



UNION NEWS

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WHY UNIONS STILL MATTER

(This article is an excerpt from the preface of the new edition of Michael D. Yates' book, *Why Unions Matter*)

The first edition of *Why Unions Matter* was published in 1998. In it I argued that unions mattered because they were the one institution that had dramatically improved the lives of the majority of the people and had the potential to radically transform both the economic and political landscape, making both more democratic and egalitarian. I showed with clear and decisive data that union members enjoyed significant advantages over nonunion workers: higher wages, more and better benefits, better access to many kinds of leaves of absence, a democratic voice in their workplaces, and a better understanding of their political and legal rights. What is more, unions benefitted nonunion workers through their political agitations and through what is called the "spillover" effect—nonunion employers will treat their employees better if only to avoid unionization.

This assessment of the impact of unions has not changed in the second edition. What was said ten years ago is true today. I have updated the numbers, but they still show that unions matter. Other things being equal (that is taking two groups of workers alike with respect to experience, education, region of country, industry, occupation, and marital status), union workers in 2007 earned \$1.50 an hour more than nonunion workers, a wage

premium of 14.1 percent. This wage premium was highest for black and Hispanic workers, meaning that unionization reduces racial wage inequality. The union premium was even greater for benefits: 28.2 percent for health insurance, 53.9 percent for pensions, 26.6 percent for vacations, and 14.3 percent for holidays. These union advantages have diminished over the past decade because union density (the share of employed wage workers in unions) has fallen. This decline has also compromised both the union impact on inequality and nonunion wages and benefits. There have been many reasons for the decline in union membership and density—and these are discussed at length in the new edition of *Why Unions Matter*. However, we can say here that falling density means a tremendous loss for the working class: lost wages and benefits for all workers, still less response by the government to the needs of workers, and a smaller counterweight to the forces that have given rise to greater inequality.

Maybe unions matter even more today than they did in 1998. Working men and women are more vulnerable to a host of problems than they were then:

—Because of the electronic revolution, the radical reorganization of the labor process, and the political deregulation of important product and financial markets, employers are more likely to move operations to lower-wage parts of the United States and to poorer countries. They are

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also more inclined to threaten to do so. Try to buy U.S.-made shoes, toys, jewelry, and a host of other consumer goods. If your automobile is made in the United States, chances are good that it was manufactured in union-free southern states.

—Employers are more likely to contract out to lower-wage states and nations both labor-intensive operations such as call centers and higher-wage labor like computer programming and medical service work. When we make inquiries about our computers, our credit card bills, our health insurance, the person on the other side of the phone will very likely be in a foreign country.

—Deregulated globalization, fueled in part by anti-labor trade agreements, has displaced working people in poor countries like Mexico from their land and jobs. Large numbers have come to the United States, intensifying competition in some labor markets, allowing employers to divide and conquer their workforces, and giving an excuse for xenophobes to foment anti-immigrant hysteria, which helps to keep domestic workers' from seeing clearly that it is their employers (and the employers' allies in government) that

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By Dean Murakami

It was my pleasure to moderate a panel of community college students at the recent FACCC A&P Conference. The students included Justin Young, who is a retired Marine Corps Veteran from American River College; Cortney Cooper, who was a foster youth and past-president of the Student Senate for California Community Colleges; Alex Walker-Griffin is a student member of the Board of Governors, and Kenia Alcocer who is a Muslim immigrant. Each of the students had a fascinating story where they have overcome incredible challenges to become successful community college students. Justin Young did an outstanding job of representing the students of Los Rios.

The first question I asked was "What was more important to you in your community college education? Personal growth or to get a job." Without hesitation each of them said that personal growth was more important, not only to achieve their educational goals, but also to become successful in their lives. I want to contrast this with the seemingly incessant focus to get students through in two years and increase the number of degrees and certificates in the community college system. Toward that end, the system institutes Guided Pathways and AB 705 to force students through, but absent from that equation is whether those students are better educated. Somehow statistics have become more important than the students we teach.

All of us have seen so many students mature, grow, and develop over the course of their community college career. A number of them need more than those two years to find their way, become more responsible adults, more diligent in their studies, and become very productive citizens. A few of my students have left college and, to my delight, have come back several years later. In this current environment, giving students the needed time to grow, develop, and mature is no longer appreciated. Setting a major and college career path at 18-years-old that then attempts to restrict a broader educational experience, is not good for students. Beyond just providing classes, the college provides a structured and safe environment with social interactions, clubs, and activities that are a positive benefit for student growth. It is how many young people assimilate the norms and values of the community.

