



# WORK & CULTURE

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## Community Organizing and Economic Development in the University-Hospital City

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*Breaking Down the Ivory Tower: The  
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This essay explores the historical development and geographical context of ongoing community organizing movements fighting for economic justice in New Haven, Connecticut. As a deindustrialized city facing gentrification and effective single-employer status due to the overarching presence of Yale University, New Haven is a characteristic example of what Michael Denning has described as a “university-hospital city.” In the name of the very working-class residents who are displaced by gentrification, city administrations typically accept development at any cost, offering substantial sums as incentives to prospective employers. Facilitated by neoliberal policies that characteristically combine proclamations of economic self-sufficiency with corporate welfare, such development takes place at the expense of governmental resources or programs aiding the working poor and unemployed. Sizable capital investments are approved without any leveraging of demands on potential employers to provide better wages and benefits for workers or provide services to communities.

In contrast to these policies, current community organizing efforts in New Haven have focused on securing “community benefits agreements,” in which developers would agree to the demands of community organizations in exchange for gaining development rights. The particular New Haven-based social movement under consideration here must be understood as inseparable from “social movement unionism,” a revitalization of labor and community activism that has emerged in response to the decline of the American labor unions.<sup>1</sup> Through this movement, ordinary people, predominantly working-class racial/ethnic minorities, have been able to substantially improve their working and living conditions. In this essay, I consider New Haven’s status as a university-hospital city and the intertwining of labor and community organizing in a broader social movement pressing for economic justice in the city. By way of conclusion, I compare the goals and achievements of this movement in New Haven, as well as their counterparts elsewhere in the United States, to similar results of recent experiments in direct-democratic governance in Porto Alegre, Brazil.

## New Haven and the University-Hospital City

The *university-hospital city* is a particular form of the postindustrial city under present-day global capitalism.<sup>2</sup> It is typically a mid-sized city whose dominant employers are universities and university-affiliated research and teaching hospitals. As a measure of the internal dynamics of a city, however, this classification might be differentiated from other categorizations of cities (“global

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<sup>1</sup> See Rick Fantasia and Kim Voss, *Hard Work: Remaking the American Labor Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> I borrow this idea from Michael Denning, which he discussed in an untitled talk addressing striking graduate teachers on Beinecke Plaza, Yale University, in March 2003. The same idea appears in his “Lineaments and Contradictions of the Neoliberal University System” in this series of essays.

cities," "edge cities," "second tier cities") that exist on a continuum based on comparative indices of relative size, population, wealth (whether of industrial, merchant, or finance capital), internationalism and migration flows, (geo)political significance, cultural offerings, and proximity to other cities of various types.<sup>3</sup> University-hospital cities are by no means marginal to the postindustrial landscape. Within the United States, it is estimated that "a university or university-affiliated hospital is currently the biggest employer in approximately one third of all urban areas."<sup>4</sup> Numerous examples of these cities can be cited: New Haven (Yale University), Baltimore (Johns Hopkins University), Provo (Brigham Young University), Birmingham (University of Alabama), New Brunswick (Rutgers University), Cambridge (Harvard and M.I.T.), and many others. And when one considers major sections of cities in addition to legally defined municipalities, the number expands tremendously: Morningside Heights (Columbia University) and Greenwich Village (New York University) in Manhattan, West Philadelphia (University of Pennsylvania), South Central Los Angeles (University of Southern California), North Seattle/University District (University of Washington), Hyde Park in Chicago (University of Chicago), and so on.<sup>5</sup>

In many cases, universities were not originally the primary employers within their locales. With the decline of manufacturing-industrial employment in cities over four decades, universities gradually became dominant employers and property holders/tenants, assuming greater roles in city governance and administration.<sup>6</sup> Industrial and residential migration from these cities typically left them with isolated, indigent populations, with which university/hospital agendas clash (especially over housing and policing issues) and upon which they are dependent (for cheap labor and research subjects). Given the extensive infrastructure of universities—their research buildings, lecture halls, offices, dormitories, performance spaces, sports and exercise facilities, churches, museums, physical plants, parking garages and lots—their considerable capital investments include an extensive and immobile built environment.<sup>7</sup> Since universities cannot relocate to avoid labor or community conflict, these institutions endeavor to aggressively remake the geographies of their host cities, which as a result are often saddled with stalled forms of gentrification and unprofitable development.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> On "global cities" see Saskia Sassen, *The Global City* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); on "second tier cities" see Ann R. Markusen, et al, eds., *Second Tier Cities: Rapid Growth beyond the Metropolis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> David J. Maurrasse, *Beyond the Campus: How Colleges and Universities Form Partnerships with Their Communities* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 4, 20.

<sup>5</sup> Some of these are cited in Maurrasse, 21, and in Gordon Lafer, "Land and Labor in the Post-Industrial University Town: Remaking Social Geography," *Political Geography* 22 (2003), 91.

<sup>6</sup> Lafer, 90-93.

<sup>7</sup> See Lafer, 91-92. Maurrasse refers to the "sticky capital" of universities (4).

<sup>8</sup> Lafer, 100-108. Much of the "stalled gentrification" in New Haven also owes to particularly unimaginative redevelopment efforts aimed at middle- and higher-income shoppers and tenants—examples might include the overpriced artists' housing on Audubon St., most of which has remained vacant, or the much-vaunted 9<sup>th</sup> Square renovations including high-priced housing and several expensive restaurants. The most recent case of the Chapel Square Mall redevelopment is a case in point; see Mark Oppenheimer, "New Haven, 06510," *New Haven Advocate*, 13-19 January 2005, 16-17. Despite whatever profit losses are being absorbed by the

Of the major American university-hospital cities, New Haven is one of the few that have been studied critically in any significant measure.<sup>9</sup> Gordon Lafer has described the dynamics of university-led redevelopment within the city, discussing the various and ongoing efforts to encourage biotech firms to move to New Haven, the corporate redevelopment of the Broadway shopping district and the Dwight Street area, the university's control of land and labor markets, and Yale's efforts to wall itself off from indigent populations.<sup>10</sup> Lafer's discussion of economic processes in New Haven is part of a larger argument about labor relations in the city. In particular, he argues that these processes were determined and manipulated by Yale University in an attempt to defeat its unionized workforce during the contentious strike of 1996. In the intervening years, however, a new wave of community organizing arose in the city, aiding in the highly successful strike and contract negotiations of 2003 for the Yale unions, and then leading to a groundbreaking development agreement with Yale-New Haven Hospital.<sup>11</sup> As examples of "social movement unionism," these community-organizing efforts continue to provide research and mobilization in support of ongoing unionization drives (as in SEIU-District 1199's efforts to organize employees at Yale-New Haven Hospital) and are attempting to spearhead a broader movement for economic justice in the city. Fully aware of Yale's dominance as the major employer in the city, this movement seeks to unite the interests of New Haven community residents and Yale employees.

### **Social Movement Unionism in New Haven**

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university in its development plans, its goal of creating a pseudo-suburban corporate-retail shopping environment close to campus has been partially successful, with the appearance of chains like Urban Outfitters and Barnes and Noble occupying prominent places in the Broadway shopping area. This pattern thus recreates what Hal Foster describes as the suburban "mall" of "urban space." See his *Design and Crime (and Other Diatribes)* (London: Verso, 2002), 55. It is also worth mentioning that the cumulative effect of gentrification can—despite unprofitable boutique business and corporate chains that may end up being partially subsidized in some way by larger institutions like Yale University or the city administration—increase property rates. Thus, the renovated, mostly vacant high-end apartment complexes make enticing investments for speculators looking to profit from the housing market bubble that continues to prop up the US economy. See Robert Brenner, "New Boom or New Bubble?: The Trajectory of the US Economy," *New Left Review* 25 (January-February 2004), 57-100.

<sup>9</sup> In addition to Lafer, see the many publications by the Connecticut Center for a New Economy (see below). For earlier and/or more conservative treatments of New Haven and Yale, see Robert Dahl, *Who Governs: Democracy and Power in an American City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961); *Yale University: A Framework for Campus Planning* ([New Haven]: Cooper, Robertson & Partners, 2000); and Douglas Rae, *City: Urbanism and its End* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004). Lafer discusses New Haven's prominence as a subject of study (92-93). For a study of the University of Pennsylvania and West Philadelphia, see Maurrasse, 29-64.

<sup>10</sup> Lafer, 103-5, 107-8; 105-7; 93-100; and 113.

<sup>11</sup> For more information on the 2003 strike and a good treatment of many aspects of the New Haven labor movement (including many of the topics discussed here), see Chris Rhomberg and Louise Simmons, "Beyond Strike Support: Labor-Community Alliances and Democratic Power in New Haven," *Labor Studies Journal* 30/3 (2005), 21-47.

A nascent revitalization of labor and community organizing has appeared in response to the long decline of American labor unions. After a period of great strength in the 1930s on account of organizing efforts by the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), the labor movement underwent a deep transformation during and after WWII. Faced with government crackdowns legitimated first by wartime production needs and then by Cold War anticommunism, labor unions transformed from components of an oppositional social movement into institutions incorporated into postwar capitalism and the state. Unions gained a degree of official recognition in the postwar years, resulting in a “social compact” or “social contract” allowing for workers’ increased wages and benefits in exchange for the purging of labor radicals and the greater restriction of organizing rights (embodied in the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947). A process of bureaucratization ensued, whereby labor unions would regularize the means of increasing membership and obtaining dues, workers’ grievances and concerns would be addressed through a series of highly formalized procedures, and the active, militant labor leaders of the prewar years would be replaced by invisible “organization men” or corrupt labor bosses. After the years of labor stability that coincided with the era of peak domestic production—a period often described as the “American century”—the system began to come undone. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, the process of deindustrialization was well under way, and the now well-entrenched bureaucratic unions were incapable of responding effectively. The 1980s in particular were a low point, marked by the rise of new union-busting strategies promoted by anti-labor consulting firms and symbolized by Reagan’s destruction of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO) in 1981.<sup>12</sup>

To reverse labor’s long downturn, creative organizers within established service unions—in particular the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE)—drew upon and promoted organizing strategies first used in innovative organizing campaigns during the 1980s.<sup>13</sup> With the goal of transforming US labor unions into a thriving labor movement, these organizers developed the outlines of a new *social movement unionism*.<sup>14</sup> Its characteristics include: a much greater emphasis on

<sup>12</sup> See Fantasia and Voss, 46-77.

