

Let your circle be unbroken

Women become stronger by helping each other

BY YVONNE R. WALKER
PRESIDENT, SEIU LOCAL 1000

March is International Women's History Month, a time when we share stories of the women who have influenced us and made our world stronger through their work and their legacy.

My mother, Linnette, helped make me the woman I am now. A native of Jamaica, she became a nurse in England, then immigrated to San Diego. She married my father and started raising three kids. And she taught each of her children that while we are all extraordinary, it takes a circle to bring out the extraordinary within us.

Now as the leader of Local 1000, I have a big circle, which I achieved by following my mother's example. To support her in her new country, she built her circle through a network of women. My first grade teacher became an aunt. And as my circle widened, many more wonderful women were welcomed into our family.

In a circle, you're never alone. Moms help each other out, watching each other's children, lending a hand and taking care of each other in good times and bad.

When I was in the Marines during Desert Shield, my husband got called to duty. I had just had a baby when flu season hit. My newborn got bronchitis and we landed in the hospital; I was scared and feeling alone. Tonja had just transferred in to where I was stationed, but we hadn't met since I had been on maternity leave. Tonja showed up to the hospital with a peek-a boo Elmo doll and changed my world. Turns out she was a mom in a new town and wanted a circle, too.

We create circles to draw power, to lend support

and to empower other women as well as ourselves. It's not a transactional relationship; we are sharing our strength so we all become stronger.

One of our union leaders, Shrhonda Ward, shared her story about her mother's impact on her leadership and the circles she develops that empower here at Local 1000.

Shrhonda's mom was vice president for a health care union. Growing up, she remembers the phone ringing off the hook, people reaching out to her mother to help build their strength.

While working as an employee at DMV, Shrhonda found herself in a difficult situation. While sick with two small children at home, her husband was called

While we are all extraordinary, it takes a circle to bring out the extraordinary within us.

to military duty right after 9/11.

Maria, a steward with our union, helped Shrhonda keep her job by accompanying Shrhonda as she fought — and won — to get her job probation extended and the training she needed. With that support, Shrhonda passed with flying colors.

Maria suggested that Shrhonda become a steward, too. Shrhonda talked to her mom and reflected on all those phone calls, the responsibility of union leadership and whether she could provide that kind of support. By seeing women like herself in leadership roles, she was able to envision herself as a leader being supported by other women in the union. As a result, Shrhonda became a steward in 2002.



Shrhonda Ward learned firsthand the importance of a circle of support.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SEIU LOCAL 100

Over the years, she built on her circles, supporting other state workers and widening her network. In 2009, she became a chapter president.

"Yvonne sees something in me that I don't always see in myself, and there have been so many other wonderful women there to help support me in my leadership," Shrhonda says. "They saw these roles as a good fit for me, and they did what they could to help me be successful."

"Being a leader isn't easy," she adds. "You have to be dedicated and ready for the fight, and do whatever it takes to win. Now, I help strengthen the circle that is our union."

We all need a circle; help yours stay strong.



Yvonne R. Walker
President
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Secure retirement needs more than dreams

Women particularly face challenges in golden years

BY YVONNE R. WALKER | PRESIDENT, SEIU LOCAL 1000

Are you dreaming of a happy retirement? For women, prospects for their golden years can appear pretty bleak as we are more likely to be poor in retirement than men. It's no wonder given the fact that we begin and end our careers being paid less than men for the same work. Due to raising families and caring for loved ones (often unpaid), we also have fewer hours in the labor force. Meanwhile, Social Security — what many Californians rely on for their retirement income — as well as pensions are based on earnings and time worked.

Adding to the financial strain, women are more likely to be single as seniors and live longer, meaning we have to make our limited resources stretch that much farther ... and often end up homeless or dependent on relatives or strangers for support.

But the plight of poverty is a major problem for all seniors in California, where about half of all workers have no access to a workplace retirement plan.

In response to that, we worked with the state to create CalSavers, a retirement plan for mostly low-wage workers who have no employer-based savings plan such as a pension or 401(k).

To support the development of CalSavers, we invited a brave and inspirational woman to share her story: Sally Armendariz. As a younger woman, she made legal history by challenging the law that prohibited women from getting disability payments for pregnancy-related conditions that kept them from working. Decades later, Sally's employer fired her after 38 years; a paralegal, she had requested time off because her husband had died. She lost her husband and her job on the same day. So, at 76 and with no retirement options, Sally was still working. But she continues to proudly speak out for the need for such safety nets as CalSavers.

What does senior poverty look like? People have to make daily choices between buying medicine or food, between filling a prescription or paying a utility bill. It's

no surprise local food banks and homeless shelters say they're seeing the biggest client growth among seniors.

When I go to a grocery store or to a restaurant, I often silently reflect on how old the age of the various employees I encounter may be. The gray-haired cashier or the senior hostess who showed me to a seat have to be on their feet all day for most of their shifts.

SEIU Local 1000 fights for pensions for public sector workers. In California, the average monthly pension is \$3,084 or about \$36,000 annually. We still need to combine Social Security benefits with pensions and personal savings for our members to enjoy a secure and dignified retirement. However, for as many as one-third of CalPERS retirees, they do not receive Social Security and are dependent on their pensions and savings alone.

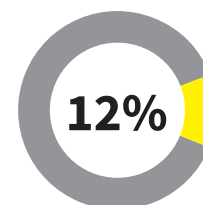
Another group SEIU represents faces even greater challenges: Home care workers. These workers often care for family members with a disability. If you care for a family member, you are not eligible to contribute to Social Security. Unless they care for others, the worker has absolutely no retirement security. That's why our sister local SEIU 2015 fights for decent wages, health care, unemployment and retirement security for home care providers.

What's past is prologue; we're all going to face this issue at some point. Working together now, we can help make all Californians' prospects for a comfortable retirement a reality.

