relieves activists who may have little skill or interest in the requisite project management (funding, tax filings, computer systems, and other back-office activities), replacing them with professionals of its own choosing, and in whom it has confidence, while preserving the tax-exempt



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status of the foundation. The Solidago Foundation’s LIFT (Labor Innovations for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century) program, which we will treat in more detail below, is a case in point. During the period 2013-2016, transfers of this type *from unions* included \$660,000 to the New World Foundation, \$25,500 to the North Star Fund, and \$200,000 to the Solidago Foundation, while those from other foundations included \$1,078,300 to the New World Foundation, \$1,250,000 to the New York Foundation, and \$2,465,000 to the Solidago Foundation.

The fifth and final category is direct support paid to unions. This is a relatively small item, both in the aggregate and in the case of any given foundation. And few foundations actually provide such direct payments. (General Service, New World, and Surdna are among those that do.) But it is, again, indicative of the friendly relationship between the two broad sets of institutions that have a demonstrated interest in the worker center movement.

**Table 6**  
**Foundations Ranked by Total Indirect Grants in Support of Worker Centers, 2013-2016**

Ford Foundation	24,364,000
Marguerite Casey Foundation	4,840,000
Kellogg Foundation	4,705,000
Kresge Foundation	4,413,000
Surdna Foundation	4,265,000
Public Welfare Foundation	4,252,500
Nathan Cummings Foundation	3,060,000
General Service Foundation	1,138,800
Veatch Program	740,000
Moriah Fund	613,000
Solidago Foundation	571,000
Rockefeller Foundation	525,000
Mertz-Gilmore Foundation	509,000
New World Foundation	413,500
Hill-Snowdon Foundation	303,000
Norman Foundation	210,000
Ben & Jerry’s Foundation	208,500
North Star Fund	161,000
Needmor Fund	71,500
Noyes Foundation	65,000
New York Foundation	5,000

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Table 6, which roughly parallels Table 3 above, provides a ranking of our roster of funders based on their grants to infrastructure providers. Based on the discussion here, these figures cannot be directly tied to worker center-related activity per se, but they are indicative of levels of support for providers that take a direct and significant interest in that activity.

In Table 7 we report on the convergence of foundation grants and union expenditures directed to a selected market-basket of infrastructure providers across our categories, including *TAP*, which we have already discussed, and a variety of public relations, research, strategy, and technology firms, as well as supportive content-activism-oriented groups.

**Table 7**  
**Foundation and Union Support for Selected Infrastructure Providers, 2013-2016**

Selected Infrastructure/ Indirect Supports	Foundation Support 2013-2016	Number Of Foundations (of 21)	Union Support 2013-2016	Number of Unions (of 6)
<i>American Prospect, The</i>	1,370,000	7	314,500	4
Berlin Rosen			13,070,500	5
Fenton Communications	1,000,000	1		
Freedman Consulting	2,883,000	1		
Good Jobs First	2,360,000	4	40,000	3
Highlander Research & Education Center	825,000	5		
Jobs with Justice	9,972,500	14	5,176,700	5
Labor/Community Strategy Center	1,590,000	4		
Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy	6,420,000	10	267,500	3
Movement Strategy Center	4,267,000	13	379,000	3
National Employment Labor Project	12,050,000	7	458,500	4
New York Communities for Change	140,000	3	4,146,500	5
Progressive Technology Project	875,000	4		
Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education	2,531,500	6		



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**Berlin Rosen** is a public relations and strategic communication consultancy that numbers among its clients the AFL-CIO (\$166,000 in 2013-2016), CWA (\$6,183,500), SEIU (\$5,677,000), UFCW (\$847,000), and UNITE HERE (\$197,000), as well as the National Employment Law Project and the Ford Foundation.<sup>34</sup>

If Berlin Rosen is the go-to public relations firm for unions, Fenton Communications, which describes itself as “The Social Change Agency,” is its counterpart for the foundation and activist communities. Its clients include the Ford, Kellogg, Kresge and New York Foundations among many others; a lengthy roster of activist groups that includes the likes of the American Civil Liberties Union, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, MoveOn, Oxfam America, and the Rainforest Action Network; and the *Guardian* newspaper, as well as an assortment of unions and Farmworker Justice.<sup>35</sup>

**Freedman Consulting** is a Washington-based consultancy specializing in strategy, planning, and policy development for change-oriented clients. The firm’s Principal is Tom Freedman, whose roles as adviser and strategist in the Clinton Administration and as press secretary to Rep. Chuck Schumer it essentially reprises. Among its clients are the Clinton Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Joyce Foundation, and the Open Society Foundations, and in the past included the Clinton/Gore and Obama campaigns.<sup>36</sup> In 2013-2016, the Ford Foundation paid Freedman fees totaling nearly \$2.96 million.

**Good Jobs First** describes itself as a resource center for grassroots groups pursuing corporate and government accountability. Among its other activities, it monitors government subsidies to corporations and produces company and industry case studies. An example is the Walmart-centered website Walmart Subsidy Watch.<sup>37</sup> The group also maintains an interactive online database of corporate structures and subsidies.<sup>38</sup>

**Highlander Center for Research & Education.** While not a household name, the Highlander Center has been a critical resource for labor and other organizers for the better part of a century. Founded in Tennessee in the 1930s, it was the de facto organizing school for the labor movement in the Southern states during and after the Great Depression. Similarly, and more to the present point, the Highlander Center received a \$120,000 grant from the Kellogg Foundation for a five-year program, 1995-2000, to “assist farmworkers in Immokalee, Florida, to acquire skills and methodologies within their communities for improving their lives.”<sup>39</sup> Thus was born, or at the very least nurtured, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers.<sup>40</sup> The center has evolved with the times, and retains its role, low in visibility but high in influence, today, much of it built around a social model of learning, termed “popular education,” in which shared narrative replaces imparted wisdom.<sup>41</sup> Over the years, for example, hundreds of workers and activists from Charleston, South Carolina, have studied (or taught) at Highlander, most recently those engaged in the Fight for

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\$15 movement.<sup>42</sup> During this four-year period, Highlander received support from the Marguerite Casey Foundation (\$600,000), Hill-Snowdon (\$58,000), Nathan Cummings (\$88,000), Needmor (\$4,000), and Surdna (\$75,000).

**Jobs with Justice (JWJ)** is a special case, and will be discussed in more detail momentarily.

**The Labor/Community Strategy Center (LCSC)** is a self-described “think tank/act tank” based in Los Angeles.<sup>43</sup> Though not focused on worker centers per se, the Center has a local focus, a membership demographic, and a focus on organizing that contribute to the interest shown by such foundations as Marguerite Casey (\$750,000 during 2013-2016), Ford (\$700,000), Hill-Snowdon (\$80,000), and the Needmor Fund (\$60,000).

**The Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE)** is another LA-based organization, with a particular focus on organizing and supporting advocacy coalitions to pursue progressive economic policies. LAANE was a co-founder of the Partnership for Working Families, a national coalition of similar organizations that now includes Align, the rebranded New York branch of Jobs with Justice. In the worker center space, LAANE has played an important role in labor organizing and environmental activism centered on the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach.<sup>44</sup> LAANE receives extensive support from foundations and unions alike. In the period 2013-

2016, this included \$750,000 from the Marguerite Casey Foundation, \$700,000 from Ford, \$1,200,000 from Kellogg, \$760,000 from Kresge, \$390,000 from Nathan Cummings, \$1,200,000 from Public Welfare, \$125,000 from Rockefeller, \$10,000 from Solidago, \$1,240,000 from Surdna, and \$45,000 from the Veatch Program, as well as \$1,602,500 from the AFL-CIO, \$50,000 from the SEIU, and \$55,000 from the UFCW.

As described in its 2015 filing with the IRS, the **Movement Strategy Center (MSC)** is “a national intermediary with more than 300 partner grassroots organizations, alliances, and networks that operate at local, regional, and national levels.” The Center focuses on what it terms “transformative movement building....” and provides “a home for movement innovation: the leaders, methods, initiatives, and networks that are breaking new ground.”<sup>45</sup> This is the very definition of infrastructure support. In 2013-2016, the Center was funded in part by grants or fees from the Ford Foundation (\$1,250,000), General Service (\$62,000), Hill-Snowdon (\$35,000), Kellogg (\$330,000), Kresge (\$1,893,000), Moriah (\$40,000), Nathan Cummings (\$232,000), New World (\$25,000), New York (\$5,000, the only infrastructure grant by this foundation), Public Welfare (\$50,000), Solidago (\$250,000), Surdna (\$55,000), the Veatch Program (\$40,000), the AFL-CIO (\$136,000), the SEIU (\$60,000), and the UFCW (\$183,000). It is worthy to note that, in addition to providing its own services, the Center also serves as something of a pass-through for



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funding worker center and related activities. In 2015, for example, it distributed \$10,000 to the Florida Immigrant Coalition and \$38,000 to the Food Chain Workers Alliance.<sup>46</sup>

**The National Employment Labor Project (NELP)** is a research and policy development provider that is heavily supported and relied upon by progressive advocates and the labor movement. Its staff includes several labor specialists, among them some with a special interest in living/minimum wage issues. It has been an important player in the Fight for \$15 movement, including maintenance of an issue-related website.<sup>47</sup> A summary of NELP's labor-related work can be found in its 2015 Annual Report.<sup>48</sup> In the period 2013-2016, the Ford Foundation awarded grants totaling \$7,550,000 to NELP. Additional support came from General Service (\$175,000), Kellogg (\$1,900,000), Moriah (\$200,000), Public Welfare (\$1,155,000), Rockefeller (\$400,000), and Surdna (\$670,000). The focus-list unions were also relatively generous in funding NELP, to the tune of \$75,000 from the AFL-CIO, \$12,500 from the CWA, \$300,000 from the SEIU, and \$70,000 from the UFCW.

**New York Communities for Change (NYCC)** is a membership organization whose purpose is to “RESIST fascist and racist policies that affect our most vulnerable communities.” That is to say, it is an ideologically-grounded activist group that focuses in significant measure on the structure of the local economy. NYCC spun out

of the New York chapter of ACORN when that group was disbanded in the wake of a voter-registration scandal. Its membership appeal is to minorities and working class families, which makes it a natural ally of the worker center movement. Indeed, one of its local chapters is an actual worker center, *Comite de Trabajadoras y Trabajadores de NYCC*, which has been involved in organizing carwash workers. It has been a central player in the Fight for \$15 movement.<sup>49</sup> NYCC has received support from the New World Foundation (\$50,000 during 2013-2016), Solidago Foundation (\$50,000), and the Veatch Program (\$40,000), and also from the CWA (\$750,500), the RWDSU (\$256,000), the SEIU (\$3.18 million, including fees for service from the Fast Food Workers Committee), and the UFCW (\$5,000).