<sup>13</sup> These include the “Justice for Janitors” campaigns in Denver and Los Angeles by SEIU and the unionization drive of clerical and technical workers at Yale University (Local 34) in 1984 by HERE. To avoid possible confusion, I should also note that in 2004, the Union of Needletrade Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE) merged with HERE to form UNITE-HERE. Hence, any recent references to the union’s activity after the merger will use the new name.

<sup>14</sup> Social movement unionism can be understood as both a revival of union activism and militancy and as a new phenomenon responding to the coordinates within which the contemporary labor movement operates. For a review of social movement unionism and community organizing see Bruce Nissen, “The Effectiveness and Limits of Labor-Community Coalitions: Evidence from South Florida,” *Labor Studies Journal* 29/1 (2004), 67-89. Janice Fine refers to the notions of “community unionism” (in which labor movements are supported by community organizing) and “labor market unionism” (in which unions target entire industries rather than particular employers). See the abstract to Janice Fine, “Moving Innovation From the Margins to the Center for a New American Labor Movement” (1997), viewed online at <http://web.mit.edu/ipc/www/pubs/abstracts/97-001ab.html> on 19 January 2005. Also see her article “Building Community Unions,” *The Nation*, 1 January 2001.

labor solidarity and collective action, often at the expense of “servicing” contracts; the use of corporate campaigns to shame employers (inspired by New Left antiwar strategies); union organizing campaigns that bypass the flawed National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) certification elections, typically through the counting of union membership cards; a repositioning of labor within, and a reassertion of labor as central to, the greater goal of social justice; creativity and experimentation in organizing campaigns; and a longer-term perspective on labor organizing.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps the central aspect of this movement is its decision to devote resources to organizing new unions in the face of declining union membership: in social movement unions, union members’ dues are increasingly being devoted to new organizing (in some unions upwards of 30%).

Another component of the new labor movement was the appearance of solidarity efforts between different unions and between unions and external groups—“communities and their organized representatives, social movements, religious organizations, and so on.”<sup>16</sup> Examples of the external solidarity groups might include the “Jobs with Justice” coalition, which includes labor unions, environmental, women’s and student groups, and community organizations, who have attained a strong presence in Atlanta, Boston, Cleveland, New York, and Seattle; Solidarity with Justice for Janitors, a community support organization for the Justice for Janitors campaigns in Los Angeles; an interfaith council of clergy in Las Vegas supporting organizing efforts of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters; and the student mobilization efforts by Harvard students on behalf of university employees.<sup>17</sup> In most of these cases, social justice organizations provide external solidarity efforts on behalf of organizing unions—in some ways a limited but nonetheless very significant goal, given the decline of American labor and the ability of labor unions to improve workers’ wages, benefits, and working conditions.

New Haven has played a special role in the history of American social movement unionism. In particular, many of the movement’s innovative organizing strategies were first developed by John Wilhelm and union organizers in the four-year campaign to unionize predominantly female technical and clerical workers at Yale—resulting in the recognition of HERE Local 34 in 1984.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the highly publicized, ongoing union-organizing drive by the Graduate Employees and Students Organization (GESO)—the first significant attempt (starting in 1990) at a private university teaching- and research-assistant union in the US—helped to inspire similar organizing drives at private and public universities across the country and has brought many young academics into contact with social movement unionism. And because SEIU is the international union affiliated with organizing workers at Yale-New Haven Hospital, the two arguably most important internationals in American social movement unionism (HERE and SEIU) are currently working together to transform New Haven into a “Union City,” sharing resources and research information in the process.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 127-130.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 111, 143, 157-158, and 171-172.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>19</sup> The reference is to the “Union Cities” program sponsored by the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), which is geared towards spurring new

In the aftermath of the 1996 strike, labor union leaders at Yale realized that they needed to hone their organizing strategies in order to survive, let alone expand upon existing gains or help new organizing campaigns succeed. At least four major goals were set in place. First, a political program was geared towards gaining greater support of elected officials; the central goals were promoting and supporting labor-friendly electoral candidates at the city and state level and putting greater pressure on already-elected politicians to support pro-labor initiatives. Second, the existing unions needed to build closer alliances with the new organizing movements on campus. Third, a sophisticated corporate campaign was necessary, targeted at the university's numerous political "weak spots." Fourth, the unions needed to build stronger ties to the greater New Haven community, for the purpose of drawing on their support in labor struggles at Yale.

On the first goal, the unions made significant headway, hiring political organizers to focus specifically on coordinating electoral campaigns and keeping in regular contact with elected officials. In addition, the Yale unions began to coordinate more labor-based political activity through the previously moribund Greater New Haven Central Labor Council, which was jumpstarted after Local 35 leader Bob Proto became the council's president.<sup>20</sup> Concerning the second goal, the two recognized unions and the two organizing drives formed a public federation (the Federation of Hospital and University Employees, FHUE) and began to systematically coordinate their organizing strategies. To further the third goal, HERE transferred a veteran political organizer, John Canham-Clyne, to New Haven to work as a full-time researcher on various corporate campaigns focusing on Yale's vulnerable points. The first significant effort was the landmark research on Yale University's numerous historical ties to slavery by graduate students Antony Dugdale, J.J. Fueser, and Celso Alves.<sup>21</sup> Dugdale was later hired as a full-time researcher himself, eventually working with Fueser, Benjamin Begleiter, and others on numerous projects, most notably the Yale Insider website that tracks many of the university's socially irresponsible financial investments.<sup>22</sup>

The fourth goal set by the Yale union leaders was to develop greater community involvement in the local labor struggles. Few preexisting community organizations had been directly involved in labor solidarity efforts in the 1996

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union organizing efforts. See *ibid.*, 109-111. The organizing drive at Yale-New Haven Hospital (YNHH) is affiliated with District 1199, a progressive New England healthcare workers' union that recently merged with SEIU. Also see Janice Fine, "Building Community Unions," on the difficulty and rarity of organizing collaborations by different union internationals (as in District 1199 and the UAW in Stamford, in this case); viewed online at <http://www.thenation.com/doc.mhtml?i=20010101&s=fine> on 19 January 2005.

<sup>20</sup> See Fantasia and Voss, 108-111, 168-169, on social movement unionism's revival of many of the six hundred central labor councils in the United States. American central labor councils, originally city- or region-based craft-unionist umbrella organizations affiliated with the AFL, have apparently gone through cycles of regeneration. Mike Davis notes that a "dramatic reinvigoration of somnolent city central labor councils" took place in 1933-34. See *Prisoners of the American Dream: Politics and Economy in the History of the U.S. Working Class* (London: Verso, 1986), 58.

<sup>21</sup> See "Yale, Slavery and Abolition: Yale University and Its Legacy," available online at [www.yaleslavery.org](http://www.yaleslavery.org).

<sup>22</sup> See [www.yaleinsider.org](http://www.yaleinsider.org).



strike. For example, a network of New Haven churches known as Elm City Congregations Organized (ECCO) had formed in 1993 and would eventually become somewhat involved in solidarity efforts with the Yale unions. But at the time it was (and remains) relatively autonomous from the labor movement and concentrated on reducing drug-related violence and, more recently, creating affordable housing in local working-class communities.<sup>23</sup> Before contacting other community organizations, the unions first developed a community-organizing program of their own explicitly targeted at generating support for the strikers from New Haven residents. Andrea van den Heever (formerly Cole), a Local 34 staff organizer from South Africa who had been involved in the anti-apartheid movement, notes that the organizing strategy was linked directly to the unions' organizing committee members. According to van den Heever,

We identified exactly where our committee members lived in each one of the New Haven neighborhoods and in the small neighboring towns, and we formed neighborhood committees right where they lived. Over a two or three week period we held 13 neighborhood meetings which were attended by a total of about 2,500 people.<sup>24</sup>

The community meetings in turn spurred the clergy members in the Greater New Haven Clergy Association to action: they soon produced a statement in support of the unions that was signed by over one hundred church leaders in the city.<sup>25</sup>

Labor leaders in the Yale unions realized that such efforts were crucial to their tentative victory in the 1996 strike. During the next few years, the unions sought to expand their nascent solidarity networks and continued to develop stronger ties to progressive clergy in the city. In the process, a coalition of labor, church, and other organizations were able to fight successfully for a Living Wage Initiative and help to secure union recognition at a large downtown hotel (the Omni Hotel).<sup>26</sup>

### **The Connecticut Center for a New Economy**

For all of the merits of the new community-organizing program launched by the Yale unions, it still remained primarily a means to maintain community support for labor. This changed significantly in 2001, when a few church and union leaders founded an organization called The Connecticut Center for a New Economy (CCNE).<sup>27</sup> CCNE essentially does two kinds of things: write and

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<sup>23</sup> From a brief description of ECCO at the Catholic Campaign for Human Development website at <http://www.usccb.org/cchd/povertyusa/successnew3.htm> viewed on 17 January 2005.

Activists and clergy members working with the Connecticut Center for a New Economy (CCNE), a research and community-activist organization with ties to the Yale unions, were crucial in facilitating ECCO's affordable housing initiatives. For more details see "Moving for Change," an historical summary of activities and accomplishments on CCNE's website, available at <http://www.ctneweconomy.org/moving4change.htm>.

<sup>24</sup> Andrea Cole, "How Yale Workers Defied Union Busting," *Dollars and Sense*, September-October 1998, viewed online at <http://www.dollarsandsense.org/archives/1998/0998cole.html> on 19 January 2005.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Lafer, 115.

<sup>27</sup> This change is highlighted in Rhomberg and Simmons, "Beyond Strike Support."



publish reports on particular aspects of the local urban economy, and create political campaigns around the issues discussed in the reports. The organization is headed by van den Heever as its new president and two progressive clergy (and ECCO) members, chair Reverend Lillian Daniel of the Church of the Redeemer and New Haven director Reverend Scott Marks of New Growth Outreach Ministries. The composition of the organization's leadership reflects the increasingly close working relationship between HERE and SEIU: in contrast to van den Heever's involvement in Local 34, Daniel and Marks have close personal ties to the hospital campaign.<sup>28</sup>

CCNE's attempts to bridge the Yale unions and the larger New Haven community exemplify social movement unionism's drive to fill the "space between unions," as described by Fantasia and Voss.<sup>29</sup> Drawing both praise and suspicion in the official press, CCNE has been described as "an advocacy group for urban working families"<sup>30</sup> and "a labor union-funded think tank."<sup>31</sup> Financially and institutionally, CCNE positions itself somewhere between a union-funded solidarity organization and an independent non-profit agency.<sup>32</sup> This combined status allows CCNE a great degree of proximity to the Yale unions while still maintaining a significant measure of independence from them. Rather than running community-organizing programs dictated from the unions, CCNE generates new, broad programs—often in tandem with union leaders, but from a position of equality. CCNE then gains union and church support for those programs by arguing for their relevance in meetings with labor and clergy leaders.<sup>33</sup>

One of CCNE's strengths is that its organizational goals-- facilitating greater economic empowerment and political involvement of working people—

<sup>28</sup> Daniel is married to Lou Weeks, the head organizer of the hospital organizing campaign, and Marks's father is a retired employee of the hospital, receiving a very low pension after over twenty years of service.

