Organizing the Unorganizable

The Justice for Janitors History Project

Caroline Luce, PhD Candidate, UCLA, Feb. 6th, 2012

Lecture Outline

I. The Janitorial Industry in Los Angeles: Then and Now

II. American Immigration post-1965

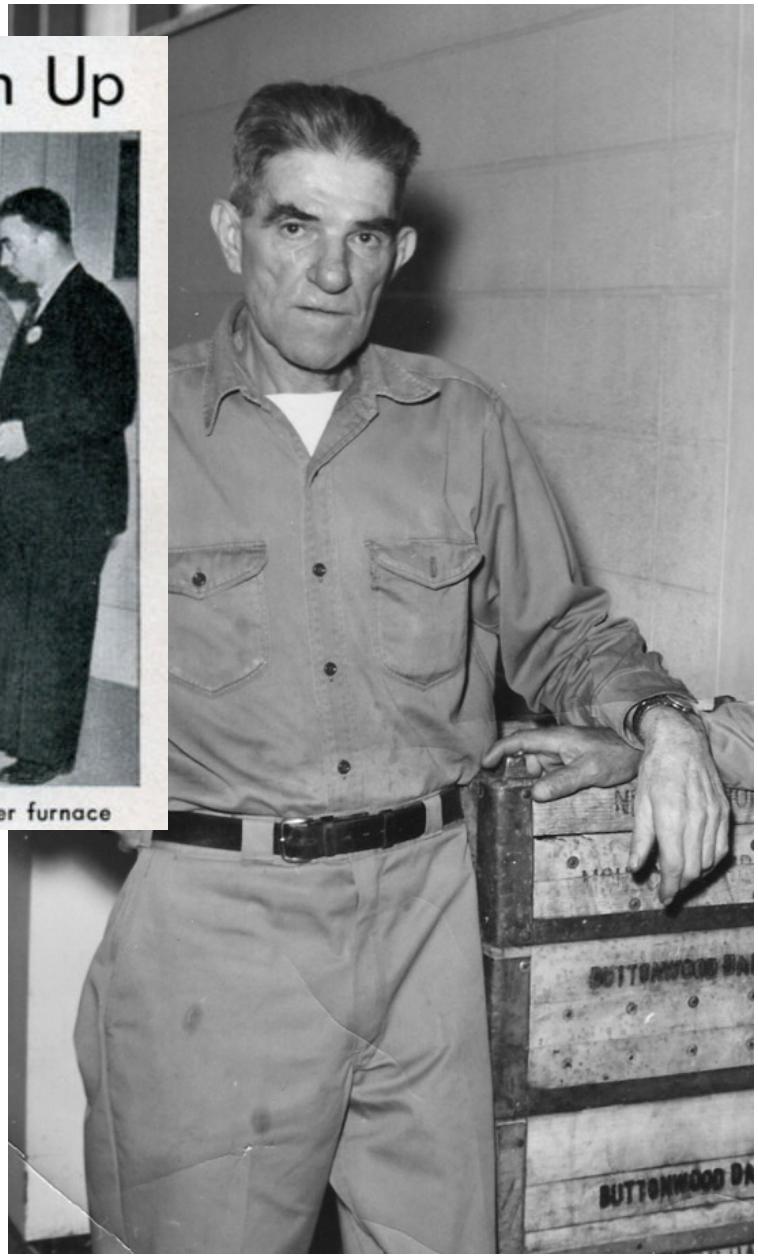
III. Organizing the Unorganizable

IV. The Justice for Janitors History Project

College Course Helps Janitors Brush Up

A COLLEGE course for school janitors is a novel addition to the curriculum of Teacher's College, Columbia University, in New York City. Given under the supervision of Dr. Henry H. Linn, once a janitor himself and now superintendent of grounds and buildings at the school, the intensive course runs for five days and includes instruction in the best methods of sweeping floors, polishing furniture, cleaning woodwork, and operating coal and oil-burning furnaces. Round-table discussions and student-teacher consultations are held.