**The Progressive Technology Project (PTP)**, based in Austin, Texas, is a provider of online database software for more than 100 community organizing groups. It also provides fundraising and technology training for organizers and activists.<sup>50</sup> In 2013-2016, its work was supported by four focus-list funders: Marguerite Casey (\$450,000), Ford (\$300,000), Surdna (\$75,000), and the Veatch Program (\$50,000).

**Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education (SCOPE)** is a Los Angeles-based grassroots organization serving “low-income, female, immigrant, black, and brown communities...” through training programs, leadership development, alliance building,

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and community organizing.<sup>51</sup> Like NYCC, its programs intersect with, but focus more broadly than, worker centers per se. In the 2013-2016 time frame, it received support from the Marguerite Casey Foundation (\$965,000), Ford (\$761,000), Nathan Cummings (\$500,000), New World (\$210,000), Solidago (\$45,000), and the Veatch Program (\$50,000).

These organizations and others like them give structure, guidance, substance and support to the worker center movement, the constituent elements of which could neither afford nor replace their services on their own. They may not be “of” the movement in the sense that the centers themselves are, but without them the movement would be unable to advance. For that reason, we regard the support of these ancillary organizations to be an essential component of the worker center

*“Much as political consultants give political candidates an alternative source for services that were traditionally provided by the political parties, these consultants and activists actually relieve the worker centers of the need to affiliate with established unions, and thus, in some measure, contribute to the dilemma which the unions face.”*

phenomenon. At the same time, much as political consultants give political candidates an alternative

source for services that were traditionally provided by the political parties, these consultants and activists actually relieve the worker centers of the need to affiliate with established unions, and thus, in some measure, contribute to the dilemma which the unions face.

## **Jobs with Justice: Old-Fashioned Organizing Meets New-Fangled Philanthropy**

Jobs with Justice (JWJ) was founded in 1987 by Larry Cohen, then organizing director and later president of the Communications Workers union (CWA). It is, at once, a national coalition of unions and labor-friendly organizations as well as a collaborative center for local coalitions of labor, community, religious and other activist groups.

Its function from the outset has been to mobilize support for organizing and for worker justice campaigns. In general, planning occurs at the national level, while actions are organized locally.<sup>52</sup> The organization maintains more than three dozen local chapters, some of which are actually worker centers (e.g., the Tompkins County (NY) and Vermont Workers Centers),<sup>53</sup> while others serve as more general organizing hubs. Of late,



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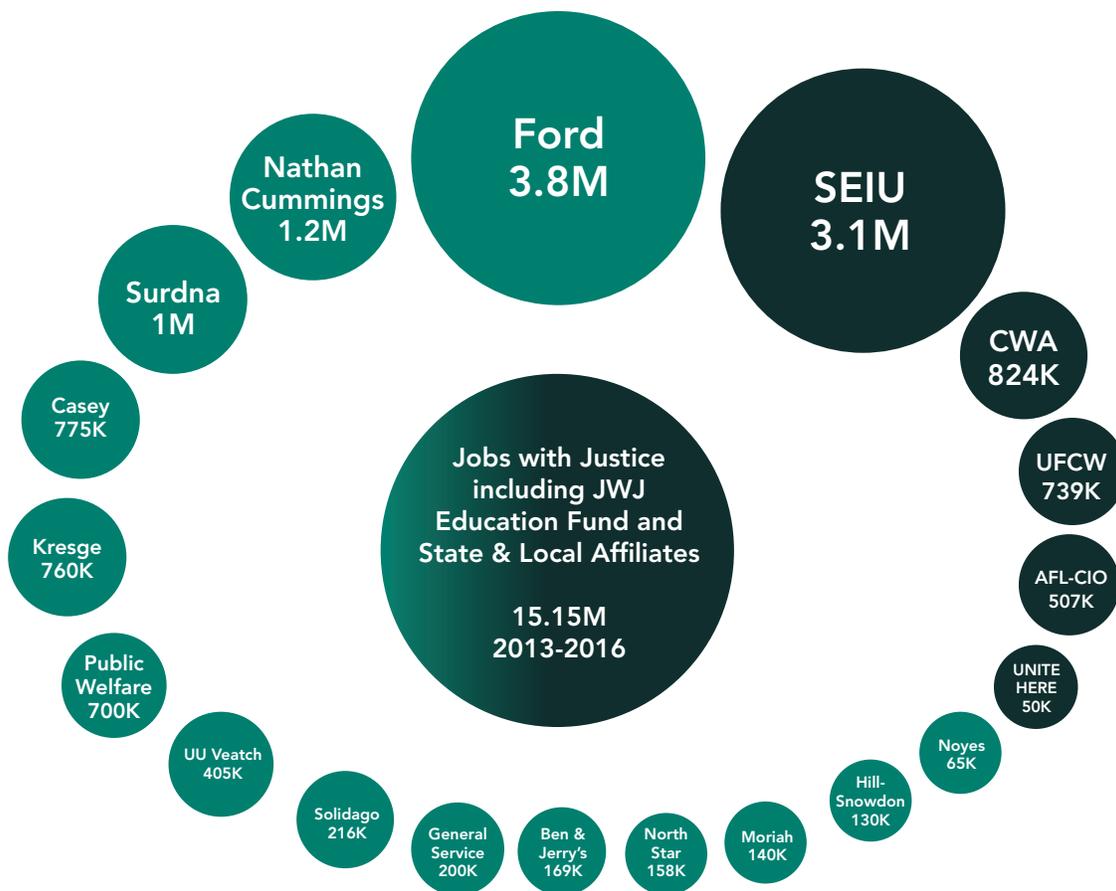
JWJ has engaged in some rebranding at the local level, as for example, in New York City, where the chapter has been renamed the Alliance for Greater New York (ALIGN).

A number of unions and federations partner with JWJ, including the AFL-CIO, CWA, SEIU, UFCW, and UNITE HERE, as well as others not discussed in other portions of this report. Since the RWDSU, which we treat separately here because it files separate LM-2 forms with the Department of Labor, is actually a component affiliate of the UFCW, this amounts to all of the unions on whose worker center-related activity we will focus below. In addition, JWJ lists as allies several of the entities that show up elsewhere in this report, including the Highlander Center, Interfaith Worker Justice, International Labor Rights Forum, National Domestic Workers Alliance, National Day Laborer Organizing Network, National Employment Law Project, OUR Walmart, and the Restaurant Opportunities Center.<sup>54</sup> The Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program also lists itself as a partner. The JWJ agenda is organized around eight issue clusters: racial justice, economic justice, promoting unions and collective bargaining, shaping the workplace, immigration reform, exposing union busters, strengthening workers' rights, and improving labor laws.<sup>55</sup> Jobs with Justice is frequently represented in public displays of support for such causes as the Fight for \$15 minimum wage movement and limiting the actions of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers.

Because it has such widespread support in both the labor and the philanthropic communities, and because it occupies something of a middle ground between an infrastructure provider and a set of worker centers, let us take a closer look at the financing of this organization. That is accomplished in Figure 3. In collecting the figures reported in the figure, we combined awards to JWJ with those to its local chapters (excluding the Vermont and Tompkins County Worker Centers, which are tracked separately later in this report) and to the Jobs with Justice Education Fund. While not all of this money was by any means directed specifically to support the worker center movement, JWJ is inherently supportive of that effort, even to the extent of receiving more than \$2 million from the Fast Food Workers Committee for services rendered. (It is for this reason that we have included it here within the somewhat amorphous but clearly supportive group of infrastructure providers.) At the same time, we did identify separate grants from several sources to POWER, an acronym for a JWJ project, Protect Our Workers from Exploitation and Retaliation, which seems primarily to be invested in immigration rights. Here, too, JWJ tests one of our boundaries, that between immigrant rights (excluded) and workers' rights (inclusion). The POWER grants are not included in our analysis. JWJ does not file an LM-2 report with the Labor Department.

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Figure 3  
Foundation and Union Support for Jobs with Justice, 2013-2016



In the figure, the balance of the awards to JJJ during this period is apparent, as is the relative contribution of each supporting funder. The sizeable investment in this organization by the labor movement is a good indicator of its importance to the unions, while the broad and deep support of the foundation community speaks to the appeal of its agenda of progressive

reform and support for workers' rights, including, specifically, the worker center movement. If there is any point in this space where the established unions do work cooperatively with outside supporters of the worker center movement in an effort to draw in these ethnic, immigrant, and generally low-wage workers, JJJ may well be that point.



# THE EMERGING ROLE OF WORKER CENTERS IN UNION ORGANIZING

## The Foundations and Their Grantees

The key to understanding the worker center movement lies in understanding the philosophy and degree of engagement of the change-oriented, activist foundations that support it. This is perhaps most succinctly described in a report, titled *Lift Every Voice: Movement-Building as a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Philanthropic Strategy*, produced by the Marguerite Casey Foundation, that summarized its “Equal Voice” campaign, an initiative to create a movement of poor and working-class families and give them the tools to advocate for their interests. Founded in 2002, by the start of the campaign in 2007 the foundation

... already provided support for advocacy, activism, and issue education to community-based organizations that have at the heart of their respective missions social justice and movement building....

Those organizations constituted a natural base of allies.... And because the foundation was structured in a unique way, with our program officers serving as resources and partners to grantees rather than simply reviewing proposals and signing off on grants, and connecting groups to one another was already a key part of our mission, we were well poised... [for] a natural extension of the mission we had been pursuing all along.<sup>56</sup>

In our 2013 study we provided thumbnails (incorporated here only by reference) of all but

two of the foundations included in this update,<sup>57</sup> the New World and Solidago Foundations, both of which award grants but also receive outside support for their own projects and fiscal sponsorships. We will detail the grant-making of both momentarily. First, though, some basics on the two.