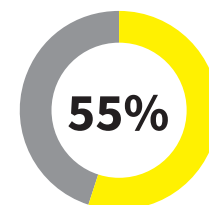


Yvonne R. Walker
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Women and retirement security



"Very confident" they will be able to retire comfortably



Expect to work past age 65 or never retire

\$31,169

\$17,375

Median annual income for women over age 65

Median annual income for men over age 65

Sources: Transamerica Center for Retirement Studies, Social Security Administration, SEIU



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Celebrate women and power of change

Unions make a big difference in working women's lives

BY YVONNE R. WALKER
PRESIDENT, SEIU LOCAL 1000

Imagine your job is to clean up somebody else's mess. You work long hours, often late at night by yourself. You are isolated, vulnerable and on your own. If attacked, there is no one to hear you scream.

Imagine your job depends on how you look, not what you do or how well you do it. You're treated like a thing, not a person. Your boss feels free to force you to do anything: Work off the clock, dress provocatively, accept harassment – or worse. You fear if you object that you could be fired – or deported.

Then, imagine having someone who could help you gain power to end such abuse and assure you a better work environment with more pay, more benefits and a better life. That's the protection a union can offer.

Sunday is International Women's Day, a global celebration of the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. Unions have been a big part of that success story. Unions help narrow the gender pay gap. On average, women in union jobs earn much more than their non-union counterparts, particularly in right-to-work states and for women of color. According to federal statistics, Hispanic unionized women earn 42% more than their non-union sisters. Black women in unions earn 33% more.

It's not just about the dollars. Union women are much more likely to have employer-paid health insurance. Women in unions have fought for and won sick leave to care for children and parents — so important since the job of caring for our families disproportionately falls on us. We have pensions and retirement benefits. And we have life-changing protection — against assault, harassment and unfair rules.

I want to mention how we are fighting to change sexist and racist labor practices in two industries. First, we are getting rid of tipped wages. What's wrong with tipping? The problem is, in 43 states, restaurants can pay people well below minimum wage, \$2.13 vs. \$7.25. It's no coincidence that 70 percent of those jobs are held by women, and the restaurant industry has the highest rate of sexual harassment and low unionization.

Tipping, an American custom dating back to the 1860s, bakes racism into our culture. As Black freed slaves found jobs as restaurant workers, hotel workers and railroad porters, their employers paid them no wages; instead, tips became their compensation. It was as if they were still slaves. Hotel workers and porters unionized, leaving restaurant workers non-unionized and still dependent on tips to make up subminimum wages.



SEIU-USWW members campaign for better working conditions.
PHOTO COURTESY OF SEIU-USWW

California is one of the progressive states that eliminated this two-tier practice. In states without lower minimum wages, sexual harassment of waitstaff goes down by 50%.

SEIU has also fought for unionized workplaces to be free of sexual assault and harassment. For thousands of female janitors, the threat of rape on the night shift is real.

Locally, SEIU-United Service Workers West represents more than 45,000 janitors, security officers and airport workers statewide who help keep California clean and safe. USWW includes many brave women who have been fighting against rape on the night shift. They won peer-to-peer training of their co-workers to help end sexual assault and harassment in the workplace. They also won the creation of a statewide registry to ensure that companies go through anti-harassment training.

Courageous women marched, spoke out and fasted to win these recent gains. And we are joining them now in Sacramento to support their contract campaign, which I will be talking more about in the coming weeks.

Because union women are stronger together.

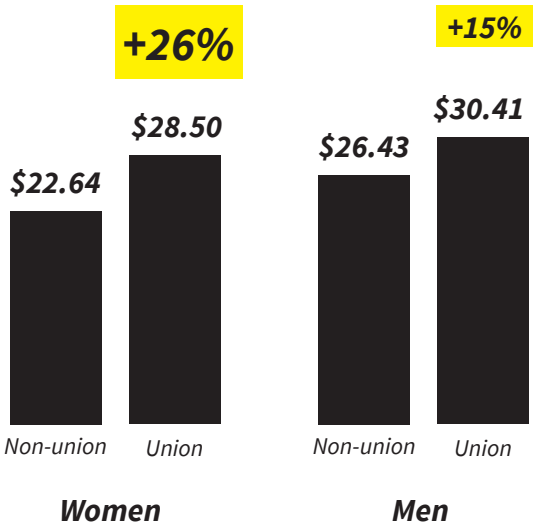


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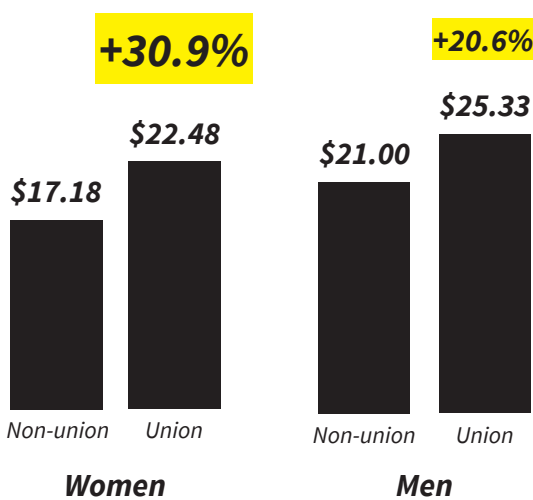
Union Advantage

The difference between union and non-union wages is bigger for women.

Average hourly wages in California



Average hourly wages nationwide



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



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Let your heart and mind soar

Poets provide inspiration in both words and actions

BY YVONNE R. WALKER
PRESIDENT, SEIU LOCAL 1000

*“a poem is pure energy
horizontally contained
between the mind
of the poet and the ear of the reader
if it does not sing discard the ear”*
— From “Poetry” by Nikki Giovanni

Poetry can make your heart and mind soar. It distills language down to an essence; simple, pure and powerful. And it makes you think.

That’s why I love poetry.

During Black History Month, we celebrate poet greats such as Maya Angelou and Langston Hughes, two of my favorite poets.

I’d like to share with you two lesser known poets that have also touched my life.

Their lives’ work went far beyond words on a page.

Poet and writer Pauli Murray changed history. Lawyer, activist, scholar, Episcopal priest; she accomplished many firsts.

Murray wrote, “Hope is a Song in a weary throat.” That was from “Dark Testament,” part of her incredible 1970 collection.

But it’s her writings on discrimination against African American people (particularly children) and all women that had the widest impact.

