Workers United: The Racine, Wisconsin, Labor Movement and the Shifting U.S. Economy, 1950s-1980s

By

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For Danita

Table of Contents

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Introduction: Working-Class Identity and Postwar U.S. Society

Leading up to the 2012 presidential elections, Patrick Caldwell, a reporter from *The American Prospect*, visited Racine, Wisconsin, to better understand a state that political analysts have described as the "most schizophrenic battleground" in the nation.[1] The majority of voters in Racine opted for George W. Bush, Paul Ryan, Scott Walker, and Barack Obama throughout the decade. In June 2012 they voted against recalling their Republican Governor Scott Walker, but recalled their Republican state senator. Racine, a small industrial city that sits along Lake Michigan between Chicago and Milwaukee, has a long history of unionization and was widely known as a progressive union town with militant labor activists. But the Racine that Caldwell visited in 2012 seemed like the barren wasteland of abandoned manufacturing plants and retail shops that depictions of deindustrialized North American cities invoke. Plant closings, increased management resistance to unions, mass layoffs, shrinking local and state budget expenditures, and conservative political agendas that undermined the gains of the labor movement took a heavy toll in Racine in the 1970s and 1980s.

On his visit, Caldwell encountered Democrats seeking to appeal to white middle-class voters undecided about their upcoming presidential vote. Democrats felt good about their chances due to the resurgence of political activism over the last two years since Governor Walker's attack on public sector workers in the state. In "The County that Swings Wisconsin," Caldwell implied that activists and the voters they swayed were responding to nostalgia for a bygone era when unions had the political power and clout to influence local, state, and national elections. But Racine County Democratic Chairwoman Jane Witt explained, "I think there are a

[1] Patrick Caldwell, "The County that Swings Wisconsin," *The American Prospect*, 25 October 2012, online edition, http://prospect.org/article/county-swings-wisconsin, accessed 25 October 2012.

lot of people who are loyal to the unions, even if their own company doesn't have one anymore…There are a lot of union sympathizers."[2] The 12,000 people who signed up with the AFL-CIO affiliated group Working America leading up to the election confirmed Witt's sense of union sympathy in Racine. Democratic Party members joined forces with Working America to rally these union supporters to re-elect Obama, his Vice President Joe Biden, and send Democrat Tammy Baldwin to the U.S. Senate.[3]

Caldwell's situating of post-industrial Racine in nostalgic terms is emblematic of a declension narrative that seeks to explain the collapse of union power in the 1970s. Scholars have pointed to the decline of class politics during the 1970s and argued that class lost its meaning as a tool to mobilize working people to collective action. Related and overlapping theories point to the successes of the civil rights and women's movements of the 1960s, which shifted social and political debate toward individual rights in lieu of group identity. Others suggest that the political ties between labor and the Democratic Party deteriorated and rank-and-file union members lost their militancy and courage in the face of deindustrialization, corporate resistance, and conservative backlash. Similarly, the failure of liberal Democrats and policymakers to adapt to the changing economic conditions of the world economy and adjust domestic policy to minimize the resulting turmoil caused working people to lose confidence in the labor-liberal coalition.[4] Yet, the mobilization around Working America in 2012 is evidence of the continued legacy of a working-class identity and the power of class politics in Racine.

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[2] Ibid.
[3] Racine County, "Election Results," racineco.com/crepository/pastelection/s20121106.pdf, accessed 18 March 2013.
[4] Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: The New Press, 2010); Judith Stein, *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

This dissertation explores how a boarded-up, post-industrial town continued to shape elections forty years after scholars mark the decline of class politics. The continuing identification of Racine as a union town and membership in class-based groups like Working America are legacies of the broad-based working-class politics pursued by labor activists from the New Deal era through the 1980s. Those activists included Harvey Kitzman, who helped start the largest union local in Racine, became director of the United Auto Workers Region 10, and led the way in building a broad community of labor activists and their supporters. Kitzman spent his career building, reshaping, and sustaining a sense of class solidarity in Racine and throughout Wisconsin. William "Blue" Jenkins organized workers at the largest foundry during World War II, led the local branch of the NAACP, and became the first black president of the county's labor council. Loretta Christensen organized workers across industries, sat on the board of the AFL labor council and of *Racine Labor* in the 1950s, and remained an active member of the county's Democratic Party for forty years. Anthony "Tony" Valeo worked in the community to build solidarity across employment sectors, led UAW Local 180 during the 1960 strike, served as a UAW international representative, and organized community-labor coalitions throughout his long career. These and other activists shaped a class politics that sought to encompass the whole community through union organizing, civic engagement, worker education and mobilization, and a political use of the labor history in the city. Using a broad-based class politics that successfully adapted to economic, social, and political changes in the city and nation, labor activists kept the notion of a collective class solidarity at the forefront of the city's identity from World War II to the 1980s. Even after the plant closings in the 1980s, the Racine labor movement remained an active voice for the working people of Racine and reinforced the continued relevancy of union membership and political action.

Racine is typical of the Midwestern industrial towns found in the literature on deindustrialization and the post-industrial United States. Although significantly smaller than Chicago or Milwaukee, Racine's relatively diversified industrial base made it more resistant to market fluctuations that devastated one-industry towns like Akron, Gary, or neighboring Kenosha, Wisconsin.[5] However, several factors set Racine apart and played key roles in the enduring labor militancy and lingering sense of collective identity. Early organizing beyond industrial settings to include public workers, private service, and white-collar workers expanded the definition of who belonged in the labor community. The labor strife that persisted in the postwar period belied any illusions of a labor-management accord in local class relations and extended the sense of collective struggle. And the forty-year history of the publication of the local labor paper, *Racine Labor*, which helped encourage public debate on working-class issues, the political use of the city's labor history, and broad support for working-class issues across diverse unions shaped a lasting narrative of the valuable role of the labor community in securing economic and social justice for all workers. These factors facilitated an environment favorable to the building and sustaining of a sense of class solidarity and the adaptability of class politics to changing economic, social, and political struggles over time. Studies such as this, of a community in transition from an industrial to a service-based economy, can provide new insight into the ways in which worker solidarity, working-class communities, and worker activists' strategies changed within a shifting capitalist society in the late-twentieth century. They reveal the ways in which the meaning of class and class politics shifted in the 1970s as opposed to a simple story of decline like that articulated in the *American Prospect* article.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

[5] Steven High, *Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America's Rust Belt, 1969-1984* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 5-6.

Workers started organizing and building community in conjunction with industrial development. In the nineteenth century, Racine County developed as an agricultural area. Situated at the mouth of the Root River on Lake Michigan, the city of Racine originally provided business and governmental services to the surrounding agricultural areas. However, proximity to Chicago and Milwaukee created an attractive setting for manufacturing industries and many firms located their operations in Racine in the early- to mid-twentieth century.[6] Racine's labor movement mirrored the city's industrial growth. In the 1880s the local Knights of Labor membership totaled nearly 1,000. Early unions included cigar workers, bricklayers, masons, plumbers, and brewery workers, all members of the elite American Federation of Labor (AFL), which focused on organizing skilled craftsmen. While the AFL focused on organizing skilled craft workers, some worker activists saw the need to organize unskilled workers across whole plants and industries. During the Great Depression workers in Racine formed the Racine County Workers Committee to represent unemployed Works Progress Administration (WPA) relief workers.

As workers continued to organize they formed local unions and sought affiliation with major national and international unions, further solidifying Racine's reputations as a union town. Many independent or AFL-affiliated industrial unions organized in the late-1920s in Racine. For example, workers at Racine's largest foundry, the J. I. Case Company, organized themselves into the Workers Industrial Union and after a 91-day strike the company finally recognized their union. However, it was not until 1936 when the workers at Case affiliated with the United Auto Workers as Local 180 that they saw real gains at the workplace. The United Auto Workers

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[6] Nelson Peter Ross, "Two Civilizations: Indians and Early White Settlement," 33; Chelvadurai Manogaran, "Geography and Agriculture," 137-138; Richard H. Keehn, "Industry and Business," in *Racine: Growth and Change in a Wisconsin County*, ed. Nicholas C. Burckel (Racine: Racine County Board of Supervisors, 1977), 280.
[6] John Buenker, *Invention City: The Sesquicentennial History of Racine, Wisconsin* (Racine: Racine Heritage Museum, 1998), 120-121.

(UAW), an example of the formation of unions in large industries and not just specific trades, successfully organized various factories during the late-1930s without creating significant conflict with local AFL affiliates. The UAW joined the newly organized Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in 1935. Like other CIO unions, the UAW in Racine organized workers in industrial settings and the culture of CIO unions inspired workers to become engaged citizens and demonstrate worker unity within local unions, across industries, and with other unionized and non-unionized workers in the areas where they operated.[7] The largest manufacturer, Case remained the most intransigent regarding worker rights. The largest union, UAW Local 180, represented the workers at Case and often led by example in regards to labor militancy and the benefits of persistency.[8] City firefighters formed a union in 1931 and affiliated with the AFL.[9] Building Service Employees International Union (BSEIU) started organizing private service workers in Wisconsin during the 1930s and BSEIU Local 152 had several units of janitors in schools, office buildings, and department stores in Racine.

World War II created an unprecedented opportunity for political and social action in the United States by expanding the role of the federal government, facilitating the movement of even more people from rural areas and Southern cities to industrial centers, and bringing unprecedented wealth and power to the United States. Scholars have detailed how federal policymakers became more committed to the government's role in social welfare and economic growth. Federal spending increased the capital holdings of large corporations. As a result, increased wages, a sense of affluence, and a hope for greater access to this affluence spread

[7] Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 2, 355-360.
[8] Harvey Kitzman, interview by Jack W. Skeels, 4 March 1963, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.
[9] "Firefighters At Peak Strength; Department Makes Steady Gains," *Racine Labor*, 6 Jan 50, p 1.

throughout U.S. society.[10] In Racine and across the nation, individuals and groups took advantage of the opportunities of the World War II period to demand a voice in shaping the new social, political, and economic landscape.

As Nelson Lichtenstein and others have shown, the massive wartime economic and social changes helped mobilize workers to join unions in ever greater numbers and solidify the labor movement's connection to the Democratic Party. Unionization rates in key industries rose above eighty percent after the war and by 1953 over one-third of workers outside the farm industry belonged to unions.[11] High wages and low unemployment made joining the union less risky for workers seeking economic gains and workplace democracy. Nationwide, about half a million black workers joined industrial unions, most after migrating from the South or from rural areas, and led the way in addressing racial issues in the workplace. Black workers were galvanized by New Deal legislation and used the rhetoric of economic and political citizenship to gain access to jobs and unions.[12] Blue-collar women workers joined the labor movement as well and used their positions to create better conditions for women throughout U.S. society, eventually leading to legislative changes in the 1960s and 1970s that opened the door for greater economic freedom.[13] As Dorothy Sue Cobble argues, the expansion of unions gave the working class, and its main vehicle for political influence, the labor movement, more ability to "exert economic and political pressure in support of wage demands[, which] contributed to the high wage economy of the postwar years."[14] Cobble also shows that unionization and wage increases had a greater impact on women workers, as they had less bargaining power to begin with than male workers. She

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[10] Michael Sherry, *In the Shadow of War: The United States Since the 1930s* (Yale University Press, 1997).
[11] Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 54-59.
[12] Robert Korstad and Nelson Lichtenstein, "Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement," *JAH*, Vol. 75, No. 3 (Dec 1988): 786-811.
[13] Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 6.
[14] Ibid, 100.

argues that industry-wide negotiated wage and benefit levels helped equalize women and men's wages in the postwar era.[15] These changes helped workers expand their sense of entitlement to a share of the postwar prosperity.

As black men and white women entered Racine's workplaces in the postwar period they actively asserted their place in labor unions and established themselves as capable members of the labor community. Most black women remained in domestic and service positions as they were most often last to be hired in industrial workplaces. In Racine, workers consolidated their postwar gains in workplaces by demanding more from employers at the bargaining table and backing up their demands with work stoppages and strikes. Worker activists also used their new political power to actively participate in local politics and enter public debates on social and economic conditions affecting the community. Activists elected labor-endorsed candidates to local and statewide offices, demanded seats on the boards of charitable institutions, and lobbied for legislation to protect public sector collective bargaining rights. Although most of the private industrial and many public sector workplaces were organized by the 1950s, workers pushed a class agenda that would benefit all the workers in the city in addition to those represented by labor unions. Labor liberals used the postwar growth and prosperity to push for an expansion of economic citizenship rights for a larger portion of society. As Paul Whiteside, an active union organizer in the area from the 1930s through the 1980s, emphasized, "When you got control of a thing, you got the majority in an area you tend to be more aggressive."[16]

While the labor movement experienced an unprecedented position of power in U.S. political and economic debate in the postwar period, it did not go unchallenged by conservative business leaders and politicians intent on minimizing labor's influence. Weaknesses within the

[15] Ibid.
[16] Paul Whiteside, interview by James A. Cavanaugh, Kenosha, WI, 13 August 1981, tape 3 side 2, Wisconsin Labor Oral History Project, 1981-1982, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, WI.

New Deal labor laws and attacks on collective bargaining laws mitigated labor's ability to more fully consolidate its power. Along with weaknesses within the labor law, the conservative political and corporate backlash of the postwar period limited labor's influence. In Racine, the long-lasting battles with paternalistic managers at companies like Case and the history of civic engagement among union leaders and rank-and-file members created an atmosphere of militant resistance to toward efforts to weaken federal labor laws or undermine the political power of organized labor.

The determination of labor activists fueled management efforts to retain the greater share of profits by restricting workers' resources, restructuring corporations, and moving to new locations.[17] The intense battle over unionization at the nearby Kohler Company, plant relocations, and a political attack by conservative politicians at the state level (detailed in chapter one) highlighted these limitations for Racine's labor community. Despite these constraints activists continued to fight for some level of control over workplace and community issues. This level of engagement allowed Racine's activists to remain focused on internal and external organizing during the postwar period. Workers actively lobbied against a state right-to-work law, successfully elected local politicians who supported their class agenda, and fought to gain better bargaining rights for public workers and others who were less organized than industrial workers. Labor activists also solidified their internal connections in Racine. Many trade unions and industrial unions came under one umbrella when the AFL and CIO merged in 1955. The community maintained a vibrant news journal, *Racine Labor*, that provided news, information, and support for the community's working people. As former editor Richard Olson explains, the board of directors always imagined the newspaper as "both a labor paper and a community

[17] Jefferson Cowie, *Capital Moves: RCA's Seventy-Year Quest for Cheap Labor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 3, 4; Sugrue, 127-28.

paper, not just a labor paper for unionists or a community paper for citizens, but both."[18] These factors worked together to help the labor community coalesce in the postwar period.

As the 1960s dawned, Racine's labor activists sought to build on the successes of the postwar period and continued their efforts to push liberals to hold to the promises of New Deal liberalism, mainly active support of workers' efforts to gain full economic citizenship rights. A strike at Case, coupled with the ongoing struggles at Kohler and the political battle surrounding it fueled the notion of continued class warfare. Unions organized new members in the low-wage service sector and public workers demonstrated the labor militancy that would take hold across the nation in the 1970s. Minority activists built on the inroads they made in the postwar period and helped reshape the sense of class identity in the city to more fully incorporate race and gender.

The economic, political, and social changes of the postwar period helped propel new gains in the fight for racial equality in the United States. As the federal government became more actively engaged in intervening in crises, civil rights activists seized the opportunity to intensify their demands for access to the new economic and social changes. Black activists used the democratic rhetoric of the war period to challenge the federal government to act on the behalf of citizens left out of the new social contract. Scholars have noted the ways in which the civil rights movement opened "the American workplace."[19] As historian Jacquelyn Dowd Hall has noted, black workers understood that civil rights and workers' rights were two connected aspects of the freedom struggle.[20] In Racine, labor activists actively participated in the civil rights and

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[18] Richard W. Olson, "An Isolated Survivor: *Racine Labor*," in *The New Labor Press: Journalism for a Changing Union Movement*, eds. Sam Pizzigati and Fred J. Solowey (Ithaca: ILR Press, 1992), 180, 182.
[19] Nancy MacLean, *Freedom is Not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).
[20] Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *JAH* 91, no. 4 (Mar 2005): 1233-1263.

women's movements of the 1960s, which helped the larger labor community more smoothly adapt to shifting social identities while maintaining a commitment to class solidarity. While internal challenges of racial conservatism and political difference existed, the active participation of black workers, public workers, women, and those in the service sector, helped legitimate a wide diversity of workers as working-class community members.[21]

Labor activists reshaped their sense of class solidarity as political debates around minority hiring practices and housing grew in the city. The continued solidarity laid the foundation for the political battles of the 1970s. Some labor activists and labor unions have worked hard to adjust their strategies in order to meet goals of not only changing American workplaces but also creating a more democratic society. The historiography of the period demonstrates the ways in which the labor movement used creative coalitions to bring about workplace and societal improvements. Jefferson Cowie describes how the changed American landscape played out among workers as more diverse workplaces expanded opportunities for building solidarity across race and gender lines. As he points out, "The new worker emerging in the 1970s was not, however, a simple reincarnation of the 1930s proletarian of popular historical imagination." As workers sought to understand their economic situation and the new politics of race and culture, they reacted in multiple ways, often revolting not only against corporations but also intransigent union leadership as exemplified by the strike against General Motors at Lordstown. Although Cowie bemoans the inability of liberals, especially those in the Democratic Party, to capitalize on working-class political expression, he acknowledges the rank-

[21] Joseph M. Kelly, "Growth of Organized Labor," in *Racine: Growth and Change in a Wisconsin County,* ed. Nicholas C. Burckel (Racine: Racine County Board of Supervisors, 1977), 345-353.

and-file militancy of the period.[22] So, while the environment had changed, working-class activists played an active role in shaping political and economic issues in American society, especially on the local level. In Racine, rank-and-file workers' activism continued into the 1970s and facilitated organizing in new sectors and within changing work environments.

By 1972 Racine County ranked second in Wisconsin for the number of manufacturing establishments, yet industrial jobs declined due to technological advancements and corporate restructuring. Some plants had moved from the city to the county to capitalize on lower tax rates, others had shifted out of state to the South or overseas. With the decline of well-paying industrial jobs, the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad ended commuter service from Chicago to Racine in 1970 and many retail establishments closed during this period as well.[23] While industrial jobs declined, public sector and low-wage service sector jobs increased.

Racine's workforce also shifted as more Mexican and Mexican-American workers moved to the area and took the entry-level jobs in the region's meatpacking plants and foundries. Women's employment increased as industrial jobs declined and the service sector grew, shifting the makeup of many unions and the opportunity to expand labor organizing in new sectors.[24] At the same time, organized labor maintained a prominent voice in Racine's political and social debates and actively supported the efforts of low-wage service workers and public employees to achieve more dignity at work and economic security in uncertain times.

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[22] Jefferson Cowie, "Vigorously Left, Right, and Center": The Crosscurrents of Working-Class America in the 1970s," in *America in the Seventies*, ed. Beth Bailey and David Farber (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 76, 80-81.

[23] Nelson Peter Ross, "Two Civilizations: Indians and Early White Settlement," 33; Chelvadurai Manogaran, "Geography and Agriculture," 137-138; Richard H. Keehn, "Industry and Business," in *Racine: Growth and Change in a Wisconsin County*, ed. Nicholas C. Burckel (Racine: Racine County Board of Supervisors, 1977), 280; Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America: Plant Closings, Community Abandonment, and the Dismantling of Basic Industry* (NY: Basic Books, 1982).

[24] Jane L. Collins and Victoria Mayer, *Both Hands Tied: Welfare Reform and the Race to the Bottom of the Low-Wage Labor Market* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 31-39.

As industrial employment declined and low-wage service sector and public worker activism grew, labor activists in Racine effectively shaped a narrative of a broad-based class community that legitimated the role of public and private service employees to demand better wages and working conditions. While industrial unionism was seen as crucial to the maintenance of middle-class incomes for workers, many policymakers, intellectuals, and conservative pundits debated the rights of public employees to join unions and especially their right to strike.[25] Although Wisconsin was the first state to enact legislation enabling public employees to bargain collectively, strikes were prohibited. Joseph McCartin has rightly compared the militant nature of public worker unionism in the late-1960s through the early-1970s to industrial union activists in the 1930s. Teachers, fire fighters, police officers, sanitation workers, as well as clerical workers flocked to public sector unions during this period. Strike activities were also impressive, with 478 strikes in 1975 alone.[26] In Racine, public workers organized earlier than at the national level, opening the door to a wider understanding of who belonged as members of the labor community.

Racine's activists maintained a vibrant labor community, a militant class politics, and managed to adapt to the changing environment while also continuing to focus on fighting against economic inequality and exploitation into the 1980s. Between 1977 and 1987 manufacturing jobs in Racine County declined by 15 percent, and most of this decline came in the city of Racine itself. By the early 1980s, Racine's downtown had over one million square feet of empty business space. These depressed conditions limited the city's ability to attract new businesses

[25] Jon Shelton, "Against the Public: Teacher Strikes and the Decline of Liberalism, 1968-1981," PhD diss., University of Maryland, College Park, 2013.
[26] Joseph A. McCartin, "'A Wagner Act for Public Employees': Labor's Deferred Dream and the Rise of Conservatism, 1970-1976," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 95, No. 1 (June 2008): 123-148.

and visitors.[27] Yet, the labor community continued to actively fight against the effects of deindustrialization with diverse tactics, went on strike to push back against management resistance, stayed politically involved in local and national elections, organized new workplaces, formed coalitions with social justice and political groups to address related concerns, and engaged the long history of labor activism and militancy in the city. While their efforts did not ultimately lead to a reversal of the economic instability wrought by weakened labor contracts and plant closings, it did sustain a sense of class solidarity and commitment to push forward a working-class politics that they hoped would change the political landscape to one where a broad-based economic and social agenda could proceed.

Racine's working-class community demonstrated a remarkable ability to adjust to the changing economic and political landscape in the second-half of the twentieth century. A long history of class struggle and the political use of the city's labor history helped maintain a sense of shared experiences within the community. The broad-based working-class politics that fueled labor activists' engaged involvement in political debates garnered some level of control in allocating resources for working-class residents. An increasing number of workers with unions behind them, improving—in limited and disjointed fashion—the economic, social, and political conditions for all workers in the city helped create and maintain a productive working-class identity in the city. Labor activists' expansive understanding of who belonged in the working class, language, actions of solidarity, and struggles for economic and political power demonstrate the continued importance of a working-class identity and solidarity that went beyond typical narratives of labor's lost power during the transformations of deindustrialization. Racine's activists also adapted to the economic and political times by showing a continued willingness to

[27] John Buenker, *Invention City: The Sesquicentennial History of Racine, Wisconsin* (Racine: Racine Heritage Museum, 1998), 120-121.

build coalitions within the labor community, with liberal politicians, and with other social justice organizations. *Workers United* traces the history of these developments and analyzes how class remained a salient force in the changing political, economic, and social landscape.

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL INTERVENTION

As scholars have sought to explain the decline of union density and workers' ability to impact national economic and political debates in the 1970s they have focused on four key areas: shifts in national discourses from solidarity and collectivity to rights and individuality due to successes of the social movements of the 1960s (mainly civil rights and the women's movement) and a growing distrust among individuals in institutions to effect change; limitations within labor laws that restricted workers' ability to organize and union power; the decline of rank-and-file mobilization; and the breakdown between organized labor and its political allies. I will look at these four areas and the ways in which this project builds upon and departs from previous scholarship.

In an attempt to explain the decline of labor power in the 1970s and 1980s some scholars examine the impact of other social movements on class identity. Nelson Lichtenstein describes a shift wherein the momentum from the civil rights, women's, and gay rights movements caused a decline in the effectiveness of a language of working-class solidarity and an increase in the power of a language of individual rights based on other aspects of identity such as race and gender. He concludes that "the rights of workers, as workers, and especially as workers acting in an autonomous, collective fashion, [moved] well into the shadows."[28] Bruce Schulman also argues that a shift occurred that led to a new emphasis on personal liberation. Americans suffered a crisis and lost faith in the federal government, especially during the Carter Administration and the president's inability to handle the economic recessions and restore

[28] Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, 3.

American strength. As Americans sought to deal with a fragmented society and political and social upheaval, Schulman argues that they turned to the market, new spiritual solutions, new connections to other movements, and to the popular music and movie scenes of the times.[29] And at the end of the twentieth century, a shift from the importance of worker solidarity towards a new rights consciousness continued to effect change in American society.[30] Diverging from Lichtenstein's analysis, my study takes a close look at 1960s social movements at the community level and uncovers greater collaboration, cooperation, and tension than accounted for in national-based stories of shifting U.S. postwar society. This suggests that a sense of collective identity still existed, although in new and more complex ways.

Scholarship that looks at the relationship among civil rights, feminism, and labor activism demonstrates the ways in which the meaning of class changed as labor activists worked within and with civil rights and feminist social movements. A closer look at the post-war period in labor history highlights labor activists' significance in expanding citizenship rights by addressing gender and racial inequality both within workplaces and American society in general. It also emphasizes a continuity between the 1950s and 1970s that is elided by the declension narrative. In *Freedom is Not Enough*, Nancy MacLean points to the significance of the civil rights movement in democratizing the workplace.[31] As she explains, civil rights activists used the language of economic citizenship in their challenge to liberals to extend the postwar gains to black workers and their families. Black activists within the labor movement also challenged

[29] Bruce Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (New York: The Free Press, 2001), xii, 90-94, 123-142, 150.
[30] Ibid., 114-115, 74-76, and 244.
[31] MacLean, 4.

their leaders in union and civil rights organizations to actively pursue economic gains as seen with the focus of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.[32]

As Dorothy Sue Cobble contends, "class differences remained salient in the New Deal and after, although in newly disguised forms, and [labor] ideologies and institutions had a powerful effect on the formulation and implementation of social and employment policy."[33] Cobble shows the ways in which "labor feminists" used the labor movement as the "principle vehicle" to improve the conditions for women in American society. She explains that blue-collar women led the movement for women's job rights through their access to industrial trade unions. Cobble uses the strategies of members of the United Packinghouse Workers of America to demonstrate the ways in which labor feminists sought to build coalitions with community-based groups to address racism in the workplace and in the community.[34] Cobble and MacLean's studies suggest the value of examining the ways in which worker activists continued to adapt new strategies and tactics based on shifting identities to effect change in U.S. society.

Other scholars have also documented the ways in which worker activists maintained ties to the new social movements and developed new strategies as the American political and social terrain shifted. One way to highlight the continued relevance of working-class politics is to view the labor movement as a collection of activists and organizations with varying strategies, ideologies, and tactics to improve workers' rights in the changed landscape of 1970s and 1980s America. Examining different segments of the labor movement reveals the ways in which certain labor unions and labor activists negotiated the changed terrain and engaged with new

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[32] Joshua B. Freeman, *American Empire: The Rise of a Global Power, the Democratic Revolution at Home: 1945-2000* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012), 32-40; Guian A. Mckee, *The Problem of Jobs: Liberalism, Race, and Deindustrialization in Philadelphia* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 6-7; William P. Jones, *The March on Washington: Jobs, Freedom, and the Forgotten History of Civil Rights* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2013).
[33] Cobble, *Other Women's Movement*, 6.
[34] Ibid., 3-6 and 74-81.

discourses surrounding individual rights based on race, gender, and sexual orientation in more direct ways than other unions and labor activists. Historian Peter Levy makes this point in his analysis of the relationship between the labor movement and members of the New Left. Levy highlights periods of collaboration, confrontation, and reconciliation between the two groups throughout the 1960s. His study illustrates that the connections between labor and liberal activists came only at certain moments and proved more successful at the local level and not on the national stage. For example, his examination of the collaboration in Madison, Wisconsin that led to the formation of the Teaching Assistants' Association demonstrated success at the local level. Yet, as he explains, foreign policy issues like the war in Vietnam, the rise of the Black Power movement, and the counterculture movement created rifts between labor and New Left activists that limited their effective collaboration at the end of the decade.[35]

Expanding the view of the labor movement to include social justice and service unions as well as trade and industrial unions provides scholars with an opportunity to review labor activists' varying tactics in increasing democratic rights within the changed terrain of 1970s America and engaging with the discourses surrounding identity rights. Vanessa Tait offers a different assessment of the labor movement by using this more inclusive view. While denouncing traditional trade unions as ineffective in the post-1960s period, Tait points to the effectiveness and saliency of poor workers' social justice unions, which should be recognized as a key component of the labor movement. She describes social justice unionism as looking beyond workplace benefits and wages and organizing more as political movements consciously focused on issues of race, gender, and class. Tait points to examples such as the United Freedom Movement in San Francisco that, while not strictly a labor group, used direct action and militant tactics to end employment segregation in the area. She also examines the development of the

[35] Peter B. Levy, *The New Left and Labor in the 1960s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 4, 156-160.

National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO) and the leaders' ability to organize the poor around their rights to a decent income. Tait acknowledges the ways in which some trade unions sought to implement the grassroots organizing and democratic leadership of social justice organizations and poor workers' unions. For example, she examines the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM) caucus that developed in the late-1960s within the UAW in an effort to end racial discrimination within the union.[36] Tait's study points to the value of widening our understanding of the labor movement to include social justice organizations and poor workers' unions and the ways in which their tactics can effect change.

A second area of the declension narrative suggests that weaknesses within labor law and corporate attacks on those laws both reduced organizing opportunities and distracted union leaders from their goals. Nelson Lichtenstein suggests that privileging collective bargaining forced the labor movement to narrow its focus to shop-floor issues and bureaucratic considerations at the loss of a wide-based social and economic justice platform of earlier CIO activists.[37] David Robertson agrees with Lichtenstein and offers three ways that the emerging collective bargaining procedures based on the 1935 National Labor Relations Act (NLRA or Wagner Act) gave significant advantages to employers over workers' bargaining committees: the law limited collective bargaining to a particular plant, craft, or employer, forcing a focus on bread-and-butter issues and less on issues such as pricing, investments and production; it separated bargaining units so that employers could pursue "divide and conquer tactics;" and the process to union recognition was long, which gave employers the opportunity to obstruct and

[36] Vanessa Tait, *Poor Workers' Unions: Rebuilding Labor from Below* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2005), 2, 8, 28-30, 39, 58.
[37] Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, 59, 100.

delay.[38] The debate surrounding collective bargaining that culminated with the passage of the Taft-Hartley Amendment in 1947 left labor unions in a vulnerable position. Taft-Hartley placed new legal restrictions on labor unions and granted employers more rights. Section 14b limited the spread of unionization by outlawing union shops and creating the space for states to enact right-to-work laws.[39] The supposed labor-management accord of mid-century forced unions to become large, bureaucratic institutions, focused on collective bargaining, resistant to militant activism with the rank-and-file, and less able to organize the unorganized or build broad community coalitions.[40] While these limitations and efforts at pushback did limit union's movements, in Racine, workers understood the limitations of these laws and continued to push for reforms and against the political and corporate backlash. Worker activists also maintained their commitment to internal organizing and civic engagement, which kept unions in a central position in the city.

Thirdly, and closely related to the depoliticization of labor unions that Lichtenstein stresses, is the decline of rank-and-file mobilization as a major component of the declension narrative. Many scholars argue that by the 1970s, labor, especially that part consisting of industrial workers, was on the decline. In a recent monograph, Jefferson Cowie characterizes the 1970s as "*the Last Days of the Working Class.*" Nevertheless, Cowie provides readers with details of a growing diversity within the labor movement. He highlights the stories of the more radical elements of some industrial unions and their efforts to create more democratic, activist-

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[38] David Brian Robertson, *Capital, Labor and State: The Battle for American Labor Markets from the Civil War to the New Deal* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2000), 200. Despite its limitations the Wagner Act provided workers a collective voice with a set of institutions to back up their demands in the workplace. It was designed to protect workers from the abuses of management and from coercion. Workers felt even more emboldened to demand better workplace conditions, authority over their work, and wages and benefits. For a discussion of the benefits of the Wagner Act see Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, 36 and David Brody, *Labor Embattled: History, Power, Rights* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 24.

[39] Lichtenstein, *Labor's War at Home: The CIO in World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 238-239; Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, 117, 118, 176, 236.

[40] Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, 98-177.

oriented unions in which black, women, and young members formed various caucuses, clamored for and effected some change. Cowie argues that by the mid-1970s, this newly diversifying labor movement never fully incorporated the issues of race, gender, and participatory democracy into a cohesive framework. As a result, workers found no common ground outside of a narrow vision of class based on the industrial union model.[41] While Cowie acknowledges the changing dynamics of the working class, his analysis focuses on white, working-class men in industrial positions and the ways in which the established leadership of the AFL-CIO failed in its duty to incorporate other elements of labor. I suggest that this focus on a national leadership inclined to only maintain its historical base of white, male industrial workers prompts Cowie to overlook the continued salience of class beyond the 1970s.

Yet many scholars have incorporated the changing demographics of the U.S. workforce into studies of working-class history. Already in 1982, Erik O. Wright revealed that "over 60 percent of all working-class positions are filled by women and nonwhites" and that "the traditional image of the American workers as a white, male industrial worker is thus far from representative of the working class in the United States today."[42] Failing to incorporate the changing demographics of the working class limits the historical analysis of working-class society in the United States. Often, the decline of militant class politics is traced to changing structural industries and occupations within the transformation of capital, but expanding the definition of who counts as working class in society brings minorities, women, and immigrants into a more broad-based understanding of the social importance and political relevance of class in the late-twentieth century. My study builds on scholarship that moves beyond a white, male,

[41] Cowie, *Stayin' Alive*, 6.
[42] Wright, "The American Class Structure," 724.

industrial focus and integrates race and gender into class analysis.[43] As Dorothy Sue Cobble asserts, for worker activists, "Gender, race, and other identities were not add-ons to class experience but inseparable features of it."[44] In Elizabeth Faue's assessment of U.S. labor history she points to the need for historians to recognize the limitations of "this historically white and male" perspective to move the field of working-class U.S. history in new, more fruitful directions. Faue suggests asking questions of how shifts in work, social distinctions of race and ethnicity, and structural changes in the larger community impact class identity.[45] I argue that taking into account workers across racial, gender, and employment sectors in Racine will provide a more nuanced image of the working class in U.S. society during deindustrialization.

An examination of rank-and-file activism during the latter part of the 1970s however shows that workers continued to engage with each other, collaborated with other social justice groups, and sought to work together to regain economic stability in the poor economic times of the period. By focusing on national political debate and popular culture Cowie uncovers the declining attention to working-class issues within mainstream society. He concludes, "Missing from the seventies' progressive agenda were policy innovations that could effectively draw together the economic politics of the thirties and the social politics of the sixties."[46] Cowie also condemns the leadership of the AFL-CIO for "the failure to organize new workers or to help create a more expansive working-class identity beyond the industrial core."[47]

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[43] Alice Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men, and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in 20th-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) and Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).
[44] Dorothy Sue Cobble, "When Feminism Had Class," in *What's Class Got to Do With It?: American Society in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Michael Zweig (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 34.
[45] Elizabeth Faue, "Retooling the Class Factory: United States Labour History after Marx, Montgomery, and Postmodernism," *Labour History* 82 (May 2002):109-119.
[46] Cowie, *Stayin' Alive*, 15.
[47] Ibid, 16.

One reason scholars continue to bemoan the lack of class identity as a motivating factor for worker organizing is the failure to recognize the ways in which class identity changed over the postwar period. Objectively, class represents a relationship defined by the level of power a worker possesses in the workplace. As Erik O. Wright and others have pointed out, based on power relations at the workplace, most people in the U.S. workforce should be considered part of the working class. In his study of the American class structure, Wright found most useful a definition of the working class as those with minimal to no control "over investments, decision making, other people's work, and one's own work." Class can also be defined by wages as the lower a workers' wages, the less ability that worker has to act on independent choices in a capitalist society.[48] Subjectively, class represents an individual and community's social, political, and cultural experiences, shaped by race, gender, sexuality, and other social processes. At the center of my analysis, class identity is made through a complex social process that reacts, responds, and adapts to political, economic, and social conditions in individual lives, in communities, and at the national level.

Class is also created, maintained, and transformed in the larger community inhabited by workers through social institutions and local political debates including housing, access to jobs, taxes, and urban development. As early scholars of the New Labor History such as Herbert Gutman and E.P. Thompson have shown, class identity is socially constructed and is a process

[48] Erik Olin Wright, Cynthia Costello, David Hachen, and Joey Sprague, "The American Class Structure," *American Sociological Review* 47, no. 6 (Dec 1982): 709; Michael Zweig, "The Challenge of Working Class Studies," in *What's Class Got to Do With It?: American Society in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Michael Zweig (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 3, 10; Katherine Gibson and Julie Graham, "Rethinking Class in Industrial Geography: Creating a Space for an Alternative Politics of Class," *Economic Geography*, Vol. 2 (Apr 1992), 109-127; Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2009), 12.

defined by economic, political, and social struggles over time.[49] Scholars need to look at both institutions (workplaces and unions) and community to understand how class is reproduced and shaped within a changing world.[50] Working-class communities are constituted not just in physical worksites or labor centers but also through public debate, civic engagement, and social activities. Examining unions and workplaces across employment sectors that working people inhabited is vital to understanding the makeup of working class identity. This includes incorporating the economic and political structure of the Racine society as well as community life, and gender and race dynamics.

Workers' identities are created and recreated not based on class relations alone but are intricately tied to race and gender. Because of the important legacy of industrial workers in creating the modern labor movement, scholars often privilege these workers in studies of the U.S. labor movement. Lizabeth Cohen details how industrial workers made the New Deal by pushing federal policymakers to take a firm stand on the side of workers in their struggle to gain greater economic freedom and some control over workplace conditions.[51] Industrial worker activists played key roles in the development of twentieth-century U.S. society by providing a forum—the labor movement—for working-class Americans to have a greater voice in political and economic debates of the period. Therefore, the focus of much labor history during the postwar period privileges a class identity based on the blue-collar white male worker who made up the majority of the workforce in industrial plants.[52] Yet, World War II brought black men and black and white women into these industrial settings in growing numbers, changing the nature of

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[49] E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966) and Herbert Gutman, *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America: Essays in American Working-Class and Social History* (NY: Vintage Books, 1977).
[50] Faue, "Retooling the Class Factory."
[51] Lizbeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
[52] Dorothy Sue Cobble, "Introduction," in *The Sex of Class: Women Transforming American Labor*, edited by Dorothy Sue Cobble (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2007), 4.

class relations both between workers and as workers represented their class interests in the broader society.

Other factors, such as employment sectors and the social values placed on particular jobs, also contribute to class identity. As manufacturing declined in the United States, industrial jobs have been replaced by a growing number of service sector positions, mostly low-wage, and public sector jobs. These jobs create new relationships of power in the workplace. As employers gained more and more of the power in the workplace as market ideology replaced the liberal state's intervention in labor-management relations, class formation shifted. As feminist scholars have noted, the shift in employment sectors has also led to a feminization of work, impacting both male and female workers. Women are increasingly becoming primary and sole breadwinners in U.S. households.[53] Similarly, the labor movement has changed from a postwar majority of manufacturing workers organized in plant-based industrial unions to a majority of public sector and service sector unions. These changes required new organizing and representation methods as well as new ways to build solidarity across sectors, worksites, and communities.[54] By clarifying the relationship among unions, between unions and other community-based organizations, and highlighting the experiences of members of the Racine working class my study measures the effectiveness of class as a political category throughout the second half of the twentieth century.

The final aspect of the declension narrative related to this study is the relationship between labor and their political allies, namely the Democratic Party. In *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies*, Judith Stein focuses on the ways in which the Democratic Party and liberals more generally failed to respond to the economy and

[53] Cobble, "Introduction," 3-6; Jane L. Collins and Victoria Mayer, *Both Hands Tied: Welfare Reform and the Race to the Bottom of the Low-Wage Labor Market* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), ix, 39.
[54] Cobble, "Introduction," 5, 6.

to workers' role in a successful economy. This inattention created a void filled by policymakers who put their faith in the market instead of regulation.[55] Stein's focus on national level political and policy developments provides a broad framework for understanding the ways in which the transformation to a global financial economy affected the U.S. political economy. Within this discussion, Stein points to the failure of "New Democrats" (those more closely aligned with the New Left) to keep labor at the center of the discussion of economic strength as had been established in the 1930s. She argues that this political shift within liberal politics left labor outside the political economy.[56]

Other scholars have shown that some activists within organized labor found ways to participate in and shape 1970s politics. For example, Andrew Batista's examination of labor liberalism uncovers the ways in which the politics of the "Reutherite wing" of the labor movement worked to maintain ties to Democrats to the left of mainstream liberals and to effect social change in American society, even during the decline of labor in the 1970s and 1980s described by Stein and Cowie. Although all their projects were not successful, some had a lasting impact on activism and politicization for marginalized groups. The attempts at collaboration described by Battista show a continued effort on the part of some labor activists and liberal policy makers to affect democratic change, to exert influence in the public arena, and to rebuild valuable alliances. These efforts prompted working people to continue to organize around issues of class even as the labor movement declined.[57]

Like the examples that Battista highlights, Racine's labor liberals collaborated and actively participated in civil rights groups, women's groups, environmental and consumer groups

[55] Judith Stein, *Pivotal Decade*, xi.
[56] G. Calvin Mackenzie and Robert Weisbrot, *The Liberal Hour: Washington and the Politics of Change in the 1960s* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2008), 7-8.
[57] Andrew Battista, *The Revival of Labor Liberalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 4-6, 83-147.

in the 1970s and 1980s, extending their influence with the Racine public, in local and state politics, and in forcing some change. This in turn allowed the labor movement to remain a relevant institution for economic, political, and social change even during the uncertain, hard times of the late-twentieth century. The Racine case points to the ways in which labor activists continued to push their agenda even as their resources and allies dwindled. The response of the labor movement to those most vulnerable, low-wage and service workers, mostly minorities and women, at the critical time of economic and political turmoil in the 1970s and 1980s mattered greatly in continuing the relevance of class conflict. As chapter four details, retail workers organized in the mid-1980s even as industrial workers went on strike to protest plant closings and demand dignity in severance negotiations.

The Racine case draws upon the scholarship of labor history, African American history, and women's history that challenges the notion that class lost relevance in the 1970s. This literature uncovers the ways in which class fueled fights for equality even as the labor movement lost power within the broader U.S. political economy. For example, Jacquelyn Dowd Hall points to the ways in which the declension narrative surrounding the civil rights movement minimizes the activism that emerged from the struggles of the 1960s and erases important victories and the lasting impact that they had on U.S. society.[58] Similarly, looking at African American, women's, and welfare rights studies that highlight connections between labor and other social movements reveals a more robust union movement. For example, Annelise Orleck's *Storming Caesars Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War of Poverty*, illustrates the value of a community study in understanding the relationship among class politics, identity, and the fight for economic security and social justice. Orleck's study of black women who migrated from the

[58] Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *JAH* 91, no. 4 (Mar 2005): 1233-1263.

South to the West reveals how economic hardship manifested itself in the women's daily lives. Using oral histories and archival research, Orleck shows how these low-wage workers in Las Vegas organized to fight against economic inequality and pushed policymakers to create and expand the social safety net. Orleck details how their active engagement in the Culinary Workers Union motivated black women to build networks of support, lobby for political action, and bring real changes to the economic lives of women. The women in Orleck's study were welfare mothers as well as low-wage service workers, collapsing the distinction between workers and welfare recipients and illustrating the value of scholars expanding their definition of who belongs in postwar labor studies. *Storming Caesar's Palace* shows how working-class activists continued to push for an active federal government in their demands for economic stability and built important cross-class and multi-racial coalitions to achieve these goals.[59] My study, based in the small industrial city of Racine, also looks at the ways in which class politics and civil rights activism coalesced and led to new organizing among those often left out of the promise of full economic citizenship, even into the last-third of the twentieth century.

Other histories point to the need to document the voices of more political actors when doing urban history. Rhonda Y. Williams removes the label of powerlessness from poor black women and shows how they served as political actors to reshape the public housing policy from the New Deal through the Great Society Programs of the 1960s in Baltimore. *The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women's Struggles against Urban Inequality* examines "the relationship among cities, poverty policy, poor people, and activism."[60] Williams offers an account of the ways in which low-income women participated actively in urban life to defend themselves and

[59] Annelise Orleck, *Storming Caesars Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005).
[60] Rhonda Y. Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women's Struggles Against Urban Inequality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 4.

their families from economic insecurity and personal indignity. This community study of Baltimore resists the narrative of low-income women as mere victims of urban poverty. It also provides an example of the benefits of a community study in revealing new understandings of community dynamics by giving voice to those often left out of examinations. Similarly, Heather Ann Thompson's *Whose Detroit? Politics, Labor and Race in a Modern American City* explores the relationship among liberal politics, union ideology, and black-community-based organizations while foregrounding the agency of black workers in Detroit. Thompson shows that collaboration between labor and civil rights activists led to the success of black liberal politics in capturing the allegiance of working-class Detroit over time. Black militant working-class activists pushed the liberal agenda toward economic and social justice by demanding changes on the shop floors of Detroit's auto plants and in the power relations in municipal governments as more and more black militants called for an end to police brutality and institutionalized community policing. Thompson's study complicates the racial politics of the 1960s and 1970s by showing how some white racial conservatives often left inner cities as losers in the war for urban control while white liberals sided with black demands for access to a voice in urban politics.[61]

Vanessa Tait expands the story of working-class activists to the national stage as she details various organizations that low-wage activists formed and used to gain an economic foothold in the second half of the twentieth century. *Poor Workers' Unions: Rebuilding Labor from Below* illustrates the ways in which civil rights groups, workers' organizations, and the women's movement inspired new forms of rank-and-file activism, which laid the groundwork

[61] Heather Ann Thompson, *Whose Detroit? Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

for new organizing strategies within the contingent labor workforce in the twenty-first century.[62] Tait's analysis reveals the value in studying the determined efforts by labor and other activists to effect change in U.S. society by organizing new workers, building effective coalitions, and politicizing another generation of rank-and-file members. Expanding on studies like those offered by Orleck, William, Thompson, and Tait within the framework of Racine's working-class community highlights the ways in which individuals and the organizations that served them negotiated shifting meanings of class solidarity from the postwar period through deindustrialization.

POSTWAR LIBERALISM

The story of Racine's labor community is intricately tied to the complexities of New Deal liberalism and the relationship between labor activists and their liberal allies. The New Deal era reshaped U.S. liberalism, made it the driving force of the political landscape, legitimized government intervention in the private sector, and built its strength on a coalition of Democratic politicians, labor leaders, intellectuals, and racial minorities.[63] After the war, labor activists used their power to continue to push New Deal policies even further to aid more and more of the working class.[64] In his 1941 State of the Union address to Congress, President Franklin D. Roosevelt linked the militaristic efforts of winning World War II with solving the economic and social ills of the nation. In place of fear and inaction, Roosevelt asserted that people everywhere should enjoy freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. For activists around the world, Roosevelt's speech seemed a call to action. For labor activists this speech and Roosevelt's plan for an "Economic Bill of Rights" seemed to confirm their support of the New Deal liberal agenda and provided proof that Roosevelt supported their

[62] Vanessa Tait, *Poor Workers' Unions: Rebuilding Labor from Below* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2005).
[63] Mckee, *The Problem of Jobs*, 5, 6.
[64] Cohen, *Making a New Deal*, 228.

demands for a broad-based economic citizenship and that the federal government would support their efforts to gain those citizenship rights.[65] In states with significant industrial sectors such as Wisconsin, labor activists helped propel the Democratic Party to power and demanded government involvement as part of their economic rights after World War II.[66]

New Deal liberals adopted policies of active government to manage and regulate the economy, provide social welfare programs, and redistribute private power. New Deal liberals supported and promoted the growth of the labor movement. As the postwar economy continued to grow, politicians and policymakers shifted their attention away from economic inequality to focus on other matters, such as Cold War foreign policy and anticommunism. As Andrew Battista points out, union activists had broader goals beyond allying labor to the Democratic Party. Activists sought to "transform it into a coherent liberal political party."[67] In the postwar period, activists in Racine continued to push their liberal allies to take a firm stand on the side of workers' struggle to gain greater economic freedom and some control over workplace conditions.[68] In Racine, the idea of economic security for all that emerged within the context of New Deal liberalism remained salient and labor activists often used the rhetoric of economic citizenship throughout the decades. This dissertation traces the concept of economic security as a right of citizenship and observes how working-class activists sustained this concept as more and more workers sought access to the benefits of postwar prosperity and full citizenship rights.

HEALTHCARE UNIONISM

[65] Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 143; Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, 27; Elizabeth Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World: America's Vision for Human Rights* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).
[66] See Cohen, *Making a New Deal* for Chicago and Guian A. Mckee, *The Problem of Jobs: Liberalism, Race, and Deindustrialization in Philadelphia* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008) for Philadelphia.
[67] Andrew Battista, *The Revival of Labor Liberalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 9; Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*, 2nd edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 6.
[68] Cohen, *Making a New Deal*; Similar to Battista, I will use the terms labor liberalism and labor liberal to encapsulate this agenda throughout the dissertation.

Healthcare unionism plays a key role in the transition of work from industry to service in the postwar period of deindustrialization. As scholar Karen Brodkin Sacks points out, the health care industry, one segment of the larger service industry, played a vital role in the nation's shift toward a postindustrial society and by 1983 employed almost eight million workers. She argues that "what happens in health care has been and will continue to be very important for shaping the chances of women and minority men in the work force."[69] In their 1970 assessment of the health care industry, Barbara and John Ehrenreich argue that the industry's most important goal outside of patient care is profit making. Despite critiques of the health care industry's efficiency in relation to patient care, as a profit-making entity, this industry developed in the late twentieth century as "an extraordinarily well-organized and efficient machine," where even "non profit" hospitals made profits that they reinvested in capital expenditures and expansion.[70] Sacks' *Caring by the Hour: Women, Work, and Organizing at Duke Medical Center* provides a useful example of how a close look at one workplace offers a nuanced view of the ways in which workers relate to each other, their employers, and to local unions. Sacks provides the details of the daily work lives of the mostly black, female, service employees at Duke Medical Center. She concludes, "How women saw their work and their relationships to others played a big part in their individual and collective definitions of rights, notions of fairness, and their willingness to act."[71]

Sacks provides a nuanced understanding of how workers' relationships influence union organizing. My community study of Racine expands her conclusions about worker identity formation and its relationship to community life by focusing on multiple workplaces and

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[69] Karen Brodkin Sacks, *Caring by the Hour: Women, Work, and Organizing at Duke Medical Center* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 13.
[70] Barbara Ehrenreich and John Ehrenreich, *The American Health Empire: Power, Profits, and Politics* (New York: Random House, 1970), 21-22.
[71] Sacks, 7.

multiple organizations. At the same time, an examination of organizing at St. Luke's Hospital and the 1976 strike detailed in chapter three reveals the ways in which these service workers negotiated the transitions within the labor community while advocating for greater workplace democracy and economic security at their worksite. The labor community's support for their efforts, even as SEIU union leadership refused to, motivated these low-wage, mostly minority women to identify with the Racine labor community and see themselves as crucial actors in the class struggle.

Historians have demonstrated the value of healthcare unionism to low-wage service workers on a national level and new organizing with the economic shifts of the 1980s and 1990s. Leon Fink and Brian Greenberg's history of the development of Hospital Workers' Union Local 1199 in late-1950s New York into a powerful nation-wide service union just over a decade later points to the ways in which grassroots activism, a radical union leadership, and aggressive organizing garnered significant gains within the healthcare industry. The authors detail the high expectations yet stifled progress of Local 1199's organizing and bargaining activities on the national level in the 1970s, but they also highlight empowerment as a key factor for success. Analyzing the results of organizing at New York's Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center, the largest non-profit hospital in the nation, leads them to conclude, "By aggressively responding to workers' feelings of powerlessness and to their demands for respect rather than by just meeting their economic needs, however real, Local 1199 continued to invest union campaigns with the 'sense of liberation' that [the national organizing director] and other union leaders called for."[72] Fink and Greenberg show the effectiveness of one national union on the working lives of hospital workers across the country.

[72] Leon Fink and Brian Greenberg, *Upheaval in the Quiet Zone: A History of Hospital Workers' Union Local 1199* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 166.

The Building Service Employees International Union (BSEIU) started as a janitors' union in the early twentieth century. Over the years, workers started organizing other building service employees and when Congress passed legislation to allow hospital workers to organize, the union started organizing service workers in healthcare. By 1968, membership had expanded to the point that Building was dropped from the name. As scholars have shown, SEIU leaders and organizers have continued to grow the membership rolls and many locals have focused on social justice unionism taking up issues related to low-wage and under-employed workers such as welfare reform, minimum wage fights, and immigrant rights issues.[73] In Racine, SEIU unions represented the school janitors, hospital workers, and nursing homes. SEIU members in Racine actively participated in the labor community, held their meetings at the Racine Labor Center, and participated in political education with UAW locals in the area. Healthcare unionism and public worker activism in the 1970s and 1980s reaffirmed the militant nature of the city's labor activists and helped sustain the community's morale as hard fought union drives and strikes were celebrated and new members welcomed into the movement.

In addition to furthering studies that examine the continued relevance of class in the post-industrial era, this study complements a new trend in the interdisciplinary literature on deindustrialization. The literature on deindustrialization points to the devastating effects of plant closings, global capital expansion, and mass layoffs on industrial workers and their communities. My study relies on Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison's analysis of deindustrialization as a process within capitalist society in *The Deindustrialization of America*. The authors show how corporate decisions and the battle for industrial control over the economy led to a steady movement of capital and the massive "dismantling" of basic industry across the U.S. by the late-

[73] Tom Beadling, Pat Cooper, Grace Palladino and Peter Pieragostini, *A Need for Valor: The Roots of the Service Employees International Union, 1902 – 1992* (Washington, DC: SEIU, 1992); Ruth Milkman, *L.A. Story: Immigrant Workers and the Future of the U.S. Labor Movement* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006), 62-75.