Community college students become more productive members of the community because they earn higher wages, pay more taxes, are more likely to vote, are less likely to commit a crime, and less likely to get arrested than those that don't attend college.



"... student success is when that student has matured, developed, and learned how to take control of their lives."

That is why I believe that the college environment is just as important a factor in education as the classes that we provide.

What I learned from our student panel at the FACCC A&P Conference is that student success is less about the degree or certificate they earn and more about the people they become. For me, student success is when that student has matured, developed, and learned how to take control of their lives and not let life overtake them. That is when I know that student will be successful in whatever life pathway they choose.

This is why I believe that Guided Pathways and AB 705 are the wrong direction for so many of our students. We have to stop this assembly line approach to education, where we place too much emphasis on STEM and get rid of liberal arts studies. Are we headed toward what is happening at the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point? That UW college will eliminate 13 majors, including American studies, art, English, French, geography, geoscience, German, history, music literature, philosophy, political science, sociology and Spanish. They say that these majors are being eliminated because they want to focus on classes and majors that lead directly to

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jobs. Didn't our student panel say that the community college experience is less about getting a job, and more about their personal growth? Why don't we listen to our students, instead of listening to legislators, administrators, and the Lumina Foundation about what is best for our students?

Another current fight concerns the development of a separate Online Community College, the 115th community college in California. The separate Online College misses the point of what the college experience is all about. Not only will students miss the social, psychological, and structured environment of the college that will help in their maturity, but they will miss critical face-to-face interaction with counselors, librarians, the faculty member, help from peers, tutoring services, and many others that help to make them successful in their classes.

We are at a tipping point where community colleges are headed down a very destructive path for students and our profession as educators. If we wait much longer it will be too late and we will permanently harm a higher education system that helps more students find their way each year than any other higher education system in history. That is what is at stake. Do we sit back and let it happen or do we rally to change the direction?

Anyone who knows me, will tell you that I am not afraid of speaking out at the State Chancellor's Office or the state legislature. It is too late in my career for me to care what they think of me, and I am close enough to retirement, so what can they do?? I make sure the faculty voice is heard at committees and in direct meetings with legislators. Unfortunately, it will take more from faculty to change the direction community colleges are headed. We need to let them know the unfortunate consequences as we try to implement AB 705 and Guided Pathways. In addition, we must do everything we can to stop the proposed Online College and the new funding formula.

I want to thank so many of you who have volunteered your time to come and lobby at the Capitol. We need your continued support and activism if we are to have a community college that truly cares about students and our profession as faculty. Believe me when I say that forces are purposely eroding the role and integrity of the Academic Senate and faculty unions.

We can't let that happen. ■

MY NEGOTIATION EXPERIENCE

By Connie Zuercher

During my 29 years as a Sacramento City College faculty member, I have had the honor of serving in a variety of faculty leadership roles. In the Spring 2016 semester, just as I thought I was out to pasture, I was approached and asked to serve as a representative for the Academic Senate on the LRCFT Union Negotiation Team. Having attended some of the LRCFT Executive Board Meetings as well as SUJIC (Senate Union Joint Issues Committee) meetings during my senate leadership tenure, I was familiar with many of my district union colleagues and so I was looking forward to learning about yet another aspect of how our district processes work.

First and foremost, let me say that although the negotiations conversations and strategic planning began in the fall of 2017, the work that preceded those conversations had been going on for some time before those meetings began. As many of you may realize, our union colleagues attempt to have these conversations with all faculty in the semesters prior to beginning the actual process with the district. By conducting forums on each campus or collecting surveys or having general knowledge of a variety of faculty issues that seem to be common concerns across campuses or attending state-wide legislative conferences to gain awareness of faculty concerns throughout the state as a result of legislation, our union representatives gain insight as to concerns and interest of faculty---that is, if faculty are participating in these attempts at communication and understanding.

It is from this information gathered that conversations about what the union interests during negotiations unfold.

In the meantime, we are not the only party interested in what the contract language will reflect as a result of this process. Our district administrative colleagues also have an interest in what the contract says, so they are having their own meetings and those interests are eventually shared, and at some point, it is decided which will take priority. That priority has much to do with money (surprise), past unresolved issues, current legislation, as well as current issues that need to have processes in place that are mutually agreed upon by faculty and administration.

