

# A LETTER FROM OUR LEADERS

## ***Can we talk about how we are winning?***

We are up against some of the most powerful forces in the country. Yet we're winning the fight for a world that ensures a full, decent life for people like us. We're doing it by uniting across race, class and gender; across rural, suburban and urban communities; and across the country's best known retail brands. We're winning thanks to the power and courage of our members. We take risks to tell our stories and stand up to those in power. And we find allies in people of conscience who care deeply about the future of this country and this democracy.

No one makes a billion dollars — it is taken from working people, communities, or the earth.

Wall Street executives make it by driving companies like Shopko into the ground without paying severance to people who have worked there for decades. Billionaires like Jeff Bezos make it off the backs of the overworked and underpaid people working in warehouses at Amazon. The Walton heirs make it by cutting hours, wages and benefits for hourly Walmart employees.

They have multiple mansions and yachts. We can't even get adequate time off or dependable schedules that let us take care of our families.

So we are standing up to change this.

We are excited to share with you what we accomplished in 2019 with your support. And we are excited about our plans for the year ahead.

2020 will be a year that we lift up our voices together and fight to win back our jobs, our country and our democracy from the wealthy elites.

This year, we will organize across the country to challenge corporations and Wall Street executives who profit from our pain.

This year, we will tell politicians to put working people and our families first and pass laws that give us a fair shot.

This year, we will keep sharing our stories and making our pain public so that others may join our movement for justice.

Our kids and grandkids deserve a better world than what we're living in right now. We have the power to change everything if we're willing to stand up for it! Thank you for all you have done to stand with us and we look forward to the year ahead alongside you.



In unity,



**ONIE PATRICK**

Former Kmart employee, Illinois



**CAROLYN "CAT" DAVIS**

Current Walmart employee, North Carolina



**JAMAL MUHAMMAD**

Former Amazon employee, Georgia

# FIGHTING FOR DIGNITY AND JUSTICE

In 2019, we fought for structural reforms at U.S. corporations, taking special aim at private equity firms that buy up retail companies and then systematically destroy them. We took aim at Wall Street's short-term focus that forces companies to extract large profits quickly, at the expense of workers and communities. We addressed sexual harassment in the workplace, introducing shareholder resolutions and connecting survivors to legal resources and healing networks. And we continued to develop strong leaders, particularly among our predominantly women of color membership.

Our leaders testified at Congressional hearings and before state legislative bodies, supporting the introduction of the Reward Work Act, the Stop Wall Street Looting Act and the Schedules That Work Act.



Bernie Sanders rallies with UFR leaders at Walmart Annual Shareholders meeting in Arkansas

United for Respect leader and current Walmart associate, **Carolyn "Cat" Davis**, filed a shareholder resolution at Walmart calling on the company to put hourly employees on its Board of Directors. **Senator Bernie Sanders** joined us to blast the company's low wages.



Cyndi Murray, current Walmart associate

United for Respect leader and current Walmart associate, **Cyndi Murray**, testified at a Senate hearing in support of the **Reward Work Act**, which would require publicly-owned companies to allow workers to elect a third of a company's board members.



Janie Grice, former Walmart associate



Giovanna de la Rosa, former Toys 'R' Us store manager

At the first-ever congressional oversight hearing on private equity, **Janie Grice**, former Walmart associate, testified before the House Financial Services Committee on the need to limit stock buybacks; and **Giovanna de la Rosa**, former Toys 'R' Us store manager, exposed how private equity firm executives get paid multi-million dollar bonuses while working people get little to no severance.



**I'm inspired to be part of this movement and to continue to bring these learnings to people who work hourly jobs in the retail industry.**



**GIRSHRIELA GREEN**

Former Walmart associate and founder of our Respect the Bump Campaign, California



## SURVIVORS KNOW

[survivorsknow.org](http://survivorsknow.org)

While using organizing methodology grounded in restorative practices and harnessing survivor power, we partnered with and helped found **Survivors Know**, a network to address sexual harassment and gender-based violence through healing and liberation, while exploring policy change and solutions grounded in restorative justice.