As a lawyer and scholar, she came up with the idea of how to legally argue a case against segregation, by documenting psychological harm on Black children. Her paper and research were used by future Justice Thurgood Marshall, then chief counsel for the NAACP, in arguing *Brown v Board of Education* — the 1954 landmark case in school desegregation. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously that separate is not equal and that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional. At that time, 17 states mandated that all their schools be segregated.

“States’ Laws on Race and Color,” her 746-page book exposing the extent of segregation in every state in the country, was called by Marshall the bible of civil rights lawyers and played an essential role in beating segregation.

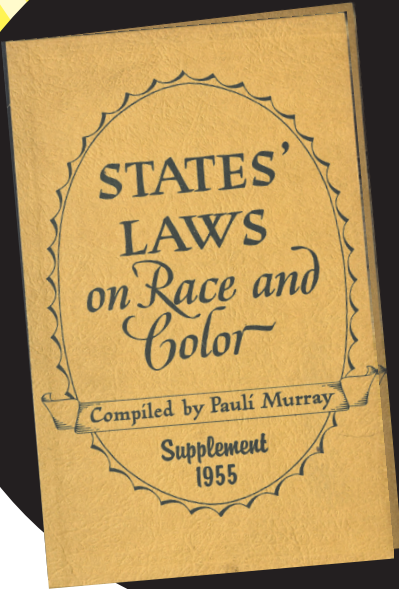
What Murray did with others is as important as her individual accomplishments. Early in her career, she organized to raise money for the defense of a Black man sentenced to death. She worked on behalf of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, an interracial organization in Arkansas. It was founded in the

1930s to help sharecroppers and tenant farmers who had not been helped under the New Deal Agricultural supports to get federal assistance.

Over the decades, Murray kept collaborating and developing new institutions to fight sexism and racism. She came up with the idea of an “NAACP for women” and co-founded NOW – the National Organization for Women — with Betty Friedan in 1966.

Nikki Giovanni, now in her 70s, is a poet, writer and scholar. A longtime professor at Virginia Tech, she’s won seven NAACP Image Awards and written three New York Times best sellers – remarkable for a poet. When she was starting out, she couldn’t find anyone to print her poems, so she started her own publishing company. She became one of the leading poets of the ‘60s Black Renaissance.

“My dream was to discover something no one else had thought of,” Giovanni said of her career. “I guess that’s why I’m a poet. We put things together in ways no one else does.”



Pauli Murray’s 746-page masterwork was dubbed the bible for civil rights lawyers and became a fixture of law libraries nationwide.
PHOTO COURTESY OF YALE LAW LIBRARY (IMAGE WAS NOT MODIFIED)

Her first collection of poems in 1968 was a response to assassinations and treatment of Black leaders and the Black community. She’s written so much since then including children’s books; she was nominated for a Grammy. Giovanni wrote so many incredible poems, such as “Africa,” “Revolutionary Dreams” and one simply titled “Poetry.”

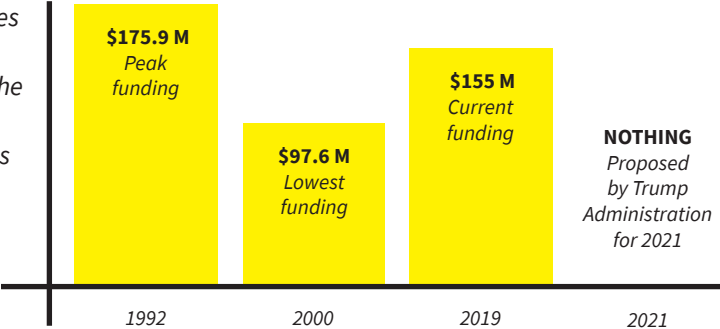
Like Murray, Giovanni continues to inspire me with both her words and actions. One of my favorite Giovanni quotes: “I really don’t think life is about the I-could-have-beens. Life is only about the I-tried-to-do. I don’t mind the failure but I can’t imagine that I’d forgive myself if I didn’t try.”



Yvonne R. Walker
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Arts funding: A little means a lot

Funding fluctuates for the National Endowment for the Arts, the nation’s single largest arts funder including programs for underserved communities.



Each year, the NEA funds*:

2,400 grants representing
16,000 communities in all
435 congressional districts
*On average

\$20,000 median grant
0.004% NEA portion of the federal budget
54% to low income areas



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Fight for the right to count every vote

From registration to election day, suppression gets creative

BY YVONNE R. WALKER
PRESIDENT, SEIU LOCAL 1000

Why do we celebrate Black history in February? Thank Frederick Douglass and Carter Woodson. Douglass, America's most famous abolitionist, was born a slave sometime in February 1818. President Abraham Lincoln, who signed the Emancipation Proclamation, also was born in February. With those dates in mind, February was chosen to commemorate Negro History Week in 1926 by historian and author Woodson, the "father of Black history."

History of all kinds is important to remember; it helps us understand our present situation in the trajectory of the past, so we can also change the future.

Take voter suppression, for example. Back in 1957, the Justice Department created a Civil Rights Division. Its job was to protect voters from discrimination. Starting in the early 2000s, that emphasis has shifted away from protecting civil rights to searching for voter fraud — and making it harder for people to vote.

Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts, who started working against civil rights in the 1980s, was pivotal in the 2013 decision to strike down the Voting Rights Act provision that removed federal oversight of state election procedures. That opened the door to new ways to discriminate against voters.

What has been the impact? I see three main obstacles to voting.

Some states are making it more difficult to register to vote, using everything from poll taxes to voter ID laws to punishment for incorrectly filling out voter registration forms. They are passing laws to ban on-campus ballot boxes, requiring non-restricted parking at any polling place, demanding out-of-state students to get in-state driver's licenses or car registration, or disallowing use of student IDs as voter identification. Texas permits handgun licenses as proof of voter identification, but not college student IDs.

Why target students? Voters age 18 to 25 are more likely to vote progressive. The University of Wisconsin system has more than 170,000 students, but that state saw student participation in the 2016 election drop drastically after the adoption of voter ID laws. In 2016, Donald Trump won Wisconsin — a pivotal electoral state — by fewer than 23,000 votes.