1970s. Their extensive research shows the devastating effects of plant closings on communities through wide-spread job loss, municipal tax losses, and population movement. The authors also highlight the ways in which corporate decisions often have detrimental outcomes for seemingly boom areas that should have been reaping the benefits of reindustrialization. Using Houston, Texas as an example, Bluestone and Harrison show how the competition between cities, throughout the nation for industrial growth led to poor city planning, housing shortages, and increased income disparities.[74]

The contributors to *Beyond the Ruins* provide added depth on the ways in which workers negotiated deindustrialization to Bluestone and Harrison's analysis. The essays in this collection highlight the period of deindustrialization as only one stage in capitalist development within the world economy. They combine a micro- and macro- approach to industrial transformation by placing the international story within the context of local developments. For example, Robert O. Self explores the ways that deindustrialization fit within local political maneuverings in Oakland and the East Bay.[75] Richard Newman's article on grassroots environmental protest in the Love Canal case speaks most closely to my questions about working class responses to industrial transformation. Newman shows how community resistance can, at times, play a role in forcing corporations to admit and repair damages caused to local communities. His work highlights the ways in which grassroots mobilization can provide the impetus for political leaders to support the working class in their struggle with capital's intransigence. Newman's study shows the unbalanced power relations between corporations on one side and communities on the other

[74] Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America: Plant Closings, Community Abandonment, and the Dismantling of Basic Industry* (New York: Basic Books, 1982).
[75] Robert O. Self, "California's Industrial Garden: Oakland and the East Bay in the Age of Deindustrialization," *Beyond the Ruins: The Meanings of Deindustrialization*, Jefferson Cowie and Joseph Heathcott, eds. (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2003), 159-180.

while also illustrating the ways determined local actors sought to wrestle some type of control from corporate power.[76]

Other articles in *Beyond the Ruins* also highlight the limitations of a strict declension narrative by incorporating workers' memory and community identity into the narrative. Steve May and Laura Morrison argue that in order to understand deindustrialization scholars must take into account the memories of workers who have lost their jobs. They point out that deindustrialization has affected worker identity. From the oral histories collected, May and Morrison conclude that workers explain deindustrialization as corporate abandonment of the social contract, yet workers retain their sense of pride in themselves as they adjust. Likewise, in their article on plant closings in Louisville, Kentucky, Joy L. Hart and Tracy E. K'Meyer argue that workers considered themselves to be agents instead of victims in their narratives. The authors suggest that "workers' investment in the political system" can be maintained even as factors of deindustrialization break their trust.[77] These stories suggest an important component that is lost in the declension narrative. During the period of deindustrialization workers and communities banded together and continued to fight, despite the odds.

Political Scientist Dale A. Hathaway's *Can Workers have a Voice?* offers an example of a study that highlights workers' agency as they went through deindustrialization. In his study of deindustrialization in Pittsburgh Hathaway asks whether workers had a voice in economic and political structuring in three cases of working-class resistance to deindustrialization of the steel industry. He looks at the power dynamics of the Pittsburgh economic and political elite and their responses to working-class resistance to determine the viability of this resistance. Hathaway

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[76] Richard Newman, "From Love's Canal to Love Canal: Reckoning with the Environmental Legacy of an Industrial Dream," *Beyond the Ruins*, 112-138.

[77] Steve May and Laura Morrison, "Making Sense of Restructuring: Narratives of Accommodation among Downsized Workers," *Beyond the Ruins*, 259-283; Joy L. Hart and Tracy E. K'Meyer, "Worker Memory and Narrative: Personal Stories of Deindustrialization in Louisville, Kentucky," *Beyond the Ruins*, 284-304.

demonstrates that the greater the threats to ruling hegemony, the more elites used all their resources to discredit, suppress, and alienate worker activists and their allies. He concludes that in Pittsburgh, workers reacted too late to the decisions that led to deindustrialization in the Monongahela Valley. Hathaway contends that workers will have to fight for a voice in the economic futures of their communities by means of forcing a reinterpretation of "public" to include workers.[78] He also suggests that a close look at the ways in which workers have represented themselves in their fight to resist the forces that lead to job loss and underemployment may offer future strategies for worker activists who seek to empower their communities.

Building on this literature, my study of Racine explores the determination of workers to continue to fight for economic justice and maintain a voice in the local political economy. Such explorations may point toward strategies that can lead to new growth in organized labor and greater success by activist workers in their fight for some control. This study shows how workers have the power to shape the economic and social landscape as employers' increasingly have to search for new ways to limit workers' resources.[79] Racine's long history of class struggle, the willingness of activists to adapt and transform to new situations, and a commitment to broad-based notions of economic and social citizenship helped fuel a sense of class solidarity and commitment to class politics throughout my period of study. Throughout the most severe dismantling of Racine's industrial sector, even while workers lost power on the shop floor, they held on to the working-class militancy that had seen them through the earlier period. At the end of the 1980s, workers felt encouraged by the political victories they had managed at the local and state level. Over the second half of the twentieth century Racine's labor community learned to

[78] Dale A. Hathaway, *Can Workers Have a Voice?: The Politics of Deindustrialization in Pittsburgh* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993).
[79] Cowie, *Capital Moves*, 3, 4.

adapt to the major political, economic, and social transformations of the era without losing sight of the need to combat economic inequality and exploitation.

Workers did lose power at work and in local, state, and national political battles, but defeat came not because they failed to adapt or limited their militant activism but due to larger economic and political changes out of their control. This story matters in today's continuing battle for greater economic, social, and political empowerment in the United States. It offers an example of the ways in which a broad-based definition of who belongs in the labor movement, coalition building, and militant resistance to economic and political conservatives can help cultivate and sustain collective actions for holding on to some gains and the political motivation to continue to fight when new opportunities emerge.

TERMINOLOGY

In this dissertation I use the term labor community (or working-class community) as Racine labor activists used it over the decades of my study. The most active, engaged activists expressed their vision of the city's labor community to include all workers and those who wanted to work. This meant craft workers, industrial laborers, public workers, office staff and technicians, private service workers, and those unemployed or underemployed who relied on social service programs for survival stood within the labor community. While a sense of collective identity and class solidarity requires the engagement of rank-and-file workers, Racine's labor leaders and engaged activists provided the motivation, commitment, and direction that kept bringing in new members and inspired others to action. Of course, this vision was complicated by social issues as black and Hispanic workers struggled throughout the period of study to break into the better paid, higher skilled positions. This vision was also made more difficult by the refusal of the building trade locals in the city to welcome non-white workers into

apprenticeship positions until the late-1970s. However, the general consensus among the core group of labor activists was to incorporate as many workers as possible into the community, aided by early organizing in the public sector and private service industries, and their participation in other social justice movements.

Activists strictly enforced the boundaries of the labor community during strikes or other labor actions when met with resistance. Union leaders and rank-and-file members would shun strikebreakers or other workers who spoke and/or acted against class interests. While all workers did not always walk in lock-step with the circle of engaged activists, the labor community's ability to garner the support of its members to participate in rallies, Labor Day celebrations, sports and other social events, write letters to the editor, engage their political leaders, vote for labor-endorsed candidates, grant interviews with journalists and researchers, and to sign membership cards and actively seek jobs in unionized workplaces shows the value of using the broader term of labor community. The broad-based working-class vision pursued by the Racine labor community influenced local politics, charitable and social justice organizations, social issues such as housing and education, increased the number of workers with the power of unions behind them, and improved Racine's economic and social conditions. This dissertation examines a community composed not only of white males working industrial jobs, but minorities and women who were active in labor and social justice issues. It looks particularly at the ways race and gender helped shape the character of Racine's working-class politics by the 1970s.

SOURCES

This study of Racine's working class is based on archival research of local union records, political organizations, and social justice groups, particularly the Racine branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). My sources also include

records of the United Auto Workers and Service Employees International leadership records and county-wide labor councils. *Racine Labor*, the *Racine Journal-Times*, and other daily newspapers provided the backdrop for the census data, local business and industry records, and local electoral politics. *Racine Labor*, the weekly newspaper published by a group representing most of the city's unions, provided another avenue for activists to communicate with the public, maintain an active voice in political, economic, and social debates both local and national, and to sustain the historical narrative of Racine as a union town with an active working class. Started in 1941 after two earlier daily papers failed to turn a profit, the *Racine Labor* provided a working-class perspective on local, state, and national news. It often provided a dissenting voice to editorials and reporting in the daily newspaper, the *Racine Journal Times*. The paper maintained a large circulation because unions paid for their members' subscriptions and a popular bargain center section allowed residents to advertise items for sale free of charge. The long time editor Loren Norman also had a large following and readers looked forward to his weekly "Squibs" column. Each union that bought a subscription for its members was given a voice on decision-making about the paper but there were no formal links to any particular local or labor council. Norman also insisted as editor that he would print both sides of any dispute or neither. This created a broad spectrum of ideas and columns that, while sometimes offering conflicting viewpoints on the same topics, expanded the appeal of the paper and created an active forum for working-class debate. *Racine Labor* was also a community paper, it reported on local religious and ethnic festivals, the annual safari day at the zoo, and every summer it published a vacation guide, which often featured a related editorial column about the role of organized labor in guaranteeing vacations for workers.[80]

[80] Richard W. Olson, "An Isolated Survivor: *Racine Labor*," in *Workers and Unions in Wisconsin: A Labor History Anthology*, ed Darryl Holter (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Press, 1999), 173 – 183.

I have used oral history records collected from Racine-area worker activists starting in the 1950s and through the 1990s and held at the Wisconsin Historical Society and the Walter Reuther Library. I have also interviewed members of Racine's working class community to gain insight into memory, space, and identity. These sources have enhanced my discussion of workers' involvement with civic and political affairs in Racine and beyond as well as the importance of union activities to worker identity in the city.

Chapter Outline

Chapter 1, Economic and Social Citizenship in the Postwar Era, begins by exploring Racine's postwar labor community, focusing on the 1950s. It looks at organizing and strike activities in the city while also analyzing the ways in which local, state, and national political developments shaped and were shaped by the local labor community. This chapter includes an introductory discussion of the large role labor relations at J.I. Case had on the city, and the solidarity expressed among workers across the city and beyond the confines of the labor community as activists took their workplace struggles to the larger public. It highlights the long history of working-class militancy, labor collaboration, and language of working-class citizenship and rights, as well as a nuanced understanding of the role of a working-class identity within the political debates of the decade. This chapter looks at how labor activists' involvement with the growth of the Wisconsin Democratic Party facilitated a growth of political power for working-class activists in the city and led to an active civic engagement by labor activists. The chapter also introduces the early organizing and lobbying efforts of public workers in Racine and Wisconsin, how the broad-based class identity of the city influenced public workers' efforts to organize and bargain collectively with the city and county, and the role of black migrants in industrial unions in Racine.

The second chapter, Sustaining a Labor Movement in the Turbulent 1960s, places Racine's economic, political and social transition within a national context. Building on the gains of the postwar period, Racine's labor community used its political capital to expand civic engagement and pursue legislative protections for workers. Using the archive collections of national unions like UAW and SEIU and other historical narratives of the period, I take a close look at the ways successful organizing drives, the expansion of civil rights and public worker unionization fueled the growth and solidarity of Racine's working-class community during the decade. This chapter explores the ways in which the labor community engaged with other social justice organizations and how that contact reshaped their ideas about class, highlighting internal tensions over social issues and between the more conservative building trades and the liberal industrial and public sector unions. Chapter two also shows how a strategic use of the city's labor history played a key role in mitigating shop-floor losses and sustaining a sense of class solidarity and commitment to class politics in Racine despite the internal tensions.

Chapter 3, Working-Class Solidarity and the Transformation of Capital, focuses on the 1970s and shows the ways in which the Racine labor community managed to remain relevant during changing political and economic conditions. With a focus on public sector and healthcare unions, it traces the changing politics and strategies of the labor community as members sought ways to maintain their established economic positions within the city. It shows a concrete example of the cross-industry collaboration and support evidenced in Racine. The cases of public worker strikes by fire fighters and teachers also show the expansive nature of Racine's labor community and the solidarity that existed across sectors. Industrial and service sector unions continued to work cooperatively. Union members sought to effect change across the city, state, and nation.

Chapter 4, Labor Militancy during Deindustrialization and Beyond, looks at the rapid decline of the community's economic security. It illustrates the effects of plant closures on employment, social services, education, and housing in the city. It explores working-class responses and efforts to maintain acceptable levels of economic security. Chapter four shows the wide range of activities that unions used to fight back against plant closings and the continued efforts to organize workplaces, despite declining political and economic influence. The overwhelming economic and political conditions limited the effectives but not the spirit of Racine's labor community during the 1980s as workers maintained a militant approach to political activism.

I conclude with insights on the continued importance of working-class identity and the vehicle of labor unions for the economic stability and growth of working people, reiterate the benefits of historical studies that combine industrial and service sector workers in the analysis, and suggest new interpretations of the labor movement during this period of low-density and "decline."

Chapter 1: Economic and Social Citizenship in Postwar Racine

Racine's labor activists solidified their vision for a broad-based labor community through organizing new workers across race and gender lines and private and public sectors, expanding the usage of working-class politics on the shop floor and in civic and social institutions that impacted the whole city, and creating a working-class solidarity rooted in a community of unions willing to work together to solve local issues and protect working-class interests in the postwar period. The Roosevelt administration's policies, especially the 1935 Wagner Act, Roosevelt's 1944 "Four Freedoms" State of the Union Address in which he called for freedom from want and freedom from fear, and the postwar economic prosperity seemed to justify the government's role in protecting people from economic downturns and expanded opportunities to spread economic and social citizenship rights for labor liberals. Having their expectations raised by Franklin Delano Roosevelt's rhetoric and their wages and unionization rates grow at unprecedented rates during the war, labor activists in Racine committed to solidifying and expanding those gains in the postwar era.

This chapter details the still-fraught relationship between management and labor in Racine despite the federal government's encouragement of social liberalism—expanding the wealth of the nation to those previously left out—that created a more favorable political climate for labor. At the same time, pattern bargaining, whereby big unions in mostly-stable industries like auto and steel set the standard for wage and benefit packages that less powerful unions then used to negotiate with other employers in the same industries raised wage levels and workplace standards across the nation. While the political landscape and pattern bargaining did improve wages, benefits, and working conditions for many U.S. workers, in Racine fierce battles continued to wage in the class struggle. Labor activists sought to build on the momentum of the

postwar expansion of social and economic citizenship by organizing and politicizing workers across industries. They actively fought against management intransigence toward collective bargaining, lobbied against conservative business and political leaders efforts to enact anti-labor legislation, and demanded a voice in local political, economic, and social debates.

By the 1950s, Racine's labor community had organized nearly all plants in the industrial sector and many of the private service and public sector workplaces. Racine resembled large-industrial centers in the Midwest with its diversified economy and high levels of unionization with an active labor community involved in local political, economic, and social issues. From World War II to the 1950s union membership expanded, rank-and-file activists fought in the workplace, at the ballot box, and in the community to legitimize a broad-based working-class outlook. This outlook included not just bargaining for more power in individual workplaces, but for changing the lives of working people in the whole community. Labor activists' civic involvement throughout the postwar period confirmed their place in local and state politics. Local activists played a key role in rebuilding the Wisconsin Democratic Party, ran for local public offices, and demanded seats on the boards of local charitable organizations. The labor community saw itself in a strong position to bargain over economic issues but also recognized a shifting political environment that empowered the capitalist class to wrest control away from labor and restrict government involvement.

Changing race and gender demographics in Racine also helped create a wider view of who qualified as members of the working class. The need for workers during the war brought black men and white women into the industrial shops in Racine as never before. The workers who flooded into Racine during and after the war arrived in a city with a vibrant working-class community that prided itself on a long history of organizing and community service. Non-white

men and women labor activists' committed participation in unions not only expanded the demographics of the Racine labor community but also impacted the community's understanding and implementation of class politics as new members challenged unions to act on the rhetoric of full citizenship for all.

World War II and the federal government's investment drove the growth of manufacturing and brought dramatic economic, political, and social changes to Racine and across the nation. The resulting prosperity legitimized government involvement in private manufacturing for members of the labor community and their political allies. Like many mass-production urban areas, Racine's industrial output exploded due to government defense contracts. Increased production called for new and refurbished factory sites. The federal government built new facilities so that the J. I. Case Company could produce bomber wings and gun carriages. Allis Chalmers Manufacturing Company received funding to build new facilities to complete its forgings contract and Massey Harris Company expanded its tractor facilities to build gun motor carriages, light tanks, M4s, and various other tank parts. Other companies that received federal contracts include Sperry Gyroscope Company, Belle City Manufacturing, Neleon Brothers and Strom Company, and Twin Disc Clutch Company.[81] With these new economic opportunities, the population of Racine County increased from 90,217 to 109,585 between 1930 and 1950.[82] This influx of jobs, people, and income complicated existing political lines as labor activists sought to solidify their position with their political allies. In Racine, labor activists used the momentum to negotiate favorable labor contracts for union members, expand government protection for workers and the social safety net for those outside of unionized

[81] Heritage Research Center, "WWII Industrial Facilities: Authorized Federally Funded Facilities," http://www.heritageresearch.com/ourlibrary/databases/wwii/industries/wisconsin.htm, http://www.heritageresearch.com/ourlibrary/databases/wwii/authorized/wisconsin.htm, accessed 16 Sept 2012.
[82] http://www.census.gov/population/cencounts/wi190090.txt.

workplaces, and resist pushback from conservative business leaders and politicians. They met heavy resistance, which fueled labor strife while also opening the way for labor activists to gather public support among political, social, and religious allies.

In Racine and across the nation, conservatives sought to retain the status quo or even shift power away from these goals. While some industrialists and business leaders supported the administration's efforts to restore economic stability with federal regulations and reduced competitive price wars, other conservative business leaders challenged Roosevelt's New Deal policies, especially the National Labor Relations Act (Wagner Act), and any attempts to interfere in their business prerogatives. Once the economy did start to recover some business leaders started to resent what they saw as the high cost of lost "management prerogative."[83] As Nelson Lichtenstein points out, if anything is exceptional about the American labor system, it is the "hostility managers have shown toward both the regulatory state and virtually all systems of worker representation."[84] The National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), a key organization opposed to government regulation and unionization, understood itself to be involved in a "knock-down, no-holds-barred fight against labor unions by every possible means" and at the forefront of the attack on the Wagner Act.[85] The Business Advisory Council also objected to the Wagner Act, "which contained what they thought were dangerously radical provisions that could require corporations to bargain with unions and require workers to join them."[86] Such corporate resistance suggests how fraught the relationship between labor and

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[83] Colin Gordon, *New Deals: Business, Labor, and Politics in America, 1920-1935* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p 164-65 and 215-220; Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009), 8, 9.
[84] Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 105.
[85] Kim Phillips-Fein, 14.
[86] Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 41.

management remained in an era that some scholars and activists often associate with cooperation between the two sides.[87]

In an important victory for NAM and others, the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act placed legal restrictions on unions and helped shift the balance of power away from unions and the state and toward corporate America. The new amendment undermined the importance the Wagner Act placed on collective bargaining as an effective tool in equalizing the playing field in the labor-management struggles for control at the site of production and in the larger economic, political environment. Instead, Taft-Hartley made individual rights just as important as collective bargaining. It imposed new legal restrictions on labor unions and granted employers more rights, increasing the power imbalance in labor-management relationships.

The Act also codified efforts to curtail the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO)—the leader in industrial unionization--through its anti-Communist measures. Communists had played important parts in helping organize within CIO union locals but after Taft-Hartley, unions could no longer tolerate such political diversity. The law required union members to sign affidavits showing they were not affiliated with the Communist Party in any means. This allowed those opposed to Communism to push out many active union leaders and organizers.[88] Finally, Taft-Hartley limited the spread of unionization by outlawing union shops, which would have required all workers to join the union that won representation at a particular workplace thus creating space for state-level right-to-work laws.[89] In his study of the U.S. labor movement Lichtenstein concludes, "Taft-Hartley thus did much to depoliticize the unions by curbing

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[87] Lichtenstein, 98, 127, Lichtenstein describes how in the 1980s as labor lost significant ground to corporate capitalists the myth of a labor-management accord became popular among activists, historians, and policymakers who sought to critique the federal government's retreat from protecting collective bargaining. He quotes John Sweeney, AFL-CIO president calling for a return to the "unwritten social contract" on page 98.

[88] Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, 115; Lizabeth Cohen, Making *a New Deal: industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 366-367.

[89] Nelson Lichtenstein, *Labor's War at Home: The CIO in World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 238-239.

interunion solidarity and ghettoizing the power of the labor movement" and devalued the idea of worker organization "independent of managerial influence."[90] Taft-Hartley and the NLRB's rulings in the postwar period changed the scope and meaning of collective bargaining and weakened the appeal of trade unionism.[91] The new legal restrictions limited the effectiveness of labor's efforts to promote the ideology of working-class solidarity in the postwar period.

Conservative political backlash also limited the labor movement's range of effective strategies and sought to change the public debate by damaging union leaders. Lichtenstein argues that the postwar liberal and labor alliance failed to achieve any of its goals and was too unorganized to overcome entrenched Conservative resistance to expanding economic citizenship rights. Conservatives used the rhetoric of menacing union bosses as vindication for their resistance to collective bargaining, which weakened labor's position in the public arena. As a result, Lichtenstein suggests that the coalition of the labor movement and the Democratic Party forced unions to separate collective bargaining from political debate to protect the fragile relationship. Some unions, especially at the national level refused to take strong political stances in support of such issues as civil rights or Cold War foreign interventions. Union leaders focused on getting the best labor contracts concerning wages and fringe benefits coupled with attempting to adhere to a "labor-management accord" by suppressing rank-and-file militancy, which led to a business-model approach to bargaining. Union bureaucracies grew to service their members while organizing, political education, and community outreach took a backseat.[92] These external and internal changes weakened the labor community's position and strengthened their political and class opponents.

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[90] Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, 117.
[91] Ibid., 176.
[92] Phillips-Fein, 125-126; Nelson Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit: Walter Reuther and the Fate of American Labor* (New York: Basic Books, 1995, 347-350.

In Racine, even the myth of a labor-management accord did not exist. The largest employer, The J.I. Case Company (Case), was led by Leon R. Clausen, who actively fought against workers' right to collectively bargain and resented any government involvement in private industrial matters. As the largest employer, organized by the largest and most powerful UAW local, the relationship between labor and management had a large influence on class politics in the city. After starting the firm in Rochester, Wisconsin in 1842, Jerome I. Case moved his agricultural manufacturing firm to Racine two years later.[93] Leon R. Clausen became president of the company in 1924 and remained as president and then chairman of the board for the next thirty years. Known as a "rugged individualist," Clausen remained opposed to collective bargaining and any type of government or worker involvement in business affairs. He personally resisted all the workers' efforts to form a union or to bargain. Workers first went on strike in 1934 and then for 97 days in 1935.

Workers at Case initially tried to organize into a union in 1906 but management successfully defeated their efforts and started blacklisting any workers who tried to organize. During the Great Depression, workers again attempted to organize with the help of members of the local Socialist Party, but the company retaliated by firing over a thousand of the four thousand workers. Finally, in 1933 workers managed to organize into an independent union after a ninety-one day strike, but negotiations with the company did not meet many of their demands. The workers affiliated with the American Federation of Labor in 1934 after another strike but joined the newly-formed United Automobile Workers in 1937 as UAW Local 180 under the

[93] J. I. Case Company, *CASE: A Case History* (Racine: Case Company, n.d.).

leadership of Harvey Kitzman. They became the first unit of what would become the Agricultural Implements Division of the UAW.[94]

During World War II, the federal government demanded a one-year contract between UAW Local 180 and the company in an effort to keep war production on schedule, but Clausen's refusal to recognize workers' basic bargaining rights persisted over the next two decades.[95] As the local labor paper editorialized, Clausen "fought the UAW tooth and nail throughout his career."[96] After finally granting bargaining rights in 1936, Case management, led by President Clausen, rejected Local 180's request to collect automatic dues deductions from paychecks or to require all members of the bargaining unit to join the union as requested. However, inspired members kept voting to keep these key issues on the bargaining table as well as to capitalize on the gains made by other UAW unions across the automobile industry.

So, in the industrial heartland, which has been associated with the labor-management accord in the postwar period, local conditions in Racine mimicked the continued employer resistance typically associated with plants in the South and West. The difference between the hope generated by the rhetoric of postwar liberalism and the reality of class struggle caused continued worker activism and fueled workplace and political battles to extend economic citizenship across the nation. Worker activism had pushed forward the passage of the Wagner Act and gave it political relevance. From the very beginning, activists recognized the limitations of the Act, and continued to pursue avenues outside of collective bargaining to gain economic and political power. Despite resistance from business leaders, conservative politicians, and

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[94] "An Evening Dedicated to Harvey Kitzman," Kitzman Papers, WHS; Joseph M. Kelly, "Growth of Organized Labor," in *Racine: Growth and Change in a Wisconsin County*, edited by Nicholas C. Burckel (Racine: Racine County Board of Supervisors, 1977), 356-362.
[95] "Ex-Case Chief Clausen, 87, Dies; Known as a Rugged Individualist," *Racine Journal Times*, 15 Aug 1965, p1, 3A.
[96] "Clausen's Death Marks By-Gone Era," *Racine Labor*, 20 August 1965, p9.

Southern Democrats seeking to protect their economic, social, and political power structure, the labor movement expanded and gained a powerful voice in national politics. Industrialists,' like Clausen's, continued resistance to government regulation and workers' collective bargaining efforts galvanized the labor movement in Racine and across the nation. For example, the tremendous growth of the labor movement, as well as the institutionalization of labor relations within the New Deal state transformed Oakland, California's labor community into a political and social force. To consolidate their power, activists extended unionization in Oakland to the mass of unorganized workers and created a conflict with a local business association that facilitated the 1946 general strike.[97] In Chicago, the Packinghouse Workers' Organizing Committee battles for union recognition despite heavy resistance led to more and more workers becoming committed to the union and willing to engage in long-term fights with management.[98]

Members of Local 180 set the tone of labor militancy and activism that coalesced in postwar Racine. Harvey Kitzman led UAW Local 180's bargaining committee in weekly negotiation meetings. Kitzman was born on a farm in rural Wisconsin in 1906 and completed the eighth grade before leaving school to help with farm work. At seventeen, he left home to pursue a baseball career. When a car accident ended his baseball career just two years later, Kitzman started work at the Ajax Auto Works in Racine. He became interested in labor activities during Hoover's presidential campaign because management tried to pressure all the employees to vote Republican. Outraged, Kitzman started educating workers on the need for political activity based on class interests. Kitzman moved to Case in 1929 and worked there as a bar operator for the next nineteen years. He helped organize the first successful union and served as president for ten years. Kitzman and his co-workers fought to establish the union, get

[97] Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 35-36.
[98] Cohen, 292, 297.

recognition as the official bargaining unit by management, and to set the best possible working conditions, wages, and benefits for all the employees. Kitzman recalled that during the 1930s many working-class activists did not have clear ideas about what sort of mechanism would be successful in their attempts to negotiate with management. But, workers organized because "people saw the opportunity to become human beings and not machines…the opportunity to redress when you had a grievance because you were not satisfied with what the foreman was doing or what was going on...and this is what motivated people to flock to the union in the early days by the hundreds."[99] Kitzman served as president of Local 180 until 1947, when he helped establish the UAW farm implement division. In 1949 he was elected to his first term as director of UAW Region 10, which represented over 50,000 union members in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming by providing administrative and organizational support to UAW locals.[100]

UAW Local 180 union members worked for years to gain a contract more in line with national standards. Even during the war, Local 180 members staged work stoppages and sit-ins in an effort to gain better working conditions. Their representatives had voted against the no-strike agreement that International leaders accepted during the war and only orders from Walter Reuther, president of the International, could get the workers back on the job when grievance negotiations failed.[101] Even before the war ended, Case president Clausen demanded that city officials provide "law and order" to maintain discipline in the plants after peace was declared. The contract between Case and Local 180 expired in April of 1944.[102] After the war, Case managers still denied workers the benefits that union organizers had bargained for with

[99] Harvey Kitzman interview.
[100] "History of Region 10," Harvey Kitzman Papers, WHS; Biography, Harvey Kitzman Papers, WHS.
[101] Kelly, "Growth of Organized Labor,"370-71.
[102] Ibid.

automotive executives at Ford, General Motors, and Chrysler in Detroit. Weekly negotiation meetings came to a standstill because the company would not accept the all union shop, a grievance procedure, department-level steward system, and vacation pay members demanded. The bargaining committee would not agree to a settlement on wages first as the company demanded. Finally, the day after Christmas in 1945 workers at Case went on a strike that would drag on for 440 days. Kitzman remembered that although the company tried to keep the plant running, "it was really marvelous the way people hung together. Not a single soul tried to go in and go to work. They all took the position that this time they were going to do it up right, so we do not have to do it again."[103]

While workers were motivated to get what they recognized as standard contract provisions, Clausen's intransigence fueled their determination to hold out for a better agreement. They picketed through two Wisconsin winters and aggressively defended the plant against strikebreakers. Clausen immediately cancelled workers' health insurance, refused to negotiate with the mayor or any other arbiter, and publicly denounced even the notion of collective bargaining. Workers at Case sought to gain and maintain community support during the strike. Local 180 sent informational letters to other UAW locals within the state, brought complaints to the Wisconsin Employment Relations Board because of management's refusal to accept a union shop, and sent Racine striking Case workers to help maintain momentum at a Case plant in nearby Rock Island, Illinois, which was also on strike.[104] UAW Local 82, representing the workers at Modine Manufacturing Company in Racine, sent a resolution approved by membership where they resolved "that Local 82 sends its greetings to the striking workers of…Local 180 in Racine, and others throughout the country, and declares itself ready to join

[103] Kitzman interview, WPR, page 17 and 18.
[104] UAW Local 180, Box 2, Folder 10.

them in the fight so that Freedom from Want and Freedom from Fear shall be made a reality."[105] The union's inclusion of "freedom from want" and "freedom from fear" illustrated the way in which Racine's labor community embraced the New Deal liberalism of the period.

The public pressure paid off for Case workers when Mayor Wendt sent an open letter to Case management "condemning their unchristian principles in allowing the group hospitalization insurance to be cancelled" during the strike.[106] Wendt, a long-time supporter of worker rights, had been legal counsel for the UAW before being elected mayor in 1943.[107] The union praised the mayor, contending, "We know that every fair minded citizen in the city of Racine agreed with your statements to the company and the press."[108] Case workers also won support from Fiorello La Guardia, the former major of New York and a prominent voice for New Deal liberalism at the national level. As director of the United Nation's Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, LaGuardia urged Clausen to meet with his men and demanded, "You better accept that invitation of the mayor of Racine to meet Monday. I would if I were you. It's just about time to end this" on his national radio show in June 1946.[109] Yet, the company, especially President Clausen, refused to even negotiate.

Support from the city and federal governments allowed the 3000 Local 180 members to continue to hold out for some of their demands. Workers managed to stay away from the plant so long because the overwhelming majority found other sources of employment. The City, led by Mayor Wendt's initiatives, also agreed to hire some of the workers for local public work projects and the International provided financial support. Finally, a federal arbitrator moved

[105] UAW Local 180, WPR, Box 5, Folder 6.
[106] The Local 180 collection, WPR, Box 5, Folder 6, letters 17 Jan 45, 22 Jan 45, 6 Feb. 46, 14 Feb. 46.
[107] Michael Holmes, "Politics and Government, 1920-1976," in *Racine: Growth and Change in a Wisconsin County* Edited by Nicholas C. Burckel (Racine: Racine County Board of Supervisors), 254.
[108] The Local 180 collection, WPR, Box 5, Folder 6, letters 17 Jan 45, 22 Jan 45, 6 Feb. 46, 14 Feb. 46.
[109] "Hurls Advice at J.I. Case," *Racine Labor*, 3 June 1946, p 1.

negotiations thirty miles north to Milwaukee to take some of the pressure off Case management, which soon led to compromise between the company and union. The arbitrator convinced both sides to accept concessions and they finally reached an agreement in March 1947. The company agreed to increase the number of paid stewards, but the union gave up two key demands, the union shop and dues checkoff. They also compromised on grievance procedures and vacation pay. Less than half the membership voted on the weak agreement, but approved it by a margin of nearly two-to-one.[110] The voter turnout was probably low because so many Case strikers felt unsure of the future of their own employment and the union at Case after pushing so hard for changes with such few gains actually achieved.

Despite the poor agreement, Local 180 members remained committed to the union as the best means to improve working conditions. They continued to participate in sit-down strikes, work stoppages, and officially sanctioned strikes throughout the postwar period. Kitzman remembered, "If we were unable to settle a grievance in which we felt we were entitled to have an adjustment, there was only one other way we could move on it. It was to simply shut the operation down. That happened not once but hundreds of times. This is the way we did our collective bargaining inside the plant."[111] And workers steadily came back into the union as employment levels rose.[112] The continued efforts of these Racine unionized workers in the face of extreme resistance by management solidified the efforts of the1930s and war period. It situated Local 180 as an example of the need for perseverance for other unions in the city. This would set the stage for Local 180's role as a leading union in Racine's labor community.

While UAW Local 180 represented the largest union in the city, workers throughout the manufacturing sector, public employees, and office workers all worked to reap the gains of

[110] Kelly, "Growth of Organized Labor," 375; Kitzman interview.
[111] The Local 180 collection, WPR, Box 1, folder 26; Kitzman interview.
[112] The Local 180 collection, WPR,

economic prosperity and build on the momentum of the labor movement's growth of the past twenty years. By mid-century Racine had about 230 manufacturing firms employing roughly 12,000 employees.[113] After the war workers at local automobile manufacturing firms, foundries, home electronics manufacturing plants, printing companies, outdoor clothing makers, and engine parts manufacturing firms all went on strike or threatened strikes for better pay and working conditions in the city. UAW Local 391 capitalized on an organizing drive at Webster Electric Company, a local radio manufacturing firm, and won a NLRB election in February 1950 by a victory of 316 to 12. After several months of negotiations, the local signed a contract with management recognizing Local 391 as the official bargaining agent, a union shop agreement, an insurance program, grievance procedures, vacation pay, and dues check off provision, and a new seniority agreement.[114] Workers at Belle City Manufacturing, a local foundry, bargained for and won better pension and wage agreements during several rounds of contract negotiations. UAW Local 85, representing workers at Walker Manufacturing, signed what was called at the time the best contract in the area. It was reported to have a better pension and wage package than a contract negotiated by the UAW with General Motors in Detroit the same year.[115]

A seven-month strike at Modine Manufacturing Company in 1952 demonstrated two key factors that would continue to unfold in postwar Racine. As U.S. companies began to change management practices and seek to gain profits through the buying and selling of other corporations, ownership and management of local manufacturing plants shifted from local to foreign control. Many family and privately-owned companies were sold or relocated and new

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[113] University of Wisconsin-Parkside, "Proposal for a Records Survey of Manufacturing Firms in the Cities of Racine and Kenosha, Wisconsin, As Part of an Archives of Industrial Society Project" (Kenosha, WI, 1978). Business Survey Records, Wisconsin Historical Society, UW-Parkside Area Center, Box 1, Folder 11.
[114] "Webster Local Wins Election on Union Shop," *Racine Labor*, 17 Feb 50 p1; "Union Shop Won in New Webster Pact," *Racine Labor*, 31 March 1950, p16.
[115] "Belle City Local Wins Pensions, 10c Increase," *Racine Labor*, 18 August 1950, p1; Victory at Walker's," *Racine Labor*, 11 August 1950, p1; "Raise for Belle City Employes," *Racine Labor*, 24 October 1952, p2.

managers and owners did not always adhere to local customs and traditions, which led to increased tensions during negotiations and strike activity to achieve workers' gains. While Modine's owners remained local, the management team did not and approached the 1952 bargaining term as an opportunity to severely limit the union's power. A second trend within Racine's labor community was the rank-and-file support for striking workers across the area. Union members often walked picket lines with their striking brothers and sisters, sent financial support to other unions' strike funds, and attended rallies and marched on the behalf of workers across industries and employment sectors.

While Modine's workers felt the time was right to negotiate a labor agreement in line with similar industrial plants, the new management team felt that their prerogatives should be made explicit in the new agreement. A. B. Modine started Modine Manufacturing in 1916 as a producer of radiators for farm tractors. Over the years the company expanded its product line to produce radiators for cars, trucks, and a wide variety of heat transfer needs for industrial installations. After moving to Racine as a partner in another firm in 1913, Modine started his own firm to manufacture his radiator designs.[116] UAW Local 82 had negotiated amicably with Modine's management team for twenty years and represented 800 employees by 1952 . The current contract expired 16 July and the union approached the company about making changes that would fall closer in line with other automobile industry agreements. However, by September, only a union recognition clause had been successfully negotiated. The company wanted to include a management prerogative clause in the contract and would not negotiate on any other items such as wages, fee scales for piece work, or other economic issues. The management clause listed a set of terms that the company would not negotiate and management rights that would not be bargaining over with the union.

[116] "A. B. Modine: A Remembrance," www.modine.com\web\about-modine\history, accessed 11 August 2013.

Union members recognized that signing this agreement before opening negotiations on a new labor contract would greatly reduce their bargaining power. Workers felt that their only option to protect themselves from the prerogative clause was to insist on a past practices clause that would allow the bargaining team to bring standard operating procedures as starting points for negotiations. When management refused to include the past practices clause or discuss economic issues workers voted to strike. Local 82 President Louis Raschke, UAW International Representative Harold Thompson, and other activists in the community felt that the new hard-line approach from the company was the product of outside managers not from the Racine area. They also argued that management sought to take advantage of political shifts to wrest power from workers. Harvey Kitzman's speech after his 1953 reelection as UAW Region 10 Director spoke directly to this issue in the Modine strike. He declared, "If the employers think just because they were successful in putting a Republican administration last November that they are going to destroy the labor movement, they had better start thinking again because that is not going to happen." Kitzman highlighted the importance many in the labor community placed on fighting back against what they saw as political backlash against labor's gains since the New Deal.[117]

Workers stated their reasons for pursuing the strike throughout the cold winter and in light of severe financial hardship as the need for dignity at work and a sense of the need for reciprocation of the loyalty they had shown to the company in letters to the *Racine Labor*, at union meetings during the strike, and at public rallies. One older worker explained that he worked at Modine's for over twenty years and expected the management to recognize the service

[117] "Local 244 Strike in Second Week," *Racine Labor*, 3 October 1952, p1, 2; "Conciliator Sets Date for meeting in Modine Strike," *Racine Labor*, 10 October 1952, p1; "Talk Over Strike at Modine Co.," *Racine Labor*, 17 October 1952, p3; "Modine Union, Backed by all Labor, Fights On," *Racine Labor*, 5 December 1952, p1; "Why Modine is Striking," *Racine Labor*, 5 December 1952, p4; "What's Happening in the Modine Strike, *Racine Labor*, 30 January 1953, p1, 4; "UAW Backs Modine Strikers to Hilt, Declares Kitzman," *Racine Labor*, 27 March 1953, p2.

of long-term employees like him and negotiate fairly because of their dedication, thinking beyond personal profit. He wrote that the company had always been fair and that he and his fellow workers wanted the company to continue dealing with them in a fair manner. The wife of a Local 82 member wrote in to encourage the workers to stand firm in protecting the interests of all working people in the city. She explained that she had to take a job to help supplement the family's income and encouraged others who could to do the same while also admonishing against any shame or guilt in using community charity services to help provide for their families. At a union meeting in March, after negotiations had been halted for nearly a month, member Arthur Kitzman (no known relation to Harvey) asked for a vote of confidence from the floor so the bargaining committee would know where members like him stood. There was a unanimous voice vote in favor of the bargaining committee's efforts.[118]

The Racine labor community gave full support to the Modine striking employees in part because they recognized that this was a precedent-setting strike. Other UAW locals, unions within the CIO, and AFL-affiliated unions all contributed to the Local 82 strike fund. Members of UAW Local 180, at J.L. Case, donated $100 and pledged another $100 each month until the strike was settled. Local 180 President Tony Valeo reported that Case workers "want to show their gratitude to the other locals which came to their assistance in past disputes." Contributions came from locals across the city, including auto workers, garment workers, foundry workers, laborers, leather workers, and bookbinders. The letters and resolutions submitted with the donations reiterated the labor community's commitment to helping working people across the city. Steve Olson, President of UAW Local 244 at Massey-Harris pledged the support of his union in a written statement issued to Modine strikers that emphasized if one company proved

[118] "Be Fair Says Modine Worker," *Racine Labor*, 20 February 1953, p1; "Membership Gives Vote of Confidence to Modine Local Bargaining Committee," *Racine Labor*, 6 March 1953, p1; "Modine Wife View," *Racine Labor*, 20 March 1953, p5.

successful in overturning hard fought union wins it would not bode well for workers throughout the area. As he explained, the whole labor community's interests were closely tied to the workers' success in the strike against Modine Manufacturing. This level of support enabled the union members to survive the long winter months.[119]

Religious leaders also supported the union. After several failed attempts by the U.S. Department of Mediation and Conciliation to broker an agreement, Reverend S. V. Labaj of the Holy Trinity Church stepped in to help in January. The union willingly agreed to work with him but he was unable to convince the company to bargain. In March, Reverend John B. Wolf used a sermon at the Church of the Good Shepherd to counsel Modine's managers to recognize that they had forced the workers into a corner and the workers had to stand their ground. While pointing to errors on both sides he cautioned managers to accept the fact that "business will cut off its nose to spite its face if it attempts to forget the human values involved and supports a campaign of power politics." Despite the determination of the workers to maintain the strike and the public pressure to bargain, Modine's management held firm to their demand that a management clause be signed before any other contract negotiations proceeded.[120]

Pressure from the U.S. Navy and other firms in need of parts from Modine's or demanding access to their supplies inside the Racine plant led the Conciliation service to send in three representatives and force the company into bargaining. After a series of eight meetings over the course of an intense week of bargaining, an agreement was finally reached on Sunday, 19 April 1953. Union members ratified the contract with only twenty-five dissenting votes. The

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[119] "Locals Leap to Help Modine Strikers," *Racine Labor*, 14 November 1952, p1; "Case Local Votes to Aid Modine Strike," *Racine Labor*, 14 November 1952, p1; "Modine Strike Drags On," *Racine Labor*, 21 November 1952, p2; Modine Union, Backed by all Labor, Fights On," *Racine Labor*, 5 December 1952, p1, 3; "Modine Strikers Get Strong Support," *Racine Labor*, 12 December 1952, p1.

[120] "Mediators Active but Modine Strike Goes On," *Racine Labor*, 23 January 1953, p1; "Modine Strike Drags On," *Racine Labor*, 21 November 1952, p2; "Modine Co. Mistakes," *Racine Labor*, 20 March 1953, p4.

union successfully added the past practices section to the management clause with the compromise of a partial no-strike clause. Other wins included better job security, a new arbitration agreement, fringe benefits, and wage increases. The strike took a heavy toll on the workers, union, and company. It was a slow process of restarting production and getting all the workers back on the job; many workers were laid off until June.[121]

Municipal and county workers also sought to gain better pay and working conditions through union organizing and strike campaigns in the 1950s. While most policymakers and political leaders saw industrial unionism in the private sector as necessary to a robust economy by the 1950s, public worker unionism remained a highly contested idea. Congress excluded public employees from the Wagner Act. In Wisconsin, the Progressive wing of the Republican Party supported public employees' efforts to organize and bargain over work conditions and to protect the civil service system earlier than other states and the federal government. Republican Governor Philip La Follette voiced his approval of state employee unionization in 1932, giving legitimacy to a small union of state employees that would become the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) in 1936. Public workers and ASFCME activists pushed allies in the Wisconsin legislature to create the first state retirement system in 1943 and by 1947 they had successfully lobbied for the first wage-escalator clause for public employees linked to the Consumer Price Index. By the end of War World II, AFSCME had a strong foothold in the "city and county governments of Wisconsin's urban centers."[122]

Racine reflected this statewide trend of early public worker organization and collective bargaining. Racine's fire fighters formed the first public sector union in the city in 1931. In

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[121] "U.S. Moves in Modine Strike, Meeting Monday," *Racine Labor*, 20 March 1953, p1; "Seventh-Month Old Modine Strike Ends," *Racine Labor*, 24 April 1953, p1, 7; "Radiations: What's Doing at Modine's," *Racine Labor*, 5 June 1953, p5; "Modine Strike, 212 Days Old, Comes to End," *Racine Journal-Times*, 20 April 1953, p1.
[122] Robert W. Ozanne, *The Labor Movement in Wisconsin: A History* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1984), 72-74, quote from page 74.

1935 they successfully bargained with the Common Council for a wage increase. The water department employees followed in 1937, by organizing ASCME Local 63.[123] Other city employees organized into the CIO-United Public Workers Local 249, started a major organizing drive during World War II, and went on strike in 1948 to improve wages. Union organizers tried unsuccessfully to organize teachers through the American Federation of Teachers in 1916 and 1920 but the labor community stayed closely involved with the school system, arguing for good schools with well-paid quality teachers, despite the high public cost. The school janitors organized through the Building Services Union BSEIU 152 and, after they won wage increases in 1943, local labor activists demanded that teachers' wages be kept at least at the same level as the janitors.[124] Early organizing and bargaining paid off for Racine's public workers and they were seen as an integral part of a labor community by the industrial and skilled trades union activists in the city.

Early strike activity paid off for Racine's public workers. On 3 January 1952, 200 workers represented by United Public Workers Local 249 walked off the job and stopped all garbage and ash collection, snow removal, and building maintenance. The workers had won increased wages in negotiations with the City Council the previous November, but could not come to an agreement on guaranteed annual salaries and cost of living increases. Local 249 members maintained picket lines at the Department of Public Works garage, the sewer disposal plant, city hall, cemeteries, and the zoo. Workers kept the heat at 40 degrees to prevent water lines from freezing in municipal buildings but many city offices closed because of lack of heat. The union kept a skeleton crew at the sewage disposal site and had workers standing by for burials if vaults filled to capacity. While many citizens complained on the radio and the local

[123] "Water Department Employes Local 63, Was Chartered in 1937, *Racine Labor*, 3 September 1965, p33.
[124] Kelly, "Growth of Organized Labor," 386-389.

daily newspaper condemned the city employees for initiating a strike, the labor newspaper supported their right to take necessary action to improve their wages and protect workers. A snow storm in the middle of the strike left streets impassible and basketball games and other sports tournaments were cancelled. After a twelve-day strike, Local 249 won a two-year wage agreement. Although the strike was successful, some labor activists felt that it lasted longer than necessary due to poor service by union officials and lack of negotiation strategies by both the union and city council members.[125]

In addition to reflecting ongoing battles over the legitimacy of collective bargaining and workers' standards of living, the municipal employees strike also sharpened a debate over the role of Communists in organized labor at the onset of the Cold War. Many of the radical union activists of the 1930s had been influenced by the anti-capitalist politics of the Industrial Workers of the World and the Communist Party. However, as union ranks grew, most workers did not share the radical politics and these views became a minority in the CIO unions. The Cold War environment that facilitated anti-Communism led to the purge of Communists from CIO unions after the passage of Taft-Hartley. Taft-Hartley only exacerbated an internal CIO ideological battle that had been waging since the 1930s. In Racine, most union activists sought to distance themselves from the taint of Communism. In fact, Harvey Kitzman accepted the nomination for President of the Wisconsin CIO council in 1939 to lead the effort to remove Communist board members. It was not until the state CIO conventions of 1946 and 1947 that anti-Communists

[125] "Municipal Employes On Strike," *Racine Labor*, 4 Jan 52, p1; "Dispute Situation: City Council Offers Strikers 5 Proposals," *Racine Labor*, 11 Jan 52, p1; "Journal-Times Goes Beserk," *Racine Labor*, 11 Januar y 1952, p4; "City Workers Win Point, End Strike," *Racine Labor*, 18 January 1952, p3; "Good Deal for City Workers," *Racine Labor*, 18 January 1952, p4; Tex Reynolds, "Between the Lines," *Racine Journal-Times*," 3 January 1952, p1; "City Employes Strike Over Wage Demands*," Racine Journal-Times*, 3 January 1952, p1, 3A; "City Workers' Strike Unjustified," *Racine Journal-Times*, 3 January 1952, p10A.

successfully purged all the Communist leaders from the organization.[126] The national CIO ousted the United Public Workers, the United Electrical Workers, and other far-left unions from the organization in 1950.[127] Members of Local 249 in Racine chose at the time to remain with UPW instead of seeking a new charter with another CIO union. However, during the strike, workers expressed disappointment about the lack of support from national UPW representatives and some local supporters blamed the slow negotiations on the UPW representatives as well as the City Council. One month after the strike Local 249 members voted unanimously to disaffiliate with the UPW and seek affiliation with the CIO, whose Racine locals had shown key support during the January strike.[128] Racine activists supported the city workers but judged UPW as operating outside the boundaries of the local labor community. The Racine labor leaders' refusal to accept Communists or organizations that seemed to be led by Communists into the labor community complicates their otherwise broad understanding of who belonged. This can partly be explained by the close relationship between Harvey Kitzman and Walter Reuther, who was a staunch anti-Communist.[129]

Other public workers actively engaged in organizing and bargaining for better wages and working conditions during the early-1950s as well. Racine County highway workers, sheriff's deputies, and courthouse employees represented by Teamsters Local 43, sought to increase wages in their 1952 bargaining sessions. After several weeks of intense negotiations and a three-day strike, union and county negotiators came to an agreement. Highway workers, courthouse

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[126] Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, 46, 115-116; "Growth of Organized Labor," 364-366; Kitzman interview; Ozanne, *The Labor Movement in Wisconsin*, 86-94.
[127] Lisa Phillips, *A Renegade Union: Interracial Organizing and Labor Radicalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 101, 105, 107, 115; Robert W. Ozanne, *The Labor Movement in Wisconsin: A History* (Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1894), 91; Steve Rosswurm, "An Overview and Preliminary Assessment of the CIO's Expelled Unions," in *The CIO's Left-Led Unions*, edited by Steve Rosswurm (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 1-2.
[128] "City Employes Sever Tie to Public Workers Union," *Racine Labor*, 21 March 1952, p1; "Keep Racine Clean," *Racine Labor*, 21 March 1952, p1.
[129] Kitzman interview; See also, Joseph E..Kelly, ""Growth of Organized Labor," 364, 365.

workers, and deputies all received considerable increases and the cost-of-living scale was adjusted.[130] Local fire fighters and police officers also worked together during the postwar decade for better pay and safer working conditions. Fire fighters and police officers often sought the aid and support of the local labor movement during negotiations. They presented their proposals to the Racine Trades and Labor Council, the representative of AFL-affiliated unions in the city and used the services of Ben Schwartz, a local lawyer who helped most local unions during negotiations, filed charges with local and national labor boards, and settled many inter-union disputes. In negotiations in 1953, firefighters expressed their frustration with the pay scale in the city. They acknowledged the consistent wage increases they had received over the years but planned to present the Common Council with figures demonstrating how far the city fell behind in pay rates compared to other Wisconsin cities.[131] Public workers in the city and county departments used the favorable climate in Racine to successfully demand better pay and their active participation helped establish Racine's image as a robust labor community.

Along with bargaining and strike activity, public workers also sought legislative changes to further support government employee unionization and bargaining rights. Leaders in the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) and their supporters in private sector unions had made significant gains for public employees by the 1950s. Building on the success of the 1930s and 1940s, these activists continued to lobby the state legislature for a law granting public employee bargaining rights against the opposition of state chambers of commerce, the League of Municipalities, and the County Boards Association. In 1958, after electing the first Democratic governor and state assembly in years through the

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[130] "County Wage Tiff Sizzles," *Racine Labor*, 15 February 1952, p1; "County Workers Win," *Racine Labor*, 22 February 1952, p1, 5; "Approve County Pay Pact," *Racine Labor*, 29 February 1952, p1.
[131] "Trades Council Backs Request of Firemen," *Racine Labor*, 7 November 1950, p1;"Firefighters 'Burned Up' About Wages," *Racine Labor*, 16 Oct 1953, p1.

combined efforts of young political progressives and labor union activists, this coalition pushed through legislation that led to the Municipal Employee Relations Act (MERA).[132] Signed by Gov. Gaylord Nelson in 1959, this law was the first of its kind in the United States to grant collective bargaining and mandate that employers negotiate with employee-chosen representatives. MERA expanded the role of the Wisconsin Employment Relations Commission (WERC) to provide enforcement and regulation for public employees as it had for private sector workers. However, it did prohibit public employee strikes.[133] This long sought legislative victory increased the sense of power and fueled organizing activity in the area.

In addition to legal and political changes, labor activists confronted a burst of migration to Racine during and after the war. The black population in the city increased from 477 to nearly 7000 by the end of the 1950s. As with most of Wisconsin's industrial centers, most of the black migrants to Racine during the WWII years came from southern states.[134] Longtime union and civil rights activist William Jenkins remembered that most black people arriving between the 1930s and the 1950s came straight from the South or just after a stop in Chicago because, "this was a good work place, awful good place for work." Some black male workers like Jenkins were active members of the city's industrial unions. Black union membership rose during the war as they filled the need for production workers. These workers used their experiences in the Racine labor community to continue to fight for access to better jobs, more economic security, and more respect in the workplace. [135]

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[132] Joseph E. Slater, *Public Workers: Government Employee Unions, the Law, and the State, 1900-1962* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2004), 158-184.
[133] Wisconsin Legislative Documents, "Municipal Employee Relations Act," http://docs.legis.wi.gov/statutes/statutes/111/IV, accessed 21 Sept 2012.
[134] John W. Cole, "Number of Blacks in State Rises 72%," *Milwaukee Journal*, 3 Mar 1971, p 1; Joe William Trotter, Jr., *Black Milwaukee: The Making of An Industrial Proletariat, 1915 – 45*, 2nd ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 149-150; Tex Reynolds, "Between the Lines," *Racine Journal-Times*, 13 Feb 1959, p 1, 2.
[135] William "Blue" Jenkins, interview, WHS, transcript page 16.

William "Blue" Jenkins's early experiences gave him the confidence to stand up for himself and others, and a keen understanding of social politics in the city. Jenkins moved to Racine in 1917 with his family from Hattiesburg, Mississippi. His father, Frank Jenkins, worked as a coal miner in Virginia, moved to Hattiesburg for job opportunities, and came to Racine when Case recruited black workers from the South during a strike. When Frank Jenkins discovered that Case hired him as a strikebreaker he decided not to accept the job because of his experience as a unionized coal miner. He eventually found work at the Nelson Brothers construction company and the Jenkins family settled in the mostly Italian neighborhood on the north side of town near the railroad station. As one of the few black families in the neighborhood, they opened their house as the first stop for many black migrants to Racine, and gave them information on housing, jobs, and what to expect as newcomers. As an outgoing person and local sports star, "Blue" Jenkins knew lots of people in the city and had access to diverse subcultures. As a precocious youngster he roamed the city on his own, went to work and taverns with his father, and mingled with sports stars across the city. He played baseball, softball, and basketball on local teams in the black community and was the only black player on his high school football team. When his Horlick High School teammates voted Jenkins captain, the coach stood up for him when a group of parents protested having a black player in a leadership position.[136]

After graduation in 1936, Jenkins turned down two college football scholarships in part because he was worried about racial discrimination at state universities and went to work to help support his family after his father died in the early 1930s. He moved around from job to job until he was hired at the Belle City Malleable foundry in 1939 and became an active member of UAW

[136] William "Blue" Jenkins interview; Julia Pferdehirt, *Blue Jenkins: Working for Workers* (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2011), 6-15.