Student janitors get some pointers on operating an oil-burner furnace



Popular Science October, 1940

Janitorial Work: Then and Now

The Janitorial Industry in Los Angeles: Then and Now

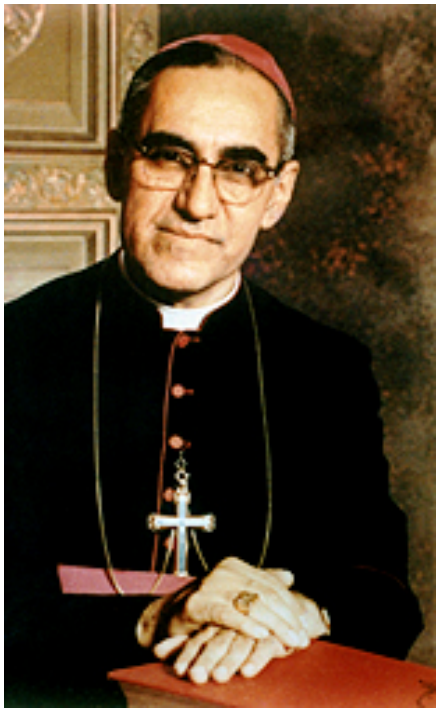
Downtown Los Angeles c. 1955 – (LAPL)

Downtown c. 2006

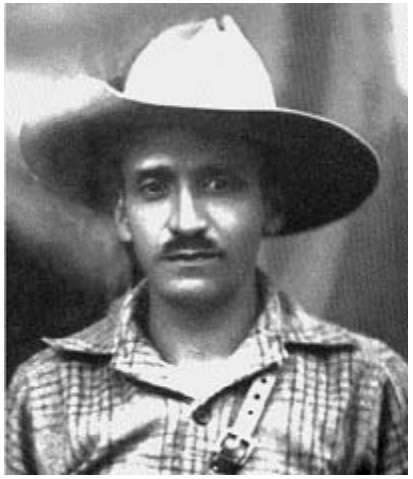
Immigration Changes 1965 - 1995

- Immigration Reform Act (Hart-Celler Act) 1965
  - -Ends Asian Exclusion
  - -Ends quotas based on National Origins (from 1924)
  - - Instead quotas based on hemispheres – 170,000 from eastern hemisphere, 120,000 from western hemisphere = 1st restrictions on immigration from Central/South America
  - - Exemptions for certain "preferred" categories: families of U.S. citizens (children, spouses, brothers/sisters, parents), professionals and skilled workers, investors ($1million+)
- Immigration Reform and Control Act 1986
  - -Amnesty for undocumented immigrants here since 1983
  - - sanctions for employers who knowingly hire undocumented
  - - increased powers for enforcing to the Border Patrol (ICE)
- Proposition 187, California 1994
  - - Local law enforcement required to report undocumented detainees to CA Attorney General and ICE
  - -Denies undocumented ("illegals") access to education, health care, housing and other social services

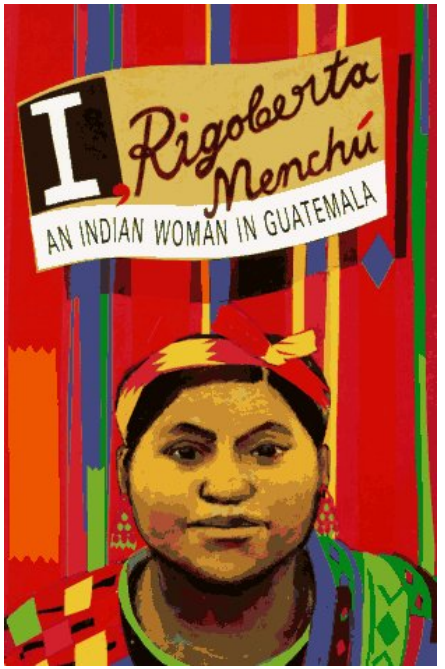
Border Industrialization Program – Maquilladoras



