

Giving thanks for many people



Yvonne R. Walker speaks to SEIU Local 1000 members during a rally at Sacramento City Hall.
PHOTO COURTESY SEIU LOCAL 1000

Being part of a union tops this list

BY YVONNE R. WALKER
PRESIDENT, SEIU LOCAL 1000

What am I thankful for this holiday? **I'm thankful for unions**, and my union in particular. Up to 45% of all U.S. workers are legally excluded from the right to bargain collectively. I'm thankful to be part of the other fortunate 55%.

Last year alone in California, we won the right for 40,000 child care workers to bargain collectively and fight for better wages as well as more subsidized child care. We also fought to get legislation to clarify and expand who is an employee with rights to wages and benefits.

Overall, I am thankful that unions fight to improve the quality of life for working people. No matter how hard they work, millions of people are falling behind and drowning in debt and insecurity while juggling jobs and family responsibilities. I am thankful that my union is a vehicle for working people to organize and reverse this troubling trend toward greater insecurity and fear.

I'm thankful for leaders in our union who step up and fight for their peers and all Californians. That includes Rose Gudiel, who leads anti-poverty work in Southern California with our union in partnership with Rev. William

Barber and the Poor People's Campaign. Rose has engaged hundreds of union workers and community members to fight for living wages and end racism as a tool to divide and weaken the power of working people.

And many thanks go to the scores of leaders in Local 1000 who are part of our bargaining team. They leave their families for weeks to negotiate with the state, encourage their co-workers to take action and build our power to win at the table.

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I'm thankful for the commitment of our members to step up and take leadership in the political process. We have a huge year ahead of us — a presidential year. And in California, we have a huge opportunity to reshape the funding for public education for decades to come through the Schools and Communities First initiative. Right now, our member political organizers are fanning out across the state to help get signatures to right a quarter century of wrongs in

funding public education and essential services and getting some of the wealthiest corporations to pay their fair share of property taxes.

I'm thankful for artists who are changing our culture, pushing the boundaries, asking questions, and helping us stay connected to our histories. Artists such as Ava DuVernay; the woman who brought us “When They See Us” is the same person who created the equally engaging and enlightening “13th,” one of the best non-fiction stories of the 21st century, regardless of medium. More, please.

Also on this list are Angie Thomas, debut author of the novel, “The Hate U Give,” and George Tillman Jr., director of the movie based on that book. They provide a vivid, heart-wrenching description of life spent living in different worlds, the racism that we confront from a young age, and how these disparate experiences are not easily combined or circumvented.

And last but not least, I'm thankful to have this venue through which I get to speak with all of you. Happy Thanksgiving, everyone!



Yvonne R. Walker
President
SEIU Local 1000

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1808 14th Street Sacramento, CA 95811 | (866) 471-7348

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