Voter ID laws also work against Black and Latino voters. According to the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, eligible Black and Latino voters were about three times less likely than whites to possess an accepted form of state ID required to register. As a result, 63,085 Milwaukee County eligible voters did not possess an accepted I.D. leading up to the 2016 election. And that was just one county!



SEIU Local 1000 member leader Tara Rooks speaking at a recent meeting.

In the name of fighting fraud, states also are purging people from voting lists, making them ineligible to vote even after they have registered, or invalidating ballots for minor technicalities after people have voted. In some states, hundreds of thousands of people have been purged unfairly from the rolls. Nationwide, it's adding up to millions.

Just last week, a federal district judge ruled that the suit accusing Georgia Gov. Kemp of using racially biased methodology to purge up to 700,000 legitimate voters between 2016 and 2018 has merit. Kemp won his governor's race by fewer than 55,000 votes.

Some states also continue to prohibit ex-prisoners from voting. They've served their time and are off parole, but may still not be permitted to vote. These rules vary greatly from state to state. California is among five states that allow ex-felons and probationers to vote, but not inmates or parolees.

So, what is there to do? We realize that voter fraud is being used as a scare tactic, playing on racial bias and our fears.

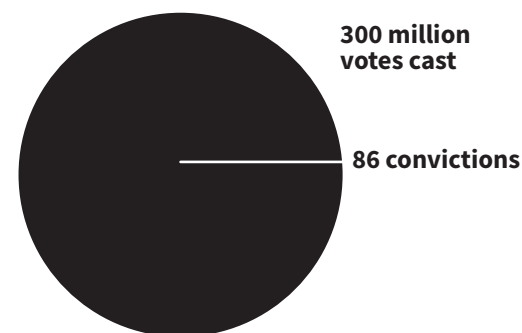
Spread the word. Support organizations that are helping register voters and fight discrimination. Volunteer to help register people to vote. Your vote matters — and so does theirs.



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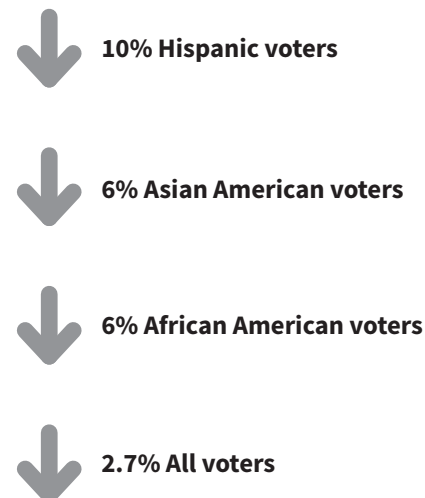
Voting myth vs. reality

Cases of voter fraud*



* From 2002-2007, according to Justice Department study

Impact of ID requirements on election turnout



Source: Ohio State and Rutgers universities



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Celebrating hard-earned rights

Still fighting for the right to vote

BY YVONNE R. WALKER
PRESIDENT, SEIU LOCAL 1000

Our voting rights did not come easy. I'm reminded of that often during Black History Month and this centennial celebration of the 19th Amendment that enabled American women to vote in 1920.

Originally, only property-owning white men could vote. No one else was granted full citizenship or allowed to participate.

Frederick Douglass, one of our nation's leading abolitionists, risked his own freedom as a gifted journalist, orator and writer. And he was an ardent advocate for women's rights. As the only African American man at the Women's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls in 1848, he spoke in support of women's rights, and for women to speak for themselves.

"I believe no man, however gifted with thought and speech, can voice the wrongs and present the demands of women with the skill and effect, with the power and authority of woman herself," Douglass said.

Three years after the Civil War ended, the 14th Amendment formally granted African Americans citizenship in 1868. But it took the 15th Amendment in 1870 (after continued pressure on Congress) to overtly grant voting rights to African American men.

That amendment enabled African American men to vote — and even to run for office — at least for a time. During the 1880s, about 2,000 African American men were elected to public office.

However, by the 1890s, several states had enacted poll taxes, literacy tests and used violent intimidation to disenfranchise Black voters.

Meanwhile, Black women were still battling for their voting rights. Abolitionist, feminist and ardent anti-segregationist Mary Ann Shadd Cary became the first African-American woman newspaper publisher and editor. Responding to Douglass' call in 1848 for suggestions to improve the lives of Black people, she wrote, "We should do more and talk less," in a letter that helped galvanize the male-dominated, anti-slavery establishment into taking more action. She openly defied the Fugitive Slave Act passed in 1850 and encouraged former slaves to flee to Canada.

A former slave, Ida B. Wells — a gifted journalist and fervent abolitionist — reached fame for documenting lynchings, fighting for the right to vote and advocating for Black women's



Abolitionist Frederick Douglass

equality in the late 1800s. She famously refused to be relegated to the back of the march for suffrage, joining with the delegation of white women from Chicago instead.

Once women attained the right to vote, they significantly helped swing elections in favor of Black men. But it was a constant struggle, fighting decades of violence aimed at suppressing the Black vote. As recently as 1964, only 2% of Selma's eligible Black residents were registered to vote despite their legal right to do so.

One calendar year later — after decades of cumulative risks, lives lost and organizing having gone into the effort — the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was passed.

And the battle continues. In 2013, that act was weakened by the Supreme Court, and states have since passed new laws restricting voting rights disproportionately for people of color.

Today, Black leaders are still fighting for people's rights and making history. In 2018, Joe Neguse became the first African American person elected to Congress from Colorado. He also co-founded New Era Colorado, which registered 150,000 young voters.

At SEIU Local 1000, we use our hard-earned voting rights to ensure our elected representatives reflect our priorities, including the right to join a union, ending structural racism, health care for all, and the right for immigrants to live and work free from intimidation and fear.

Local 1000 members themselves make this happen by reviewing candidates' positions, conducting interviews, volunteering for our endorsed candidates to help them get elected, and meeting with them regularly once in office.

While much work remains to be done, we will continue to lift up those who suffered and lost to put us in a position to win.

