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5 LAANE brain

Understanding the model and future of the Los Angeles alliance for a new economy

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Introduction

The Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE) is the acknowledged powerhouse and anchor of the Partnership for Working Families (PWF). While PWF owes its origins to many organizers and organizations, LAANE was the start-up that pioneered a new kind of hybrid institution – one based in the labor movement but not entirely of it; one tied to organizing but also focused on research; one set up to push government to adopt more progressive policies but to do so by working with elected officials and allies within government; and one created to design policy packages to address economic problems often caused by irresponsible corporations *and* help build power for the labor, community organizing and environmental justice movements.¹

LAANE emerged in the wake of the Los Angeles uprising of 1992, a social explosion triggered by the acquittal of LA Police Department officers whose brutal beating of Rodney King was caught on camera. But while the police beating and the subsequent acquittal was the match, a significant portion of the tinder was the despair caused by persistent racial inequalities and economic injustice. By the early 1990s, Los Angeles had become a city where people of color comprised a majority of its roughly 3.5 million (at that time) residents. Yet this “new majority” was emerging just as the city and the broader regions were experiencing extreme economic dislocation due to deindustrialization and growing numbers of the working poor.²

The widening economic divide, growing racial discord and a massive influx of immigrants was a challenge to the region’s labor movement, which was still disproportionately dominated by white leaders and which had not invested in efforts to organize the new wave of workers in manufacturing, services and other sectors. As a result, the labor movement was losing members and losing political clout. Only the growth of public sector unions – representing city, county and school district employees – kept LA’s labor movement afloat as a power broker in local and state politics.

The creation of LAANE was based on the untested premise that the labor movement could be revitalized if it invested in organizing the new wave of

immigrant workers and forged coalitions with multiracial community and faith-based organizations and, later on, environmental justice groups. LAANE's emergence was part of a broader "social movement moment" in Los Angeles which saw the start and expansion of a myriad of activist organizations, partly in response to the 1992 civil unrest. Gradually, the typical method of building power through single-issue organizations was supplanted by the mosaic of intersecting groups constituting a movement ecosystem. The relative decline of corporate capital – and fragmentation of the city's business elite – in this period also opened up a pathway for new ideas and, importantly, a new narrative or story about who the economy was for and how it worked.³

Into that combination of a vacuum and a whirlwind entered LAANE with a new model of building community power, shifting the narrative and impacting policy. Win after win – first slowly gained, then seemingly stacked on one another – created momentum. A modest but hard-won living wage ordinance led to the creation of community benefits agreements which in turn led to campaigns at America's most active ports, which led to proposals to create construction careers and restructure the city's recycling programs. Along the way, LAANE became increasingly sophisticated at an inside-outside game that involved relationships with political figures and bureaucrats as well as supporting the revolving door of activists going to work for government agencies and LAANE recruiting key government staffers to join its own staff. LAANE has since become a major actor in the city's and region's politics and culture, with an annual "city of justice" dinner that brings together activists, philanthropists, politicians and celebrities and raises up to \$800,000 of LAANE's \$4 million annual budget.

It's been an inspiring record of accomplishment but shifts may be needed to meet the future. While the rhetoric and some of the work has been regional, LAANE's biggest victories have been in the city of Los Angeles. Recognizing that weakness – particularly the way it limited gains at the ports which are controlled separately by the cities of Los Angeles and Long Beach – LAANE has developed a long-term campaign to shift the politics of Long Beach, itself a city with over 450,000 residents. That campaign – which has required the development of a local organizing base – has evolved in ways that could impact the organization in a positive direction as it grapples with how to combine grassroots organizing, coalition building among progressive nonprofits and engagement in electoral politics.

LAANE has also been grappling with the changing politics and climate around racial injustice. This has involved looking at each of its campaigns through a racial lens, hiring more African American staff and encouraging its union partners to recognize the importance of both race and class issues to building a broad progressive movement. As LAANE has won more and more policy battles, it has also come to recognize the importance of not only passing those policies but also making sure that they are effectively implemented: getting the city government to restructure an entire recycling industry is different than securing a living wage for subcontracted workers. And finally, with the economy derailed by the COVID-19 crisis, LAANE's message that we do better when we protect all of us is highly

relevant but it is also highly likely to be challenged by a business sector seeking to take advantage of economics distress and labor's diminished strength.⁴

LAANE emerges

For most of the twentieth century, Los Angeles was viewed as America's Eden – the land of sunshine, beaches, open spaces, opportunity and ambition. But it was an imbalanced vision: in the post-World War II period, the city's business and civic elite forged a local growth coalition – made possible by federal funds and policies – that promoted a combination of suburban sprawl and downtown redevelopment, largely locking out the poor and people of color from the benefits of both.⁵

The resulting economic and racial disparities led to the Watts rebellion of 1965. Another in a long line of incidences of police violence unleashed long-smoldering, cumulative rage at the police and at pervasive racial discrimination, with unrest resulting in 34 deaths, 1,032 injuries and 3,952 arrests. Then Mayor Sam Yorty and business leaders did little to respond to the grievances that led to the violence; instead, Yorty stoked racial tensions by encouraging stronger police measures and downplaying the social and economic causes.⁶

This energized the city's liberal forces to find an alternative to Yorty and his conservative agenda. A liberal alliance, primarily of Black and Jewish Angelenos, coalesced around Tom Bradley – a police lieutenant prior to his election in 1963 as the first Black member of the Los Angeles City Council – to replace Yorty. Bradley narrowly lost in his effort to unseat Yorty in 1969, but was successful 4 years later, and served as mayor for 20 years. More than just a mayor, Bradley became a symbol of the city's racial enlightenment, an image he reinforced by fostering cross-racial alliances (although he also declined to get involved in an early 1970s fight for compulsory busing to integrate the Los Angeles schools).

By the mid-1980s, however, the Bradley coalition had begun to falter. The 1978 passage of Proposition 13, a statewide tax limitation, restrained the ability of California's cities to raise funds. The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, rapid deindustrialization, declines in private sector unionization and subsequent cuts of federal funds for urban social programs put the squeeze on the cities. Although Bradley increased municipal hiring of African Americans and Latinos, diversified the police department and helped minority entrepreneurs gain access to city contracts, he did little to stem the city's loss of well-paying jobs and its widening economic disparities. Politically, he became increasingly reliant on private developers and investors and began to neglect his original political base.⁷

Los Angeles uprising

When the city again exploded in civil unrest in April 1992 – leading to 55 deaths, 2,383 injuries and more than 17,000 arrests – it was clear that the great promise of the Bradley coalition had dissipated. By then, the city's business leadership had also become more fragmented and less cohesive. During its postwar boom, Los

Angeles was run by a shadowy handful of businessmen – the so-called Committee of 25 – who spoke with one voice, typically through the then reactionary *Los Angeles Times*. By the early 1990s, there was no longer a well-organized, coherent corporate power structure led by people with a long-term stake in the city's well-being. Increasingly, the largest corporate employers in Los Angeles were run by branch managers who were accountable to higher-ups located outside the region and even outside California. Meanwhile, the city's economy increasingly became dominated by real estate developers, large universities and major hospitals. Politically, the vacuum of business leadership was filled primarily by elected officials' reliance on contributions from a wide variety of firms with a direct stake in local policymaking. These include contractors that do business with the Metropolitan Transit Authority, the port, the airport, the school district and other government agencies, and developers seeking zoning approvals and tax breaks.

