

Join Oakland Rank-and-File Strike Committee to broaden the fight to defend public education!

Oakland Rank-and-File Strike Committee
26 February 2019

Teachers in Oakland are taking a stand, giving voice to the determination to fight back of teachers across the US and all over the world. We are receiving broad support because workers realize that we are not just fighting for ourselves but for the fate of public education. All workers, moreover, face the same problems: low wages, skyrocketing living costs and precarious employment.

The conditions exist to mobilize this broad popular support. But a warning must be made: the Oakland Education Association (OEA) and the California Teachers Association (CTA) are rushing to sign a rotten deal with the district and state Democratic Party officials, just as the unions did in Los Angeles, Denver, West Virginia, and many other cities and states.

Whatever agreement the unions reach behind closed doors will not address the issues for which we are striking. The OEA has already declared that it accepts the district's insistence that any gain for teachers will be offset by cuts to school programs and school closures. It has refused to make the fight against budget cuts part of the strike.

Any deal that fails to halt relentless budget cutting and other attacks on public education will embolden billionaire school privatizers like Eli Broad and his supporters in both big business parties to escalate their attacks on teachers and public education across the country. So it was in Los Angeles, where the shutdown of the strike has been followed by rapid moves by the school board to implement new privatization schemes.

Oakland teachers must draw a line! It is time to fight back!

We, rank-and-file teachers in Oakland, are organizing a strike committee based on the following principles:

(1) It will be completely independent of the unions, including the OEA, CTA and other unions, and democratically controlled by rank-and-file teachers. It will take up the fight for critical issues long abandoned by the unions, including opposing all budget cuts, teacher layoffs and school closings.

The committee demands that rank-and-file teachers must oversee all negotiations, which should be live-streamed, and teachers must have a full three days to study and discuss any agreement before a ratification vote and any return to work.

(2) It is independent of the Democrats and Republicans. The Democrats are not "friends" of the teachers and public education. They are beholden to the same giant corporations and financial institutions as the Republicans. In California, it is the Democrats that have spearheaded the expansion of charter schools and school privatization.

(3) It rejects the lie that there is no money for public education in a state with 141 billionaires who pay virtually no taxes. Any time the two big business parties want to brutalize immigrants, bail out the banks, bomb another country, cut corporate taxes or expand the prisons they find hundreds of billions of dollars.

(4) The committee bases itself on the methods of the class struggle. We will fight to unite the working class, of all races, genders and nationalities, in a common struggle against social inequality. This includes the fight for a statewide strike by teachers and the preparation of a national general strike to defend the rights of all workers.

The Oakland Rank-and-File Strike Committee is fighting for the following demands, which are based on what our students need, not what Dr. Kyla Johnson-

Trammell, Tony Thurmond, Gavin Newsom and other representatives of the ruling class say they can afford.

This includes:

1. No cuts, no closures! Full funding for public education by sharply increasing taxations on the giant corporations and the super-rich, and a reduction of taxes on working-class families.

2. An immediate 30 percent increase in pay for all teachers and the reduction of class sizes to 18 for elementary school and 26 with an aide for middle and high school.

3. Take profit out of education! We demand a complete end to charters schools, which drain resources and students from traditional public schools, and the conversion of charters back into public schools.

We urge teachers to join the Oakland Rank-and-File Strike Committee today to organize the independent strength of teachers, oppose any effort to shut down the struggle without meeting teachers' demands, and fight to mobilize the entire working class to defend the social right of students to a free and quality public education.



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