Local 553. The lessons he learned from his father, his outspokenness and willingness to stand up for others, and interactions with other foundry workers and UAW members, led to Jenkins' commitment to union activity and social justice issues throughout his life.[137]

Black men moving into Racine sought jobs in the foundries for secure income during the 1940s. Craft unions and many employers excluded black workers from skilled jobs, although some remembered that discrimination was less prevalent in Racine than in other industrial cities. Even in the foundries, black workers had the most dangerous and hardest jobs. Jenkins father, although skilled in several areas of carpentry and plumbing, was never able to join a building trade union or get a skilled job in this field in Racine.[138] Belle City Malleable served as the city's main employer of black foundry workers during the postwar period. Non-white workers found employment in foundries because these were often the hardest, dirtiest jobs available in manufacturing centers and workers who could find better employment usually did. Although a few black workers moved up to skilled positions in the foundries during the war, they were more often than not passed up for promotions. Black workers in Racine slowly began to look to the various UAW locals during and in the immediate postwar period to address their concerns.

Black workers were more open to unions in Racine than in cities with larger black populations and established black middle classes and institutions. In Detroit, for example the black community had vibrant chapters of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Urban League. Black workers in Detroit usually went through the Urban League or their local ministers to find industrial jobs and to combat discrimination in hiring or union practices. And, Ford Motor Company, the largest employer of black workers in Detroit, made efforts to appeal to black workers, provide good pay and benefits, and be seen as a

[137] William "Blue" Jenkins interview; Pferdehirt, *Blue Jenkins*, 79.
[138] Jenkins interview, *Racine Growth and Change in a Wisconsin County*; Pferdehirt, 96.

benefactor in the black community. With the history of exclusion from good jobs and the benefits of union membership, black workers in Detroit had little reason to listen to UAW organizers. As Meier and Rudwick show, the UAW had to work hard to recruit support from black middle-class leaders and to gain the trust and commitment of black workers. It was not until the UAW took an active role in the 1941 strike to integrate Ford plants outside of River Rouge that black workers started to shift their allegiance to their local unions.[139]

In Milwaukee, racial tensions in industrial plants stemmed not only from prejudice on the part of rank-and-file white workers, but also because most black workers only gained entry into industrial employment as strikebreakers or through "exceptional personal contacts with influential whites."[140] With increased employment during World War I, black Milwaukeeans created their own labor organizations and formed all-black chapters of existing white union locals. This history of organized struggle within the black working-class and within the whole black community to hamper increasing discrimination in social and governmental services in the city, helped propel the efforts of black industrial workers during and after World War II. Black workers responded favorably to the advances of CIO organizers in the city during this period and kept pressure on the UAW and other CIO unions to seriously address the needs of black workers in the defense industries.[141] Black workers' increasing activism across the nation forced employers, unions, and the federal government to deal with issues of discrimination during and after World War II.

When black workers' efforts for entry into defense work during war mobilization continued to fall on deaf ears, leaders took action. A. Philip Randolph, a long-time labor and

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[139] August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, *Black Detroit and the Rise of the UAW* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 108 – 175.
[140] Trotter, *Black Milwaukee*, 13.
[141] Trotter, *Black Milwaukee*, 42, 46, 47, 61, 148-50, and 162 -66.

civil rights activist, called on black workers to mobilize for a march in Washington, D.C. to protest discriminatory hiring practices in defense jobs and in the U.S. armed forces. Randolph, black worker activists, civil rights leaders, and some union leaders, planned to bring one-hundred thousand protesters to go to D.C. and demonstrate their determination to continue to demand access to jobs and the economic security they would bring. The success of the mobilization, lobbying by Randolph, and the need to keep up with war production, led President Franklin D. Roosevelt to sign Executive Order 8802, banning discrimination based on race, creed, color, or national origin in defense industries and in the federal government for the duration of the war and establishing the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) to oversee enforcement in 1942. The FEPC was very active in the Midwest, holding hearings in Chicago, Milwaukee, and Detroit, negotiating with some employers, and using its limited power to force compliance. [142]

The measured success of the FEPC fueled black worker activists to continue to push for equal treatment in the workplace and in their unions. Black workers in Detroit's auto industry and in other UAW locals pushed for stronger efforts to strengthen anti-discrimination clauses in employment contracts. Through their efforts and the determination of some international union officials to effect change, the UAW initiated an internal Fair Practices Committee in 1944. It was in place to deal with discrimination both in manufacturing plants and in local unions. In the postwar demobilization, fears of a tightened labor market and lingering racial prejudice led to resistance on the part of companies and some white rank-and-file members and union leaders of full anti-discrimination clauses. The Fair Practices Committee apparatus provided an avenue for

[142] Andrew Kersten, *Race, Jobs, and the War: The FEPC in the Midwest, 1941-46* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 14-17; William P. Jones, "The Unknown Origins of the March on Washington: Civil Rights Politics and the Black Working Class," in *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*, Vol. 7, #3 (2010): 33 – 52; and Anthony Chen, *The Fifth Freedom: Jobs, Politics, and Civil Rights in the United States, 1941 – 1972* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 36-37.

black workers and union locals to seek aid in these discrimination cases.[143] The UAW's FEPC efforts placed it at the forefront of industrial unions in this regard and made the UAW a valued organization among Detroit's black workers.[144] In Milwaukee, the March on Washington Movement brought even more black industrial workers into the UAW ranks.[145]

The labor activism surrounding World War II demonstrated to black workers in Racine that unions could be forces for economic justice and racial equality. As part of his union duties, Jenkins went to Milwaukee in the early 1940s for a UAW Fair Employment Practices Committee meeting. While there he met workers from Detroit UAW locals who shared how black workers fought for a greater voice in their union locals and the varied successes they were achieving. The talks he had with them motivated Jenkins to become even more involved in his local 553 and to encourage other black workers to join and become active in the union.[146] Korstad and Lichtenstein point out those black workers who joined CIO unions during that period were "in the vanguard of efforts to transform race relations."[147] While the UAW's record was a complicated mix of accommodation and resistance, the broad-based social justice rhetoric of the UAW facilitated a growing support for the union among black workers and community leaders.[148]

Jenkins remembered that he became more involved in his labor union when he saw the treatment of black contract workers from the Caribbean during the war. Management "misused those guys. What did they know about union contracts? They were really discriminated against.

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[143] Meier and Rudwick, 213 - 215.
[144] Meier and Rudwick, 215.
[145] Trotter, *Black Milwaukee*, 166.
[146] Jenkins interview.
[147] Robert Korstad and Nelson Lichtenstein, "Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement," *JAH* 75 (Dec 1985): 786 – 811.
[148] Meier and Rudwick, ix.

It was bad," he recalled.[149] During World War II the federal government instituted an Emergency Labor Importation Program that brought five million Mexican and Caribbean guestworkers to the United States. These migrants fell into a "no-man's land" when it came to receiving the legal protection of U.S. labor laws. Workers were promised better wages and working conditions yet employers consistently failed to follow through on all their promises. Foreign workers served to rein in domestic workers militancy, depress wages, and increase workplace strife as workers attempted to maximize the gains of the war economy.[150] While some white workers pushed Belle City to expel the immigrant workers, Jenkins's response was to recruit them into the union. Other black workers at Belle City started to participate in union activities during the debate over Caribbean workers and access to jobs in the reconversion process when white union members demanded the workers recruited from Caribbean nations be sent home. While black workers also wanted to protect their jobs and the seniority they had established, they resented the inherent racism they perceived in white unionists' words. At the union meeting when a member suggested "send the s.o.bs back in cattle cars if we have to" Jenkins "got up and I really blew my top. I was cussin'…I got pretty excited at that meeting. And after that, the guys started coming to me then." [151] The contract workers did leave after their time at Belle City Malleable. The racial tension shifted power relations within Local 553 as leaders sought to gain Jenkins's support. Workers in the plant, both black and white, increasingly started to look to Jenkins as one of their union leaders because of his vocal stand for all workers during the early postwar period.

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[149] Jenkins interview.
[150] Cindy Hahamovitch, *No Man's Land: Jamaican Guestworkers in America and the Global History of Deportable Labor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 2, 3, 83.
[151] Jenkins interview, 119 – 122.

Jenkins' position as a leader in Local 553 was solidified when he led a sit-down strike after the war. Belle City Malleable management had agreed to vacation pay during the war, but they reversed their position when the contract expired in 1945. When bargaining committee members approached Jenkins about leading a work stoppage he readily agreed. He talked to the workers in his unit and after several agreed to follow his lead he sat down in front of his machine in the steel shop. He told the foreman, "So until they make up their mind what they're gonna do, I'm gonna [sit] down here."[152] Several foremen attempted to use racial solidarity to get the other workers in Jenkins's department back to work based on the fact Jenkins was the only black worker in the unit. When the foremen failed to get the white employees back to their stations other workers in the plant sat down including the core room. The foundry's core room is where workers manufacture the center cores that were then used to make hollow steel castings. Without cores, the production line would stop. As Jenkins explained, if the core room did not run, the plant could not operate. The work stoppage proved successful and management reinstated vacation pay. Workers continued to look to Jenkins for advice and guidance, but it was a long time before he was elected to official office. He determined to "keep running for office in the union until I could be of some use to my people."[153] Jenkins would be elected president of the local in 1955 and again from 1957 through 1960. Union delegates voted elected Jenkins as president of the Racine County AFL-CIO in 1962 and he also served as chairman of the UAW foundry sub-council for district 2. In the 1970s Jenkins successfully ran for a seat on the county school board, worked with unemployed youth in the community, and sat on various neighborhood improvement boards into the 1980s.

[152] Jenkins interview, 119.
[153] Jenkins interview, Pferdehirt, 72-80.

Racine's labor activists continued to battle racism and fight for racial inclusion in workplaces and unions throughout the postwar period. In September 1942 the UAW Local 180 executive board asked the bargaining committee to address the reported discrimination against black workers because management refused to accept them as members of the union.[154] This was a tactic often used by management to foment dissension and break union solidarity. But as more and more black workers came to Racine looking for steady employment, discrimination and racial tension grew.[155] Local union leaders like Jenkins and Kitzman worked to counteract the racism of other workers, managers and the broader community. Yet, a few union activists and CIO and UAW rhetoric did not cure all the racial tensions created with the influx of new black workers during the war years. Employment data suggests that while the black male population was increasing, access to well-paying industrial jobs did not keep up with the growth. While Jenkins and a few others successfully broke the racial barrier in a few local plants, black workers in Racine remained in the lowest paid, most dangerous positions.[156] Throughout the postwar years black workers and their allies continued to work for change through UAW education programs, social justice organizations like the NAACP, churches, and direct action.

Unionized workers participated in civic improvement related to race relations outside of the workplace as well. Local 180 worked closely with the Urban League and NAACP of Racine as they offered names for employment for vacant plant positions. Unlike cities like Milwaukee and Detroit, both of which had larger black populations and clearly defined black middle classes earlier in the twentieth century, Racine's black population did not start to grow to significant numbers until the 1940s and 1950s. Racine's branch of the NAACP was started in 1947 and

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[154] UAW Local 180, WPR, Box 2, Folder 4.
[155] Jenkins interview; Tex Reynolds, "Negroes," *Racine Journal Times* 13 Feb 59.
[156] "Race Relations and Equal Opportunity in Racine County," Community Forum on Race Relations in Racine County, Wisconsin, http://www.usccr.gov/pubs/sac/wi0301/ch3.htm, accessed 25 sept 2012.

long-time UAW activists like Jenkins, were involved from the beginning. As a union leader in Local 553 and the NAACP branch president, Jenkins used his dual positions to affect change in the community.[157] Racine UAW members regularly recruited their fellow union members into the NAACP and joined forces to promote racial equity as other social justice oriented unions did. Many CIO union locals worked to improve race relations among members and to force employers to honor labor contracts without discriminating against workers based on race. For example packinghouse workers in Kansas City and Chicago came together across racial lines to force employers to grant black women equal opportunity to previously all-white positions. Autoworker, packing worker, and electrical unions supported equal opportunity legislation at the state and national level and would often join forces with NAACP to boycott retail establishments that would not serve black patrons.[158] Jenkins was very proud of the fact that the entire membership of UAW Local 234 voted to affiliate with the Racine NAACP chapter. Local 234 represented workers at Lakeside Malleable, one of the foundries in the city where black workers were able to obtain jobs.[159] Black workers in Racine found the most economic security in the industrial plants in the city and used their union membership to fight for social change. The weekly labor paper regularly carried stories about local NAACP activities, membership drives, and campaigns for social justice.

Black workers and their allies continued to push to include racial justice into the notion of class solidarity and economic citizenship that shaped the Racine labor community, but it was an ongoing process. For example, black workers in Racine lived in the least-maintained housing of the city. Housing was severely overcrowded in areas for black residents and "slum lords"

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[157] Meier and Rudwick, 78 – 79.
[158] Roger Horowitz, *'Negro and White, Unite and Fight!' A Social History of Industrial Unionism in Meatpacking, 1930 – 90* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 224 – 225; Cobble, 81-82.
[159] Jenkins interview; "Entire Union Group Affiliates with NAACP," *Racine Labor*, 13 Feb 1959, p1.

charged exorbitant rents for housing that received no maintenance. After years of struggling to get a housing code passed that would require landlords to maintain basic health and safety conditions, black working-class Racinians marched through the city in the mid-1950s to obtain better housing options as the population exploded. Corrine Owens, former Racine NAACP president, led the lobbying efforts at the city level. When the Racine Common Council repeatedly tabled the proposal for a proposed public housing ordinance to alleviate the worst conditions, Owens organized a march to City Hall in an effort to publicize the needs of black residents. Many new residents still lived in the trailer camps on the north and south edges of the city built during the massive in-migration during the early 1940s.[160] Yet, without mentioning race as a factor, the local AFL unions passed a resolution asking the city not to allow any trailer camps to be located within the city limits.[161] The AFL unions supported the Racine realtor's association that claimed that low-rent federally-subsidized housing would hurt the private building industry. This decision left black families segregated on the outside of town in substandard housing with no official plan to build new housing in the city. Meanwhile, *Racine Labor* ran editorials condemning the poor housing conditions that black families faced, urging the Common Council to act on building public housing in the city to accommodate the growing black population, and urging real estate agents to practice fair practices when it came to renting and selling to black residents.[162] While the support from union leaders and editorials in *Racine Labor* provided moral support for black residents living in extremely overcrowded and neglected dwellings, the real change needed to come from working-class residents living in all-white

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[160] "Low-Rent Home Plan Squeaks Past Council," *Racine Labor*, 13 Jan 1950, p1; "Race Relations and Equal Opportunity in Racine County," Community Forum on Race Relations in Racine County, Wisconsin, http://www.usccr.gov/pubs/sac/wi0301/ch3.htm, accessed 25 Sept 2012.
[161] RTLC records, box 1, folder 6, WHS.
[162] "Housing Project Misrepresented," *Racine Labor*, 20 Jan 50, p1; "Defer Housing Plan," *Racine Labor*, 20 Jan 50, p1, 2; Loren Norman, "Squibs," *Racine Labor*, 24 Feb 50, p4; "Race Relations and Equal Opportunity in Racine County;" "Group Discusses Possibilities For Solving Negro Housing," *Racine Journal Times*, 25 May 1956, p 4.

neighborhoods where black residents could not rent or buy homes. Examples like this demonstrate the ways in which an all-inclusive working-class solidarity did not always operate successfully to overcome racial conservatism.

In addition to racial conflicts, Racine's labor community divided over the question of women's labor rights. For many white and minority women who found industrial jobs during World War II, the higher wages and job security ended with the war and the return of troops. Yet, the taste of access to better-paid, better-protected jobs led many women to become active in the labor movement. Increased employment possibilities fueled working women's efforts to gain equal pay, greater access to jobs beyond traditional "women's work," and protective features such as child care and maternity leave.[163] Because of negotiated seniority rules, women, like the non-white men who were first hired during the war, faced the first in, first out rule of employment turnover. Women have reported the exhilaration of the higher wages and greater independence felt with wartime employment as well as the disappointment of losing those opportunities in the immediate postwar period. At the same time, however, women used the empowerment and education they received through union meetings and negotiations to become involved in the labor movement, in local and national politics, and in the women's movement. Women filled the ranks of national unions like the United Electrical Workers and UAW beginning in the 1930s and by the 1940s the UAW showed real progress in representing its women members. Through the efforts of labor feminists, UAW leaders created the Women's Bureau in 1944 and made a permanent division by 1946 under the Fair Practices and Anti-Discrimination Department.[164] Articles related specifically to women members and generally educating all membership to the needs of women workers appeared regularly in *Ammunition*, the

[163] Cobble, 56 – 58.
[164] Cobble, 19.

CIO member education journal, during this period. The regular feature "Sister Sue Says" covered issues like women's role in local unions, women's need to attend union meetings, the importance of child care and lunch rooms in work places, and sharing housework.[165] CIO unions made some effort to more fully represent women members.

Some union leaders and shop stewards worked hard to create an inclusive atmosphere and gain the support of all workers. While women in the garment industry in Racine organized in the nineteenth century, many of the factories left the city by the 1950s and women's membership in local unions declined. Loretta Christensen, a member of the AFL office workers union at Western Printing Company was one of only a few women who held a prominent place in Racine's labor community in the postwar period. In 1937 she was elected treasurer of the Racine Trades and Labor Council and she was the only female trustee among the twenty-two member group over the labor newspaper in 1941. She was active with Racine's chapter of the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL), a national organization "dedicated to advancing the interests of working-class women," and its fight for pay equity during the 1940s.[166] The Racine WTUL was formed in 1935 and received a charter from the national organization the next year. The members worked to help organize workers across industries and participated in worker education, sending members and others to the University of Wisconsin-based School for Workers. Racine WTUL members participated in annual Labor Day celebrations, entering a float in the parade each year. It disbanded in 1951 shortly after the national organization dissolved due to the growth in the labor movement and built-in union structures to organize workers that made the organization obsolete.[167] Other women held leadership positions in several local unions, with Geraldine Kamla becoming the first female to be elected president of a

[165] For example see "Sister Sue Says," *Ammunition*, and Vol 2, no. 1 (Jan 1944), 23; Vol 3, no 3 (Mar 1945), 11.
[166] *Growth and Change*, 384-385; RTLC Records, WHS, Box 1, folder 3; Cobble, 27.
[167] "Trade Union League Ends 15 Years of Service to Racine," *Racine Labor*, 5 January 1951, p5.

local in the summer of 1954, representing UAW Local 627 at Oster Manufacturing. Women were also on the executive boards of the garment workers union, retail clerks, laundry workers, and communication workers unions in the city.[168]

In Racine, women's employment varied across industries and at different plants. In manufacturing, women worked mainly at Western Printing, Webster Electric, and Rainfair. Webster Electric had enough women employees to organize the best players into the winning team in the Girls Industrial Softball League in 1954.[169] This also shows there were enough female industrial workers to form a whole league in the area. Early in 1945, Local 180 helped five women receive unemployment benefits after a week's lay off from Case.[170] In April of 1950, Local 180 called a special meeting of all the women laid off at the Case plants to discuss the issue of gender discrimination. Women had complained about not being called back to work in the repair shop before some men who had less seniority. Union leaders took the matter to the bargaining table with management.[171] When negotiations failed, Local 180 filed unfair labor practices charges against Case through WERC.[172] This type of willingness to stand up for women workers led many women to enter and remain active in social justice movements in Racine and around the nation.

Many of the women who entered the workforce during or after the war reported they became involved in labor or women's issues through unionized work in WWII. For example, Dorothy Haener, who would go on to help found the National Organization for Women in the 1960s, reported that the UAW local where she worked as a punch press operator and welder in

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[168] "Women Play Vital Role in Many Racine Locals," *Racine Labor*, 01 October 1954, p7.
[169] "Webster Girls Win Championship," *Racine Labor*, 10 September 1954, p1.
[170] "Five Women Win Contested Jobless Pay Claim Against J. I. Case Co.," *Racine Labor*, 12 Jan 1945, p 5.
[171] "Negotiation Minutes," The UAW Local 180 Collection, WPR, Box 1, Folder 24, 18 April 1950.
[172] "Women Employes Have Rights Too, Case Hearing Set," *Racine Labor*, 5 May 1950, p1; "Hearing on Case Women Employes to Resume June 2," *Racine Labor*, 26 May 1950, p3.

the 1950s offered the encouragement and education necessary for her political activity. Clara Day appreciated the hard work of her steward in Teamsters Local 743 in Chicago and the way organizers worked hard to include minorities and women.[173] These types of efforts by union leaders helped bring women and minorities into organized labor and also inspired these under-represented workers to become politically active in other areas.

While labor feminists had been working hard to implement changes within the labor movement and many positive changes had occurred, the process would take time.[174] Labor leaders slowly responded to women activists and began to recognize the need to fully integrate women members. In 1940 the Local 180 Executive Board approved a motion to exempt women members from the compulsory union membership meeting requirement for male members, which would surely have limited the amount of worker education and mobilization required to inspire greater political action by women members.[175] In another instance in 1944 Harvey Kitzman complained to the Wisconsin Industrial Commission after the agency approved a request by Case to extend an order to hire female plant workers.[176] The union felt that Case management wanted to keep the women on staff because they could pay them lower wages for similar work. Case never employed many female employees inside their Racine plants and it was not until the 1970s that female employment levels increased there in any significant numbers. However, women were demanding more voice in union and workplace decisions.

The first UAW District Conference for women was held in Milwaukee in February 1950. Racine locals at Case, Horlicks Corporation, several die cast plants, and Howard Industries sent

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[173] Dorothy Haener interview, Documenting the Midwestern Origins of the 20th-Century Women's Movement, 1987 – 1992, WHS; Clara Day interview, Documenting the Midwestern Origins of the 20th-Century Women's Movement, 1987 – 1992, WHS.
[174] Cobble, 19.
[175] Executive board minutes, 5 Apr 1940, Local 180 Collection, WPR, Box 1, Folder 30.
[176] UAW Local 180, WPR, 20 Nov 44, Box 5, Folder 5.

delegates. The Retail Clerks local also sent observers to report back to their union. The women's conference had panels on laws affecting women workers, equal pay, seniority, and fair practices.[177] At the same time, every issue of *Racine Labor* included an image of a "pinup" girl.[178] This was a complicated balance as worker activists sought to adjust their thinking and adapt to new social norms related to work and gender differences. While unions offered women opportunities for greater political involvement and leadership roles, such gains were hard fought by women activists. However, the language and actions within the historical record reveal a movement toward greater inclusiveness and recognition of the value of full incorporation of all workers into the Racine labor community. This tension existed across the decades as the working-class community went through processes of shifting understandings of the gendered nature of the workplace, women's ability and desire to have full economic citizenship, and acceptance of women in leadership roles.

As the record for black and women workers indicates, in Racine non-white men and white women made early inroads into the leadership of the labor community starting and resolving battles that would only come with the intensification of civil rights and women's movement in other areas. Many workers continued to push for economic and social justice issues throughout the postwar period. Workers reached out to union leaders, their religious advisors, community and ethnic civic association leaders, and to any organization they thought might assist them in their efforts for economic security. They wrote letters to their elected state and national political leaders, to the international headquarters of their unions, and to daily newspapers to address their perceived needs. When workers felt their issues were not suitably

[177] "UAW Plans Women's Confab," *Racine Labor*, 3 Feb 50, p1.
[178] "Newest Dance Star," *Racine Labor*, 14 Apr 1950, p 10.

addressed, they kept moving along the line of available assistance in Racine and through national networks.[179]

Racine's worker activists participated in a wide variety of activities related to improving relations with local businesses and building working-class solidarity. Leaders were proud of the fact that unions cooperated across racial, ethnic, and labor affiliations to publish the weekly newspaper, hold special events, and plan yearly Labor Day celebrations.[180] Leaders prioritized community improvement. The RTLC voted in 1946 to meet with "other civic organizations" to see to the recreational centers to provide an outlet for area youths.[181] Also in 1946 Racine UAW-CIO education director Hugh Reichard felt confident to write in a column for *Ammunition*--the monthly magazine produced by the International's Education Department—that Racine, "cradle of industrial unionism" was "where UAW members man the city council and elect the mayor of their choice."[182] Union members in Racine ran for public office, they lobbied the city and county to improve housing availability, and they sponsored Boy Scout troops and youth baseball teams. In 1949 the Teamsters local initiated a drive among area unions to sponsor a room at St. Luke's Hospital and donated $400 of the necessary $2000 to see it through.[183] As labor activist Paul Whiteside remembered, the high rates of unionization in Racine and Kenosha empowered the working-class communities to work together. Nearly all the major industrial plants were organized, skilled trades workers had been organized since the turn-of-the-century and often collaborated with industrial unions, the Teamsters had organized most of the truck drivers in both cities, public worker unionization was widespread in the area, and service

[179] For example see worker correspondence in SEIU Executive Office – David Sullivan Files, WPR, Box 19, Folders 38, 39; The UAW Local 180 Collection, WPR, Box 1 Folders 3, 9; Box, Folder 4; Letters to the Editor, *Racine Labor*, 20 Mar 1953, p5.
[180] Paul Whiteside interview; Jenkins interview: Hugh Reichard, "Racine Again," *Ammunition* Vol. 4, no. 3 (March 1946): 18 – 19.
[181] RTLC records, WHS, Box 1, folder 5.
[182] Hugh Reichard, "Racine Again," *Ammunition* Vol. 4, no. 3 (March 1946): 18 – 19.
[183] RTLC records, Box 1, Folder 6.

workers in the janitorial industry had high levels of union representation. As he stated, "when you got control of a thing, you got the majority in an area, you tend to be more aggressive."[184] Because Racine's union members felt they were in a strong position they felt confident in pursuing broad-based social justice issues that would benefit the whole community.

During the postwar period labor activists used their growing power and political voice to demand entry to many of the city's civic and charitable organizations as board members, policy makers, and active contributors. Corporate executives often held positions in city and state government and set on the boards of multiple charitable organizations in the city. Their influence impacted management and labor relations well into the second half of the twentieth century. Like worker activists, these industrials recognized that class conflict operated not just within the plants but in the political arena as well. Both sides saw the need to influence public debate and that victory in one area led to their class politics achieving precedence in the other. Worker activists wanted to counter the political weight of management by fighting and winning seats on the Common Council, the executive board of the United Way, and various other civic organizations.[185]

Working-class activists provided Racinians with an alternative view of local news to counter the negative press labor received in the *Racine Journal Times*, the daily paper, and to keep the community abreast of news related to working-class issues. Starting in the 1930s the labor community sponsored the *New Day* and then *Racine Day*, but producing daily news journals proved too expensive. When the *Racine Day* had to shut down in the late-1930s because of high operating expenses, representatives from the Racine Trades and Labor Council, a body of the area's AFL unions and the United Automobile Workers Council #8 got together

[184] Paul Whiteside interview, WHS, 13 August 1981, WI Labor Oral History Project.
[185] Michael Holmes, "Politics and Government, 1920 -1976" in *Racine: Growth and Change in a Wisconsin County*, ed. Nicholas C. Burckel (Racine: Racine County Board of Supervisors, 1977), 252-253; RTLC Box 1; Folder 6.

and decided on a weekly format, which started the 60-year run of *Racine Labor* in 1941. Loren Norman, a former Illinois mine worker, labor organizer, and journalist, was the first editor of the weekly. The newspaper operated as a cooperative, with each local holding subscriptions getting voting rights at annual meetings. It had no formal ties to any labor organization or particular union, despite the large contingent of UAW locals in the area. Instead, the aim of the paper was to appeal to the whole city and still be recognized as a paper for working people and labor activists.[186] Even during conflicts on the national level between the AFL and CIO, and later the UAW and CIO, the publishers maintained their commitment to inclusiveness of all labor news, regardless of affiliation. Local union members also held a weekly radio show on WRJN reporting on plant conditions, layoffs, bargaining committee updates, and other issues related to working-class community members.[187] Local 180 sponsored an annual Christmas dance and used the funds collected in entrance fees to buy gifts for needy children in the Racine community. In the 1940s members contributed to the needs of the children at the Taylor Orphanage through the welfare committee.[188] These public activities helped foster the labor community's role in Racine's public life.

Labor activists' community and civic involvement went beyond local matters as union members sought to influence state politics and to continue to push a working-class agenda to benefit not just the local labor community but the city, state, and nation as well. While Democrats at the national level received the majority of labor organizations' support during the New Deal period, in Wisconsin the Progressive Party and progressives within the Republican Party garnered more support than the conservative-led Democratic Party. It was not until

[186] Richard W. Olson, "An Isolated Survivor: *Racine Labor*," in *The New Labor Press: Journalism for a Changing Union Movement*, Sam Pizzigati and Fred J. Solowey, eds (New York: ILR Press, 1992), 174-183.
[187] UAW 180, WPR, Box 6, Folder 15.
[188] Local 180, WPR, Box 2, Folder 4.

debates surrounding World War II led to a split in the Progressive Party that many young liberals who joined together in the University of Wisconsin's Young Progressive Club and were war veterans worked with those seeking to reform and revitalize the Wisconsin Democratic Party. Gaylord Nelson, John Reynolds, Horace Wilkie, James Doyle, and Carl Thompson worked together with other liberals and former Progressives to gain control of the Democratic Party in 1948. Union activists and progressive leaders in each county organized campaign drives to reshape the Democratic membership in the state. Labor organizations began to actively support the Democrats at the local and state levels and contributed significant amounts of financial and manpower support throughout the decade. In Racine, labor activists including Sam Rizzo and Harold Thompson, served on the county's Democratic Organizing Committee. During the 1950 campaign the Democrats focused their support on Harry Truman and his Fair Deal platform, supported civil rights, social security expansions, and the repeal of the Taft-Hartley Act.[189]

During the 1952 political campaign season, Racine's labor activists sought to pushback against a Republican resurgence. The main focus was an attempt to prevent the reelection of Senator Joseph McCarthy. Racine political and labor leaders joined forces with a statewide coalition of university administrators, business and financial managers, and other labor leaders and formed the Wisconsin Citizens Committee on McCarthy's Record. The group published a 136-page book detailing McCarthy's business and political dealings starting with his 1936 campaign for District Attorney. They concluded that McCarthy's "policies and methods reflect a dangerous drift toward alien, totalitarian methods," and that his allegations of Communist takeover of the government was unfounded. Former Mayor Francis Wendt and Harvey Kitzman were two of the 75 business, labor, and university officials who signed their support for the

[189] Richard C. Haney, "The Rise of Wisconsin's New Democrats: A Political Realignment in the Mid-Twentieth Century," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History*, Vol. 58, #2 (winter, 1974-1975): 90-106. "Racine DOC To Meet Jan. 27, Will Pick Officers For Year," *Racine Labor*, 13 Jan 1950, p1.

book's findings.[190] While McCarthy did retain his Senate seat, Racine activists took pride that he did not win victories in the county or city. In the city he lost by 4,000 votes and the county tally just over 1,000 votes.[191] Working-class activists continued to stay involved in local and state politics and planned a strategy to continue their efforts to elect political leaders that would promote working-class issues. In Racine labor activists did not feel obligated to forego political goals for the benefit of collective bargaining; they actively campaigned on both fronts.

Their political opponents also gathered their allies for action. Republican Mark Catlin pushed a bill (named after him) through the legislature that prohibited any political contribution from union dues after William Proxmire won forty-nine percent of the vote in his 1954 run for governor with the majority of his campaign funds coming from labor organizations. Local 180 sent members to the State Capital in Madison to learn more about the Catlin Bill (419A) and they concluded it was "the most backward step the state of Wisconsin or any legislature of the state could take."[192] The law decimated Democratic campaign coffers and limited the labor movement's ability to pursue its agenda. Labor activists felt this bill was part of a larger strategy of politicians and business leaders to pass so-called right-to-work laws and restrictions on labor unions that would severely damage unionization efforts in the state. Several states implemented such laws after the passage of Taft-Hartley, which in Section 14(b) led the way for such legislation by allowing states to ban closed shops, an oft-sought contract measure that would allow unions to require all workers to join.[193] Business groups such as the National Association of Manufactures (NAM) worked with their political allies and used the rhetoric conservatives

[190] "Group Aims to Publicize Joe's Record," *Racine Labor,* 6 Jun 1952, p1; "State Leaders Endorse Booklet Exposing McCarthy," *Racine Labor*, 4 July 1952, p2.
[191] "Racine Votes for Ike but Not McCarthy," *Racine Labor,* 7 November 1952, p7.
[192] UAW Local 180, WPR, 19 April 1955.
[193] Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, 164-166; UAW Local 180, WPR, 21 June 1955, Box 3, Folder 9.

generated during the Kohler strike to promote such laws.[194] For such a law to pass in Wisconsin, known for its progressive politics and high levels of unionization shows how powerful conservative business leaders and their political allies fought to shift the balance of power between labor, capital, and the state. In September 1955 Local 180 members resolved "that it must be the job of all the people, within and without the labor movement, to oppose this vicious 'un-America' law" and pledged to use all the union power to resist it through a media campaign and direct legislative lobbying.[195] Workers across the state recognized the need to defeat such legislation and supported the Kohler strike in part to keep "right-to-work" laws out of the state. While AFL and CIO councils sought to question the constitutionality of the law in the through state courts, the law was not repealed until Democrats gained control of the legislature and governorship in 1959.[196]

Racine working-class activists worked hard to elect local politicians that would speak for the working people of the city and called them to task if advances were not made. In the postwar period class remained the most significant factor in city elections. For most of the first half of the twentieth century industrialists served as mayor. With the election of Francis Wendt as mayor in 1943, labor activists started to gain control of a few Common Council seats.[197] By 1950 active union members served as chairman of the finance committee at the city and county level, president of the city council, and as chair for the county courthouse, salaries, health, highways, parks, and zoning committees.[198] Four of the five candidates that announced they were running for seats on the city council in January 1954 were also active in the local unions

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[194] Phillips-Fein, 125-129.
[195] UAW Local 180, WPR, Box 3, Folder 9, 6 Sept 55 – 20 Sept 55.
[196] Robert W. Ozanne, *The Labor Movement in Wisconsin: A History* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1984), 147; "Labor Proves Legality of Catlin Law," *Racine Labor*, 11 January 1956, p2.
[197] Michael Holmes, "Politics and Government, 1920 – 1976," in *Racine: Growth and Change in a Wisconsin County*, ed. Nicholas C. Burckel (Racine: Racine County Board of Supervisors, 1977), 252-253.
[198] "Many Union Men Active in Civic, Political Posts Here," *Racine Labor*, 1 September 1950, Section 3, p1, 15.

and one was also on the Racine Trades and Labor Council.[199] While Wendt, with overwhelming labor backing, did not win the 1955 mayoral election, nine of the thirteen city council seats went to labor endorsed candidates.[200] The biggest success for Racine's working-class political activists came in the 1958 elections. Gerald Flynn was elected as the first Democrat to represent Racine in Congress in 68 years. On the Wednesday after Election Day, Flynn went around to many of the local factories to thank workers as they started their shifts. The election also saw the return of William Proxmire to the Senate, Gaylord Nelson as governor-elect and labor-backed Democrats filled all the area's state legislative seats.[201]

Success on the shop floor, in the community, and at the ballot box did not blind Racine's labor community to corporate restructuring, growing capital mobility, and technology changes that threatened employment levels, economic security, and political power. Changes in corporate management decisions regarding short-term profits and finance and the battle for industrial control over the economy led to a steady movement of capital and the massive "dismantling" of basic industry across the U.S. The shift in political power toward corporate management also facilitated capital mobility as businesses forced local and state governments to vie for their attention through tax cuts and other incentives that weakened community's safety nets and put labor in even weaker positions with management.[202] Working-class activists in Racine looked at plant closings, massive layoffs due to corporate restricting or shifting operations, and management changes as serious concerns in the 1950s.

Mergers and restructuring led to consolidation of corporations and worker layoffs. In preparation with its merger with the Hudson Company, Nash Motors in Racine began laying off

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[199] "Candidates Popping Up For City Jobs," *Racine Labor*, 8 January 1954, p1.
[200] "City to Have New Mayor, 9 New Aldermen," *Racine Labor*, 13 April 1955, p2.
[201] "Landslide Buries GOP," *Racine Labor*, 7 November 1958, p1.
[202] Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America: Plant Closings, Community Abandonment, and the Dismantling of Basic Industry* (New York: Basic Books, 1982).

workers in nearby Kenosha and Milwaukee in 1953. In February 1954 the company laid off 1,300 employees at the Kenosha plant and several hundred in Milwaukee. What became the American Motor Company was still the largest employer in Kenosha, but workers there recognized their vulnerability to shifting economic trends in the county.[203] Through another merger, the local Massey-Harris Company became the Massey-Harris-Ferguson Company during the same period. Like the Case Company, workers at Massey-Harris-Ferguson had to deal with cyclical unemployment due to lulls in the agricultural cycle. When members of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and butcher workmen, Leather Division Local 77 refused to accept the increased production schedule introduced by the Eisendrath Tannery management, the company announced it was closing the plant.[204] In 1956, workers at Case and Massey-Harris-Ferguson faced one of the worst years of layoffs since the postwar reconversion. A report by the Wisconsin Industrial Commission showed that in October 1956 nearly one thousand fewer workers were employed in Racine than October 1955, mainly due to the layoffs in the agricultural implements industry. While textile and garment workers saw an increase in employment due to the production of new lines of vehicles, it was not enough to compensate for all of the out-of-work employees at Case, Massey-Harris-Ferguson and other local foundries. The Case Company's downturn seemed more severe than just the seasonal decline in orders for farm equipment because the company decided to close its Anniston, Alabama and the Racine Main Works Plants due to low orders. The list of unemployed workers totaled 1,630, most

[203] "Nash Layoff Hits 1300 at Kenosha," *Racine Labor*, 26 February 1954, p1; "Hudson and Nash Merger is Now Final," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 23 April 1954, page 6, part 2; University of Wisconsin-Parkside, "Proposal for a Records Survey of Manufacturing Firms in the Cities of Racine and Kenosha, Wisconsin, As Part of an Archives of Industrial Society Project" (Kenosha, WI, 1978). Business Survey Records, Wisconsin Historical Society, UW-Parkside Area Center, Box 1, Folder 11.
[204] "Plan Meeting on Closing of Tannery," *Racine Labor*, 11 January 1956, p1.

unskilled workers, including over 300 women.[205] The diversity of industrial sectors helped the overall unemployment levels, but those unable to adapt to new technologies and the unskilled felt the brunt of the downturn in heavy industry.

Automation and technological innovation also caused layoffs and created as much concern and planning within the labor community as corporate restructuring. As scholars have shown, workers have dealt with technological change over the years by learning ways to accommodate the changes and protect their power on the shop floor.[206] At the 1953 UAW International Convention, delegates passed a resolution for the union to institute a program of planned study on automation and its impact on workers. The resolution stressed that rapid progress in industrial efficiency concerned "every worker, every citizen in America" and "gives more urgency than ever before to the necessity for finding a solution to the problem of maintaining full employment and full production in peacetime."[207] In 1955, Machinists Lodge 437 invited Erling Johnson, an area engineer to speak at their union meeting about automation. Johnson warned the skilled workers to prepare for the shock of automation as the immediate effects included suffering of workers due to massive layoffs and lower wages. He urged, "Labor has a duty to closely scrutinize all new methods and how far they are to progress with a view to easing the changeover caused by automation."[208] Johnson agreed to study the problem and contribute a series of articles to *Racine Labor* to report his findings. In his January 1956 article he suggested the biggest problem of automation would be economic distribution because

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[205] "Local 244 Hard Hit by Layoffs," *Racine Labor*, 29 August 1956, p8; "New Pact, Layoffs Concern Local 180," *Racine Labor*, 29 August 1956, part 2, p3; "Despite Layoffs, Work Here Holding Up Well," *Racine Labor*, 3 October 1956, p1.
[206] Melvyn Dubofsky, "Technological Change and American Worker Movements, 1870-1970," in *Technology, the Economy, and Society: The American Experience*, edited by Joel Colton and Stuart Bruchey (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 162-185.
[207] "Legislative Program," *Ammunition*, Vol. 11, no. 4 (April 1953): 38-39.
[208] "Warns about Shock of Automation," *Racine Labor*, 30 March 1955, p1.

technological advances would not only displace some workers but would eliminate whole areas of employment.[209]

In his 1959 Labor Day address, President George Haberman of the Wisconsin AFL-CIO spoke directly to the labor community's concern with automation, plant closings, and corporate restructuring. While he acknowledged the benefits of increased productivity he also recognized the dangers it caused to the workforce, as young people entered the labor market and workers lived and worked longer at the same time the need for unskilled workers fell. He emphasized the AFL-CIO's efforts to plan ahead for these coming changes and highlighted work with Governor Gaylord Nelson in planning a conference to discuss these issues in 1960. He pointed at plant closings throughout Wisconsin of evidence of the need to increase vocational education, provide adequate recreation facilities and develop conservation plans, and economic expansion to benefit of working people in the state.[210] Working-class activists recognized the need to stay abreast of economic and political changes in order to maintain economic security for workers and the political power to pursue their best interests.

The increasing challenges facing the Racine labor community did not hinder worker activists' commitment to class politics and remaining an economic, social, and political force in the city. Workers in Racine continued to place their mark on the city's built environment as they had since the early local unions constructed union halls and occupied public space during rallies, strikes, and organizing campaigns. The Racine Trade and Labor Council, the association of all the Racine area AFL unions, built a two-story Union Hall building in 1912. Located downtown, Union Hall contained a bar, night club, bowling alley, and a variety of meeting

[209] "A Kenosha Engineer Looks at Automation," *Racine Labor,* 18 January 1956, p4.
[210] "Population Growth Automation Give U.S. Problem, State AFL-CIO," *Racine Labor*, 4 September 1959, p8.

rooms.[211] UAW locals and other CIO unions banded together to build the Racine Labor Center so that union locals would have permanent space to meet and collaborate. In 1956 they purchased seven acres of land and authorized a building at the cost of $300,000.00.[212] The Racine Labor Center gave workers a place to socialize, conduct union business, build solidarity, and feel at home. True to its commitment to broad-based collaboration and cooperation, the building committee, part of the District Council 8, the collection of UAW and independent unions in the city, offered space not only to member unions, but to other social justice organizations as well. Once the building was completed the NAACP moved its offices into the Labor Center. It had a bowling alley, a bar, and rooms for other social and union activities. It served as a command post for strikes throughout the second half of the twentieth century. It also demonstrated to the city that Racine's workers held a firm commitment to pursuing their class interests.

This commitment to class interests was sustained in social, community, and family events as well. The working-class community's involvement in civic and political events carried over into social events for working Racinians. The annual three-day Labor Day festivities were only one opportunity for working people to come together. The bowling, dartball, and golf leagues provided social connections outside of work places. It also brought workers from diverse plants together. Many unions reported on social activities in *Racine Labor* and advertised picnics, socials, and parties on a regular basis. In 1952 all the CIO unions got together to hold a dance for union members and their families. The next year, area UAW locals banded together to form a recreation council. Together with mass rallies to support strike activities, these sports teams

[211] "Squibs," *Racine Labor*, 22 April 1960, p1.
[212] The UAW Local 180 Collection, WPR, Box 3, Folder 10, 17 April 1956, regular membership meeting minutes.

and other leisure activities went a long way in shaping the sense of working-class group identity across employment sectors.[213]

The most widely-publicized case of worker solidarity involved the four-year strike at the Kohler Company, a producer of plumbing fixtures, in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, eighty miles north of Racine. The Kohler Company, like Case, consistently refused to give in to worker demands for a union shop and mandatory arbitration as the last step in the grievance procedure. The strike started in April 1954 when management again refused to implement what amounted to standard contract language by this point in U.S. labor relations. The nearly 3,000 workers belonged to UAW Local 833 but felt they were continuing the fight that workers had been waging with the Kohler brothers since the American Federation of Labor attempted to form a union in 1934. That earlier strike was met with tear gas and gun fire by the company's security force. Two men were killed and 47 people injured.[214] Participants in the 1954 strike were children and family members of the earlier strikers. Workers, management, and union leaders felt that the 1954 battle to keep Local 833 in Kohler Company was a crucial event in the on-going U.S. class struggle. Almost immediately, the UAW counsel filed suit with the NLRB for unfair labor violations against Kohler Company and continued to add to complaints for the next four years. Kohler's representatives readily filed countersuits. These lawsuits, finally settled four years after the strike, would play a crucial role in future labor relations at the plant.

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[213] "Big CIO Dance is Set to Go," *Racine Labor*, 21 November 1952, p3; "Webster Eletric Fields two Baseball Teams," *Racine Labor*, 14 August 1953, p2; "Recreation Council Set Up by UAW Here," *Racine Labor*, 13 November 1953, p1; "All Out for Big Rally," *Racine Labor*, 5 February 1954, p1; "A Hearty Welcome to our New Readers," *Racine Labor*, 12 February 1954, p1; As Finn Enke demonstrates in their study of the feminist movement, understanding the ways in which group identity unfolds "on the ground," through spatial analysis reveals how spatial practices help consolidate group identity, *Finding the Movement: Sexuality, Contested Space, and Feminist Activism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 8-9.

[214] UAW-CIO Local 833. All my life my Daddy's been on Strike to make my future better: The Kohler Worker's Story." ([Indianapolis, Ind.]: UAW-CIO International Union: UAW-CIO Local 833, 1955); online facsimile at http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints/search.asp?id=1525; Visited on: 9/23/2012, p 7.

As the strike wore on, it became a national issue and both sides recognized the need for a victory. The long, bitter strike, the propaganda from both sides, the coercion that workers faced to return to the plant, and the violence as strikebreakers tried to enter the plant made the strike a sensational news story. UAW Local 833 received the full support of the International. One year into the strike UAW Local 833 released a brochure titled "All My Life My Daddy's been on Strike to Make My Future Better: The Kohler Worker's Story," which started with a history of the 1934 strike and explained the violence, fear, and intimidation faced by workers who held onto their pride and determination to gain justice.[215] The company's *Kohler of Kohler News*, a monthly journal "by and for the Kohler Co," for April 1955 offered management's position that "the dignity and worth of the individual American workman is theoretically stressed by unions" and "the vicious methods of power-hungry labor leaders who seek not only to dominate their membership, but seek, within or without the law, to take this nation down the road to socialism, must be understood."[216] Battle lines were drawn and the national debate ensued. The President and Secretary-Treasurer of the UAW gave tremendous amounts of time and resources to sustain the Kohler workers. They initiated a boycott campaign, solicited extra strike fund donations from the network of UAW locals, and sought the aid of John and Robert Kennedy. At the time, John F. Kennedy was serving in the U.S. Senate and was chairman of the Labor and Public Welfare Committee. His brother, Robert Kennedy was chief counsel for the Democratic minority in the Senate. While JFK offered minimal support, once Robert Kennedy visited Sheboygan and saw that the UAW claims were true, he provided constant support for their efforts.[217]

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[215] "All My Life," 10.
[216] Kohler of Kohler News, April 1955,Kohler, Wisconsin p 1 and 37.
[217] Nelson Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit: Walter Reuther and the Fate of American Labor* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 347.

In Racine, Local 180 members voted to send the striking employees monthly $100 checks to support the strike, they actively participated in the Kohler boycott, and sent members to many rallies in support of the Kohler workers over the years.[218] Workers from the Kohler Company came and spoke at several membership meetings and updates were given as part of the regular meeting minutes. This is most impressive because Local 180 and other Case locals in Rockford and Burlington, Illinois had negotiations break down and several strike votes during the same period. During three years of negotiations and working without a contract, Local 180 President Tony Valeo trained stewards, pushed back against company efforts to divide the bargaining unit and take all shop-floor authority away from workers, and led multiple close, contentious strike vote meetings. When a two-year agreement was finally signed in February 1956, it had been 39 months since Case workers had a signed labor agreement and the new plan offered a few economic advancements but met none of the standards of agreements within the agricultural implements industry.[219] Instead of focusing solely on their own internal problems, workers at Case linked their struggle with those of the Kohler workers. Meetings often consisted of a comparison of the struggles at Kohler and with dealing with the disparate Case plants.[220] By December 1955 Wisconsin workers had donated $5000.00 to the Kohler strikers. Workers in Racine convinced the YMCA and other organizations to participate in the Kohler boycott and

[218] Local 180 Collection, WPR, eboard and regular membership meeting minutes 1954 – 1955.
[219] "Sexton Praises Local 180," *Racine Labor*, 28 March 1952, p1; "Case Company Helps Fight Jobless Compensation," *Racine Labor*, 18 April 1952, p1; "Proposal is Rejected by Case Local," *Racine Labor*, 30 January 1953, p3; "Case Local Rejects Company Offer," *Racine Labor*, 15 May 1953, p1; "UAW Now Represents all Case Co. Workers," *Racine Labor*, 7 August 1953, p1; "Strike Authorization Voted by Case Local," *Racine Labor*, 23 October 1953, p1; "Case Stewards Go to School," *Racine Labor*, 18 December 1953, p2; "Case Local 180 Membership Backs Bargaining Committee," *Racine Labor*, 8 January 1954, p1, 6; "Officers Meet to Help Local 180," *Racine Labor*, 15 January 1954, p1; "Mass Meeting Called by CIO to Back Case Local," Racine Labor, 55 January 1954, p1; "Case Local to Hold Strike Vote May 8," *Racine Labor*, 23 April 1954, p1; "Case Strike," *Racine Labor*, 7 May 1954, p1, 8; "Case Local Rejects Proposal," *Racine Labor*, 21 May 1954, p3; "Case Local Strike Vote Fails to Win 2-3rd Majority," *Racine Labor*, 15 December 1954, p3; "Case Local Rejects New Company Offer," *Racine Labor*, 31 August 1955, p5; "Case Local Defers Action on Strike Vote," *Racine Labor*, 11 January 1956, p3; "New Pact, Layoffs Concern Local 180," *Racine Labor*, 29 August 1956, Part 2, p3.
[220] Local 180, WPR, Box 3, Folder 8.

even threatened to picket and discontinue all union meetings at Eagle Hall, where many unions met, because Kohler products were installed in a recent renovation. Controversy was only averted when it was proven that the architect did not receive the boycott notice until after the fixtures were installed.[221]

Herbert V. Kohler, president of the company, sought out his allies in the conservative National Association of Manufactures (NAM) and company spokesmen went on a nationwide speaking tour to various business organizations and conservative political groups.[222] While workers around the country rallied behind the Kohler strikers, Herbert Kohler became a champion among conservative leaders and a rallying point for "right-to-work" proponents. Effective lobbying and rallying by conservative forces led to the McClellan Committee hearings looking into corruption in the Teamsters and other unions in the late-1950s in the U.S. Senate. Barry Goldwater, Republican Senator from Arizona, pressured the McClellan Committee into investigating Walter Reuther despite the lack of evidence of financial or other misconduct. Some scholars point to the McClellan Committee hearings as a significant turning point for conservative opponents of the New Deal order. Phillips-Fein and Shermer mark this as a major event in Barry Goldwater's political career, as he solidified his position in the Republican Party while also facilitating an eventual take-over by the far right members.[223] As scholars have noted, Goldwater used his first term in the Senate to position himself as anti-union as he asserted the

[221] UAW Local 180, WPR, Box 6, Folder 12, May1956.
[222] Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man*, 347; Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands*; and Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, 138-139.
[223] Phillips-Fein, 127-128; Elizabeth Tandy Shermer, "Origins of the Conservative Ascendancy: Barry Goldwater's Early Senate Career and the De-legitimization of Organized Labor," *JAH* Vol. 95 (Dec 2008): 678-709.

ideals of anti-collectivism of the Republican Party's right-wing.[224] Reuther testified for three days in March 1958 for the McClellan Committee.[225]

Yet, on the local level in Sheboygan, Racine, and other parts of Wisconsin, the Kohler strike and its political outcomes galvanized local class struggles, both in the workplace and in city and state politics. Workers in Racine especially saw the significance of the Kohler strike and the relationship between management intransigence seen at Case and other manufacturers refusing to accept what they saw as the basic rights of the liberal postwar era. The Kohler strike ended when the NLRB ruled in late-August 1960 in favor of most of UAW Local 833's claims of unfair labor practices against the company. Pickets ended in early September and, although there was no signed agreement between the company and union, most workers returned to their jobs on 14 September. The legal battle continued until 1962 when the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the NLRB decision and forced the company back to the bargaining table. Finally, a new contract was ratified on 7 October 1962. The new contract provided for dues check-off, no wage increases, but increases in fringe benefits, arbitration, and better seniority.[226] The long, hard-fought battle proved significant not only for Kohler employees but as a victory tale in Wisconsin's record of labor history. The narrative labor activists shaped of the strike remained a powerful incentive to militant action in support of working-class issues in Wisconsin's industrial centers.

While the Kohler strike and worker activism that developed around it served as a galvanizing event in the areas' labor communities, tensions continued to exist. AFL unions had offered unyielding support during the Kohler strike and Racine's AFL and CIO unions often

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[224] Elizabeth Tandy Shermer, "Origins of the Conservative Ascendancy: Barry Goldwater's Early Senate Career and the De-legitimization of Organized Labor," in *JAH* Vol. 95 (Dec 2008): 678-709.
[225] Phillips-Fein, 125-126; Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man*, 347-350.
[226] Walter Uphoff, *Kohler on Strike: Thirty Years of Conflict* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), 300-314.

flaunted their ability to successfully work together despite tensions at the national level. So, what should have been an amicable merger between state- and local-AFL and CIO affiliated councils turned into a multi-year contest within the Wisconsin labor movement. At the state level and in Racine County issues surrounding representation and voting rights, per capita tax payments from affiliated organizations, division of officer slots, and finances and property held up the merger and led to heated disputes within the communities. In January 1956, just a few months after the national merger was complete, Charles Schultz, Wisconsin State CIO President, told the committee selected to work on a merger at the Racine County level that they should proceed as quickly as possible because he expected no delay at the state level. Charles Heymanns, already chosen to be the merged AFL-CIO Regional Director, told the local AFL delegates something similar and adding that the two-year window was too long for Racine, with its "progressive history and…pattern of cooperation."[227]

By October 1957 it was plain that serious issues would prolong the merger process. In Racine, AFL locals felt that the CIO unions would have an undue advantage due to their much larger numbers. The AFL locals were in better financial situations than the CIO locals and wanted much lower per capita tax rates and a more equitable distribution of delegate votes to counteract the membership imbalance. At the state level, the battle turned bitter over issues of what the AFL building trades called CIO invasion of their jurisdictional territory and attempts to dominate the merged council. At an AFL building trades conference in Wausau, Wisconsin a delegate warned that CIO building trades workers should not be doing new construction or major repairs in industrial plants and another argued that CIO delegates to the merger convention wanted AFL money to pay for failing labor newspapers without voting to support an AFL

[227] "CIO Locals to Discuss Unity," *Racine Labor*, 4 January 1956, p3; "Start Merger Talks Now, Urges Heymanns," *Racine Labor*, 18 January 1956, p1; ""View on Local Merger: The Sooner the Better," *Racine Labor*, 22 February 1956, p1.

newspaper that was solvent. State CIO merger delegates sent a public letter to AFL-CIO president George Meany demanding that he force a merger at the Wisconsin state level. When AFL-CIO national representatives made plans for a merger convention in February 1958, AFL delegates vowed not to attend. Finally, after several months of negotiations both groups agreed to a compromise on representation and per capita tax issues and sent the final issue of a representative newspaper to President Meany to decide. The first merged state AFL-CIO convention was held in Milwaukee in July 1958. The merged group did leave the convention with successful resolutions endorsing Democrats in the upcoming election, including William Proxmire for his Senate reelection campaign and Gaylord Nelson for governor. In Racine, the battle over representation and per capita tax lasted until late in 1959, when at a meeting arranged by Heymann's both sides agreed to send the cases to President Meany for arbitration. By early-December, the only items left open were officer elections. However, the Racine Labor Council would not receive its charter until 1960.[228] While the merger delays point to continuing tensions between the historic AFL and newer industrial unions, ultimately the Racine labor community managed to move toward greater unity.