<sup>29</sup> Fantasia and Voss, 108.

<sup>30</sup> Jeffrey Krasner, "Biotech's Exiting Wounds: New Haven Losing Jobs, More as Firms Outgrow It," *Boston Globe*, 17 April 2002.

<sup>31</sup> Diane Scarponi, "Tax Man Going After Colleges in Some Towns," *Associated Press*, 21 March 2004.

<sup>32</sup> On the union funding side, the UNITE-HERE office at 425 College Street gives CCNE office space and photocopying/paper supplies, and also pays for one of their full-time organizers. SEIU pays the salary of another CCNE organizer. On the other hand, CCNE is registered as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Being tied to the grant cycle, it gains the vast majority of its funding from progressive granting sources like The New World Foundation, the Needmor Fund, The Public Welfare Foundation, and The Tides Foundation. A fruitful comparison might be made between domestic non-profit organizations and internationally-oriented and UN-mediated non-governmental organizations (NGOs). If CCNE were an NGO, it might be positioned somewhere between what Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink describe as "solidarity organizations" (advocating particular interests) and "rights organizations" (advocating human rights independent of interests). See Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*, 15. A similar kind of dichotomy is identified by Peter Willetts as that between "interest groups" (affiliated) and "pressure groups" (non-affiliated). See Willetts, "What is a Non-Governmental Organization?", *UNESCO Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems*, viewed online at <http://www.staff.city.ac.uk/p.willetts/CS-NTWKS/NGO-ART.HTM> on 19 January 2005.

<sup>33</sup> Thanks to Gwen Mills, CCNE organizer, for her comments which I have paraphrased here.

are practical and highly focused.<sup>34</sup> Although an increase in unionization is one of the most powerful ways to achieve these goals, it is not seen as an exhaustive solution and would need to be supplemented by public policy, intervention in development schemes, and more. As such, CCNE articulated from the outset a multi-pronged approach whose ultimate aim is nothing less than an *organized urban working class*, beyond the confines of particular employers in union organizing campaigns. And although CCNE began its work in New Haven, it sought to found branches in all of Connecticut's deindustrialized cities—and to date has had some success in Hartford, Stamford, and Bridgeport in addition to New Haven. But CCNE's primary work has been in New Haven, in part because the organization leaders believe that "that CCNE's ability to successfully expand its work across the state hinges on the development of a successful model in New Haven."<sup>35</sup>

Of particular interest are CCNE's campaigns focusing on employers' use of public subsidies. By demonstrating the nature and degree of public financing in a particular development project, CCNE provides a method of holding a developer publicly accountable—a strategy that has been promoted by Greg LeRoy of Good Jobs First, among others.<sup>36</sup> The first such CCNE campaign began with the July 2001 report titled "Incubating Biotech: Yale Prospers, New Haven Waits," in which the university's biotech investments were revealed to be highly profitable for the university and of negligible value to the city of New Haven and its residents. Yale University and its spin-off biotech research and development firms receive massive tax breaks and subsidies from city, state, and federal governments. But these investments produce jobs requiring college training, often at an advanced level, and thus for which working-class New Haven residents are usually unqualified. The fact that New Haven area schools are drastically under-funded means that area students' science and math skills are on average woefully deficient, making it difficult for such students to go on to study science-related subjects in college (if they are able to go to college at all). And the biotech manufacturing jobs required to produce pharmaceutical products—which could have been filled by working-class residents with little higher education—never came to New Haven. The university either licenses its biomedical patents to existing manufacturing firms outside the city, or startup biotech firms leave New Haven before entering the manufacturing stage. In

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<sup>34</sup> The explicit goals are: "[1] Actively support the transformation of thousands of low-wage jobs into family-supporting jobs by creating a moral and political climate in the state that will support the rights of low-wage workers to organize for better wages, benefits, and dignity on the job. [2] Actively intervene in urban redevelopment schemes (particularly those that involve public subsidies) to ensure that the economically disadvantaged members of each community benefit from the creation of good jobs and affordable housing. [3] Conduct broad-based public education in neighborhoods throughout each of the urban centers on the economy, jobs, and wages, as well as policy solutions to the widening income gap in the state. [4] Dramatically increase civic participation among the working poor and among immigrant communities in particular." Cited from the CCNE website's "History and Accomplishments" section, viewed online at <http://www.ctneweconomy.org/moving4change.htm> on 17 January 2005.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Good Jobs First is an organization similar to CCNE based in Washington, DC. Numerous reports and books providing community and labor groups with strategies on targeting and exposing corporate welfare are available on the organization's website at <http://www.goodjobsfirst.org/gjfpubs.htm>.

effect, the city ends up subsidizing its suburbs and distant locations by supporting companies that need to recruit all of their employees from outside the city.<sup>37</sup>

*Incubating Biotech* was the first report in a series of publications that were integral components in various political and community organizing campaigns led by CCNE. The discussions of taxes and inadequate school funding in the report was explored further in *Schools, Taxes, and Jobs* (January 2002) and channeled into a broader effort to challenge Yale University's extreme degree of tax-exemption (a "super exemption" authorized by the Connecticut state constitution). Reports like *Uncharitable Care* (March 2003), *A Guidebook to Hospital Debt* (October 2003), and *Yale, Don't Lien on Me* (November 2003), addressed Yale-New Haven Hospital's predatory financing schemes, which forced uninsured patients to pay exorbitant fees for service and resulted in numerous liens on houses, and the hospital's illegal appropriation of state-granted free bed funds explicitly designated for uninsured and poor patients. The reports helped promote the Hospital Debt Justice Project, which demanded the cancellation of all current debts (and to date has been partially successful). The report *A Very Red Line* (September 2003) highlighted the avaricious plans of the trustees of the New Haven Savings Bank, a mutual savings bank owned by its depositors, to announce a public offering and allow stockbrokers to purchase the bank—thereby earning the trustees millions at the expense of depositors and the larger community.<sup>38</sup> Although the situation generated a protest movement in which CCNE was centrally involved, the bank went public after the trustees made some concessions to community demands and was predictably bought out by a corporate banking firm, New Alliance Bancorp.<sup>39</sup> CCNE also involved itself in other movements, such as the campaign of Reverend David Lee (a CCNE board member) for a position on the Yale Corporation; fights over Yale University's attempt to redevelop Trade Union Plaza, a labor-initiated, federally-subsidized housing complex, into a high-rent building provisionally titled University Village<sup>40</sup>; and an effort to prevent housing acquisition and demolition for the construction of a new school in a neighborhood near the hospital. And CCNE argued for service-sector unionization and implicitly supported unionizing drives in the local area—particularly at Yale and within the local casino/gaming

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<sup>37</sup> See The Connecticut Center for a New Economy, *Incubating Biotech: Yale Prospers, New Haven Waits* (New Haven: CCNE, [June] 2001), available online at <http://www.ctneweconomy.org/pubs.html>.

<sup>38</sup> Although the depositors gained from the bank sale, they earned a much smaller amount that was proportional to their bank savings in comparison to the trustees' earnings. The larger community's concerns were that the local bank had longstanding ties to New Haven, demonstrated in many charitable contributions of the bank to the city. The movement itself focused on generating a public media outcry and legally attempting to secure the right of depositors to vote over the bank trustees' decision to hold a public offering. See Keith Griffin, "NHSB Deal a 'Perfect Storm:' Tyler Cooper Shepherds Bank Conversion," *The Connecticut Law Tribune*, 19 April 2004, viewed online at <http://www.tycoop.com/news/publication.cfm?pubID=130> on 20 January 2005.

<sup>39</sup> All of the publications are available online at <http://www.ctneweconomy.org/pubs.html>.

<sup>40</sup> See Mandi Isaacs-Jackson's excellent essay, "New Haven's Trade Union Plaza: 'By Working People for Working People,'" *WorkingUSA* 8/5 (September 2005), 573-591.

industry (also being organized by HERE)—in its report *Good Jobs, Strong Communities* (December 2001).<sup>41</sup>

One of the most important public CCNE campaigns was the promotion of the “social contract.” The *Schools, Taxes, and Jobs* report first announced the idea of a social contract between city residents and the university, but the concept was soon afterwards expressed in the CCNE pamphlet “A New Social Contract between Yale and the Community.”<sup>42</sup> Drawing on the language of “partnership” that featured prominently in the context of the 2002-2003 contract negotiations between the Yale administration and unions, the social contract set out five areas of concern for the residents of deindustrialized New Haven: public education, access to jobs, good union jobs, affordable housing, and access to healthcare.<sup>43</sup> The social contract became a particularly powerful organizing concept. It simplified the numerous aims of CCNE to a basic point: Yale University—being a non-profit institution with pretensions to social value and profiting greatly at state and federal expense—could assume the role of a benevolent sovereign power in New Haven instead of primarily exploiting the city. New Haven might then embrace its working-class residents rather than excluding them (which is physically realized through gentrification). The sense of term “contract” itself is implicitly *laborist*—a means of securing social provision through negotiation between a powerful private entity and ordinary people. As an attempt to both reconstitute and rethink the “social contract” of American labor’s heyday, the power of CCNE’s social contract lies in its ability to leverage ethico-moral demands on employers in the name of city residents and thereby create the possibility of extending social movement unionism directly to community organizing.