The New World Foundation was chartered in 1954 by Anita McCormick Blaine, who early in life inherited the fortune of Cyrus H. McCormick, the well-known inventor of farming equipment. The foundation was an early supporter of the civil rights movement, and later of a variety of other social movements. It has long emphasized support of community organizing.<sup>58</sup> The foundation is chaired by Kent Wong, director of the UCLA Labor Center. Board member Lisa Abbott is director of organizing and leadership development for a Kentucky activist group and also serves on the board of the Progressive Technology Project.<sup>59</sup> Together they typify a board that is somewhat unique in its substantial emphasis on activist experience. In the present context, a key program is the Phoenix Fund, formed in 1996, which supports collaborative projects among progressive unions, community organizations, interfaith networks, immigrants, and students, as well as worker centers and networks of worker centers and their campaigns for labor and immigration rights.<sup>60</sup>

The Solidago Foundation was founded by Joseph and David Rosenmiller and focuses on three program areas: economic justice, environmental justice, and electoral justice.<sup>61</sup> It is most significant in the present context for two projects, Labor Innovations for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (LIFT) and The

# U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE WORKFORCE FREEDOM INITIATIVE

Workers Lab: Innovating for Worker Justice. The former is a partnership with unions, other foundations, worker centers and academia designed to promote strategic collaborations. The latter is an “accelerator” that invests in community organizers, social justice organizations, issue

campaigns and the like, all focused on improving conditions for low-wage workers.<sup>62</sup>

Now let us turn to a summary of 2013-2016 grant-making by all of the funders in our study.

## BEN & JERRY’S FOUNDATION. *Total Awards: \$1,317,000.*<sup>63</sup>

### Worker Centers:

- Arise Chicago, \$15,000
- Brandworkers International, \$60,000
- Center for Frontline Retail, \$20,000
- Center for Worker Justice in Eastern Iowa, \$40,000
- Cincinnati Interfaith Workers Center, \$25,000
- *Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en Lucha* (CTUL), \$67,000
- *Damayan* Migrant Workers Association, \$20,000
- *El Centro Humanitario*, \$20,000
- Enlace, \$80,000
- *Fuerza Laboral*, \$40,000
- Garment Workers Center, \$40,000
- Greater Minnesota Workers Center, \$45,000
- Hand in Hand, \$20,000
- Latino Union of Chicago, \$40,000
- Laundry Workers Center, \$40,000
- New Vision Taxi Drivers Association, \$20,000
- New York Worker Center Federation, \$5,000
- Northwest Arkansas Workers Justice Center (NNAWJC), \$45,000
- OUR Vanderbilt, \$20,000
- Pioneer Valley Worker Center, \$15,000
- Retail Action Project/Good Old Lower East Side, \$20,000
- Southern Maine Workers Center, \$30,000
- Street Vendor Project, \$60,000
- Tompkins County Workers Center (Jobs with Justice), \$20,000
- United Workers, \$40,000
- VOZ, \$40,000
- Warehouse Workers Resource Center, \$40,000
- Western North Carolina Workers Center, \$15,000
- Worker Center for Racial Justice, \$55,000
- Workers Center of Central New York, \$40,000
- Workers’ Dignity Project, \$51,500
- Workers Justice Project, \$20,000

### Infrastructure:

- Jobs with Justice, \$168,500
- United Students Against Sweatshops, \$40,000



# THE EMERGING ROLE OF WORKER CENTERS IN UNION ORGANIZING

## MARGUERITE CASEY FOUNDATION. *Total Awards: \$10,505,000.*<sup>64</sup>

### Worker Centers:

- CIW, \$100,000;
- Enlace, \$375,000;
- Farmworkers Association of Florida, \$845,000;
- Miami Workers Center, \$470,000;
- Mississippi Workers Center for Human Rights, \$50,000;
- National Domestic Workers Association (NDWA), \$1,550,000;
- New Orleans Workers Center for Racial Justice (NOWCRJ), \$700,000;
- Restaurant Opportunities Center (ROC), \$300,000;
- Southwest Workers Union, \$900,000;
- Wisconsin Jobs Now, \$75,000;
- Workers Defense Project, \$300,000.

### Infrastructure:

- Highlander Research and Education Center, \$600,000;
- Interfaith Worker Justice (IWJ), \$550,000;
- Jobs with Justice, \$775,000;
- LCSC, \$750,000;
- LAANE, \$750,000;
- PTP, \$450,000;
- SCOPE, \$965,000.

## FORD FOUNDATION. *Total Awards: \$44,003,000.*<sup>65</sup>

### Worker Centers:

- CASA de Maryland, \$700,000
- Coalition of Immokalee Workers/Campaign for Fair Food (CIW), \$400,000
- Food Chain Workers Alliance (FCWA), \$150,000
- International Domestic Workers Alliance, \$200,000
- National Day Labor Organizing Network (NDL), \$2,850,000
- NDWA, \$7,395,000
- NOWCRJ, \$2,739,000
- New York Taxi Workers Alliance, \$450,000
- ROC, \$3,955,000
- Workers Defense Project, \$650,000
- Workers Justice Project, \$150,000

### Infrastructure:

- Better Balance, \$500,000
- TAP, \$140,000
- Freedman Consulting, \$2,883,000
- Good Jobs First, \$1,300,000
- International Labor Rights Forum, \$200,000
- IWJ, \$775,000
- Jobs with Justice, \$3,780,000
- LCSC, \$700,000
- LAANE, \$700,000
- MSC, \$1,250,000
- NELP, \$7,550,000
- PTP, \$300,000
- SCOPE, \$761,000

# U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE WORKFORCE FREEDOM INITIATIVE

Ford also awarded \$850,000 to the New World Foundation; \$1,200,000 to the New York Foundation; and \$1,475,000 to the Solidago Foundation. Examples: In 2013 the Foundation awarded funds to Jobs with Justice (Education Fund) “for the United Workers Congress to build

capacity and encourage strategic collaboration between low wage workers and worker center networks.” In 2014, Ford awarded \$426,255 to the NDWA for a one-day meeting at the Foundation “to help identify and develop innovative strategies to raise standards for domestic workers.”

## GENERAL SERVICE FOUNDATION. *Total Awards: \$1,955,600.*<sup>66</sup>

### Worker Centers:

- Centro Humanitario Para Los Trabajadores, \$20,000
- FCWA, \$45,000
- National Black Worker Center Project (via MSC as fiscal sponsor), \$51,800
- NDL, \$140,000
- NDWA, \$140,000
- NOWCRJ, \$130,000
- ROC, \$160,000
- Warehouse Workers for Justice, \$45,000
- Workers Defense Project, \$85,000

### Infrastructure:

- The Data Center, \$40,000
- IWJ, \$120,000
- Jobs with Justice, \$200,000
- MSC, \$62,000
- NELP, \$205,000

The foundation also distributed \$142,800 to the New World Foundation and \$90,000 to the Solidago Foundation, and contributed \$309,000 to

the United Electrical Workers (UE) Research and Education Fund.



# THE EMERGING ROLE OF WORKER CENTERS IN UNION ORGANIZING

## HILL-SNOWDON FOUNDATION. *Total Awards: \$1,058,500.*<sup>67</sup>

<p><b>Worker Centers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Adhikaar</i>, \$5,000</li> <li>• <i>CASA de Maryland</i>, \$111,000</li> <li>• <i>Miami Workers Center</i>, \$97,500</li> <li>• <i>NDL</i>, \$95,500</li> <li>• <i>NDWA</i>, \$70,000</li> <li>• <i>NOWCRJ</i>, \$80,000</li> <li>• <i>ROC</i>, \$65,000</li> <li>• <i>Voces de la Frontera</i>, \$111,500</li> <li>• <i>Worker Center for Racial Justice</i>, \$35,000</li> <li>• <i>Workers’ Dignity Project</i>, \$85,000</li> </ul>	<p><b>Infrastructure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Highlander Research and Education Center</i>, \$58,000</li> <li>• <i>Jobs with Justice</i>, \$130,000</li> <li>• <i>LCSC</i>, \$80,000</li> <li>• <i>MSC</i>, \$35,000</li> </ul>
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Data do not include 2016 awards.

## WK KELLOGG FOUNDATION. *Total Awards: \$13,840,000.*<sup>68</sup>

<p><b>Worker Centers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>CIW</i>, \$800,000</li> <li>• <i>Farmworkers Association of Florida</i>, \$1,975,000</li> <li>• <i>NDWA</i>, \$1,800,000</li> <li>• <i>NOWCRJ</i>, \$455,000</li> <li>• <i>ROC</i>, \$2,835,000</li> <li>• <i>Workers Defense Project</i>, \$1,125,000</li> </ul>	<p><b>Infrastructure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>TAP</i>, \$375,000</li> <li>• <i>LAANE</i>, \$1,200,000</li> <li>• <i>MSC</i>, \$330,000</li> <li>• <i>NELP</i>, \$1,900,000</li> </ul>
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Kellogg also gave \$900,000 to the Solidago Foundation. Example: Kellogg awarded \$1.3 million to NELP in 2016 for a project to “secure fair treatment for low-wage working parents of

color by developing and testing a robust worker center technical assistance model in Mississippi and Louisiana and an enhanced narrative around race and employment in the American South.”

# U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE WORKFORCE FREEDOM INITIATIVE

## KRESGE FOUNDATION. *Total Awards: \$5,173,000.*<sup>69</sup>

<p><b>Worker Centers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Southwest Workers Union, \$760,000</li> </ul>	<p><b>Infrastructure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fenton Communications, \$1,000,000</li> <li>• Jobs with Justice, \$760,000</li> <li>• LAANE, \$760,000</li> <li>• MSC, \$1,893,000</li> </ul>
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## MERTZ-GILMORE FOUNDATION. *Total Awards: \$1,261,000.*<sup>70</sup>

<p><b>Worker Centers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adhikaar, \$100,000</li> <li>• Brandworkers International, \$191,000</li> <li>• Center for Frontline Retail, \$150,000</li> <li>• ROC, \$50,000</li> <li>• Retail Action Project/Good Old Lower East Side, \$180,000</li> </ul>	<p><b>Infrastructure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TAP, \$125,000</li> <li>• Good Jobs First, \$40,000</li> <li>• Jobs with Justice, \$275,000</li> <li>• National Mobilization Against Sweatshops, \$100,000</li> </ul>
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Also awarded: \$50,000 to the New York Foundation. Data do not include 2016 awards.

## MORIAH FUND. *Total Awards: \$1,073,000.*<sup>71</sup>

<p><b>Worker Centers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CASA de Maryland, \$30,000</li> <li>• NDWA, \$270,000</li> <li>• ROC, \$160,000</li> </ul>	<p><b>Infrastructure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International Labor Rights Forum, \$218,000</li> <li>• IWJ, \$15,000</li> <li>• Jobs with Justice, \$140,000</li> <li>• MSC, \$40,000</li> <li>• NELP, \$200,000</li> </ul>
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Data do not include 2016 awards.