The struggles at Modine, Kohler, and Case in the 1950s created a strong sense of working-class solidarity throughout the Racine working-class community. Workers often referenced the early strikes of the 1930s and the violence and deaths involved in those struggles for greater working-class citizenship rights in Wisconsin. These memories and the history of militancy in the community created a continual atmosphere of militant resistance to intransigent

[228] "Merger Constitution Refereed Back by AFL," *Racine Labor*, 18 October 1957, p1; "Will Continue Working for Unity in 58 Haberrman Says," *Racine Labor*, 27 December 1957, p10; "More Delay Seen in State Labor Merger," *Racine Labor*, 7 February 1958, p1, 5; "No April 16 Meeting of AFL Council," *Racine Labor*, 11 April 1958, p1; "Proxmire, Nelson Endorsed by Labor, " *Racine Labor*, 01 August 1958, p1, 3; "Merger Meeting Wednesday," *Racine Labor*, 24 October 1958, p1; "Merger of Racine Labor Councils Near at Hand," *Racine Labor*, 9 October 1959, p1; "Merger of Two Councils Here Moves Slowly Ahead," *Racine Labor*, 24 December 1959, p1, 9.

corporate power in the decades after World War II. Workers remained determined to act in their best economic and political interests, pushing back against corporate restructuring and searching for effective solutions to the adverse effects of automation and plant closings. Political, civic, and social activities also helped shape a sense of working-class group identity. While black and women workers made considerable gains, the road to a most-inclusive working-class group identity was not always smooth. However, the language of inclusion and direct action in support of racial equality and gender equality led working-class Racinians towards that path. The continual labor militancy and collaboration building by worker activist members of the Racine working-class led to a sense of strong solidarity across industries, private and public workers, and racial and religious boundaries. By the 1960s, Racine's organized workers kept open lines of communication across employment sectors, supported others' bargaining and strike efforts, and worked to create a more equitable distribution of Racine's resources, as we will see in chapter two.

Chapter 2: Sustaining a Labor Movement in Racine during the Turbulent 1960s

The 1960s began with a high-stakes strike between UAW Local 180 and Case, which built on the issues of workers' legal right to bargain collectively and the balance of power between workers, management and the state of the Kohler strike. Instead of abandoning the class politics of the postwar period, Racine activists demonstrated an evolving class consciousness that responded to and incorporated the efforts of black workers and women to gain greater access to middle-class standards of living and continued to look for means to more effectively use the power they had to affect change in workplaces and the larger community. Labor activists also responded to minority-worker demands by demanding more equitable hiring practices in the city and incorporating the language and actions of the civil rights movement into the local labor movement. The growing number of Mexican American migrants to the city intensified demands for equal employment opportunities, neighborhood resources, and equal access to housing. Job loss through technological advancements in manufacturing and plant closing led activists to maintain an on-going conversation about economic and technological shifts that impacted workers and actively search for ways to successfully protect the economic security most had come to expect in the postwar economy. The labor community remained active in local, state, and national political debates and successfully elected liberal Democrats to key political offices. Union members stayed involved in their civic endeavors through financial contributions, volunteering, running for office, and advancing class politics.

This chapter details how Racine activists crafted a narrative of the valuable role of the labor community in leading the struggle for economic and social justice in the city, state, and nation. Leaders used the strikes and labor actions for political and economic education for rank-

and-file members and the larger public. The goodwill established in the postwar period and activists continued involvement in public debate earned widespread support in the city and forced management to come to the bargaining table on multiple occasions. While efforts to improve economic opportunities for non-white workers and to resolve racial discrimination in real estate and school funding won only token improvements, labor activists proved their commitment to broad-based social and economic citizenship rights. Despite internal social tensions, the Racine labor community built on the foundation established in the postwar period, shaped a public narrative that legitimated working-class politics and garnered widespread public support for labor issues, and successfully adapted to the influx of new workers into the community.

Postwar gains propelled black people, women, and others to push harder for the benefits of economic growth and activists gained the momentum needed to break new ground in Racine and around the United States. The struggle for racial equality coalesced into a widespread social movement during the 1960s. Women, homosexuals, and other disadvantaged groups also organized social and political movements to be accepted into mainstream U.S. society. Better jobs and union benefits as well as the language of individual rights in the civil rights and labor movements helped galvanize labor feminists and other women to assert themselves even more radically. Women's efforts fuelled changes in the labor movement as the UAW and AFL-CIO leadership started to deal more fully with issues related to working women. The efforts of civil rights activists and women helped broaden the labor movement and expanded its demands for social and economic freedoms throughout the decade.[229]

[229] Nancy MacLean, *Freedom is Not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 124-154; Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 145-155.

Racine is just one example of a local labor community whose members took advantage of the activism of the period by expanding their struggles for economic and social justice. Walter Reuther, president of the UAW, one of several progressive international unions, sought to join civil rights coalitions during the early-1960s and worked closely with the Johnson administration to expand and strengthen Great Society programs. Reuther sought to link civil rights with economic justice from his leadership position in the labor movement.[230] Black trade union activists working through the Negro American Labor Council expanded their efforts beyond economic reforms to include anti-discrimination and voting rights as they organized workers and community groups to participate in the 1963 March on Washington. These black activists maintained their commitment to equal access to stable employment for black workers as they gathered support from local unions and civil rights groups. They helped people like Reuther and liberal civil rights leaders to recognize the need for broad-based demands for economic security. While the national coalition formed around the March on Washington did not last beyond the mid-1960s, at the local level many powerful coalitions brought significant change. New York, Chicago, Detroit, and St. Louis all saw powerful coalitions built between labor activists and civil rights organizations.[231] Union activists also helped facilitate a sea change in black female employment in the postwar period. For example, the United Packing Workers union, known for its progressive agenda, formed coalitions with community-based groups to fight racial discrimination and provide minority workers access to jobs in Chicago and other locations.[232] Working-class activism in labor and civil rights movements during the 1960s expanded the

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[230] Kevin Boyle, *The UAW and the Heyday of American Liberalism 1945-1968* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 161-205.
[231] William P. Jones, "The Unknown Origins of the March on Washington: Civil Rights Politics and the Black Working Class," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*, Vol. 7, #3, 2010: 33-52.
[232] Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 78-82.

boundaries of working-class identity, focused on social and economic justice for all, and created a sense of sustained activity that lasted throughout the decade and beyond.

Events in Racine complicate two complementary theories within the historiography of U.S. postwar liberalism: the idea that the expansion of the civil rights movement limited the effectiveness of class identity and that the postwar liberal agenda facilitated changes in union bureaucracy that dampened worker activism within the labor movement. While scholars have documented similar cases of labor and civil rights coalitions in Detroit, Chicago, and other cities, this type of analysis has not been extended to the national level. Nelson Lichtenstein suggests that the changes wrought by the social movements of the 1960s caused a decline in the effectiveness of the language of working-class solidarity and an increase in the language of individual rights based on other aspects of identity such as race and gender so that "the rights of workers, as workers, and especially as workers acting in an autonomous, collective fashion…well into the shadows."[233] Lichtenstein also argues that the successes and rhetoric of the New Deal period, with the entrenchment of collective bargaining and the notion of industrial pluralism, led in part to the self-destruction from within and critiques from without. In reaction to management hostility and the relative weakness of the labor movement, unions began to rely on full-time staff and authoritarian leadership to push for greater power, alleviate the burdens of the new servicing functions of the union local apparatus, and ensure internal discipline. This led to a decrease in organizing and internal education efforts, faithful commitment to Democratic politicians in lieu of independent political agendas, corruption, and low-turnover in union leadership resulting in loss of relevance to new generations of workers. These changes opened the labor movement to critique from both within and without, silencing many radical voices

[233] Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor Law* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 3.

within local unions and from both liberal and conservative intellectuals who begin to embrace an emerging discourse of individual rights.[234] The Racine case complicates this narrative.

Events in Racine during the 1960s highlight the value of examining local events within a national context to uncover the greater detail in which the complex relationship among class, race, and gender unfolded in the postwar period. Racine's labor community actively participated in the civil rights and women's movements of the decade. Struggles for race and gender equality expanded the labor community's demographics as labor activists responded to and participated in these same struggles. Throughout the decade, organizations connected to social movements—the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Urban League, and the League of Women Voters—maintained close relationships with Racine's labor community. At the same time, worker-activists organized new workplaces, including government offices and the healthcare industry, following legal changes in the state and nation. Instead of retreating into collective bargaining for bread-and-butter issues in individual workplaces, labor activists in Racine continued to advocate for economic, social, and political reform in the city, state, and across the nation, building on and embracing changes wrought by the civil rights movement.

The presence of experienced and committed local activists allowed unions to fill International staff positions with people who had deep connections in the labor community as union bureaucracies expanded to meet the servicing needs of their members. Harvey Kitzman, Sam Rizzo, and Tony Valeo are only three of the many Racine labor activists who moved into full-time staff positions, either in the UAW or the Democratic Party, from their local union leadership positions. Despite their failure to gain leadership positions in international union

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[234] Lichtenstein, 141-177. See also Heather Ann Thompson, *Whose Detroit?: Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 6; and Lowell Turner and Richard W. Hurd, "Building Social Movement Unionism: The Transformation of the American Labor Movement," in *Rekindling the Movement: Labor's Quest for Relevance in the 21st Century*, eds Lowell Turner, et al. (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2001), 11.

hierarchy, black male and white female union activists did move through the local ranks of union leadership in the city. For example, William Jenkins felt that although he repeatedly ran for leadership positions in the UAW infrastructure he was never selected because of his outspoken critique of the UAW's International leadership. However in the local community his fellow union activists voted him president of the AFL-CIO council and he sat on various other labor and community boards. Jenkins also remained active in the county Democratic Party infrastructure.[235] Loretta Christensen also never moved up the ranks of the bookbinders union but did serve for many years on the Racine Trades and Labor Council and was the only female on the board of *Racine Labor* for many years. Racine's labor community built on their momentum from the postwar period and broadened their demographics and social consciousness throughout the decade without losing sight of the value of a collective class politics.

The Racine labor community's commitment to a broad working-class solidarity that incorporated issues of race and gender reflects a broader trend in scholarship that links the civil rights movement with expanding those who could actively participate in the U.S. political economy. While Nelson Lichtenstein highlights the ways in which the civil rights movements pushed the idea of the working class from the center of public debate, Van Gosse points to the ways that the changes led to a new democratic order, expanding those who could claim political rights. Suddenly, black people, women, and other minorities, could claim a voice in society as individuals with full-citizenship rights based on demands for equal access for all identity groups. Gosse points to the ways in which this new "democratic politics" became so strong that even the backlash of the Reagan period, when many working-class gains were lost, could not reverse the changes wrought by this new discourse. This new political landscape could be a powerful tool of

[235] Jenkins interview.

the labor movement.[236] Judith Stein details the role of the United Steel Workers Association (USWA) in facilitating race relations in steel mills in Birmingham and providing a route for black workers to seek advancement through seniority rights and other means. Local USWA leaders worked to provide ways to implement the provisions of Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act within Birmingham's mills and provide more economic opportunities for black workers. Leaders also kept communication channels open with civil rights organizations.[237] And, as historian Nancy MacLean argues, the opening of the workforce through black workers' fight for economic freedom set the stage for broader challenges to inequality.[238] These studies reveal various ways that labor activists worked to improve citizenship rights in the workplace and across American society in response to and in support of demands made by the civil rights and feminist activists who often stood at the forefront of these demands. As we will see, the Racine labor community continued to focus on a class politics that was informed by both gender and race as a means to organize workers, maintain economic stability, and implement social reforms in the city throughout the 1960s.

While the Racine case illustrates the continued relevance of class politics as the best way to collectively respond to and challenge economic, political, and social changes in the decade, internal tensions existed. Racial conservatism among white workers in the community limited labor's response to minority housing problems, a more proactive approach to minority hiring in the city's industries, and especially in opening apprenticeships within the building trades. The traditional American Federation of Labor (AFL) locals, with their long history of narrow

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[236] Lichtenstein, 141-177; Van Gosse, "Postmodern America: A New Democratic Order in the Second Gilded Age," in *The World the Sixties Made: Politics and Culture in Recent America*, ed. Van Gosse and Richard Moser (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 7-14.
[237] Judith Stein, *Running Steel Running America: Race, Economic Policy, and the Decline of Liberalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 38-94.
[238] Nancy MacLean, *Freedom is Not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006).

organizing goals and conservative approach to political and social issues that would further democratize society also caused tensions within the labor community during the decade. In Racine's black community, intra-class conflict flared in the decade as well. Black workers' commitment to class politics conflicted with the more middle-class approach of new leaders within the NAACP to community problems. Non-white men and white women workers faced the brunt of job loss due to plant closings and often found it harder than their white male counterparts to find new employment. Most black women in Racine were relegated to domestic or low-wage service work. The Racine labor community responded to these tensions and evolved and adapted their sense of class consciousness as they met these challenges head on during decade.

A fierce battle between Case and UAW Local 180 during most of 1960 reinforced the ongoing political and legal debate over the relationship among unions, capitalists, and government generated by the Kohler strike. Questions over collective bargaining, management paternalism and prerogative, and union leadership raised in the 1930s, revisited during the 1946 strike and throughout the struggles at Kohler and Case in the 1950s had yet to be resolved. The six-month strike kept the ideals established in the postwar period concerning workers' rights to organize, collectively bargain, and choose their bargaining agent without duress at the forefront of the Racine labor community's outlook. As we have seen, Case workers tried to improve their contract with Case since right after World War II. While activists pointed to Local 180 members' nearly thirty-year history of organizing and battles for better wages and working conditions, the contract with Case was one of the worst in the agricultural implements industry. As the largest union in Racine whose nearly 3,000 members played a very active role in

organizing other workers, civic engagement, and political action, Local 180 activists felt that 1960 marked a crucial moment in their relationship with Case.

From the start the Local 180 executive board, led by President Tony Valeo, framed the union demands as necessary advancements for the Case plants and the agricultural implements industry in Racine. In correspondence with membership and the public, Local 180 leaders stressed the old-fashioned nature of the paternalism and tactics of Case's management team. The executive board explained, "we feel compelled to insist that the Company also make a genuine attempt to modernize our labor agreement to bring it in line with contracts currently existing between the UAW and their Competitors in the Agricultural Implement Industry" in a letter to members announcing the beginning of contract negotiations in January.[239] The bargaining committee presented an 18-point list of contract changes including a union shop clause, dues check-off, supplemental unemployment insurance, arbitration procedures, and new seniority rules—all generally standard items in negotiated agreements throughout industry. After a month of failed negotiations, workers voted to go on strike to force Case to bargain.[240] Members voted overwhelming for the strike at the 20 February 1960 meeting because they felt justified in their demands. As Morris Fields, UAW Farm Implement Department Assistant Director explained, "We are not asking Case to break new ground, merely to come up near the other contracts in the industry."[241] The union's public messages highlighted the company's refusal to stay up-to-date with what by then were standard collective bargaining procedures.

As with the Kohler strike, which had entered its sixth year, both labor and management saw the Case strike as one of major importance for labor relations not only locally but across the

[239] The Local 180 collection, WPR, Box 6, Folder 15, letter 14 Jan 60.
[240] "Set Strike Vote at Case: Local 180 To Ballot Saturday," *Racine Labor*, 19 Feb 1960, p1, 2; "Strike By Local 180 Approved," *Racine Labor*, 26 Feb 1960, p1.
[241] "Set Strike Vote at Case: Local 180 To Ballot Saturday," *Racine Labor*, 19 Feb 1960, p1, 2.

nation. The Case management team maintained their attitude that the labor union was encroaching on management's prerogative and that the whole notion of collective bargaining was un-American. They refused to participate in any forms of arbitration and sought to limit outside influence in management decisions. The company also continued a long history of sending letters directly to all employees and using local media in an attempt to influence public opinion while refusing to sit down at the bargaining table with union representatives. The correspondence attacked UAW representatives as seeking their own interests at the expense of workers. Management went so far as to label Harvey Kitzman an "outsider" even though he was a former employee, helped start the union at Case, and still lived in the city. Case President William Grede also went on television and threatened to move the plants out of Racine, which would have had a major impact on the local economy. One letter argued that union members should attend the next Local 180 meeting and "protect your human rights" because Detroit outsiders were attempting to gain undue power.[242] The reference to human rights illustrates how the idea of a postwar accord between labor and management did not exist in Racine; management tried to co-opt the language of the liberal coalition and twist it against the labor movement.

Despite these tensions, the Local 180 executive board effectively pushed back against the company's back-to-work campaign in June. Valeo answered the company's boast that workers had lost their insurance coverage because of the ongoing strike by reminding workers that premium payments were part of the strike benefits they were already receiving and were being made by the International Union.[243] Union leaders gave reports on radio station WRJN. In one

[242]UAW Local 180, WHS, 3 Mar 60, letter from Case to workers; The Local 180 Collection, WPR, Box 6, Folder 15, letters 23 March 1960, 6 April 1960; UAW Local 180, Box 1, Folder 1; "'180' Sets Strike Meeting Saturday," *Racine Labor*, 15 July 1960, p1.
[243] Local 180, WHS, Box 1, Folder 1, letter 15 Mar 1960.

such report toward the end of the strike in August, Sam Rizzo, a Racine native and international representative for UAW, spoke to "Mr. & Mrs. Racine Businessman…Mr. & Mrs. Racine Citizen more so than to the members of Local 180" and asked them to encourage Case management, their social and business associates, "to engage in good faith collective bargaining. Insist that this strike be settled."[244] Racine's labor roundtable group decided to hold a mass meeting to detail the history of the strike and Case's unwillingness to bargain fairly when the company refused to sit down with the bargaining team in August. Valeo detailed the union's original list of demands and explained how they were whittled down in an effort to get Case to negotiate. Leaders from the community spoke in favor of continuing the strike, promised the full support of the UAW international offices, told of Governor Nelson's fact-finding team, and asked for more donations to the Local 180 strike fund.[245] Labor activists worked hard to keep public opinion on the side of the Case workers out on strike. These actions by Valeo and other union leaders during the strike illustrate the ways in which many union activists made an effort to keep the whole community involved in labor disputes and offered opportunities for more democratic decision-making and rank-and-file involvement in the strategies and directions union took during major disputes. This rally and others like it went a long way in solidifying the Racine labor community and showing the strength of the community as a whole, beyond a simple struggle between one employer and one union local.

While local leaders worked hard to counter negative messaging from Case their efforts highlighted the gender tensions related to women's work in the local foundries within the evolving labor community. Early in the strike, the executive board sent a letter to "the wives of striking members" inviting them to attend a meeting at the Racine Labor Center so they could

[244] UAW Local 180, WPR, box 7, folder 1.
[245] "Mass Meeting Planned," *Racine Labor*, 5 August 1960, p1; "Full Facts to be Told on Case Strike at Big Rally," *Racine Labor*, 12 August 1960, p1, 5; "Case Mass Meeting," *Racine Labor*, 26 August 1960, p1, 3.

"hear the facts and ask questions on our current labor dispute." Wives were invited to "ask husbands to babysit" so that women would be free to attend.[246] No suggestions were offered for husbands of Case's working women. The willingness to engage with workers' families demonstrated union leaders' commitment to maintaining the momentum of the strike and eliminating family pressure for individual workers to return to work. However, the focus on workers' wives belied the fact that women were also out on strike and perpetuated a notion of the male as breadwinner and woman as homemaker. In fact, Local 180 had resisted the company's efforts to hire women in part because they felt that it would give management justification for keeping the wages low at Case.[247] The language and ideas it reproduced about gender roles in the family and workplace illustrated that some labor leaders had not fully adapted to changes in the workforce and the demands of labor feminists.

Union leaders also worked to sustain strikers' commitment to staying on the picket line despite the economic hardship and some members' defections. For the first time in over ten years, some workers crossed the picket lines.[248] To counter claims that leaders were benefiting from the strike to the determinant of rank-and-file members, representatives reminded workers that "it is all of us in Local 180 rank-and-file members, stewards, committeemen, and Executive Board members who have to work in the shop under a contract that doesn't come close to any other contract in the agricultural implement industry."[249] Workers were invited to come to the strike headquarters at the Racine Labor Center at any time to speak with union leaders or UAW International representatives. The Labor Center also served as the pickup point for strike benefits payments. Closer to the Case plants the Polish Center, a familiar location where union

[246] UAW Local 180, WPR, 25 Mar 60, box 6, folder 15.
[247] UAW Local 180, WPR, 5 Apr 40, box 1, folder 30; Box 1, folder 3 negotiation minutes 11 May 1937; Box 5, folder 5 letter from Wisconsin Industrial Commission, 20 Nov 44.
[248] Kitzman interview.
[249] Local 180, WHS, 10 June 60 letter to strikers from union.

meetings had been held before the Labor Center was built, served as picketing headquarters. Informational meetings for workers were held by department and across several days so all could find time to attend. The value of establishing headquarters and holding meetings in different parts of the city went beyond strategic convenience for Case strikers. It also kept the workers interacting with the larger working-class community and maintaining networks of solidarity.

Racine's labor community, and labor communities across the nation, rallied to the aid of the Case strikers. UAW locals from Milwaukee, Madison, and Detroit made contributions to the Case strikers' fund. Brewery, steel, and meatpacking workers from the Milwaukee area also made contributions.[250] By early June other workers had donated $13,705.18 to aid Local 180's strike effort.[251] Workers in Racine, Kenosha, and at Allis-Chalmers near Milwaukee held food drives to help support the Case strike.[252] *Racine Labor* ran informational stories and editorials throughout the six-month strike. In one issue, the labor paper listed the contract provisions the workers wanted and compared them to similar contracts at other agricultural implement plants including Allis-Chalmers, Caterpillar, International Harvester, and John Deere. In each instance, Case management refused to budge on issues already agreed on at other plants including union security, dues check-off, and supplemental unemployment benefit plans.[253] Various rank-and-file and union leaders from Local 180 were featured in the "Who's Who in Labor" weekly column in the newspaper as well. For example, the 3 June column featured Moises Diaz, originally from San Antonio, Texas, who had joined Local 180 in 1958. The article pointed out

[250] "More Locals Help Local 180 Strikers," *Racine Labor*, 20 May 1960, p3; "Keep Pushing Strike Aid to UAW Local 180," *Racine Labor*, 24 June 1960, p5.
[251] "Local 180 Aid To Strikers Is Increased," *Racine Labor*, 10 June 1960, p3.
[252] UAW, WPR, Box 7, Folder 1; "Clerks Boost Food Plan to Aid Strikers," *Racine Labor*, 27 May 1960, p1.
[253] UAW Local 180, WHS, newsletter; "Comparison of Insurance Programs in Racine, *Racine Labor*, 4 Mar 1960, p4.

that Diaz had served as a steward and as a member of the Fair Practices Committee and rose to prominence in the union due to his tireless efforts working as a picket captain.[254]

The Mexican American population had just started to grow in Racine and would only reach the 5,000 mark in the 1970s. Yet, Mexican American workers like Diaz found jobs in industrial settings, mostly working in Racine's foundries at Case and Belle City Malleable. Like black workers, Mexican Americans worked within Racine's unions to improve their economic positions and served as active members, despite their limited advancement within the international union hierarchy and upward job mobility in the plants.[255] By featuring Diaz in the *Racine Labor* weekly "Who's Who" column, the editors showed their willingness to highlight the diversity of Local 180's members to the labor community.

The paper also participated in public shaming by publishing "The Dishonor Roll: Scabs of the Week" report on the first page of each weekly paper.[256] It listed the names and addresses of workers who crossed the picket line. Again, it was an opportunity for the paper's editor to display the nature of the Racine labor community. This time by showing those who had stepped out of bounds of the community. The use of the term "scab" to describe strikebreakers and the frequent listing of actual individuals who decided to cross the picket lines reinforced the community boundaries. Those who did not support the union cause would not get the community support.

As can be expected in a strike like this, with twenty-four hour picket lines, some union members crossing as strikebreakers, and the company's refusal to bargain, tensions on the picket

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[254] "Strike Brings Out Talent In Two Younger Local 180 Members," *Racine Labor*, 3 June 1960, p2.
[255] Lyle W. Shannon and Judith L. McKim, "Attitudes Toward Education and the Absorption of Inmigrant Mexican-Americans and Negroes in Racine," *Education and Urban Society*, Vol. 6 #3 (May 1974):333-354; Dionicio Nodin Valdes, *Barrios Nortenos: St. Paul and Midwestern Mexican Communities in the Twentieth Century* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 28, 137, 147; see chapter three for a more detailed discussion of the Mexican American population.
[256] See for example, *Racine Labor*, 17 June 1960, p1; 1 July 1960, p1.

line remained high. There were several instances of violence as pickets tried to prevent strikebreakers from crossing the line. On 23 March, just a few weeks into the strike, a worker crossing the picket line hit Tony DeLaat, one of the union's picket captains, with his vehicle.[257] DeLaat suffered a fractured knee cap and other injuries. He was placed in a cast and could not walk for at least two months. However, he said as soon as he was given permission to move around he hoped "the boys can fix me up with a wheel chair at strike headquarters so I can at least be around."[258] In June, four picketers were hit by strikebreakers. One driver had his window broken by one of his victims. Case used this incident to leave the bargaining table. The Local 180 executive board sent a letter to members detailing the events that led up to the attack and condemning both the strikebreakers and managements' actions.[259] While *Racine Labor* had run a few small articles about worker solidarity and the value of supporting strikes, in July the paper ran a two-page article, "Strikebreaking Really Doesn't Pay Very Well," which detailed all the reasons for not crossing picket lines. Included in this column was the contrast between short-term paychecks compared to long-term better wages and working conditions. The column also discussed typical company tactics during a strike and how they were designed to cripple unions and local economies.[260] When workers started 24-hour picketing and non-Case workers joined the lines, management filed charges of mass picketing against the union with the NLRB.

Local union leaders took a public stand in support of UAW Local 180 and its strike efforts, recognizing the serious impact a lost strike would have on the Racine community. Indeed, as the largest union in the city, Local 180 served as a model for other union locals, provided key civic services in the community, and helped organize workers throughout the

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[257] "Case Out For Trouble," *Racine Labor*, 25 March 1960, p4.
[258] "Tony DeLaat to be Laid Up for Months," *Racine Labor*, 01 April 1960, p2.
[259] "Pickets Hit by Scab Cars," *Racine Labor*, 17 June 1960, p1; The Local 180 UAW Collection, WPR, Box 7, Folder 1, letter to members dated 16 June 1960.
[260] "Strikebreaking Really Doesn't Pay Very Well," *Racine Labor*, 08 July 1960, p1, 4.

agricultural implement industry and in other employment sectors alike. The fact that Case workers had one of the least progressive employment contracts in the city spurned continued action on the part of labor activists. The Racine County Industrial Union Council met and pledged to offer "financial, moral, and whatever other support needed."[261] Union presidents from the area held regular meetings and formed a committee to aid in the strike and stay abreast of events. This committee reported to area unions providing updates and collecting strike assistance funds, spoke at rallies for the workers, and organized food drives.[262] In July, as the strike seemed no closer to resolution, UAW Local 553 members, at the Belle City Malleable Foundry, voted to increase their monthly union dues by one dollar in order to increase their donations to the Case workers' strike fund. When asked about his union's contribution efforts, local secretary Jim Rizzo replied, "We hear a lot of talk about cooperating to make Racine a better town and how management and labor should work together but if Grede and [company] have their way in crushing the union, which seems to be their goal, Racine might as well forget about any future progress."[263] While not taking a public stand to support UAW Local 180, Governor Gaylord Nelson denied Grede's request that he restore "law and order" in Racine and admonished Case to sit down at the bargaining table with the union and sign a "mutually agreed upon contract."[264]

Best known for his environmental and consumer protection politics, as we saw in chapter one as governor and senator, Nelson relied on the support of labor activists and was known for his commitment to labor-friendly policies and legislation. Scholars have pointed to Democrats

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[261] "Labor Rallies To Support Embattled Case Strikers: Pledges Aid to Local 180," *Racine Labor*, 11 Mar 1960, p1; Because the county and state CIO and AFL council had not merged, the Racine County Industrial Union Council still represented the UAW locals in Racine. For more see chapter one.
[262] "Case Strikers Carry On; Racine Locals Back Them: Steering Committee is Set Up," *Racine Labor*, 18 Mar 1960, p1; "Map Plans to Aid Strikers," *Racine Labor*, 8 April 1960, p1.
[263] "Local 553 Boosts Aid to Strikers," *Racine Labor*, 29 July 1960 p 1.
[264] "Nelson Solution: Why Not Bargain?," *Racine Labor*, 29 July 1960, p1.

like Nelson, William Proxmire, and Eugene McCarthy as a new breed of liberals, influenced by postwar liberalism but with fewer ties to strict party politics, and "imbued with a sense of activism," ready to step outside of tradition and use pragmatic solutions to social and economic problems of the 1960s.[265] Nelson had been elected as the first Democratic governor in over twenty years during the 1958 election by upsetting the incumbent Republican, Vernon Thomson. Leading up to the election Nelson delivered over 200 speeches, many in local union halls. He would show up at plant gates to talk with workers as they came and left work. As a young party organization, newly reorganized in the postwar period, the Wisconsin Democrats needed strong grass-roots support. Through clear discussion of issues important to workers in the state Nelson, along with other Democrats, were able to get the urban and labor votes that had been going to the Progressive Party during the New Deal period.[266] In the Senate, Nelson was a member of the Labor and Public Welfare Committee and often supported policies related to workers' rights and anti-poverty initiatives. Bill Cherkasky, who worked closely with the Wisconsin Democratic Party throughout the 1950s and 1960s served as Nelson's Chief of Staff in the Senate starting in 1968, recalled that Nelson "was a hundred percent down the line on labor." He remembered that Nelson always had the backing of labor organizations and that the Nelson administration "relied on labor to a great extent to be the backbone of our campaigns."[267] In a 1960 speech on civil rights, Nelson linked the history of trade union organization to social justice campaigns which

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[265] G. Calvin Mackenzie and Robert Weisbrot, *The Liberal Hour: Washington and the Politics of Change in the 1960s* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2008), 42-59.
[266] Richard C. Haney, "The Rise of Wisconsin's New Democrats: A Political Realignment in the Mid-Twentieth Century," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History*, Vol. 58, #2 (Winter, 1974-75): 90 – 106.
[267] Bill Cherkasky, interview by Anita Hecht, McLean, Virginia, 20 October 2010, Proxmire Oral History Project, Wisconsin Historical Society, online transcript, http://content.wisconsinhistory.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/proxmire/id/3592/rec/3, accessed 18 March 2013.

would help serve as a model for civil rights protections for all.[268] *Racine Labor* would often accept columns written by Nelson and offered editorial support for his legislative agenda throughout his term as Governor and during his Senate career.[269] Nelson demonstrated his support of workers' rights during the strike by urging Case management to bargain fairly with Local 180 instead of aligning with management's call for state intervention.

Even with the public siding with the union and Governor Nelson's admonishment to go to the bargaining table, Case president Grede and his management team withstood the pressure and continued to refuse to bargain. This left workers with few options. The union filed a complaint with the National Labor Relations Board detailing managements' unwillingness to bargain but the process of hearings did not force Case immediately to the bargaining table.[270] By August, the Local 180 bargaining team had dropped many of the eighteen original points in an effort to get management to discuss at least a few.[271] While a few workers crossed picket lines (the union named at least twelve by name) a large contingent of the workers continued to push for remaining on strike. At a July union meeting with over 1000 members in attendance, workers voted to "continue our strike against the J.I. Case [Company] and that all of us stand united in our fight to win a fair share of dignity and justice—by the negotiation of a just and honorable contract for our members."[272] While many workers sought to stay the course, management's refusal to bargain left few options.

With negotiations at a stand-still, Governor Gaylord Nelson sent in a fact-finding committee that succeeded in resuming talks between Local 180 and Case. Throughout August

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[268] Gaylord Nelson, "Civil Rights in Wisconsin: Proud Achievements, Unfinished Business," in *The Collected Speeches of Governor Gaylord A. Nelson*, 1959-1960, ed. Edwin R. Bayley (Madison), 1960 need page 9-16.
[269] Harold J. Thompson, The Secretary Says: Gov. Gaylord Nelson!," *Racine Labor*, 14 October 1960, p5; "State AFL-CIO Convo Highlights," *Racine Labor*, 16 October 1964, p9; "Nelson Raps Intervention in Strikes," *Racine Labor*, 14 October 66, p13; Gaylord Nelson, "Capitol Comments," *Racine Labor*, 10 March 1967, p8.
[270] UAW Local 180 Collection, WPR, Box 6, Folder 15, letter to members 20 April 1960.
[271] UAW Local 180 Collection, WPR, Box 7, Folder 1, radio update for 10-11 August 1960.
[272] "Case Local Members Give Solid Support," *Racine Labor*, 22 July 1960, p1, 2.

labor leaders held public meetings, wrote editorials, and found every avenue available to argue for the value of collective bargaining and the need for Case to negotiate. UAW national Vice President Pat Greenhouse participated in the Governor's commission. He publically stated that the strike would end if Case recognized the union's right to collectively bargain on behalf of the members.[273] While the company had consistently challenged the union's right to collectively bargain since members gained recognition in 1934, it was hard for current workers to accept the removal of the original eighteen points from the negotiation table. They and union leaders maintained that their requests were fair and necessary in order "to break out of the bonds of second-class citizenship and take their place alongside other workers in Racine who have long enjoyed [these] rights."[274] However, the strike was taking a heavy toll on Local 180. Finally, members voted on 18 September, by a margin of 816 to 360, to accept the negotiated agreement mediated by Governor Nelson's team. The strike did not win workers a union shop or dues check-off, but it did get improvements in insurance benefits, better piece-work payments, and seniority. The company maintained its wage increases at its initial offering from four to seventeen cents, depending on department and seniority.[275] Despite the continued failure to win a union shop and dues check-off union leaders focused on the wins they did receive and Governor Nelson's ability to force management back to the bargaining table. The UAW Ladies Auxiliary 362 threw the workers an "End of the Strike" dance on 23 September.[276]

The memory of this 1960 strike between Case and UAW Local 180 remained an important element in the continued militant activism within the Racine labor community. Immediately after the strike ended, Local 180 leaders and activists in the community started a

[273] "Acceptance of Union Key to Ending Strike," *Racine Labor*, 26 August 1960, p3.
[274] E-board to members, 20 April 1960, The UAW Local 180 Collection, WPR, Box 6, Folder 15.
[275] George Miller, "Union Ends Case Strike: Expect Call-back of All Workers in Two Weeks," *Racine Journal-Times*, 19 September 1960, p 1.
[276] UAW, Local 180 WPR box 7, folder 1.

campaign to rebuild the union and to educate members on the value of remaining committed to unionization. This illustrates just one way in which Racine story complicates scholars' claim that unions sacrificed internal and external organizing in favor of top-down leadership and business services. Fifty stewards attended a two-day institute in November where they went over the new contract, learned strategies for dealing with grievances, and planned to grow membership.[277] The local's education committee was reinstituted and its stated goals were to inform members about current events, increase attendance at union meetings, eliminate discrimination, voter registration, and political participation.[278] But it was not until 1962 that Local 180 negotiated a contract that included a pension plan, a clear arbitration agreement, and leave of absences.[279] *Racine Labor* ran a banner headline in January of the next year declaring, "CHECK-OFF WON BY 180" and speculating that it represented a step toward a new era at the Case Company. Valeo reported, "We seem to detect a new attitude on the part of the company and we look to the future with some measure of optimism."[280] The union was able to negotiate a settlement with the company for vacation pay withheld from workers during the 1960 strike and 1648 workers received checks totaling over $340,000 in July 1963.[281] These long-term payoffs from the strike vindicated the union's position to fight against management resistance and supported the idea of worker solidarity not only at Case but to the whole community.

While the 1960 Case strike generated very few material gains for members of Local 180, it did motivate the labor community in Racine to continue to fight for the interests of working people in the city. When William Jenkins was asked why Racine had a good record with

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[277] "Time To Build Kitzman Tells Local 180 Institute: Stewards Discuss Contract," *Racine Labor*, 18 November 1960, p1.
[278] "The Weighty One Eighty," *Racine Labor*, 3 March 1961. P10.
[279] Kitzman interview.
[280] "Check-Off Won by 180: Is New Era Near at Case Co?" *Racine Labor*, 4 January 1963, p1, 2.
[281] "Year of '63 A Milestone for Local 180," *Racine Labor*, 30 August 1963, part 2, p 3.

progressive unions he attributed it to "the strife that we've had here—the labor strife," particularly against the Case Company. He maintained that because workers at the largest industrial plant in town had to fight repeatedly to reaffirm their right to collectively bargain it kept Racine's working-class activists determined to push even harder to gain full economic and social citizenship rights for all members. While the 1960 strike was going on at Case, workers across Racine kept up their efforts to improve the economic and civic conditions of the city. Maintenance and miscellaneous workers at Western Printing and Lithographers voted to affiliate with the UAW and formed Local 1007. They signed a three-year agreement with the company that improved wages, added a cost-of-living adjustment to the contract, and a union shop. When the Wisconsin Employment Relations Commission (WERC) held their election by secret ballot the next month, workers voted overwhelmingly (279 – 17) to approve the contract clause for a union shop.[282] The lithographers at Western (Local 54) refused several offers by the company on their new contract that had expired at the end of August 1959 and threatened a strike in February 1960 over two sticking points. After continued negotiations the union reported in April that the new contract with a "terrific" wage package and improvements across the board was finally signed.[283] The mostly female employees of Rae Motor Company, manufacturers of fractional horsepower motors for small electronics, voted in June for an all-union shop by a vote of 87- 1 out of ninety-nine possible votes. They affiliated with UAW as Local 1296 and signed their first agreement with the company the previous year.[284] These new organizing drives strengthened the labor community and boosted their collective power to initiate economic, political, and social changes in Racine.

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[282] "First Western Pact for UAW," *Racine Labor*, 22 January 1960, p1; "Union Shop Vote Won by Local 1007," *Racine Labor*, 26 February 1960, p2.
[283] "CIO Council Pledges Aid to Lithos," *Racine Labor*, 26 Feb 1960, p1; "Litho Turn Down Latest Offer," *Racine Labor*, 25 March 1960, p3; "Litho Get Top Wage," *Racine Labor*, 15 April 1960, p1.
[284] "Rae Motor Local Victory," *Racine Labor*, 24 June 1960, p1.

Union leaders also used the courts to protect workers' rights through the legislative measures enacted as a result of successful lobbying coming out of the civil rights movement. The Walker Manufacturing Company, a supplier of exhaust systems for the automobile industry, tried to force all workers over the age of sixty to retire in 1962. After going through the grievance procedure with Walker Manufacturing for two years, UAW Local 85 took their case to the fair practices division of the State Industrial Commission in 1964. This was the first case of age discrimination since the fair practices legislation passed. To the union it seemed as if the company was forcing older workers with more seniority and earning potential out of work and replacing them with young, cheaper, less experienced employees. The men who were forced out of their jobs still wanted and needed to work to support themselves and their families. One worker wrote a letter to the editor using the language that labor activists had been using of workers' rights to push policymakers to address economic injustice: "We live in the good old U.S.A., a land of freedom, liberty and justice for all. Let's all of us uphold that thought and lineup to these ideals…Let's fight for our rights!"[285] Three workers filed an injunction against the company to keep their jobs until the dispute was settled. When the Industrial Commission ruled that the retirement policy violated the state's Fair Employment law because it discriminated against older workers, the company took the case to the Wisconsin Supreme Court. The Court eventually reversed the Industrial Commission's ruling because Walker's retirement benefits to those workers laid off was greater than what they would have received with voluntary retirement benefits.[286]

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[285] "Hits Walker's Forced Retirement," *Racine Labor*, 10 January 1964, p1; "Walker Early Retirement," *Racine Labor*, 31 January 1964, p1, 5; "Hits Walker Deal," *Racine Labor*, 7 August 1964, p4; "Local 85 Upheld in Forced Retirement," *Racine Labor*, 3 July 1964, p2.

[286] "One More Hearing is Set in Tangled Walker Retirement," *Racine Labor*, 31 July 1964, p1; *Walker Manufacturing Company v. Industrial Commission*, 27 Wis 2d 669, 135 N.W.2d 307 (1965).

Racine's labor activists did not limit their activities to the shop floor or legal battles but also focused on community coalition building. The teachers' union, Racine Education Association (REA), reached out to local organizations and citizens' groups to advertise a national campaign centered on strengthening schools in the coming years. Union leaders invited groups like the NAACP to send representatives to area schools to learn more about funding, enrollment, and staffing issues and they initiated a publicity campaign to highlight their concerns and ideas about improving Racine's schools.[287] The county labor council voted to work with the Red Cross to institute a city-wide blood bank program, expanding their existing agreements that were organized by union locals. The board also continued its campaign to have a labor staff representative on the board of the United Fund. This campaign resulted because working-class activists worked hard to help collect donations during the annual fund-raising drive and felt that the organizers needed better communication within workplaces. Activists also felt that workers used the services of the organizations funded by the United Fund and should have a voice on the board. However, the power struggle between business and labor leaders that was evident in the interwar period in city politics emerged during mid-century on the boards of public and private charitable organizations.[288]

Community involvement included education and lobbying against corporate plans to turn back labors' economic and political gains. Labor activists and their allies fought corporate efforts to reduce business taxes. Companies would lobby for lower tax rates and force communities into bidding wars for the lowest rates. *Racine Labor* reprinted a study prepared for

[287] NAACP Racine branch, WHS, Box 1, Folder 1, letter from REA, n.d.
[288] "AFL-CIO Body to Consider Blood Bank," *Racine Labor*, 21 February 1964, p1; "Pick Labor Team to Spur Racine United Fund Drive," *Racine Labor*, 23 August 1963, p1; "Labor Seeks Post on Staff of United Fund," *Racine Labor*, 2 October 1964, p1; "Resolution Urges Labor Staff Representative for United Fund," *Racine Labor*, 2 October 1964, p8; "Will Keep Pushing for Labor Staff," *Racine Labor*, 12 March 1965, p1; "Valeo Heads United Fund Labor Group," *Racine Labor*, 4 June 1965, p17.

the Wisconsin Committee for Fair Taxes showing that despite some business leaders' claims, University of Wisconsin scholars had found that economic growth had not been affected by higher tax rates for manufacturing firms in the state.[289] The labor community lobbied against legislation that limited workers' ability to collectively bargain.[290] For example, working-class activists sought to change a state law that required a two-thirds majority vote to approve a labor agreement's union shop clause, whereby all eligible members of the bargaining unit were required to become union members. Manny Brown, the State Assembly representative from Racine brought legislation to change the two-thirds majority to a simple majority during successive legislation sessions in response to local activist lobbying. In 1965 and 1967 the law passed in the Assembly but failed in the State Senate.[291] Both of these issues represented tactics conservative business leaders used to offset strong labor communities by attacking local economies and workers' rights.

Worker activists and their liberal allies brought even greater attention to the problem of employment discrimination during the decade. In 1962 labor and civil rights activists criticized the mayor's Commission on Human Rights for its failure to make any significant progress in eliminating hiring discrimination in the city. LeRoy Wooley, active member of UAW 553 at Belle City, and the first black man to be apprenticed in a skilled trade in Racine, spoke on the subject in Milwaukee on behalf of the NAACP. Racine Mayor Humble expressed anger at the statements printed in the *Milwaukee Sentinel* but William Jenkins came to Wooley's defense. Jenkins issued a statement, asserting, "Mayor Humble must face the fact that when it comes to assisting Negroes gain employment in the white and blue collar brackets, his organization is a

[289] "Committee Challenges Claim That Taxes Drive Industry From State," *Racine Labor*, 5 February 1960, p4.
[290] "Right to Work Laws a Fraud on the People," *Racine Labor*, 15 July 1960, p1, 4.
[291] "Labor Gets Strong Support On Two Measures in Assembly," *Racine Labor*, 16 July 1965, p4; Manny S. Brown, "Legislative Report: Labor Bill Falls Short by Narrow 54-44 Vote," *Racine Labor*, 4 August 1967, p6.

non-entity." Jenkins criticized the Commission for failing to act on reports that the Racine State Employment Office was administering aptitude tests to black and Mexican unskilled workers, but not to white unskilled applicants. He also charged the Commission with ignoring complaints about industry hiring practices in the city.[292] Minority workers continued to struggle to find placements in most Racine firms, only a few foundries and the Case Company had more than a few minority employees.

At the national level, efforts by black leaders within the UAW and Walter Reuther's efforts to strengthen the coalition between civil rights activists and the labor movement led to union policy initiatives to improve minority hiring, urban renewal, and full employment policies. While the UAW had mobilized workers to vote for John F. Kennedy, the union's hopes for a strong domestic economic agenda did not materialize during his presidency. Reuther instituted internal structural changes and worker-education programs to revamp the International and open the door to better collaboration with civil rights activists who had pressured the union to address the racial conservativism within its ranks. In his speech at the August 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Justice, Reuther declared that "we will not solve education or housing or public accommodations as long as millions of American Negroes are treated as second-class economic citizens and denied jobs." In his 1963 Labor Day speech, Reuther linked economic justice and civil rights declaring, "Without a job and a regular paycheck…the right to sit at a lunch counter is a mocking mirage."[293] Non-white worker activists and their allies in the labor community sought to capitalize on the national debate around economic citizenship rights for all to improve hiring practices and job promotions in Racine.

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[292] "Mayor Attacked on Minority Hiring," *Racine Labor*, 23 March 1962, p1, 2.

[293] Kevin Boyle, *The UAW and the Heyday of American Liberalism: 1945-1968* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 126-131; 145-156; 162-167 quote on page 162; William P. Jones, *The March on Washington: Jobs, Freedom, and the Forgotten History of Civil Rights* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2013), 194-195, quote on 195.

When the Wisconsin Industrial Commission held state-wide hearings on minority hiring in 1964, the nineteen Racine firms that participated had 904 minority workers out of a combined 15,615 employees. Belle City Malleable had over 400 black and Hispanic workers, while most firms only had 2 or 3, all of whom had just been hired a few weeks before the hearings took place. This demonstrated what black working-class activists charged about minority workers being kept out of local firms. While there were several black union members serving in leadership roles in local unions, little concerted effort to bring in and train minority workers across the city's diverse manufacturing industries. A guest speaker at a local NAACP event commented on the city's racial issues including hiring practices a few months after the Racine hearings were held and exclaimed shock that "the Negro [is] so severely proscribed in where he can work."[294] Black labor activists continued to push for changes in Racine.

With the aid of activists in Milwaukee and Chicago, local black union members formed a Racine-Kenosha chapter of the Negro American Labor Council (NALC) in 1965 to address employment discrimination in the city. Formed in 1960 by A. Philip Randolph and other black union activists, NALC councils sought to push the economic justice issues of racial discrimination within the labor movement, workplaces, and the nation. Randolph had continued to push the fight against employment discrimination as a critical battle in racial justice for most of the twentieth century. Local NALC councils recruited members from labor unions to study problems of non-white workers and to look for solutions to those problems.[295] Augusta Hill, UAW Local 72 member at American Motors Company in Kenosha was elected first president of the council and urged all unions to actively participate in NALC. At civil rights labor conferences black activists also urged union members to fight against discrimination in the

[294] Minority Hiring Being Probed," *Racine Labor*, 6 March 1964, p1, 2; "Negro Leader Raps Discrimination Here," *Racine Labor*, 22 May 1964, p1, 14.
[295] Jones, 132-139.

workplace. At the 1965 UAW Region 10 Conference Harvey Kitzman pushed the unions to back efforts to force management to hire black workers. Similarly, at the AFL-CIO conference on civil rights held that same weekend, black activists charged that union leaders were not doing enough to give minorities equal access to jobs. Delegates passed resolutions calling for the state AFL-CIO council to take the lead on giving civil rights groups information on how black workers could qualify, apply, and find information on building trades apprenticeships. The building trades unions were almost 100 percent white at the time.[296] Black workers and their allies in Racine and the surrounding area continued to work on expanding the economic and social citizenship rights that grew out of the labor movement and New Deal liberalism of the earlier period.

The working-class community in Racine also maintained their efforts to be seen as a vital link to the well-being of the whole city. The annual Christmas parties for many locals generated funds to donate to area organizations including the mental hospital and orphanage. Funds also went to provide gifts for workers' children and hold a party for retired workers at the Racine Labor Center.[297] This civic involvement was one of the things that made Harvey Kitzman excited about his work with the UAW. He reflected, "We also believe that every single member of our union…ought to make a contribution to his community…and make whatever contribution he can. He owes that to his community."[298] Racine's activists led the way in the labor community's efforts to maintain the civic health of the city.

Working-class group identity and a sense of community were reinforced in the decade through continued presence and activism within the space of the city and through a strong sense

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[296] "Negro Labor Council Officers Are Installed," *Racine Labor*, 24 September 1965, p7; "Fight for Equal Rights, Housing Get labor Push," *Racine Labor*, 19 November 1965, p1, 2; "AFL-CIO Answers Criticism," *Racine Labor*, 19 November 1965, p1, 2.
[297] "Unions Give Santa a Boost," *Racine Labor*, 23 December 1960, p1.
[298] Kitzman interview.

of labor history and tradition. In early 1960 the city parking department approached the Union Hall board of directors in an effort to remove the building and replace it with a parking ramp. Located downtown on Wisconsin Avenue, Union Hall was home to many of the original AFL locals in Racine and at the time had twenty-four member unions. A landmark of the city's labor community since 1912 the building held a special place for many workers across the city. Along with the Teamsters Hall and the Labor Center, it represented the labor community's commitment to the welfare of all working people in the region.[299] The built environment union members inhabited established an atmosphere of worker solidarity within Racine.

The delegates looked around for another site to relocate in the area but found none that would accommodate the meeting space needs and recreation facilities the current building contained. Attorney Ben Schwartz told the parking officials that the group would sell the building for $300,000 to cover some of the losses that the unions would face from moving locations or building on a new site. However, the parking department approached the City Council to condemn the whole block of Wisconsin Avenue, including Union Hall. The labor community rallied together, attended the public hearings, and successfully fought the parking department's move.[300]

By 1968 the Union Hall Association had accumulated the necessary funds to build a new building and purchased land on the outskirts of the city. When workers removed the cornerstone it revealed a copper box containing materials from the early-twentieth century, including newspapers, correspondence between members of the building committee, and histories of the original twenty unions. William Sommers, past president of the Union Hall building committee

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[299] Joseph M. Kelly, "Growth of Organized Labor," In *Racine: Growth and Change in a Wisconsin County*, edited by Nicholas C. Burckel (Racine: Racine County Board of Supervisors, 1977), 345-347.

[300] Loren Norman, "Squibs," *Racine Labor*, 22 April 1960, p1; "Union Hall to Fight Condemnation Action," *Racine Labor*, 22 April 1960, p1; "Hearing on Union Hall," *Racine Labor*, 6 May 1960, p3; "Fight on Union Hall," *Racine Labor*, 13 May 1960, p1.

enclosed a brief note, "I hope the day is not far away when the workers will come into their own. May this building be a lasting monument of Labor." The old cornerstone was placed in the new building during a special ceremony commemorating the history of the Racine Trades and Labor Association and Union Hall.[301] David Harvey has shown that union halls and other sites where union members congregated and the memories associated with them affect people's lived experience. They are part of the labor community's collective memory, political identity, and symbolically represent their notions of working-class solidarity.[302] Keeping the original Union Hall until the unions purchased more land and built a new site allowed the labor community to maintain its power over the built environment and shape the city's image as a labor town.

Another key factor in reaffirming and shaping working-class history was the use of family history, history of struggles successful or not, and the idea that improving the city had always been a key element of working peoples' activism. The "Who's Who" column in *Racine Labor* illustrated the history of activism with Racine's families. The sons, daughters, siblings, and family histories all confirmed the notion of the labor community as a family of activists. For example, in the column about Bob Mathieus, the newly elected Local 180 Vice President, readers learned that his father also worked at Case and was a shop steward for the union.[303] Death notices also detailed long histories of community activism. When Edrie Kitzman, wife of Harvey Kitzman, died the article announcing the memorial service detailed her long history of political and labor activism. Harold Thompson used his weekly column to commemorate Edrie Kitzman's service to the Racine labor community, including her early years working at Case and

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[301] "Union Hall Association Builds New Home," *Racine Labor*, 19 July 1968, p1; "Union Hall Cornerstone Reveals Historical Items," *Racine Labor*, 22 November 1968, p1, 13.
[302] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1991), 33, 62-63, 89-90, and 116-118. Lefebvre represents space as an intersection of spatial practice, representations of space and represented spaces depicting perceived, conceived, and lived space; See also M. Gottdiener, "A Marx for Our Time: Henri Lefebvre and *The Production of Space*," *Sociological Theory* 11, no.1 (Mar 1993): 129-134; David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1996), 417.
[303] "Who's Who in Labor," *Racine Labor*, 25 February 1966, p5.

helping develop leadership education programs for local unions.[304] Retirements also offered a way to celebrate the history of activism within the Racine labor community. Loretta Christensen retired after forty-five years of active union and community work. She was one of the first women hired by Western Publishing, worked on the RTLC board for twenty-five years in various roles, and was one of the leading women in the labor community. The list of her service activities for the community illustrated a long history of involvement and all the areas that benefited from working-class engagement.[305] When Russ Johnson retired from the city, the labor paper's story focused on his whole family. Both he and his wife, Roma served as president of Local 67. His son Russell was a union steward at Hamilton-Beach and son Robert was president of UAW Local 72 at Greene Manufacturing. Tom Faucett retired at the same time as Johnson and was at the city because he took a job during the Case strike in 1946 when Mayor Wendt provided public works jobs for the strikers.[306] The stories of individuals' service in behalf of local unions and the larger community worked together with the physical landscape, labor organizing, strike activities, civic involvement, and social activities to make and remake the working-class identity in Racine.