The organizing campaign around the social contract consisted of numerous meetings in different New Haven neighborhoods—taking place in churches, schools, public halls, homes—and often included a well-designed PowerPoint presentation on the social contract concept. In March and April 2002 alone, CCNE organizers met with “over 1800 people [who signed] onto the Social Contract during the six community meetings...held during a two-week period.”<sup>44</sup> By the time of the March walkout in 2003, the level of community interest in the social contract was very high—which was both reinforced and reflected in the assignation of one of the five walkout days as the “community day.” When the fall strike occurred, CCNE had developed a degree of community involvement for almost two years that was an order of magnitude greater than comparable efforts in the 1996 strike. The success of this community involvement rested not only the supported provided to the Yale employees by their neighbors or to city residents generally. The idea of including in the new contracts specific language to improve job accessibility—including improved job training and recruiting, and extending the employee housing program to predominantly nonwhite city regions underrepresented in the bargaining units—was a central part of community-organizing discussions of the social contract. But although such language did ultimately appear in the new contracts, organizing for the social contract did not cease with the resolution of

<sup>41</sup> Also see <http://www.ctneweconomy.org/moving4change.htm>.

<sup>42</sup> See <http://www.ctneweconomy.org/contract.htm>.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> See <http://www.ctneweconomy.org/moving4change.htm>.



the strike.<sup>45</sup> In early 2004, CCNE held a community organizers' convention oriented around the social contract (the "CCNE Social Contract Convention") on May 15.

Despite CCNE's impressive achievements up to this point, one might argue that it had not yet fulfilled the great promise of the organization: to build a new economic justice social movement that was not only tied to existing labor organizing struggles. In particular, CCNE had not yet been able to: 1) create and successfully complete a long-term campaign led by city residents outside the labor movement based around Yale and thereby fulfill its goals of community leadership development, and 2) devise a community organizing program whose mobilizations were not primarily determined by the schedule of contract fights between the Yale unions and the university. (Indeed, the gains in the 2003 contract settlement for New Haven residents not already employed at Yale were still relatively meager, despite being a remarkable leap forward.) But the social contract was much less a failure than a probe for a much larger operation already in the planning stages: the community organizers' convention identified key community leaders and inspired them become more active, although what that would entail at the time was not clear. However, a turning point in the social contract campaign took place just prior to the May 15 convention, leading to a concrete means of realizing the social contract itself.

### **CORD and Community Benefits Agreements**

As explained by Rev. Scott Marks, it was the public offering of the New Haven Savings Bank and the inability of community organizers to stop the bank sale in early 2004 that provided the impetus for a shift in strategy by CCNE.<sup>46</sup> What provided the possibility for this shift was the idea of a "community benefits agreement." First appearing in the context of Los Angeles—not coincidentally, a significant center for social movement unionism<sup>47</sup>—CCNE leaders had learned of these agreements through contacts at the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE), a parallel organization to CCNE. The principle behind a community benefits agreement is straightforward. It is a legally binding agreement between a particular developer and a community organization (especially an umbrella organization representing many smaller community groups) in which the community organization agrees to support a particular development project only under certain conditions. Such conditions might include living wage requirements or unionization neutrality agreements for those employed on the development site (the construction project and/or the business to be located at the completed site), employment programs giving preference to low-income neighborhood residents, child-care facilities, parks and recreational facilities, input in the development's tenant selection process, and affordable housing.<sup>48</sup> Despite the numerous benefits for a developer arising

<sup>45</sup> One can view the current Local 34 and 35 contracts at <http://www.yaleunions.org>.

<sup>46</sup> Marks's comments were made during his talk at the CORD convention on December 13, 2004 at the Betsy Ross School in New Haven (see below for more details).

<sup>47</sup> See Fantasia and Voss, 134-150.

<sup>48</sup> See Julian Gross, *Community Benefits Agreements: Making Development Projects Accountable* (Los Angeles: Good Jobs First and the California Public Subsidies Project, 2002), 3. Gross's book provides a step by step explanation of community benefits agreements from a clear, legally-

from such agreements—such as contributing to a financially, physically, and psychologically-healthier community surrounding the development and forestalling future public relations problems—the capitalist logic of minimizing expenditures in the short term discourages developers from entering into such agreements voluntarily. Contrarily, if developers sign community benefits agreements with little political pressure holding them accountable, the gains for the community are likely to be minimal. The onus, then, is on the community organization (or organizations) involved to do the kind of organizing necessary to build a mobilized, unified populace and consensus on a set of demands, in turn forcing developers to meet and negotiate.<sup>49</sup>

The community benefits concept extends the logic of the union contract directly to community-developer relations, although these agreements are typically long-term, one-time settlements, in contrast to union contracts. Closely linked to labor organizing itself, these agreements can set a base standard for employees working for firms based in the new development site—such as a living wage standard or unionization rights. And like much labor unionization, community benefits agreements are directly tied to new inflows of capital—typically, but by no means only, that of large corporate developers. As Greg LeRoy notes, the appearance of such agreements was predicated on the appearance of new population growth and development in American cities within the last decade.<sup>50</sup> The concept is not without its weaknesses, of course, some of which are outlined by its proponents. Perhaps the greatest difficulties have to do with the definition of “community,” which is, given the nature of the process, relatively ad hoc (even if well meant and close to “representative”). If one’s particular community group is not involved in the process or one is not represented by any particular community group, one’s voice is left out to some degree. Such problems in fact are also reminiscent of possible difficulties in union organizing, where the boundaries of bargaining units (as the “constituency”) are moveable and permeable in contract negotiations. But again, the issue here appears to be a matter of organizing: a properly organized and broadly based coalition is really the only way to ensure that a community benefits agreement’s potential is properly realized.<sup>51</sup> The examples of the agreements in Los Angeles attest to this potential: the sheer dollar amounts of what the community groups secured in the \$240 million Staples Center agreement (worth \$70 million) and the \$11 billion Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) expansion (worth \$500 million) are only one measure of these stunning achievements.<sup>52</sup>

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informed perspective and is available from Good Jobs First and the LAANE (see <http://www.goodjobsfirst.org/cbarelease.htm> for more information).

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>50</sup> Greg LeRoy, preface to Gross, i.

<sup>51</sup> One recent counterexample might be the case in Atlantic Yards development in Brooklyn, in which a less-comprehensive community benefits agreement was signed. The relative lack of city government involvement was cited as being part of the problem—in contrast to New Haven or Los Angeles, New York’s administration is more conservative—but the weaker organizing also was part of the equation. See Terry Pristin, “In Major Projects, Agreeing Not to Disagree,” *New York Times*, 14 June 2006.

<sup>52</sup> The Staples Center was first proposed to the city in 1996 at the cost of \$240 million and was finished in 1999. Community organizing groups opposed to the construction of the center did not

Compelling in principle and realizable in practice, the community benefits agreement concept became the means by which CCNE developed its new organizing campaign. In anticipation of a new, unannounced development project at Yale-New Haven Hospital, community and church leaders, city officials, and CCNE organizers held a meeting on 6 May 2004 at the Sacred Heart Church (in the Hill North, near the hospital) to discuss ways of creating community-friendly development. CCNE advocated for a community benefits agreement, and the idea was enthusiastically taken up by the meeting's participants.<sup>53</sup> Many of the community and church leaders at the meeting had been witnessing the systematic erosion of their communities by various forms of development for decades. The Hill North area's woes began with deindustrialization and subsequent strategies for "urban renewal" that divided the city on class and racial grounds and that in particular turned out poorly for the neighborhood.<sup>54</sup> The destruction of the Oak Street area and creation of an interstate connector (to Route 34) effectively separated the Hill North from the downtown section of the city. Entire neighborhood blocks were razed to make room for new school construction—such as the creation of Lee High School in the mid-1960s—as well as numerous parking garages and parking lots.<sup>55</sup> In

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target its labor practices and were relatively weak politically vis-à-vis the center. As a result, little was achieved in those early community interventions. When the same developer, the L.A. Arena Company, announced a massive expansion project—a \$1-billion redevelopment project located next to the Staples Center—these community organizations formed a large coalition (the Figueroa Corridor Coalition for Economic Justice) and worked with LAANE, Strategic Actions for a Just Economy (SAJE), and Coalition L.A. to negotiate with the developer. In 2001, after a significant organizing campaign, the coalition secured an agreement for public subsidies worth as much as \$70 million—including a living wage agreement, a substantial affordable housing program, union organizing rights for workers in the expanded center, a "first source hiring program" for low-income individuals, a funded residential parking program, and a \$1 million commitment to meeting "community park and recreation needs." Building on the precedent of this and similar benefits agreements in Los Angeles, when the development firm Los Angeles World Airports announced its proposed \$11-billion expansion and modernization of LAX, many of the same community-organizing groups pursued negotiations with the developer. In December 2004, Los Angeles World Airports announced that it had signed a \$500-million agreement with the community groups that provided for many of the same kinds of public subsidies (wages, union rights, housing, parks/environment) as well as devising means of reducing noise, pollution, and traffic problems arising from the expanded airport. See "Staples Center History," viewed online at [http://www.barrystickets.com/staples\\_center/staples-center-history.htm](http://www.barrystickets.com/staples_center/staples-center-history.htm) on 20 January 2005. For quotes on the Staples Center, see Gross, 6. Some of this history was discussed by Roxana Tynan of LAANE at a public hearing held by the New Haven Board of Alders on 26 May 2004. On LAX, see Jennifer Oldham, "L.A. to Fund Upgrades near LAX," *Los Angeles Times*, 4 December 2004. The agreement is currently being reviewed by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

<sup>53</sup> Most of the information on the chronology of the community benefits agreement campaign comes from an interview with Gwen Mills on 20 January 2005.

<sup>54</sup> For the classic treatment of this theme, see the Black Panther Party's pamphlet, *Go to School, Learn to Rule: The Yale Method* (New Haven: A.I.M. [American Indian Movement] and A.R.G. [African Research Group], 1970), viewed online at <http://dhm.best.vwh.net/archives/1panth.html> on 21 January 2005.