# THE EMERGING ROLE OF WORKER CENTERS IN UNION ORGANIZING

## NATHAN CUMMINGS FOUNDATION. *Total Awards: \$6,420,000.*<sup>72</sup>

<p><b>Worker Centers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NDWA, \$1,860,000</li> <li>• NOWCRJ, \$600,000</li> <li>• ROC, \$900,000</li> </ul>	<p><b>Infrastructure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TAP, \$375,000</li> <li>• Good Jobs First, \$275,000</li> <li>• Highlander Research and Education Center, \$88,000</li> <li>• Jobs with Justice, \$1,200,000</li> <li>• LAANE, \$390,000</li> <li>• MSC, \$232,000</li> <li>• SCOPE, \$500,000</li> </ul>
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## NEEDMOR FUND. *Total Awards: \$439,500.*<sup>73</sup>

<p><b>Worker Centers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enlace, \$8,000</li> <li>• Mississippi Workers Center for Human Rights, \$30,000</li> <li>• NOWCRJ, \$30,000</li> <li>• United Workers Association, \$90,000</li> <li>• Vermont Workers Center (Jobs with Justice), \$70,000</li> <li>• <i>Voces de la Frontera</i>, \$40,000</li> <li>• Workers Defense Project, \$100,000</li> </ul>	<p><b>Infrastructure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlander Research and Education Center, \$4,000</li> <li>• LCSC, \$60,000</li> </ul>
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Needmor also awarded \$7,500 to the New World Foundation. Data do not include 2016 awards.

## NEW YORK FOUNDATION. *Total Awards: \$1,032,500.*<sup>74</sup>

<p><b>Worker Centers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Adhikaar</i>, \$65,500</li> <li>• Brandworkers International, \$85,500</li> <li>• Center for Frontline Retail, \$154,000</li> <li>• <i>Damayan</i> Migrant Workers Association, \$132,500</li> <li>• Flushing Workers Center, \$135,000</li> <li>• Laundry Workers Center, \$124,000</li> <li>• ROC, \$45,000</li> <li>• Retail Action/Good Old Lower East Side, \$102,000</li> <li>• Street Vendor Project, \$83,500</li> <li>• Workers Justice Project, \$100,500</li> </ul>	<p><b>Infrastructure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MSC, \$5,000</li> </ul>
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# U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE WORKFORCE FREEDOM INITIATIVE

## NEW WORLD FOUNDATION. *Total Awards: \$1,088,500.*<sup>75</sup>

<p><b>Worker Centers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brandworkers International, \$70,000</li> <li>• Chicago Workers Collaborative, \$50,000</li> <li>• <i>Fey y Justicia</i> Workers Center, \$50,000</li> <li>• KIWA, \$25,000</li> <li>• NDL, \$50,000</li> <li>• NDWA, \$25,000</li> <li>• NOWCRJ, \$25,000</li> <li>• North Shore Workers Community Fund, \$50,000</li> <li>• NNAWJC, \$60,000</li> <li>• ROC, \$45,000</li> <li>• Vermont Workers Center (Jobs with Justice), \$50,000</li> <li>• VOZ, \$50,000</li> <li>• Warehouse Worker Resource Center, \$25,000</li> <li>• Workers Interfaith Network, \$75,000</li> <li>• Workers Justice Project, \$25,000</li> </ul>	<p><b>Infrastructure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TAP, \$25,000</li> <li>• IWJ, \$53,000</li> <li>• MSC, \$25,000</li> <li>• NYCC, \$50,000</li> <li>• SCOPE, \$210,500</li> </ul>
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The Foundation also awarded \$50,000 to the UE Research and Education Fund. Data do not include 2016 awards.

## NORMAN FOUNDATION. *Total Awards: \$1,060,000.*<sup>76</sup>

<p><b>Worker Centers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CIW, \$50,000</li> <li>• Enlace, \$30,000</li> <li>• FCWA, \$115,000</li> <li>• NOWCRJ, \$50,000</li> <li>• NNAWJC, \$100,000</li> <li>• United Workers Association, \$120,000</li> <li>• Warehouse Workers for Justice, \$85,000</li> <li>• Wisconsin Jobs Now, \$50,000</li> <li>• Workers Center for Racial Justice, \$75,000</li> <li>• Workers Defense Project, \$55,000</li> <li>• Workers' Dignity Project, \$25,000</li> <li>• Workers Interfaith Network, \$95,000</li> </ul>	<p><b>Infrastructure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Data Center, \$100,000</li> <li>• International Labor Rights Forum, \$90,000</li> </ul>
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In addition, the foundation awarded \$20,000 to the UE Research and Education Fund.



# THE EMERGING ROLE OF WORKER CENTERS IN UNION ORGANIZING

## NORTH STAR FUND. *Total Awards: \$620,000.*<sup>77</sup>

<p><b>Worker Centers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Adhikaar</i>, \$70,000</li> <li>• Brandworkers International, \$75,000</li> <li>• <i>Damayan</i> Migrant Workers Association, \$57,000</li> <li>• Flushing Workers Center, \$20,000</li> <li>• Laundry Workers Center, \$20,000</li> <li>• NDL, \$46,500</li> <li>• NDWA, \$17,500</li> <li>• ROC, \$15,000</li> <li>• Retail Action Project/Good Old Lower East Side, \$68,000</li> <li>• Street Vendor Project, \$10,000</li> <li>• Workers Justice Project, \$60,000</li> </ul>	<p><b>Infrastructure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jobs with Justice, \$158,000</li> </ul>
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The fund also awarded \$3,000 to the New World Foundation, and \$50,000 to the publication

*LaborNotes*, which covers the worker center movement extensively.

## JESSE SMITH NOYES FOUNDATION. *Total Awards: \$535,000.*<sup>78</sup>

<p><b>Worker Centers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brandworkers International, \$60,000</li> <li>• CIW, \$60,000</li> <li>• <i>Comite de Apoyos a los Trabajadores Agriculturas</i>, \$45,000</li> <li>• Farmworkers Association of Florida, \$85,000</li> <li>• FCWA, \$75,000</li> <li>• ROC, \$125,000</li> <li>• Southwest Workers Union, \$20,000</li> </ul>	<p><b>Infrastructure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jobs with Justice, \$65,000</li> </ul>
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Data do not include 2016 awards.

# U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE WORKFORCE FREEDOM INITIATIVE

## PUBLIC WELFARE FOUNDATION. Total Awards: \$5,747,500.<sup>79</sup>

<p><b>Worker Centers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CIW, \$450,000 plus \$60,000 to the affiliated Student/Farmworker Alliance</li> <li>• ROC, \$330,000</li> <li>• United Workers Association, \$475,000</li> <li>• Workers Defense Project, \$180,000</li> </ul>	<p><b>Infrastructure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TAP, \$125,000</li> <li>• IWJ, \$1,022,500</li> <li>• Jobs with Justice, \$700,000;</li> <li>• LAANE, \$1,200,000</li> <li>• MSC, \$50,000</li> <li>• NELP, \$1,155,000</li> </ul>
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Of particular interest, the Foundation awarded \$200,000 to National Public Radio in 2016 for coverage of workers’ rights, following a 2015 grant of \$300,000 to the Center for Public Integrity to support workers’ rights reporting, and \$320,000 to *In These Times* for original news coverage and commentary on this issue, including

establishment of a dedicated blog, *Working In These Times*. Since these entities are not on our list of infrastructure providers (this is precisely the sort of activity for which grants to TAP are standing in), none of these grants has been included in the data reported elsewhere in this report.

## ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION. Total Awards: \$800,000.<sup>80</sup>

<p><b>Worker Centers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adhikaar, \$150,000</li> <li>• NDWA, \$125,000</li> </ul>	<p><b>Infrastructure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LAANE, \$125,000</li> <li>• NELP, \$400,000</li> </ul>
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Note the previously mentioned 2013 award to Abt Associates to assess the impact of the Foundation’s “Campaign for American Workers.”



# THE EMERGING ROLE OF WORKER CENTERS IN UNION ORGANIZING

## SOLIDAGO FOUNDATION. *Total Awards: \$1,227,000.*<sup>81</sup>

Worker Centers:	Infrastructure:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Adhikaar</i>, \$56,000</li> <li>• <i>Centro Comunitario de Trabajadores</i>, \$50,000</li> <li>• CTUL, \$25,000</li> <li>• FCWA, \$50,000;</li> <li>• <i>Fuerza Laboral</i>, \$50,000</li> <li>• Immigrant Workers Center Collaborative, \$25,000</li> <li>• Los Angeles Black Workers Center, \$20,000</li> <li>• NDL, \$65,000</li> <li>• NDWA, \$65,000</li> <li>• New Mexico Workers Organizing Collaborative, \$40,000</li> <li>• NOWCJR, \$70,000</li> <li>• Pioneer Valley Workers Center, \$3,000</li> <li>• ROC, \$57,000</li> <li>• <i>Voces de la Frontera</i>, \$10,000</li> <li>• Workers' Defense Project, \$20,000</li> <li>• Workers' Dignity Project, \$50,000</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jobs with Justice, \$216,000</li> <li>• LAANE, \$10,000</li> <li>• MSC, \$250,000</li> <li>• NYCC, \$50,000</li> <li>• SCOPE, \$45,000</li> </ul>

Data do not include 2016 awards.

## SURDNA FOUNDATION. *Total Awards: \$5,912,000.*<sup>82</sup>

Worker Centers:	Infrastructure:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NDL, \$57,000</li> <li>• NDWA, \$915,000</li> <li>• NOWCRJ, \$125,000</li> <li>• ROC, \$505,000</li> <li>• Workers' Defense Project, \$45,000</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TAP, \$205,000</li> <li>• Good Jobs First, \$745,000</li> <li>• Highlander Research and Education Center, \$75,000</li> <li>• Jobs with Justice, \$1,000,000</li> <li>• LAANE, \$1,240,000</li> <li>• MSC, \$55,000</li> <li>• NELP, \$670,000</li> <li>• PTP, \$75,000</li> </ul>

The Foundation also awarded \$75,000 to the New World Foundation and \$125,000 to the SEIU.