Local labor activists also took the lead and organized around human and civil rights during the period. By 1960 black and women workers were more adamant than ever about the need for greater roles in union management and greater efforts on the part of unions to protect the rights of minority workers. A. Philip Randolph's efforts to force the AFL-CIO to deal with the racism within its ranks became increasingly public. Vice President Randolph spoke openly about internal racism, called for the expulsion of resistant locals, and demanded action from

[304] "Services Friday for Mrs. Kitzman, Plan Memorial," *Racine Labor*, 10 July 1964, p2; Harold J. Thompson, "The Secretary Says," *Racine Labor*, 17 July 1964, p8.
[305] "Loretta Retires," *Racine Labor*, 20 December 1968, p1, 8.
[306] "Two Long-Time City Employes Retiring," *Racine Labor*, 29 December 1967, p1.

President George Meany. In Racine, labor activists concerned with issues of race and gender sought various means to improve unions' ability to meet their needs. William Jenkins organized a UAW Parley on Human Relations and Civil Rights at the Labor Center and invited members of the NAACP, Jewish organizations, the mayor's committee on human rights, and members of local union fair practices committees to come and discuss related issues and interests.[307] At the November 1960 AFL-CIO national conference on civil rights in Chicago the delegates passed resolutions calling on union groups to hire staff to address civil rights issues and improve enforcement of existing guidelines related to antidiscrimination in union by-laws and union contracts.[308] The first AFL-CIO national conference on women held in 1961 demonstrated "a new, more tumultuous relationship between labor women and the established male leadership." The theme focused on the problems of women workers and over three days delegates outlined the issues related to their roles as women and workers. Women labor activists had "sounded a challenge to the male leaders of their movement and to society at large."[309] This challenge would be reinforced by women in the civil rights movement and the New Left later in the decade.

In Racine, organizing by Jenkins, Kitzman, and other activists concerned with biennial conventions of the Wisconsin AFL-CIO led to Racine locals co-sponsoring or jointly offering resolutions to submit to the main body on issues of civil rights. In 1964 workers across industries including foundries, publishing, garment making, and teaching all supported the hiring of a permanent staff person solely concerned with managing a Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) at the state AFL-CIO as called for at the Chicago conference. Each participating union from Racine submitted separate, but identical resolutions calling for "the

[307] "UAW Parley on Human Relations and Civil Rights," *Racine Labor*, 14 October 1960, p3.
[308] "Unions Urged to Take Steps on Civil Rights," *Racine Labor*, 18 November 1960, p12.
[309] Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement,* 155 – 159.

immediate appointment by the Executive Board of a new staff position with sole duties confined to working with the Fair Employment Practices program and problems within the State of Wisconsin."[310] The push for fair employment, and organizational support to help enforce federal regulations through union bargaining contracts, continued throughout the 1960s as racial minorities and women demanded equal access to full economic citizenship. As we have seen, local unions' FEPC committees had been active since the 1950s. As William Jenkins moved up the ranks of the labor community leadership he took the opportunity to merge the local unions' council political action and education committees and spearheaded a campaign to increase the participation of black and women workers in Racine's labor activities through political action at the city and state level as well as within their local unions. Although frustrated with the lack of opportunity for black union activists to move through the ranks of the UAW, Jenkins continued to push for greater education within the labor movement and created local programs to get more minority and female rank-and-file workers involved in union activities. He also worked, with limited results, on improving the local trade union members' commitment to civil rights issues.[311]

Local activists in manufacturing industries also continued their efforts at cross-sector solidarity. Racine's labor leaders had supported organizing in all employment sectors since the immediate postwar years. Racine's fire fighters had been organized since the early-twentieth century and counted on AFL unions' support when presenting demands to the Common Council.[312] By the mid-1960s changes in employment law at the state and national level opened the door to even greater organizing efforts. At the same Wisconsin state AFL-CIO convention in Green Bay where Racine local unions urged for a state-level commitment to support for fair

[310] Kitzman Papers, WHS, Box 1, Folder 3, 1964 Wisconsin state AFL-CIO resolutions.
[311] Jenkins interview.
[312] Racine Trades and Labor Council records, WHS, Box 1, Folder 1, meeting minutes.

practice committees at the local union level, they also banded together to urge for state-wide action to change Wisconsin's Public Employee Bargaining Act. By 1964 nearly 1.5 million workers belonged to public sector unions across the United States, largely through the efforts of AFSCME, which was still headquartered in Madison, Wisconsin.[313] As part of the effort to grant these workers the right to strike and improve workers' ability to bargain effectively, Racine local union delegates to the 1964 Wisconsin AFL-CIO convention supported the removal of the no-strike clause from the Public Employee Bargaining Act.[314] In 1966 Racine locals across industries stood together in support of mandatory fact-finding, conciliation, or mediation to force municipalities to bargain faithfully with public employees, again in response to MERA. [315] These resolutions submitted to the Wisconsin AFL-CIO conventions demonstrate the broad-based nature of issues concerning Racine's labor community as well as their understanding of state and national-level economic and political changes.

In Racine, industrial and trade workers had a long history of supporting public sector employees. County employees had been members of the Racine Trades and Labor Council since at least the early 1930s.[316] City workers had a regular column in *Racine Labor* and participated in the CIO union council.[317] Once changes at the state level helped improve bargaining rights for public employees even further in 1962, Business Service Employees International Union (BSEIU) Local 152 started organizing school janitors in the area and the union signed an agreement with the Racine School Board.[318] BSEIU started as an organization of janitorial unions in Chicago, and expanded to include, elevator operators, and other non-trade workers in

[313] Joseph E. Slater, *Public Workers: Government Employee Unions, the Law, and the State, 1900-1962* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2004), 162, 164.
[314] See chapter one.
[315] AFL-CIO resolutions, 1964, 1966, Kitzman Papers, WHS; CIO bulletin No. 1, Kitzman Papers, WHS.
[316] RTLC records, WHS, Box 1, Folder 3.
[317] See for example "Local 67 City Employee Notes," *Racine Labor*, 01 April 1960, p20.
[318] Letter from Arthur Jung to Fairchild, 2 Apr 1963, SEIU Executive Office – David Sullivan Files, WPR, Box 51, Folder 5.

public and private buildings. In the early years the union was mainly a collection of autonomous local unions but started to streamline and organize more formally in the 1940s under the leadership of William McFetridge. He also recognized the potential of organizing all sorts of service workers, including office workers and hospital workers.[319] Racine's industrial and trade unions sought to actively support the service employees in the area. When BSEIU Local 152 met resistance in their 1964 bargaining sessions with the school board, the local AFL-CIO council voted to support the union and sent a delegate to bargaining meetings on the local's behalf, as they had done on behalf of police, firefighters and other city and county employees since the Depression era.[320]

A big challenge to working-class solidarity came during the county social workers' strike in late-1968 and 1969. The International Association of Machinists (IAM) Lodge 437 represented the Racine County social workers. Social workers felt dissatisfied with pay rates, training and promotion procedures, and the lack of some level of institutional authority in dealing with individual cases brought to the department. Turnover in the department was high and many suspected it was due to low wages. High turnover limited case workers' ability to help applicants. When negotiations failed to produce any changes in policy from the County Board of Supervisors, social workers started an informational picketing campaign in December 1968. In the announcement calling the strike on 2 January 1969, union attorney, Jay Schwartz (whose father represented AFL unions for over thirty years in city) said the primary demand was binding arbitration by a locally appointed committee to hear their case against the county board.[321]

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[319] Tom Beadling, Pat Cooper, Grace Palladino and Peter Pieragostini, *A Need for Valor: The Roots of the Service Employees International Union, 1902 – 1992* (Washington, DC: SEIU, 1992), 11, 14, 31-34.
[320] "AFL-CIO Backs School Employees," *Racine Labor,* 17 July 1964, p1, 2.
[321] "Social Workers Picket," *Racine Labor*, 27 December 1968, p3; "Welfare Workers on Strike," *Racine Labor*, 3 January 1969, p3.

The strike was a volatile issue in the community, due to recent unrest in the city stemming from poverty issues and housing. After a riot started in response to police action after a fight outside a party in August 1968 a group of black citizens formed the Concerned Minority Citizens Group and demanded neighborhood improvements from the mayor's office. The city still had not passed a housing code and rental homes in the poor and minority neighborhoods remained in substandard condition despite plans that had been under discussion for three years. Officials authorized a study designed to rate the efficiency of area welfare organizations after residents demanded changes. The study called for public aid recipients to sit on a community board that helped make administrative decisions, a consolidation of the county and city public welfare departments, and better training of case workers to address citizen needs. Social workers received the support of local residents because the strikers' demands mirrored some of the changes suggested by the welfare services study.[322]

The strike also caused concern in the city because of opposition to the social workers' right to join a union and to go on strike. Some social workers in the area condemned the County Welfare Department workers for joining a union and then going on strike as unprofessional. During one of the county meetings to discuss the social worker situation, someone called in a bomb threat. Yet, the Racine labor community and many outside of the labor community supported the social workers. The building trades' council publically supported the social workers' strike. The Racine United Fund (the charitable aid umbrella organization) executive director asked all agency heads and staff members to support the social workers by not crossing the picket lines to get to their offices inside the county building. The Racine-Kenosha chapter of

[322] "Mayor Stresses Renewal, Race Relations, Housing," *Racine Labor*, 21 Aug 1967, p1, 8; "Race Unity Week to be Marked by Picnic, Panel Discussions," *Racine Labor*, 7 Jun 68, p1; Loren Norman, "Squibs," *Racine Labor*, 9 Aug 1968, p1, 4; "Negroes Hit Inaction as Riot Cause," *Racine Labor*, 9 Aug 1968, p2; Says Racine's Apathy Keeps Minority Down," *Racine Labor*, 16 Aug 1968, p3.

the National Association of Social Workers issued a public statement supporting the aims of the county workers as well. After six weeks of negotiations the county switched bargaining teams and a final settlement was reached granting a new merit system, increase in personnel, wage increases, a new salary schedule, and union dues check-off.[323] This was an important strike for the Racine labor community. While city and county workers had gone on strike several times during the postwar period, this strike by social workers opened conversations about the rights of teachers, police officers, and hospital workers to use strikes as a tool for gaining their economic and workplace demands. It also highlighted the link between the working poor and labor unions as an avenue for gaining economic security and social capital. Public debate around the strike also highlighted the labor community's continued commitment to the broad-based notion of the postwar liberal idea of economic and social citizenship rights.

Labor activists continued to organize workers in new employment sectors despite management hostility and their weakened position within the labor-management relationship. The 1960s saw a tremendous increase in low-wage service, public sector, and office workers in the city. During the decade, BSEIU went through a restructuring and started organizing campaigns to include new categories of workers into the union. Started by janitorial workers in Chicago in 1902, BSEIU expanded to include elevator operators and building maintenance workers in Milwaukee, New York and across the U.S by the 1920s. Unlike other national unions, BSEIU was a collection of autonomous locals as opposed to the more top-down approach of the UAW and other industrial unions. Starting in the 1940s, the organization started

[323] "Squibs," *Racine Labor*, 10 January 1969, p1; "Social Workers Strike," image, *Racine Labor*, 10 January 1969, p1; "Social Workers Strike Spills Into Community," *Racine Labor*, 17 January 1969, p1, 7; "Development Hinted in Social Workers Strike," *Racine Labor*, 24 January 1969, p1; "Should Social Workers Strike," *Racine Labor*, 24 January 1969, p1, 4; "Association of Social Workers OKs Strike Goals," *Racine Labor*, 31 January 1969, p3; "New County Team for Strike Talks," *Racine Labor*, 14 February 1969, p2; "Social Workers Dispute Ended," *Racine Labor*, 21 February 1969, p3; "Lauds Social Workers," *Racine Labor*, 28 February 1969, p3.

to modernize and required local unions to standardize operations.[324] Across Wisconsin, BSEIU locals consolidated to meet the new requirements to hold a BSEIU charter. Many locals had dwindling memberships or all retired members as building owners moved to automatic elevators and outsourced janitorial services, and over the early part of the 1960s most of these locals were subsumed by Local 150 based in Milwaukee. While many members complained about the lack of follow-through by Local 150 President Don Beatty, his ability to organize workers and get contracts signed helped fuel consolidation of locals across the state. At the same time, Beatty used the pooled resources and additional funds from the International to start organizing drives and increase the state-wide membership of Local 150.[325]

Legal changes also opened the door for increased organizing campaigns. Labor feminists and the unions they worked with and within had worked to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) since its passage in 1935. Garment workers' unions had sought to bring the mostly female workers excluded into the minimum wage protections throughout the 1940s. Labor and civil rights groups forged coalitions to push for expansion of FLSA concurrently with the passage of the Civil Rights Act. In 1966 at its annual Conference, the AFL-CIO made expansion of FLSA one of its top priorities. This concerted effort paid off as Secretary of Labor Willard Wirtz acknowledged that policy makers had not considered the impact on so many women and non-white male workers. He admitted, "This apparent objectivity has tended not to insure equal treatment but to camouflage unequal treatment."[326] Following changes to the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1966, which incorporated nearly a million and a half new hospital and nursing

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[324] Tom Beadling, Pat Cooper, Grace Palladino and Peter Pieragostini, *A Need For Valor: The Roots of the Service Employees International Union, 1902 – 1992* (Washington, D.C.: Service Employees International Union, 1992).
[325] SEIU Executive Office – David Sullivan Files, WPR, Box 19, Folder 35; Box 19, Folder 38 letter from June Weatherspoon; Box 19, Folder 38 letters from Bernice Joswick, Robert Jahnke, and Valencia Smith; Box 19, Folder 38 letter from Moats to Sullivan 19 March 1963; Box 20, Folder 2 letter about merger Local 146 into 150, 8June 1965.
[326] Quoted in Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement*, 178.

home workers under the minimum wage requirements and allowed workers previously excluded from the National Labor Relations Act to join unions, labor activists intensified organizing efforts in the industry. The new amendments brought an estimated 84 percent of the non-supervisory workforce under the protection of federal law. Only domestic workers remained unprotected.[327] In Racine, BSEIU started organizing campaigns in the healthcare industry under the direction of Local 150. They focused on service employees—nurses' aides, dieticians, food service workers and janitors—at hospitals and nursing homes.

As part of the BSEIU healthcare campaign Local 150 started organizing efforts at St. Luke's Hospital in 1966. After a concerted organizing effort, Local 150 asked WERC to hold a union representation election. In a letter urging employees at St. Luke's to vote "yes" to accept BSEIU Local 150 as their bargaining agent Charles Heymanns, regional director for AFL-CIO and former head of the Kohler union, wrote, "Hospital Employees, like all other groups of American wage-earners, have the legal, moral, and American right to join Unions and be represented."[328] Not-for-profit institutions like St. Luke's Hospital had served as employers for new immigrants, Latinos, and southern black migrants to northern cities for many years. Like other jobs available for minority workers, these were often the lowest paid in the area. Exempt from provisions of the National Labor Relations Act until 1974--the rights of workers to organize a union of their choice, bargain collectively, strike, boycott, and picket, and the prohibition of employers from intimidating, firing, or blacklisting employees for union activities--these hospitals could keep workers' wages below those in other industries. At the same time the life-support function of hospitals, their centrality to the health-care system of cities, and the role of

[327] Text box, *Racine Labor*, 6 January 1967, p3; Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement*, 110-111, 177-178.
[328] SEIU Executive Office – David Sullivan Files, WPR, Box 20, Folder 4, letter from AFL-CIO 25 July 1966.

local and federal governments in sustaining them, led to the involvement of government officials, the press, and organized pressure groups--the public--in labor-management disputes.[329]

Holding to his promise to focus on a strong win at St. Luke's Hospital, Local 150 President Don Beatty continued to work closely with the 250 employees throughout the successful representation election and the St. Luke's dispute of election results that followed. When the election was upheld by WERC, Beatty appointed a bargaining committee and opened negotiations with the hospital. When management refused to negotiate an acceptable agreement, Beatty asked for strike sanctions against the hospital. Members voted to strike if the bargaining committee could not successfully negotiate a fifteen cent per hour increase. However, when the registered nurses threatened to walk out in support of the service employees—a clear example of class solidarity—hospital management raised their offer. Finally, in February 1967, members voted in favor of a one-year contract providing for wage increases going up to twenty cents an hour, ten-minute breaks, seniority for promotions and vacancies, and six paid holidays.[330] When the contract came up for negotiation again the next year members focused on adding a union shop clause to the contract. When writing to the international union again for strike sanctions against St. Luke's Beatty explained, "The big stumbling block is Union Shop, which seems to be more important to the employees than even wages."[331] While Beatty was surprised by the militancy of the St. Luke's service workers, the tradition in Racine of local unions working together to protect the rights of workers regardless of union affiliation or employment sector most probably helped spur the employees at St. Luke's Hospital.

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[329] Leon Fink and Brian Greenberg, "Organizing Montefiore: Labor Militancy Meets a Progressive Health Care Empire," in *Health Care in America: Essays in Social History*, ed. Susan Reverby and David Rosner (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1979), 226-228; Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, 36.
[330] SEIU Executive Office – David Sullivan Files, WPR, Box 20, Folder 5; "Ok Labor Contract at St. Luke's Hospital," source unknown.
[331] SEIU Executive Office – David Sullivan Files, WPR, Box 20, Folder 6, letter to Sullivan 15 March 1968.

The women of BSEIU Local 150 joined workers in a number of other largely female workplaces who organized during the decade. Women had been organizing for economic, political, and social change in Racine throughout the twentieth century. As we have seen a few women held leadership positions in local union councils and on the board of the labor newspaper. The International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) had a few locals in the early part of the century but their numbers declined as garment makers left the area.[332] However, ILGWU Local 187 members who worked at Rainfair, a company that manufactured rain gear and protective clothing, remained active in the local labor community. For example, members voted to donate fifty cents per week to the Case union when they were on strike in 1960. Members also used their lunch and break times to make stuffed animals and other toys for children in Racine's hospitals, shelters, and other institutions.[333] Many Racine locals sent delegates to the UAW Region 10 Women's conferences held throughout the decade. The 1960 conference in Milwaukee addressed concerns about political action and new ways of organizing women workers.[334] The UAW Auxiliary 362 that re-organized around the 1960 Case strike remained active throughout the decade and held regular meetings at the Labor Center. Local women formed a "Women for Kennedy Club" during the 1960 election and participated in Democratic Party events.[335] The League of Women Voters held campaigns on changing the Racine school board and ran voter registration drives throughout the period.[336] These cross-class alliances went a long way to increasing women's visibility in political debates in Racine. To further encourage women's involvement in the political process the UAW Women's Division

[332] Kelly, 383-384.
[333] "Case Union Praises Rainfair ILG Local," *Racine Labor*, 17 June 1960, p3; "Rainfair Gals Help Santa," *Racine Labor*, 04 Dec 1964.
[334] "UAW Women's Parley Talks Union's Goals," *Racine Labor*, 5 August 1960, p12.
[335] "Women For Kennedy Club Formed," *Racine Labor*, 7 October 1960, p13.
[336] "Year's Activities Recounted by League of Women Voters," *Racine Labor*, 19 May 1961, p15.

held a Ladies Night event at the Labor Center in October 1962. Organizers asked each UAW local to send at least two female representatives to the meeting.[337] Women activists in Racine expanded on the foundation they had built in the postwar period to become active, engaged, and respected members in the area's labor community. They pushed for labor and community groups to address the needs of women workers throughout the diverse employment sectors.

While the Racine labor community welcomed the newly organized hospital workers into the group they also remained aware of technological changes that could negatively impact the growth and strength of the community. The effect of technological changes and automation remained a key topic of concern. Activists focused on three key areas related to technology and automation. They made efforts to educate workers and to train new workers on the latest technology. Labor activists kept the relationship between automation and unemployment in the public conversation so that business and government policymakers would address this issue. Finally, activists sought to improve retirement plans and social security laws in order to move older workers out of the workforce earlier without economic hardship on their families.

New sources of education and job training were needed to improve workers' economic opportunities. In the early-1960s union officials worked with the Racine Vocational and Adult School to participate in a program to train recent high school graduates in technological and administrative fields while also receiving on the job training. Leaders hoped the program would serve to provide options for young people who could not afford college or who needed to work and also attend school. They also hoped to keep newly trained workers in the area to boost the local economy.[338] Workers were encouraged to continue education through programs offered by the School for Workers in Madison and union councils financed special classes at the local

[337] "Ladies' Night," *Racine Labor,* 5 October 1962, p1.
[338] "Plans For Technical Institute Outline To Union Group Here," *Racine Labor,* 18 March 1960, p3.

vocational school to that end. The vocational school also had a program designed for workers whose jobs required advanced training to keep up with new technology.[339] Unemployed workers could take a ten-week course designed to improve their skills to get back into the labor force. This course was held in the evenings so that if workers were called back to their previous jobs they could continue their skills training.[340] An economics professor from the University of Wisconsin taught several different classes in Racine. Professor Jack Barbish had worked for several years at the School for Workers through the university's extension program. His Racine classes included Economics for Labor, which explained economic policy as it related to working-class people.[341]

The activity in Racine demonstrates that labor activists continued their efforts at worker education, social justice, as well as building class awareness and solidarity beyond the workplace. This activity is also evident at the national level in some unions. For example, BSEIU initiated several social justice campaigns in conjunction with efforts to organize office workers and hospital workers, sometimes seen as "un-organizable." These social justice campaigns increased with the election of George Sullivan to the presidency. Under Sullivan's leadership the union started focusing on national issues like automation, unemployment, and civil rights.[342] BSEIU started a scholarship program for members and their children in the 1960s. Arthur Heitzer, the son of Local 150 member Michael Heitzer was chosen to receive one such award in 1965.[343] Heitzer went on to become a lawyer and represented BSEIU Local 150 members when they were unjustly fired from St. Luke's Hospital in the late-1970s.

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[339] "Vocational School Launches Program to Train Technicians," *Racine Labor*, 02 September 1960, p13.
[340] "New Course Will Help You Improve Skills," *Racine Labor*, 13January 1961, p1.
[341] "Economics Simple as Barbish Explains It," *Racine Labor*, 19 February 1960, p2.
[342] Beadling, et al, *Need for Valor*,34-45; Ruth Milkman, *L.A. Story: Immigrant Workers and the Future of the U.S. Labor Movement* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006), 10, 62-69.
[343] SEIU Executive Office Files – David Sullivan Records, WPR, Box 20, Folder 2, letter to Beatty from Sullivan dated 30 April 1965; Beadling, et al, *Need for Valor,* 49.

Local activists sought to keep the needs of working people in thoughts of local, state, and national politicians in relation to the effects of automation. *Racine Labor* published articles throughout the decade that demonstrated the labor community's continuing efforts to keep abreast of technological changes as well as lobby for effective means to cope with unemployment caused by automation. Early in 1960 James B. Carey, secretary-treasurer for the AFL-CIO's industrial union department, reported that the combination of record high levels of industrial output combined with steady to rising unemployment should be seen as a warning of upcoming economic trouble.[344] The paper also reported segments of a speech by David J. McDonald, United Steel Workers of America President, at a conference of governors. McDonald suggested reducing hourly work-weeks to offset worker displacement caused by automation. He also declared "Bold action and cooperation between many forces, primarily, labor, management and government" was needed to resolve unemployment.[345] *Racine Labor* published excerpts from a letter from Walter Reuther, President of UAW, to industry leaders outlining a seven-point program to train industrial workers for white-collar work. Reuther called for company policies to promote from within, aptitude tests for production workers to determine other positions they may be capable of pursuing, and training programs.[346] Union members in Racine kept abreast of these national conversations as they hoped to work locally to minimize the negative impact on the Racine job market.

Finally, local labor activists sought to influence legislation at the local, state, national levels to minimize economic problems related to automation. Labor activists participated in the Committee on Aging of the Community Service council, which advocated for city services for

[344] "When Production is High but Jobs Decline, Look Out," *Racine Labor*, 04 March 1960, p7.
[345] "Automation Must Bring Less Hours," *Racine Labor*, 08 July 1960, p6.
[346] "UAW Proposes New Plan To Retrain Factory Workers," *Racine Labor*, 13 April 1962, p15.

elderly citizens.[347] Harold J. Thompson, UAW Secretary, advocated for the Forand bill (H.R. 4700) to provide better health coverage for retired workers in his weekly "The Secretary Says" column in *Racine Labor*. He urged readers, unions, and social justice groups to write letters and telegrams to their elected representatives to support this legislation.[348] Thompson often wrote articles related to broad-based economic and social policies to keep local residents and workers informed of important issues of the day. Local activists hailed Governor Nelson's plan to expand unemployment benefits in the state. Wisconsin had led the way in unemployment laws across the nation. The Racine labor community had participated in the call for more extensive unemployment benefits for workers due to the seasonal nature of foundry work in the city. Companies like Case laid off workers each year as demands of the agricultural industry rose and fell. In 1960 Governor Nelson signed a new law that increased the minimum and maximum weekly payments and changed the maximum length of receiving benefits from twenty-six and half weeks to thirty-four weeks. The new law extended payments to over 50,000 unemployed workers on the brink of reaching the maximum time limit under the previous law.[349] Racine unions also supported an early retirement program and benefits coupled with training and hiring young workers to gain experience and seniority at the 1964 and 1966 Wisconsin AFL-CIO state convention in Green Bay.[350] The activism, education programs, and outreach by labor activists during the 1960s demonstrate their efforts to improve the economic prospects of working people.

Labor community efforts to respond to and counteract economic and political changes did not stop the tide of plant closings, corporate restructurings, and layoffs that increased pace in the late-1960s. A partial list shows the increase in transfers of ownership and plant closings. The

[347] "Hails City's Concern Over Older Folks," *Racine Labor*, 11 March 1960, p11.
[348] "Health Insurance for Retired," *Racine Labor*, 29 January 1960, p6.
[349] "Benefits of new U.C. Law Pointed Up by Gov. Nelson," *Racine Labor*, 2 September 1960, p7.
[350] Kitzman papers, WHS, Box 1, Folder 3, AFL-CIO resolutions.

Sunbeam Corporation purchased John Oster Manufacturing Company, manufacturer of hair clippers, and moved the Racine operations to Florida in 1964. When severance packages could not be successfully negotiated, UAW Local 627 asked for approval to strike but eventually was able to get a better severance package through arbitration. B. D. Eisendrath Tanning was sold in 1965 and closed the next year, the last tannery in the city. The Horlick malted milk company lost local ownership in the 1940s and in 1969 Beecham, a British-owned firm acquired the company. Hartmann Luggage closed in 1962 after being purchased in 1955 by an outside management company and the operations moved to Tennessee. Both Case and Walker Manufacturing were purchased by Kern County Land Company in the mid-1960s, which was then purchased by Tenneco in 1967. Jacobsen Manufacturing became a subsidiary of Allegheny Ludlum Industries in 1969.[351] The biggest transfer occurred with the Hamilton Beach Company, the largest electrical machinery manufacturer in the city. Founded in 1910, the company produced fractional horsepower motors for electrical appliances. In 1962 the company started moving operations to plants outside of Racine. In 1968, Hamilton-Beach announced it was closing all Racine operations and laid off the few remaining members of UAW Local 577—down from 1300 to 300 members and over one hundred non-union clerical and office workers.[352]

A close look at the events surrounding the closing of Hamilton-Beach in Racine reveals the ways in which plant closing involved the whole community and not just the lost jobs of the workers at the plant. It demonstrates some of the ways unions and working-class activists sought to fight back against such closings and the uneven power relationships between corporations, local governments, and workers. Hamilton-Beach started moving production lines to facilities in

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[351] "Back Oster Local: Strike Authorization Approved," *Racine Labor*, 20 March 1964, p1; Richard H. Keehn, "Industry and Business," In *Racine: Growth and Change in a Wisconsin County*, edited by Nicholas C. Burckel (Racine: Racine County Board of Supervisors, 1977), 310 – 313.

[352] Keehn, "Industry and Business," 310 – 311; "Union Faces Problem of Hamilton-Beach Closing," *Racine Labor*, 26 January 1968, p1, 5.

North Carolina in 1966. When the union's bargaining committee, led by UAW Local 577 president George Iverson, could get no clear answer about the fate of the Racine operations, they asked for help from Sam Rizzo, UAW Sub-Regional Director. In response to Rizzo's letter, the company's general manager sent a statement explaining that rapid growth in blender production forced the company to move mixer production out of Racine. He said rumors that the company planned to move were false but cautioned, "I have also stated very clearly to union people that we, like any other business are in no position to guarantee long-range projection of employment levels."[353] A year and a half later, the plant was still being dismantled and hundreds of workers were being laid off.

George Iverson, a Hamilton-Beach employee for nearly twenty years with fourteen years experience serving in leadership positions in the union, felt overwhelmed and frustrated with the lack of communication and the lack of recourse. In May 1967, Iverson convinced Racine Mayor William Beyer to contact corporate headquarters asking for information on the Racine operations, but the mayor's requests went unanswered. In September, the union filed unfair labor practices charges against the company with the National Labor Relations Board claiming refusal to bargain per the contract clause on department closings and transfer of work. Iverson gave hours of testimony in the case, submitted a 19-page deposition, and went to Detroit to get UAW International lawyers to amend the charges and present additional evidence. However, the case was still pending as employment at Hamilton-Beach dropped from over 1,000 to just over 300.[354]

Workers and union officials were lost as to how to proceed. They tried every avenue available as far as using the grievance procedure in the contract, filing charges through the

[353] "Not Planning to Move, Says Hamilton-Beach," *Racine Labor*, 01 July 1966, p2.
[354] "Union Faces Problem of Hamilton-Beach Closing," *Racine Labor*, 26 January 1968, p1, 6.

NLRB, appealing to management for clear plans for the future, yet were at a distinct disadvantage. The company kept quiet on plans to close until the workforce had dropped below 300 and most of the production lines were shut down. The union recognized that the company held all the cards. Older workers and women faced the most uncertainty, but many workers with long years of service felt cheated out of their seniority, pensions, and ability to support their families based on what became a useless labor agreement with Hamilton-Beach. As late as January 1968, Employment Relations Manager, H. C. Scheible, told bargaining members that "nothing is definite yet," in a meeting where all in attendance could see workers dismantling and removing a machine out of the plant. He also argued that layoffs were normal during that part of the year and claimed workers were over-reacting to "wild rumors."[355] Yet, the inability to plan paralyzed union efforts to protect members and stifled workers' new job searches.

The union blamed management policy and federal and state tax policy for the dismantling of the Racine plants and transfer of operations to North Carolina. The union charged Hamilton-Beach with inflating expenses in Racine to make it appear unprofitable by charging plant expenses for the North Carolina facilities and the salary of at least one company official that did not actually work in Racine. Activists also expressed frustration at federal and state policies that allowed the free movement of capital across the nation. As Iverson explained, "this whole setup stinks…Our taxes help make up the difference when these southern states offer tax-free land or other bonuses to companies to lure them there."[356] Politicians recognized this as well. When U.S. Senator Gaylord Nelson introduced legislation to prevent states and municipalities from using tax-free bonds to induce businesses to move to their regions and to limit corporations' ability to write-off building expenditures from income taxes, he referenced an example similar to

[355] "Union Faces Problem of Hamilton-Beach Closing," *Racine Labor*, 26 January 1968, p1, 6; Irma Johnson, "Hamilton-Beach UAW Local 577: Layoffs Continue," *Racine Labor*, 2 February 1968, pp9.
[356] "Union Faces Problem of Hamilton-Beach Closing," *Racine Labor*, 26 January 1968, p1, 6.

the Hamilton-Beach situation that happened in Milwaukee.[357] Yet, the need for revenue and the appearance of job creation forced many municipalities to continue this practice and ultimately continued to tip the power away from governments and workers and toward corporations.

Most Hamilton-Beach workers found jobs in other plants in the area. Women had a hard time finding new employment. Pauline Partach wrote a long letter to *Racine Labor* detailing her frustration with the job market in Racine, the constant advice she received to go on welfare, and her inability to qualify for education programs to improve her typing speed. Partach, the 45-year old widow of a former Case employee, with over three years at Hamilton-Beach and raising a son, spent almost a year looking for work. She had worked in the clerical office for Hamilton-Beach but her typing skills kept her out of similar positions and she reported that no one would hire a middle-aged unskilled woman for factory work. She was finally offered a dish washing job at $1.25 per hour, which did not cover her expenses and another part-time position that did not guarantee more than five hours a week. After the plant closed, workers waited another seven months for a severance and pension package to be negotiated. With the company gone, there was little pressure to place on management to come to terms. In March 1968, Local 577 filed charges with WERC arguing that the company could not leave before August 1969 when the contract expired and filed an injunction in Circuit Court to prevent the company from moving any more equipment until the case was settled. However, that failed and the plant officially closed in June.[358]

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[357] "Nelson Offers Bill to Curb Plant Pirating," *Racine Labor*, 7 April 1967, p8.

[358] Irma Johnson, "Hamilton-Beach UAW Local 577: Placement Not Easy," *Racine Labor*, 12 April 1968, p13; Pauline Partach, "Relief Seems Tempting to Job Hunting Widow," *Racine Labor*, 17 January 1969, p1, 10; Irma Johnson, "Hamilton-Beach UAW Local 577: Meeting Crowded," *Racine Labor*, 16 February 1968, p9; Irma Johnson, "Hamilton-Beach UAW Local 577: 35 at Hearing," *Racine Labor*, 8 March 1968, p18; "Hearing Set On Injunction against Hamilton-Beach," *Racine Labor*, 8 March 1968, p2.

Although workers felt helpless to prevent the lost jobs and security associated with losing another plant from the city, the union helped maintain the social connections among workers. The Local 577 recreation department held a Valentines dance the week after the company officially announced it was closing operations. The bowling and dartball tournaments continued throughout the season. The Hamilton-Beach Credit Union Board of Directors moved quickly to discuss options for shareholders and those with loans and held meetings to explain options to those involved. The credit union was formed in May 1950 with company backing. After members heard all their options they voted 887 to 2 to dissolve the credit union's assets and reinvest. They voted to dissolve the credit union even before the company would confirm they were leaving and made arrangements to liquidate all the funds and deposit them with a central credit union service. The union paid for newspaper subscriptions for all members until March 1969 so that everyone could stay current with the pension and severance bargaining situation.[359] The former members of UAW Local 577 held annual Christmas parties for many years after the plant closed, maintaining the social ties and connections built over the years in the plant. As this first tide of plant closings illustrate, the impact of deindustrialization would have a heavy toll on industrial communities. The Racine case supports scholarship that points to early signs of the transformation of U.S. capitalist system.[360]

Race relations in the city created just as much upheaval as plant closings. William Jenkins served as an important figure in bridging the Racine labor and black working-class communities. As president of the Racine NAACP he had worked closely with the UAW in

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[359] "Board Votes to Dissolve Hamilton-Beach Credit Union," *Racine Labor*, 2 February 1968, p1, 5; "Hamilton-Beach Makes it Official: 'Goodbye,'" *Racine Labor,* 9 February 1968, p1; Irma Johnson, "Hamilton-Beach UAW Local 577: Meeting Crowded," *Racine Labor*, 16 February 1968, p9; "Vote to Dissolve Credit Union at Hamilton-Beach," *Racine Labor*, 23 February 1968, p1; "Hamilton-Beach Pension statement Terms Told," *Racine Labor,* 28 February 1969, p5; "Note to former Local 577 members," *Racine Labor,* 7 March 1969, p2.

[360] Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, *Deindustrialization of America: Plant Closings, Community Abandonment, and the Dismantling of Basic Industry* (New York: Basic Books, 1982).

establishing a UAW Fair Labor Practices Committee in the city in the late-1950s.[361] His ardent criticism of local union leaders' failure to adequately respond to racial discrimination within workplaces and union locals demonstrated his willingness to lead the UAW's anti-discrimination campaign in Racine.[362] Jenkins also placed heavy demands on the "leadership, if you can call it that" of the black community. He expected all leaders to actively work to improve the black and working-class communities in the city.[363] The Racine branch of the NAACP worked throughout the decade to pass a city ordinance to strengthen anti-discrimination measures in housing and private clubs by changing Real Estate Commission liquor licensing requirements. They worked with the Governor's Commission on Human Rights and the Racine Commission on Civil Rights to produce better legislation to protect minority citizens from discrimination.[364] The civil rights group invited local alderman to attend meetings and participate in drafting legislation for a city ordinance prohibiting discrimination in housing, employment, and local establishments. The NAACP submitted draft legislation to the mayor in 1963 but the city attorney said the city could not legislate individual behavior and judged the law would be illegal.[365] On his return from the March on Washington, Racine NAACP President Sloan Williams, II, organized a rally to kick off a membership drive and further publicize the call for antidiscrimination legislation in Racine.[366]

A case of rental discrimination fueled the NAACP calls for local legislation. A new black teacher, Obry Moss, moved to town but was denied a rental agreement in an apartment

[361] Racine NAACP, WHS, General Correspondence 1959, Box 1, Folder 1.
[362] Jenkins interview.
[363] Jenkins interview.
[364] Racine NAACP, WHS, Box 1, folder 1, letter from Governor's commission 25 Oct 60, letter to Racine Commission 26 April 1963.
[365] Racine NAACP, WHS, Box 1, Folder 1, letter to alderman, 9 July 1963 letter to national, "City Pass Rights Law?: Harvey: No; NAACP: Yes," *Racine Labor*, 09 August 1963, p1.
[366] "NAACP Rally Told: Equal Rights Fight 'Just Beginning,'" *Racine Labor*, 6September 1963, p1; Racine NAACP, Box 1, Folder 1, letter to Current 24 August 1963 re: Moss case.

building by the bank overseeing the property. The bank agreed to rent the house through the teachers union, which was arranging housing for new teachers moving to the area. However, when it was determined that the teacher was black, the bank backtracked. The bank suggested that the teacher meet the property owner, a local doctor, and have the owner decide if he should rent the property to Moss. When local union leaders tried to intercede on the teacher's behalf, the doctor said he would not be coerced into renting to someone he did not want to. The union, REA, contacted the Racine NAACP for assistance. A contingent of NAACP members began picketing both the doctor's office and the bank in late August 1963. Sloan Williams used the opportunity to press the mayor and Common Council to open discussion for antidiscrimination legislation.[367] The city's commission on human rights agreed that the incident was a case of discrimination and went on record supporting the NAACP's proposed legislation.[368] The Racine AFL-CIO council adopted a resolution stating "that the Racine AFL-CIO council protest and condemn this act of racial discrimination, and wholeheartedly joins, supports and commits itself to actively aid the Racine branch, NAACP, in its fight against such discrimination by all moral and physical means available."[369] While highlighting the continued struggle of black workers for full citizenship in the city, this case also illustrates the connection between labor and social justice organizations to improve conditions.

Black and other minority workers also sought the aid of the NAACP during the 1960s. Representatives often took workers' complaints to union leaders, to company human resource and management offices, and often wrote job recommendations for various employment openings in both white- and blue-collar positions. For example, in 1966 a worker approached

[367] Racine NAACP, WHS, general correspondence, Box 1, Folder 1, letter to Current 24 Aug 1963.
[368] "Cite Discrimination in Obry Moss Case," *Racine Labor*, 27 Sept 1963, p2; "Background of Moss Case," *Racine Labor*, 27 Sept 1963, p4, 10.
[369] "AFL-CIO Council Backs NAACP in Bank Picketing," *Racine Labor*, 18 October 1963, p1.

the NAACP to speak on his behalf about employment opportunities and equal employment practices of the American Motor Company in Kenosha, instead of going through UAW Local 72, possibly due to tensions within the union and between management and the union. Through Jenkins and Julian Thomas, the Racine NAACP had close ties with UAW locals in the city. The area's Fair Practices Committees, NAACP, and after 1963 the Urban League worked to improve economic and social conditions for all Racine citizens and not just their particular members. The Racine AFL-CIO council worked closely with the NAACP on local political issues as seen with the local civil rights legislation. They also coordinated political campaigns.[370] The AFL-CIO council sent a delegate to the Urban League of Racine's monthly meetings.[371] The 1960s also brought alliances between the NAACP and local women's social and political organizations. As president of the chapter, William Sloan, II joined the Women's Civic Council of Racine. The NAACP and League of Women Voters members participated in joint voter registration drives. NAACP representatives corresponded with local church officials at Holy Communion Lutheran Church, St. Lucy Catholic Church, and St. Paul's Baptist Church in particular on issues related to the Racine black community and more broadly on general social welfare issues.

The NAACP, Urban League, union FEP committees, and other organizations responded to deteriorating conditions within the minority neighborhoods in Racine. Due to ongoing housing shortages, black and other racial minorities were trapped in older, poorly-maintained rental units mostly in the Franklin neighborhood area, but also in several smaller areas located on the northern and southern edges of the city limits. For those black residents who could afford to buy homes, few were available. As Jenkins recalled, he and his wife spent several years trying to buy a home for his family. If his wife, who was very light-skinned, went to look at possible

[370] Jenkins interview; Racine NAACP, WHS, General Correspondence, letter from AMC to Thomas, 1 Aug 66 and letter from Jenkins to Thomas, 11 Aug 1966.
[371] "Two New Locals Join AFL-CIO Council Here," *Racine Labor*, 20 September 1963.

homes, she would have success but when Jenkins showed up, suddenly, the real estate agent would be unable to make a deal. He remembered how one of his white friends offered to broker a deal on behalf of his family, but he refused because his dignity and manhood would not allow him to accept such aid.[372] Black residents had fought for two decades to improve housing conditions through city and state legislation. As we have seen, the real estate lobby was able to mount a campaign against the housing legislation of the 1950s, which sought to alleviate deteriorating conditions in rental units. In the 1960s, when an anti-discrimination housing code still could not make it past a city council vote, it mixed with frustrations of poor employment opportunities, segregated and inadequate schools, lack of city services, and frustration over poverty to mobilize various segments of the minority, labor, and civil rights communities.

Access to affordable, quality housing remained an issue in Racine for non-white residents. In his 1966 "State of the City" address, Mayor Beyer made improving poor neighborhoods a priority. He blamed the city's decreasing tax base, increasing social problems, and "flight to suburbia" on the failure to implement sanitation codes and fair housing laws. In response to black residents' demands for anti-discrimination housing laws, the mayor formed the Hill-Kidd Committee to find a solution to Racine's housing problem. A year later, the Committee's plan called for a nine-month education campaign for fair housing. Some programs for neighborhood improvement were implemented, but they did little to resolve issues of overcrowding, deteriorating buildings, and lack of city services. The failure to pass a fair housing code prevented Racine from applying for federal urban renewal aid, yet the Racine real estate association and building trades' council advocated against federal funds as a threat to their industries. However, private enterprise did little to alleviate the continual housing shortage in the city. Racial discrimination also severely limited the options of minority residents. The

[372] Jenkins interview.

mayor's 1967 address again stressed the need for better race relations, housing, and urban renewal.[373]

Tensions surrounding race relations remained high in the city. Threats and rumors of riots in August 1967 led to emergency meetings with city, religious, labor, and civil rights leaders. Community centers in black and Latino neighborhoods stayed open into the evenings with events designed to keep young adults off the streets, job service agents offered job referrals in poor neighborhoods, and groups organized public meetings. The Franklin Community Center and the Southside Community Center opened in the early-1960s to provide space for neighborhood children to play, to give residents more opportunities to meet with social service organizations that would hold office hours several days a week, and to provide job training and employment resource information. The centers opened during the early push for better community service in minority neighborhoods. By the mid-1960s the Franklin neighborhood had gained many new Mexican American residents and minorities made up two-third of the residents in the area.[374] Over the next several months services at the Spanish Center increased: job, financial planning, and language courses were offered. Local activists ran for city offices to improve representation in Racine's first ward. Local labor unions were encouraged to talk with members about pushing for an open housing bill in the city. Finally, in June 1968 the city's efforts culminated in a Race Unity Week that included a picnic and panel discussions on race relations, education, and religion. However, tensions remained high and minority residents felt betrayed by the lack of actual improvements.

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[373] "New Housing Needed to Save City, Mayor Says," *Racine Labor*, 22 April 1966, p8; "YWCA Franklin Project Gaining Area Acceptance," *Racine Labor*, 15 July 1966, p1; "Hill-Kidd Committee Urges 'Compromise' Educational Campaign for Fair Housing," *Racine Labor*, 27 January 1967, p14; "Mayor Stresses Renewal, Race Relations, Housing," *Racine Labor*, 21 April 1967, p1.

[374] "Race Tension Exists in Franklin District," *Racine Labor*, 3 Sept 65, p25; "YWCA Franklin Project Gaining Area Acceptance," *Racine Labor,* 15 July 1966 p1, 6; "Find Racial Situation Growing Worse in Racine," *Racine Labor,* 9 jun 67, p10.

In the first week of August, a fight at a party spread into the streets and turned into a neighborhood wide disturbance in the Washington Park area. A few people were seriously injured in fights and one from a gunshot wound. People broke windows in neighborhood businesses, some stores were looted, and about thirty people were arrested for a range of offenses including disorderly conduct. Local residents felt that the disturbance (called a riot by residents and city officials) had its roots in the failure of the larger community to take action on minority grievances. In response to the disturbance a group of residents formed the Concerned Minority Citizens association and submitted a list of recommendations to the mayor including hiring minorities for police and fire departments, as teachers, administrators, and social service workers, and a call for a minimum housing code. As Julian Thomas explained on the "UAW Speaks" radio broadcast the next week, young minorities in the city had become disillusioned because "they see us beat at the doors of city hall, the welfare office and other agencies and come away empty handed." [375]

A sociological study of Racine conducted over the decade demonstrated that the increased concentration of Mexican American and black residents in Racine's inner city left them in "isolated ghettos." Surveys revealed that residents felt isolated and hoped for better integration into the economy and society of the city. Sixty-three percent of black residents felt that housing discrimination limited their ability to secure better employment opportunities and education opportunities for their children.[376] These conditions fueled the anger and frustration demonstrated by the riot. Racine was not unique. Government policies at the national and state

[375] "Cool It, Baby," *Racine Labor*, 4 August 1967, p1; "Good Advice: Keep Cool and Use Common Sense," *Racine Labor*, 4 August 1967, p2; "Locals Urged to Push Open Housing," *Racine Labor*, 17 November 1967, p7; "Racine Spanish Center," *Racine Labor*, 29 December 1967, p17; "Schmitt Challenges Labor to Rally to Aid of Poor," *Racine Labor*, 10 May 1968, p1; "Race Unity Week to be Marked by Picnic, Panel Discussions," *Racine Labor*, 7 June 1968, p1; "Squibs," *Racine Labor*, 9 August 1968, p1; "Negroes Hit Inaction as Riot Cause," *Racine Labor*, 9 August 1968, p2; "Says Racine's Apathy Keeps Minority Down," *Racine Labor*, 16 August 1968.
[376] Shannon and McKim, "Attitudes Toward Education and the Absorption of Inmigrant Mexican-Americans and Negroes in Racine."

levels shifted funding to the suburbs and away from urban centers. Riots occurred in the late-1960s in Milwaukee, Tampa, Cincinnati, Chicago, Baltimore, and Detroit. The Kerner Commission charged with studying areas hit by riots, pointed to unemployment, underemployment, police practices, and housing issues that led to what has been termed the urban crisis. The report called for national action to combat "discrimination, create jobs, renew urban areas, and build more public housing" outside of ghettos.[377]

Another disturbance caused newly elected Mayor Kenneth L. Huck to institute a twenty-four hour curfew for the city. Heated city council meetings that followed pitted residents against each other as some white residents felt that aldermen should not give in to minority demands through riots and black residents demanded action on housing in particular, but also access to good jobs and recreation centers. In their continued support for the right of decent housing for all, *Racine Labor* ran a front-page series of photos depicting some of the housing conditions in the city called "Shame of Racine: Indecent Housing." Civil rights activists and residents kept pressure on city officials to make concrete changes to local conditions. In August, thirty welfare recipients held a sit-in at the county social services office and presented a letter containing thirty-one demands to the director. Most demands called for better treatment by case workers, more access to services, and a training program for caseworkers. This list of demands led to an investigation and recommendations for changes within city and county services that played a role in the social workers strike. The Milwaukee priest, civil rights activist, and NAACP youth branch leader Father Groppi came to Racine and led a young people's march for better social and economic services. Groppi was known nationwide as a supporter of better housing and social

[377] Joshua B. Freeman, *American Empire: The Rise of a Global Power, the Democratic Revolution at Home: 1945-2000* (New York: Penquin Books, 2012), 239-41. For a discussion of Milwaukee see Patrick Jones, *The Selma of the North: Civil Rights Insurgency in Milwaukee* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

services for minorities in Wisconsin.[378] Race relations, equal access to city services, and discrimination in housing and employment plagued Racine throughout the decade. The heightened visibility of racial upheaval that played out in the city and across the nation also highlighted frictions within the local black community.

Efforts to address racism were complicated by economic differences among black residents. Joe William Trotter, Jr. shows how the black working-class community in Milwaukee often put class issues before race as middle-class black reformers focused on integration and equal access.[379] Some of this tension can also be seen in Racine's black community politics during the 1960s. By the mid-1960s leaders in the NAACP branch started to focus on building alliances with local government, business, and religious leaders instead of the close alliance with the local labor community. The efforts to place black candidates into leadership positions in private industry and local government throughout the decade gives some proof of this shifting focus. More importantly, the Racine NAACP branch presidents built close ties with city officials and sat on multiple advisory boards related to human rights, housing, and educational issues. While these issues concerned all members of the black community, the focus on political lobbying limited the amount of organizing and community building needed to relate to many of the working-class black residents. However, local black leaders also spent a significant amount of time in the decade working on perceptions of the black community as a whole. They worked with the Kiwanis Club to remove images of "Aunt Jemima" from their annual Pancake Day

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[378] Michael Holmes, "Politics and Government, 1920 – 1976," In *Racine: Growth and Change in a Wisconsin County*, edited by Nicholas C. Burkel (Racine: Racine County Board of Supervisors, 1977), 256; Loren Norman, "Squibs," *Racine Labor*, 9 may 1969, ; "Criticize Curfew," *Racine Labor*, 9 May 1969, p8; "Shame of Racine: Indecent Housing," *Racine Labor*, 6 June 1969, p1; "Welfare Clients Present 31 Demands," *Racine Labor*, 29 August 1969, p6; "CISSS That's Coalition for an Improved Social Service System," *Racine Labor*, 29 August 1969, part 2, p5; "Welfare Crisis Told," *Racine Labor*, 5 September 1969, p6; Groppi Sparks Legal Hassle; He Gets His Publicity, too," *Racine Labor*, 10 October 1969, p1, 2; Jenkins interview; Dan Day, "From Father Groppi, Priest and Activist to Father Groppi, father and bus driver," *Kingman Daily Miner*, 3 Jul 81, p4..

[379] Trotter, Jr., *Black Milwaukee*, 126-27, 162 -3, and 213.

sponsored by the Quaker Oats Company. The NAACP argued that the images and the actor that usually represented the character, dressed in the attire of a domestic slave, perpetuated racial stereotypes, which reinforced notions of racial inferiority and prejudice.[380] NAACP representatives also spoke with industry leaders about hiring more black workers at city plants. Yet, most of their efforts to improve black community life in Racine were conducted through political lobbying and court cases.

Middle-class leaders limited the Racine NAACP's approach to certain problems. When minority residents complained about police harassment and brutality in public spaces, the NAACP's solution was to work to keep black people from gathering outside of local clubs and bars. In a letter to the recently formed Urban League of Racine, NAACP President Julian Thomas wrote that the executive board was concerned "about the problem of loitering in front of Taverns, and the explosive situations which could result between offenders and policemen."[381] Scholars have noted that in the postwar period a trend started across the nation to police urban spaces in new ways that made public behavior by black people suddenly illegal.[382] By calling for an effort to eliminate loitering and even by seeing loitering as the problem, the NAACP response reaffirmed what local residents saw as another attempt to blame the victim. Instead of real efforts to increase employment opportunities, solve overcrowding issues through a fair housing policy, and educating the police force, most efforts by city and civic leaders offered policies that put the weight back onto the residents themselves. Thomas's actions reaffirmed

[380] Racine NAACP, WHS, letter from national 15 April 1963.
[381] Racine NAACP, WHS, letter to Carroll Dickinson 24 Jul 1965, Box 1, Folder 2.
[382] Heather Ann Thompson, "Why Mass Incarceration Matters: Rethinking Crisis, Decline, and Transformation in Postwar American History," *JAH*, Vol 97, no. 3 (Dec 2010): p703 – 734; Simon E. Balto, "'Occupied Territory': Police Repression and Black Resistance in Postwar Milwaukee," *Journal of African American History* 98:2 (Spring 2013): 229-252.

some residents' belief that his notions of middle-class respectability colored his leadership of the NAACP.

Class remained a key element within black politics in Racine. By 1969 a serious class divide existed within the NAACP and in the community. Thomas called a special meeting of the executive board to address claims that low membership in the Racine branch "stems from the fact that my leadership has been too MIDDLE CLASS and, that as President, my action or lack of action is interpreted as local branch policy." These complaints against Thomas came from the labor community as well. For example, Loren Norman, *Racine Labor* editor, criticized Thomas's approach in dealing with the mayor's poverty committee. When Thomas demanded that poor people or people qualified to speak for poor people should have seats on the committee, Norman took offense because of how he perceived Thomas' approach to community problems as out of touch with black and Latino working poor in the city. He asked why Thomas, a mid-level manager at Case with a relatively large salary, was more qualified than a working-class citizen like Norman?[383] Loren Norman was the son of a mineworker and worked five years as a mineworker before he started writing for the United Mineworkers union newspaper. He moved to Racine in 1940 to work on the *Racine Day*, which was reorganized into the *Racine Labor* after bankruptcy in 1941. Norman always thought of himself as a member of the working-class and remained a Socialist throughout his life.[384] During the controversy, Thomas hoped to create a new leadership and organizational structure that would make the Racine NAACP "the type of branch that all people concerned with social justice will want to be a part of." Thomas recognized that his strong personality may have interfered with the work of the organization and

[383] Loren Norman, "Squibs," *Racine Labor*, 4 March 1966, p1, 4.
[384] "Retired Labor Paper Editor Loren Norman Dies at 72," *Racine Labor*, 3 Feb 1978, p1, 5; Dick Olson, "Roaring Seventies," *Racine Labor*, 3 Feb 78, p4.

offered an open dialogue to make needed changes.[385] On the other hand, when LeRoy Wooley kicked off his 1968 campaign for alderman, he promoted himself as clearly aligned with working-class issues, the only black skilled trade worker at Case, and as an active member of both labor and civil rights organizations. His campaign team was made up of labor activists as well.[386] While both external and internal racial tensions impacted community life, working-class citizens sought both labor and social justice organizational aid in their struggle for economic and social justice during the 1960s. This tension highlights the centrality of working-class politics in Racine's black community, even within the context of the civil rights movement's demands for political rights based on racial identity.