<sup>55</sup> The high school was designed by the architectural firm of Kevin Roche, who specialized in a postwar urban modernist style called "brutalism." See the images of the Richard C. Lee High



subsequent years, the university and hospital began to expand significantly, eventually building new wings of the hospital (such as the Children's Hospital in 1993) and taking over various buildings in the vicinity (such as the Lee High School building, which became the Yale School of Nursing in 1995). The university and city were operating in tandem, with the city using the powers of eminent domain to clear neighborhood blocks and build new schools and the university buying up older New Haven school buildings. The result was to clear the largely black and Latino working-class residents from the immediate vicinity around the hospital, creating a large buffer zone between it and the rest of the Hill area.<sup>56</sup> The destruction of housing units in particular took its toll on the neighborhood: between 1970 and 2000, the Hill North had lost 4,000 residents, decreasing from 13,000 to 8,900 in thirty years.<sup>57</sup> Exacerbating this housing shortage, the recent housing bubble that appeared in the wake of the 2000-2001 recession and resulting land speculation pushed housing rates even higher than they had been previously—in no small part due to Yale University-led housing ownership and redevelopment (not including the foiled attempts with “University Village”) and widespread absentee landlordism in the city.<sup>58</sup>

By the time of the May 6 meeting at the Sacred Heart Church, Yale University already owned a great deal of the area around the hospital, and further development following the familiar patterns was taking place. For example, an entire block of houses was destroyed in 2002-2003 to make room for another school, which this time would be called the John C. Daniels school—in honor of a mayor who, ironically, facilitated the sale of New Haven city streets to the university (in particular, High Street, between Elm Street and Wall Street). Local graffiti artists lamented the school's construction, which resulted in the destruction of a wall at the edge of the construction lot that was used for their work.<sup>59</sup>

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School available at the website of his former architectural firm at <http://www.krjda.com/text/projectDetail.cfm?id=115>.

<sup>56</sup> These comments are based on those of Antony Dugdale, during a presentation on community benefits agreements at a GESO Coordinating Committee meeting in June 2004.

<sup>57</sup> Information is taken from a sheet titled “The Hill...by the numbers,” produced by CCNE; much of the information is compiled from the US Census and by defining tracts 1402, 1403, and 1046 as the “North Hill” or “the area north of Congress Ave., from Ella T Grasso Blvd to the train tracks, plus area between Howard Ave and the train station (e.g. Trowbridge Square).”

<sup>58</sup> For an insightful treatment of the housing bubble, see Brenner, esp. 78-82. In addition, suburban families moving back into the city resulted (and continues to result) in the conversion of small apartment buildings into single-family houses (often originally two-family working- and middle-class houses).

<sup>59</sup> This photograph shown below appears on the Yale Insider website, at <http://newhavenadvocate.com/binary/71988-273-1/news-2992.jpeg>, viewed on 21 January 2005.



A map of the Hill North neighborhood: the area below and left of the Oak St. Connector are the Yale Medical School and Yale-New Haven Hospital Buildings. The rectangular, right-hand side block between the names of Congress Ave. and Davenport Ave. is the location of the new Daniels School.



Photo of the graffiti wall on Congress Ave. "Yale-New Haven Sucks!" is clearly directed at the hospital. Before it was painted over, the wall also reminded viewers that the hospital took over Lee High School.



The Yale School of Nursing, formerly the Richard C. Lee High School (built 1962-1967), designed by Kevin Roche in a “brutalist” style.<sup>60</sup>



<sup>60</sup> The map of the Hill North is taken from a CCNE PowerPoint presentation on CORD; the last four photographs were taken by the author in January 2005.



A sign on Congress Ave. adjacent to the construction site of the John C. Daniels School (formerly the Prince-Welch School).



The construction lot for the new Daniels School. The photo at the top of the page is directly to the left of the lower photo. The crane's load line (at the center-top of the lower photo) bisects Yale-New Haven Hospital, looming in the distance. Both photos were shot above a fence that replaced the graffiti wall.

The meeting seemed to spur activity in several directions. First, as noted above, it provided a new means of realizing the social contract, which the May 15 convention would help to promote. Second, it inspired members of the New Haven Board of Aldermen—who had since become much more progressive due to union-led organizing efforts in the 2003 elections—to consider passing a resolution supporting the idea of community benefits agreements. The board held a public hearing on May 26, at which Roxana Tynan of LAANE provided a compelling and informative presentation on the community benefits agreement concept and history in Los Angeles. The resolution was then submitted to the full Board, and on July 6 it was passed unanimously. Third, it provided CCNE with the idea of holding focus group meetings (on June 2 and 9) in the Hill to find out what kinds of things residents would like to see in a community benefits agreement.

Meanwhile, on June 1 Yale-New Haven Hospital publicly announced that it was planning a \$350-million development project involving a new cancer research and treatment center. Immediately after the announcement, news reports linked the pending resolution on community benefits agreements to the hospital expansion.<sup>61</sup> The first CCNE focus group meeting was held the next day, and by the second meeting a week later, a critical mass of people were participating in the discussions. The group decided to form a new organization, calling itself Community Organized for Responsible Development (CORD)—the symbolism of which would emphasize the need for solidarity in the face of developers' past attempts to divide and placate community group coalitions.<sup>62</sup> In the focus group meetings, CORD would also identify several areas of concern that could be addressed by a prospective community benefits agreement: affordable housing, public health, jobs (including supporting the hospital workers' unionization drive), parking and traffic, environment and open space, and youth recreation and education. By the time CORD held its first official meeting on June 23, the organization was growing quickly and was beginning to develop a plan for surveying residents in the Hill North area.

On July 3, CORD began its surveys, with organizers going door-to-door five days a week. Using a sophisticated data-collection method funded by a grant to CCNE, organizers received Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) that included surveys linked to the addresses and names of most Hill North residents (culled from the telephone book and voting lists). In the conversations and surveys in which I participated, there was a general consistency in the responses of neighborhood residents. Typically, they were irritated at the university and hospital's exploitative practices—particularly with the housing liens and other manipulative forms of debt collection—and wanted the institution to give more

<sup>61</sup> See Mary E. O'Leary and Angela Carter, "Cancer Center in the Works: City Sees Plan as Opportunity to Review Hospital's Tax Impact," *New Haven Register*, 1 June 2004.

<sup>62</sup> For example, CORD's official stationary includes a relevant quotation from Ecclesiastes 4:12 using the word "cord." "Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not easily broken."

back to the community such as free or cheaper healthcare. Residents, plagued by high rents, typically worked far from their homes and usually commuted to work. Thus, an endless source of irritation were the Yale employees who often parked in front of their homes—taking their own spots and even blocking them in or out of their driveways. And residents generally expressed sympathy with workers at the Yale-New Haven Hospital and believed that the employees should have a union if they want one. These and other comments found their way into the survey data, which gathered information from almost 800 people, or almost 10% of the Hill North residents.

The biweekly meetings of CORD set a quick pace for a campaign that would last about two years. The urgency of the meetings themselves owed to the inimitable presence of Rev. Scott Marks, who directed the proceedings with a palpably spiritual intensity. Marks also introduced to CORD members union-organizing techniques such as role-playing conversations with prospective CORD members and demanded accountability from CORD members to turn out people for particular actions. In addition, CORD also held meetings for issue-based subcommittees addressing the types of issues first listed in the focus group meetings (affordable housing, parking and traffic, etc.). The subcommittees drew on the survey data to determine the most prominent community interests and then did some research on issues relating to these interests (including environmental problems such as lead pollution resulting from building demolitions). The subcommittees (and then the full group) also heard from external groups wanting to contribute to CORD's proposed benefits—including a proposal for a hospital community-review board submitted by a Yale medical student organization.

CORD's urgency was also fueled by the awareness of the speed with which the hospital sought to begin the development process. Within days of the announcement, Yale-New Haven Hospital officials quickly moved to request Connecticut state approval for their plans on a piecemeal basis, which would allow them to continuously revise their building plans as they saw fit. This unprecedented approval would have prevented a proper assessment of the impact of the development on the surrounding community—making such an approval, in effect, a means of obfuscating the social and economic impact of the expansion.<sup>63</sup>

Soon afterwards, the hospital disclosed that it would build a parking facility on Howard Avenue, opposite from the cancer center building that would replace the older Grace Building (former home of the Grace-New Haven School of Nursing). Realizing the need to act quickly, CORD planned an action that would formally announce the organization's presence and would state its aim to negotiate a community benefits agreement with the hospital. CORD held a press conference in front of the Grace Building in late July or early August, in an attempt to preempt the possible destruction of a housing facility for senior- and disabled-citizens on fixed incomes at 904 Howard Avenue. According to the hospital's original plans, the housing facility would have been surrounded by the proposed parking facility, effectively condemning 904 Howard Ave. to eventual absorption and demolition by the hospital. The attendance of some hundreds of people at the press conference signaled to the organization's seriousness, and the

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<sup>63</sup> See Mary O'Leary, "Y-NH Asks State to Push Ahead with Plan," *New Haven Register*, 5 June 2004.

hospital responded by announcing it would not build the parking facility. Further actions followed within a couple of months. To produce a positive public image in the face of potential community opposition to the project, hospital officials held a hearing on September 14 for neighborhood residents to address their concerns. CORD turned out two hundred members and transformed the hearing into a political action at which it would make a second public request to negotiate with the hospital.

Into the fall, CORD concentrated on building its individual and organizational membership, avoiding co-optation, finalizing its benefits proposals, and organizing towards a large action in December. CORD members held numerous meetings in their homes for their neighbors to view a PowerPoint presentation created by CCNE and Antony Dugdale. The presentation offered a trenchant and informative critique of development practices in the Hill North over the last forty years. Building on preexisting kinship, ethnic/communal, and organizational networks, CORD's membership grew quickly. (In early January 2005 it stood at 446 individuals and 22 member organizations, and included many persons and groups far removed from the Hill North area—including several East Rock neighborhood residents and various political activists in the city.) As the organization garnered greater attention in the press, the hospital attempted to quell any possible community insurgency by seeking to gain a strategic advantage over CORD.<sup>64</sup> The hospital sent an invitation to Marks to attend a small meeting with hospital officials, business leaders, and community organization directors. With the CORD membership's approval, Marks attended the meeting, parlaying the organization's demands to meet and negotiate, but hospital officials in turn used Marks's attendance (with photographs) to claim that they had already met with CORD and resolved their issues. Undaunted by this media manipulation, CORD voted on its slate of proposals for a community benefits agreement on November 10 and began organizing for a public meeting on December 13.

On December 13, CORD held a large community meeting at the Betsy Ross School for the ratification of its benefits proposals, at which hundreds were present. Described as a "boisterous rally" that "at times took on the fervor of a religious revival,"<sup>65</sup> the meeting served both as a political demonstration for CORD's agenda and as a community-building social event, with a substantial dinner, daycare, and children's activities being offered to participants. In the following year, CORD continued pressing for its goals: the organization secured a public hearing with the Legislation Committee of the Board of Aldermen on 24 January 2005 at City Hall to press for legislation addressing problems with parking in the Hill North neighborhood. A coalition of CORD, CCNE, and Yale union researchers proposed an amendment to existing traffic and parking laws that would require greater transparency in developers' plans. According to the proposed law, developers would be mandated to fund research on the probable traffic and parking impact of any establishment or expansion of their operating facilities. In effect, the proposed legislation would facilitate the developer

<sup>64</sup> See the press appearance in Angela Carter, "Group Seeks Meeting with Y-NH President," *New Haven Register*, 9 August 2004.