The response of the Los Angeles political and business elite to the 1992 riots revealed how out-of-touch they were with everyday life in the city's neighborhoods, particularly those populated by Black and Latino residents. Bradley appointed Peter Ueberroth, who had orchestrated the business community's embrace of the 1984 Olympics, to spearhead the city's official response to the riots. The Rebuild LA program, later called simply RLA, was top-down in its structure and program. Its 94 board members included a wide spectrum of business, government, civic, religious and celebrity names, but it had no organic connection to the riot-torn neighborhoods it was supposed to serve. RLA hired a private consulting firm to estimate how much private investment would be needed to address the high levels of joblessness in the area. The answer: \$4 billion to \$6 billion. But RLA raised and invested less than \$400 million in its five years of existence.⁸

But while the 1992 civil unrest revealed the region's economic and racial chasms as well as the shortcomings of the corporate elite, it also highlighted the gaps in Los Angeles' progressive movement. In the wake of the uprising, progressives were rightly angry at the police brutality and economic disenfranchisement that produced the rage – but they were also rightly chagrined that that righteous anger had burnt the city rather than spawned a new vision for the city that could guide social change activists. In the wake of the unrest, activists began to experiment with new models, including a region-wide strategy focused on organizing bus riders, a campaign to push the entertainment industry to train and hire residents of South LA and a sophisticated electoral strategy that eventually led to the election in 2005 of Antonio Villaraigosa, a former labor organizer with deep ties to labor and communities of color.⁹

While LAANE eventually emerged as a key part of that progressive infrastructure, it was building on earlier efforts to improve worker power. With unionization declining in tandem with deindustrialization, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) brought its national Justice for Janitors campaign to Los Angeles in 1988. Focusing on mobilizing and unionizing the mostly immigrant workforce among janitors in LA's largest office buildings, the campaign

won significant wage and benefit victories by “masterfully combining top-down and bottom-up strategies.”¹⁰ It used corporate and industry research to help organizers develop strategies at the national level, while also employing a stepped-up commitment to organizing and empowering rank-and-file members on the ground. That campaign showed the power of the inside-outside game – combining lobbying elected officials with protest – at which LAANE would later excel. This was particularly evident in a violent police attack in 1990 on janitors protesting the national cleaning company International Service Systems (ISS) in LA’s tony Century City area, which led unions to enlist pressure from Mayor Tom Bradley to resolve the conflict.

This victory for immigrant janitors (and a related campaign that led to the unionization of over 70,000 home health care workers) laid the groundwork for a new approach to achieving a pro-worker agenda. Maria Elena Durazo, the daughter of immigrant farmworkers, had led a revolt within Local 11 of the hotel workers union to make it pay more attention to the increasingly immigrant workforce – and she knew more was needed to advance their interests. She tapped Madeline Janis, an immigrant and tenants’ rights lawyer and activist who had led CARECEN, a key Central American refugee rights organization, to establish a nonprofit group that would bridge the gap between labor and LA’s liberal community and elected officials, clergy and academics. Working alongside them was Miguel Contreras, Durazo’s husband, who had learned his organizing skills working for the United Farmworkers union, worked for the hotel workers and in 1994 became political director of the LA County Federation of Labor, and two years later, its head.¹¹

The first iteration of what was to become LAANE was an organization called the Tourism Industry Development Council (TIDC).¹² Formed in 1993, TIDC intended to capture the attention of a hospitality industry preparing for the 1994 FIFA World Cup, the international soccer championship. The idea – which later became a pillar of LAANE’s organizing model – was to draw attention to the low wages in the industry just as reporters were arriving looking for “color stories,” a strategy that emphasized the power of communications. But it also included a strategy to forge an alliance with other sectors, in this case by organizing tours of neighborhoods of color that were left off the usual map of “places to see” but included small businesses that could benefit from having visitors and their dollars steered in their direction.¹³

TIDC had several of the elements that would eventually become key to its successor formation, LAANE. First, it was labor-initiated and was intended not only to raise worker wages and expand union membership but also to forge connections with communities of color and with unexpected allies like small business. It also was very conscious about advancing a particular narrative: one could hardly look at the name, the Tourism Industry Development Council, and make the usual anti-labor claim that it was attempting to sink the industry; rather, the story needed to be done to make the industry and its workers thrive. Under the subsequent banner of “shared prosperity,” LAANE would seek to revise the notion of a “healthy business climate” by recognizing the importance of living wages,

affordable housing and (eventually) a clean environment as key components of a prosperous economy.¹⁴

TIDC also reflected another characteristic: it was nimble enough to shift focus when a battle emerged with regard to another aspect of the tourist industry, the threat of worker dismissal at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX). In 1995, Republican Mayor Richard Riordan asked the City's Airport Commission to award new franchises for the stores and restaurants at LAX. The new owners laid off about 300 workers and replaced them with lower-paid, nonunionized employees. Working closely with Local 11 of the hotel workers union and with the support of progressive City Council member Jackie Goldberg, TIDC and allies got the City Council to adopt a pioneering worker retention law requiring new owners of LAX franchises to keep the existing employees and to pay them living wages.¹⁵

That victory set the stage for a major campaign to get the Mayor and City Council to adopt a "living wage" ordinance modeled on one passed by another labor-community coalition in Baltimore.¹⁶ In 1997, the LA City Council passed the living wage ordinance – mandating higher wages (initially \$7.25, which is \$11.75 in 2020 dollars) and benefits for workers at firms that had contracts with the city. Operating then as the Los Angeles Living Wage Coalition, LAANE and its allies among unions, community groups and faith-based groups¹⁷ spent a year building support on the 15-member City Council, spearheaded by Council Member Jackie Goldberg, a close labor ally. The Los Angeles business community fiercely opposed the law, with the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce claiming that the law, if passed, would cost the city \$130 million a year. Responding to business pleas, Mayor Riordan, a moderate Republican, vetoed the law, but the City Council overrode the veto.

