

Justice for Janitors History Project Timeline

In April 1990 members of the Los Angeles janitors union (SEIU Local 399) launched a strike that would help to change the U.S. labor movement. The “Justice for Janitors” campaign pit low wage, mostly immigrant men and women against some of the wealthiest and most politically connected corporations in L.A. Using civil disobedience, dramatic public actions, sophisticated corporate research, and community solidarity the Justice for Janitors campaign combined top-down and grassroots approaches to social change. After the 1990 victory, the union continued organizing systematically for a decade. A successful strike in the spring of 2000 won a countywide contract and signaled the rising political power of Latinos in southern California.

Justice for Janitors in Los Angeles & SEIU	Local, National & International Political Context
<p>1987 SEIU Local 399 attempts to unionize the janitors at the Gas Company, one of the biggest buildings in downtown LA. Although the drive fails the union experimented with mobilizing immigrant and undocumented janitorial workers.</p> <p>1988 “Justice for Janitors” begins. Having made building services a priority of his leadership efforts, John Sweeny, president of the SEIU, launches a national campaign to unionize the janitorial workers into the SEIU. The first major effort launched in Denver in 1986, and in 1988 “Justice for Janitors” organizers arrive in Los Angeles.</p> <p>1989 Downtown campaign targeting ABM (American Building Maintenance) & Bradford Building Maintenance (a subsidiary of ABM). In April 1989 Local 399 signs Master agreement for all of downtown, the campaign’s first victory.</p> <p>1989 Following the downtown victory, Local 399 begins Century City campaign targeting ISS, a Danish-owned international corporation.</p>	<p>1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act: made it illegal to knowingly hire or recruit unauthorized immigrants, amnesty for undocumented workers who came to U.S. before 1982 and some seasonal agricultural workers</p> <p>1988 Republican George Bush elected President of the U.S.</p> <p>1989-91 Collapse of Eastern European Communist governments and USSR.</p>

<p>1990 Victory in the Century City campaign follows police violence against janitors blocking streets. ISS agrees to negotiate with Local 399.</p>	
<p>1990 President of Local 399, George Hardy dies. Hardy served as president of the SEIU from 1971-1980.</p>	
	<p>1992 Peace Accords end El Salvador Civil War</p>
<p>1992 Following LA Civil Unrest, Local 1877 criticizes head of "Rebuild LA" initiative for promoting low wage jobs.</p>	<p>1992 Los Angeles Civil Unrest (April).</p>
	<p>1992 Democrat Bill Clinton defeats George Bush to become President of U.S.</p>
<p>1992-94 Campaigns to organize janitors at Toyota, LACMA, Hughs Aircraft and other employers.</p>	<p>1993 Richard J. Riordan (Republican) becomes mayor of Los Angeles</p>
<p>1995 John Sweeney (from SEIU) elected president of AFL-CIO in contested election</p>	<p>1994 Proposition 187 passes: prohibits illegal immigrants from accessing health care, education and other social services in the state of California. Calif. judge issues permanent injunction barring its implementation, Supreme Court later strikes down as unconstitutional</p>
<p>1995 University of Southern California janitors and replaces them with non-union Service Master employees.</p>	
<p>1996 Miguel Contreras (former United Farm Workers organizer and Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union Local 11 organizer) elected president of Los Angeles Federation of Labor. He makes organizing and supporting immigrant workers' rights a priority</p>	<p>1996 Guatemala: Peace treaty between rebel groups and government signed ending long civil war</p>
<p>1995-96 Local 399 internal strife and re-organization.</p>	

<p>1996-97 Mike Garcia from Local 1877 (Bay Area janitorial union) sent in by SEIU national office to serve as trustee of Local 399. Local leaders vote to split building service and health care workers into separate locals. Justice for Janitors becomes part of SEIU Local 1877 and health care workers retain Local 399.</p>	<p>1997 Los Angeles enacts a Living Wage Ordinance.</p>
<p>1997 Andy Stern becomes president of SEIU nationally</p>	
<p>1997 Victory at USC</p>	
<p>1998 Respect @ LAX campaign targets service workers at Los Angeles airport</p>	<p>1998 Democrat Gray Davis elected governor of California defeating the sitting governor, Republican Pete Wilson who had campaigned against immigrant rights</p>
<p>1999 Maintenance Cooperation Trust Fund (MCTF) formed, funded by contributions by employers.</p>	<p>1999 Living Wage Ordinance extended to include workers at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX)</p>
<p>2000 Well-organized strike yields a countywide contract with building owners and contractors.</p>	<p>2000 Republican George W. Bush elected President of U.S. Re-elected in 2004.</p>
<p>2000 Local 1877 launches campaign to organize security guards, Security Officers United, Los Angeles (SOULA)</p>	
<p>2001 Local 1877 organizes janitors in Orange County</p>	<p>2001 Democrat James K. Hahn elected mayor</p>
	<p>2001 Attacks on New York and Washington, D.C. U.S. invades Afghanistan</p>
	<p>2003 U.S. invades Iraq</p>
<p>2005 SEIU and other unions leave AFL-CIO to form "Change to Win" union federation</p>	<p>2005 Antonio Villaraigosa (Democrat) elected Mayor of Los Angeles</p>

<p>2010 Local 1877 becomes United Service Workers West (USWW).</p>	<p>2007-09 Global financial crisis leads to sharp economic decline, high unemployment</p> <p>2008 Democrat Barack Obama elected President of the U.S.</p>
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