<sup>65</sup> In Mary O'Leary, "Vocal Crowd Makes Demands of Y-NH," *New Haven Register*, 14 December 2004. The article claims that 400 people attended the meeting, but it may have been closer to 500 or 600.



accountability made possible by a community benefits agreement. Setting a precedent repeated many times during the campaign, the public hearing was dominated by CORD and its supporters. Both CORD and hospital workers gave impassioned testimony concerning the parking problems they face daily, whereas a few university officials testified in opposition to the amendment.

The parking proposal was a powerful move—building mass support rooted in the daily frustrations of Hill residents—and was one of the crucial elements determining the outcome of the campaign. As further public hearings on parking and other issues related to the hospital development plan were held with the city administration and Board of Aldermen, they became sites of mass collective action. (Indeed, as attendance at these meetings grew, they were eventually relocated from City Hall to the Betsy Ross School to accommodate the increasing number of participants.) Punctuating these periodic demonstrations were a few key events. On May 21, 2005, during Yale's graduation weekend, CORD held a rally of two to three thousand people near the hospital, featuring speeches by progressive labor leader Andy Stern (of SEIU) and a performance by the multitalented leftist hip-hop/R&B musician Wyclef Jean (formerly of the Fugees).<sup>66</sup> Within days, the president of Yale-New Haven hospital Joseph Zaccagnino—a bitterly anti-union figure whose low point in labor relations was overseeing the arrest of union organizers leafleting at the hospital—announced his resignation, effective at the end of September.<sup>67</sup> On November 14, one hundred New Haven clergy members signed the “Let My People Go” statement criticizing the hospital on multiple fronts—including its anti-union position—and delivered it to the hospital administration. On December 13, 2005, around six hundred CORD supporters marched to the hospital from Career High School in the cold weather, all as part of a one-year anniversary celebration of the ratification meeting. All the while, Yale New-Haven hospital dithered in its development plans, repeatedly proclaimed its positive role in the city, and enlisted small community organizations not aligned with CORD on its behalf. For example, in the spring of 2005, the hospital signed a \$1.3 million agreement including a small fraction of CORD's proposals with the Hill Development Corporation, an insider organization closely linked to the hospital and city administration. The hospital then celebrated the agreement in the press, claiming that it had resolved any possible community-based antagonism. In late November, the Greater New Haven Clergy Association, a small group of about twenty ministers, cited their opposition to the “Let My People Go” statement. And yet, excepting the crucial issue of hospital unionization, both groups actually shared many of the same criticisms of the hospital.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Jean has performed in left-labor-immigrant rights contexts before. During a mass rally on 4 October 2003, celebrating the “Immigrant Freedom Rides” sponsored in part by progressive labor organizations like SEIU and HERE, Jean performed as well. Indeed, it may have been these labor connections and CCNE's own goals of empowering immigrants in New Haven and the many immigrants who work at Yale-New Haven hospital that may have drawn Jean to the CORD struggle in the first place.

<sup>67</sup> Mary E. O'Leary, “Zaccagnino to Step Down as Y-NH President, CEO,” *New Haven Register*, 26 May 2005.

<sup>68</sup> See Angela Carter, “Wyclef Lends His Voice to Union's Fight,” *New Haven Register*, 22 May 2005; and Carole Bass, et al., “Of Clergy and Surgery: Men of the Cloth Bicker over the

On March 22, on the day that another public hearing was to take place at the Betsy Ross School, Yale-New Haven Hospital and CORD jointly announced that they would sign a comprehensive community benefits agreement (worth about \$5 million). Significantly, the agreement secured the end to the hospital's anti-union campaign, with a new conduct agreement ensuring a fair election. In Joel Lang's remarkable report on the community benefits agreement and CCNE's van den Heever, the author noted that one of the most significant factors in the outcome was the Zaccagnino's successor as hospital president, Marna Borgstrom. Invited the previous night to a meeting in the Hill with CORD and CCNE leaders, Borgstrom listened sympathetically to the neighborhood residents' concerns and set the settlement process in motion. Some of the key participants in that process were CORD committee chairmen and Hill residents Ted Gardner, a retired fireman, and James Washington, a retired postal worker, both of whom joined CORD early on and become some of its most active leaders. Attesting to the apparent impossibility of their victory and the future tasks of CORD, Gardner noted, "You look at a big corporation like [Yale-New Haven], it will sit in your head that nothing can be done. Our job is now to hold them to what was agreed on. This is historic, historic. We never had an association with an entity like this. Deals were always done in the backroom with a wink and a handshake."<sup>69</sup>

### **A New Working-People's Movement**

The unprecedented success of CCNE in New Haven was the culmination of a ten-year process, beginning with the 1996 contract settlement and intensifying in 2001 with the formation of the organization itself. In its work with CORD, CCNE was finally able to make gains for the community far in excess of securing good contracts for existing labor unions or even organizing rights for new unions. Indeed, the independence of CORD and CCNE from the unionization battles, despite their interconnections, was underestimated by the hospital, which apparently saw CORD as a "phony front...for the union" according to van den Heever.<sup>70</sup> The organization now has two immediate tasks ahead: overseeing the implementation of the agreement (as well as enforcing its provisions) and aiding in the unionization drive of the hospital workers, which had stalled since the end of the 2003 Yale union contract negotiations.

But if the summer has effectively marked a brief caesura in the plans of CCNE, it also appears to have been a time of reflection and planning. To this end, CCNE hosted a conference for the coalitions Building Partnerships and Partnership for Working Families that took place at the Omni Hotel in downtown New Haven in late June. At the conference, which included several

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Implications of a Unionized Yale-New Haven Hospital," *New Haven Advocate*, 24 November 2005. Thanks to Gwen Mills for clarifying the chronology given here.

<sup>69</sup> Quoted in Joel Lang, "The Fight to Cure a Community's Ills: How an Innovative Alliance Forced Yale-New Haven Hospital to Help Its Impoverished Neighborhood as Part of a Plan for a New Cancer Center," *Hartford Courant*, *Northeast Magazine*, 21 May 2006. The article also lists the key provisions in the agreement, which includes 400 new jobs for New Haven residents with priority for Hill residents, various job training programs, funding for new housing, greater financial aid for low-income patients, parking provisions, and a commitment to devising a comprehensive improvement plan for the Hill along with the city administration.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

nonprofit groups like CCNE and LAANE, CORD members gave a presentation on their achievements and then participated in discussions on the future of the community benefits movement. From what little I have heard, the goal is ambitious: to form a wide-reaching, national (or even international) social movement of working people through the vehicle of the community benefits agreement and other strategies.

It would be an appropriate time, then, to consider what this movement's ultimate goals might be. What would it mean for working people if most large development contracts included comprehensive community benefits agreements? Given the language of "partnership" between labor and capital that is pervasive here, the ideal endgame here might be some form of state-capital corporatism, with the social provision divided between private settlements in contracts and state-supported social programs. But if this scenario might recall the way development is conducted in progressive social democracies like Sweden, we might view a city like Las Vegas—with its high union density and decent standard of living for working people—as a possible model existing within the US itself.<sup>71</sup>

If Las Vegas in some ways appears to be the epitome of social-movement unionism, one should note that the discourse surrounding that city's achievements is characteristically absent of self-conscious leftism and instead bears the hallmarks of the "American dream" ideology that has plagued the American left for over a century.<sup>72</sup> Countering this tendency, CCNE's present discussions could include the articulation of a leftist egalitarian vision combining labor and communities that could help this movement take flight, but the ideals of business partnership could be at odds with the militant ethos needed to energize the new organizing cadres. (Indeed, one result of this kind of partnership is that labor and communities end up effectively stumping for capital itself—hardly an exciting prospect for organized workers and residents.<sup>73</sup>) However, CCNE and similar organizations have pragmatically avoided adopting any explicit political position, because they are a nonprofit group and have to work within the existing political framework, which means dealing with many Democratic Party politicians who have only a certain tolerance limit for labor unions and working-class community organizing.<sup>74</sup> One might then reasonably ask questions such as: does this movement necessarily bear the Gompersian weaknesses of the "Change to Win" labor coalition—the group of unions including SEIU, UNITE-HERE, the Teamsters, and others who broke away from

<sup>71</sup> Steven Greenhouse, "Crossing the Border into the Middle Class," *New York Times*, 3 June 2004, and "Local 226, 'The Culinary,' Makes Las Vegas the Land of the Living Wage," *New York Times*, 3 June 2004.

<sup>72</sup> For the classic treatment of this idea—which, instead of universalizing American dreamism, manages to situate the ideology of class advancement within distinct conjunctures marked by waves of immigration and assimilative incorporation—see Mike Davis's masterpiece, *Prisoners of the American Dream*. The dynamic is currently being re-instantiated by the massive influx of Latino immigrants in the present conjuncture.

<sup>73</sup> See Greenhouse, "Local 226," in which the author notes that the casino/gaming industry agreed to unionization of its workers in exchange for using the political power of labor to expand its business.

<sup>74</sup> At the same time, CCNE and CORD have been eminently pragmatic, drawing support from Green Party members and activists, Community Party activists, political independents, and others.

the AFL-CIO in the summer of 2005?<sup>75</sup> If the postwar social contract with capital was an illusory dream that was, in Mike Davis's words, nothing more than an "armed truce" between labor and capital, is this movement reviving a concept evoking a past that never existed and a future possibly doomed to failure?<sup>76</sup> I do agree with critics like Bill Fletcher that an explicit concept of socialism—or, at least, an unapologetic, non-sectarian, anti-imperialist leftism—needs to return to the labor movement if sustainable progress is to be achieved.<sup>77</sup> But at the same time, I feel that despite the strength of these critiques, some of the present debates within the progressive end of the labor movement are to some degree false ones. Perhaps the programmatic solutions offered by Bronfenbrenner and others are only one way of fashioning a progressive working-people's movement.<sup>78</sup> In CCNE, it would seem that instead we find here an unnamed socialism being built from the "ground up," on solidly materialist principles. And by working with progressive unions to represent the interests of working-people who are not necessarily union members, I would argue that groups like CCNE are actually pushing the Change to Win unions in a leftward direction.