After several LRCFT strategic meetings in the fall and a retreat in early spring, the actual meetings with the district begin. LRCFT representatives are placed on teams based on interest or expertise. Each team sets up meetings that may be LRCFT strategy meetings or meetings with the district administrative

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are their true enemies. As we shall see, the influx of immigrants offers the labor movement new and enthusiastic troops for rebirth and revitalization.

—Over the last ten years, our government has been increasingly under the thumb of corporate interests. The failure of organized labor to provide a counterweight to this has allowed a corporate-political alliance to sweep away most of the safety nets that protect us from the vagaries of the market and the inevitable occurrences of failing health, old age, and workplace injuries. Our health insurance system is in tatters, with nearly fifty million people without coverage and tens of millions more with inadequate and expensive coverage. These numbers grow each year. Few workers have the once common defined benefit pensions, in which they are guaranteed predictable monthly incomes when they retire. Instead, the declining fraction of workers who have pensions must accept defined contribution plans, in which they put up the money, sometimes with an employer match, and then must decide in what type of stock or bond fund to invest. How much money is available depends on the amount they were able to put into their funds, the size of the employer match, and the performance of the funds. The social security system, which is well-managed, financially sound, and capable of providing decent pensions for all, has been attacked by labor's enemies in a propaganda campaign aimed at privatization. Workplace safety has become a dead letter as has the enforcement of our labor laws. Those programs aimed at the poor, including those who lose their jobs, have been shredded, less generous in terms of both coverage and benefits. Workers were encouraged to consider their homes as security blankets, assets they could sell or borrow against to deal with emergencies or just to supplement incomes. But now the notion that a house is an asset that always rises in value is another big joke, one made at the expense of the working class. All in all, we can say with certainty that workers have lost ground economically, while those who hire them and invest in their companies, those who loan them money or hold their mortgages, have taken what workers have lost and lined their own pockets. Inequality of income and wealth have not been as great as they are now since the 1920s.

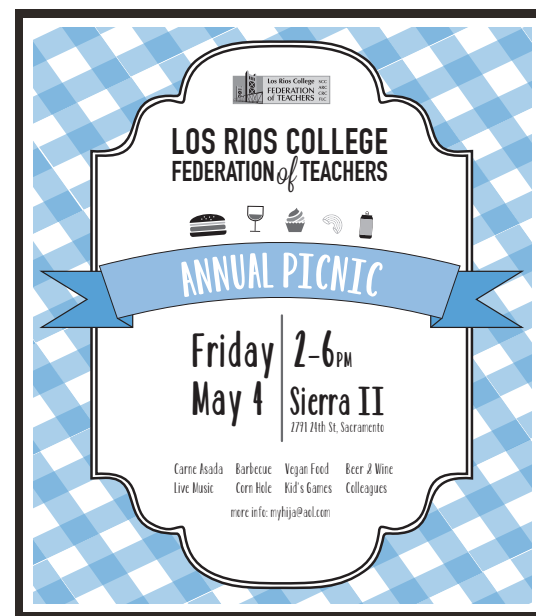
—While our government has eagerly helped employers beat down their workers, it has just as fervently wasted hundreds of billions of dollars waging war. In fact, the two phenomena are connected. War spending starves social programs and socially useful public investments. The war in Iraq may cost as much as three trillion dollars, money enough to implement a national health care system, expand social security, and begin to make the public investments needed to restore the health of our badly ravaged environment. Wars also are always harmful to the rights of workers. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the federal gov-

ernment put in place measures to deny the rights of many federal workers to unionize and threatened to invoke antiterrorism laws to stop strikes. A climate of war is a climate of fear and accusation. One right-wing pundit said on Fox Television that a national health care system would encourage terrorist physicians, willing to work for less, to come to the United States. Here it is interesting to note that in Iraq, where the United States was supposedly engineering a democratic society from scratch, unions and strikes are for all practical purposes illegal.

—Compounding worker insecurity has been the collapse of two financial bubbles, first the stock market crash that began in 2000 and the real estate debacle that commenced in 2007. The recovery from the first was one of the weakest on record, and working-class living standards never returned to where they were at the end of the last century. Some were able to maintain their incomes or make up for money shortfalls by borrowing, with credit cards and by taking out home equity loans. Both allowed consumer spending to grow faster than it would have otherwise. Now, however, the bursting of the housing bubble has left workers with a mountain of debt and no way out.

It is difficult to imagine that this litany of working-class woes can be challenged and eradicated without strong unions and a vibrant labor movement.