Archbishop
Oscar Romero



Farabundo Martí



Efrain Rios
Montt , 1982

Subcontracting in the Janitorial Industry

c. 1955

Building Owner
Usually Individual or Institution

Building Management Department (Janitors, Security Guards, Maintenance)

c. 1980

Building Owners
Realty Investment Companies and Financial Institutions

Reduce Operating Costs, Increasing Rental Income

Property Management Company

Reduce Costs of Cleaning Services

Cleaning Contractors
ISS, ABM, Bradford, Servicemaster

Lower Wages and More Work

Janitors and Other Cleaning Workers

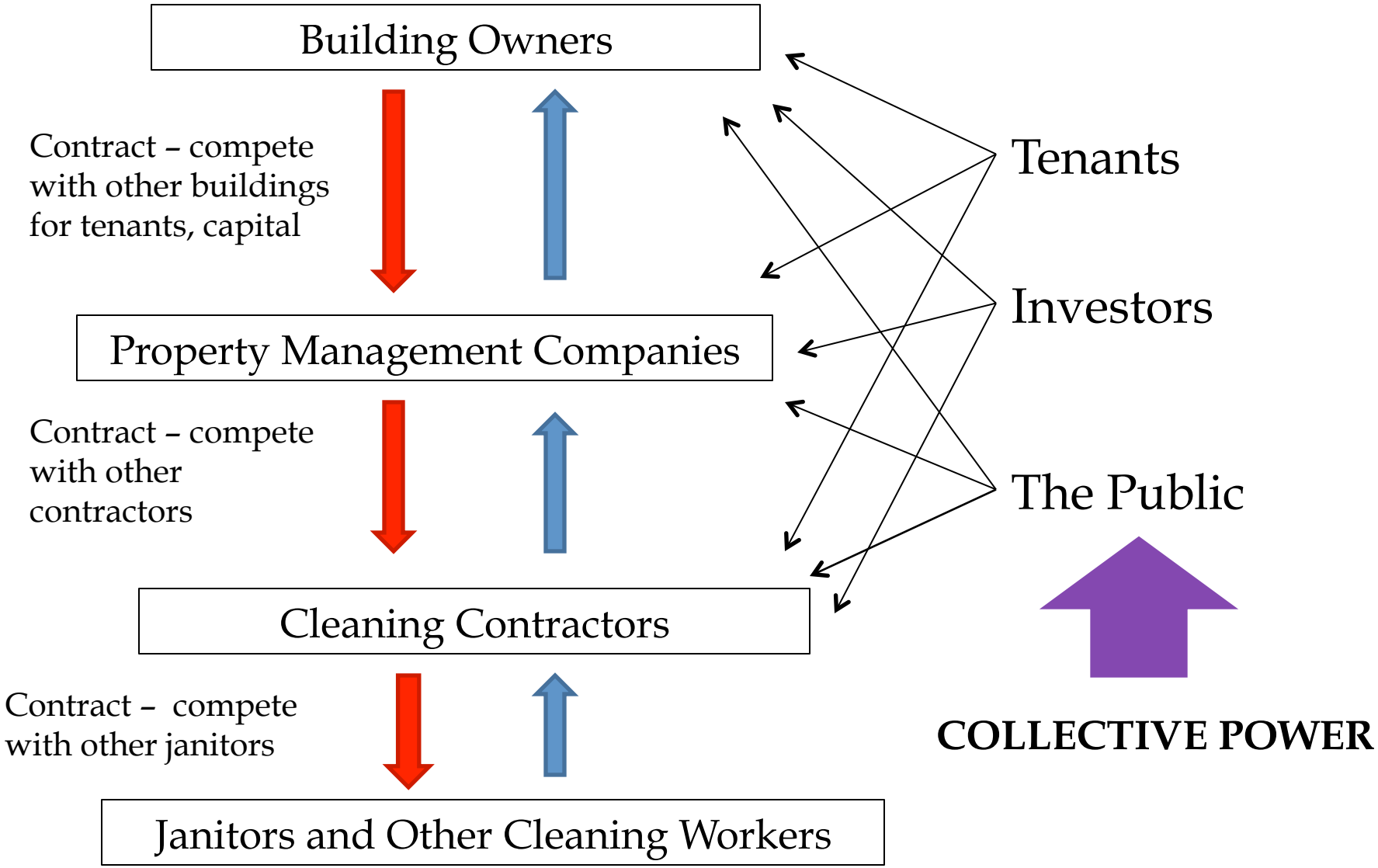
Organizing the Unorganizable

I. Research and Strategic Planning
II. Guerilla Legal Tactics
III. Union Motherhood
IV. Coalition Building

Research and Strategic Analysis

- Administrative structure of the NLRB isn't functioning – not providing sufficient leverage to reign in employer behavior
- Instead of winning elections – build power
- Where are the leverage points?
- Targeting – who is the owner? What else do they own? Who is backing them financially? Who is the Property manager? What other buildings do they manage? Who are the tenants? What business do they do? How many tenants?