# U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE WORKFORCE FREEDOM INITIATIVE

## UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST VEATCH GRANTS PROGRAM. *Total Awards: \$1,410,000.*<sup>83</sup>

### Workers Centers:

- CLEAN Carwash Campaign, \$40,000
- CIW, \$40,000
- Farmworkers Association of Florida, \$40,000
- Miami Workers Center, \$40,000;
- National Black Workers Center Project, \$50,000
- NDL, \$80,000
- NDWA, \$80,000
- NOWCJR, \$50,000
- OUR Walmart, \$50,000
- ROC, \$80,000
- *Voces de la Frontera*, \$40,000
- Workers Center for Racial Justice, \$40,000
- Workers Defense Project, \$40,000

### Infrastructure:

- IWJ, \$70,000;
- Jobs with Justice, \$405,000 (the Veatch Program lists itself as a partner of the organization)
- LAANE, \$45,000
- MSC, \$40,000
- NYCC, \$40,000
- PTP, \$50,000
- SCOPE, \$50,000

In addition, the Program awarded \$40,000 to the UE Research and Education Fund, and \$55,000 to *Labor Notes*. Data include *only* 2016 awards.

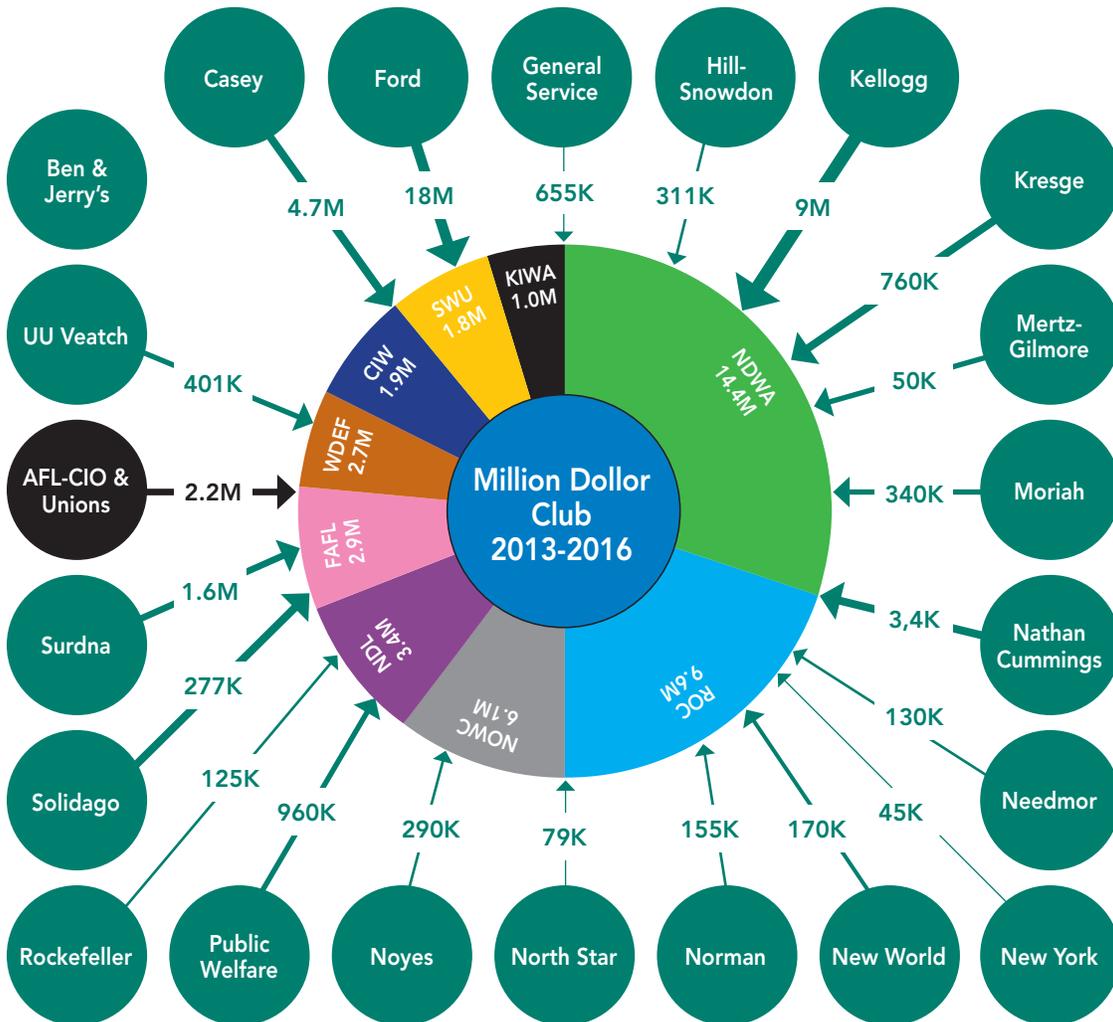
# THE EMERGING ROLE OF WORKER CENTERS IN UNION ORGANIZING

## The Principal Beneficiaries

As is evident by now, and will become more so when we present Table 8 later in the analysis, there are, among the worker centers, some that attract

far more support than do others. Let us begin to examine the receipts of the grantees themselves by identifying the biggest among them. Figure 4 will get us started.

**Figure 4**  
**Worker Centers Receiving More Than \$1 Million During 2013-2016, By Source of Funds**



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Our data indicate that nine worker centers received at least \$1 million from our focus list of funders during the period in question. They included, in descending order of receipts, the National Domestic Workers Alliance, the Restaurant Opportunities Center, the New Orleans Workers Center for Racial Justice, the National Day Laborers Organizing Network, the Farmworker Association of Florida, the Workers Defense Project, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, the Southwest Workers Union, and the Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance. The figure includes the full array of funders, but shows that not all made awards to one or more of these entities. To make clear the predominance of foundation funding, we have included here the sum total of contributions from the AFL-CIO and five unions, the CWA, RWDSU, SEIU, UFCW, and UNITE HERE, i.e., those whose memberships most closely resemble those of the worker centers or whose leadership has devoted significant resources to the centers or to organizing in this segment of the workforce.<sup>84</sup> KIWA is shown in black in the figure because it is the *only* worker center in our study that received the bulk of its support from organized labor, specifically \$1,016,000 from the AFL-CIO. The New Orleans center is the only other one that received significant union support – mainly \$1,043,000 from the UFCW – but it would have made the list even without that support. Of

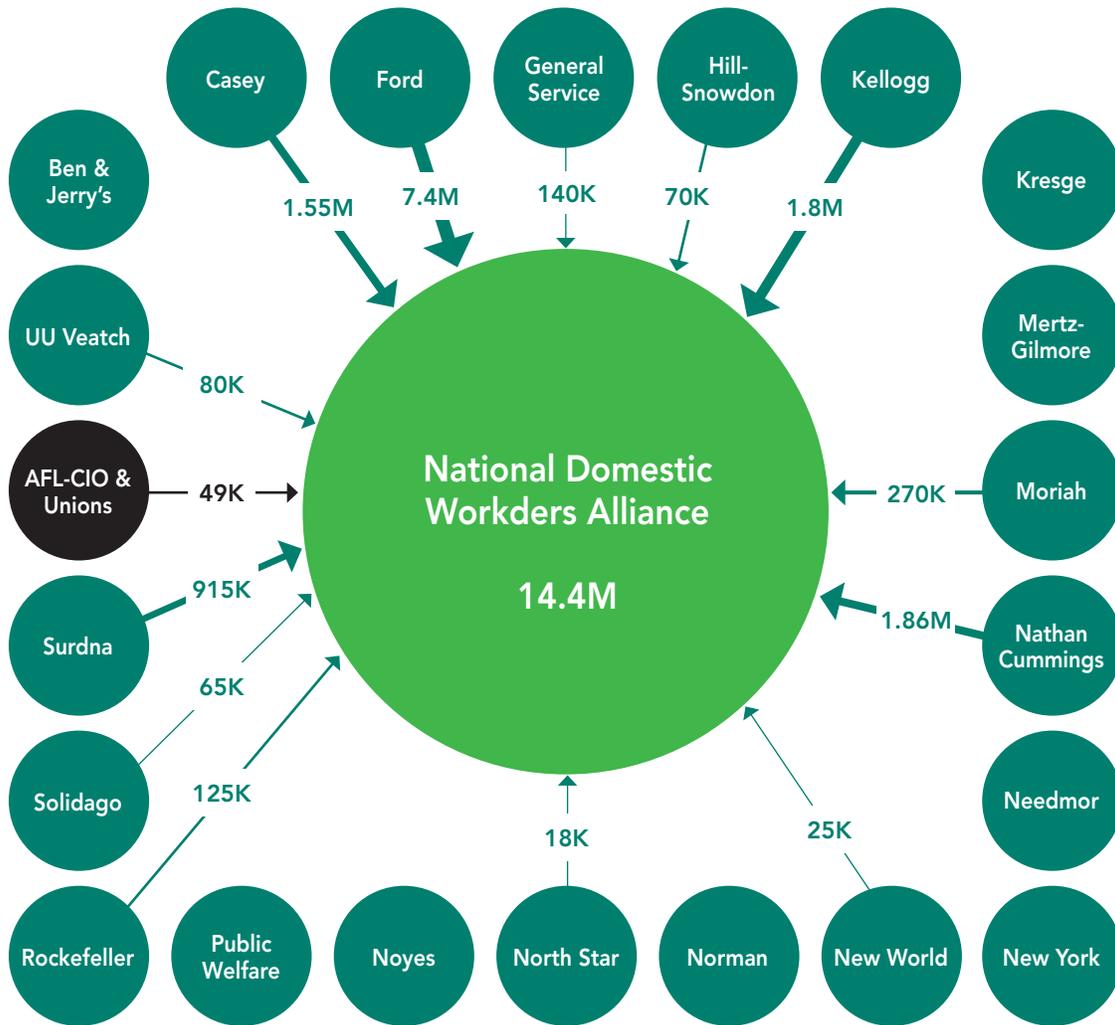
the more than \$44 million awarded to these nine enterprises over this four-year period, barely \$2 million came from within the labor movement itself. If the mainstream unions do benefit in the long run from all of this organizing activity among low-wage workers – which we have suggested is an open question – they will have been among the most successful free riders in history.

*“If the mainstream unions do benefit in the long run from all of this organizing activity among low-wage workers... they will have been among the most successful free riders in history.”*

Let us now take a closer look at funding of the three biggest worker-center grantees, all of which made appearances of greater or lesser centrality in our initial report. In every instance, we are including only funding from the specific sources, which are not in themselves necessarily indicative of total funding available to the worker center in question. We begin with Figure 5, which illustrates support for the NDWA, far and away the most widely supported worker center during this period.