(Michael D. Yates is Associate Editor of *Monthly Review*. Until 2001, when he retired, he was a professor of economics at the University of Pennsylvania, Johnstown. His many publications include *Cheap Motels and a Hotplate: An Economist's Travelogue* (2007), *Naming the System: Inequality and Work in the Global Economy* (2003), and *Why Unions Matter* (2009), all published by Monthly Review Press.) ■



LRCFT SOCIAL JUSTICE WORKSHOP SERIES

By Belinda Lum

Over the past year, we have witnessed a constant barrage of attacks directed at women, the poor and working class, the LGBTQIA communities, immigrants, and people of color. Although these incidents brought national attention to the prevalence of hate and bigotry—as faculty we were well aware that these ideas were becoming increasingly prevalent on our campuses, in our classrooms, and in our meetings. In response, LRCFT committed significant time, effort, resources, and energy towards strengthening the work that we do to actively support historically under-represented communities with significant attention to undocumented communities.

Immediately following the election, our efforts focused on providing baseline information to our faculty on immigrant experiences and the legislation impacting these communities. Additionally, we hosted “Know Your Rights” workshops that were conducted in partnership with the California Rural Legal Aid Foundation (CRLAF) and the Northern California American Civil Liberties Union. These workshops were open to students, staff, faculty, and administrators of the Los Rios Community College District as well as the community at large.

During the fall 2017 semester, we hosted a number of social justice workshops, including Self Defense for Inclusive Communities, LGBTQIA Safe Space Training, and an UndocuAlly Training. Our overarching goal was to provide opportunities for union members to not only improve professionally, but to also join together as a broader community to actively work towards social justice and positive social change. The Self Defense class focused on how to stay safe during marches and protests, and offered participants the chance for hands-on learning of these techniques. The LGBTQIA Safe Space training was organized and taught by members of the LGBTQIA Faculty Caucus at SCC and provided important and insightful lessons on how to create safe and welcoming environments for LGBTQIA individuals in our offices, classrooms, and in our pedagogical approaches.

Finally, we launched the Union’s UndocuAlly program. We have trained eight Union members from the four campuses to run UndocuAlly workshops for faculty, staff, and administrators. We created an LRCFT UndocuAlly Sticker, and created a registry of trained allies so that students and fellow allies, can refer members of our undocumented community to individuals who may be able to help them. In addition, LRCFT members are actively lobbying and pushing the District to create a stronger in-

frastructure for undocumented communities. This includes adapting our policies regarding ICE on campus, creating Dream Resource Centers, coming into compliance with AB 21, and insuring the District’s policies regarding financial aid distribution to AB 540 and DACA students is consistent with the rest of the state.



We have continued this work in spring 2018 by offering flex-eligible LGBTQIA Safe Space Trainings and UndocuAlly trainings, and growing the four workshop offerings based on suggestions from the membership. For those interested in suggesting or offering workshops, please contact one of your Union representatives.

A REPORT TO OUR MEMBERS

By Robert Perrone

Transparency and information are key components of what unions should provide to members. In the interest of increasing regular communications with our members, let’s review some of the Union’s recent achievements.

The Union has supported faculty through its various college-level forums and workshops. One such forum was the Community College Symposium during flex week this semester, where various speakers addressed the state of California’s community colleges. Another continuing series is the UnDocuAlly training workshops held at every District college this semester. These workshops focus on creating safe campuses for undocumented communities. The Union supported the environment through its sponsorship of the March for Science and the creation of a special poster for the occasion. That “Oceans are rising and so are we” poster won a graphic arts award at this year’s convention of the California Federation of Teachers.

The Union supported students through its \$10,000 annual book scholarship for Los Rios students—\$2,500 at each college; through its financial support of special graduation ceremonies for students of African descent, Chicano/Latino, Native American, and Asian Pacific Islander students.; through its financial support of food closets at each college. In addition, the Union supported the Cesar Chavez Day and MLK Day marches.

At a recent retreat of the Union’s Executive Board, one of the “weaknesses” cited in a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis was the failure of the Union to effectively spread the news of its achievements.

So, without further ado, let’s review what the Union has been doing for its members for the last couple of years.