[dearwalmart.com](http://dearwalmart.com)

We organized screenings across the country of **Dear Walmart**, an independent documentary that offers a behind-the-scenes look at how Walmart employees built a movement and won key policy changes at the country's largest private employer.

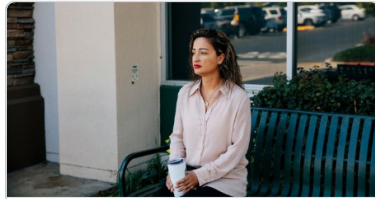


[athenaforall.org](http://athenaforall.org)

We helped found the **Athena Coalition**, a growing alliance of powerful civil society organizations, think tanks, racial justice, community and worker organizations that challenge Amazon's drive to monopolize the market and corrupt our democracy.



Workers of color – especially women – are more likely to have unpredictable work schedules, face cancelled shifts, work consecutive closing & opening shifts, & be part-time workers. #SchedulesThatWork is about basic dignity & fairness for all workers.



How Unpredictable Work Hours Turn Families Upside Down  
Shifts added or subtracted at short notice play havoc with budgets and lives, and disproportionately hurt black and Hispanic women.  
[nytimes.com](https://www.nytimes.com)

*UFR leader Brandy Powell featured in New York Times article on Fair Workweek*

With the introduction of the **Schedules That Work Act of 2019**, we highlighted how Black and Latina women are disproportionately harmed by the widespread retail practice of adding and subtracting shifts on short notice. United for Respect leader **Brandy Powell** shared her story about the harmful repercussions she and her five children live with as a result of irregular hours.

## TIME'S UP

[timesupnow.org](http://timesupnow.org)

United for Respect engaged with thousands of women working in retail who have experienced sexual harassment on the job and connected survivors with legal support in partnership with the **Time's Up Legal Fund**.



1 in 4

Retail workers live below or near the poverty threshold

2 in 5

Black (43%) and Latinx (42%) retail workers live in or near poverty

In partnership with Americans for Financial Reform, Hedge Clippers, Center for Popular Democracy and the Private Equity Stakeholder Project, we released a comprehensive study of private equity's practices – **Pirate Equity: How Wall Street Firms are Pillaging American Retail**.

*Pirate Equity: How Wall Street Firms are Pillaging American Retail*



Leading up to the historic introduction of the **Stop Wall Street Looting Act**, we lobbied elected officials, bird-dogged presidential candidates, and sent a petition to Shopko's Wall Street owner, Sun Capital, signed by 700 Shopko employees.



Walmart CEO's salary last year: \$23,618,233  
A Walmart worker's median pay last year: \$21,952

The issue isn't that these employees aren't working hard enough. It's that our system doesn't value workers. And it's a moral outrage.



Senator Sherrod Brown, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, Senator Elizabeth Warren



Paula Curtis, current Walmart associate

United for Respect leader and Walmart associate, **Paula Curtis** from California, attended Walmart's annual shareholder meeting to read a UFR-filed resolution challenging Walmart to improve corporate policy by formalizing robust Board oversight of the risks related to sexual harassment of hourly employees.



We saw first hand how private equity firms destroyed the old Toys 'R' Us by loading it with \$5 billion in debt, but we were powerless to stop it. Now we have a front row seat and access to the company's finances and business strategy.

**MADELYN GARCIA**

Toys 'R' Us Mirror Board Member, Florida



Former Toys 'R' Us employees

After making history by winning a \$20 million financial assistance fund, leaders Madelyn Garcia, Giovanna de la Rosa, and Michelle Perez helped launch the **Toys 'R' Us Mirror Board**, a first-of-its-kind structure that gives employees access to key corporate information and a direct line of communication with the company's top executives and board.



## A STATE-BY-STATE STRATEGY

In addition to fighting for change at the federal level, United for Respect put resources into pushing for change at the state and city level. We're building strong partnerships with local organizations — pushing for paid sick days, predictable work hours, guaranteed severance and better working conditions. 2019 saw our ambitious expansion into **California, Florida, Georgia, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Texas, and Arkansas** — Walmart's backyard. We now have a team of full-time, national and state organizers in nine states, with plans to add more in 2020.