The living wage campaign added an additional element to the LAANE model: research to counter business claims and lay out alternatives. In 1996, the coalition fighting for the wage hike brought in an economist, Robert Pollin, to do a study for the City of Los Angeles which suggested that there would be positive impact on reducing worker poverty and minimal impacts on costs or employment levels. Perhaps as significant, LAANE commissioned an important study after the fact that demonstrated that the estimated positive impacts were indeed what developed.¹⁸ It showed that the Chamber of Commerce, which had warned that the law would trigger economic hardship, was crying wolf – setting a pattern for work challenging business claims that progressive policies "kill jobs" or otherwise stifle private investment.

The living wage campaign also put workers at the center of the campaign and provided opportunities for them to tell their stories and put a human face on the reality of poverty. And it led to the development of a new name: the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy. There was controversy over the rechristening: some on the TIDC board wanted the title to instead refer to a "just economy" but the idea of simply claiming that a "new economy" had to be just – much like developing the tourist industry had to promote worker livelihoods – won the day. Indeed, LAANE's use of phrases like "new economy" and "living wage" was

an intentional effort to identify itself with forward-looking and positive change, rather than be viewed as simply a protest movement trying to stop bad things from happening.

LAANE soon began to build on the living wage approach of demanding quid pro quos from businesses with city subsidies. It did so by coming up with another new policy vehicle: community benefits agreements (CBAs). This phrase, too, was designed to position its opponents on the wrong side of the narrative battle. In its first CBA campaign, in 1998, LAANE targeted a major new hotel, retail and theater development project in Hollywood. Like most real estate projects, this one needed many approvals and permits from the City. LAANE's major ally on the City Council, Jackie Goldberg, represented the Hollywood area and was willing to use her leverage over city approvals to insist that the developer agree to provide traffic improvements, a living wage for construction workers, a first-source hiring plan to hire back laid off airport workers and a policy of union-neutrality in exchange for city approvals. This campaign signaled yet another piece of the LAANE model falling into place: an inside-outside game where political allies would carry the ball while LAANE would help mobilize labor and community support.

After winning the CBA campaign in Hollywood, LAANE took on an even bigger target – the proposed major expansion of the Staples Center – then home of the Los Angeles Lakers, Clippers, Sparks and Kings sports teams as well as a major concert venue – in downtown LA. LAANE worked with a coalition of community groups to negotiate the CBA with the developer. Leveraging the need to obtain required city approvals and subsidies, the coalition forced the developer to agree to a “first source” hiring policy for people whose home or job was displaced by the development, a requirement that 70 percent of the 5,500 permanent jobs would pay a living wage or be covered by a collective-bargaining agreement, and concessions about improving nearby parks and promoting affordable housing.

A key element of this effort was the partnership between LAANE and community groups with seemingly less power who had long been suspicious that their concerns would be swept to one side in any coalition with labor, particularly given the history of the building trades unions who generally took the side of developers in order to secure union-wage jobs for their members. While not quite fully equal partners – and the reality is that the unions turned to the community only after the developer had reneged on initial promises to labor – the 2001 Staples Center CBA helped to make real the labor-community alliance, including a surprising role for immigrant residents finding their way to political power.¹⁹

The idea of labor teaming up with local tenants, environmental justice groups and others to secure local benefits from development was reinforced in the 2004 effort to secure a CBA with Los Angeles World Airports, the agency that runs the region's airports. A seemingly motley crew of local activists, labor leaders, environmentalists and others secured a \$500 million agreement that promised to soundproof houses and schools, provide jobs to local residents and generate small business opportunities in the areas surrounding the airport.

LAANE rising

The living wage and CBA victories put LAANE on the map of the wider labor movement and local and national foundations. This brought additional resources which also made possible the ability to think ahead rather than simply reacting to opportunities. LAANE's research and policy staff began to look at the LA economy in terms of specific economic sectors and to analyze whether, and how, these sectors were dependent on government for subsidies, permits and regulations. With this lens, LAANE could focus on specific industries and forge alliances with labor, community and environmental groups that sought to hold those industries and corporations to higher standards of corporate responsibility. As Madeline Janis, LAANE's executive director from its beginning through 2012, commented:

The left tends to focus on the economy from 60,000 feet high. It leaves progressives with no sense of what they can do to change it. If you focus on hotels or manufacturing or retail, you can figure out an agenda.²⁰

Since the early 2000s, LAANE's campaigns have focused on restructuring the ports of Los Angeles, reworking the trash and recycling industry, guiding the development of the construction careers that might be generated from massive public investment in light rail and alternative energy and requiring companies in the retail sector to adopt "fair work week" policies for its employees. Much of the work reflected an emerging Blue-Green analysis and coalition, particularly at the Ports. One early sign of LAANE's clout was that Mayor James Hahn, a liberal Democrat elected in 2001, appointed Janis to the board of the powerful Community Redevelopment Agency, where she used that position to advocate for more pro-labor and community-oriented progressive policies and not cater to businesses and real estate developers, as the CRA had done in the past.²¹

In 2005, with support from Latinos and white liberals as well as Black voters defecting from Hahn, Villaraigosa defeated Hahn and then won reelection four years later, ushering in what was initially one of the most progressive big city regimes in the nation. Moreover, a majority of the 15-member City Council owed their seats to support from unions and their community allies, giving LAANE significant influence inside City Hall. In 2013, Eric Garcetti succeeded Villaraigosa; Garcetti also had a close relationship with LAANE and attended its annual fundraising dinner, while his wife was on LAANE's advisory board. By cultivating these allies inside City Hall, LAANE was able to make significant headway in a number of major campaigns.

Before examining LAANE's historic and contemporary campaigns in more detail, we want to acknowledge that in evaluating LAANE, it is difficult to completely distinguish how much of its success has been due to its model of combining research, communications, organizing and policy advocacy as core elements of its campaigns – and how much has been due to the political skills of its leaders and the wider political and economic milieu. On the former, Marshall Ganz has stressed that one of the key elements of successful organizing and political

advocacy is the ability of leaders to be nimble and flexible enough to take advantage of the conditions they confront.²² Studies of social movements often understate, or ignore, the importance of political skill. Successful activists understand that human beings are actors in their own history. They don't wait for the time to be ripe. Instead, they ripen the time.²³

As for the milieu, recall that Los Angeles was in a particular moment of historic transformation and social movement experimentation – and this made it possible for LAANE to thrive. To be clear, we are not arguing that LAANE's approach is uniquely confined to a particular place; the fact that PWF organizations in other cities have adopted all or part of LAANE's approach suggests that it has much to offer. Rather, we are suggesting that context matters, including a particular reconfiguration of labor and community partners, a uniquely fragmented business class and a growing social movement ecosystem. Replications in other locales have had to figure out how to identify points of leverage within their local political economy.²⁴

For example, Working Partnerships, LAANE's sister organization in the high-tech Silicon Valley area of northern California, initially followed a LAANE template, working on a living wage hike as its signal campaign. But much of what it eventually pursued was quite distinctive, including a campaign to provide health insurance to all undocumented children, a focus on tackling the issues of gig work and temp agencies and an emphasis on affordable housing, a serious concern not only of the region's working families but also the high-tech companies that were having difficulty attracting employees who could afford to live within commuting distance of their jobs.