# THE EMERGING ROLE OF WORKER CENTERS IN UNION ORGANIZING

Figure 5  
Grants Received by the National Domestic Workers Alliance, 2013-2016



Clearly, the principal supporters of the NDWA were the Ford, Nathan Cummings, Kellogg, Marguerite Casey, and Surdna Foundations, with Ford providing more than half of all grants received from our focus list of funders during this period. But what is equally remarkable is the

breadth of support for this organization, which received grants from 13 foundations, as well as a small amount of labor money. We attribute this in some measure to the inherently sympathetic appeal of supporting domestic workers, together with day laborers, the quintessential low-wage workers, and

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regard it as a good indicator of the power of such perceptions to garner legitimacy and support for the worker center movement.

Whether it was that appeal or some other factor, NDWA far surpassed the total of grant funds received by the next closest center, the Restaurant

Opportunities Center, even though ROC had led the group in our analysis of the 2009-2012 period *and* increased its own receipts from around \$6 million to almost \$10 million in this later period. That does not detract, however, from the continued successful ‘grantsmanship’ of ROC, as illustrated in Figure 6.

**Figure 6**  
**Grants Received by the Restaurant Opportunities Center, 2013-2016**

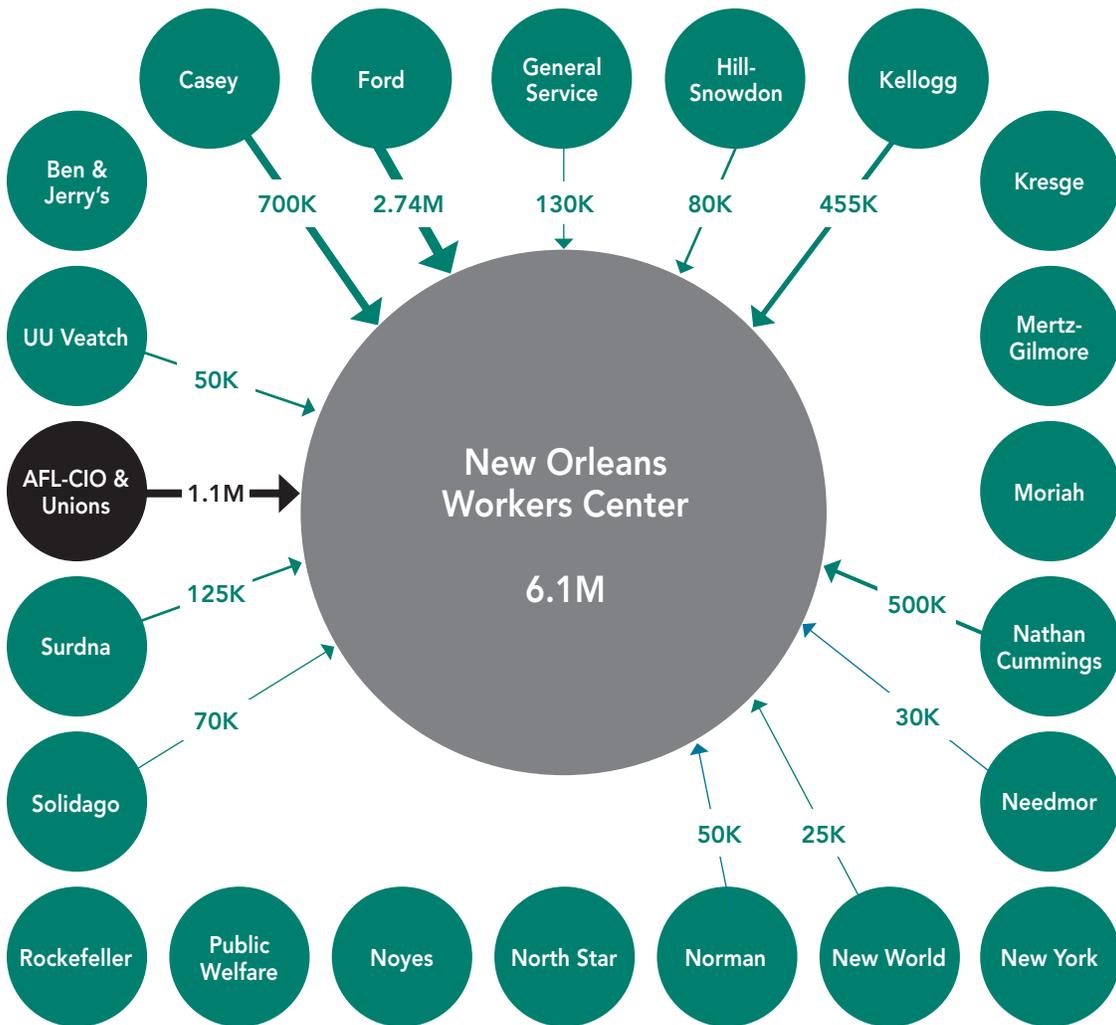


# THE EMERGING ROLE OF WORKER CENTERS IN UNION ORGANIZING

Ford and Kellogg are again the lead donors here, with Nathan Cummings a distant third, but funding is lower almost all the way around. A significant difference, however, is that the Public Welfare Foundation, which did not support

NDWA during the period, provided more than \$300,000 of support to ROC this time around. ROC attracted support from fully 16 of the 21 funders on our focus list.

**Figure 7**  
Grants Received by the New Orleans Workers Center for Racial Justice, 2013-2016



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The third largest recipient in the aggregate was the New Orleans Worker Center for Racial Justice, which, like ROC, also significantly increased its grantsmanship during the most recent period. Ford is once again the leading funder of the Center, with the Casey Foundation and the unions following at a significant distance. NOWCRJ attracted funding from a dozen foundations and a pair of labor organizations.

We conclude this section with brief profiles of the remaining million-dollar grantees. Again, our listing of grants should not be taken as comprehensive except to the extent that it traces to one of our focus funders. In descending order of receipts:

### **National Day Laborers Organizing Network.**

Together with NDWA, this is perhaps the purest example of organizing workers who seemingly cannot be organized through traditional, workplace-based efforts, since by definition they have no consistent workplace. NDL did receive very limited union funding during the 2013-2016 period (\$27,000 from the AFL-CIO and \$15,000 from the UFCW), but the bulk of its support came from foundations, including Ford (\$2,850,000), General Service (\$140,000), Hill-Snowdon (\$95,500), New World (\$50,000), North Star (\$46,500), Solidago (\$65,000), Surdna (\$57,000), and Veatch (\$80,000).

**Farmworker Association of Florida.** Organizing indigenous, minority, and immigrant farmworkers

in Central, and later also South, Florida since 1983, this group serves a constituency similar to that of CIW (see below), and even has an office in Immokalee, but focuses its activism within the state of Florida rather than nationally or globally. It receives no union support, but is the beneficiary of considerable, albeit less diverse, philanthropy, including from the Marguerite Casey Foundation (\$845,000), Kellogg (\$1,975,000), Noyes (\$85,000), and Veatch (\$40,000).

**Workers Defense Project.** Like NDL, this Austin-based worker center founded by employees and volunteers at a local shelter receives some limited funding from organized labor (\$35,500 from the AFL-CIO and \$45,000 from the SEIU), but relies mainly on foundation support, including, but not limited to, \$300,000 from the Marguerite Casey Foundation, \$650,000 from Ford, \$85,000 from General Service, \$1,125,000 from Kellogg, \$100,000 from Needmor, \$55,000 from Norman, \$180,000 from Public Welfare, \$20,000 from Solidago, \$45,000 from Surdna, and \$40,000 from Veatch. That all averages out to \$650,000 per year during 2013-2016. For purposes of comparison, the group's annual report for 2013, the first of those years, listed total grants and contributions of \$1,030,000.<sup>85</sup> Consistent with our expectations, it appears that our selection criteria for funders has captured roughly two-thirds of these contributions.

**Coalition of Immokalee Workers/Campaign for Fair Food.** Interestingly, CIW was also formed in 1983 (see our discussion of the Highlander



## THE EMERGING ROLE OF WORKER CENTERS IN UNION ORGANIZING

Center above), but in South Florida rather than Central. This group was the focus of an extended discussion in our initial report, where we documented foundation support of \$5,641,000 from the market-basket of funders we employed at that time. In the present cycle, even as CIW has claimed success in its wage campaign and broadened its agenda to add a focus on human trafficking, that total has declined to about \$1.9 million. Of this, the group received \$100,000 from the Casey Foundation, while \$400,000 is attributable to the Ford Foundation (all “new” money), \$800,000 to Kellogg (down from \$1,260,000), \$50,000 from Norman (“new” money), \$60,000 from Noyes (triple the previous period), \$450,000 from Public Welfare (down from \$1,170,000), and \$40,000 from the Veatch Program (down from \$200,000, though this is likely a false result traceable in large measure to the unavailability of data from this source). Ben & Jerry’s, Hill-Snowdon, Kresge, and the Open Society Institute dropped out as donors in 2013-2016, and CIW received no union support. Fundraising aside, CIW claims to have developed a new model of social responsibility, which it terms Worker-driven Social Responsibility, or WSR (as versus Corporate Social Responsibility, or CSR),<sup>86</sup> and the organization’s successes have led some to speculate that the group’s strategy may have broader applications, though implementing that in different settings is not without challenges.<sup>87</sup>

**Southwest Workers Union.** This project of the *Centro por la Justicia* is a San Antonio-based

organization with some 3,000 members. Like so many worker centers, it has set an agenda that combines worker rights, environmental justice, and community empowerment, in this case all under the slogan “*Dignidad. Justicia. Liberación.*” Translation: Dignity. Justice. Liberation. Support during 2013-2016 came primarily from the Casey Foundation (\$900,000) and Kresge (\$760,000), with an assist from Noyes (\$20,000).

**Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance.** As previously noted, KIWA was the exception to the rule with respect to funding, receiving most of its support from organized labor, specifically \$1,016,000 from the AFL-CIO. The group’s only foundation support came from the New World Foundation (\$25,000).

The grantees we have reviewed to this point have been the most successful at attracting financial support, but they constitute only a small fraction of worker center organizations. Our analysis, which began with a list of 21 funders known to support the worker center movement and worked outward by examining the specific awards they reported publicly and/or to the IRS, led us to identify nearly 70 such grantees during 2013-2016, and even they do not constitute all of the extant activity. To provide a more complete picture of funding patterns, we offer Table 8, which lists all of the organizations we classified as worker centers for this analysis, and identifies the extent and nature of their foundation or union support.