Targeting in the Janitorial Industry



Amplify your voices: Turkey of the Year

Justice for Janitors Organizing Committee
Service Employees International Union, AFL-CIO, CLC
Local 399 • 1247 West 7th St. • Los Angeles, California 90017 • 213-680-9567

Press Advisory

For Immediate Release
November 20, 1989

For Information Contact:
Bill Ragen 680-9567

Janitors To Present 3rd Annual Turkey of the Year Award to Security Pacific National Bank

Los Angeles, CA - After months of deliberation, The Justice for Janitors Organizing Committee of the Service Employees International Union has decided to present David K. Stuyvenbuerg of Security Pacific National Bank with the prestigious Third Annual Turkey of the Year Award. **The ceremony will take place at 12:30 p.m. in front of the Wilshire-**
event will
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efforts to

Mr. Stuyv
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We're sorry we weren't able to clean your offices last night....

Last night, we, the janitors of AT&T Center, Pacific Mutual Building, Wilshire Grand Building, 615 South Flower Building, Wilshire Bixel Building and Security Pacific Beaudry Center walked off our jobs to protest illegal anti-union actions by Bradford Building Services, our employer. These include harassment and threats of discharge against workers who have engaged in activity legally protected by the National Labor Relations Act.

We are paid only the minimum wage, and earn no benefits. The majority of downtown janitors work under a union contract that provides decent wages and health insurance. Our efforts to secure these same standards have been met with threats and even firings.

Tonight we will return to work. It is not our intent to inconvenience you, the tenants, but to call attention to Bradford's unethical attacks on our rights.

This does not mean we have quit our struggle. We will continue until our rights our respected.

Our dispute is with our employer and not with the manager of the building. Nonetheless, we believe that the building management can play a positive role in finding a solution to this issue. If you share that belief, call your building manager:

AT&T Center	Mund Shaikley	(213) 489-4270
Pacific Mutual (523 W. 6th)	Tina Bachakes	(213) 622-2033
Wilshire Grand (600 Wilshire)	Angie Stevens	(213) 689-1133
615 S. Flower Building	Patrick Lacey	(213) 628-2440
Wilshire Bixel (1055 Wilshire)	Thomas Anthony	(213) 481-2600

On Strike To Protect Our Rights!

After months of trying to resolve our dispute through letters, petitions, attempts to meet with representatives of ISS,the building manager and its owner, we are left with no alternatives but to strike for our rights. ISS has responded to our organizing with illegal firings and threats in order to make us stop our activities. The National Labor Relations Board has alleged more than 40 violations of worker's rights by ISS here at 2029 Century Park East. We are on strike to stop the illegal treatment and to force ISS to obey the law.

The parking attendants don't face these problems, nor do the engineers or the elevator repair people at the building. All of them are protected by a union contract while we, the janitors, suffer nightly harrassment in addition to poverty wages and no benefits. This simply is not fair.

Please call Ron Goins of ISS at 730-5500 and 2029's Building Manager Sam Kaufman at (213) 552-8100. Tell them that we all deserve to share in Century City's prosperity.

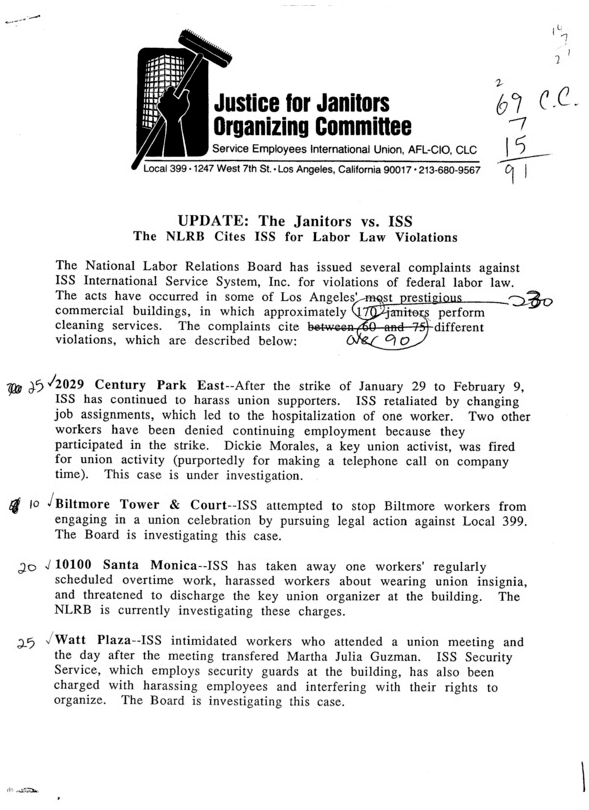
Justice for Janitors
Hospital And Service Employees Union Local 399
1247 W. 7th Street, Los Angeles, CA 90017
(213) 680-9567