In short, both LAANE and Working Partnerships (and other PWF affiliates) responded to and were emblematic of the context in which they emerged. LAANE is very much of the labor movement but it also very much of Los Angeles – and one of the distinct pluses of the PWF model has been the clear commitment to adapting to local conditions rather than assuming a sort of lock-step franchise operation. This is a clear lesson – one not always followed – for other organizing and political networks.²⁵

What is the LAANE model?

The LAANE model centers on labor-community partnerships, expanding the role of the labor movement beyond bargaining for wages and benefits to building a movement that secures benefits for an entire community through addressing the structures of industry.²⁶ Although deceptively simple, the model blurs long-held lines in the sand between workers and the structure of production as well as between economy and community. To do this, LAANE targets industries that are “sticky” and so less likely to move from a region if wages increase, regulations are strengthened or taxes are more progressive. These industries include transportation, construction, education, tourism, logistics, waste management and energy provision. In this way, it further connects the responsibility of businesses to the communities in which they operate and make profit. LAANE also leverages the



Figure 5.1 LAANE's Elements of Successful Campaigns.

power of the public sector, utilizing and even creating new methods in which public power can shape commerce, including regulation, universal wage and benefit standards, enforcement and discretionary approvals.

Over time, campaigns have been developed in comprehensive, including research, policy development, organizing and communications. Internally, that translates to a “team model” with expertise in each area working collectively toward systemic change. Externally, it translates into an inside-outside strategy that cultivates relationships with both decision-makers and those who implement policy, and a self-conscious focus on the need to build and sustain power (Figure 5.1).

Organizing has always remained at the center of the LAANE model. Whether the organization is engaging workers at job sites, impacted communities, labor leadership, “grass tops” of progressive leadership or unlikely partners, the model cannot function without its center. The role, targets and intensity of that organizing has changed across time and with the particular needs of campaigns. With partners, there is a strategic process to understand the organizing landscape – the interest of organized workers and community members, the mobilization needed to move policy and the capacity and needs of unorganized workers and communities. Finally, there is a commitment to organizing and power building as fundamental rather than instrumental; they are not vehicles for a policy win but ends in and of themselves that will help to correct the long-term imbalances of the current economic system.²⁷

A key aspect of organizing is to give workers and community residents a public voice in the campaigns. LAANE devotes significant time and resources to

identifying people who can tell their stories to others in similar situations, to the media, to targets, including public officials, corporate executives and others. This is partly about communications but it is not instrumental in the sense of parading individuals to win a policy; there is a sincere effort to build a cohort of leaders. As a result, it has been critical in all of LAANE's campaigns to identify leaders and ensure that workers and community residents are the public face of the campaigns.

The role of research has remained vital to the work of LAANE. Beginning with the living wage study in 1996, research has been used as a tool to assert the collective benefits of increased wages to cities and communities, thus extending the number of stakeholders involved in a wage fight. LAANE's research also demystified the mechanism of industries, allowing campaigns to craft nuanced solutions. Research reports have also become central to crafting a communications strategy targeting the media, partly because they offer a sense of rigor and confidence in both the analysis of the problems being exposed and the policy changes being proposed.

LAANE has occasionally collaborated with outside researchers but it also employs full-time staffers who are responsible for conducting research – typically by crafting profiles of particular industries and learning what leverage local, county or state government has to force these industries (or particular companies) to act more responsibly. Some LAANE researchers have degrees in planning, geography, public policy, sociology or economics, but some learn on the job. The research is designed not simply to provide knowledge for knowledge's sake, but to be useful in waging campaigns – it is sometimes called “tactical investigation.” Careful research – for example, learning how the recycling industry or the ports really work – has also profoundly informed the design of policy mechanisms that could help raise wages and shift conditions for workers.

As for policy, in a world wracked by deindustrialization and slipping union strength, policy change can be seen as a much more efficient approach to changing conditions. Mandating better wages or openness to unionization through a community, benefits agreements can leverage community and political power to assist workers even when labor organizing is relatively weak. Over time, LAANE built the internal capacity (and the broader ecosystem capacity) to craft policy language and design policy mechanisms. From CBAs, Project Labor Agreements, community shared solar and exclusive waste franchises, LAANE leadership, staff, partners and lawyers from across the ecosystem designed policies that busy and understaffed public officials could adopt as their own and champion. But LAANE recognizes that changing policy isn't simply a matter of developing good ideas. It also requires developing the political clout to get elected officials or businesses to adopt and implement them. Every aspect of LAANE's strategy involves changing the power dynamics between capital and labor.

Part of LAANE's hidden strength lies in narrative and communications. LAANE has its own communications department and assigns at least one of its staff to each campaign as part of the team approach. Each campaign seeks to generate media attention so that the public and policymakers, as well as corporate

targets, understand that the “problem” has become an “issue” – a matter of controversy that needs to be debated and resolved in order to improve people’s lives. The research staff helps identify the problem and craft a solution. The organizing staff helps to mobilize workers and allies, and to train leaders to tell their personal stories. The communications staff seeks to generate public attention to the problem and the campaign to solve it.

According to Danny Feingold – who joined LAANE in 1999, helped develop LAANE’s communications capacity and eventually served as communications director until 2016 – he inherited a narrative waiting to be fully realized. In his view, the living wage campaign established the notion that “there was a responsibility on the part of both government and business to make sure that the companies that were benefitting from taxpayer money were using that money in a way that would support people to be able to live at a decent level.”²⁸ But equally important was that this sort of measure – and everything else LAANE would propose – would be good for the economy as a whole.²⁹ At the time, this was not a well-trodden argument utilized in the labor movement nor was it a solid part of labor communications; unions tended to expand on why something would be good for workers rather than for the whole economy. But the CBA struggles provided a perfect opportunity for a broader argument of how equity could improve prosperity, and this became part and parcel of LAANE’s communications strategy.

An additional component of each campaign (and the overall organizational) strategy is an “inside-outside” approach with several different dimensions. The first is an effort to elect or appoint “movement officials” who are accountable and in relationship with an independent base.³⁰ Over the years, LAANE has successfully lobbied to get public officials to appoint LAANE staff, leaders and/or allies to key institutions like the Community Redevelopment Agency, the Ports Commission (which oversees half of the busiest port complex in the world), the Planning Commission, the Public Works Commission and the LA Convention and Tourism Development Board. Several LAANE staff have also transitioned into positions within the legislative and administrative arenas.³¹ And it’s not just a one-way street. LAANE has been successful in hiring staff with experience in government and with unions and other allies, in order to take advantage of their skills and personal contacts. For example, current executive director, Roxana Tynan, began working at LAANE in 2001 after having worked as an organizer for UNITE HERE and then as a deputy to LA City Council member Jackie Goldberg, who was LAANE’s closest ally in spearheading the living wage campaign on the inside. In addition, members of LAANE’s board of directors – which includes leaders of unions, immigrant rights, housing justice and environmental organizations as well as two academics – have ties to elected officials, journalists and funders that they utilize on LAANE’s behalf.