### **Development and Globalization: New Haven and Porto Alegre**

The foregoing narrative of development and community organizing in a university-hospital city is predominantly a national, US-based one. However, there are numerous possible articulations with global processes that make the previously described social movements more relevant to the global justice movement than it might first appear. Although these articulations would need to be understood in relation to an American "labor aristocracy" that benefits from a US-centered neoliberal imperialism, the realities of the contemporary American workplace and attacks on existing social provisions in the US suggest

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<sup>75</sup> See Bill Fletcher, Jr., "Debate over Future of Fed Produces More Heat than Light," *Labor Notes*, August 2005, viewed online at <http://www.labornotes.org/archives/2005/08/articles/c.shtml> on 9 July 2006. To take one example of progressive unions' possible conservatism, SEIU's chief negotiator with the hospital, Larry Fox, claims that "If the NLRB were to be abolished tomorrow, it would be a great thing for the unions" (in Lang). Despite the deep flaws of the NLRB, particularly since the passing of Taft-Hartley, such claims at times point to a kind of free-market unionism within progressive labor that historically has favored the relatively privileged skilled craft workers of the AFL, in contrast to semi-skilled or unskilled laborers, for whom a reformed and functioning NLRB would be beneficial. At present, the main axis seems to be growing or leading-edge sectors (like healthcare, leisure, and education) in contrast to the declining manufacturing sector.

<sup>76</sup> Davis, 104. Also see Fletcher's critique of the progressive unions' promotion of the "social contract," in "Can U.S. Workers Embrace Anti-Imperialism?", *Monthly Review* 55/3 (July-August 2003), viewed online at <http://www.monthlyreview.org/0703fletcher.htm> on 9 July 2006.

<sup>77</sup> For Fletcher, the crucial term is "anti-imperialism," within which an anti-capitalist and socialist position is made explicit. See *ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> For a more comprehensive plan for reviving the labor movement—which demands that labor represent the entire working-class (and not just its members), be pro-public sector, genuinely democratic, a new political program not based solely on the Democratic party—see Kate Bronfenbrenner, et al., "The Future of Organized Labor in the U.S.: Reinventing Trade Unionism for the 21st Century," viewed online at <http://www.monthlyreview.org/0205commentary.htm> on 9 July 2006.

that workers of the world are facing the onslaught of neoliberal policies together, if unevenly.<sup>79</sup> I will end by posing three different questions concerning the movement's global intersections and sketch out brief, exploratory answers.

First, are CCNE and CORD part of the global fight against neoliberalism? It would seem so, although one might not initially realize or announce it. Self-consciously leftist terminology is significantly absent from CCNE and CORD's public discourse in part because the organizations themselves do not frame their discourses in such a way—perhaps for legitimate fears of being discredited in a conservative political climate. Nonetheless, it is clear that their goal of economic justice generally does not accord with American neoliberal policies exported across the globe. Moreover, CCNE consistently exposes the use of public subsidies for private enrichment, an increasingly rampant phenomenon under global capitalism that contradicts the anti-interventionist rhetoric of capital's mouthpieces.<sup>80</sup> And of course the employer in question, Yale University, is enmeshed in systems of finance capital that impact numerous world regions, often with calamitous consequences.<sup>81</sup> Contesting such an employer therefore means coming into conflict with one node of a massive network of global finance capital, although organizers don't necessarily perceive this on a daily basis. As a part of American social movement unionism, the efforts of organizations like CORD and CCNE are important for the global justice movement, since this growing labor/working-people's movement "represent[s] the sole institutional counterweight to the American neoliberal juggernaut *within American society itself*."<sup>82</sup>

Second, do individual actors or organizations in these movements possess an awareness or experience of related process elsewhere in the world? In some cases they do, particularly at the leadership levels of the organizations. For example, one might consider Andrea van den Heever's history in the South African anti-apartheid movement or Scott Marks's participation in this year's World Social Forum to be part of a broader global imaginary in CCNE or CORD.<sup>83</sup> And CCNE's links to sister organizations all over the US (like LAANE) and to union international situate it within a relatively cohesive network of labor and economic justice groups in North America.<sup>84</sup> CORD members, however, have international ties of a different sort. Given the significant presence of many

<sup>79</sup> For a critical assessment of present-day labor conditions and rights in the US, see Human Rights Watch, *Unfair Advantage: Workers' Freedom of Association in the United States* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2000), also available online at <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/uslabor/>.

<sup>80</sup> Henry Giroux makes this basic point in "Neoliberalism and the Demise of Democracy: Resurrecting Hope in Dark Times," *Dissident Voice*, 7 August 2004, viewed online at <http://www.dissidentvoice.org/Aug04/Giroux0807.htm> on 22 January 2005.

<sup>81</sup> See Lafer, 95-96; and Amanda Ciafone's essay on Yale's investments with Farallon in this series.

<sup>82</sup> Fantasia and Voss, 168.

<sup>83</sup> One might also note the broader imaginative affiliations of social movement unionism to global labor movements in South Africa, Brazil, and South Korea. As Jay Driskell has noted, South Africa was quite significant for the Yale struggle: in addition to Andrea van den Heever's presence, the early version of GESO titled TA Solidarity formed in 1987 after being inspired by the anti-apartheid movement.

<sup>84</sup> For example, many CCNE organizers went to the UNITE-HERE Founding Convention in Chicago in July 2004.

recent immigrants in the Hill, especially from the Caribbean and Latin America, it is not surprising that this presence is reflected in the organization to some degree. And when one broadens the frame to include survey respondents, the significance of international (or at least hemispheric) ties cannot be overstated. During a CORD house visit, Dale Lucas (an SEIU-District 1199 organizer) and I spoke with a Jamaican man named Denny whose story was remarkable. He had fought the housing demolitions for the Daniels School, taking the city to court and appearing on local television news shows. As a result he was able to retain his house, to the dismay of city officials. He also owed thousands of dollars in debts to the hospital, in one case due to his sister's emergency medical visit while she was visiting from Jamaica. After mentioning that he sends much of his income to relatives back home, I muttered something about Michael Manley and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) structural adjustment programs that crushed the Jamaican economy in the late 1970s. Denny was surprised and said, "oh, you know about Michael Manley and the IMF," and went on to say that the resulting poverty in Jamaica was the precise reason for his presence in the US, where he had lived since the early 1980s. For Denny there appeared to be continuity between his struggles in New Haven and the "structurally adjusted" Jamaican economy.<sup>85</sup>

Third, is the situation in New Haven part of a broader global pattern of community mobilization in university-hospital cities? Such an assertion is questionable. Certainly, the economic-geographical patterns like deindustrialization and the growth of university/hospital-dominated cities or parts of cities have their global manifestations all over the world. With the substantial growth of universities in the postcolonial era and recent appearance of private universities in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, university-led capital investments are certainly impacting cities all over the world. And the sheer numbers of people in universities have risen in the developing world: well over half of the global student population (47 million out of 80 million total in 1995) comes from developing nations, and the rise of the global mega-city has been paralleled by the appearance of mega-universities of over 200,000 students like the National University of Mexico or the University of Buenos Aires.<sup>86</sup> Thus, one might expect that the global university-hospital city is, or could be, a privileged site of struggle for progressive movements of working people. Still, the kinds of science-based investments bringing millions of dollars in finance capital to developed-world universities are by no means universal—which means that one must distinguish the wealthiest North American and/or developed-world examples from other, less prosperous university-hospital cities as targets for development-based organizing campaigns.<sup>87</sup>

In terms of the community organizing in New Haven, and its broader correlates in American social movement unionism, one must account for the particularity of the national context. The US is rare among developed nations for

<sup>85</sup> Our conversation with Denny took place in June 2004, after CORD was formed but before the PDA survey program was in place.

<sup>86</sup> See the first chapter of the Task Force on Higher Education and Society, *Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril and Promise* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2000), viewed online at <http://www.tfhe.net/report/Chapter1.htm> on 22 January 2005.

<sup>87</sup> On the lack of scientific production in developing world universities, see chapter 5 of the same report, viewed online at <http://www.tfhe.net/report/Chapter5.htm> on 22 January 2005.

its historical failure to create a comprehensive, state-based social provision (welfare, health coverage, housing, education). During the postwar period of peak production, a social provision was instead provided privately on a piecemeal basis through different employers and, for a large percentage of Americans, through union contracts with those employers. Without a formidable state provision, deindustrialization and neoliberal policies served to drastically reduce American workers' incomes and benefits.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, the two major parties in the American political system are so completely dominated by neoliberal thought and policies that any kind of national or even state-level political representation advocating for something like social-democratic benefits is unlikely to become dominant in the short term. Organizing strategies such as those of CCNE and CORD might therefore be most appropriate in cities or regions in which substantial capital investment coincides with a minimal or nonexistent system of social provision and a labor-unfriendly, neoliberal state. Of course, some measure of power at the local governmental level has been crucial to the CCNE and CORD projects, particularly the support of a pro-labor Board of Aldermen and a (mostly) labor-friendly mayor; and that power has in part been made possible by the substantial presence of labor union funding for political organizing.

And yet, one might object that the particularity of American labor is too easily overemphasized, on account of a reflexive American exceptionalism that infects both jingoistic *and* critical writings by Americans on America. By temporarily bracketing the distinction between “developed” and “developing” nations or regions, we allow for the possibility of comparing the United States to other nations and global regions with similar histories of enslaved populations and (semi-)free migration. Through such a lens, the United States (especially the American South) looks rather similar to much of the global South—particularly the settler-colonial nations of the Western Hemisphere that also include a deeply fractured working-class and a stark racial and ethnic division of labor. In many of these nations, trade unionists have struggled (and continue to struggle) against labor-hostile states and work environments and, therefore, against many of the same difficulties in labor organizing that American unions currently face.

This global comparison offers a political history that might be instructive to American union organizers: the politically-oppositional trade union movements emerging from autocratic states industrializing in the wake of postwar decolonization and developmentalism. As labor historian Kim Moody notes, “[f]rom El Salvador to Nigeria...unions have been central to the struggle for democracy or liberation.”<sup>89</sup> Perhaps the most important of these movements emerged from the triumvirate of Brazil, South Korea, and South Africa, the three most economically-powerful nations sharing this historical trajectory. Indeed, it is from this history that the term “social movement unionism” originally emerged—specifically from the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and its involvement in the anti-apartheid struggles during the 1980s.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Fantasia and Voss, 19-27.