Make it Loud:
Street Theater

Century City
June 15th, 1990
vs. ISS

“Guerilla Legal Tactics”

-Unfair labor practices are unfair labor practices regardless of whether you have NLRB certification, regardless of immigration status
-Information as leverage, grievances as an organizing tool



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UPDATE: The Janitors vs. ISS
The NLRB Cites ISS for Labor Law Violations

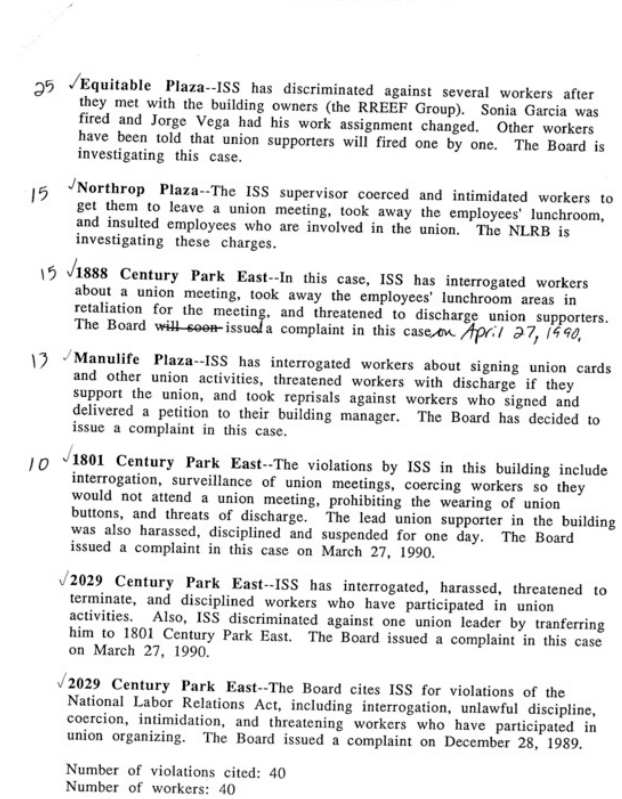
The National Labor Relations Board has issued several complaints against ISS International Service System, Inc. for violations of federal labor law. The acts have occurred in some of Los Angeles' most prestigious commercial buildings, in which approximately 170 janitors perform cleaning services. The complaints cite between 60 and 75 different violations, which are described below:

2029 Century Park East--After the strike of January 29 to February 9, ISS has continued to harass union supporters. ISS retaliated by changing job assignments, which led to the hospitalization of one worker. Two other workers have been denied continuing employment because they participated in the strike. Dickie Morales, a key union activist, was fired for union activity (purportedly for making a telephone call on company time). This case is under investigation.

Biltmore Tower & Court--ISS attempted to stop Biltmore workers from engaging in a union celebration by pursuing legal action against Local 399. The Board is investigating this case.

10100 Santa Monica--ISS has taken away one workers' regularly scheduled overtime work, harassed workers about wearing union insignia, and threatened to discharge the key union organizer at the building. The NLRB is currently investigating these charges.

Watt Plaza--ISS intimidated workers who attended a union meeting and the day after the meeting transfered Martha Julia Guzman. ISS Security Service, which employs security guards at the building, has also been charged with harassing employees and interfering with their rights to organize. The Board is investigating this case.



Equitable Plaza--ISS has discriminated against several workers after they met with the building owners (the RREEF Group). Sonia Garcia was fired and Jorge Vega had his work assignment changed. Other workers have been told that union supporters will fired one by one. The Board is investigating this case.