Another inside-outside dimension is the cultivation and maintenance of a movement on the outside that can apply pressure and hold elected officials accountable, including through protest, rallies and demonstrations, media and grassroots lobbying. LAANE uses staff resources to both organize workers and

community members to put pressure on elected official and dedicates staff time to lobbying elected officials, with several staff registering as lobbyists with the city of Los Angeles. Another often overlooked component of the inside-outside game is the cultivation of relationships with bureaucratic staff within the administrative arena who will ultimately craft and implement the programs and enforce wins. LAANE has excelled in this task: by building relationships with bureaucratic staff in the early phases of the campaign, its staff are able to get buy-in and utilize administrative expertise as they write policy recommendations and reports.

The model in action: the ports

The Ports Campaign illustrates the LAANE model in action. Starting in the mid-2000s, the campaign sought to address the woefully low wages of port truck drivers. At the time, drivers who were misclassified as independent contractors were making nearly 30 percent less than drivers who were classified as employees.³² All drivers were also subject to serious health impacts because they typically experienced long waiting times in their idling diesel trucks to pick up cargo. That same pollution had devastating health impacts on the Los Angeles region and the communities near the port and along travel routes, making residents subject to high levels of asthma and other disorders.

The campaign released an innovative research report, *The Road to Shared Prosperity: The Regional Economic Benefits of the San Pedro Bay Ports' Clean Trucks Program*, that laid out a policy solution called the Clean Trucks Program and calculated the direct and indirect benefits to communities surrounding the port complex, the region as a whole and the port truck drivers themselves.³³ LAANE then worked to build an unusual multi-sector coalition called the Coalition for Clean & Safe Ports that included traditional environmental organizations, people of color-run environmental justice organizations, public health organizations and, of course labor, including the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, which represents truck drivers and hoped to organize the port drivers if they were re-classified as employees. This was an early instance of a labor-environmental coalition (sometimes called a “blue-green” alliance) with constituencies and organizations that had rarely worked together in the past.³⁴ And because the port’s toxic pollution primarily hurt low-income communities of color and because the drivers were disproportionately people of color, the campaign had an important element of racial as well as economic justice.³⁵

The policy solution, the Clean Trucks Program, linked reducing pollution through shorter idling times and phasing out older vehicles with reclassifying drivers as employees. The argument – one that was embraced by environmental groups long used to the logic of asking companies to pay for the externalities from their operations – was that if trucking companies were forced to pay drivers as workers rather than independent operators, they would be incentivized to reduce waiting time (and diesel-idling time) at the ports. Moreover, larger trucking companies with worker-drivers would have more financial capacity to purchase

lower-emission trucks compared to small independent driver-owners, who were already saddled with extraordinary financial burdens and were forced to drive old polluting diesel engine vehicles.³⁶ What is more, LAANE's initial analysis concluded that inclusion of a measure to encourage "employee conversion" would help Los Angeles County realize nearly half a billion dollars in direct and indirect benefits (in 2007 dollars), all on top of even larger benefits due to improvements in health as a result of lower truck pollution.³⁷ That larger package of benefits included a reduction in publicly funded antipoverty programs, indirect benefits to communities from increased wages and a reduction in health care costs.³⁸

The program was adopted by the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles in 2007 and 2008. Subsequent research found that the Clean Trucks Program exceeded its environmental goals, reducing emissions by 90 percent and reducing health costs by 96 percent.³⁹ But the worker part of the program came up short. Long Beach rejected the employee conversion element when it adopted the policy and Los Angeles created a severability clause that would allow it to implement the program even if parts of it were rejected in court.⁴⁰ And that did indeed happen: in 2013, after winding its way through the courts, a final decision from the US Supreme Court found in *American Trucking Ass'ns v. City of Los Angeles* that the agreements used to require trucking companies to treat drivers as employees was preempted by the Federal Aviation Administration Authorization Act.⁴¹ The loss had major ramifications for workers in the industry, most of whom were technically considered independent owner-operators. As Cummings explains: "In so doing, the drivers themselves suffered a setback: with employee conversion undermined in federal court, drivers assumed the burden of purchasing and maintaining clean trucks without the economic benefits promised by employee status."⁴²

The Ports campaign has continued fighting the misclassification and wage theft in the administrative arena, specifically the National Labor Relations Board and the California Division of Labor Standards Enforcement. Additionally, LAANE has expanded across the supply chain to build partnerships with Warehouse Workers Resources Center to develop a broader campaign to improve working conditions for employees in the goods movement sector across several Southern California counties. And the campaign had lasting impacts. It cemented the Blue-Green work, building trust between labor and environmental activists. In particular, environmental organizations saw LAANE (and, by extension, labor) sticking with the environmental aspects of the deal and, in turn, were supportive at retaining the employee conversion components even when it was clear that the program's clear air goals would be met.

The Ports campaign also clarified LAANE's emerging approach of undertaking research on a sector, identifying the workers and other constituencies concerned about that industry's practices, and forging policy solutions that would help build alliances between labor, community allies and elected officials.⁴³ Perhaps as significant, the Ports campaign jump-started an effort to target Long Beach – the second biggest city in LA County with over 400,000 residents – as a ripe opportunity for building a political base and extending the LAANE model on a semi-regional basis.

LAANE campaigns

Raise LA and the Fight for 15

LAANE continued to win major victories in 2010, expanding its portfolio of industry, community and labor partners. Arguably, the biggest victory was the Raise LA campaign. This was part of a growing nationwide movement to raise wages of the lowest-paid workers in key industries that rely on poorly paid employees. Building on the momentum of “living wage” laws that covered workers in businesses with municipal subsidies and contracts, labor and its allies began to target large employers, including fast-food restaurants and Walmart, through corporate campaigns of embarrassment and pressure. The movement soon came to include winning higher across-the-board minimum wages in cities for all workers, not just those employed by companies with city contracts or those employees in certain sectors. Known as the Fight for 15, in most cities, SEIU funded the local organizing efforts, with the first major victory won in SeaTac, Washington (the site of the Seattle airport) in 2013. That was followed the next year by an historic city-level agreement to a \$15 minimum wage for all of Seattle.⁴⁴