<sup>89</sup> Kim Moody, *Workers in a Lean World: Unions in the International Economy* (London: Verso, 1997), 206.

<sup>90</sup> Thanks to Alicia Schmidt Camacho, Hazel Carby, Michael Denning, Dara Orenstein, and Laura Wexler for their thoughts on social movement unionism and American labor at the American Studies Symposium (April 29, 2005) and at the meeting of the Marxism and Cultural



At present, these nations—like the US—would at least in principle exhibit the political coordinates favorable to the use of developer agreements: a politicized labor movement, state disinvestment, deindustrialization, and the political takeover of city administrations.

With this in mind, one might compare CCNE's social contract and CORD's community benefits agreements to a different but not unrelated social experiment in another university-hospital city, Porto Alegre in the Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul. In 1989, the Brazilian Workers Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores* or PT) gained power in the city of Porto Alegre, the state capital of Rio Grande do Sul and home of several universities including the sizable Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (around 30,000 students). In order to allow city residents to bypass corrupt governmental procedures, the PT instituted a means of power sharing called the *orçamento participativo* or "participatory budget" (PB). As Hilary Wainwright describes it, "[t]hrough a process of meetings in which they elect delegates, citizens decide on the priorities for the municipal investment budget. They argue for the relative importance of investment in projects of public works, services, and the social economy."<sup>91</sup> The long history of the PB in Porto Alegre is complex and is detailed elsewhere, but it is worth reviewing a number of aspects of the PB that are reminiscent of the community benefits agreement process and organizing taking place in New Haven.<sup>92</sup> First, one might note similarities in the democratic nature of both processes, involving voting on all major decisions and the collective methods of identifying and tallying issue preferences. And the structure for identifying priorities is very similar to that in CORD. In the case of the PB, preferences for particular budgetary expenditures are oriented through a list of issue categories, as in CORD's approach to devising a community benefits proposal: "street paving, sewage and water, housing, health care, education, transportation, social assistance and city organization, including parks, sports and cultural facilities, and public lighting."<sup>93</sup>

Second, the PB was based in organized neighborhoods and allowed for the possibility of shifting governance away from corrupt city politicians and bureaucrats.<sup>94</sup> Third, the PB involved a coordination of neighborhood organizing, labor unions, and a sympathetic local government. As Celso Daniel noted, the PB grew out of the idea of "taking the principles of democracy from social movements, including the trade union movement, with us when we

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Theory Working Group (May 17, 2005). For more on global social movement unionism, see Moody, *Workers in a Lean World*.

<sup>91</sup> Hilary Wainwright, "Porto Alegre: Public Power Beyond the State," in Sue Branford and Bernardo Kucinski, *Lula and the Workers Party in Brazil* (New York: The New Press, 2003), with Hilary Wainwright, 108.

<sup>92</sup> For some English-language treatments of the PB in Porto Alegre, see Wainwright, 107-135; Benjamin Goldfrank, "Making Participation Work in Porto Alegre," in Gianpaolo Baiocchi, ed., *Radicals in Power* (London: Zed Books, 2003), 27-52; and Bernard Cassen, "Brazil's New Experiment: Participative Democracy in Porto Alegre," trans. Barbara Wilson, *Le Monde Diplomatique* (English Edition), October 1998, viewed online at <http://mondediplo.com/1998/10/08brazil> on 22 January 2005.

<sup>93</sup> Goldmark, 40.

<sup>94</sup> Thanks to Celso Alves for his comments on the PB and PT.

gained office.”<sup>95</sup> Hence we might see the PB as a logical, city-governmental extension of labor and community organizing movements akin to those of CCNE, CORD, and US-based social movement unions. The significant time-commitments in social movements have meant that in both cases a small, committed minority has been primarily involved—although in both cases with broader community approval.<sup>96</sup> And given that the PB operates out of the city government and emerged as a PT initiative, the PB is closely identified with a particular political party and contested on that basis, whereas politicization around the CBA struggle in New Haven, effectively a one-party town, takes the form of media battles between the unions/CCNE/CORD and the university itself.<sup>97</sup>

Several concrete results of the PB process have helped facilitate community-based control over developers in ways rather reminiscent of the community benefits agreements in Los Angeles and union-based social movements in New Haven. For example, in 1998, Bernard Cassen described the following:

The developers had their greedy eyes on the *vila* Planetario, a collection of shacks inhabited by scavengers occupying a prime site in the middle of town. All they had to do was send in the dogs and bulldozers as usual, to clear the way for the construction of high-class flats or offices. The [PB] enabled the inhabitants to be rehoused in the same place, in permanent dwellings. The *vila* is now the Jardim Planetario.

Another model operation is under way in the Cristal sector, where the Multiplan Group is putting up a shopping centre, the Big Shop, covering an area of 52,000 square metres. But the municipal authorities have insisted that the group must first, at its own expense, rehouse the inhabitants of the *vilas* that had occupied the site of the proposed complex. The first batch of 400 houses is currently being built in another part of the city and should be completed within the next few weeks. Delegates from

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<sup>95</sup> Cited in Wainwright, 109. Daniel, a PT mayor of Santo André, was murdered in January 2002, possibly by drug mafia members opposing the new governmental methods (Wainwright, 110).

<sup>96</sup> Wainwright (119) notes that participation was at around 40,000 in 2003, although a delegate system was designed to increase representation of less active parts of the city. In the context of CORD, the surveys are the organization’s greatest source of legitimacy, but even these only represent about 10% of the neighborhood the organization claims to represent. Cassen notes, however, that 80% of Porto Alegre citizens approve of the PB; although no similar survey exists for the much smaller CORD in the Hill North, it seems that approval of the organization is quite strong and growing.

<sup>97</sup> See Goldmark, 40-43 on the way in which the PB is identified with, and imagined as an instrument of, the PT by other political parties. Of course, in both cases, progressive forces have gained significant control over their city government. In the case of Porto Alegre, a progressive social-democratic labor party is firmly in command and contested by a range of yet more progressive forces in the city. In New Haven the strong mayoral system and history of machine politics prevent the dominance of progressive forces to the same degree, despite the progressive inclinations of the Board of Aldermen. Moreover, the overarching presence of the Democratic Party—which dominates city politics—limits the political possibilities available to the Board and even the progressive social movements in the city. But even within the Democratic Party, conflicts do take place between progressive candidates (often sponsored or supported by the unions) and insider candidates with connections to the mayor’s office. The city elections in fall 2005 featured contested races of this sort.

the first *vila* to be evacuated visit the building site every Saturday to check on progress and 80 inhabitants of the *vila* are in fact employed on the project, so the finishing should be good. When we called to look at it, about 30 very young officials from the local authority housing department were there, finding out on the ground what people's power really means.<sup>98</sup>

In addition, Hilary Wainwright has noted that

In the early 1990s, the French company Carrefour wanted to build one of its supermarkets in the north-central region of Porto Alegre. This region has many small businesses, especially shops, and these small entrepreneurs were extremely angry. With the example of the PB on their doorstep, they reacted by organizing a lively public meeting and decided to take their concerns to the thematic PB plenary of the budget on economic policy. "We wanted to set up a committee to negotiate for compensation for the small businesses in the area, as a condition of the new supermarket," said one of the activists. "The participatory budget was the obvious channel for this proposal."

The outcome was unprecedented. Carrefour had never before had to make real concessions to gain entry into a new marketplace. While normally its supermarkets let spaces inside for around twenty local shops, the Porto Alegre committee won an agreement for forty. The company also agreed to employ young people, since they are the ones suffering most from high unemployment, and to help fund training schemes. In the past, the government had successfully bargained for infrastructural improvements from transnationals, such as McDonalds, but it had never before obtained social improvements.<sup>99</sup>

These unprecedented victories over large corporate developers are highly reminiscent of the kinds of actions taken by CCNE, CORD, and the coalitions in Los Angeles that won community benefits agreements. The battles over corporate housing development in the Vila Planetário are not dissimilar to those over Trade Union Plaza and the "University Village" or over the public housing building at 904 Howard Avenue. And the housing and employment gains made in the Big Shop and Carrefour developments are quite similar to gains achieved in the Los Angeles community benefits agreements or those sought by CORD. And that both New Haven and Porto Alegre have in the past typically capitulated to corporate development without objection reflects the fact that both cities are constrained by and must compensate for federal and state governments that embrace neoliberal policies.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Cassen.

<sup>99</sup> Wainwright, 133.

<sup>100</sup> Wainwright (127-128) argues that the Porto Alegre city government has to make up for federal government's damaging neoliberal policies. The city compensates to the degree it can through the PB, but it perhaps perpetuates the larger government's neoliberal policies in the process. In New Haven, the city government tries to fulfill a similar role to that of the PT in Porto Alegre but political organizing in the city has not been powerful enough to centralize the process to nearly the same degree---perhaps it could produce something like the PB if it had a particularly progressive mayor. So, the New Haven Board of Aldermen supports and encourages piecemeal solutions to try to add up to a social provision (like the Living Wage Initiative or the community benefits agreement idea). In the process, the city administration

Still, we should not blithely point out the congruence between these two cities without realizing that a genuinely international movement labor-community movement that shares strategies and coordinates activities has never actually existed, perhaps outside of the various Communist Internationals. And although the goal of a global workers' movement—however difficult to imagine, let alone realize—is laudable and will ultimately be necessary to building an egalitarian world, it too should not be fetishized in the name of a quasi-academic cosmopolitanism that views all things global through rose-tinted glasses.<sup>101</sup> After returning from Porto Alegre, Rev. Marks mentioned to me that despite his amazing and transformative experience at the forum, it mostly inspired him to come back to New Haven and do more organizing—a sentiment with which I heartily concurred.

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perhaps abnegates the greater responsibility of working towards a city- or state-based system of provision, relying instead on developers and unions/community organizations to take care of things.

<sup>101</sup> Some of the most remarkable panels at the World Social Forum 2005 were those involving progressive labor unions from different parts of the world—such as one that included unions from South Africa, Korea, Japan, India, US, Brazil, and Argentina. One panelist later noted to Michael Denning that the panel itself was nearly impossible to organize, given the coordination in schedules and translation requirements. But if, as Denning mentioned in conversation, they often talked at cross-purposes and spoke not so much to each other but merely in the same space, it was nonetheless a good and highly informative effort.