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**Table 8**  
**Worker Center Grant Receipts, By Source and Total Amounts, 2013-2016**

Selected Worker Center or Related Recipient	Foundation Support 2013-2016	Number of Foundations (of 21)	Union Support 2013-2016	Number of Unions (of 6)	Funders Providing Support 2013-2016
<i>Adhikaar</i>	446,500	6			Hill-Snowdon, Mertz-Gilmore, New York, North Star, Rockefeller, Solidago
Arise Chicago	15,000	1			Ben & Jerry's
Brandworkers International	541,500	6			Ben & Jerry's, Mertz-Gilmore, New World, New York, North Star, Noyes
CASA de Maryland	841,000	3	100,000	4	Ford, Hill-Snowdon, Moriah; AFL-CIO, CWA, UFCW, UNITE HERE
Center for Frontline Retail	324,000	3			Ben & Jerry's, Mertz-Gilmore, New York
Center for Worker Justice in Eastern Iowa	40,000	1			Ben & Jerry's
<i>Centro Comunitario de Trabajadores</i>	50,000	1			Solidago
<i>Centro Humanitario Para Los Trabajadores</i>	20,000	1			General Service
Chicago Workers Collaborative	50,000	1			New World
<i>Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en Lucha</i>	92,000	2	300,000	1	Ben & Jerry's, Solidago; SEIU (via Fast Food Workers Committee)
Cincinnati Interfaith Workers Council	25,000	1			Ben & Jerry's
CLEAN Carwash Campaign	40,000	1			Veatch
Coalition of Immokalee Workers/Campaign for Fair Food	1,900,000	7			Casey, Ford, Kellogg, Norman, Noyes, Public Welfare, Veatch
<i>Comite de Apoyo a los Trabajadores Agriculturas</i>	45,000	1			Noyes
Damayan Migrant Workers Association	209,500	3			Ben & Jerry's, New York, North Star
<i>El Centro Humanitario</i>	20,000	1			Ben & Jerry's

# THE EMERGING ROLE OF WORKER CENTERS IN UNION ORGANIZING

**Table 8**  
**Worker Center Grant Receipts, By Source and Total Amounts, 2013-2016** (continued)

Selected Worker Center or Related Recipient	Foundation Support 2013-2016	Number of Foundations (of 21)	Union Support 2013-2016	Number of Unions (of 6)	Funders Providing Support 2013-2016
Enlace	493,000	4			Ben & Jerry's, Casey, Needmor, Norman
Farmworker Association of Florida	2,945,000	4			Casey, Kellogg, Noyes, Veatch
Fey & Justicia Workers Center	50,000	1	19,000	1	New World; SEIU (via Fast Food Workers Committee)
Flushing Workers Center	155,000	2			New York, North Star
Food Chain Workers Alliance	435,000	5	5,000	1	Ford, General Service, Norman, Noyes, Solidago; UFCW
Fuerza Laboral	90,000	2			Ben & Jerry's, Solidago
Garment Workers Center	40,000	1			Ben & Jerry's
Greater Minnesota Workers Center	45,000	1			Ben & Jerry's
Hand in Hand	20,000	1			Ben & Jerry's
Immigrant Workers Center Collaborative	25,000	1			Solidago
International Domestic Workers Alliance	200,000	1			Ford
Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance	25,000	2	1,016,000	1	New World; AFL-CIO
Latino Union of Chicago	40,000	1			Ben & Jerry's
Laundry Workers Center	184,000	3			Ben & Jerry's, New York, North Star
Los Angeles Black Workers Center	20,000	1	50,000	1	Solidago; AFL-CIO
Miami Workers Center	607,500	4			Casey, Hill-Snowdon, Veatch
Mississippi Workers Center for Human Rights	80,000	2			Casey, Needmor
National Black Workers Center Project	101,800	1			General Service, Veatch

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**Table 8**  
**Worker Center Grant Receipts, By Source and Total Amounts, 2013-2016** *(continued)*

Selected Worker Center or Related Recipient	Foundation Support 2013-2016	Number of Foundations (of 21)	Union Support 2013-2016	Number of Unions (of 6)	Funders Providing Support 2013-2016
National Day Labor Organizing Network	3,384,000	8	42,000	2	Ford, General Service, Hill-Snowdon, New World, North Star, Solidago, Surdna, Veatch; AFL-CIO, UFCW
National Domestic Workers Alliance	14,312,500	13	49,000	3	Casey, Ford, General Service, Hill-Snowdon, Kellogg, Moriah, Cummings, New World, North Star, Rockefeller, Solidago, Surdna, Veatch; AFL-CIO, CWA, SEIU
New Mexico Worker Organizing Collaborative	40,000	1			Solidago
New Orleans Workers Center for Racial Justice	5,054,000	12	1,053,000	2	Casey, Ford, General Service, Hill-Snowdon, Kellogg, Cummings, Needmor, New World, Norman, Solidago, Surdna, Veatch; SEIU, UFCW
New Vision Taxi Drivers Association	20,000	1			Ben & Jerry's
New York Taxi Workers Alliance	450,000	1			Ford
New York Worker Center Federation	5,000	1			Ben & Jerry's
North Shore Workers Community Fund	50,000	1	18,000	1	New World; CWA
Northwest Arkansas Workers Justice Center	205,000	3			Ben & Jerry's, New World, Norman
OUR Vanderbilt	20,000	1			Ben & Jerry's
OUR Walmart	50,000	1			Veatch
Pioneer Valley Workers Center	18,000	2			Ben & Jerry's, Solidago

# THE EMERGING ROLE OF WORKER CENTERS IN UNION ORGANIZING

**Table 8**  
**Worker Center Grant Receipts, By Source and Total Amounts, 2013-2016** *(continued)*

Selected Worker Center or Related Recipient	Foundation Support 2013-2016	Number of Foundations (of 21)	Union Support 2013-2016	Number of Unions (of 6)	Funders Providing Support 2013-2016
Restaurant Opportunities Center	9,627,000	16	10,000	2	Casey, Ford, General Service, Hill-Snowdon, Kellogg, Mertz-Gilmore, Moriah, Cummings, New World, New York, North Star, Noyes, Public Welfare, Solidago, Surdna, Veatch; AFL-CIO, SEIU
Retail Action Project/Good Old Lower East Side	370,000	4			Ben & Jerry's, Mertz-Gilmore, New York, North Star
Southern Maine Workers Center	30,000	1			Ben & Jerry's
Southwest Workers Union	1,680,000	3			Casey, Kresge, Noyes
Street Vendor Project	153,500	3			Ben & Jerry's, New York, North Star
Student/Farmworker Alliance	60,000	1			Public Welfare
Tompkins County Workers Center (Jobs with Justice)	20,000	1			Ben & Jerry's
United Workers Association	725,000	4			Ben & Jerry's, Needmor, Norman, Public Welfare
Vermont Workers Center (Jobs with Justice)	120,000	2			Cummings, Needmor
Voces de la Frontera Workers Center	201,500	4			Hill-Snowdon, Needmor, Solidago, Veatch
VOZ	90,000	2			Ben & Jerry's, New World
Warehouse Worker Resource Center	65,000	2			Ben & Jerry's, New World
Warehouse Workers for Justice	130,000	2			General Service, Norman
Western North Carolina Workers Center	15,000	1	36,000	1	Ben & Jerry's; RWDSU
Wisconsin Jobs Now	125,000	2			Casey, Norman

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**Table 8**  
**Worker Center Grant Receipts, By Source and Total Amounts, 2013-2016** *(continued)*

Selected Worker Center or Related Recipient	Foundation Support 2013-2016	Number of Foundations (of 21)	Union Support 2013-2016	Number of Unions (of 6)	Funders Providing Support 2013-2016
Workers Center for Racial Justice	205,000	4			Ben & Jerry's, Hill-Snowdon, Norman, Veatch
Workers Center of Central New York	40,000	1			Ben & Jerry's
Workers Defense Project	2,600,000	10	80,500	2	Casey, Ford, General Service, Kellogg, Needmor, Norman, Public Welfare, Solidago, Surdna, Veatch; AFL-CIO, SEIU
Workers Dignity Project	211,500	4			Ben & Jerry's, Hill-Snowdon, Norman, Solidago
Workers Interfaith Network	170,000	2			New World, Norman
Workers Justice Project	355,500	5	100,000	1	Ben & Jerry's, Ford, New World, New York, North Star; SEIU



## THE EMERGING ROLE OF WORKER CENTERS IN UNION ORGANIZING

### Strategic Innovation: The SEIU and the Worker Center Movement

In recent years, much of the action surrounding low-wage workers has focused on two interrelated objectives – organizing fast food workers and raising the minimum wage to \$15 per hour. At the center of both initiatives is the Service Employees International Union, the SEIU.

SEIU is a unique actor in the context of worker centers. On the one hand, it is arguably the one union among its peers that is most committed institutionally and culturally to organizing, the one union that has been most innovative in its approaches to that task, and the one union that has traditionally sought to appeal to the very cluster of demographics that characterize many of the workers targeted/served by the centers. Moreover, the heart and soul of SEIU's membership is in the service economy, including some highly skilled workers such as nurses, but many lower-skilled workers as well. If it were not so large, so highly institutionalized, and so tied historically (from the days of Andy Stern's leadership) to the model of top-down business unionism, it would be fair to characterize SEIU as a giant worker center in its own right. And yet, it is all of those things, and as a result, it not only has much to gain from successfully linking itself to the worker center movement but also has the most to lose should it fail to do so.

The union's leadership is well aware of this fact and has devoted considerable resources to addressing

the challenge. At least as early as 2012, the union identified fast food workers as a potential target of opportunity, and from that point forward it launched a concerted campaign to organize them under the SEIU banner. How that came about is something of a chicken-and-egg dispute. The story involves the union, the Fight for \$15 organization and campaign, NYCC, Berlin Rosen, and a host of other players. One uncertainty revolves around whether the union went to its activist allies with a plan to organize these workers, or whether the allied groups noted independently the concerns of the workers and brought them to the attention of the union. In the words of one SEIU organizer, “Without SEIU this [expletive deleted] would not have happened. Fast-food workers are not going to self-organize. They've been so beat down for so long by circumstances and an anti-labor environment. You look at the Civil Rights Movement—a lot of that was top-down, orchestrated movement.”