As with the first walkout in New York in 2012, the LA campaign began with an industry-specific focus on low-wage workers – in New York it was fast-food workers, in Los Angeles, it was hotel workers.⁴⁵ LAANE’s long-term partnership with Unite/HERE Local 11 set the stage for action and in 2014, the City Council passed a law raising wages to \$15.37 for workers in hotels located near LAX, based on the legal argument that those hotels depended on the city-owned airport for their livelihood and thus were, in effect, subsidized by the municipality.⁴⁶

LAANE and its allies then turned to an increase in the overall minimum wage. The campaign involved a significant amount of organizing and grassroots lobbying and LAANE dedicated resources to help organize workers to lobby the LA City Council. Additionally, LAANE staff made a significant effort to gain the support of unions whose members were not low paid – some of whom believed that a minimum wage increase could undercut their leverage in contract negotiations.⁴⁷ In most cases, LAANE’s appeal to union solidarity prevailed, adding the influence of these unions to the lobbying effort. By the spring of 2015, the LA City Council passed an historic increase in the minimum wage that would reach \$15 by 2020 (and then subsequently increase by the rate of inflation). LA was the third major city to adopt such a bold law.⁴⁸ Concurrent campaigns led to the passage of a \$15 minimum wage at the County of Los Angeles (which manages the unincorporated areas) in 2015 and the Cities of Santa Monica and Pasadena in 2016.⁴⁹ California passed its own minimum wage less than a year after the City of Los Angeles.⁵⁰

Don’t waste LA

One of LAANE’s most significant “blue-green” victories has been the Don’t Waste LA Campaign to remake LA’s waste and recycling systems. This multi-year-long project included extensive research on the private waste and recycling

industry that collected garbage from LA's businesses, institutions, homeowners and landlords. Several reports focused on the impact of that system on garbage and recycling workers as well as on the city's infrastructure and environment, and proposals for an alternate way of doing business that would improve worker and environmental conditions. The campaign team also developed an intense partnership with both staff in the city's Sanitation Department and elected officials to adopt a new approach over the opposition of the powerful waste and recycling industry.

Near the end of 2010, city residents were sending 7 million tons of trash and recyclable materials to landfills that were nearing capacity. Almost anyone with a truck could obtain one of the city's open-market permits to collect garbage. LAANE's initial research report discovered that different waste haulers were collecting on the same block. Workers who collected and recycled the garbage faced dangerous conditions, including high rates of injury, illness and encounters with toxic materials.⁵¹ When city officials set an ambitious goal of becoming a zero waste city by 2030, LAANE saw a clear window to take their Blue-Green coalition to City Hall to address working conditions, environmental concerns and systemic change in the inefficient crazy-quilt waste and recycling industry.

According to one assessment:

LAANE worked with the Sierra Club, Earthjustice, and other environmental groups that wanted fewer trucks on the road and a mandate that trucks run on alternative energy. They also teamed up with labor organizations that wanted workers processing trash to get good benefits and higher-than-minimum starting wages. Together, they urged the city council to rewrite rules so that companies that meet alternative-energy and worker-friendly standards would get exclusive city contracts in what's called a franchise system.⁵²

By 2016, the City of Los Angeles finalized its new waste and recycling system based largely on the LAANE design. The program was ambitious, attempting to shift from a "wild west model" of individual operators picking up at different locations at different times (clogging the streets with traffic and pollution). The new alternative was a franchise system in which the city was split into zones and waste and recycling companies bid for the exclusive right to manage refuse for that zone. The program was set to reduce emissions, provide universal recycling and eventually begin to offer composting. It also mandated better safety conditions for workers who collected and recycled the waste. With its eye always focused on workers' rights, LAANE recognized that a franchise system would make it easier for those workers to unionize and improve their better pay and working conditions.

This ambitious makeover struggled at the finish line as elected officials of color voiced concerns about the lack of diversity among haulers and suppliers.⁵³ Moreover, the roll out of the program was beset with major hiccups – partly the result of reorganizing a reluctant industry that was highly competitive, inefficient and resistant to regulation. An editorial in the *Los Angeles Times* reported

that “apartment owners and business operators who have experienced repeated missed trash pickups and astronomical bills since the city forced them into a garbage-hauling monopoly program called RecycLA.”⁵⁴ In response, the city created the Removing Barriers to Recycling Program which rolled back and refunded certain fees, delayed others and increased public education.⁵⁵

LAANE and its allies were familiar with the dilemmas of implementing a new program that involved municipal regulation of a reluctant industry. It had initially experienced similar problems in implementing the living wage and Clean Port policies. By the time the Don’t Waste LA campaign was won, the City was looking to LAANE as not just an advocate for policy change but a source of expertise and knowledge about the industry.⁵⁶ In fact, just as the City Council was close to passing the ordinance, Mayor Eric Garcetti hired LAANE’s Don’t Waste LA campaign director, Greg Good, to oversee its operation. The fact that an architect of the program was helping in implementation illustrated the importance of LAANE’s inside-outside approach to policy change. Under Good’s leadership, the City eventually improved the program’s implementation and it soon was viewed as a model for reforming a complex industry that had previously operated with few rules or standards, to the detriment to its workers and the wider community.⁵⁷ Other cities, including New York City, looked to Los Angeles to transform their own waste and recycling systems.⁵⁸

New efforts

LAANE has waged several other campaigns in the “blue-green” spirit, bringing together economic and environmental concerns. Among these has been a series of efforts that made the nation’s largest municipal utility, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP), adhere to strong environmental standards and, along the way, strengthened ties between community and consumer groups and labor. One example was a campaign for an energy efficiency program that trained workers to provide free energy efficiency upgrades for low-income rate payers. This led to the creation of the Utility Pre-Craft Trainee Program, a multiyear paid training program with a pipeline to well-paying utility jobs. As of 2020, the program had trained nearly 200 workers and there was a waitlist of another 1,600 people.

Beyond energy, LAANE also crafted a stormwater campaign at the county level to increase investment in infrastructure, reduce pollution in around the county (particularly into the Pacific Ocean and its estuaries), recharge local groundwater reserves, decrease reliance on imported water and create good-paying construction and operation jobs that would be targeted toward local low-income communities.⁵⁹ LAANE worked with a coalition of community, environmental and labor groups to pass Measure W, which increased property taxes (called a parcel tax) in LA county to pay for the program. In November 2018, 70 percent of voters approved Measure W.⁶⁰ The implementation of Measure W will invest an estimated \$300 million per year to upgrade the area’s nearly century-old regional water systems. This will make Los Angeles County – a desert whose sprawling

development was made possible by government efforts to import water and construct a maze of highways to promote its car-oriented infrastructure – more resilient in the face of climate change which is expected to impact Los Angeles in the form of reduced snow pack and thus increased stormwater from each storm.⁶¹