Northrop Plaza--The ISS supervisor coerced and intimidated workers to get them to leave a union meeting, took away the employees' lunchroom, and insulted employees who are involved in the union. The NLRB is investigating these charges.

1888 Century Park East--In this case, ISS has interrogated workers about a union meeting, took away the employees' lunchroom areas in retaliation for the meeting, and threatened to discharge union supporters. The Board will soon issued a complaint in this case on April 27, 1990.

Manulife Plaza--ISS has interrogated workers about signing union cards and other union activities, threatened workers with discharge if they support the union, and took reprisals against workers who signed and delivered a petition to their building manager. The Board has decided to issue a complaint in this case.

1801 Century Park East--The violations by ISS in this building include interrogation, surveillance of union meetings, coercing workers so they would not attend a union meeting, prohibiting the wearing of union buttons, and threats of discharge. The lead union supporter in the building was also harassed, disciplined and suspended for one day. The Board issued a complaint in this case on March 27, 1990.

2029 Century Park East--ISS has interrogated, harassed, threatened to terminate, and disciplined workers who have participated in union activities. Also, ISS discriminated against one union leader by tranferring him to 1801 Century Park East. The Board issued a complaint in this case on March 27, 1990.

2029 Century Park East--The Board cites ISS for violations of the National Labor Relations Act, including interrogation, unlawful discipline, coercion, intimidation, and threatening workers who have participated in union organizing. The Board issued a complaint on December 28, 1989.

Number of violations cited: 40
Number of workers: 40

The Biltmore Tower, Fine Arts Building and Central Plaza--The Goverment found evidence that ISS unlawfully terminated two employees and disciplined a third for their union activities. ISS also threatened to take reprisals against and interrogated workers, and has utilized these tactics to discourage employees from engaging in concerted activities. ~~A hearing is set for February 28.~~ Dec. 1st, 1989

Number of violations cited: 16
Number of workers: 30

Transamerica--ISS threatened to terminate employees because of their support for the union, as well as engaging in surveillance of workers. ~~The case goes to hearing on February 28.~~ 1988

Number of violations cited: 2
Number of workers: 60

California Mart--ISS and the owner of California Mart together (as joint employers) unlawfully terminated one worker because she joined in organizing activities at the building. They also interrogated employees about their union activities, intimidated and harassed employees by making disparaging comments about the organizing efforts, threatened employees with reprisals, and in general interfered with and coerced employees in the exercise of their rights to organize a union. ~~The Board has issued a complaint, but the trial date has not yet been set.~~ 3-31-89

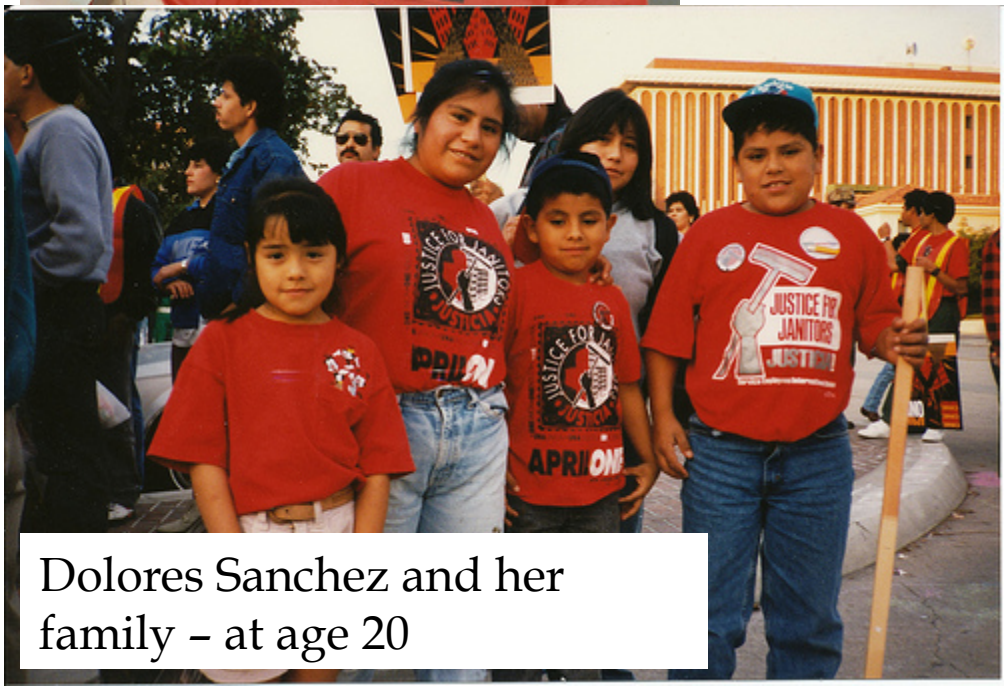
Number of violations cited: 9
Number of workers: 40