Within the labor community itself, issues over political action and race relations created tensions. The skilled trade locals remained stubbornly segregated throughout the decade. Jenkins recalled his tenure as AFL-CIO council president as particularly trying because of these issues.[387] While Racine's labor leaders prided themselves on unity throughout the postwar period and during the initial conversations about merging the AFL and CIO in the 1950s, it was one of the last communities to receive a merged charter in 1960. The AFL unions, while powerful in their industries, felt that the larger CIO unions, mostly UAW locals, would push an agenda they did not agree with. Sectoral differences also affected electoral politics. The 1962 Democratic Congressional election created a heated debate between the machinists, building trades, and the old-CIO locals. The trade unions endorsed Jay Schwartz, son of labor lawyer Ben Schwartz who served as the legal counsel for the Racine Trades and Labor Council before the merger. Other unions wanted to support Gerald T. Flynn, a career politician who had previously held the post. After the election, which Flynn won, the trade union locals disputed the use of

[385] Racine NAACP, General Correspondence, Oct 1969, WHS.
[386] "Total Ward Improvement is Goal of LeRoy Wooley," *Racine Labor*, 22 Mar 1968, p8.
[387] Jenkins interview.

Committee for Political Education (COPE) funds and the debate extended over a number of years and leadership changes in the council.[388] This issue carried over from the tensions during the Racine AFL-CIO Council in the late-1950s. Schwartz would go on to become a prominent lawyer who followed his father's example of working on behalf of the Racine labor community. He negotiated contracts for local service employees and teachers during the 1970s. The newly elected officers at the 1964 installation ceremony all spoke about uniting the labor movement and working more cooperatively. Incoming President Jenkins said, "We'll have to join together in a united effort to make this a better council." Re-elected Secretary Ray Marhefke said, "I don't believe we can indulge ourselves in factionalism. We need and must have unity."[389] Clearly, more work toward unity needed to happen. Yet, the divisions between skilled trades and industrial and service unions did not lead to a permanent separation of the community. These divisions also highlight the fact that room existed within the labor community for a range of political allegiances.

Throughout the turbulent 1960s, Racine's labor activists successfully mobilized the labor community around the Case strike, using it and the Kohler strike to build on the narrative of the valuable role of working-class solidarity and politics for the economic growth of the city. A strategic use of labor's history in the city also played a key role in sustaining a sense of working-class consciousness and collectivism, even as racial and gendered critiques helped broaden and diversify the members. Successful organizational drives, the changes at Case, organizing and public actions related to civil rights, and new public employees and service workers members

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[388] Jenkins interview; "Set First meeting for Merged AFL-CIO," *Racine Labor*, 10 June 1960, p1; "Machinists Lodge 437 Backs Jay Schwartz," *Racine Labor*, 20 April 1962, p1; "Machinists Lodge Raps Flynn, Restates Support of Schwartz," *Racine Labor*, 25 May 1962, p5; "Flynn, Schwartz Feud Erupts," *Racine Labor*, 15 June 1962, p2; "34 Union Officers Here Form Labor for Schwartz Unit," *Racine Labor*, 24 August 1962, p2; "Close Ranks, Flynn Urges," *Racine Labor*, 14 Sept 1962, p2.

[389] "Need for Unity Stressed as AFL-CIO Installs Officers," *Racine Labor*, 19 June 1964, p1.

fueled the growth and solidarity of Racine's labor movement in the 1960s. Despite continuing issues surrounding corporate restructuring and plant closings, race relations, and open housing, successful efforts to incorporate more workers into the labor movement and to support a broad notion of economic and social justice prevailed in Racine. Women workers and working-class women's organizing also expanded the vision of Racine's labor community. Activists in the labor movement remained committed to this broad-based approach despite the changing political rhetoric of individual rights surrounding the civil rights movement. The continued growth of public sector and low-wage service unions strengthened the ranks of labor. This solidarity proved invaluable in the coming decade, especially as public sector and healthcare workers looked for organizing and strike support in a hostile political environment.

Chapter 3: Working-Class Solidarity in Racine amid the Transformation of Capital

By the 1970s, Racine had a long history of manufacturing, financial, and personal services, including a great diversity of industries such as auto parts, small engines, cooling systems, other industrial and household goods, and financial and healthcare institutions. In 1972, a few years after the height of industrial employment in the late-1960s, Racine's 262 manufacturing firms employed over 10,000 workers. Construction and skilled trade workers, garment industry employees, white collar office workers, city employees, and low-wage service workers added to the unionized presence as fifty union locals had 17,000 members. This represented over twenty-six percent of the city's workforce.[390] Labor activists had gained vast experience negotiating changing economic, political, and social conditions. While Racine's economy was clearly declining in the 1970s, workers used every available means to hold on to the gains they achieved, spread those gains to others, and fight for greater effectiveness in their class struggles. Racine's working-class activists continued their civic and community involvement, fought against the diminishing tax base, and challenged Democrats to support for working-class interests at the state and national level. Worker militancy helped fuel the momentum of class struggle in the decade as fire fighters, janitors, teachers, and industrial workers all went on strike to protect themselves from economic uncertainty and employer-sought take backs. Even late in the decade, when it seemed as if economic decline and political conservatism would overwhelm the city, the labor community actively supported hospital workers and teachers as they went on strike for better wages and working conditions and to

[390] "Proposal," Business Records Survey, WHS, Box 1, Folder 11, p 6 – 8; Joseph M. Kelly, "Growth of Organized Labor," in *Racine: Growth and Change in a Wisconsin County*, edited by Nicholas C. Burkel (Racine, WI: Racine County Board of Supervisors, 1977), 345 – 397; Richard H. Keehn, "Industry and Business," in *Racine: Growth and Change in a Wisconsin County*, edited by Nicholas C. Burckel (Racine: Racine County Board of Supervisors, 1977), 281, 282, 306-07.

obtain a sense of dignity and power at work. This chapter demonstrates that Racine's labor community remained not only relevant, but relatively robust while, as scholars have pointed out, nationally, the labor movement lost members, support from political allies, and visibility in the broader public sphere.

The Racine labor community's continued ability to garner support from both its members and the public complicates a declension narrative of U.S. labor history that laments the movement's loss of relevance in 1970s. Activists and workers in Racine demonstrated this solidarity through support of a diverse group of workers throughout the city and across employment sectors as the economic uncertainty and political pressure continued to build. Many workers and their unions faced defeats in workplaces, yet sustained their solidarity and commitment to a broad-based class politics, celebrated some successes, and ended the decade with political victories on the local level and continued hope for the economic security promised by the postwar liberal agenda. The momentum of the 1950s and 1960s carried the militant working-class solidarity through the decade. Racine's workers continued to demonstrate a broad interest in economic, social, and political issues. Thus, despite several waves of the multifaceted elements of deindustrialization, employer resistance to workers' struggles for economic security, city budget issues, politically risky public sector worker strikes, and a changing social environment, workers still had a strong sense of class solidarity and a shared interest in building on and protecting previous gains.

Successful campaigns by public sector workers and low-wage service workers and the broad support throughout the labor community and within the larger Racine community during the 1970s demonstrated how effective working-class activists had been over the previous decades in building a sense of community, responding to varied demands for access to the rights

of economic and social citizenship in the city, and using their combined political muscle to impact a wide range of working people. In his examination of 1970s working-class identity, Cowie concludes that workers became more politically conservative, holding on to their industrial union jobs despite a growing sense of despair and hopelessness for a better life and resisting pushes by those outside to gain access to their tenuous hold on middle-class life. Yet, workers in Racine demonstrated a greater effort to include those struggling to gain access to a middle-class standard of living, based on their working-class solidarity. Public sector unionization had brought municipal employees and teachers into the organized labor movement. The expansion AFSCME and SEIU increased the numbers of unionized private and public service workers in the city, especially in the realm of the healthcare industry. The labor community rallied behind public workers and inspired low-wage service workers to push back against both management resistance and union bureaucracy to improve their wages and working conditions. The labor militancy and cross-racial class commitment to expanding economic and social citizenship to more of Racine's working class created an atmosphere of working-class solidarity and commitment to common goals in the city.

This chapter focuses mainly on workers outside of industrial workplaces in the city including fire fighters, state employees, teachers, and hospital service workers. Their experiences illustrate how Racine's labor community supported high-risk strike activity even as the economic upheavals and conservative pushback shifted the public sympathy away from the labor movement. As the scholarship shows, on the national level, the labor movement lost members, support from political allies, and relevancy with the public in general. Incorporating local stories, like the one in Racine, into the national narrative can help complicate the story of labor's decline by pointing to areas of effective negotiation within the changing political climate.

In Racine, working people indeed faced challenges. But, unlike the challenges from within of expanding access for black and female workers in earlier decades, new outside forces—political conservatives in the region and labor leaders from outside the city—offered new obstacles to the goals of the labor community. The strong connection to working-class politics, the long history of labor activism, and a sense of class solidarity enabled Racine's labor community to willingly meet those challenges throughout the decade.

City and county workers pushed for greater gains in increasing numbers during the 1970s in Racine and the labor community used its political power to back these workers. Joseph McCartin has rightly compared the militant nature of public worker unionism in the period to industrial union activists in the 1930s. Teachers, fire fighters, police officers, sanitation workers, as well as clerical workers flocked to public sector unions. Strike activities were also impressive, with 478 strikes in 1975 alone.[391] In Racine, fire fighters, teachers, and school janitors demonstrated public worker militancy with the backing and support of the city's industrial workers. A group of citizens from the rural area of the county formed a group called Stop Outlandish Spending (SOS) in the late-1960s to protest rising county taxes to cover expenditures in the city. The push against government spending raised real concerns for city employees, who feared cuts to schools and other social services in the inner-city. SOS campaigning led to voters' rejecting a school bond proposal, even after an inner-city elementary school was forced to close in the middle of the school year due to deteriorating building conditions. SOS candidates gained two seats on the Unified School Board and helped conservative Kenneth Huck defeat the labor-backed incumbent William H. Beyer in the 1969

[391] Joseph A. McCartin, "'A Wagner Act for Public Employees': Labor's Deferred Dream and the Rise of Conservatism, 1970-1976," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 95, No. 1 (June 2008): 123-148.

mayoral election. Pressure from taxpayers to lower municipal expenditures also led the Common Council to walk a tough line with unions representing city employees.[392]

The New Deal and postwar policies that facilitated the movement of families to the suburbs reshaped the political alignment of urban areas. As white, middle-class families moved outside the city, city and county budgets became stretched due to shrinking tax bases. The workers who moved held on to most of the well-paying jobs and positions of power in the city, which directed even more funds to providing services for these developing suburbs and leaving older, central city services and public works projects without the needed funds to make improvements. While the labor movement and liberal agenda that supported unions during the high-tide postwar prosperity opened the door for many workers, the ways in which they reshaped society privileged those who held the best union jobs (white, male, suburbanites) in growth industries. By the 1970s a growing social divide existed.[393] For example, the link between the decline of urban areas coupled with the growth of nearby suburbs allowed white homeowners to prosper from low taxes and government subsidized loans (e.g. G I Bill/FHA mortgages) while excluding racial minorities and preventing tax dollars to fund improvements to the inner-city public services in Oakland and Detroit in the postwar period. White, male suburbanites were able to forget the ways that government expenditures contributed to their growing wealth and take up a narrative of independence and self-help that political conservatives embraced, severing any remaining ties to the postwar liberal agenda of expanding economic citizenship and social

[392] Micahel Holmes, "Politics and Government: 1920 – 1976," in *Racine: Growth and Change in a Wisconsin County*, edited by Nicholas C. Burckel (Racine: Racine County Board of Supervisors, 1977), 255-257.
[393] Joshua B. Freeman, *American Empire: The Rise of a Global Power, the Democratic Revolution at Home: 1945-2000* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012), 123-24, 240; Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

justice.[394] This realignment of power structures, which occurred across the nation, created new challenges for Racine's labor community as they had to increasingly battle rural conservatives for seats on the city council, county council and school board throughout the 1970s. Activists had to counter the developing narrative that elided labor's important role in bringing prosperity to so many more Americans thus de-legitimizing continuing efforts to help bring those left out fully into the new landscape.

In Racine the 1970s began with public workers posed to capitalize on the labor community's previous gains. 1970 started with fire fighters negotiating an improved contract after a few days of calling in sick during failed bargaining talks. Thirty-one fire fighters called in sick on Tuesday, 6 January forcing one fire station to close for the day and bringing a successful end to dead-locked negotiations that had been stalled since September. Fire fighters remained frustrated because the city failed to pay them at a level similar to police officers. However, after an all-day bargaining meeting, fire fighters and city negotiators reached an agreement for a series of pay raises over the course of the year, an increase in the clothing allowance, and better insurance benefits.[395]

When the city council voted to grant police officers and other city employees but not fire fighters a raise just two weeks later, Racine fire fighters went out on strike for 71 hours. The city immediately filed an injunction against their union, Local 321, because Wisconsin's public sector laws prohibited strikes. However, after an emergency Common Council meeting city aldermen agreed to what amounted to binding arbitration to a "blue ribbon" committee's determination of wages and fringe benefits for the fire fighters and also agreed not to discipline

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[394] Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003; Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*, 2nd edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

[395] "Agreement Is Reached Between Firemen, City, Contract Signed Thursday," *Racine Labor*, 9 Jan 1970, p 1, 3.

striking workers. As per the agreement reached at the emergency council meeting, a blue ribbon committee would be convened and report back by early May, with whatever decision to be implemented by 01 June. Although Racine County Judge Richard Harvey agreed to dismiss the city's suit, he issued a written judgment condemning the fire fighters and the "rash of illegal strikes by public employees" as a warning to Wisconsin's public workers.[396] Judge Harvey's reaction was typical of much of the judicial response to public sector strikes during the early-1970s. Public workers received minimal support from public officials and the judiciary and often faced injunctions or arrests.[397]

Racine's fire fighters rallied again when alderman attempted to remove forty captains and lieutenants out of the bargaining unit for Local 321. Union members brought other labor activists to the city council meeting, argued that the city would be in breach of their existing agreement, and successfully changed the council's course of action. Speakers in support of the firefighters included those in local Machinist and Teamsters unions as well as the Racine AFL-CIO council president. Fire fighters also brought letters from 39 of the 40 members in question affirming their desire to stay in Local 321.[398] This continued support from other members of the Racine labor community and commitment by most of the Local 321 members to take a stand for their group interests allowed the fire fighters to continue their efforts for economic security.

Like the fire fighters, teachers and janitors continued to demand better working conditions, increased wages and benefits, and a voice in decision making. Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 152, representing the janitors and food service workers for the

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[396] "Suit Against Firemen Dismissed, Strike Ends," *Racine Labor*, 30 January 1970, p1, 5.
[397] Joseph McCartin has detailed the backlash against public sector unions and strikes during the 1970s. See "A Wagner Act for Public Employees": Labor's Deferred Dream and the Rise of Conservatism, 1970-1976," *JAH*, Vol. 95, no 1 (June 2008), 123 – 148; Joseph McCartin, *Collision Course: Ronald Reagan, the Air Traffic Controllers, and the Strike that Changed America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 215-216.
[398] "Firefighters Win Round In City Council," *Racine Labor*, 3 July 1970, p2.

Racine Unified School District, went on strike in January 1971 mainly over cost of living increases. The 270 members felt that the seven percent cost of living adjustments offered by the board was insufficient because other district employees received nine percent increases and the operating budget increased by eleven percent. Although Local 152 members voted to strike over the weekend, union leaders asked members to wait until Tuesday to give the school board an opportunity to reopen negotiations. However, when the board did not offer to restart negotiations, janitors started picketing the school board on Wednesday, 13 January in subzero temperatures. School janitors and other service employees issued a statement aligning themselves with Racine County taxpayers against administrators who received twenty-five percent raises and used state and federal funds to supplement wages for cafeteria workers and some other district personnel while local taxes had recently been increased. This tactic showed an attempt to get support from the rural areas where residents had been protesting increased taxation while also securing economic benefits for the lowest-paid county workers.

The union also linked the recent closing of Howell School (the mostly-black elementary school closed during winter break due to a failed building inspection) to the school board's refusal to put children's safety first. Members also fought the reclassification of engineers to lower pay grades by removing license requirements for these positions. The strike brought the Unified School Board back to the bargaining table and schools went down to part-time schedules during the eight-day strike. After a week of additional negotiations, the union and school board agreed to wage increases for most of the employees covered by Local 152's bargaining unit, reversed the attempt to downgrade engineers, upgraded some workers in food service, and added three cents to the cost of living with a lump-sum payment to cover another portion of the

difference between the rising cost of living and workers' wages.[399] The public debate and strike paid off for Local 152 in a much improved labor contract.

Teachers in Wisconsin and across the United States went on strike in 1972. Municipal governments in the United States struggled to maintain budgets during the inflationary 1970s to cover infrastructure, education, and other expenses. Shrinking tax bases due to deindustrialization and suburbanization severely limited cities' ability to justify expenditures on social services to a resistant public. As Bluestone and Harrison have detailed, cities' efforts to remain attractive to an increasingly mobile industrial capital severely impacted both city budgets and taxpayers' wallets.[400] While Racine's teachers had started to bargain for wages in the 1960s after the passage of the Municipal Employee Relations Act (MERA), they did not become very active in city political and social issues until their affiliation with the National Education Association in1970. However, teachers quickly gained momentum just as other public workers across the nation went on strike and advocated for greater authority in their workplaces and higher wages. In January 1970, Racine Education Association (REA) Local 325 released its bargaining proposals for the upcoming year. In their statement, teachers aligned themselves with the labor movement, both locally and nationally. While emphasizing the need to have a say in class sizes, workloads, and salaries, the statement also criticized the county for ignoring inner-city schools and demanded that funds be allocated to build a replacement for Howell School and acknowledged support of labor's boycott of GE Products. Local 325 President Michael Margosian said, "It is absolutely necessary for solidarity among unions to utilize maximum strength. Our local heartily endorses and supports the boycott of GE products," in explanation of

[399] "Service Employees Strike Unified School District," *Racine Labor*, 15 January 1971, p1, 3; "Local 152 Notice to Citizens," *Racine Labor*, 15 January 1971, p2 "Heavy Bargaining in School Dispute," *Racine Labor*, 22 January 1971, p8; "Schools Normal as Service Strike Ends," *Racine Labor*, p1.
[400] Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America: Plant Closings, Community Abandonment, and the Dismantling of Basic Industry* (New York: Basic Books, 1982).

why this was included in their proposals for the year. This represented a major turning point for Racine's teachers, who had been previously criticized within the labor community for not taking an active role in working-class issues.[401]

On 25 September 1972 about 1,500 teachers in Racine, members of the Racine Education Association, went on strike and picketed all 47 schools in the county district (representing 32,000 students), making it the sixth teachers' strike in Wisconsin that year. Negotiations began in May but moved slowly and the Unified School Board unilaterally implemented work rules that the bargaining committee rejected concerning elementary school teacher planning time. In late-August, at a union meeting of over 1100 teachers, members voted seven-to-one to authorize a strike. A big concern at the meeting and among teachers and activists was the school board members' willingness to disregard the bargaining table and enact arbitrary administrative rules, for them it showed a sign of disrespect for the teachers and for collective bargaining. Local 325 set up a "crisis center" at 1234 Washington Avenue to serve as a strike headquarters and information center. The week before the strike, teachers did informational picketing at a few community schools and spent the weekend distributing brochures detailing their concerns and goals for bargaining at shopping centers in the area. Union officials kept negotiations open and sought mediation to resolve the bargaining standstill. Teachers returned to work seventeen days later on 11 Oct 1972 when workers voted 1031 to 108 to accept a proposal by the court to supervise negotiations between REA and the school district. As usual, union officials reached out to the city labor council for support and the Alliance for Labor voted to support REA Local 325 in their contract negotiations.[402] A big concern for labor activists was the resistance of the

[401] "Teachers Union Offers Proposals for 1970 Salary Negotiations," *Racine Labor*, 16 January 1970, p2; Kelly, "Growth of Organized Labor," 386-389.
[402] "Racine Teachers Strike Schools," *Milwaukee Journal*, 25 Sept 72, p 1; "Teachers Return in Racine," *Milwaukee Journal*, 12 Oct 1972; "Teachers Authorize Strike," *Racine Labor*, 1 September 1972, p3; "Alliance for Labor

school board and public officials in general during the months of bargaining between the teachers and Unified School District board members. This tension would last throughout the decade.

Public employees were not the only workers at odds with management in Racine during the early-1970s. Workers in industrial plants in the city also fought back against attempted contract take-backs and other assaults on their economic security. In August 1970 members of UAW Local 642 went on the first strike since 1935 against the Dumore Company. Opened in 1913, by Louis Hamilton of the Hamilton-Beach Company, Dumore produced small motor-operated electronics for the automobile industry and home and light-industrial products. The members of Local 642 wanted to add a strike clause as the final step in the grievance procedure but when the company refused they decided to go on strike. The following week, over one thousand UAW Local 553 members went on strike against Belle City Malleable, one of the largest foundries in the Midwest. Belle City employees protested the company's attempt to change how incentive workers were paid for non-piece work. Union officials argued that the company wanted to intimidate individual workers and to keep these employees in a part-time status for incentive pay. Workers wanted to keep the existing contract language that called for an average of their normal incentive pay scale while doing other duties. These two strikes illustrate employers' continuing efforts to maximize profits at the expense of employees' wages and to maintain greater power in workplace relations.

During the negotiations, community members and other workers supported the UAW strikers. Local bowling alleys opened their doors to the strikers and as usual, area unions contributed to the strike funds of each striking local. The Dumore and Belle City workers also

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Action Votes Support of Teachers," *Racine Labor*, 15 September 1972, p1; "Teachers' Strike?," *Racine Labor*, 22 September 1972, p1.

held a strikers' slow pitch softball game. SEIU Local 152 issued a public statement of support for the UAW strikers and promised "moral and financial support." UAW Local 642 President Paul Kozlik issued a public letter in *Racine Labor* in response to Case workers show of support: "I remember when we were miles ahead of Local 180 in about 10 categories…Now if Dumore would give us the language of the Case contract on cost of living [and] right to strike on grievances…we'd be most of the way home toward settlement." The local support encouraged strikers to stand firm. Over 800 Belle City strikers returned letters the company sent to workers' homes to try to get them back to work on three separate occasions in an effort to prove their solidarity with each other and their firmness in refusing to compromise on incentive pay changes.

Kozlik also accused Dumore and Belle City management teams of using the same tactics that the Case Company used in the 1960 strike to intimidate workers and force unfair settlements. This reference back to the Case strike was a key part of the working-class identity in the labor community. Workers and labor activists looked back on union activities and workers' continued struggles in the city as not only inspiration but also as explanation of what kept people engaged in working-class issues. During strikes, organizing drives, public rallies, and annual Labor Day celebrations, activists traced the history of struggles for economic and social justice in the city and the region as evidence of the continued importance of thinking, acting, and mobilizing around working-class issues. In a 1974 interview about Racine's labor community, long-time labor and civil rights activist William Jenkins linked the continued success of organized labor in the city to the hard fought gains of the UAW local that represented the workers at J.I. Case Company, the largest employer in the city that refused to sign contracts with what, by the middle of the twentieth century, seemed standard across the country. He

maintained that because workers at the largest industrial plant in town had to fight repeatedly to reaffirm their right to collectively bargain, Racine's working-class activists determined to push even harder to gain full economic and social citizenship rights for all workers. Jenkins recalled, "Racine's always been a union town, you know, progressive as far as labor's concerned." He also emphasized, "The strife that we've had here—the labor strife" was the motivating factor to keeping union activists engaged in maintaining an active labor community.[403]

The local labor community rose together in outrage in response to a county official's comments in the local paper saying Belle City Malleable strikers were engaged in thievery by applying for welfare benefits. Workers from across industries, including Sam Rizzo in his role as UAW International Representative, converged on a county board meeting to protest the statements and called for the firing of Robert Hess, head of the surplus foods division of the Racine County Welfare Board. At the meeting another welfare department representative assured citizens that Belle City employees and any family could use the resources of the Welfare Department and that many families with full-time workers still qualified for various benefits.[404] These acts of solidarity and financial contributions from other unions went a long way in helping workers maintain their course during a period of tough negotiations. Racine's working-class activists recognized that more and more employers in Racine and across the nation were taking hard-line approaches to collective bargaining and the support for strikers across industries proved valuable in stemming this tide of pushbacks in the city.

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[403] Keehn, 295; "Strikes-Negotiations," *Racine Labor*, 14 August 1970, p1; "UAW Local 553 Hits the Bricks," *Racine Labor*, 21 August 1970, p1; "Strikers All-Star Game Set, Belle City to Meet Dumore," *Racine Labor*, 21 August 1970, p6;"Service Union Backs Strikers," *Racine Labor*, 28 August 70, p1; Williams Jenkins Interview; ; "Average Hourly Earnings," *Racine Labor*, 18 September 70, p1, 5.

[404] County Board to Probe Slur on Strikers by Food Chief," *Racine Labor*, 28 August 70, p1; "Resign AFL-CIO Council tells Surplus Foods Director, Unions Ask Director's Dismissal," *Racine Labor*, 28 August 70, p5; "Belle City Letters Returned," *Racine Labor*, 4 September 1970, p1, 8; "Kozlik Compares Dumore and Case Says strikers Just Want to Catch up," *Racine Labor*18 September 70, p1, 2.

Federal mediators stepped in to both the Dumore and Belle City cases and moved negotiations to Chicago in an effort to escape the tension in Racine. However, both unions and companies refused to compromise. The Dumore strike lasted for 82 days and ended with a three-to-one vote in favor of a new three-year contract that included major improvements in the cost of living assessments, higher wages for lower paid employees, and better pension agreements.[405] The Belle City workers felt that they had given the company so many concessions over the previous ten years of negotiations that they could no longer claim to have the best contract or wage agreement in the city. Local 553 members ratified a three-year agreement after a twelve-week strike. While union leaders hailed the contract as the best one in over ten years, with substantial wage increases and a six percent yearly cost of living adjustment, it came at a high price. The company closed the malleable iron casting operation, affecting about 500 workers, leaving only the steel casting operations in business. A week after the new contract was signed only 300 of the original 1050 strikers had been called back to work. Union officials acknowledged the loss of jobs and made efforts to find new positions for those workers who would not be recalled to Belle City. As the largest concentration of non-white workers, these most vulnerable employees had to find new employment, lost the seniority they had at the foundries, and would carry the brunt of the economic instability that occurred over the next two decades. While labor leaders praised the new agreement, it was clear to activists that better negotiation strategies were needed.

In 1972 UAW International Representative Sam Rizzo brought contract negotiations between UAW Local 1007 and Western Printing Company to the public in an effort to fight

[405] "Dumore Strikers Say No, 107-5," *Racine Labor*, 2 October 1970, p1; "Resume Belle City Talks," *Racine Labor*, 16 October 1970, p1, 7; "Belle City Talks are Resumed," *Racine Labor*, 23 October 1970, p1, 5; "Dumore Strikers Accept Contract," *Racine Labor*, 30 October 1970, p2; "Local 553 Waits Word," *Racine Labor*, 30 October 1970, p3; "553 Ends 12-Week Strike; Ratifies 3-Year Pact," *Racine Labor*, 13 November 1970, p1, 7.

against a local company's refusal to bargain in good faith. While workers were not out on strike, negotiations became deadlocked in July. After several frustrating rounds of failed negotiations and public statements by managers against the union, Rizzo held an open meeting where he justified the union's position by stating that more important than pay raises or additional benefits, the workers demanded respect and real recognition of the union as bargaining agent. The mayor, a county board member, and several journalists were included in the audience. When the union president and another organizer spoke, they likened Western Publishing to the Case Company of the 1930s and 1940s. Again using the history of labor activism and worker solidarity against management intransigence to justify current activities. Just two days after the public meeting management requested a return to the bargaining table and members overwhelming accepted the new agreement, which included many of their original demands.[406] While this is another example of management's pushback against unions in the 1970s, it is also evidence of the power of a vibrant labor community to influence public opinion and pressure employers to bargain.

Yet, it was clear that the tide of plant closing began in the late-1960s had not abated. While Local 180 members were encouraged by a change in management at Case, negotiations were still slow and worries of massive layoffs led them to seek the aid of federal mediators. After months of rumors and failed negotiations, Case finally announced it was closing the Rockford, Illinois plant in July 1970. 500 workers faced layoffs, while production from Rockford moved to plants in Racine and Bettendorf, Iowa. Rockford employees had priority in moving to other Case locations and keeping their seniority, but of course for workers with over twenty years at a plant, moving between ninety and 120 miles was not as easy as it was for the

[406] "UAW Local 1007 Explains Position in Western Publishing Dispute," *Racine Labor*, 4 Aug 1972. P3; "1007 Ok's New Western Pact, *Racine Labor*, 11 Aug 1972, p1.

company to switch facilities. Meanwhile, workers in Racine and throughout the agricultural implements industry sought to increase cost of living adjustments and improve grievance procedures so that those with jobs could receive better living and working conditions.[407] Standard Foundry workers, members of UAW Local 60 also learned their plant was closing. The foundry, purchased by Motor Castings Company in nearby West Allis, Wisconsin, closed after only three years under new management. Most workers were able to find employment at Belle City Malleable in Racine or other plants in the Racine and Milwaukee areas. [408] In an ironic twist of fate, Belle City members of Local 553 used the closed Standard Foundry site as a base for picketing during the strike that started just two months after operations ended at Standard.

Although Modine Manufacturing maintained its headquarters in Racine, it started shifting production out of the city in the 1970s. Started in 1916 to produce radiators for automobiles and tractors, the company opened a plant in Indiana in 1934 and another in Kentucky in 1947. When it opened yet another facility in Ohio in 1970 it started laying off workers in Racine. Under a special agreement, twenty-three workers, represented by UAW Local 82 retired in November 1970 and over thirty workers were moved to new positions, while the company estimated that less than forty-five would be laid off at that time. The company shifted from a focus on production and instead housed its research and development center in Racine.[409] This was indicative of the shift from unskilled to skilled labor that accompanied some corporate restructuring during the period. The shift to high-skilled jobs impacted young workers and non-white workers who had not had the opportunity to receive the skills needed for these new positions.

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[407]R. J. Steiner, "Case Local 180 Report: Future Moves Told," *Racine Labor*, 3 July 1970, p9.
[408] "Standard Foundry Down the Drain," *Racine Labor*, 3 July 1970, p14.
[409] Richard H. Keehn, "Industry and Business," in *Racine: Growth and Change in a Wisconsin County*, edited by Nicholas C. Burckel (Racine: Racine County Board of Supervisors, 1977), 319; "23 Local 82 Men Retire from Modine Plant Here under Special Arrangement," *Racine Labor*, 20 November 1970, p6.

In the most devastating case of a plant closing in the early-1970s, Howard Industries closed its Racine operations giving workers only a fifteen-minute notice. UAW Local 841 found itself scrambling to gather information to bargain for pension, severance packages, and insurance coverage for the nearly two hundred employees in the bargaining unit. On Monday, 14 February 1972, in what was supposed to be a resumption of bargaining agreement talks, the company announced to the union that the plant was closing and terminated 110 workers on the spot. Despite the announcement during contract negotiations, management claimed the decision was based on obsolete plant facilities. Seventy workers would remain on the payroll until production ceased. Howard Industries had manufactured fractional motors for small electronics in Racine since World War II but was sold in 1965 to a holding company, MSL Industries.[410]

Shakeups in local industrial operations put additional stress on city politics. Race relations, minority hiring, school desegregation and funding, and state and national political debates played key roles in shaping the evolving sense of solidarity in the labor community. Most of the issues up for debate related directly back to economic concerns and the budget freeze instituted at the state and county levels that reduced welfare and other social service programs. Civic engagement, always high among workers in Racine, reached new levels during the economic turmoil of the 1970s. In response to the attack on public schools by the SOS committee, another group of concerned citizens formed the Support Excellence in Education (SEE) committee to keep citizens informed on issues related to public schools and to advocate for funding and policies that members felt would benefit all of Racine's school-aged children. While SEE did not have any overt connections to the Racine labor community, the organization supported labor's agenda against SOS in the battle for more efficient and equitable school

[410] "Howard Industries Closes Plant on 15-Minute Notice," *Racine Labor*, 18 February 1972, p3; Keehn, "Industry and Business," 312.

funding. A showdown developed between the two groups during the 1970 school board elections. The three SOS candidates elected in 1969 were replaced by SEE- and labor-backed candidates. SEE followed up its victory by endorsing a $16.2 million dollar bond issue to fund new buildings and better management of elementary school busing.[411]

A group of minority residents petitioned the Wisconsin State Employment Service (WSES) office in Racine to hire Spanish-speaking full-time staff and to offer better services for minority job seekers and those looking for job training.[412] In response to the petitions from the Spanish Center and Project Breakthru, the WSES office issued a statement listing the advances made in the previous two years towards helping minority and disadvantaged workers gain the skills needed to join the workforce and helping with job placement. The Racine office also highlighted its efforts to reach all areas of the city by holding extended hours in local neighborhood centers and its current recruitment efforts for Spanish-speaking staff.[413] However, the continued demands for more services illustrated the high level of minority unemployment in the city and the inability of those with limited skills to find employment in increasingly technical fields and within the context of layoffs due to plant closings and relocations. Black and other minority workers were the first laid off as those most often with the least seniority. As we have seen, as late as 1963, many industrial plants had no minority workers. Apprentice training in skilled trades was still all-white in the city despite a half-decade of organizing by black workers. In a 1971 survey of Racianians, 76% of black respondents felt that there were not equal job opportunities for all people. While 72% of Mexican Americans in the study felt that job

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[411]"SOS Candidates Rebuffed," *Racine Labor*, 10 April 1970, p5; "Vote on 16.2 million in school bonds Tuesday," *Racine Labor*, 29 May 1970, p1, 4.
[412] "SEE Sponsors Meeting on Financing Public Schools," *Racine Labor*, 20 February 1970, p6; "Petitions Back Minority Groups Seeking More Help Getting Jobs," *Racine Labor*, 20 February 1970, p6.
[413] "WSES Defends Minority Placement Activities," *Racine Labor,* 27 February 1970, p15.

opportunities were equal for all people, as late as 1990 data for Racine county suggests that black and Latino workers remained outside of the skilled jobs available in the city.[414]

Racine's labor and social justice activists continued to support better funding for county schools and participated in efforts to improve minority hiring in the city. When the school board and city council debated who should pay for busing children to schools to deal with a building shortage, *Racine Labor* ran an editorial criticizing both boards for refusing to place children's safety as a main priority. Robert Tighe, Racine AFL-CIO President, participated in a union leadership training program to help unions participate more fully in War on Poverty programs.[415] The War on Poverty came out of Johnson's Great Society agenda and included job training for youth and the unemployed, community action programs for urban renewal, and small business development. The UAW South Lakeshore Area Fair Practices Committee (representing Racine and Kenosha) formed in response to continued efforts by the International Union to address minority hiring and other issues related to the history of discrimination in employment and housing in the nation. The local chapter aimed to work with civil rights groups, private companies, and other union groups to improve conditions in the area.[416] Labor unions endorsed school board candidates backed by SEE and labor activists ran for city council seats. Leroy Worley, the only black skilled trade worker in the city, won an alderman seat during the election that swept SOS candidates out of office. This continued push by labor activists to fight against conservative influence in Racine's public offices demonstrates the level of confidence the

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[414] Lyle W. Shannon and Judith L. McKim, "Attitudes Toward Education and the Absorption of Inmigrant Mexican-Americans and Negroes in Racine," *Education and Urban Society*, Vol. 6 #3 (May 1974):333-354; Community Forum on Race Relations in Racine County, Wisconsin, "Chapter 3: Rae Relations and Equal Opportunity in Racine County, Wisconsin," http://www.usccr.gov/pubs/sac/wi0301/ch3.htm; I use the term Latinos because the census numbers do not separate between Latino heritage. Mexican Americans made up the majority of this background but increases of Puerto Ricans in the 1970s and 1980s requires a broader term.

[415] "School Board: Substance of Ideology," *Racine Labor*, 30 January 1970, p4; "Unions Urged to Join in Anti-Poverty Fight," *Racine Labor*, 20 February 1970, p1.

[416] "Fair Practices Group Reviews Housing, Jobs," *Racine Labor*, 6 March 1970, p7.

working-class community held in its voice in local affairs as well as the continued necessity of pushing their class agenda.

The Racine labor community and especially the activist-members remained very progressive into the 1970s. Labor activists led the way, as they had in the 1960s, toward improving minority hiring, better access to good schools, and a call for broad social and economic improvements for the poorest area residents. As scholars and activists have pointed to during this period, the labor movement was one of the best placed institutions to address the needs of black and poor workers, both those inside and outside labor unions. In a 1971 article in *Harper's Magazine* long-time civil rights activist Bayard Rustin made this argument and pointed to the ways in which the labor movement offered a comprehensive program to meet the economic needs of urban black workers and their families. Especially through the AFL-CIO's Committee on Political Education and the UAW's Political Action Committee, both of which led the way in Racine's efforts to improve minority hiring and housing situation throughout the decade. Rustin saw the labor movement as the most progressive as it had been in its history as demonstrated by a "commitment to broad, long-term social reform in addition to immediate objectives of improving wages and working conditions." By this time the percentage of black workers in unions exceeded their percentage of the larger U.S. society and Rustin called on liberal journalists and activists to see the progressive nature of the labor movement and recognize labor unions as a legitimate avenue for improving the social lives and economic situations of urban black families.

Black workers had slowly began to work their way into leadership positions within the UAW especially, public worker unions, and to a lesser degree the AFL-CIO leadership. This gave black union activists the ability to demand better hiring practices from employers and to

negotiate better contracts that would benefit the low-wage and unskilled workers joining the labor force. While black union members met with continued resistance within the building trades, an Outreach program started in the late-1960s added a significant percentage of minority workers to apprenticeship programs. Industrial union leaders had actively participated in civil rights and War on Poverty programs and during the changing economy of the 1970s continued to build alliances with liberal groups seeking to improve social and economic equality.[417]

The school budget cuts implemented by SOS members, the shrinking state aid to local governments, and officials' slow move to integrate public schools in the county had ramifications throughout the decade. School desegregation and quality of education led Racine's NAACP activities in the 1970s. Branch president Julian Thomas and Keith Mack, a black educator and long-time advocate within the black community, worked throughout the period to improve educational resources. The Unified School District started a program that entailed massive bussing and the closing of area schools in Racine with large black enrollments. Once these schools were closed, Mack and Thomas demanded hot lunch programs be implemented in the new schools to cover eligible students. Although the school board responded within a few months to the request for hot lunches, the Racine NAACP asked for federal intervention to improve education standards for the city's black student population.[418] The closing of Howell Elementary intensified the segregation of poor students, mostly black and Latino, in a few inner city schools. This segregation severely limited their opportunities to compete in the larger society.[419]

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[417] Bayard Rustin, "The Blacks and the Unions," *Harper's Magazine*, May 1971, 73-81; for a discussion on union's struggles to represent black workers see William B. Gould, "Black Workers Inside the House of Labor," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 407 (may 1973), p. 78-90; for a discussion of labor union politics and minority hiring and social justice see Vernon Coleman, "Labor Power and Social Equality: Union Politics in a Changing Economy," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 103, no. 4 (Winter, 1988-1989), 687-705.
[418] NAACP, Racine Branch, WHS, general correspondence, Nov 72, Feb 73
[419] Shannon and McKim, 348-355.

Local parents and other community groups also participated in filling the short-falls in Racine's public education system. Parents of elementary students from Howell School initially started car pool services to get their students to Fratt School when the county failed to provide transportation to the young children who had to walk up to a mile and half to their new school. Parents then formed the Back Our Youth Organization as a fund-raising group to purchase a school bus for the displaced students. A group of college and high school students and local community members formed the Revolutionary Youth Movement (RYM) and provided free breakfast for local students in the North side neighborhood. They were inspired by the breakfast program initiated in Chicago, Oakland and other cities by the Black Panther Party. The RYM program provided meals for white, black, and Hispanic junior high students. At breakfast students learned about black and Chicano leaders as well as labor leaders and RYM members worked to improve race relations among the students by explaining that in part racial divisions were fomented by the elite society members to keep poor people poor.[420] The Latino population started increasing dramatically in the 1970s in the industrial corridor between Chicago and Green Bay. With the growing strength of the Chicano movement in the late-1960s and early-1970s, students in southeastern Wisconsin started organizing and demanded more high school and college courses on Chicano history and heritage. Despite limited success at the University of Wisconsin locations in Madison and Milwaukee, students and staff at the smaller Whitewater campus successfully created a Chicano Studies program.[421] These group efforts demonstrated

[420] "Seek School Bus For Kids Hit By Closing of Howell School," *Racine Labor*, 24 April 1970, p1; "Revolutionary Youth Movement Provides Free Breakfast for Kids," *Racine Labor*, 19 Feb 1971, p1; Peter B. Levy, *The New Left and Labor in the 1960s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 4, 156-160; Andrew Battista, *The Revival of Labor Liberalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 4-6, 83-147.
[421] Dionicio Nodin Valdes, *Barrios Nortenos: St. Paul and Midwestern Mexican Communities in the Twentieth Century* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 206, 7; 221.

the strong link between social justice and labor in Racine during this period as well as community efforts to improve education opportunities despite poor local funding.

The RYM story's appearance in the *Racine Labor* and in such a positive light indicates that the editor was supportive of this New Left initiative in the city. Scholars have suggested that persistent antagonism between New Left activists and the labor movement hampered a cohesive liberal agenda in the post-1960s period. Peter Levy offers a more complex relationship between labor and the New Left as one of cooperation in the early-1960s, confrontation in the second half of the decade, and some level of synthesis or reconciliation after 1970. Levy suggests that three main breaking points—the Vietnam War, militant civil rights activists calling for Black Power, and the counterculture of the late-1960s caused the breakdown between New Left and labor in the 1960s but that collaboration existed and tensions eased by the 1970s. Andrew Battista illustrates how the "Reutherite wing" of the labor movement worked to maintain ties with a wide range of liberals and supported many New Left projects in local areas. This can be clearly seen in Racine's labor community, where activists showed support for minority housing and hiring issues, made room for New Left activists in the community, and demanded equitable access to schools for all members of the community, despite budget constraints and persistent racism.

Housing and minority hiring also remained high on the agenda for social justice organizations. Through its legal team, the Racine NAACP sought to pass legislation that would give municipal boards the authority to revoke real estate licenses in cases of housing discrimination. This issue remained an important one in the tight housing market in Racine. When a young, black professional was denied a lease in a white neighborhood in the 1960s, the Racine NAACP legal defense department took the case to the Wisconsin Supreme Court. After the judge ruled that the licensing board did not have explicit provisions in place for penalizing

real estate agents and brokers that did not follow the city's anti-discrimination codes, leaders implemented a plan to introduce new legislation.[422] Related to the housing issue, Thomas, in his role as NAACP branch president, sent a letter to county officials opposing a proposed freeway loop that would "displace hundreds of low and middle income black and white working families."[423] The Spanish Center also continued its programs of language instruction and financial and job services for Mexican Americans and other Hispanic citizens. While the services helped many residents, debate over Center management led to high turnover in many positions. In 1972 the non-profit Jobs for Progress's Service Employment Redevelopment (SER) program came to Wisconsin to help the Chicano population in Racine, Kenosha, and Milwaukee find better employment opportunities and combat the twelve to fifteen percent unemployment. By the early-1970s there were 10,000 Chicanos in Racine County and the local office offered education, vocation, and on-the-job training for local residents. They also initiated an employer-education program and sought to improve public school services for Spanish-speaking children.[424]

The Spanish Center, SER, and the neighborhood centers that popped up in Racine's black and Latino neighborhoods were all products of Johnson's War on Poverty programs. These domestic programs suffered due to budget expenses coming from the Vietnam War. The programs also reflected the postwar liberal shift away from direct government involvement and instead supported private-sector solutions to social and economic concerns at the community

[422] NAACP, WHS, general correspondence, 1960s, 1972.
[423] NAACP, WHS, general correspondence, 24 apr 73.
[424] Marc Eisen, "SER Runs the Gamut," *Racine Labor*, 29 September 1972, p3, 12.

level. Both the underfunding and the lack of government oversight severely limited the effectiveness of these programs on relieving inner-city poverty and unemployment.[425]

The story of the workers, members of SEIU Local 150, at St. Luke's Hospital illustrates the ways in which Racine's labor community had successfully responded to issues of race and gender over the previous decades as well as their commitment to support all workers in the city, beyond industrial employment. Not-for-profit institutions like St. Luke's Hospital had served as low-wage employers for new immigrants, Latinos, and southern black migrants to northern cities for many years. These low wages were exaggerated when separated by gender. For example, the mostly male maintenance department received an average of $2.00 more per hour than did the female-dominated housekeeping department at St. Luke's.[426] Exempt from provisions of the National Labor Relations Act until 1974—the rights of workers to organize a union of their choice, bargain collectively, strike, boycott, and picket, and the prohibition of employers from intimidating, firing, or blacklisting employees for union activities—these hospitals could keep workers' wages below those in other industries. At the same time as Leon Fink and Brian Greenberg point out, the life-support function of hospitals, their centrality to the healthcare system of cities, and the role of local and federal governments in sustaining them, led to the involvement of government officials, the press, and organized pressure groups—the public—in labor-management disputes.[427] Union members had to carefully negotiate their role with the public. Service workers at St. Luke's Hospital recognized that their wages fell far below industrial union wages in the county but, at the same time understood the possible danger of

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[425] Freeman, 202-203; Kevin Boyle, *The UAW and the Heyday of American Liberalism, 1945-1968 (*Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); Nancy MacLean, *Freedom is Not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006),

[426] "St. Luke's pact to expire tonight," *Journal Times (Racine)*, 30 April 1976.

[427] Leon Fink and Brian Greenberg, "Organizing Montefiore: Labor Militancy Meets a Progressive Health Care Empire," in *Health Care in America: Essays in Social History*, ed. Susan Reverby and David Rosner (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1979), 226-228; Lichtenstein, 36.

taking their wage demands to the public arena.[428] The workers' activism and the local labor community's solidarity inspired action when the opportunity to demand better wages and benefits came on 30 April 1976 at the end of the existing labor agreement between the 250 members of SEIU Local 150 and St. Luke's. Jay Schwartz, a local lawyer hired as lead negotiator, and newly elected Chief Steward Art Burdick sought this opportunity to increase the wages of the service workers who made up one-third of St. Luke's staff.[429] But, negotiations did not go well.

Both the hospital management and the union bargaining committee moved quickly to declare their positions to the media and demonstrate their unwillingness to compromise. In the local daily newspaper, Personnel Director Herbert Scheible (former human relations director for Hamilton-Beach during the plant closing in 1968) announced that the pay raises and other benefits offered in contract negotiations would be enacted for all employees not involved in the strike. Employers often used this tactic in an effort to break worker solidarity. Chief negotiator Schwartz outlined the union's complaints: St. Luke's was unable to maintain basic housekeeping chores because of understaffing and the hospital paid part-time employees sub-union wages, while many full-time union workers could not support their families on their hospital pay.[430]

When negotiations reached an impasse, Local 150 members set up a picket line at the hospital's front door. By occupying this public space, workers altered social relations within the city. Hospital staff not involved in the strike, patients, strikebreakers, and visitors had to engage with the picketers as they entered St. Luke's. St. Luke's female strikers actively claimed the

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[428] "St. Luke's workers seek to catch up on wages," *Racine Labor*, 12 April 1985.
[429] "St. Luke's pact to expire tonight," *Journal Times (Racine)*, 30 April 1976; "Hospital official disputes figures," *Journal Times (Racine)*, 1 May 1976; "Strike looming at St. Luke's hospital," *Racine Labor*, 7 May 1976.
[430] David Pfankuchen, "Hospital offer to take effect," *Journal Times (Racine)*, 20 May 1976; "Talks stalled at St. Luke's," *Journal Times (Racine)*, 7 May 1976; "Strike looming at St. Luke's hospital," *Racine Labor*, 7 May 1976.

sidewalk in front of the hospital and it instantly became a contested space. Police cars struck several strikers, requiring at least one woman to stay overnight at a nearby hospital. While the strikers protested the harsh treatment by security guards and police officers, hospital management claimed that officers did not properly control the picketers. Hospital security guards had two women arrested for slashing car tires while on strike duty.[431] These public acts of violence signified the strikers' willingness to claim this space to present their demands to the public and hospital management. Their picket signs conveyed these demands: "Wages not Welfare," "Your Loved Ones Are Cared for by Poverty Level Wages," and "St. Luke's Management Hates Labor."[432]

Strong support from the labor community allowed these mostly female employees to take their message to this public place in front of the hospital. Very early in the negotiation process, the Racine labor community demonstrated its support for members of Local 150. Volunteers from other unions joined the picket lines in a show of solidarity and as a means of protection for women strikers as they had for industrial workers over the years. The UAW sub-regional director issued a statement in support of the hospital workers, declaring, "Like all of us, hospital workers deserve a decent contract."[433] Members of older, more established industrial unions accepted Local 150 service workers as full members in the Racine labor community. Local unions also contributed financial aid through the "Friends of St. Luke's Strikers" fund. *Racine Labor* often carried front-page articles or images reflecting on the progress of contract negotiations and strike activities. During the strike, the paper printed multiple articles featuring profiles and comments of rank-and-file union members and those on the bargaining committee.

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[431] "Squad car hits picketer," Racine Labor, 28 May 1976; "Bargaining team sizes up strike," *Racine Labor*, 25 June 1976.
[432] "Their pay is something to protest about," *Racine Labor*, 21 May 1976.
[433] "UAW Support," *Racine Labor*, 7 May 1976; Jenkins interview.

Several regular contributors used their columns to support the strike effort to improve wages at St. Luke's Hospital. For example, Dean Pettit, in his regular Racine Education Association column, objected to the hospital's use of strikebreakers and praised other local union members who helped with picketing duty at St. Luke's in the 4 June 1976 edition.[434]

Surprisingly for Racine, hospital workers faced opposition even from their union leadership. Local 150 was a state-wide local, based in Milwaukee, representing 7,000 members at the time of the St. Luke's strike. The 250 members at the hospital did not have the support of union president Don Beatty. In fact, Beatty negotiated a contract agreement with St. Luke's management without the knowledge or support of the local bargaining committee. On 24 May 1976, Beatty mailed a letter to the members urging them to accept the deal, which offered five cents more than the previous agreement the workers rejected on 13 May. The members rejected the agreement offered by Beatty by a vote of 140-7. As reported in *Racine Labor*, Beatty's letter urged workers to go back to work because the climate was not right for a protracted strike against the hospital; he noted that several other strikes in the area (Milwaukee, Burlington, and Kenosha) had proved unsuccessful. Yet, St. Luke's workers decided to push forward with the support of the Racine labor community and their hired negotiator, Jay Schwartz. The workers felt empowered by the activism and radicalism of these local leaders, which encouraged them to continue to struggle against heavy-handed practices by hospital management and union leadership. The legacy of local labor radicalism and the gains Schwartz achieved for other unions in the area also played a key role. In interviews with *Racine Labor*, local bargaining committee members re-emphasized their support for Schwartz and Burdick and urged the labor

[434] "Their pay is something to protest about," *Racine Labor*, 21 May 1976; Dean Pettit, "Racine Education Association," *Racine Labor*, 4 June 1976; Ivan D. Israel, "UAW LOCAL 180", *Racine Labor*, 4 June 1976; "AFL-CIO backs local strikers," *Racine Labor*, 4 June 1976; "Strike fund set up to help picketers at St. Luke's," *Racine Labor*, 11 June 1976; "She'd get the soup, I'd get the crackers," *Racine Labor*, 11 June 1976; "Bargaining team sizes up strike," *Racine Labor*, 25 June 1976.

community to remember that the strike at St. Luke's was initiated to improve workers' wages and to focus on that result rather than the internal union disputes. The interviews revealed the long-standing tensions between local members and the Milwaukee leadership, especially president Don Beatty. Workers felt that having a local lawyer (Schwartz) on the negotiating team gave them more authority at the bargaining table and they resented Beatty's attempt to keep them out of the negotiating process.[435] The comments of the workers and their refusal to accept the contracts Beatty negotiated demonstrated the ways in which rank-and-file workers sought alternate means to improve their wages and job security, even against union leadership direction. Racine's militant labor community created the space for St. Luke's workers to remain determined despite the resistance from Beatty and hospital management.

Although local workers continued to picket St. Luke's Hospital, on 24 June Don Beatty and hospital administrators signed an agreement previously rejected by members. Left with few options, the local bargaining committee voted to recall the strikers on 1 July 1976 after hospital management threatened to fire all workers who did not report for duty on 2 July 1976. The new contract contained slightly less than a dollar an hour wage increase spread over three years, which represented six cents more than the first offer that led to the walkout and strike in May. Although the strike effort at St. Luke's Hospital by Local 150 members cannot be called a success by any means, workers continued to fight against management's heavy-handed practices and used community support and available legal means to effect changes within their workplace. They brought charges against union leadership at the international level, used legal means to get fired employees reinstated through the NLRB process, and worked to build a strong steward

[435] "Strikers reject deal," *Racine Labor*, 25 June 1976; "Bargaining team sizes up strike," *Racine Labor*, 25 June 1976.

system in the hospital. Workers remained committed to the idea of working-class solidarity based on the support they received from the local community and Racine's labor activists.

The history of the Hospital Workers' Union Local 1199, from its beginnings in the late 1950s New York to a powerful nation-wide service union just over a decade later, points to the ways in which grassroots activism, a radical union leadership, and aggressive organizing could garner significant gains within the health care industry. Fink and Greenberg detail the high expectations yet stifled progress of Local 1199's organizing and bargaining activities on the national level in the 1970s, but they also highlight key factors for success. Analyzing the results of organizing at New York's Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center, the largest non-profit hospital in the nation, leads them to conclude, "By aggressively responding to workers' feelings of powerlessness and to their demands for respect rather than by just meeting their economic needs, however real, Local 1199 continued to invest union campaigns with the 'sense of liberation' that [the national organizing director] and other union leaders called for."[436] This sentiment helps explain why workers in Racine at St. Luke's continued to support Burdick and Schwartz even after Beatty stepped in and took over negotiations. The workers felt empowered by the activism and radicalism of these local leaders, which encouraged them to continue to struggle against heavy-handed practices by hospital management and union leadership. The legacy of local labor radicalism and the gains Schwartz achieved for other unions in the area also played a key role.