Another major, albeit tentative, victory for LAANE was its campaign to regulate short-term rentals in Los Angeles. The campaign was triggered by Airbnb's entry into the LA market, which prompted dual concerns about removing rental housing from the residential inventory and creating short-term commercial rental units that competed with local hotels for tourists, something UNITE HERE viewed as a serious threat to its members. Before beginning the public phase of the campaign, LAANE staff wrote a major research report, *AirBnB, Rising Rent, and the Housing Crisis in Los Angeles*, which identified the problem and framed the issues, and which generated significant media attention.⁶² As a LAANE staff member explained: “[The report] found credible data, brought novel analytical techniques to tell a new story, and allowed us to reframe the conversation. Simple, clear, and powerful.”⁶³ The campaign also included a neighborhood organizing strategy to organize local Neighborhood Councils across the city.⁶⁴

LAANE spearhead a campaign that led to the City Council adopting the Short-Term Rental Ordinance (drafted by LAANE staff) in 2018. The ordinance limited short-term rentals to only a primary residence, known as “home sharing,” and requires those hosts to register with the City.⁶⁵ It also bans home sharing from units that are under their rent stabilization ordinance and entered into an agreement with Airbnb, requiring them to remove illegal listings. Despite this victory, the city government has been half-hearted in its efforts to enforce the new law, in part because doing so requires the allocation of significant public resources to identify and prosecute violators.⁶⁶ Additionally, Airbnb has resisted participating in the enforcement of the law and instead spent \$280,000 lobbying the City to delay or dispose of the enforcement mechanisms.⁶⁷ After it passed the first living wage, LAANE faced a similar problem of the city's lack of enthusiasm for enforcing the law and successfully pressured the city to allocate funds to implement the law, but comparable success around the Airbnb law has proved elusive.

One of the newest additions to the LAANE portfolio is the Reclaim Our Schools LA (ROSLA) campaign which set out to address wages and working conditions of teachers, lack of resources for students and advocating for a “community schools” model of education. Los Angeles has the second largest school district in the nation and it is not overseen by the City Council where LAANE had built power over decades of work – so this required a new strategy, new analysis of power and new partners. The campaign stretched LAANE's capacities by working in partnership with the United Teachers of Los Angeles, the local teachers union and local community groups that prioritized grassroots organizing of communities of color, including the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE) and Students Deserve.

Similar to the CBA model, LAANE championed in the 1990s, the Reclaim Our Schools campaign utilized a Bargaining for the Common Good model,

which integrates community demands into collective bargaining negotiations – again expanding who is included in the collective.⁶⁸ Beyond raises for teachers and smaller class sizes, the campaign called for cap on charter schools, an end to random searches of students, the establishment of wrap-around services in new community schools, and added staff including nurses, librarian, counselors and lawyers to help families with immigration cases.

Twenty months after the UTLA contract expired, months of intense negotiations, and in the midst of nationwide #RedforEd teachers' strikes, Los Angeles teachers and community members went on strike in January of 2019.⁶⁹ The week-long strike persevered through the pouring rain on some days and 50,000 strikers and supporters marched and rallied in downtown Los Angeles – a huge show of labor power in a city when that power is often exercised behind the scenes.⁷⁰ By the next week, Reclaim Our Schools was announcing its victory and once again demonstrating the success of the community-labor partnership.⁷¹

One project still in progress is the Fair Work Week campaign. LAANE has long partnered with the United Food and Commercial Worker Local 770 on campaigns to increase wages and address working conditions in the retail and grocery industries. Their partnership has included campaigns on sick time, securing alcohol sales, cannabis regulation and support for workers that went on strike in 2003–2004 and nearly averted another in 2019. In its most recent iteration, the partnership has focused on the impact of unstable scheduling on workers. Through significant survey data collected by LAANE and the UCLA Labor center, their report *Hour Crisis: Unstable Schedules in the Los Angeles Retail Sector* demonstrated significant impacts on workers and their families, including being forced to pay bills late, being locked out of childcare centers, missing classes and increased stress.⁷²

Introduced in 2019, the proposed Fair Work Week Ordinance relied directly on the research done by LAANE and UCLA Labor Center. The policy could impact as many as 70,000 workers in the retail industry and could include measures to give two weeks' notice for schedules, 10 hours between shift and the right to decline or request changes to worker schedules without retaliation.⁷³ The measure was initially approved and sent to the City Attorney's office to create the formal ordinance language, unfortunately, that language landed back in the hands of elected officials in February of 2020 just as the Coronavirus pandemic began. In response, LAANE and UFCW shifted gears, and joined with nearly 200 organizations to form the Healthy LA Coalition advocating for, among other things, personal protective equipment, paid sick leave and rights of return.⁷⁴

Leaning into Long Beach

The Ports campaign had revealed an important weakness: LAANE and its allies carried significant political weight in the city of Los Angeles – that was not actually regional power. LAANE and its allies were able to persuade LA leaders to build concession requirements into the Clean Truck Program that would allow independent drivers to convert to workers that could then be organized by the

Teamsters. But the union-friendly portion of that effort was derailed by Long Beach's conservative political leaders.⁷⁵ Responding to pressure from trucking firms and prompted by a business-oriented mayor, Bob Foster, in early 2008, the Port of Long Beach approved its own Clean Truck Program without an "employee conversion" element.⁷⁶

As we noted earlier, it was a significant blow. As Cummings writes: "When industry could not stop the Clean Truck Program in Los Angeles, it ramped up lobbying pressure on Long Beach and succeeded in defeating employee conversion there. The Los Angeles-Long Beach split paid political and legal dividends ..." as it created worries about the movement of traffic and jobs from one port to the other and also created a legal argument about different treatment of operators in two adjoining jurisdictions.⁷⁷ In order to move forward, LA's Clean Truck program had included a severability clause so that most of the regulations would stand even if employee conversion was struck down in court – and such a negative ruling came in 2011 (and was reaffirmed by the US Supreme Court two years later). LAANE had won a significant commitment to reduce diesel pollution, earning the trust of environmental and environmental justice allies, who returned the favor by acknowledging respect for a group whose political footprint far exceeded theirs and could have been patronizing rather than partnering. But it had not been able to deliver for its core labor base.

Vengeance – or at least a rebalancing of political power – was in order. LAANE recognized that Long Beach's power structure would portray any effort by LA-based groups to transform the city's political culture as interference by outside interlopers. As Hytrek notes, there were "unsuccessful efforts by outside union activists to pass a Labor Peace Ordinance in 2006 and Big-Box Ban in 2007" that convinced progressives that transforming the city required developing a more organic local base.⁷⁸ LAANE understood that it needed another sort of inside-outside game, in this case not between advocates and politicians but rather between the stronger and experienced organizing infrastructure outside of Long Beach and the nascent efforts within that City.