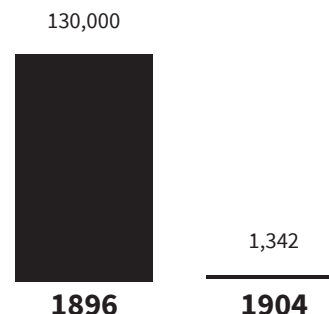


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Voter suppression

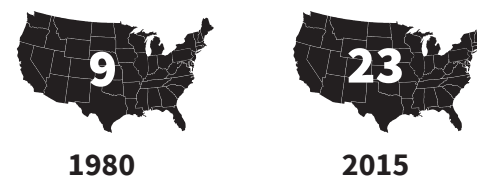
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Louisiana Black voters before and after efforts to suppress registration

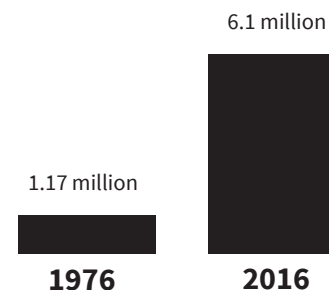


NOW

States that keep more than 5% of African American citizens from voting



Citizens barred from voting via felony conviction laws



Note: More than 7.4% of African American adults are disenfranchised, compared to 1.8% of non-African American adults.

Sources: Sentencing Project, Constitutional Rights Foundation



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Leaders who made a difference

Their grassroots efforts led to real change in their communities

BY YVONNE R. WALKER
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How do you create change? You can organize at the grassroots level, inspiring others and nurturing ideas. And you can vote, electing leaders who will follow through on those ideas and make them into law.

This week, I want to celebrate Black History Month by highlighting two African American women, past and present, who by their actions and example made a real impact in two very different movements, helping to recruit, create opportunities and inspire others to join and make change.

During this 100th anniversary of American women earning the right to vote, I also want to feature the voting process in Sacramento, how it works, and why it's been effective in getting more people to participate. So, be sure to read the sidebar to the right.

Georgia Gilmore

Over 60 years ago, Georgia Gilmore turned her culinary skills into funds for a crusade.

You've probably heard of Rosa Parks, whose refusal to sit in the back of a segregated city bus inspired the Montgomery, Alabama, boycott in 1955. Gilmore's contributions were just as important; she is thought to have raised more money for the boycott than any person in Montgomery.

As a cook, Gilmore herself had faced racism many times, including on the bus. Most of the regular bus riders were Black workers: Housekeepers, nannies, cooks and laborers. The bus was their transportation system. During the boycott, they needed other ways to get to their jobs.

That's where Gilmore came in. A few months after the boycott started, Gilmore lost her job after testifying in support of Dr. King and other boycott leaders. She subsequently opened her own catering company and developed a deep network of women to raise money for the boycott by cooking and selling food, and used the money to pay for gas and city-wide carpools. Just as importantly, she did so without drawing undue attention from white community members, who otherwise might have kicked them out of white-owned homes for organizing. (At the time, approximately half of the black women in the city worked for white families.)

After 381 days, the boycott ended when the U.S. Supreme Court struck down laws requiring segregated buses.



Members Bobby Dutta and Francina Stevenson volunteer on a Saturday to talk to fellow members about the voting process and our endorsed assembly candidate

PHOTO BY KARLOS AYALA

Little Miss Flint

Today, civil disobedience has a bright new face.

Worried about the water crisis that was sickening whole communities and killing people, Mari Copeny, aka "Little Miss Flint," wrote a letter to President Obama when she was 8 years old. She shared that she was headed to D.C. to watch Congressional hearings about the Flint water crisis and asked the President to meet with them. Instead, her words inspired Obama to fly to Flint himself, giving the crisis national attention.

Five years later, Copeny's still bringing attention to unsafe water initiatives. She started #WednesdayforWater to let people know about places where drinking water is unsafe. And she continues to create opportunities to connect with people, inspiring thousands to write letters to kids in Flint, letting people know they are not forgotten, hosting birthday parties, collecting thousands of backpacks, as well as helping with book and bicycle fundraisers for kids in her community.

These two leaders made real differences. Past and present, they remind us how we can take action to help dismantle racism and improve our communities together.



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Voting made easier

The "polls" for the March 3 Presidential Primary are now open – at least in Sacramento County.

California is making voting easier and getting more people to participate. Under the Voter's Choice Act, registered voters have three ways to vote: By mail, by drop box or in person.

Voters have more time to submit their ballot

In fact, drop-off locations started opening Feb. 3. The first in-person Vote Centers open Feb. 22, 10 days before the Primary.

We've had some practice with this new system; Sacramento County was among the first to try out this "more ways, more days" process. During the pilot program, Sacramento voter participation went up, compared to the previous mid-term election.

Not registered?

You have until Feb. 18. (You can check your voter registration online at <https://voterstatus.sos.ca.gov/>)

If you miss that deadline, you can still vote; now you can cast a conditional ballot at a Vote Center through Election Day.

This is very exciting.

Ballots already have been mailed out to registered voters. That's a live ballot, not a sample, so don't throw it away.

Mail in your ballot, postage paid, anytime through Election Day

Or drop it off at one of almost 60 drop boxes. Or in those final 10 days, vote in person at any Vote Center; you're not restricted to precincts. (See locations for drop boxes and Vote Centers at <https://elections.saccounty.net/votecenters/pages/locations.aspx>.)

Want to vote for a presidential nominee?

If you are registered with some parties, you can vote for the nominees in that party. If you are not affiliated with a party, you can request a presidential party ballot listing Democrat, American Independent or Libertarian presidential candidates without re-registering. (Ask for it at a Vote Center.) If you're non-affiliated and want to vote Republican, Green or Peace & Freedom, you'll need to re-register.

In the Nov. 3 general election, that's not an issue; everybody gets the same ballot.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SEIU

Where is Sacramento in fight against poverty?

Many neighborhoods are getting worse, not better

BY YVONNE R. WALKER
PRESIDENT, SEIU LOCAL 1000

What are you doing to lift children out of poverty in Sacramento? That's a question we should be asking anyone running for office.