Members have fought for and won severance for laid-off workers, higher pay, fair workweek, and improved family leave and pregnancy policies in stores throughout the country. They've brought retail work out of the political shadows and into the conversation. State and local electeds are listening to our call to protect working families!

Here are some examples:

Through the **New Jersey** Fair Workweek Coalition, led by Make the Road New Jersey, UNITE Here, 32BJ, Citizen Action, Working Families Party, Center for Popular Democracy and so many incredible state groups, United for Respect leaders helped launch a statewide campaign to win a fair workweek, and in close partnership with Make the Road New Jersey, we just celebrated passage of a bill that makes New Jersey the first state in the country to guarantee severance pay in the wake of Wall Street driven bankruptcies and mass layoffs.

In **Texas**, we stormed the state house for a lobby and action day demanding paid sick days and a fair work week, supporting the great work led by Workers Defense Project and Working Texans for Paid Sick Time.

The **Chicago** Fair Workweek coalition, led by UFCW 881, Chicago Federation of Labor, Warehouse Workers for Justice, Chicago Jobs for Justice, Women Employed, SEIU-HCII, Center for Popular Democracy, with United for Respect leaders won a universal fair workweek ordinance mandating fair and equitable work schedules.

# KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

**U**nited for Respect continues to be a leader in leveraging technology — including social media and our digital platform **WorkIt** — to bring people together and support them with instant, clear advice from a team of trusted and trained peers. The WorkIt app can be downloaded directly through Google Play or iTunes, to ask any question — in English or Spanish — about workplace policy or rights. It also connects co-workers who share similar experiences and can provide support and care.



We believe in the potential of WorkIt to transform how organizations support their members, reach new audiences, connect people to one another, and create a strong, collective voice of power.

In 2019, our AI-assisted peer expert team:

**Answered nearly 8,000 questions** from working people across the country.

Helped grow WorkIt to **a community of 35,000 working people**.

**Launched WorkIt to thousands of teachers** in Texas, domestic workers in California, and low-income parents in New Mexico. Sneak peek: We are now ramping up to launch to hospitality workers across Australia.

**Helped scale the app's impact** through partnerships with other movement organizations.

# ORGANIZING THROUGH INNOVATION

**A**lways pushing boundaries, United for Respect has created a new **Online-to-Offline (O2O) Strategies Group** to strengthen and develop new pathways between online organizing and offline action. We formalized an online-to-offline training curriculum, offering it to multiple progressive organizations and unions and adding capacity building sessions.



In 2019, we trained more than 200 organizers from more than 50 organizations on using our proven model to scale up organizing capacity and campaigns, including:

**Uber and Lyft drivers in California** fighting to win status as employees through the Gig Workers Rising campaign.

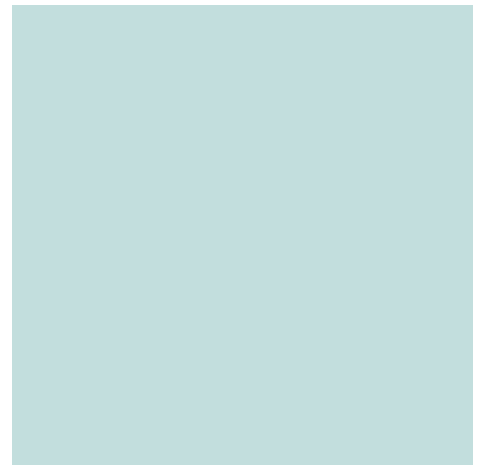
**Parents and childcare providers** organizing for quality, affordable childcare and living wages for providers under a national campaign umbrella at Center for Community Change.

**People fighting to win Medicare for All** through the Center for Popular Democracy.

**Southern manufacturing workers** in partnership with Jobs to Move America.




# LOOKING FORWARD TO WINNING WITH YOU IN 2020!



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