NEGOTIATIONS

Following the conclusion of the first phase of negotiations in the spring of 2017, the Union publicized our contract gains in a “Contract Settlement Update”. However, there were several issues that were not resolved in the

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Negotiation Experience [from page 3]

teams to begin the actual conversations where each party discusses their interest. If anyone has attended the IBA trainings, you will be aware of how our district conducts these meetings, as it is a culture that has been long established. Once everyone's cards are on the table, subsequent agendas for meetings are based on discovering additional options, while at the same time meeting district's interest and how to better establish faculty interests. Those may require further conversations and/or researching other contracts for best practices. Essentially, the work feels as if it is never done.

Within these smaller team meetings, there are also larger "all hands" meetings where small teams communicate from each constituency's perspective, what conversations are taking place and if there is movement toward agreement. It gives others who may not serve on the small teams opportunities for input to those conversations. As the semester continues, meetings begin to accumulate because, of course, there is a deadline so that the contract language can be ratified and presented to the Board of Trustees. These meetings are very long, often occurring all day on several Friday's.

Once both parties have reached common ground, an MOU (memo of understanding) is crafted and will represent language in the contract. There are times, however, when agreement does not happen as quickly, and those issues may continue into the next semester, in this case, fall 2017, so that agreement can be reached.

The unfortunate side to the negotiations that I observed dealt with issues that involved money/budgets. I believe that both parties should share to the whole committee (not just the few who are involved in money conversations) what the bottom line is. Often teams are lobbying strongly for what we think would be fair for workload concerns, only to find that perhaps part of the bucket is being spent on another cause, or that there is not enough money, which, quite frankly, can waste a lot of time in this process as conversations may have been different had each team been privy to such information.

So what are my overall observations and thoughts about this very interesting process? First and foremost, let me say that your elected union representatives are outstanding and our Executive Director, Robert Perrone is a fierce, yet very stable presence at the table. They have established relationships with district-wide administration that is mutually respected and often amicable, which is very impor-

tant, as they understand the "opposition" quite well. They are very persistent in their representation of faculty interests and do not back down easily. They are strategic in how they present the issues and because of their personal knowledge about faculty issues on each of their campuses; they truly understand and can represent those cases in the many disagreements that may occur. Historical knowledge is very important in this process, so one begins to understand the importance of continuity in this case.

At the end of the day, I was fortunate and humbled to be a member of this team. It was another opportunity that I will cherish as I gained more insight into the Los Rios district and the many who are involved in this well-oiled machine. ■

DONNA NACEY, IN MEMORIAM

By Dean Murakami

It is with great sadness that I announce the passing of Donna Nacey. Donna was a part-time instructor of accounting at Sacramento City College and a long-time member of the LRCFT Executive Board, representing part-time faculty. She was also the LRCFT Treasurer for over ten years and followed a stellar line of treasurers, including past-president Dennis Smith. Donna and Dennis both taught accounting at Sacramento City College and were accountants by profession.

The professional oversight of the LRCFT's funds is the reason why we have received such high praise from our independent auditors for decades. One auditor told me after his evaluation that LRCFT's management of funds is the best he has seen in the Sacramento region. Donna was very stringent in her method of accounting, and with our previous treasurers is the reason why there is a healthy reserve and complete ownership of the LRCFT Union Hall.

Donna has an interesting family history. She was part Native American and came from an early pioneering family in the Montana territory. Sitting with her and hearing the family stories was always fascinating and fun.

I miss Donna very much, her friendship, loyalty to LRCFT, and the unseen help she has been for so many causes. There is a hole in my heart and an unfilled empty space at LRCFT. ■

Report to Members [from page 5]

regular negotiation cycle and were carried over into last fall. The negotiations team needed extra time to reach these agreements.

Athletic Team Head and Assistant Coaches: The head coach stipend was increased by the equivalent of five additional work days beyond the regular academic year and two-and-a-half days for assistant coaches. The intent of this agreement was to cover the increased workload for activities such as regular season playoff/competition that may extend beyond the regular semester.

Department Chairs: Level II department chairs will be given the option of the annual stipend or re-assigned time of .10 FTE each semester plus a \$500 stipend. Level III department chairs that have departments of at least 20 FTEF will receive .30 FTE re-assigned time. Level III department chairs that have departments of at least 45 FTEF will receive .40 FTE re-assigned time.

Oversize Classes: The only change here from what is in the new contract is the start date for implementing the changes. The effective date in the contract has been changed from the "Summer/Fall 2018 semester" to the beginning of this semester.