During this election year, politicians talk about lots of causes, from climate change to taxation. For some reason, it is harder for them to identify ending poverty as a goal. Many politicians don't want to run on this issue, even though it's a topic that literally hits home for millions of people.

On paper, the national economy is growing, but in reality, extreme poverty is escalating too. In fact, 217,138 Sacramento County residents last year lived in poverty.

According to a new study by the Pew Charitable Trusts, the poverty rate – the percentage of households that make less than \$25,750 for a family of four – grew in one third of all counties nationwide.

Some neighborhoods were hit harder than others. Sacramento went from six neighborhoods to 18 considered “poor,” the second highest growth in the country. Within these “poor” neighborhoods, 40% of families with two or more children earned less than \$25,000.

Another counterintuitive twist in these statistics: White and Asian families in Sacramento are *more* likely than the national average to be poor. For Black and Latinx families, it's about the same as the national average.

What's particularly disturbing about our local picture is that one out of five children in Sacramento lives in poverty. Think about that for a second.

In California, we know that high housing costs and lack of full-time well-paid jobs contributes to poverty. Wages are a big factor, too. Most Californians in poverty work, but one in three California workers is employed in a low-wage job.

Some politicians are making a difference. State Sen. Holly Mitchell, a Los Angeles Democrat, finally got her CalWORKS bill passed. Recent state budgets included increases to CalWORKS grants to end deep poverty for families who receive those benefits, extension of the state Earned Income Tax Credit,

investments in affordable housing, and expanded access to early-childhood education.

This was something Sen. Mitchell talked to us about last year – she fought for years to eliminate the maximum family grant for CalWORKS, insure steady child care, and help lift families out of poverty.

As a union, we fight against poverty every day. High-wage jobs — good union jobs — are crucial to avoid poverty. Unions don't just help with wages and access to benefits, they also help with job quality. Unions help people get paid for being on-call, or having control of their schedules, or not having to work mandatory overtime — all things vitally important to help keep kids from living in poverty.

Our union continues to push for more affordable housing in our growth strategies. We push for more affordable child care for working parents. We push for fairer tax systems, so corporations don't pay low wages and have their workers' costs of living subsidized by middle-class families.

So we have made strides, and we will make more. We will continue our work in the Sacramento area, partnering with local leaders and allies to eliminate poverty.

Redistributing wealth with support from good union jobs is absolutely essential to achieve our goal. That includes both good public sector jobs as well as union jobs in fast-growing industries such as the service sector, restaurants and entertainment businesses, in addition to maintaining prevailing wages in the building industries.

We won't end poverty in California today or the day after, but when we put our minds to something and join together, we can make the seemingly impossible possible. It's not only important to do this for workers; it's important for the future of the country.



Yvonne R. Walker
President
SEIU Local 1000

Poverty in Sacramento

Sacramento has a higher poverty rate* than the state

12.8 %



California

14.3 %



Sacramento

One in five Sacramento children



live in poverty

Poverty rate* of residents under age 18

17.4 %



California

20.5 %



Sacramento

**The poverty rate is the percentage of people in households earning less than the poverty threshold, currently \$25,750 for a family of four.*

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



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Why I march with Rev. Barber

Poor People's Campaign continues King's legacy

BY YVONNE R. WALKER
PRESIDENT, SEIU LOCAL 1000

This past weekend at a commemoration in Fontana for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., I joined another reverend, Dr. William Barber, who continues Dr. King's legacy as co-chair of the Poor People's Campaign.

Dr. King continues to be an inspiration in our lives. He was a forward-thinker who experienced racism first-hand and fought rampant political, racial, and economic inequality so that no one — regardless of race or nationality — should suffer or be treated differently.

Yet despite his efforts, inequality in all its forms is as prevalent today as it was more than 50 years ago. And that is why, as Reverend Barber says, we cannot just honor Dr. King one day a year in celebration, but must dedicate ourselves to the everyday fight. When prophets like Dr. King are killed and don't finish their work, we must reach down, pick up the baton, and carry it forward.

Rev. Barber's Poor People's Campaign does so by focusing on both poverty and inequality. This headline from January 1, 2020, summarizes the challenge we face: "Wealthiest earn so much they've already maxed out their Social Security tax for 2020."

So, before I even woke up and welcomed a new decade, 200 of the wealthiest people in the U.S. had already paid their Social Security taxes for the year. Another 1,000 paid them by Jan. 2, meaning their earnings had topped the cutoff of \$137,700 in a day.

Think of the difference it would make if the rest of their income was subject to Social Security taxes! In California, a state with the fifth largest economy in the world, 18.5% of our seniors 65 and older, nearly one in five, live in poverty because Social Security is too low or nonexistent. Even worse, we know senior poverty is not equal; when you get paid less in your lifetime, you earn less in retirement. As a result, the average income for senior women and people of color is even lower than that for white men.

What do wealthy people do with all that extra cash? A lot of them pay to maintain this inequality. They pay to limit who votes. They pay to control the press and social media to turn us against each other, make us fear each other, divide us with racism, sexism and xenophobia.

They also pay for political campaigns. At a time when the average Congressional campaign now costs \$10 million, the



Yvonne R. Walker and Rev. Dr. William Barber appeared together at the commemoration of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Fontana.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SEIU LOCAL 1000

Koch brothers — America's second richest family with nearly \$100 billion in wealth — fund conservative media groups and misleading climate change research. Why? Because Koch Industries is one of the biggest polluters in the U.S., and less regulation means more money for them.

These billionaire families bankroll right-to-work groups to whittle away at union membership, further exacerbating America's wealth inequality.

By stoking our fears and maintaining the status quo, we stay divided and racism is allowed to thrive. We also see it in our prisons; in California alone, we still spend more than \$11 billion annually to lock people up, many for low-level crimes. Wouldn't that money be better spent ending poverty?

That's why Rev. Barber is leading the march for justice, for voting rights, for ending poverty and redistributing wealth, for ending environmental destruction, and for shrinking our massive military budget.