Jay Schwartz had a long history of providing legal counsel and supporting the labor community in Racine. Born and raised in Racine, Schwartz attended Horlick High School, received a bachelor's in Industrial Relations from Cornell University, and graduated University

[436] Fink and Greenberg, *Upheaval in the Quiet Zone: 199SEIU and the Politics of Health Care Unionism*, 2nd edition (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 166.

of Chicago's Law School in 1957. He provided legal counsel and negotiation services for most of the public workers in Racine County, for fire fighters in Walworth County, and for fire fighters and police officers in Kenosha County. He constantly advocated for worker solidarity and helped build a coalition between the different public workers unions, some represented by the Machinists, others AFSCME, and others SEIU. Schwartz was also active in local politics, he ran unsuccessfully for the Democratic Congressional seat in 1962 and for the Attorney General of Wisconsin in 1968. During his political campaigns he received constant support from the labor community and received endorsements from the Machinists and Building Trades Council for both his election campaigns. He served for several years as an assistant district attorney and successfully advocated for changes to local law making jury selection in Racine County more representative of the local population. Schwartz had a fraught reputation as a union negotiator because many in the labor community felt he personalized each struggle. Others saw this personalization as a strength, which infused his demand for economic security and human rights for all workers. Some unions would threaten management to bring Schwartz to the bargaining table because of his reputation as a fierce supporter of workers against management and his constant public appearances on behalf of local unions. He worked actively with the Democratic Party and pushed the state party to push for a more forceful civil rights platform in the 1968 election. He demanded a local judge step down after a Racine black police officer accused him of racial bias in his case against the Racine police department. When SEIU Local 150 President Don Beatty published a public rebuke for Schwartz's actions in the strike at St. Luke's the local labor community came out in full support of Schwartz, labeled Beatty a traitor to the St. Luke's workers, and inspired the workers to keep fighting against management's tactics and against the leadership of Local 150. When Schwartz died in 1978,

Dick Olson, the *Racine Labor* editor, described him as "a loyal ally, a compatriot, a fighter and a leader." He served in all those roles for the workers at St. Luke's , advised them of their options, kept them connected to the larger labor community, spoke on their behalf with management, and after they were forced to return to work, vowed to help them maintain their local union activities.[437]

In the aftermath of the strike, hospital management fired four employees, including chief steward Burdick, bargaining committee member Ellen Kovac, and employees Barbara DeRosier and Beverly Smith.[438] The firings took a toll on the activist workers' leadership. Art Burdick had been chief steward for five months when the hospital fired him. During that period, he worked diligently to protect union members' rights, filing 100 grievances between February and May 1976. The hospital fired and then rehired Burdick on several occasions for his aggressive performance of union duties. The militant Burdick had a tumultuous relationship with union president Beatty and with some members of the maintenance department at St. Luke's. These workers, mostly men, were among the highest paid union members and did not like Burdick's radicalism. Another member of the bargaining team to be fired, Ellen Kovac, was married with three children and had worked at St. Luke's for two years. Her husband, a member of UAW Local 82, supported her decision to go on strike. During the strike, Kovac provided a constant presence on the picket line. She was very vocal and constantly yelled encouragement to the other strikers. St. Luke's also fired sisters Beverly Smith and Barbara DeRosier. A single mother with five children at home, Smith went on strike so she could afford to support her

[437] "Jay Schwartz Mourned," *Racine Labor*, 24 Nov 1978, p1, 7; Dick Olson, "The Roaring 70s," *Racine Labor*, 24 Nov 78, p4; "Machinists Lodge 437 Backs Jay Schwartz," *Racine Labor*, 20 April 1962, p1; "Schwartz is New Local 152 Counsel," *Racine Labor*, 20 May 66, p5; "Dems Chided by Schwartz on Rights Lag," *Racine Labor*, 26 july 1968, p7; Memo from Gene Moats to George Hardy, 16 Jun 1976, SEIU Executive Office Files: George Hardy Collection, Box 18, Folder 36 – Local 150, June 1976, WPR Library.
[438] "St. Luke's fires four," *Racine Labor*, 2 July 1976; "Hospital strike collapses," *Racine Labor*, 9 July 1976.

family without working overtime or find another job to supplement her income. She worked as a central services aide with a salary of $2.73 an hour.[439] The failed negotiations, lack of union leadership support, and firings offered a severe blow to Local 150 members.

The immediate issues centered on the firings and the disagreements with Local 150 management. Hospital management alleged that Burdick had instigated a work stoppage on 7 May 1976, charged Kovac with an illegal work stoppage on 22 May, and blamed DeRosier and Smith for picket line misconduct, all causes for dismissal. Smith also faced criminal charges related to strike activity. In a meeting with hospital workers, Schwartz outlined the available legal options. Members could file a lawsuit over the legality of the labor agreement, continue to strike against the hospital and risk a mass firing, and support the efforts to rehire the fired workers, or any combination of those options. Most of the workers voted not to file a lawsuit over the disputed labor agreement because of the additional expense and time involved. But many workers expressed frustration and regret over their options. One worker spoke out, "We're chicken from the word go if we let them fire our leadership. We're back in the frying pan where we've been for nine years." While many agreed with this sentiment, at the same time, the majority felt that despite their respect for Burdick and approval of his behavior as chief steward, they could not afford to continue the fight at the current time.[440] However, members did enlist Schwartz's aid to have the fired workers reinstated in their previous positions at St. Luke's.

Management at St. Luke's Hospital, mostly represented by Scheible, refused to give any concessions to the fired workers and took the issue all the way to the U.S. Court of Appeals. A local judge dismissed charges of tire slashing against Smith but the hospital still refused to drop

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[439] "Bargaining team sizes up strike," Racine Labor 25 June 1976; *St. Luke's Memorial Hospital Inc v. National Labor Relations Board*, 623 F.2d 1173 (7th Cir. 1980), http://openjurist.org (accessed 8 Mar 2010).
"St. Luke's fires four," *Racine Labor*, 2 July 1976; "Fired striker has five kids to feed and no job," *Racine Labor* 30 July 1976; "'I don't think the scars will ever heal,'" *Racine Labor*, 30 May 1980.
[440] "St. Luke's fires four," *Racine Labor*, 2 July 1976.

its effort to prevent her and Kovac from receiving unemployment compensation.[441] Scheible and hospital lawyers continued to fight the unemployment claims of Kovac and Smith and the grievance procedures for Burdick throughout the rest of 1976 and 1977. Finally, Burdick and Kovac turned to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) for resolution with the assistance of a new attorney, Arthur Heitzer. An arbitrator upheld the firings in April 1977. Concurrently, the fired employees filed suit in small claims court to receive the vacation pay denied them when they were fired. In July, the NLRB ruled that Burdick's firing was illegal, but upheld Kovac's dismissal. The hospital also paid Burdick and DeRosier the vacation pay withheld at their firings. However, the battle over unemployment compensation for Smith and Kovac continued.[442] Under appeal, Kovac's case was resubmitted to the NLRB.[443] After Schwartz became ill, the case was handled by Arthur Heitzer, who fittingly had received a four-year scholarship as part of the SEIU scholarship program implemented by David Sullivan, which granted $500 each year to a SEIU member's college-bound child. Heitzer's father had been a member of SEIU Local 150 in 1965 when he received the award.[444]

Two years after their dismissals, Burdick and Kovac received news that an NLRB administrative law judge ruled their dismissals illegal and ordered St. Luke's Hospital to reinstate them both with full back pay and interest. Yet, the hospital immediately challenged the ruling.[445] In a show of continued union solidarity, an editorial in *Racine Labor* called on the state review commission to deny St. Luke's request to raise patient charges because the hospital

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[441] "Drop charges against St. Luke's picketer, *Racine Labor*, 5 Nov 1976; "Bev Smith cleared but St. Luke's fights on," *Racine Labor*, 10 Dec 1976; "Hospital blocks u.c. checks," *Racine Labor*, 21 Jan 1977.
[442] "St. Luke's fired Burdick illegally," *Racine Labor* 15 July 1977.
[443] "Kovac case reopened," *Racine Labor*, 2 Sept 1977.
[444] Letter from David Sullivan to Arthur Heitzer, 30 April 1965, SEIU Executive Office – David Sullivan Files, Box 20, Folder 2 – Local 150, Mar – Aug 1965, WPR Library.
[445] "St. Luke's illegally fired Kovac, Burdick rules NLRB, *Racine Labor*, 22 Sept 1978; "St. Luke's predicts drawn out litigation," *Racine Labor*, 29 Sept 1978.

was using valuable funds to continue a "futile battle to avoid obeying the law."[446] Finally, on 21 May 1980, the United States Court of Appeals, Seventh Circuit, ruled that the NLRB could disregard the arbitration award and pursue the case because the proceeding did not fully decide the unfair labor practices charge against St. Luke's Hospital. The court also ruled that the discharge of Burdick and Kovac violated two sections of the NLRA. The ruling indicated that Burdick had filed 100 grievances during his first four months as chief steward and that Kovac was a constant presence on the picket line, shouting and encouraging the other picketers. By firing these two active, militant union members just four days after the strike, the hospital demonstrated that its actions were in retaliation for the workers' union activities.[447]

While they finally received vindication, the process for Burdick and Kovac proved long, expensive and emotionally draining. In an interview after the court ruling, Kovac indicated that the four-year battle had strained her and her family. She was glad to have her name finally cleared, felt relieved that the ordeal was over, and thanked all those who supported her financially and emotionally during the process.[448] Just five months later, Kovac no longer wanted her name associated with the strike. A front-page article in *Racine Labor* reported that St. Luke's made the largest back pay settlement in Wisconsin's history, but referred only to Burdick and "another worker (who asked that her name not be used…)." The hospital paid a combined $80,000 to both workers for back wages and interest.[449] The support received by Local 150 members at St. Luke's demonstrates the continued effectiveness of working-class solidarity in the city, despite the economic, political and social uncertainty and loss of numbers in industrial unions. Instead of retreating from active engagement, union members inspired

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[446] "Who will pay for St. Luke's lawyers?" *Racine Labor*, 29 Sept 1978.
[447] *St. Luke's Memorial Hospital Inc v. National Labor Relations Board*, 623 F.2d 1173 (7th Cir. 1980), http://openjurist.org (accessed 8 Mar 2010).
[448] "I don't think the scars will ever heal," *Racine Labor*, 30 May 1980.
[449] "St. Luke's pays $80,000 in strike," *Racine Labor*, 3 Oct 1980.

workers in low-wage service positions in the healthcare industry to get the full economic and political power from organizing as possible. This also benefited teachers during this period.

By the mid-1970s Racine's teachers faced a school district board intent on cutting every possible expense. In the spring of 1976 the board unilaterally stopped paying teachers' health insurance premiums and REA had to take them to court to force them to honor the existing agreement. As the August contract deadline fast approached, the board refused to bargain, called an impasse, and then implemented new administrative guidelines. REA officials again took the board to court, asked the teachers to work under the rules, and follow the WERC and court decisions. However, when the board still refused to bargain in good faith, teachers decided their only option was to go on strike on 27 January 1977. The union was asking for written administrative codes, cost-of-living increases, an end to merit pay, and health insurance benefits.[450]

The Racine community came out in support of the striking teachers. SEIU Local 152, who served as custodians and other service employees in the school district, voted to honor the picket lines. Carpenters in Local 91 refused jobs for Unified School District. Local 180, still the largest union in the city, came out in support of the teachers and custodians. The UAW locals in Racine asked union families to keep their children out of school so that they would not have to cross picket lines. One student interviewed by the daily paper told a reporter, "My dad's a teacher at Starbuck and he said I wasn't gonna cross any picket lines."[451] Father Anthony Dorn of St. Mary's Church gave a sermon condemning the school board for union busting and allowed the sermon to be published in *Racine Labor*. Editors of the *Racine Journal Times*, the local daily

[450] "REA Wants Written Rules," *Racine Labor*, 6 Aug 1976; "REA Leadership urges efforts at legal action," *Racine Labor*, 27 Aug 76; "Schwartz Sets Rules of Settlement," *Racine Labor*, 3 Sept 1976; "School Board Stall Backs Teachers into Corner, *Racine Labor*, 14 Jan 1977.
[451] Patricia Andrews, "No School? It's Pretty Nice," *Racine Journal-Times*, 25 January 1977, p3a.

paper, came out in strong opposition to the strike. The *Journal Times* placed a box on the first page of each issue, counting the days of the "illegal strike." However, the unionized clerical workers and copy editors at the paper picketed the office with signs in support of the striking teachers. One teacher, Gerald Kongstvedt, sent an editorial to *Racine Labor* expressing his determination to continue to disobey the law and face firing after a judge issued an injunction demanding the teachers return to work. Kongstvedt explained that he would tell his students that he disobeyed the judge and participated in an illegal strike because of the example of Martin Luther King, Jr. In a sample lesson plan, he would assign his students "King's Letter from a Birmingham Jail" and explain why some civil disobedience is called for when morality is on your side. State Senator Dorman also issued a statement condemning the Unified School District's board for bad faith bargaining.[452]

The strike ended fifty days after it started on 15 March 1977 after teachers tentatively agreed to a new contract. The contract called for an end to merit pay, a one-time increase in insurance premiums, new cost-of-living adjustments, and some improvements in seniority rules. The teachers received partial fair share considerations where newly hired teachers would either join the union or pay fair share dues. However, fair share was not applied to teachers already working and not part of the union. The teachers were forced to accept the board's decision to discipline eleven employees for strike activities, but in the membership meeting voted that those eleven teachers would receive wage reimbursement from the union. Teachers waited to approve the agreement until Local 152, representing the custodians, finished their last round of

[452] "Local 152 won't cross picket lines," *Racine Labor*, 21 Jan 77, p 1; "Teacher Strike Looms," *Racine Labor*, 21 Jan 77, p 1, 8; "Request made not to cross picket lines," *Racine Labor*, 21 Jan 77, p 1; Dean Pettit, "REA Teachers Union," *Racine Labor*, 21 Jan 77, p 6; "Alliance, labor groups go down line for REA," *Racine Labor*, 28 Jan 77, p 1, 5; "Local 180 backs REA Action," *Racine Labor*, 28 Jan 77, p 2; "Board's attitude blocks settlement says Dorman," *Racine Labor*, 25 Feb 77, p 1; Gerald Kongstvedt, "Why a Teacher Refuses to obey DuRocher's order," *Racine Labor*, 25 Feb 77, p 4; Geeta Sharma, "65 picketing teachers arrested," *Racine Journal Times*, 25 Feb 77, p 1; "Fifty day strike ends," *Racine Labor*, 18 Mar 77 p 1, 9.

negotiations with the Unified School District on the same night. While the teachers' strike, like others over the years, did not garner a complete victory, the working-class community in Racine continued to see the value in collective class action. The language, strategies, and tactics demonstrated a continuation of the labor activism as well as a continued commitment to broad-based economic and social issues.

The working-class solidarity in the community led to an all-out effort to resolve many of the remaining issues within the county's Unified School District by campaigning to replace recalcitrant board members with labor-endorsed candidates. During the teachers' strike, both REA members and other labor activists pointed to individual school board members who they felt mishandled both contract negotiations and the county's school administration. Reverend Howard Stanton received most of the negative publicity. *Racine Labor* ran several articles detailing his poor attendance record at board meetings and his legal troubles after hitting several teachers on picket lines during the strike with his vehicle. At the same time, activists praised board member Howard McClennan for his efforts to end the strike, resistance to having striking teachers arrested, and commitment to fair bargaining. Both the AFL-CIO and the UAW Political Action Committee put considerable effort into campaigning for new school board members between the February primary and the April election. William Jenkins, now retired from his active role in the UAW and serving on neighborhood improvement committees, decided to enter the school board race to protect public education in the county. He campaigned against what he considered the bloated school administration and for less regulation of teachers' lesson plans. The other labor-supported candidate was UW-Parkside Assistant Professor of Education Marv Happel. He also campaigned against top-heavy administration positions and building a better

relationship between administration and teachers to improve teacher morale in the school system.[453]

The AFL-CIO and UAW PAC committees treated the Racine County school board election like a presidential campaign. They organized phone banks, sent out widespread political mailings, volunteers handed out literature in front of local industrial plants (Case management refused to allow hand-billing outside of its gates), and provided transportation to the polls on election day. The hard campaigning paid off as Jenkins and Happel received about 10,000 additional votes between the primary and the election, moving into the second and third slots and ousting their main rivals to fill the four open school board seats. The most significant result was Stanton's fall from first to fifth position in the election. Both Stanton and Lowell McNeil, the antagonistic negotiating committee member, were ousted from the school board. A *Racine Labor* editorial argued that Jenkins' and Happel's victory added "balance and reason to a board that for too long has operated without much of either."[454] Although still out-numbered on the school board, the two new members kept pressure on the school board and demanded transparency and fair labor practices. In June both Happel and Jenkins walked out of a hastily-scheduled closed meeting of the board because they said it violated Wisconsin's open meetings law and did not allow public participation. The board held the closed meeting to vote on appealing a recent state decision that forced Unified to pay disability payments to two local teachers who took time off after their pregnancies. During the next bargaining period that began in July, Happel publicly attacked a sub-committee of the board for spending over $1000 on

[453] "Stanton Skips 24% of Board Meetings," *Racine Labor*, 4 March 1977, p1; "Board Ignores McClennan 8-1 as he pleads to rebuild trust," *Racine Labor*, 11 Mar 77, p1, 4; "Jenkins Runs Because of Concern for 'kids,'" *Racine Labor*, 18 Mar 77, p1; "Happel Believes New School Board is Needed," *Racine Labor*, 25 Mar 77, p1, 8.
[454] "Labor Goes All Out to Change School Board," *Racine Labor*, 1 Apr 77, p1; "Labor Helps Oust 2 Unified Incumbents," *Racine Labor*, 8 April 77, p1, 15; "New Day Dawns," *Racine Labor*, 8 Apr 77, p4.

negative campaign ads published in two local papers.[455] As the school board election shows, the Racine labor community demonstrated a clear example of working-class solidarity and actively embraced public school teachers. Just as during political battles in the post-World War II period, local activists ran for public office to keep working-class voices alive in city debates. The community came together to support their candidates and while they did not have a clear majority on city and county boards, their interests were represented.

The community also supported public workers outside of the city. The Teaching Assistants at the University of Wisconsin in Madison went on strike in March 1970 demanding a voice in determining curriculum, work load, and performance evaluation. Coverage of this strike by newly organized graduate student workers (members of the Teaching Assistants Association (TAA), the first union representing graduate student workers in the country) in *Racine Labor* pointed out that while the students looked different than most strikers in Wisconsin, they recognized the power they had to effect real changes at the university. Racine activists praised TAA members' willingness to push the administration and faculty to hear their demands.[456] When Wisconsin state employees organized rallies and eventually went on strike in the summer of 1977, the Racine labor community offered their full support. Led by AFSCME Council 24, representing 52 locals across the state, including clerical workers, prison guards, state troopers, institution aids, job service workers, and parole officers among others the strike sought to bring greater wages to the lowest-paid state workers. The unions wanted flat wage increases across the board and the state negotiators insisted on percentage increases. Labor activists argued that percentage increases gave the bulk of funds to the highest paid workers leaving the lowest paid still below the national poverty line and below what other public workers received across the

[455] "Jenkins, Happel Walk Out of Closed Meeting," *Racine Labor*, 17 June 77, p1; "Happel Attacks Ad as Money Misuse," *Racine Labor*, 22 July 77,p1.
[456] Bill Weber, "Things Will Never be the Same After TA Strike," *Racine Labor*, 27 March 1970, p7.

state. State workers in Racine and surrounding areas picketed state offices and UW-Parkside during the strike with support from the local labor community.[457] Racine's labor community rallied to protect their city's economic environment and that of the whole state. This broad, militant outlook existed because of the long history of working-class politics to advance a more equitable society for all workers.

The strong sense of cross-sector labor solidarity and the commitment by local activists to support broad-based economic and social justice despite economic downturns, push-backs against public spending, and anti-labor management tactics proved critical to the successes garnered by public employees and low-wage service workers in Racine during the 1970s. The long history of adaptive class politics, the continued efforts to build a strong support base in the community by supporting and collaborating with other social justice organizations, and the sense of political power put the Racine labor community in a position to resist the decline of labor solidarity and class politics seen in some other areas in this period. While workers still suffered the effects of dis-investment by industrial corporations, the economic downturns that resulted in high unemployment and stagnant wages, and the inability or unwillingness of public officials to close the gaps in the social and economic security nets, they did not retreat from class politics or lose confidence in their combined efforts to impact the lives of working people in Racine.

[457] "State Employes Am to Bring Up Low End," *Racine Labor*, 8 July 77, p1, 2; "Mediator Named in State Talks," *Racine Labor*, 15 Jul 77, p1, 11; "Strike Issues Explained," *Racine Labor*, 15 July 77, p4.

Chapter 4: Labor Militancy in Racine during Deindustrialization and Beyond

The situation in Racine was dire in the 1980s, as it was in many urban areas across the nation. The decline of manufacturing meant the decline of the better-paying, union jobs and an increase of low-wage service work. The increasing power of corporate managers and the accompanying free movement of capital allowed companies to demand rollbacks from workers in labor agreements across industries. New adherence to free market principles also shifted the relationship between the government and private interests, whereby de-regulation and de-funded social programs eroded protections for workers and widened the holes in the social safety net. The unemployment rate in Racine reached fourteen percent in the early 1980s and would remain higher than the national average throughout the decade. Applications for welfare programs increased 79% in the county during the first half of 1980. The rate of home foreclosures was rising almost uncontrollably, changes in federal law threatened nearly 1,000 people's unemployment benefits, and state and local budget cuts slashed typical resources that workers had come to rely on in dire economic situations.[458] The economic recession had been pushing the unemployment rate up since the late-1970s, real wages continued to drop, and volatile interest rates added to the uncertainty as people lost their jobs and homes at an ever-increasing rate. Racine's workers took a heavy toll as unemployment in the city remained one of the highest in the state throughout the decade. At the same time Wisconsin Governor Lee Dreyfus cut state spending through the Department of Health and Social Services for welfare and medical assistance programs, placing families in an even greater state of instability. By early-1981 over

[458]Jane L. Collins and Victoria Mayer, *Both Hands Tied: Welfare Reform and the Race to the Bottom of the Low-Wage Labor Market* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 5, 23, 34-39; "Economy Slides, Welfare Rolls Grow," *Racine Labor*, 18 Jul 1980, p3; "1,000 Here to Lose UC Pay Sept. 25," *Racine Labor*, 6 August 1982, p1, 10.

600 workers at Case were laid off with no news of when they would be recalled due to the downturn in the agricultural implements industry.[459]

The political landscape had shifted in Racine and around the country. Racine's labor activists faced these changes by gathering their remaining resources to protect as many jobs as possible through strikes, rallies, legal maneuvers, political appeals, and negotiations during plant closings or threats of plant closings. They addressed the needs of non-white workers—those most severely impacted by the economic downturn and changed economy—by intensifying the fight for more equitable hiring practices, improving the community's social service programs to deal with a diversified clientele, and protesting raids by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). The labor community also organized new workers and welcomed them into unions as the best way to continue the fight for better economic security. Activists and the workers they represented showed a militant resistance to corporate push backs throughout the decade, despite losing many battles. As they had over the previous years, the labor community adapted their tactics, sought new political allies, and maintained a strong commitment to a broad view of who belonged in the labor community and how they should fight for economic and social justice. This chapter details these events to illustrate the ways in which Racine's workers continued to think of themselves as members of an active, engaged labor movement that could garner its resources and fight back. By the end of the decade, the labor community held to the hope of a resurgence of labor power and celebrated key local political victories that seemed to make such hopes seem realistic.

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[459] Judith Stein, *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 263-264; Joseph A. McCartin, *Collision Course: Ronald Reagan, the Air Traffic Controllers, and the Strike that Changed America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 9, 10; "Joblessness in Racine 2nd Highest in State," *Racine Labor*, 29 August 1980, p9; "4.4% Cuts to Hit Families on Aid," *Racine Labor*, 19 Dec 1980, p1; "Jobless Workers Angry, Frustrated," *Racine Labor*, 20 Feb 1981, p1.

Activists in Racine's labor community faced overwhelming economic and political challenges but rallied in an effort to offset their weakened position in bargaining with managers and securing jobs. When a local Burger King franchise hired a non-union contractor from outside the county to build a new restaurant in Racine, a delegation of skilled trade workers attempted to convince the contractor to use local union labor. When negotiations failed, members of Ironworkers Local 8 started picketing the construction site. The rest of the labor community provided needed support. Teamsters from Local 43 refused to drive concrete trucks across the informational picket line. *Racine Labor*'s cartoonist Gary Huck drew a series of cartoons condemning Burger King. One such cartoon showed a man wearing a hard hat walking with a woman carrying a picket sign that read, "Unions are 'Our Way,'" in a play on the company's popular advertising campaign.

Racine's labor activists found ways to support the building trades workers. In response to the picketing, the franchisee and contractor appealed for and received an injunction against the picketers. This injunction points to one of the ways in which Taft-Hartley weakened the ability of workers to come to the aid of their fellow union members. The law made secondary boycotts illegal, meaning workers could not boycott another company involved in a labor dispute.[460] This opened the door for companies to file suits against unions for supporting other workers outside their individual work sites. Failing to persuade the local franchise, area unions voted to boycott all Burger Kings in the Racine and Kenosha County areas to protect union jobs. As the open letter from the Racine County Building and Construction Trades Council explained, "the only way to persuade Burger King to stop insulting the union members in Wisconsin is to refrain from patronizing Burger King." The public pressure finally paid off when Burger King corporate

[460] Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 117-118.

management stepped in and required franchise owners in the area to use union labor where available. And the boycott ended after a construction site broke ground just north of Racine and the contractor hired union workers.[461] Economic conditions demanded that workers insist on the higher wages and protections offered by union jobs.

Although unemployment was high and management had a clear advantage in contract negotiations, workers at Young Radiator decided to go on strike on 01 July 1981 after they were unable to come to terms with the company. The members of UAW Local 37 wanted a severance pay clause in their contract to protect workers who lost their jobs as the company moved production to a non-union plant in Iowa. However, management would not negotiate on any terms until the union's bargaining committee agreed to a new incentive pay plan that workers felt was detrimental to their current wage levels. Local 37 represented 290 active employees and 170 laid off members at Young Radiator, where they manufactured heat exchangers for industrial equipment and heavy-duty radiators. The union previously accepted a wage cut in exchange for the promise to keep jobs in Racine during the 1972 contract negotiations. Young Radiator followed by opening a newly-built facility in 1975, but then started moving production to other plants in Iowa and Illinois soon after.[462]

Union members felt they had to strike because accepting wage concessions had not brought them any job security. After two months of picketing the company finally agreed to negotiate on all the terms that employees hoped to bring to the bargaining table. The strike lasted thirteen weeks and finally ended when workers ratified the new three-year agreement

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[461] "Burger King Project Non-Union; Boycott Set," *Racine Labor*, 11 January 1980, p1; "Editorial Cartoon," *Racine Labor*, 18 January 1980, p3; "Burger King Pickets Banned by Court Order," *Racine Labor*, 01 Feb 1980, p1; "It's Time to Fry Burger King," *Racine Labor*, 01 Feb 1980, p4; "Boycott Burger King: An Open Letter to Racine's Working People," *Racine Labor*, 22 Feb 1980, p1; "Burger King Shifts Policy; Boycott Off," *Racine Labor*, 6 June 1980, p1, 2.

[462] "UAW Local 37 Strikes Young Radiator," *Racine Labor*, 3 Jul 1981, p1, 12.

without the job security provision, but with changes to the company's incentive plan that reduced the lost wages to two dollars an hour unless productivity increased. Although Local 37 President Richard "Red" Johnson called the new contract "one of the best" in the last few years because of the wage increases for non-incentive workers, new fringe benefits, and cost-of-living increases, the inability to secure job security was a big blow to the union. Workers ratified the new agreement because they felt the changes to the incentive pay plan would help boost productivity, yet they were still at the mercy of the company's decision to move production at will. Striking workers received letters from the company demanding acceptance of the incentive plan along with threats to move all production to Iowa, which pressured acceptance of the contract.[463] While the strike did not pay off as well as the workers hoped, they felt strong enough to stay on the picket lines for three months and showed a willingness to fight even as the union faced a weakened position.

As well-paid union jobs continued to shrink, black and Latino workers sought entry into better paying public service jobs and joined forces with labor activists to address hiring discrimination that kept minority workers out of all but the lowest paid positions. Growing numbers of black and Latino workers in the city and their demands for equal access to jobs and services had continued to rise since the late-1960s. The work of Corrine Owens, Keith Mack, and Julian Thomas to get black teachers and school administrators hired in Racine County and throughout city and county government offices did get a few minority hires throughout the school system. All three held leadership positions in the Racine NAACP and other social justice organizations in the city. Thomas worked his way up at Case, eventually becoming director of their minority relations department, served on the mayor's human rights council, and participated

[463] "Talks Renewed in Young Strike," *Racine Labor*, 28 August 1981, p12, 13; "Local 37 Ratifies Pact with Young," *Racine Labor*, 2 Oct 1981, p1, 8.

in state-level efforts to enforce equal opportunity hiring practices. Mack and Owens worked in the school system and struggled to make sure Racine's poorest students received quality educations after teaching in county schools for many years. Owens sat on the board of the local vocational board.[464]

As the minority workforce grew in Racine and across the state union leaders sought to better incorporate non-white workers into union activities. In 1979 members of the Wisconsin Education Association formed the Ad Hoc Minority Involvement Committee (MIC) to increase minority involvement in local teacher unions and in area associations. Robert Ware, a black teacher at Horlick High School served as the first chair of MIC and helped organize a state-wide meeting in Racine in February 1981. Representatives from the Racine Black Caucus of the Racine Education Association (REA) and others around the state met to participate in leadership workshops, planning sessions, and in-depth workshops on collective bargaining and current labor agreements. The Racine Black Caucus had been active for a few years and organized to improve the education of the poor and working-class students in the county. Through dances at the Racine Labor Center, the group raised funds for a scholarship in 1980 for a graduating senior to attend Yale University.[465] Union and community involvement played a large role in gaining members' active participation and sustaining public goodwill.

Black and other minority workers continued to demand access to jobs and for fair treatment in those jobs. The American Civil Liberties Union of Racine and Kenosha hosted a forum on racial and sexual discrimination in June 1981 at the Unitarian Church. These organizations had long histories of working with labor and civil rights activists to address social

[464] NAACP, Racine Branch, WHS, General Correspondence, Boxes 3-5; Racine NAACP history, Box 6, Folder 2; Committee Meetings, Box 6, Folder 7; General Correspondence, Box 4, Folder 3.
[465] "Minority Teachers Meet to Increase Involvement," *Racine Labor*, 27 Feb 1981, p3; "REA's Black Caucus Gives Scholarship," *Racine Labor*, 13 June 1980, p4.

and economic issues in the area.[466] Organized around the firing of black police officer Sam Jones, the forum extended to a general discussion of discrimination in the city and possible solutions. Speakers highlighted the extremely low numbers of black and Latino employment at the city and county levels, segregation of black and Latino neighborhoods and uneven municipal services to those areas, and problems in the school system as far as bilingual learning opportunities, and unequal treatment in the criminal justice system. While focused on the existing problems, speakers also provided information on services and programs to assist with discrimination cases, hiring programs, and several union and community activists focused on building coalitions to improve both access to jobs and better education for children in the community.[467] To emphasize the low level of employment and promotion of minority works in city jobs, sanitation worker Thomas Love filed a class action lawsuit in federal court against the city for failure to hire and promote minority workers under the same methods as white applicants. As late as 1981 no black or Latino workers held supervisory positions in city employment. The lack of opportunity for non-white workers to escape declining employment sectors and secure more stable positions led to their higher unemployment levels and the economic and social problems this entailed.

UAW Local 553 at Racine steel Castings (formerly Bell City Malleable) had the highest numbers of black and Latino workers in the city. The community services division of Local 553 often led the effort in demanding equal services from community agencies for minority union members and residents. As layoffs and other economic setbacks took its toll on the city, Local 553 members pushed for the A-Center—a social services agency serving alcoholics in the

[466] SEIU District 925 Collection, "Organizing: Midwest Field Offices, 1985," WPR, Box 2, Folder 18.
[467] "50 Hear Forum Speakers Decry Discrimination," *Racine Labor*, 12 Jun 1981, p10, 11. Community Forum on Race Relations in Racine County, Wisconsin, "Race Relations and Equal Opportunity in Racine County, Wisconsin," https://www.usccr.gov/pubs/sac/wi0301/ch3.htm, accessed December 2012.

community—to hire black counselors. Black workers went to their Local 553 stewards to say that they could not relate to the counselors and would not continue to seek treatment. Administrators at the A-Center claimed that there were no black applicants for the social worker positions and that race was not a factor in providing services. However, after continual pressure by the union and community allies, the center hired two black and one Latino counselor in August 1981.[468] Labor activists recognized the need to provide services to workers beyond the shop floor and to improve the quality of life for all in Racine. Solving the issues of racial justice, equality, and discrimination went a long way to strengthening rank-and-file commitment to working-class solidarity as jobs became even scarcer and those just getting a foothold started to lose ground in their struggles for economic security.

Workers' determination to fight against the odds to save their jobs and some sense of economic stability for the city is best exemplified in the long battle to keep Massey-Ferguson operating in Racine. Massey-Ferguson had stopped production of tractors in the city in the late-1950s and, by the 1980s the only operation in Racine was the replacement parts warehouse where 330 workers did some repair and maintenance work and another 68 worked in clerical positions. UAW Local 244 signed a new three-year agreement with the company in March 1980 that improved local wages and started a series of step increases to bring workers wages in Racine up to the level of other plants in the United States. At the same time, over sixty workers in Racine had been laid off since March and in April the company announced it was laying off an additional 1500 workers in Detroit and Des Moines in May. The Canada-based chain was facing severe financial difficulties and appealed to workers in both countries and the Canadian government for assistance to continue operating and reduce its debt burden. By June, the Racine

[468] "Class Action Suit Charges City Bias," *Racine Labor*, 21 August 81, p1,5; "Bias Suit Moves Forward," *Racine Labor*, 19 March 1982, p5; "UAW Local 553 Calls on A-Center to Hire Black," *Racine Labor*, 2 May 1980, p1, 5, 10; "Follow-up: Up-date on Previous Stories," *Racine Labor*, 7 August 1981, p10.

replacement parts warehouse employed 375 members of Local 244. In November the union agreed to open the contract and accept economic concessions. Local President Ron Thomas explained that the workers were taking a gamble to see if it would save the company from complete collapse. The company agreed to continue business in the United States, to include management-level employees in any proposed layoff plans, and workers agreed to defer the three percent annual wage improvements they negotiated in the contract earlier that year.[469]

Despite the new agreement, the company laid off over one hundred unionized workers the following year, while keeping its entire supervisory staff. Relations continued to deteriorate between the company and union as layoffs disproportionally impacted the union members, while non-union workers retained their jobs at the warehouse. Short notice of layoffs also angered union members. Despite their frustrations, workers again agreed to wage concessions in April 1982. The new agreement also took away one week vacation and froze pension levels. When workers heard later that year that the company was negotiating with business leaders in Des Moines, Iowa to move the warehouse facilities from Racine, they felt betrayed. Although the company promised they had no immediate plans to move, workers in Racine remembered that when plants in Des Moines and Detroit closed workers received less than a week's notice in both cases. The union vowed to fight against Massey Ferguson moving the Racine facility and disregarded the company's reassurances. Despite no news of a move, workers organized a rally in December to start generating support for a campaign to keep the 400 jobs at the Racine warehouse.[470] When workers at Massey-Ferguson realized that agreeing to wage cuts and

[469] "Local 244 Gets Three Year Pact with Massey-Ferguson," *Racine Labor*, 14 Mar 1980, p1; "M-F to Lay Off 1500," *Racine Labor*, 25 April 1980, p3; "UAW Officials Say M-F Collapse Unlikely," *Racine Labor*, 12 Sept 1980, p1, 8; "Local 244 agrees to concessions to Massey," *Racine Labor*, 21 Nov 1980, p3.
[470] "Massey Bosses Escape Lay-offs Despite Pact," *Racine Labor*, 10 April 1981, p3; "Office Layoffs a Blow to UAW 244," *Racine Labor*, 24 Dec 1981, p3; "M-F Workers Angered by Short Notice on Shutdown," *Racine Labor*, 26 Feb 1982, p3; "Massey Workers Agree on Contract Concessions," *Racine Labor*, 23 Apr 1982, p7; "Despite

contract concessions did not provide them with any reasonable amount of job security they voted to reject contract concessions in the August 1983 contract talks. Faced with massive layoffs workers decided to stop negotiating even as the company was packing up to move operations from Racine to Des Moines.[471]

The story of how the members of Local 244, with the support and encouragement of the labor community and their political allies, fought to keep the Massey-Ferguson warehouse in Racine reflects a broader pattern of militant resistance to plant closings in the 1980s. Across the country, hundreds of thousands of workers in the steel and auto industries lost their jobs due to plant closings from the late-1970s to the early-1980s. Workers and their unions formed coalitions with community groups, appealed to companies to honor their perceived commitments to local areas, sought legal injunctions, tried to take over production at individual plants, and everything they could to save their communities. Industrial communities responded to deindustrialization in ways determined by local labor movement strength, community social and cultural heritage, and political involvement. For example in Connecticut unions, community activists, organizers, and religious leaders formed the Naugatuck Valley Project to combine forces in the region to fight against plant closings, build democratic economic institutions to support area communities, and to exert more power over local businesses. In Youngstown, Ohio's steel industry activists argued that companies had a responsibility to the community and that decisions to close the plants were not private corporate managers' alone, but because of the long history of workers and governments supporting the steel plants, managers had no right to arbitrarily shut down plants. Workers launched a legal battle to wrest control of a local steel plant and keep it from closing. While the effort proved only partially successful for a short time,

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Assurances, M-F Workers Ready to Fight," *Racine Labor*, 29 Oct 1982, p1, 6; "M-F Workers Plan Dec. 4 Jobs Rally," *Racine Labor*, 5 Nov 82, p1, 11;

[471] "Workers Reject Concessions to Massey-Ferguson 2 to 1," *Racine Labor*, 19 Aug 83, p1.

it did empower workers across industrial North America to fight plant closings more vigorously.[472]

In Racine, activists did not establish new community coalitions because the local labor community was already intricately tied to other social justice organizations. It was never one union against one company fighting plant closings. Workers, their political allies, and other social justice organizations rallied together to stem the tide of closings. Members of Local 244 knew they had the support of the community when they decided to fight the warehouse move.

While the tactics are similar, collective identity and memory often shape community responses to the threat or reality of plant closings.[473] In Racine, workers thought of themselves as members of an active, engaged labor movement that could garner its resources and fight back. By the early-1980s workers were angry and uncertain, but determined. Mitch Blada, a laid-off machinist from Case, called for the whole labor movement to combine resources to help transform the economy. "If we got together the heads of the UAW, the Teamsters, the AFL-CIO, we could shut it all down…It would have to be a complete banding together to make it work, but something needs to be done."[474] An older worker at Massey-Ferguson who had gone through two plant closings before moving to his warehouse job decided that the best thing for the union to do was fight vigorously against the proposed warehouse move. He said, "I didn't fight at the

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[472] For case studies of communities fighting to save plants see Thomas Fuechtmann, *Steeples and Stacks: Religion and Steel, Crisis in Youngstown* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Staughton Lynd, *The Fight against Shutdowns: Youngstown's Steel Mill Closings* (San Pedro: Singlejack Books, 1982); Dale A. Hathaway, *Can Workers Have a Voice? The Politics of Deindustrialization in Pittsburgh* (University Park: Pennsylvania State university Press, 1993); Bruce Nissen, ed., *Fighting for Jobs: Case Studies of Labor, Community Coalitions Confronting Plant Closings* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995); Jeremy Brecher, *Banded Together: Economic Democratization in the Brass Valley* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011); Michael Stewart Foley, *Front Porch Politics: The Forgotten Heyday of American Activism in the 1970s and 1980s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2013), 179-260.

[473] Kathryn Marie Dudley, *The End of the Line: Lost Jobs, New Lives in Postindustrial America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Sherry Lee Linkon and John Russo, *Steeltown USA: Work & Memory in Youngstown* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002); Steven High, *Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America's Rust Belt, 1969-1984* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).

[474] "Jobless Workers Angry, Frustrated," *Racine Labor*, 20 Feb 1981, p1.

two other plants where I worked when they closed down, but I'm going to fight like hell this time."[475] Workers recognized the need to combine the strength of the whole labor movement and their allies to fight the battle against capital flight. Local 244 members repeatedly refused to accept any concessions and the company announced in November 1983 that it was moving most of the warehousing facilities to Memphis, Tennessee. In a statement published in the *Racine Journal Times*, General Manager James Wimpress said the company was leaving because workers refused to give $1 million dollars in concessions to retool the Racine factory.[476] While some workers thought another round of concessions would convince management to leave at least some jobs for the remaining 170 employees, the majority of union members voted to stop negotiating on concessions. They did successfully bargain to do the labor of dismantling the machinery for shipment to Memphis after the company sought to hire outside contractors.

As workers and labor activists sought ways to reduce the impact of closings like Massey-Ferguson case they continued to push for job security at other job sites, participate in community-sustaining activities, and made connections with those outside the labor community to address broad-based issues of social and economic security in Racine and beyond. The workers at Jacobsen Manufacturing, represented by UAW Local 556, voted 294 to 54 to reject the company's "final offer" and went on strike on Tuesday, 3 May 1983 because they were concerned with the lack of job protection in the current contract. As Local 556 President Ed Buhler told members at a meeting that morning at the Racine Labor Center, "If they're going to take our jobs, let them try to take them past us on the picket line, instead of asking us to help them load the trucks with our jobs."[477] The company's proposal granted them the right to shift production of certain lawn tractors to North Carolina at the company's discretion. Along with

[475] "Despite Assurances, M-F Workers Ready to Fight," *Racine Labor*, 29 Oct 1982, p1, 6.
[476] "UAW 244 Angrily Responds to M-F," *Racine Labor*, 11 Nov 83, p1, 5;
[477] "Job Security Spurs Jacobsen Strike," *Racine Labor*, 6 May 1983, p1, 19.

the transfer of jobs, management also sought to circumvent the existing seniority system in job transfers. Jacobsen management hoped to persuade workers to accept the contract with a very lucrative financial pay package. However, workers felt that the company asked them to give up more rights than they felt justified in doing; instead they chose to go on strike and push the issue. Buhler explained, "They've seen what's happening in the entire community—Massey-Ferguson, McGraw-Edison, and lots of others"—referring to the shutdowns and threatened moves by manufacturing firms out of the city. The strike lasted one week, and Local 556 successfully bargained to a set limit of job transfers to North Carolina of 22 positions and kept the existing seniority system. Union members voted 304 to 34 to accept the new agreement. Buhler was optimistic about the successful strike and contract negotiations and looked at the win at Jacobsen as the start of a promising trend in Racine.[478] Workers recognized their weakened bargaining position, yet continued to fight for every step forward they could achieve.

Union activists also fought against political assaults on workers' rights in the community. In June 1984 the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) started a series of raids at Racine Steel Castings. Often at the behest of companies, the INS would come into workplaces, round up Latino workers, and detain them until they could provide documentation of their right to work in the U.S. The INS would also ask for employee records from companies and pick up workers whose documentation seemed suspect. Over the next several months, INS agents arrested nineteen Racine Steel Castings workers and charged them with being in the country without proper documentation. Of the nineteen arrested, eighteen were born in Mexico and one in Jamaica. UAW Local 553 President Dick Fought stood behind the workers who all had over five years of seniority at the foundry. He argued that the raids were politically motivated to

[478] "Job Security Spurs Jacobsen Strike," *Racine Labor*, 6 May 1983, p1, 19; "UAW 556 Gains Job Protections," *Racine Labor*, 13 May 1983, p1, 4.

induce resentment of immigrant workers at a time of high unemployment and to turn the attention away from the impact of the Reagan administration's role in the country's economic crisis. The INS had completed its investigation into employment at Racine Steel Castings two years earlier, but waited until the summer before elections to initiate the raids.

Immigration and immigration reform were hotly debated in the 1980s fueled in part by the continuing economic instability in the United States, the rise of cultural conservatism, and nationalist rhetoric that intensified with Reagan's Cold War policies and his 1984 re-election campaign. Although many undocumented workers filled an economic need as more and more jobs became deskilled and paid lower wages, political and popular rhetoric by legislators, journalists, and public protestors against immigration and integration in the 1980s and 1990s declared that there was an increasing "Mexican menace."[479] This menace painted Latino immigrants as burdens on U.S. society, unwilling and unable to integrate into American society. Politicians and popular culture lamented the inability of the nation to control its borders and prevent penetration by "undesirable illegal aliens."[480] At the same time, political conservatives attacked affirmative action programs designed to aid non-white workers equal opportunities by promoting the idea of "reverse discrimination."[481] The idea that undocumented workers stole jobs that native workers needed led to a national debate around removing and preventing undocumented immigrants from finding employment in the U.S. This narrative was countered by the continuing need for workers to fill the lowest paid positions in industrial, service, and domestic industries. Employers continued to hire undocumented workers and often recruited

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[479] I use Dionicio Nodin Valdes's term to describe the anti-Mexican rhetoric in popular discourse during the 1980s and 1990s. See Valdes, 245-262, quote on page 255.
[480] Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 266.
[481] Nancy MacLean, *Freedom is not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006), 185.

undocumented workers in a continuing strategy of reducing wages and fomenting dissent within their workforce. Despite the rhetoric around non-white workers stealing jobs and opportunities for the more deserving white workers to achieve the economic and social benefits of moving into the middle class, black and Latino workers suffered increased economic hardship during the 1980s and 1990s. Yet, employers and policymakers used the immigration debate to intensify the attack on undocumented workers through raids and other initiates by INS. This scenario played out repeatedly in the workplaces between Chicago, Racine, and Milwaukee during the mid-1980s and into the 1990s.[482]

As in other Midwestern communities like St. Paul and Chicago, in Racine union and Latino community activists worked together to provide legal aid for the arrested workers at Racine Steel Castings. The local Catholic parish raised funds to provide bond for one worker being held in Chicago and the community came together to help workers provide the needed paperwork to stay in the country. Union president Dick Fought also refused to endorse the firing of the 19 workers. The union successfully argued that Racine Steel Castings could not fire the workers until they were actually deported and got seventeen of the nineteen union members reinstated to work. Fought also challenged the notion that illegal immigrants were stealing jobs from the Racine community. As he pointed out, the foundry work at Racine Steel Castings was hot and dirty and native-born workers shunned those jobs, which is why so many black and Latino workers filled the slots in the postwar period and into the 1980s. Fought also argued that the current legislation going through Congress, would have granted all workers in question amnesty based on their years in the country. The legislation finally passed in 1986 and granted

[482] Dionicio Nodin Valdes, *Barrios Nortenos: St. Paul and Midwestern Mexican Communities in the Twentieth Century* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 215-216, 245-255; Ngai, 265-269; MacLean, 225-261; Sean Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan: A History, 1974-2008* (New York: Harpers Collins, 2008), 167-198.

amnesty to 2.7 million undocumented immigrants.[483] The INS continued to target Racine Steel Castings workers, but the union stood behind all its members and actively fought to save their jobs. This case demonstrates the multiple ways in which labor activists in the city sought to build connections with all workers, even in hard political times, to improve the sense of class solidarity that would strengthen their efforts in the long run.

Even as unions lost power on the shop floor, workers throughout the area kept seeking to organize and work within unions to mitigate the economic uncertainty of the times. As plants laid off workers or closed altogether other local businesses felt the impact. Grocery stores in Racine closed locations during the late-1970s and into the 1980s. Similar events occurred across the Midwestern industrial sector. In Gary, Indiana more than one-third of all retail stores closed as 20,000 steelworkers lost their jobs.[484]

At the same time, workers in the retail industry continued to unionize and sign labor agreements with grocery stores. When a local franchise of Sentry Foods closed, it was several months before a new location opened, the store only re-hired a few of the old employees, but the new workers decided to organize with the United Food and Commercial Workers. The workers at Randall's Country Market, located down the street from Sentry, ratified their first agreement and received substantial wage increases, which brought them up to line with other unionized grocery store workers in the city. Workers also received holiday and vacation pay and a slight wage increase for any hours worked on Sundays. Because of the poor economic climate, Piggly-Wiggly unionized workers agreed to defer their upcoming pay raises to keep stores from closing

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[483] "UAW 553 Chief Rips Raid on Immigrants," *Racine Labor*, 29 Jun 1984, p1, 5; "UAW 553 Rips Press, INS on Raids," *Racine Labor*, 6 July 1984, p1,4; "Hispanics Angered, Saddened by Raids," *Racine Labor*, " Jul 84, p5; "UAW 553 Rips New Immigrant Raid," *Racine Labor*, 20 Jul 84, p2; "Labor, Hispanics Decry Raids by INS Agents," *Racine Labor*, 27 Jul 84, p13; "UAW 553 to Fight for 2 'Aliens' Jobs," *Racine Labor*, 28 Sep 84, p3; Ngai, 267.

[484] Joshua B. Freeman, *American Empire: The Rise of a Global Power, the Democratic Revolution at Home, 1945-2000* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012), 347, 48.

in Racine and Kenosha. Paul Whiteside, Jr., business representative for UFCW Local 1444, represented the grocery store workers in bargaining negotiations and oversaw the successful union election through WERC for the Sentry workers. The Retail Clerk locals and Meatcutter locals in Racine and Kenosha merged into the Milwaukee Local 1444 to increase their organizing capabilities and negotiating power.[485] Whiteside followed the path of his father, a long-time labor and political activist in Kenosha, as a labor organizer in the region. The continuity of activists and their families that carried over from generation-to-generation in Racine and surrounding areas helped sustain the sense of labor solidarity and the history of both cities as union towns.

This continuity paid off in community fund raising and political engagement as well. Activists in Racine's labor community understood that the extra pressure from the uncertain economic times compounded by the decrease in the social safety net left many workers falling through ever-increasing gaps in the system. During the decade, activists and the social justice and charity organizations that they worked with and within provided laid-off and under-employed workers in the city with the means to provide for themselves and their families. Al Hartog, a member of Local 180 at Case, and other members of the Labor Advisory Board to the United Way, organized a Labor Run to kick off the 1980 campaign drive. Hartog explained, "It will be a demonstration of solidarity and commitment to our community."[486] Union members had made the United Way yearly fund drive an integral part of the labor community's activities since they had successfully fought for the creation of the Labor Advisory Board in the 1950s. In the weekly "United Organized labor Activities" column in *Racine Labor*, representatives advertised United Way organizations, suggested services for workers, and kept the labor

[485] "Randall's Store Workers Ratify First Contract," *Racine Labor*, 11 June 1982, p7; "Sentry Workers Vote for Union," *Racine Labor*, 6 August 1982, p2.
[486] Al Hartog, "Join the Labor Run for United Way," *Racine Labor*, 8 August 1980, p3.

community informed of events and activities throughout the decades. Workers joined forces with Project Racine and Project Kenosha and brought unions together from both cities for a community party and dance to raise funds and supplies for area food banks. This event in March 1983 raised over $5,000 for organizations in the area. Postal workers set up collections during the organizing drive leading up to the party and delivered twenty boxes of food from the National Association of Letter Carriers local.[487] With the unemployment rate almost to the double digits in Racine and Kenosha, union members recognized that most families could use additional help and that service providers were straining to meet current needs.

Racine's labor activists recognized the need to pushback against the existing national political climate to help improve local economic and social conditions. In 1981 the national AFL-CIO organized "Solidarity Day" as a march and rally to protest President Ronald Reagan's attacks on the social and economic programs of the 1960s. Reagan ran his 1980 presidential campaign on a combination of nostalgia for an idealized vision of postwar Amercia—flush from government largesse—and the role of liberals' over-indulgence of radical demands on the government as the destruction of true freedom. Many of Reagan's domestic policymakers and their supporters looked at his 1980 victory as the perfect opportunity to roll back progressive social and economic policies associated with postwar liberal efforts to expand economic and social citizenship rights.[488] But labor activists and their allies determined to push against Reagan's promised spending cuts for social programs and economic policies that would limit growth for the poorest Americans. The rally included a broad section of those fighting for social justice including union members, environmentalists, civil rights activists, and feminists, led by

[487] "Labor Effort Raises $5,000 for the Hungry, *Racine Labor*, 25 Mar 1983, p1; "Postal Workers Hold Own Food Drive," *Racine Labor*, 25 Mar 83, p3.
[488] MacLean, 225, 226; Wilentz, 134-137; Van Gosse, "Postmodern America: A New Democratic Order in the Second Gilded Age," in *The World the Sixties Made: Politics and Culture in Recent America*, ed. Van Gosse and Richard Moser (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 12.

AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland in his efforts to attack Reagan's overtures to white rank-and-file workers. Organizers also took the opportunity to show their support and solidarity with the striking PATCO workers to counter Reagan's insistence that public workers had no right to strike. About 35 workers from Racine took a chartered bus to Washington, D.C. Seven local NAACP members rented a van, and some families drove down together. Bruce Burman, a UW-Parkside employee thought it was a good event for the labor movement. He explained, "It brought labor factions together, ethnic groups, blacks, whites, Chicano, and the elderly…It was a tiring bus ride, 40 hours, but it was worth the inconvenience. If they want to do it again next weekend, I'd do it."[489]

Burman's statements illustrate the continuing saliency of building broad-based coalitions centered on working-class issues to effect change in U.S. society despite the notion that identity politics delegitimized class-based identity formation. Cookie DeBruin, a Local 556 member at Jacobsen who drove down with her husband and children, felt that Reagan did not care or respond to the events but that it was good for people to push back against his policies. Scott Zierten, a Local 180 member at Case, felt inspired that the rally brought around 250,000 people and wanted to organize a similar rally in Madison to protest unemployment cuts in the state.[490] Despite declining political power, workers saw the need to combine forces and participate in public debate.

