

Resilience and Sociocracy: A Seismic-Resistant Architecture for our Union's Future

To build the union we want, we must begin from the bottom up, laying a foundation that sways but does not buckle when hit with labor-hostile earthquakes the magnitude of the Supreme Court decision in *Janus* v. AFSCME. A solid architecture for UC-AFT's long-term sustainability was created in my [2017-18 organizing plan](#). We must continue to work toward "Getting Members and Activating Members" primarily through solidifying the Site Rep network, rolling membership drives, and expanding our ORE. To this we add the preparation of our leaders to take on concrete roles in a skills-based union along with co-creating and escalating visionary, winnable contract campaigns for both of our units this coming year. If this basic template is adopted at the July 7 Council meeting, locals can operationalize a framework on each campus designed and built by their leaders.

This plan is focused on structural integrity; as with engineering, there are organizational best practices (available to us on the ORE (Organizing Resources and Education site), CFT training materials, books like *Organizing for Social Change* etc. At the same time, differently shaped and purposed buildings require different architectures. Geodesic domes cohere through tensegrity and can be portable and light, air-dropped where needed, during military campaigns. We want to build a long-term home for our members that can withstand political seismic shifts. The analogy between buildings and locals holds here: depending on how much weight—e.g. number of bargaining unit members, inactive members, inactive Site Reps, etc.—your few active leaders are "bearing," you may need to start with your foundation and build in more steel throughout. We should also be creative--bending structural imperatives around key relationships when needed--for experienced, committed people are our true foundation.

There are many building projects to keep us busy after "Wreck it Ralph" paid a visit June 27, 2018. Fortunately, our architecture can sustain the blow. We've already built some of the nation's strongest contractual protections; we have fantastic leaders; we signed more members last year than ever before; and we've successfully *focused* on building our Site Rep networks more so in one year than all previous years combined. Though *Janus* intentionally moved the ground beneath us, we are not starting from rubble. We must use this unjust and unified attack by corporate interests on labor to unify across constituencies and remain *fired up!* Our only options are to give up or give it all we've got. As academics, we are well-suited to teach our colleagues why they need to make plans and pound nails to shore up our collective home: a union that's made it possible inhabit long-term professions.

Last year's organizing plan--creating the "bones" of a solid building—is ongoing and long-term, but is not an end in itself. We must design inviting interior spaces for collaboration and community, welcoming rooms peopled by project-loving comrades and designed for both long term and revolving residence. We must be a relational as well as a task-oriented union, because each member matters. Many want their local to be an umbrella for addressing local and national social justice issues. We can tie the upcoming midterm election and Supreme Court justice hearings to the long-term health of labor hence our jobs, salaries, retirement, etc. and create campaigns that unite mutually invested partners across public sector unions and beyond. Whatever projects inspire members, we must keep a primary focus: building democratic, issues-based campaigns that draw in members to collaborate on building their own professional futures. We have a great opportunity now with two contract campaigns, underway for Unit 17, and launching for Unit 18.

We will continue to escalate the Librarians' contract action plan through the next 3 summer bargaining sessions and likely beyond the expiration of the contract Sept. 1. We will also build the Unit 18 contract campaign leading up to a Spring 2019 sunshine date, according to a schedule we will flesh out together.

Building Up, Building Out, and Building In: Building the union we want

Building up Leaders and consequential Contract Campaigns

Building out Site Rep networks; the ORE; Alliances; Shared Governance; our Organizing skills; Contractual protections; our members' awareness of who we are and what we do.

Building in Assessment; Buy-in; and Unity

- A. Building contract campaigns for real job improvements with widespread member involvement
The issues we choose and how we frame them will give our Site Reps the tools and the talking points they need to engage members to become involved on their own behalf.
- B. Building out Site Rep structure. We know it's working, and we know we need to widen and deepen it. What trainings are desired? How can we step up the roles? How can we bring Site Reps into the core mission/leadership structure rather than a "parallel universe"? Share ways to assess and develop some Site Reps to be part of Representational teams. See [Site Rep Basics](#).
- C. Building up leaders to become more proficient organizers (fall Leadership Conference)

Keeping in mind the focused, "small ask" approach from last year's plan—to *widen* member participation—one approach would be for leaders to choose 1-2 "building projects" and *deepen* their focused energies on those. A universal focus should be on having organizing conversations. We can also become a role-based and skills-based union with people who know how to do at least one thing well and can teach others that skill to build in perpetuity: e.g. sign members; be a site rep coordinator; be a site rep; convene meeting and coordinate agenda; facilitate meeting; maintain database and lists; do representational work; lead a workshop; write good minutes; maintain the website and social media; do graphic design; write press releases; write contract campaign materials; do graphic design; build out the ORE; bargain; co-organize rallies; lobby elected officials; liaise between committees; interface with coalition partners; etc.

- D. Building in more collaborative processes, shared governance, and communications systems

I will work with leaders to refine our administrative systems and practices (consistent note-takers, shared notes in a shared space) to facilitate more public communications' commons so that decisions made or announced on various calls are transparent and timely, building in time for consent, which is at the heart of sociocracy (with thanks to Marcelino for inspiration). My preference is to create working groups around our primary work (organizing, representation, legislation, etc.) to share ideas, resources, action plans, and build up the ORE. I realize that not everyone desires more layers of internal structure, so I will query members at Council.

Whatever building projects and structures we take on, we know we will have a leaner, meaner operation. Leaders should not just go to meetings but have roles. We must become a more existential union--not in the sense that there is no longer any meaning in the universe--but in the sense that true existence is marked by *doing*, not being. We do not turn away from repair work, but, in the inspiring words of Donna Haraway, we "stay with the trouble." In so doing, we develop community, grit, and purpose. We become more resilient. We remind ourselves, through each step, that we can do this!

In solidarity,

Roxi