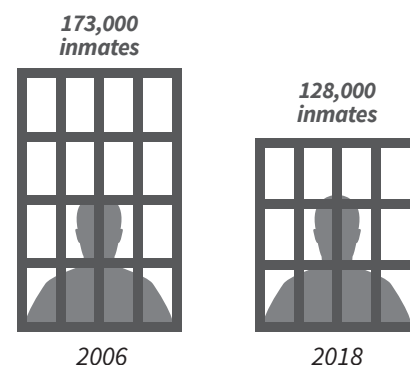
And that's why we march with him. We invite you to join in.



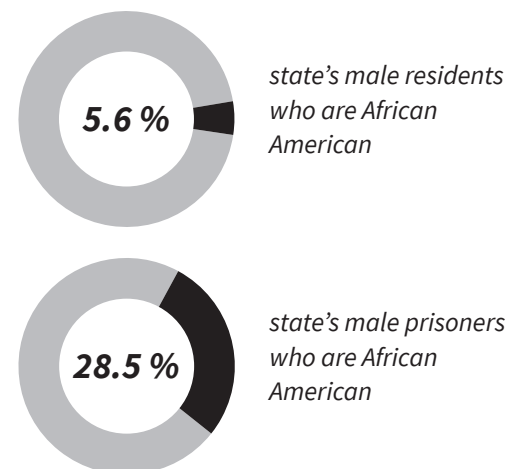
Yvonne R. Walker
President
SEIU Local 1000

California's prison population

Changes in sentencing laws have led to big decline



But African Americans are still over-represented behind bars



And over-stopped: African American drivers are much more likely than white drivers to be stopped by police, but less likely to be found with illegal items.

Source: Public Policy Institute and Stanford Open Policing Project



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Poor People's Campaign marches on

Dr. King's legacy behind a new call for a moral revival

BY YVONNE R. WALKER
PRESIDENT, SEIU LOCAL 1000

Monday, our nation celebrates the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. On this special day of remembrance, people will recall his speeches, especially "I have a Dream."

Dr. King did much more than dream; among many things, he launched a campaign to address head on our nation's poverty and its root causes. He called it the Poor People's Campaign and saw it as a way to unite impoverished Americans of all ethnicities to fight against racism and the hardships brought by that racism.

Half a century after Dr. King's assassination, that poverty and racism still exist today. So does the inherent inequality that goes with that racism; the gap between rich and poor keeps getting wider.

One man now is renewing Dr. King's battle. Rev. William Barber leads the resurgent Poor People's Campaign, a national call for a moral revival.

Rev. Barber has built this new campaign on four pillars: The evils of systemic racism; poverty and rising inequality; ecological devastation; and the war economy and militarism.

Dr. King would have recognized all these factors. Like the inequality gap, they've only gotten more extreme. And these pillars are more interrelated than you may think.

According to the Census Bureau, one in 12 non-Hispanic white people lives in poverty. The poverty rate is double for Hispanic people – one in six. For Black people, it's one in five.

Historically, poor people get the short end when it comes to governmental services; they have less political power to go with less money. Their streets are the last to get paved; their neighborhood needs are ignored. The hazards that threaten their daily lives are allowed to persist.

That's where racism intersects ecology. Racism enables governments to divert money from priorities like providing clean drinking water or eliminating toxic waste sites because the assumption is that only poor people will be affected and those poor people are not white.

That assumption, of course, is dead wrong; everybody suffers if there's no clean water to drink or toxic sites are allowed to persist. In California, Gov. Gavin Newsom has made it a priority to protect clean water – even while the federal government rolled back protections and blamed the homeless for water pollution.

Remember Katrina and Maria? Those hurricanes devastated New Orleans and Puerto Rico, respectively. The hardest hit in both places: People of color. Following these weather-related catastrophes, services for people of color were limited and

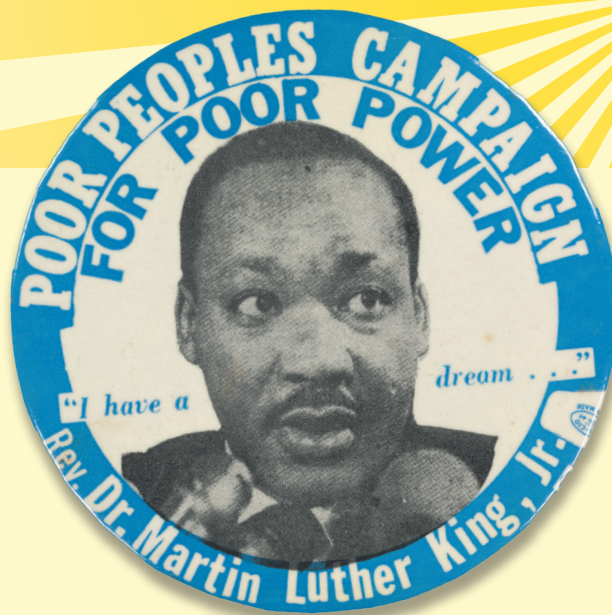


PHOTO BY THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY VIA UNSPLASH

severely underfunded. Making matters worse, public services were privatized while job quality eroded.

Those consequences continue. In New Orleans, for example, nearly all public schools are now privatized. In addition, the Davis-Bacon Act – a 1931 law requiring workers on public projects to be paid the prevailing wage – was suspended, allowing workers to be paid much less. Many contractors, with impunity, failed to pay wages at all.

As for the war economy, America continues to plow incredible amounts of money into the military instead of helping the homeless, feeding the poor and comforting the afflicted. In the last fiscal year, the U.S. spent \$649 billion on defense. That's more than the military spending of China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, India, France, Germany and the United Kingdom combined.

Back when Dr. King was alive, the U.S. gave up its war on poverty because political leaders said the country needed that cash for the war in Vietnam. Fifty years later, there's still the same excuse; take away from the poor to fight more war.

I plan to help Rev. Barber in his Poor People's Campaign any way I can. If we want to end poverty and racism, we should uphold Dr. King's legacy every day – not just Monday.