Salary schedule Advancement: As anyone who has ever tried to apply for salary schedule advancement credit knows, the process seems arbitrary and unreasonable. The District and Union agreed that no pre-approval was necessary for upper division/graduate, Continuing Education Units, or Professional Development courses taken from accredited colleges/universities. Additionally, any transcripts received which don't indicate semester or quarter units will be translated into semester units by dividing the hours involved by 30. The District will maintain a list on the HR Website which addresses known college/university PD and CEU courses and whether those provide transcripts in semester/quarter units or, if not, how those hours will be treated (dividing hours involved by 30 to get semester units). Finally, upper division/graduate CEU or PD courses that don't indicate semester or quarter units AND any other CEU/PD programs will be given 10 hours for every 1 CEU or PD.

A real source of satisfaction came from the participation of rank-and-file Union members in these negotiations, both the regular and carry over negotiations. We want to extend a special shout out to Connie Zuercher, David McCusker, and Eric Black.

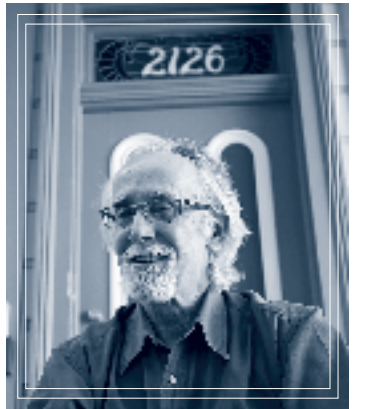
PROTECTING YOUR RIGHTS

As anyone who has ever had to deal with a student complaint can attest, receiving information on the specifics of the complaint from the LRCCD is virtually impossible. The District holds to the position that providing the specifics of a student complaint will violate the student's FERPA rights and will give the faculty member an opportunity to prepare responses to questions posed in any investigatory meeting. In other words, the District believes that if you're the target of a student and/or employee complaint, giving you any specific information will allow you to fabricate a response. They believe that your unprepared response at a hearing will be more "honest" than if you were given the opportunity to think about the allegation, recall the specific context of that allegation, and respond accordingly.

As a result of the District's continued refusal to provide copies of complaints and other documentation relating to the complaint, two years ago the Union filed an unfair practice charge against the District with the Public Employment Relations Board (PERB). The Union was able to present a prima facie case of a violation of the Educational Employment Relations Act (EERA), more commonly known as the "Rodda Act," which resulted in PERB filing a formal complaint against the District.

To represent it, the District hired the notorious union-busting law firm of Littler Mendelson. There is not enough space to detail the long history of anti-union activities carried out by this firm over the past few decades in upholding the interests of employers nationwide. What is particularly galling is that the \$400 per hour rate charged by this firm is being paid by you and me. That's right, the District gets to claim this as a mandatory expense and be reimbursed by the State. Those are your tax dollars at work — unfortunately, in the service of the employer.

Despite significant recent PERB decisions, at least one of which was virtually on point with the complaint filed by PERB in the LRCFT v LRCCD matter, upholding the obligation of public school employers to provide the very information the LRCFT requested, the District has refused to compromise its position. Briefs in the case have been submitted, with a decision expected before the semester ends. You can be certain that we'll spread the news of the upcoming PERB decision. ■



GEORGE ESQUIBEL : PROFESSOR & ARTIST, 1939–2018

By Kloss



George Esquibel recognized the need to be active in the social & cultural movements of his time. He served as a soldier in Viet Nam. George returned home to complete his Masters in Art History at CSUS. He combined art and politics by helping found the Royal Chicano Airforce art collective that produced murals, posters & banners that excoriated injustice. He marched with Caesar Chavez, and picketed lettuce and grape growers who exploited farm workers. As instructor of Art & Ceramics (as well as Chair of the Art

Dept.) at SCC, George served as teacher, advisor & mentor to thousands of college students. He was a member of the Sacra-

mento Metropolitan Arts Commission. George was a committed trade unionist as an officer for the Los Rios College Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO. As a very fine artist himself, Esquibel's own creations in clay are treasured all around northern California. He witnessed and was part of an exciting art scene quickly emerging here in the valley.

Retiring in 2007 from teaching after 34 years, George then established the LRCFT Union Hall Gallery and curated a decade of exciting art shows. Uniquely, this is the only union hall in California that is also an art gallery! These monthly events currently serve as a bond between the arts, teachers and the Sacramento community. George Equibel always maintained that art was about thinking and intellect. A high calling of higher education. Art mobilizes the mind and thus is work to be honored. It is why art belongs in this house of labor. ■

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