Locally, activists sought to create or join coalitions that would help provide some level of economic security for the city, region, and state. In 1981 the Racine County AFL-CIO voted to join the Citizen/Labor Energy Coalition. This state-wide group of labor, community, and senior citizen groups hoped to lobby the state to impose higher taxes on oil companies operating in

[489] 250,000-500,000 Rally in Washington," *Racine Labor*, 25 September 1981, p1, 7, 11; McCartin, *Collision Course*, 254, 318.
[490] "250,000-500,000 Rally in Washington," *Racine Labor*, 25 September 1981, p1, 7, 11.

Wisconsin. When long-time labor activist Tony Valeo was elected to the Citizens Utility Board's (CUB) executive board he went around to local union meetings explaining the organization's aim to represent the interests of utility consumers in the area and to recruit new members. CUB was enacted into state law in 1979 to serve as a counterweight to the utility lobby and better represent citizens within the Wisconsin Public Service Commission. Organizations like CUB came out of the consumer movement of the 1970s and 1980s most often associated with Ralph Nader's activism and supporters. In Wisconsin Senators Nelson and Proxmire also promoted consumer action groups to combat corporate power and to protect natural resources in the state. CUB was legislated to provide consumer education and lobbying at all levels of Wisconsin government. The legislation did not provide any funding, funds came entirely by donations and any citizen over eighteen could become a member with a three dollar membership contribution. While funding came from CUB, the law also stipulated that Wisconsin public utility providers had to send CUB information mailings with billing notices to customers.[491] One of CUB's first actions was to fight a proposed $141 million rate increase by Wisconsin Electric, the state's largest utility company that served customers in Milwaukee, Racine, Kenosha and surrounding areas. The proposed change would raise residential rates by twenty-three percent.[492] CUB lobbyists and their allies successfully reduced the proposed rate increases and put the greater burden for the increase on large corporations instead of small business and residential customers.[493]

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[491] Russ Whitesel, "Creation of a Citizens Utility Board (CUB)" in Chapter 72, Laws of 1979 *Information Memorandum* by Wisconsin Legislative Council Staff, Madison, WI (Dec 1979).
[492] "Local Citizen/Labor Energy Coalition Forming," *Racine Labor*, 12 Jun 81, p6; "Newly-Elected Valeo Seeks to Build Cub," *Racine Labor*, 6 Feb 81, p1, 5; "CUB to Battle $141 Million Electric Hike," *Racine Labor*, 13 Mar 81, p3.
[493] "CUB Wins Significant Victory in WEPCO Rate Increase Decision, CUB Bulletin Alert, Sept. 1981; Racine NAACP, letter from Thomas to Strohl, 29 Sept 1980, WHS, Box 4, Folder 2.

Tony Valeo's involvement in CUB is illustrative of the ways in which Racine's labor activists held broad-based visions of economic and social citizenship and extended their civic activism beyond the labor movement. Anthony "Tony" Valeo was born in Kenosha, Wisconsin on 28 October 1915 to an immigrant family from southern Italy. Unable to find a job after graduation, he went to work for the Civilian Conservation Corps. The Great Depression had a deep impact on Valeo, as it did for many young labor activists in the area, and he dedicated his life to securing economic security of all workers. Valeo finally got a job at Case in 1937 and worked there and within the union until he was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1943. After the war he returned to Case and served as an active member of the education committee during the 1945-47 strike. Valeo was elected Local 180 President in 1950 and served until 1966 when he was appointed as International Representative to UAW Region 10. His commitment to bringing people together to solve economic and social issues sent him to workplaces around Racine and to workers' homes to help explain the value of unionization, various organizing campaigns, and local union contracts, despite his intense shyness. He saw unionization as a way to protect people from the ravages of poverty and injustice and this fueled his tireless energy to get working people to stick together and make the world a better place. Outside of his union activities, Valeo served on the Labor Advisory Board to the United Way and as an activist in senior citizen and consumer rights group such as CUB. He spent his entire adult life serving Racine and Kenosha's labor community.[494]

Labor activists like Valeo joined forces with community groups and area politicians to provide aid and support to laid off workers in Racine. Organizers formed a Citizen-Labor Coalition for Jobs to lobby for and arrange Congressional hearings on plant closings and

[494] Tom Valeo interview, "UAW's Anthony Valeo Labor Person of the Year," *Racine Labor*, 5 September 1980, p1, 10.

joblessness in the area to be led by Congressman Les Aspin (D-Wisconsin) and Congressman Richard Gephardt (D-Missouri). The Citizen-Labor Coalition was made up of members of the Racine AFL-CIO Council, the UAW political action arm, the Machinists unions, and the United Electrical workers union locals. The citizens included nuns from the Dominican Sisters of the Siena Center and members of the Racine Urban League. The group publicized the hearings as a way to put plant closings and the resultant job loss on the national political agenda. They hoped to draw participants for the local hearings from Racine and Kenosha but also Milwaukee and Janesville as well. Labor activists continued to reach out to their allies in public office, despite the resistance of the Reagan administration. Congressman Aspin supported legislation at the national level to limit plant closings and to extend unemployment compensation benefits for the long-term unemployed during the early-1980s. Local labor leaders also sought to rally workers together for Labor Day events and planned a march and rally with Democratic candidates for governor and other local offices to protest joblessness and gather momentum for upcoming elections to change the political landscape at the state and local level.[495] These activities demonstrate that labor activists continued to demand answers and action from political leaders and actively sought to push the needs of working people to the forefront of political debate. While they recognized the landscape had changed, they did not abandon their efforts to keep working-class issues as part of the public debate and to continue to press for full economic citizenship for all.

The actions of the labor community throughout the decade also showed a commitment to all working people, and those looking for work, in the city. Labor activists did not retreat to only protecting the individual jobs of their local union members. The language and actions illustrated

[495] "Interest Grows in Feb. 16 Job Hearing Here," *Racine Labor*, 5 Feb 1982, p1, 5; "Local Jobless Rate at 16.3%, State's Highest," *Racine Labor*, 4 Jun 1982, p1; "March Set Sept. 5 to Protest Joblessness," *Racine Labor*, 27 August 1982, p 3.

a commitment to the unemployed and under-employed as well. Just as the theme for the 1982 Labor Day activities suggested, activists worked hard to provide relief for these workers and demanded at every level more efforts of job creation to get the unemployed back to work. Local 180 members laid off from Case made up a large contingent of the rising ranks of the unemployed. Union leaders sought to alleviate some of the layoffs through contract negotiations but also looked outside of the collective bargaining system. Union leaders collaborated with the local technical school, Gateway Technical Institute, and the Racine Job Service office and won a $627,000 grant to train laid off workers from Case and help them find employment that offered at least 75% of their former pay rate. The program, called RESTORE, also provided education on community service programs, classes on budgeting, and job search clubs to alleviate the sense of isolation laid off workers experienced. Paul Smedegaard, a laid-off Local 180 steward at Case, served as coordinator, in a role he found similar to his steward duties. He steered workers toward the agencies and training that would serve each individual best. Instituted in August 1984, the funds for the program ran out in June 1986, but the program did provide jobs averaging $11.12 an hour for many workers on permanent layoff at Case.[496] William Jenkins served as manager for a similar program called R.E.C. Industries and provided training and guidance to young, unemployed men seeking jobs.[497] Across the country unions extended their efforts to find new jobs for displaced workers. The AFL-CIO participated in lobbying for federal and state-level funding to aid in employee training and job assistance, as they had since the 1960s. When American Motors Corporation shut down its Kenosha plant, UAW Local 72 similarly

[496] "Training Program Being Set Up for Case's Laid-off," *Racine Labor*, 10 Aug 1984, p5; "Program RESTOREs Hope for Case," *Racine Labor* 18 Jan 1985, p3, 12; "UAW 180 to Apply for TAA Benefits," *Racine Labor*, 1Aug 1986, p1, 6.
[497] Julia Pferdehirt, *Blue Jenkins: Working for Workers* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 2011), 121-23.

joined forces with the Job Development Training Corporation to provide retraining and job assistance services led by union leaders.[498]

The tide seemed to turn for Local 180 during the 1987 contract negotiations. While the local contract dropped some of the language they had negotiated over the previous decade protecting job security, the contract representing all the unionized Case plants in the nation granted 100% job security for all workers not currently on permanent layoff. After months of secret negotiations and two called strikes, union leaders announced what they hailed as a "historic pact" at Case IH (the named changed after Tenneco purchased the farm tractor division of International Harvester). The new agreement promised forty-hour work weeks for the 1250 current workers at Racine plants, instituted a guaranteed employment level at the current rate, and stipulated that overtime would be limited so as to recall laid off workers before mandatory overtime.

On the surface the new contract seemed promising. However, the negotiations forced a change in seniority rules that proved detrimental to skilled trades workers. In fact, skilled trades workers voted overwhelmingly to reject the contract, but were eventually forced to accept the agreement. The local bargaining team had voted to keep the existing language but was overruled by other members in the Case chain bargaining units. As skilled workers predicted, within a year their numbers had been reduced by twenty-three with threats to more layoffs as Case IH management started implementing a contracting-out program to circumvent the contract language.[499] Management still refused good-faith bargaining and held even greater power over workers in the plants.

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[498] Dudley, 154-155.
[499] "Strike Deadline Nears at Case," *Racine Labor*, 01 May 1987, p1, 2; "Historic Case IH Pact Sets 100% Job Security," *Racine Labor*, 15 May 1987, p1, 7; "Skilled Trades Express Rage at New Case Pact," *Racine Labor*, 22 May 1987, p3, 20; "Layoffs Hit about 23 Skilled-Trades Workers at Case," *Racine Labor*, 18 March 1988, p8.

Recognizing the loss of better paid jobs in industrial settings, activists in Racine intensified their efforts to organize in low-wage industries and to appeal to workers across sectors to actively participate in the labor community. High unemployment and unsuccessful strikes to save plants from closing did not deter new organizing campaigns, even at workplaces with recalcitrant management teams who fought every effort to gain union recognition. The Zayre Department Stores had resisted unionization efforts by the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) for years. Finally, in the fall of 1983, workers at the two Racine stores voted to join UFCW in an NLRB election, but the company appealed the election. After the regional NLRB ruled the election valid, the store appealed to the national NLRB. Although, still awaiting a ruling on the vote, members of the Racine labor community came together in January 1984 to have a unity party recognizing the Zayre workers' efforts and welcoming them into the larger labor community. Members of several different labor bodies organized the party and workers from over forty different union locals attended the party at the Racine Labor Center. With over 350 people in attendance, activists praised the Zayre workers for their persistence and offered continued support as they started making plans for their first contract negotiations.[500] This party and others like it during the 1980s shows that labor activists continued to value a commitment to broad-based ideas of what and who constituted a labor community. Unions were indeed losing ground on the shop floor. Organizing in the Reagan years grew increasingly difficult due to a shift at the federal level in support to corporate managers as opposed to helping workers keep an even ground in the capital-labor relationship.

Always aware of the changing landscape, in Racine worker activists sought to mitigate the loss of shop-floor power with a concerted effort in other arenas. Events like the Zayre unity

[500] "Labor Welcomes Zayre Workers," *Racine Labor*, 27 Jan 1984, p1, 13; "United Way Offers Help for Workers," *Racine Labor*, 13 Aug 1982, p1;

party, the Labor Day rallies, the labor songfest, and United Fund events held throughout the decade served to reinforce the sense of community activists sought to maintain. It kept unions in the public mind beyond strike actions and built inter-union solidarity. A similar party was organized for workers at the Westview Nursing Home after they voted overwhelmingly to join SEIU Local 150. After years of battles with management, a change in ownership, and a federal investigation into the practices at the nursing home, workers re-committed to SEIU Local 150 with the aid of Ron Thomas, who took a position as international business representative after leaving Massey Ferguson.[501] In organizing the party, Thomas explained, "No worker and no union can afford to go it alone any longer…So we want to bring together the Westview workers and the labor community to unify for the challenges we face, as well as to celebrate."[502] Other events also focused on bringing the community together.

Racine's labor activists also planned social events to strength the sense of community. UAW Local 180 President Kelly Sparks helped coordinate the first Labor Songfest for the Racine area in 1986. Headlined by Pete Seeger, over 1,000 area residents attended the event and raised over $7000 for food banks in Racine and Kenosha.[503] Seeger rose to prominence as one of the most successful singer/songwriters who came of age in the postwar period and incorporated traditional folk songs and spirituals into what came to be known as freedom music or protest music. Blacklisted during the McCarthy period, Pete Seeger gained a mass following by grafting leftist political messages onto traditional folk songs. He used his music to encourage social change, support civil rights and labor, and to protest against the Vietnam War.[504] His broad

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[501] Ron Thomas, interview with author, 11July 2014, Racine, WI.
[502] "'Unity Party' to Celebrate SEIU Victory at Westview," *Racine Labor*, 23 October 1987, p2.
[503] "Labor Songfest Delights crowd of over 1000," *Racine Labor*, 3 Oct 1986, p16.
[504] Dick Weissman, *Which Side are You on? An Inside History of the Folk Music Revival in America* (New York: Continuum, 2005), 10, 54, 57, 59, 151-156; Peter Dreier and Dick Flacks, "Protest Music and Peoples Movements: The Tradition Continues," Common Dreams (http://www.commondreams.org/view/2014/05/26?print, accessed 29 May 2014).

appeal among progressive activists and others, led to the large crowd participating in the Labor Songfest.

Following their 1987 contract negotiations, UAW Local 180 members organized a food drive and "solidarity meal" for the striking UFCW Local P-40 members at the Patrick Cudahy meatpacking plant. Workers had been on strike since January because they refused to accept another round of wage cuts after accepting concessions in the 1982 and 1984 negotiations. As Local 180 member Gilbert Delgado explained, "We know how it is to be out on strike…We also want to show that Local 180 is again involved in the community, and to get people feeling good about being members of Local 180."[505] Battling layoffs and fighting for better contracts had taken a toll on the largest union in the city, but they still held a commitment to being a leader in the labor community as far as community outreach.

The Cudahy strike, which culminated a series of battles at the company over the decade, highlighted the impact of corporate restructuring, government deregulation, and increased management attacks on labor transformed working conditions in the United States by the end of the twentieth century. In the meat packing industry, corporate consolidation and technological advancements allowed management to combine and eliminate higher skilled positions such as meat cutters and butchers. Deregulation at the federal level led to meatpacking becoming one of the most hazardous industries in the country by the 1990s. Management targeted unions to reduce resistance to production speedups and reduced wages and went on a concerted attack against the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) in the early-1980s by gutting membership and demanding wage and benefit concessions. Average wages in the industry declined from eleven dollars an hour in the late-1970s to about eight dollars an hour by 1982.

[505] "UAW 180 Plans Meal, Food Drive for P-40 Strikers," *Racine Labor*, 22 May 1987, p1.

The worsening conditions and economic uncertainty pushed those workers with the means to find other employment, further weakening unions. Meatpacking plants like Hormel, IDP, and Cudahy started relying on an increasingly non-white (mostly Mexican), vulnerable workforce. Workers did fight back but their decreased power and lack of government support offered little hope for victory. In 1982, 1984, and 1985 workers at a Hormel plant in Austin, Minnesota went on strike and the governor sent the National Guard to protect strikebreakers against the union. Workers in Austin lost their strike and many lost their homes and had to relocate. Corporate efforts weakened but did not end worker militancy and the fight by UFCW and their labor movement allies. In 1984 in Cudahy, Wisconsin (just outside Milwaukee) Local P-40 members refused wage and benefit cuts amounting to four and a half dollars an hour. The company threatened to close and move the plant that had existed in the city since the early-twentieth century. However, workers blocked the sale of the company and forced continued negotiations. By the end of the year, workers accepted wage cuts of nearly two dollars an hour and reduced benefits but saved the plant. Cudahy management continued its efforts to bust the union, but Local P-40 and the surrounding labor communities kept fighting. The ongoing labor dispute would cause strikes for the next three years in an effort to maintain some sort of economic and workplace protections for the meatpacking workers.[506] Even in a pronounced weakened state and representing a high number of immigrant workers, UFCW P-40 continued to fight.

Labor activists used local history to reinforce a sense of solidarity during the late-1980s as they had since after World War II. The Wisconsin Labor History Society's annual meeting was held in Racine on 10 May 1986. The theme for the year was to focus on the history of

[506] Valdes, 228-231; "Cudahy Closing to Cost 850 Jobs," *Racine Labor*, 27 April 1984, p1, 12; "Cudahy Workers Accept Final Offer," *Racine Labor*, 3 August 1984, p1; "Cudahy Workers' Struggle goes On," *Racine Labor*, 17 August 1984, p4.; Freeman, 359-60.

industrial unions in the state. Speakers included Charles Heymanns, who was president of the union at Kohler Industries in 1934 and helped lead their fight for union recognition; Victor Cooks, one of the founding members of what would become Local 180; and William Jenkins in his leadership role at Belle City Malleable (Racine Steel Castings) and as the first black president of the city's labor council. The speakers talked about the history of organizing early AFL and CIO unions and the importance of educating and politicizing rank-and-file workers. Cooks and Jenkins both spoke to the need to continue that trend, urged union leaders to teach workers about the history of unions, and to do more than just have them sign union cards in order to recreate the militancy of the postwar years. Their lessons seemed even more important as only 100 people turned out to the Racine Labor Center to attend the conference.[507]

At the same time, a new sense of militancy fueled activities at the end of the decade. The fight in the city to keep Harris Metals in town after a threatened move to Tennessee, the rallying around the workers at the Westview nursing home, the activities by SEIU Local 150 members at St. Luke's Hospital, and other campaigns fueled this sense of labor's resurgence. Younger union activists with a "rebellious attitude" also held the reins a several locals and pushed for greater resistance from the whole labor community as seen in the actions and language of Ron Thomas, Mike Webster, and Albert Herron, who motivated union members and residents in Racine to come together and stand strong against corporate attacks on their community.

A history of Local 150 workers at St. Luke's Hospital is illustrative. Local activists continued to work toward better wages and working conditions regardless of the unfavorable economic climate in the city. After a three-month negotiation period, the contract for the 1982 – 1985 period provided for wage increases, although chief steward Brenda Feick admitted, "We

[507] "Racine Conference to Look at Industrial Unions' History," *Racine Labor*, 11 Apr 1986, p3; "Labor History Meeting Set in Racine May 10," *Racine Labor*, 25 Apr 86, p8; Darryl Holter, "Veteran Labor Leaders Tell Story of Unionism," *Racine Labor*, 23 May 1986, p5.

accepted less than what we wanted, and the hospital kept the wage issue open for the third year." At this time, Local 150 represented 242 workers at St. Luke's Hospital.[508] Local 150 organizers came to Racine and the 38 workers at a local nursing home voted to allow SEIU Local 150 to represent them as their collective bargaining unit.[509] Despite the internal conflicts, and Local 150's reputation in Racine, union organizers successfully managed to organize workers in several unrepresented healthcare institutions.

Labor activists in Local 150, like others in the community, also sought to improve conditions for those outside of the labor movement. In January 1985, SEIU Local 150 participated in a Milwaukee fund raiser to send food aid to the people of Ethiopia. They joined forces with five community organizations, and Local 150 members contributed over $1,000 to the fund, despite their low wages.[510] In an effort to remain involved in political activities, new president Dan Iverson and other officials voted to join a state-wide organization, the Wisconsin Action Coalition (WAC), that collectively challenged issues at the state and federal level related to tax, utility, and job issues. WAC engaged in voter registration drives in 1984, pushed for the full-employment campaign, and successfully fought against phone and utility rate increases.[511] In his report to the international union, Iverson detailed an ambitious program to improve internal organizing and political action for Local 150 members.[512] Local Racine labor unions established a Labor Roundtable to discuss shared concerns affecting the labor movement in 1985. In the second meeting, Local 150 Chief Steward Brenda Feick and Business Representative Steve Cupery reported on the union's standing. They acknowledged a concerted

[508] "St. Luke's workers gain pay hikes," *Racine Labor*, 23 July 1982.
[509] "SEIU wins at nursing home," *Racine Labor*, 17 Sept 1982.
[510] "SEIU Local 150 co-sponsors Ethiopia fund-raiser," *Racine Labor*, 21 December 1984; "SEIU Local 150 joins in Ethiopia fund drive," *Racine Labor*, 1 Mar 1985.
[511] "SEIU 150 joins WAC," *Racine Labor*, 1 Feb 1985.
[512] "Local 150, 1985" SEIU Executive Office: John Sweeny Records, WPR, Box 26, Folder 12.

effort to develop a "strong progressive orientation" to improve the image problems associated with the local's handling of the 1976 strike at St. Luke's.[513]

The change in the atmosphere between Local 150 and the Racine labor community can be seen in the increased coverage of contract negotiations during the 1985 negotiations by *Racine Labor*. As negotiations began, the bargaining unit stated its desire to improve contract language related to job security, health insurance premiums, pension plans, grievance procedures, and health and safety language. The committee also expected to raise salaries to reflect the decline in real wages due to inflation. Members at St. Luke's received questionnaires so they could voice their concerns as the bargaining committee planned negotiations. Membership had fallen from 250 in 1976 to 186 by April 1985, mostly because of layoffs at the hospital. The bargaining committee expressed the desire to capitalize on St. Luke's economic situation, which was better than other local hospitals in the area.[514]

The activities of St. Luke's workers during the 1985 negotiations demonstrated a continued effort to address economic, political, and workplace democracy issues despite the setbacks of failed strikes, economic recession, and union leadership conflict. In an attempt to sway the public, Local 150 pointed to a study by the Greater Milwaukee Area Hospital Council published in the local newspaper, which illustrated that pay rates at St. Luke's ranked near the bottom of the twenty-four hospitals polled. The report indicated that nurses aides' minimum pay ranked 23rd and housekeepers ranked 22nd. Members of Local 150 also launched a campaign urging more patients to patronize St. Luke's Hospital. In an appeal to the labor community, Local 150 Business Representative Steve Cupery acknowledged that as the only union hospital in the two cities of Racine and Kenosha, St. Luke's should be the destination of choice for

[513] "Labor Roundtable shares concerns of unions," *Racine Labor*, 22 March 1985.
[514] "St. Luke's workers seek to catch up on wages," *Racine Labor*, 12 April 1985.

members of the labor community whenever possible. This would increase the client base, which would benefit both the hospital and the union members. Union officials met with leaders of other locals in order to gain their support.[515] Unlike the boycott of St. Luke's during the 1976 strike, this linking of union and hospital fortunes had the potential of creating a positive image in the Racine community and bringing St. Luke's management closer to an accord. Scholars point to the ways in which Hospital Workers' 1199 captured public support for their workers' cause and mark it as one of the key factors of 1199's success.[516] Positive press would benefit Local 150's cause and apply needed pressure to hospital negotiators during the bargaining period.

Members voted on the negotiated labor agreement on 13 May 1985. The bargaining committee members reported that they were able to convince St. Luke's negotiating team to remove proposed wage concessions and to accept instead wage increases of 1.6 percent for the first two years of the contract. Members approved the contract by a vote of 104 to 9. Cupery reported that he believed success came from the positive pressure the union was able to generate against St. Luke's board members.[517] As Cupery celebrated the successful contract negotiations, he also advertised Local 150's plans for the future. The bargaining team and leadership members of St. Luke's unit of Local 150 planned a three-part plan of action for the future. Elements included preparing for the next wage negotiations, due in two years, by keeping pressure on St. Luke's Hospital management and continuing to advertise that service workers at the hospital were the lowest paid in the area. The plan also included "a major publicity program to encourage union members to patronize St. Luke's," and it encouraged alliances with

[515] "Study says St. Luke's pay ranks at bottom", *Racine Labor*, 26 April 1985; "Go to St. Luke's, the union hospital': SEIU 150," *Racine Labor*, 26 April 1985.
[516] Fink and Greenberg, *Upheaval in the Quiet Zone*, xi, 78-82.
[517] "St. Luke's workers beat back concessions push," *Racine Labor*, 17 May 1985.

community organizations, such as senior citizen groups, to get more labor-friendly people on the hospital's board of directors.[518]

Workers at St. Luke's remained engaged and motivated to continue their struggle for better wages and workplace influence. Leadership changes at the state level, including the introduction of Don Iverson as president, seemed to settle the disputes between Racine's members and Local 150. Workers engaged in more collaborative activities with other social justice organizations and within the Racine labor community. Therefore, the sudden dismissal, just one month after the new contract went into effect, of the fifteen nursing assistants employed at St. Luke's came as a shock, not only to those employees, but to the entire Racine labor community. As Cupery argued, the newly-signed labor agreement contained language protecting members from job loss. Hospital management argued that because the whole job line had been eliminated, the workers did not qualify for job placement in other lines, as stipulated under the contract. Although Local 150 representatives filed a grievance on behalf of the workers, the fate of the nursing assistants was tied up for years as St. Luke's refused to abide by the arbitrator's rules.[519]

St. Luke's decision to fire the nursing aides might have had several causes. By the mid-1980s, businesses across the country responded to the shifting political and legal landscape and fought back against gains made by labor unions in earlier periods. Professionalization within the health care industry may have also played a role in St. Luke's decision. As anthropologist Karen Brodkin Sacks discovered in her study of the Duke Medical Center, health care institutions started to rely on professional certification instead of on-the-job training for nurse's aides, lab technicians, and some clerical positions. Sacks also details the ways in which Duke Medical

[518] Ibid.
[519] Peter Seybold, "St. Luke's slams door on aides," *Racine Labor*, 28 June 1985.

Center management started to relegate more duties to registered nurses, while reducing the number of licensed practical nurses, nurses' aides, and other service workers.[520]

Ron Thomas, though working closely with the Westview nursing home workers, also kept involved with the battle to find jobs at St. Luke's for the laid-off nursing assistants at St. Luke's. Arbitrators ruled that St. Luke's had to rehire the most senior nursing assistant with twenty-seven years experience, Ruth Holston, and pay back pay dated to the 1985 firing. The arbitration ruling also stated that all the nursing assistants had recall rights at the hospital. Yet, Thomas and SEIU Local 150 argued that the hospital management, led by a famous anti-union law firm, was purposefully delaying implementation of the ruling. Although the hospital rehired Holston, they never paid the back pay and laid her off again after a month on her new job. Layoffs at the hospital reduced union membership to 165 by January 1987. Local 150 reached out to federal arbitrators to again deal with the recall rights of the nursing assistants and also to help with contract negotiations. The hospital called for a wage freeze and the union called for wage increases for members. The hospital also wanted to eliminate the arbitration and grievance procedures built into the contract. In an effort to keep members informed and involved, Ron Thomas arranged training sessions for members and informational meetings on the current negotiations at the Racine Labor Center. Thomas's experiences as president of the UAW local at Massey Ferguson, especially during the fight to save the jobs in Racine, opened the door to introduce the type of rank-and-file participation that was more common in Racine's UAW locals than SEIU Local 150 had experienced as a state-wide union. The union also voted to start a petition drive among all the workers at St. Luke's to show support for their wage demands and

[520] Karen Brodkin Sacks, *Caring by the Hour: Women, Work, and Organizing at Duke Medical Center* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 189-207.

convinced the hospital to agree to monthly "management-labor" meetings to build a better working relationship.[521]

SEIU Local 150 won its third arbitration agreement for the nursing assistants in July 1987. Three years after the original firings, the federal arbitrator again maintained that St. Luke's should have provided the nursing assistants with recall rights and granted them back pay and benefits. As Local 150 President Dan Iverson asserted, "This decision shows that it really pays to have a union behind you." The years without jobs of course took a heavy toll on the nursing assistants as they all suffered varying degrees of financial hardship. It also points to the growing trend of low-wage women workers becoming trapped in a cycle of under-paid jobs and welfare when faced with life's emergencies that would continue into the next century.[522] The situation also reiterated the resistance of the hospital to abide by the rules of the NLRB, federal arbitrators, and the agreements they signed with unions. A federal judge upheld the arbitrator's ruling and held St. Luke's accountable for back pay plus nine percent interest for the fired nursing assistants, charging the hospital with about $80,000 in fees to the workers. After the ruling, Ron Thomas and union leaders pushed to get the wage agreement back on the bargaining table. Finally, in May 1988 Local 150 members ratified a new three-year agreement with the hospital that included the long-sought-for wage increases. In his usual willingness to speak to the press, Thomas praised the bargaining committee and the rank-and-file members for their

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[521] "St. Luke's Not Abiding by Rulings, SEIU Charges," *Racine Labor*, 9 Jan 87, p5; "SEIU 150 Hopes to Settle Issues at Jan. 21 Meet," *Racine Labor*, 16 Jan 87, p2, 16; "Agreement May Emerge for St. Luke's Nursing Aides," *Racine Labor*, 6 Feb 87, p3; "Mediator to Assist Talks Between St. Luke's, SEIU 150," *Racine Labor,* 8 May 87, p16; "SEIU Sets Training Session for Members on March 21," *Racine Labor*, 13 Mar 87, p2; "St. Luke's Workers Get Up-date on Talks," *Racine Labor*, 15 May 87, p2; "SEIU 150 Seeks Better Relations, Pay at St. Luke's," *Racine Labor*, 22 May 87, p20; "SEIU 150 to Press Ahead for Pay Hike at St. Luke's," *Racine Labor*, 5 Jun 87, p10; "SEIU 150 Pleased with Meeting," *Racine Labor*, 12 Jun 87, p1.

[522] Collins and Mayer, 2-3, 37-39.

persistence against St. Luke's hard line, "Without a doubt, they held together under extremely adverse circumstances. Despite all the stress they held firm," he told *Racine Labor* reporters.[523]

The long-fought battle with St. Luke's did not limit the organizing efforts by Local 150 in Racine. Unlike the situation in the 1970s when Racine activists accused the Milwaukee-based local of signing sweetheart deals with management and getting workers to sign union cards and then not offering them real representation, by the 1980s, with new union leadership and local activists who were committed to educating and engaging workers, changes in the organizing efforts of Local 150 helped create the momentum of the last years of the decade. On the national level, SEIU boosted its organizing efforts by purposefully organizing the unorganized, emphasizing the union's commitment to social justice issues in the political arena. SEIU expanded to five divisions including healthcare, public sector, clerical, building services, and industrial and allied services workers.[524] As leaders worked to get wage increases and better working conditions at St. Luke's, they also worked closely with workers at the Westview Health Care Center, a local nursing home. Workers had faced the threat of job loss when the nursing home was sold and failed a federal inspection to receive Medicare benefits.

Workers saw organizing a union the best way to deal with the changes that occurred when new owners took over the home's administration. Changing conditions in the nursing home prompted Westview workers to respond favorably to an organizing effort by SEIU Local 150 in August 1987. During the organizing drive over seventy-five percent of the 180 service and maintenance workers signed union cards seeking representation. Of immediate concern to the workers was what they described as a crisis in staffing. The owners tried to reduce expenses

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[523]"SEIU Wins Major Case at St. Luke's Hospital," *Racine Labor*, 10 Jul 87, p1, 8; "SEIU Hopes Victory Will Lead to Better Relations," *Racine Labor*, 25 Sep 87, p1, 4; "SEIU 150 Gets Pay Hikes in Pact with St. Luke's," *Racine Labor*, 13 May 88, p3.

[524] SEIU Organizing Department Records, "Health care locals," WPR, Box 6, Folder 2; "Healthcare Organizing," Box 6, Folder 4.

by having fewer aides care for a growing number of patients. Workers also wanted to open negotiation on wages and benefits as the owners had eliminated a profit-sharing plan at the nursing home and cut employee's hours. Workers arranged a march to the owners' realty office in town to ask Ted Dremel to voluntarily recognize the union and start bargaining instead of waiting for a NLRB election. Dremel did agree to meet with workers and claimed he was not aware of staffing issues and that he would consider voluntary union recognition. Keeping the pressure high, workers also submitted a list of complaints by workers, residents' family members, and residents to the state office that oversaw nursing homes.[525]

The public pressure paid off and the Dremels agreed to a quick vote for union representation. On 5 September 1987, workers voted 128-4 to be represented by SEIU Local 150, as employee Coronett Sykes said about the vote, "I'm overwhelmed. It was a long time coming. We've needed this for years." President Don Iverson agreed and pointed out that the vote should serve as notice to the nursing home industry in Wisconsin that changes are needed for patient care. As we have seen, the union victory at Westview was celebrated in the Racine area with a unity party at the Labor Center. It also had larger implications in Wisconsin because activists had been lobbying for a nursing home reform bill that was recently vetoed by Governor Tommy Thompson. Union leaders hoped to bring the same concerns to the bargaining table and keep up their efforts to introduce changes in nursing home care and administration. State AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer David Newby hailed the union recognition vote and issued a statement placing the vote in the context of the momentum of the larger Wisconsin labor movement.

[525] "76% at Westview Sign Up for SEIU," *Racine Labor*, 7 Aug 87, p1; "Workers Seek Union to Solve Crisis," *Racine Labor*, 14 Aug 87, p1, 5; "Westview Workers Seek Recognition," *Racine Labor,* 21 Aug 87, p1, 8.

Newby also asserted that the victory was even more important because the workers at Westview represented the lowest paid and most exploited members of the labor community.[526]

While the labor community was rallying around the low-wages service workers at St. Luke's and Westview, workers in the industrial sector were also fighting to keep their jobs and to resist corporate restructuring efforts. Led by President Albert Herron, members of Boilermakers Local 1703 decided to pursue an all-out effort to prevent Harris Metals from shifting jobs to a non-union plant in Tennessee. The projected move would cost between sixty and sixty-five jobs for workers in Racine, representing nearly half of the membership of the local. Workers at the Harris Metals foundry produced specialty alloy-steel castings. The company was part of an international conglomerate that owned twenty-four plants in three countries. Harris Metals threatened to move after workers rejected another round of wage concessions. Instead workers voted to take a two-pronged approach that included negotiating for a severance package and applying for local aid for the expected layoffs and fighting to keep the jobs in Racine. Pointing to the support that Congressman Les Aspin put into keeping Harris Metals in the city, Herron said that the union's approach would be to remind management and the broader Racine community of the efforts both workers and politicians had used to keep Harris Metals in Racine and operating at a profit.[527]

Despite rain, over two hundred people showed up at a "Jobs with Justice" rally held in conjunction with Labor Day festivities and to build opposition to the Harris Metals move and other threats of closings and corporate abuse in the Racine area on 6 September 1987. The Jobs with Justice Campaign started earlier that year with a meeting in Miami, Florida. Their platform

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[526] "Workers Happy with Sept. 4 Union Vote at Westview," *Racine Labor*, 28 Aug 87, p11; "Sept. 12 Hearing Examines Nursing-home Reform Issue," *Racine Labor*, 28 Aug 87, p1; "SEIU Optimistic on Vote at Westview," *Racine Labor*, 5 Sep 87, p5; "97% Vote 'SEIU' at Westview," *Racine Labor*, 11 Sep 87, p1, 11.
[527] "Workers to Fight Harris Metals Move to Tenn.," *Racine Labor*, 14 August 1987, p1, 5; "Workers Set Two-part Strategy for Fighting Harris Move to Tennessee," *Racine Labor*, 21 Aug 1987, p1, 5.

called for workers to pledge to at least five acts of solidarity with other workers, stand up for the rights of working people, support the rights of all workers to bargain collectively, organize the unorganized, and otherwise mobilize around efforts for good jobs for all workers. The movement, initiated by members of several progressive unions, also urged coalition building and political action.[528] Albert Herron was one of the key speakers at the rally and urged the crowd to remember the high stakes for plant closings and demanded, "We can't let management have its way!" Other speakers also encouraged workers to "stand firm" in the fight for economic justice and pursue political action. The focus on politics played out over the weekend with many Democratic candidates speaking to Labor Day attendees about their roles in working to prevent plant closings and other issues impacting the city and county. Corrine Owens, Racine NAACP President, issued a statement reconfirming the organization's support for the Racine labor community. In part the statement spoke to the history of the civil rights organization's support of the labor movement, "we have marched shoulder to shoulder in the struggle for justice and must continue." The speakers also included the new Westview union members and Patrick Cudahy strikers. The mood of the event was evident in the theme of "Spirit of Resurgence." Workers and union leaders felt a sense of revitalization and took the time to celebrate victories even while real fights were still unfolding in the city and clear victories were hoped for but not yet achieved. As the award committee noted, part of the deliberation for the Labor Person of the Year award that went to CWA Local 4611 President Mike Webster included his reputation as being a progressive and militant young union leader. Just the kind of enthusiasm the committee and rank-and-file activists had been calling for over the past few years.[529]

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[528] Jobs with Justice, "Our History," Job with Justice Website, http://www.jwj.org/about-us/our-history, accessed 20 April 2014.

[529] "Spirit of Resurgence at 1987 Labor Fest," *Racine Labor*, 11 Sep 1987, p1, 12; NAACP Supports Labor's Cause," *Racine Labor,* 4 Sep 1987, p3.

Public pressure motivated Senator Joseph Strohl to intervene and send a letter to the Chicago-based Harris-Metals asking them to reconsider the move to Tennessee. Using the slogan that "Harris is taking the money and running," Herron and other union activists convinced politicians and the larger Racine community that wage concessions and the appeal by Congressman Aspin to bring contract work from Texas Instruments to Harris Metal constituted a commitment by workers and government officials to save the Racine production operations and that it was time for the company to follow through on those efforts. At a rally on 25 September held at the plant gates, U.S. Senate candidate Ed Garvey, Sister Brenda Walsh, CWA Local 4611 President Mike Webster, and SEIU Local 150 Business Representative Ron Thomas all showed up to speak in support of the Harris Metals workers. During efforts to keep the company from transferring jobs out of state, union bargaining team members continued to negotiate for concessions for the affected workers. However, when the company moved from no packages to $200 severance pay offers in bargaining sessions, it infuriated union leaders and workers.[530]

Even as Harris Metals officials started moving equipment out of the plant and laying off workers, bargaining team members refused to send the severance package offers to Local 1703 members. President Herron explained, "We feel like we're owed a hell of a lot more than $200 for being kicked out the door…I think their offer is disgusting." Workers recognized the continuation of a trend that started in the postwar years: large corporations buying locally owned manufacturing firms, bringing in outside managers with expertise in finance and no experience in production, and then squeezing everything out of the plant and workers before closing down. Herron urged his members and the community to fight against plant closing and hold

[530] "Strohl Asks Harris Owner to Reconsider Move to Tenn.," *Racine Labor*, 11 Sep 87, p3; "Boilermakers Plan Major Public Action to Protest Harris Move to Tenn.," *Racine Labor*, 18 Sep 87, p1, 9; "Rally Tonight Rips Harris' 'Take the Money & Run,'' *Racine Labor*, 25 Sep 87, p1;"Rally Puts Heat on Harris for Moving Jobs," *Racine Labor*, 2 Oct 87, p1, 8.

corporations accountable for their actions in Racine. So even after everyone knew that Harris Metals was closing the specialty line he argued, "We have got to keep fighting to save jobs for our community." The company revised their offer twice and their "final" offer to Local 1703 included $50 for each year of service or $200, whichever was greater. However, with the increased monetary offer the company stripped laid-off employees of their seniority rights and included a clause that said members would be required to "refrain from future activities which disparage Harris Metals and its parent company, Lindberg Corporation." Members voted to reject the offer by a margin of four-to-one.[531]

In explaining why members voted against the final offer Albert Herron stated that it was about dignity. Workers felt that the company betrayed both their loyalty to the company and willingness to take pay cuts in the last round of contract negotiations by making the decision to move production to plants outside of Racine. Workers recognized that the money offered would not even cover their monthly expenses and that the loss of seniority would also affect their ability to take job openings in the foundry divisions at their current pay levels. The "disparage" clause was also a personal affront. Herron explained, "The company was telling us to give up our political freedom for some money…These people won't let the company take their dignity away." He put the vote in terms of worker solidarity, "Boilermakers Loge 1703 may have lost some jobs, but we still have our solidarity, and we're letting people know we don't appreciate losing the jobs."[532] The union's militant resistance paid off with a new "final offer" from the company. Harris Metals management increased the severance package to $75 per year of service, returned seniority rights, and removed the disparage clause from the agreement.

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[531] "$200 Severance pay Labeled 'Disgusting,'" *Racine Labor*, 2 Oct 87, p1, 4; "Boilermakers To Vote on Severance Offer Sunday," *Racine Labor*, 16 Oct 87, p7; "Harris Ups Severance Offer," *Racine Labor*, 9 Oct 87, p3; "Dignity Before Money: Boilermakers Reject Offer," *Racine Labor*, 23 Oct 87, p1, 4.
[532] "Dignity Before Money: Boilermakers Reject Offer," *Racine Labor*, 23 Oct 87, p1, 4.

Although still unhappy with the severance rate, workers approved the adjustments in November, nearly two months after the final layoffs of the sixty-five workers. Union leaders also finalized aid for the laid-off workers through the Dislocated Worker Program, funded through the Job Training and Partnership Act. Workers could receive training through Gateway Technical College, job search assistance, and on-the-job training through participating employers.[533]

The momentum from the Labor Day celebrations in 1987 and the Harris Metals workers' militancy fed into the last years of the decade. Workers continued to rally around progressive politicians willing to support working-class issues, planned new and aggressive tactics to protect the economic security of the city and state, and continued to fight against moving jobs out of the area. Labor activists across the state organized a "New Directions for Labor" conference for May 1988 held in Madison, Wisconsin. The conference featured labor organizers and leaders, community activists, and scholars committed to finding new strategies to deal with the changing economic and political realities. A Wisconsin labor Management Conference brought SEIU President John Sweeny to Milwaukee to help build better labor-management relationship in the state.[534] The local labor community also celebrated successes as several UAW locals won wage increases in contract negotiations, city workers won against outsourcing services, and state workers gathered their resources to challenge Governor Thompson's attack on retirement plans. The 1988 presidential campaigns created an opportunity to repudiate conservative political agenda.

Although the nomination eventually went to Governor Michael Dukakis, Jesse Jackson's campaign focused on government intervention in the economy, closing the gaps in the social

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[65]"Boilermakers Vote Sunday on Improved Severance Pay," *Racine Labor*, 13 November 87, p3; "Harris Workers Approved Beefed-up Severance Pact," *Racine Labor*, 20 November 87, p6; "Training Help Available for Harris Metals Workers," *Racine Labor*, 6 Nov 87, p3.

[534] "Wisconsin Labor Management Conference, Milwaukee, April 12, 1989," SEIU Executive Office: John Sweeny, WPR, Box 119, Folder 31.

safety net, and an end to discrimination that labor liberals had continued to demand throughout the second half of the twentieth century. Dukakis ran against Vice President George H. W. Bush on a campaign of efficiency and competence in the postwar liberal tradition of practical solutions to public problems. Labor activists in Racine highlighted the central role of working-class issues in the Democratic primaries and local elections. The labor community celebrated the success of organizing around politicians working to support their causes. Despite the defeat of Michael Dukakis, workers felt encouraged by the victories against strong opponents at the city, county and state level in the November 1988 elections. And workers ended the decade militantly resisting the shift of crayon boxes to China by Western Printing. Workers arranged a boycott of China-produced crayons, rallied and marched against the company offices, and arranged a community-wide unity rally.[535]

The Racine labor community had built a strong foundation over the years while also remaining flexible in response to internal and external demands. The sense of community, commitment to a strategic political use of history, and willingness to face changes with solidarity and militancy paid off to a degree even the hard economic times of the 1980s. Workers continued to join unions, to actively work together to solve both workplace and community problems, and to resist corporate and political strategies to turn back the gains of the labor movement. The activities and language of labor activists in the 1980s and the rank-and-file

[535] "'New Directions for Labor' Conference Set for May 7," *Racine Labor*, 22 April 1988, p2; "'New Directions' Offers New Tactics, Strategies," *Racine Labor,* 29 Apr 1988, p2; "Local Results Cheer Up Democrats in Racine," *Racine Labor*, 11 Nov 1988, p1,12; "Jobs Shanghaied, UAW 1007 sets March," *Racine Labor*, 3 Nov 89, p1, 4; "AFL-CIO Sets Nov. 14 Forum to Build Unity," *Racine Labor*, 3 Nov 89, p1; "Momentum Builds for Dec. 2 Jobs Rally," *Racine Labor*, 17 Nov. 89, p1, 4;"Western Tries Threats to Undermine UAW Boycott," *Racine Labor,* 1 Dec 89, p4; "Rally Gains Support," *Racine Labor*, 1 Dec 89, p1, 5; "Labor, Community Rally Against Shift of Jobs," *Racine Labor,* 15 Dec 89, p1, 4; Freeman, 409-410; Wilentz, 266-273; "AFSCME Local 67 Wins a Battle on Contracting Out," *Racine Labor*, 11 Mar 88, p9; "Thompson Blocking Bill on Retirement," *Racine Labor,* 18 Mar 88, p1, 11; "AFSCME 67 Gets 2% Pay Hikes in Both Years of Pact," *Racine Labor*, 18 Mar 88, p3; "6000 Public Workers Rip Thompson Stance," *Racine Labor*, 25 Mar 88, p1, 11; "Historic choice Before Workers on April 5th," *Racine Labor*, 1 Apr 88, p1, 16; "Dukakis Takes State in Worker Oriented Primary," *Racine Labor,* 8 Apr 88, p1; "Local Results Generally Good for Labor Movement," *Racine Labor,* 8 Apr 88, p3.

support for their efforts demonstrates the need to look for determination and resilience from the historical actors of the period of deindustrialization. Workers in Racine did not know what the future held, but they expected to face it together, as a working-class community.

Conclusion

Racine's labor community has not sustained the economic and political strength that inspired activists' hope for change at the end of the 1980s. Despite a slight economic recovery in the 1990s and attempts at a downtown harbor revitalization project to generate tourism revenue, Racine's level of income disparity continues to rise as in other cities across the nation. Hospital workers at St. Luke's Hospital lost a decertification drive in the 1990s and the service workers are not organized at the newly merged St. Mary's Hospital. However, UAW Local 180 is still the largest union in town, with its own offices, and a somewhat stable workforce at Case. SEIU Local 150 members and other activists in Racine organized trips to Madison in 2011 to protest Governor Scott Walker's Act 10, which decimated public sector unions in the state.

Act 10, which became law in June 2011 after several legal challenges, changed the public employee collective bargaining laws first enacted in 1959 by listing a set of prohibited bargaining subjects and limiting contract negotiations to wage issues. It also required public worker unions to undergo certification with the Wisconsin Employment Relations Commission on a yearly basis and prohibited state and local governments from collecting members' dues payments.[536] Policymakers designed these legal changes to destroy public worker unions by depleting their financial and time resources. This attack by a Republican governor on public worker unions in the state mirrored the actions of private corporate employers in the postwar period. Similar to the tactics by Modine Manufacturing in the 1950s, Governor Walker eliminated the tools workers' unions had used to gain some sort of economic security and power in the workplace. The political and economic attacks on private worker unions in the postwar period weakened the labor movement and opened the door on the twenty-first century attack on

[536] "Summary of Provisions of 2011 Act 10," Wisconsin Legislature, http://legis.wisconsin.gov/lfb/publications/budget/2011-13-Budget/documents/act32/act%2010.pdf, accessed 02 June 2014.

public workers. These continued attacks on an embattled and weakened labor movement illustrate the ways in which conservative policymakers and politicians understand the power of organized workers to effect change in U.S. society.

The Racine labor community lost. So did the broader labor movement. But, as the Racine case demonstrates, working-class politics adapted to the transformations in the postwar period—the empowerment of women and non-white men, the shift from manufacturing to service work, the decline of New Deal liberalism, the rise of the conservative political power. They did so without losing sight of the economic inequality and exploitation that undergirded U.S. capitalist society. They seized the economic and political opportunity of the postwar period to consolidate the power that they could access. The labor community pushed their shifting working-class agenda in an attempt to transform the Democratic Party into the liberal powerhouse they recognized was needed to thwart the power of corporate resistors. As the economic and political landscape changed, labor activists in Racine found new ways to organize the growing low-wage service workforce. Their broad-based class solidarity inspired a sense of collective class identity for these often marginalized workers. The community banded together to fight against plant closing and to offset some of the economic, social, and political costs of these departures while also organizing and celebrating new union members in other sectors.

These finding suggest that collective worker action can impact the economic and social lives of U.S workers. As Cobble argues in *The Sex of Class*, a robust, engaged labor movement is vital for the improvement of working people's lives. The ability for workers to freely organize facilitates the access to good jobs for workers across the employment spectrum.[537] Throughout the period of study in Racine, workers across sectors and skill levels enjoyed at least some form

[537] Dorothy Sue Cobble, "Introduction," in *The Sex of Class: Women Transforming American Labor*, edited by Dorothy Sue Cobble (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2007), 8.

of power on the shop floor, successfully bargained for better wages and working conditions, and in a more limited fashion, held back the tide of management backlash. Workers rallied around social justice issues, elected local, state, and national politicians that represented their interests, and shaped the city into their vision of a militant union town.

Yet, workers and the unions that represent them cannot operate on a level playing field without the legal protection offered by an active federal government. When the economic crisis of the Great Depression and worker unrest forced government involvement in the economy leading up to World War II, the labor movement amassed the members and resolve necessary to improve the working conditions and economic citizenship for workers within and without unions. During the more favorable years of the postwar prosperity, labor activists pushed liberal policymakers to guarantee protections for workers' collective action. The labor-liberal coalition, always an unequal relationship, suffered as postwar liberals shifted focus away from management of the domestic economy to Cold War foreign policy. The failure of labor activists to lobby for the successful passage of labor law reform allowed conservative actors to whittle away at the legal power workers had to operate from a position of united strength. However, labor activists have not stopped calling for government action to restore the social safety net, provide full employment, and protect workers' right to organize. Labor activists remain committed to the broad notions of economic security and full citizenship rights that liberals espoused in the New Deal era.

Labor unionists continued notions of class solidarity and continued efforts to organize new workers complicate the declension narrative of post-1960s U.S. society. The Racine case shows how a political use of labor history, a broad-based class politics, and an expansive understanding of who belonged in the labor community inspired more and more workers to join

unions, exercise their civic responsibilities, and unite to resist conservative attacks and corporate intransigence. As engaged labor activists continue to respond to and adapt class politics, new avenues of organizing and politicizing workers emerge. Racial politics in Racine did not undermine notions of class solidarity. As was also the case in Detroit, postwar racial politics impacted and reshaped class politics in urban settings, but activists in both communities adapted to new circumstances. New demographics will also change the avenues toward producing class solidarity. More and more immigrant workers, women, and contingent workers are joining the workforce due to migration, continued shifts in employment opportunities, and the slow-moving economy. As seen in Racine, new workers bring new ideas and influences into the labor movement.

Just as activists saw the need to organize the unskilled industrial workers in the 1930s, union members have been responding to changing workforce populations over time. In 1995 reform activists in the AFL-CIO contested for and won the presidency. The "New Voice" ticket led by John Sweeney, president of SEIU, took over on a campaign to rejuvenate the labor movement by becoming more active in public debate and organizing new workers.[538] In 2005 another reform movement within labor chose to separate from the AFL-CIO and formed a new federation, Change to Win (CTW). CTW, composed of SEIU, the merged textile and hotel workers union, the United Food and Commercial Workers, the Teamsters, and a few other smaller unions represents a large and growing number of female, low-wage service, domestic and home care workers.[539] These changes and the increasing number of rank-and-file mobilizations in this period of economic instability will likewise inspire new organizing and new

[538] Andrew Battista, *The Revival of Labor Liberalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 13; Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 255-256.
[539] Cobble, 6; Ruth Milkman, "Two Worlds of Unionism: Women and the New Labor Movement," in *The Sex of Class: Women Transforming American Labor*, edited by Dorothy Sue Cobble (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2007), 79-80.

ways of representing workers' interests in the larger society. Home healthcare, domestic, and fast food workers have been mobilizing to gain more economic security and control over their work environments in recent years.

The Racine case also highlights the need for further exploration of the ways in which labor activists created and built coalitions for economic and social justice movements. In Racine, workers participated in and responded to the civil rights and women's movements. As capital continues to move to find better conditions for the free accumulation of profit, workers will need to strengthen solidarities across regions, ethnicities, and systems of work. Scholars like Vanessa Tait, Annelise Orleck, and others have started this shift to build connected histories of collective action. These efforts to revise the declension narrative open the door to further research on the role of worker centers in the labor movement as well as collaborations between labor and immigrant rights activists. The UAW has been working with building connections across nations in their efforts to unionize auto factories in the U.S. South. Workers in Brazil, Japan, and France have banded together with workers in Tennessee and Mississippi to provide better wages and working condition for workers in the global automobile economy.[540] These studies will continue to uncover the important legacies of class solidarity and movements for economic and social justice in the late-twentieth century.

The cross-sector solidarity of the 1980s highlights the ways in which broadening the demographics of the labor movement during deindustrialization can shift narratives of decline into stories of determination and collective action. Critically examining the dynamics within service-sector unions, local working-class communities, and the connections between service- and industrial-sector unions will shed new light on the nature of the working class in the 1970s

[540] Richard Bensinger, "Unionization Strategies and Recent Developments in Organizing the South," (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Labor Research Action Network, Washington, D.C., 16 June 2014).

and will provide new insight into the ways in which worker solidarity, labor communities, and worker activists' strategies changed with shifting job sectors. Community studies of deindustrialization that include a look at both the industrial unions in decline and any public sector or private service unions may uncover new organizing campaigns, new resources of class solidarity and political action, and greater cross-sector collaboration that remains hidden in a focus on a single industrial union fighting for jobs at one plant. This expanded view will also shift the focus away from blue-collar white male workers to incorporate the growing female and non-white elements of the workforce.

This case study highlights the value of oral history as a historical method. The oral histories accessed and recorded added a layer of insight into the ways in which worker activists' influenced and were influenced by shifting notions of class politics in the postwar period. William Jenkins' detailed interview provided a sense of the ways in which the labor and civil rights activists' experiences overlapped and diverged over the postwar period. As an active participant in both communities, Jenkins' understandings of the limitations of even a progressive labor community such that existed in Racine could only partially penetrate the barriers to racial justice in the city. More contact with the service workers of SEIU Local 150 may have shed light on workers' perceptions of support within the Racine labor community and struggles within the statewide local union apparatus. One avenue to expand this study will be to collect more interviews with service workers and public employees.

Ultimately, the Racine labor community of the postwar period offers avenues for scholars and activists to take "more seriously the possibilities embedded in postwar urban turmoil," because "we find that determination—not decline or decay—best characterizes our nation's

cities."[541] Labor activists in Racine and across the nation sought to change the lives of all working people. Yet, workers and their organizations cannot do it alone. Active government involvement and an engaged citizenry that recognizes the value of collective action for change are needed to protect economic, social, and political livelihoods in U.S. society. The continued salience of working-class identity and politics in Racine, even its current state of post-industrial decline, offers hope for scholars and activists seeking to make the world a better place.

[541] Heather Ann Thompson, *Whose Detroit? Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 8.

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