Another uncertainty has to do with the relationship, if any, between the union and the Restaurant Opportunities Center, which sprang into life with a similar purpose, but with ties to an SEIU rival union, UNITE HERE. Whichever origin story one accepts, and whatever the relationships may have been, the net outcome is not in the least uncertain. The SEIU initiated the Fight for \$15 campaign and integrated that with organizing efforts at McDonalds and elsewhere.<sup>88</sup> Still, in an August 2013 interview with *Salon*, SEIU President Mary Kay Henry left unanswered the question of whether the SEIU's goal was to bring these

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workers into the union itself, saying there had been a decision made to “kick that question down the road and [first] figure out how to win....”<sup>89</sup>

Perhaps. But it is also possible that Ms. Henry was being somewhat disingenuous. For almost a year earlier, in November 2012, the union, through its affiliated Fast Food Workers Committee, had spent \$35,000 for research on organizing, and during 2013, SEIU rolled out a set of what it terms “Workers Organizing Committees” based in

regions and cities around the country. The union then proceeded to fund directly the operating expenses of these worker center clones to the tune of more than \$55 million over the 2013-2016 period, not including the salaries of several of the staff leaders, who were carried on the books of the international union itself, mainly as organizers, and not including related expenditures for infrastructure and other groups supporting these organizing efforts. The funding of this in-house cluster of organizations is illustrated in Figure 8.

**Figure 8**  
**Worker Centers of the SEIU**





## THE EMERGING ROLE OF WORKER CENTERS IN UNION ORGANIZING

Unlike the independent worker centers, or even the Retail Action Project, which is staffed by the RWDSU but otherwise appears to receive no direct payments, or SEIU Local 32-BJ's own in-house center, Fast Food Justice, each of these committees has filed its own LM-2 reports with the Labor Department, thereby acknowledging its character as a labor organization, and all are funded directly and wholly or nearly so by the international union. And it is serious money, ranging from just over \$3 million in Milwaukee to more than \$14 million for the more broadly focused core group, the Fast Food Workers Committee. An examination of their reports suggests, though, that much of the organizing work itself is farmed out to other organizations on a fee-for-service basis, and begins to reveal the relationship SEIU has, or is forging, with some “independent” worker centers. For example, the Fast Food Workers Committee distributed \$300,000 to CTUL during 2015 and 2016, an expenditure listed as “Contract Services,” as well as \$19,000 to the *Fey y Justicia* Workers Center. The same committee also transferred \$2.13 million to NYCC, again as a contractor. Similarly, the St. Louis Committee distributed \$2.16 million to Jobs with Justice, as well as \$649,000 to the SEIU's Missouri/Kansas Council, for their respective services.<sup>90</sup>

There are, of course, multiple ways of interpreting this arrangement and its purpose. But in the present context, these organizing committees look in many ways like their independent worker center counterparts, albeit with a common

institutional purpose. The committees might be best understood, then, as the SEIU's effort to adopt for itself the patina of the worker center movement as it tries to move ever closer to recruiting the members of this potential pool of new members to the union.

That may provide context for a report that the Texas Organizing Project, a similar “parallel” worker center sponsored by SEIU but also by the AFL-CIO, CWA, AFSCME, UFCW, and the major teachers' unions, through its Education Fund, established the Hurricane Harvey Community Relief Fund, in collaboration with the Workers Defense Project and others, with contributions to be applied not only to humanitarian relief, but also to organizing. In the words of the Education Fund's executive director, “In an ideal world, a fund to organize low-income communities of color would not be needed, but this is the reality we live in.”<sup>91</sup>

### Discussion

We set out in this essay to update and supplement the initial report on worker centers published in 2013. In that report, we concluded that this newly emergent hybrid phenomenon of the worker center – part labor organizer and advocate, part community organizer, part immigration policy advocate, part defender of racial and ethnic culture and interests – represented both an opportunity for a rebirth of the labor movement in the United States and a potential rival to it. The

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unions, we observed, would need to figure out the best way to deal with these centers. Nothing in our revisiting of the worker centers leads us to change those conclusions. Worker centers continue, gradually, to resemble unions more and more – some may already have evolved to the point where they would seem to qualify as labor organizations under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) or the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LMRDA) – and yet they will likely never become unions as we have customarily thought of them. For as we have suggested above, worker centers can go where unions cannot, whether demographically, culturally or politically, or perhaps even with regard to engaging in things like secondary activity or unlimited picketing, where they are exempt from certain legal and regulatory constraints that apply to unions. Once institutionalized they would almost inevitably lose their flexibility and, one suspects, even risk their appeal.

This tension has produced something of a mantis-like mating ritual, with the parties warily circling one another, recognizing the inevitability of uniting but knowing that only one may survive. That is an overstatement to be sure, but it also contains an element of truth. The funding patterns detailed above make clear that, with very limited exceptions, the mainstream labor movement has kept at arm's length from the independent worker center movement, which remains almost entirely dependent on the kindness of strangers, or at least of the community of progressive-activist

foundations. But if the latest model implemented by the SEIU, internally-based worker organizing committees that sometimes contract out the actual organizing to worker centers, should prove effective at drawing this targeted worker demographic into the union, others will copy it and the rationale for independent worker centers will be diminished. On the other hand, should that initiative fail, the traditional unions will be at as great a loss as ever, and the worker centers will have a space in which to prosper.

And that, in turn, leaves the funding community playing something of a double game of its own. On the one hand, foundations are spending literally tens of millions of dollars to help support and develop an infrastructure of researchers, policy analysts, strategists and the like that serves the traditional labor movement, which also helps to fund it, as well as the worker centers. On the other hand, foundations are spending literally tens of millions of dollars in direct grants to help support and develop a worker center movement that may, in the end, supplant, altogether or in significant measure, the traditional labor movement and the unions that, ironically enough, have provided the institutional base, strategic insights, and core financing that ultimately produced much of the progressive left activism of recent years, the activism that motivates the foundations themselves.



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## List of Acronyms

AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations
CIW	Coalition of Immokalee Workers
CTUL	<i>Centro de Trabajadores en Lucha</i>
CWA	Communications Workers of America
FAFL	Farmworker Association of Florida
FCWA	Food Chain Workers Alliance
ICE	Immigration and Customs Enforcement
JWJ	Jobs with Justice
KIWA	Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance
LAANE	Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy
LMRDA	Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act
LCSC	Labor/Community Strategy Center
MSC	Movement Strategy Center
NDL	National Day Laborer Organizing Network
NELP	National Employment Law Project
NDWA	National Domestic Workers Alliance
NLRA	National Labor Relations Act
NOWCRJ	New Orleans Worker Center for Racial Justice
NWAWJC	Northwest Arkansas Workers Justice Center
NYCC	New York Communities for Change
POWER	Protect Our Workers from Exploitation and Retaliation
PTP	Progressive Technology Project
ROC	Restaurant Opportunities Center
RWDSU	Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union
SCOPE	Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education
SEIU	Service Employees International Union
TAP	<i>The American Prospect</i>
UFCW	United Food and Commercial Workers
WDEF	Workers Defense Project

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## Endnotes

- 1 Dan Schlademan, “A reborn American labor movement is coming – if unions are bold enough to change,” *Quartz* (April 6, 2017), found online June 19, 2017, at <https://qz.com/951268/a-reborn-american-labor-movement-is-coming-if-unions-are-bold-enough-to-change/>.
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may have been awarded to the fiscal sponsor acting in the recipient's behalf. This might have the effect of masking the final destination of a portion of the flow of funds, which may lead to understating the support of a given foundation for a given entity. Donors and amounts of awards listed by *recipient* organizations, as, for example, in their respective news releases, donor rosters, or annual reports, have *not* been incorporated here as primary data. Moreover, many reports and most IRS filings do not tie particular awards to the support of a particular activity, a consideration that will affect the interpretation of direct grants to worker centers only at the margins, but can lead to misinterpretation of awards to non-center infrastructure providers that help to develop and sustain the worker center movement.

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- 83 Data found online June 15, 2017 at [https://8cee67ff86c331528b38-f7074fde7de5cbe3e9f307a9e589476d.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/uploaded/2/0e5790524\\_1483934933\\_2016-veatch-annual-report.pdf](https://8cee67ff86c331528b38-f7074fde7de5cbe3e9f307a9e589476d.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/uploaded/2/0e5790524_1483934933_2016-veatch-annual-report.pdf).
- 84 The LM-2 financial reports filed annually with the Department of Labor by all of these unions and the federation are available online in a searchable database at <https://olms.dol-esa.gov/query/getOrgQry.do>. While there are many ways to search, the most efficient for these international-level entities is through a combination of the union's file number and the year of filing. The file numbers for these six organizations are AFL-CIO (000-106), CWA (000-188), RWDSU (000-071), SEIU (000-137), UFCW (000-056), and UNITE HERE (000-511). This report covers data from the 2013-2016 filings.
- 85 Found online June 18, 2017 at <http://www.workersdefense.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/All.pdf>.
- 86 "The Worker-driven Social Responsibility model hits new milestone, continues its expansion in world of business and human rights!" article found online July 16, 2017, at <http://www.ciw-online.org/blog/2017/07/wsr-new-milestones/>.
- 87 Richard Mertens, "Tomato pickers win higher pay. Can other workers use their strategy?" *Christian Science Monitor* (March 9, 2017), found online June 19, 2017, at <http://www.csmonitor.com/Business/2017/0309/Tomato-pickers-win-higher-pay.-Can-other-workers-use-their-strategy>.
- 88 Arun Gupta, "Fight for 15 Confidential: How did the biggest-ever mobilization of fast-food workers come about, and what is its endgame?," *In These Times*, November 11, 2013, found online June 17, 2017, at [http://inthesetimes.com/article/15826/fight\\_for\\_15\\_confidential/](http://inthesetimes.com/article/15826/fight_for_15_confidential/).
- 89 Quoted in Josh Eidelson, "Fast food strikes to massively expand: "They're thinking much bigger," *Salon*, August 14, 2013, found online June 17, 2017 at [http://www.salon.com/2013/08/14/fast\\_food\\_strikes\\_massively\\_expanding\\_theyre\\_thinking\\_much\\_bigger/](http://www.salon.com/2013/08/14/fast_food_strikes_massively_expanding_theyre_thinking_much_bigger/).
- 90 The reports of these organizing committees are available from the Labor Department at <https://olms.dol-esa.gov/query/getOrgQry.do>. The associated file numbers are Carolina (544-979), Chicago (544-945), East Bay (545-047), Fast Food Workers (544-946), Los Angeles (544-978), Michigan (544-952), Milwaukee (544-943), and St. Louis (544-944). Some are also referenced in the LM-2s filed by the SEIU itself. The research described above was reported in the SEIU's filing for 2012, while the centers all began filing on their own in 2013.
- 91 Bill McMorris, "Big Labor Exploits Harvey: Proceeds from 'Hurricane Relief Fund' will go to labor organizing," *Washington Free Beacon* (August 30, 2017), found online September 11, 2017 at <http://freebeacon.com/issues/big-labor-exploits-harvey/>.





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