Union Motherhood

Brisas Zapatas

Ana Castro, Rosa Ayala

Rosio Saenz



Dolores Sanchez and her family – at age 20

Coalition-Building

Cardinal Roger Mahoney, Miguel Contreras of County Fed. Of Labor, Mike Garcia of J4J, California State Assemblyman Antonio Villaraigosa

The Justice for Janitors History Project
Learning From The Past To Change the Future

Collaboration with SEIU United Service Workers West &
UCLA Institute for Research on Labor and Employment

Deliverables:
1- Archive/Online Exhibit
2- Educational Materials for Union –
Information as an organizing tool
3- Focus groups/interviews/oral histories
with veteran activists and organizers

Organizing the Unorganizable

J4J History Day

ALLIED MAINTENANCE SERVICE CORPORATION
1453 MISSION ST SAN FRANCISCO CA 94103

4867800

EARNINGS	HOURS	AMOUNT	DEDUCTIONS			
REGULAR	7500	30300	FICA TAX	1773	FED. TAX	2991
			STATE TX	511	SDI	303
			UNION 1	3200		
TOTAL EARNINGS		30300	TOTAL DEDUCTIONS			8778

YEAR TO DATE	
GROSS PAY	257576
F.I.C.A.	15071
FED. TAX	24073
STATE TAX	4033
SDI	2575

T*	FOR PERIOD ENDING
B	05-29-76

NET PAY 215.22

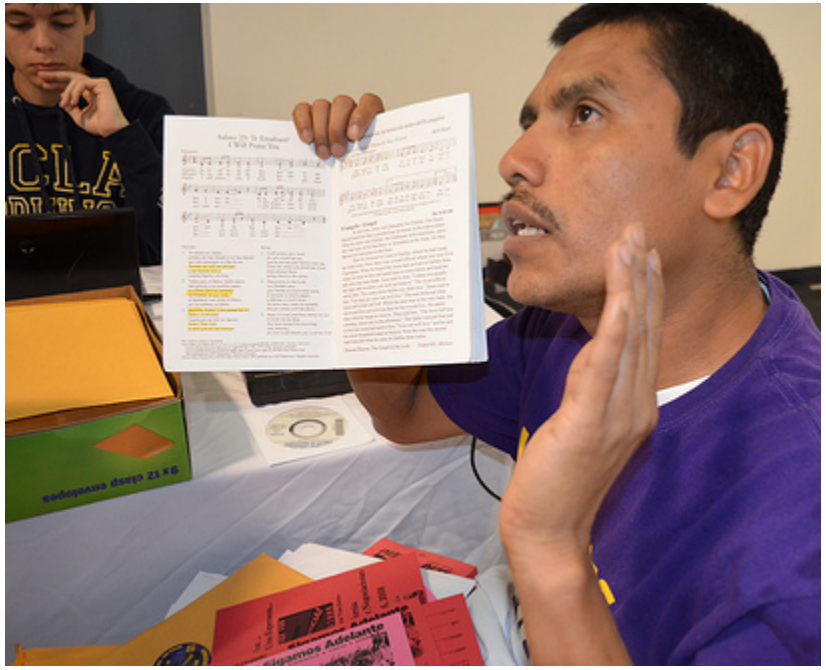
MANUELA RAMOS X97 8 804 84026

STATEMENT OF EARNINGS AND DEDUCTIONS

NON-NEGOTIABLE

*T-TYPE
W – WEEKLY
B – BI-WEEKLY
S – SEMI-MONTHLY
M – MONTHLY
O – OTHER

Ana Castro, *que ha trabajado en limpieza durante cinco años, participó en el mitin de ayer en Century City.*

Las demandas de los conserjes sin cumplir

JUSTICE FOR