Yvonne R. Walker
President,
SEIU Local 1000

Loading up on defense

President Trump's 2020 Discretionary Budget Request

(Funding in billions)

Department of Defense	\$718
Veterans Affairs	\$93
Health & Human Services	\$90
Education	\$62
Homeland Security	\$52
Housing & Urban Development	\$44
State Department	\$43
Energy Department	\$32
Justice	\$29
Agriculture	\$21
Transportation	\$21
NASA (Space Force)	\$21
Interior	\$13
Treasury	\$13
Commerce	\$12
Labor	\$11

Source: Office of Management and Budget



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Stay focused on your North Star

Set your compass for a better tomorrow

BY YVONNE R. WALKER
PRESIDENT, SEIU LOCAL 1000

Every leader needs a North Star, something that guides them through the darkness to where they want to be. With their compass, ancient mariners used the North Star to navigate uncertain waters. In uncertain times, our core beliefs are how we set our moral compass.

What is my North Star as I strive to create a California for All? By focusing on this goal: Ending poverty in California. That includes eroding structural racism and closing the gap in income inequality.

As a union leader, I know firsthand the power of unions in achieving these goals. Unions make a positive difference. Not only do unions increase worker wages and benefits, they also reduce inequality within companies, organizations, and even state workforces. Unions reduce racial income discrimination and help level the playing field; that lifts up everyone.

A look back at 2019 can be depressing; inequality in California continued to grow. The rich got richer; more than 90 big corporations – including Amazon, Chevron, FedEx, IBM, General Motors and Netflix — paid zero in federal income taxes.

Meanwhile, the poor and middle class are still struggling; they're not seeing wages grow very much if at all. Income inequality is already at a 50-year high; under the Trump administration, that will only get worse.

Looking back, I see inspiration, too, particularly from within our union. Members stepped up to fight for their fellow state workers, and for California.

For example, SEIU members Don Solleder and Vincent Green challenged the state's use of outside consultants. In question was a contract that paid \$125 an hour to four full-time IT consultants who were providing technical support that was previously provided by our bargaining unit members. The State Personnel Board agreed with their challenge and ordered the contract disapproved.

"This is an important victory," Green said. "The state needs to pay competitive wages and invest in training its own IT professionals instead of wasting up to \$2.5 billion in taxpayer dollars every year on outsourced contracts."

We have a busy year ahead of us, with a lot to talk about and do.



This month, I will be standing with Rev. William Barber, leader of the Poor People's Campaign, and sharing with you the celebrations of the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr., a legacy that is needed now more than ever.

In 2020, we'll celebrate the 100th anniversary of women winning the right to vote. I'll commemorate this centennial by exploring how voting rights are being eroded in other states as well as the organizations and efforts to restore those rights.

This year, it's important that everyone be counted – literally. I will be examining our organizational efforts around the U.S. Census to make sure every Californian – regardless of citizenship status – is included and that our state receives the needed funding and crucial representation tied to this once-in-a-decade tally.

Of course, I will keep a vigilant eye on unions – the impact of workers winning the right to organize in new industries, as well as further attacks on unions and what we are doing to stand strong.

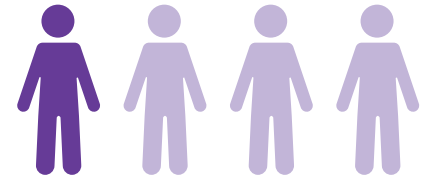
With my North Star, I know where I'm headed in 2020. Join me on this journey to a California for All.



Yvonne R. Walker
President,
SEIU Local 1000

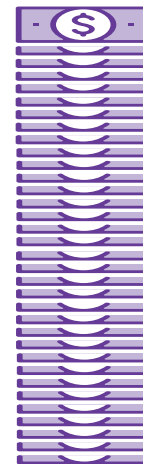
Income inequality, American style

1 in 4 U.S. workers



make less than \$10 an hour

\$14.5 million



Average
CEO salary

\$39,888

Average
worker salary

\$146,984



Median white
family assets

\$3,557

Median black
family assets

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics and Forbes



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A shared vision for 2020



Make these New Year's resolutions stick

BY YVONNE R. WALKER
PRESIDENT, SEIU LOCAL 1000

Every single day, we have the opportunity to change people's lives. In fact, we not only have the opportunity, but the responsibility, to make sure that in the fifth largest economy in the world, everyone can live the California Dream.

The California Dream — the idea that every person can achieve a better life, regardless of where they start out — is central to who we are as Californians. But even with the fifth largest economy in the world, too many Californians cannot afford to live here.

When people cannot afford basic necessities like housing, health care, education and child care, we know that our priorities are fundamentally wrong. Something must change. And through our leadership, we have the opportunity and the responsibility to change the priorities and choices of policy makers.

We have the responsibility to end structural racism in order to validate that black lives truly matter. We have the responsibility to end poverty in California by ensuring that everyone has a livable wage — because nothing stops homelessness like a middle class job. We have a

responsibility in the fifth largest economy in the world to make sure that our reach always exceeds our grasp.

As we discuss the wide variety of components that make up the California Dream, it quickly becomes apparent that this issue extends well beyond Local 1000.

“I’ve missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I’ve lost almost 300 games. Twenty-six times, I’ve been trusted to take the game-winning shot and missed. I’ve failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.”

– Michael Jordan

Fortunately, because we collectively lead and collaborate with so many different partners in California and across the country, we have the opportunity to make our voices heard, from demanding a universal \$15 minimum wage to ensuring that each and every worker has a union, regardless of what they do or where they work. We know that is what raises wages and we know that is what strengthens our communities.

Because we lead, we have the opportunity in 2020 to elect the people that will lift up our values and our vision to create a California for All.

We do all this despite the noise and the vitriol and the hate that is spewed across the news everyday. We do this to lead ourselves and each other through it.

Together, as leaders, we will rise. The journey will not be easy and the path will not be straight.

Not every day is going to be “your” day. We all know that things — life — gets in the way.

But by leading this change together, we will collectively face the risks, share the sacrifices, and celebrate the victories.

No one has to go it alone! Here, we are warriors together, when things are easy, but especially when things get tough.

So, let us begin today by celebrating all that we have to be thankful for, starting with a final reflection on 2019 and our resolutions for the new year ahead. And let's get out there and make our vision come alive in 2020!

Happy New Year.



Yvonne R. Walker
President
SEIU Local 1000