The strategy to leverage the broad LA-based social movement ecosystem emerged in the next few years. For example, in 2009, LAANE wrote a report called *A Tale of Two Cities: How Long Beach's Investment in Downtown Tourism Has Contributed to Poverty Next Door* that became the centerpiece for a town hall hosted by a newly formed Long Beach Coalition for Good Jobs and a Healthy Community. LAANE's research highlighted how a reliance on a low-wage tourist industry had actually exacerbated poverty in the city. The combination of outside expertise and local roots gave the report credibility. This led to a remarkable campaign in 2012 – led by UNITE HERE Local 11 and local community groups, with the support of LAANE – to pass an ordinance that required larger hotels to pay their workers at least \$13 an hour and provide at least five sick days a year.

While certainly a campaign with union support, it was key to develop a coherent community base of supporters beyond the roughly 2,000 affected hotel workers. To do so, the Long Beach coalition launched "LB Rising!," a leadership development program that included training local activists in integrated voter

engagement (IVE), a method that combines community organizing with more traditional efforts to “get out the vote.”⁷⁹ The campaign also recruited small business supporters, something that helped to rebut the usual Chamber complaints that something so clearly targeted at larger employers would somehow hurt small businesses that might actually benefit from the extra spending in the community. The Coalition’s proposal, labeled Measure N, passed with nearly two-thirds of the vote in November 2012.⁸⁰

The Measure N victory reset the tone in Long Beach and by the end of 2013, the City Council had passed worker protection ordinances for employees of the Long Beach’s Airport and Convention and Entertainment Center. In addition, unions won several long-simmering labor conflicts, including winning votes for unionization at two major hotel properties.⁸¹ But the power of the emerging progressive movement was tested when advocates tried to persuade the City Council to adopt a Hospitality and Workload Safety Ordinance that was also known as “Claudia’s Law” in honor of a hotel worker, Claudia Sanchez, “who fell into a coma after suffering a cerebral hemorrhage after completing a 14-hour shift in 2015.”⁸² One of the proponents of the measure was Jeannine Pearce, a former LAANE employee and a leader of Long Beach Rising, who – with the support of unions and community activists – had been elected to the City Council in 2016, a confluence that reflected the more traditional inside-outside game associated with LAANE.⁸³

However, the measure failed to pass the City Council in a deeply disappointing 5–4 vote in September 2017. LAANE and the Coalition responded with the same sort of electoral end-run around traditional city leaders that had won them a living wage: they went to the voters in November 2018 with a ballot proposition, Measure WW, which built in protections around sexual violence and excessive workloads in hotels with more than 50 rooms. In an eerie coincidence, the final margin of victory – 64 percent – was exactly the same as that for Measure N.⁸⁴ And the victory had an impact beyond its immediate protections to vulnerable workers: in the words of Victor Sanchez, LAANE’s lead organizer in Long Beach, the win:

gave us a lot of influence ... (so) we are considered when decision making around issues that are tangential to our mission and to what people know we do. We don’t have a hard time having a conversation with electeds. We can have those conversations. Now, whether or not we have power over them, I think that’s our gap. We have not reached a point where we have power to say we’re going to move this policy and we know we can pass this.⁸⁵

The Long Beach victories illustrate the importance of long-term investments in community organizing and electoral organizing beyond one election cycle or one campaign. The Long Beach strategy has its roots in LAANE’s ties to UNITE Local 11, the hospitality union that helped to birth LAANE. But to build real sustainable grassroots progressive power, LAANE recognized that it had to build a long-term movement that went beyond one union and one issue

and that trained local residents and workers to take leadership. That recognition was brought home by the opposition of Long Beach's political leaders to the employee conversion portion of the Clean Truck Program.

This was a delicate dance because local groups in Long Beach were relatively politically weak compared to their experienced LA counterparts. At the same time, LAANE had to play a role in developing the kind of authentic organized base that so many other progressive organizations bring to the table. This was a bit of a departure for LAANE as it does not have its own individual dues-paying members and, for the most part, has relied on the unions to mobilize their members on the ground. Although LAANE helped craft the strategy for the Long Beach Coalition, its success was due to its ability to train local leaders and to forge an alliances that went beyond labor issues and included protecting immigrant rights and renter rights and bringing those constituencies together to elect sympathetic candidates to the City Council.

LAANE's Long Beach effort has also contributed to heightened regional power. For example, when COVID-19 struck in the spring of 2020, the City of Los Angeles passed a worker retention and recall ordinance for hotel and janitorial employees on April 29 that required employers to rehire the workers it laid off when the pandemic hit. This victory reflected the power of labor and progressives in that city. The County, with its own progressive super-majority on the Board of Supervisors, followed suit on May 12.⁸⁶ LAANE's investment in Long Beach paid off when that city passed its own ordinance patterned after the LA measure on May 19.⁸⁷ Far from being a drag on pro-worker regional change, Long Beach was emerging – imperfectly, as lead organizer Victor Sanchez notes – as a key component of the larger strategy.

What's next?

LAANE has had setbacks and losses along the way – with one of the most painful being the 2002 voter rejection in Santa Monica of a minimum wage ordinance that sought to cover larger businesses operating on the lucrative coastal and downtown shopping areas and another being the legal setback suffered to the employee conversion program that was part of the Ports campaign.⁸⁸ Still, it's been a remarkable run of successes for LAANE. Now operating with a budget of around \$4 million a year and a staff close to 40, its model of combining organizing, research, policy development and advocacy and communications has helped to transform the political economy of Los Angeles.⁸⁹ Its sophistication at the inside-outside political game has grown over time, including an occasional revolving door between LAANE and City Hall in terms of staffing one side or the other. And while we have suggested that some of the effectiveness of LAANE was due to the specific milieu – Los Angeles in the 1990s was primed for change and the transformation of the state of California by progressive advocates and politicians was partly the result – LAANE has played a key and unique role in the ecosystem of social movement building.⁹⁰

LAANE's impact on movements and politics has not just been regional but also statewide. This has had a direct dimension: LAANE has strong allies in the

state Assembly and Senate, and its founder and former board chair, Maria Elena Durazo, is now an influential state senator who continues to use LAANE leadership as a sounding board for innovative policy ideas. But the group's influence has also been indirect: by working through the Partnership for Working Families to build power in metro areas as a stepping stone to state influence, it has provided an example for other groups interested in broadening their reach in order to achieve more power to win policy victories. For example, in many states, environmental justice advocates have often been locally focused and somewhat fragmented; in the Golden State, they have linked together under the banner of the California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA) and been highly effective in securing legislation and influence.⁹¹ Similarly, the Million Voters Project consists of seven networks – which in other places might be competitive or at odds – that link regions and groups across California to pursue integrated voter engagement for key ballot propositions.⁹²

Scale is important in another sense: LAANE and PWF's ultimate goal goes beyond adopting specific policies regarding particular industries and constituencies. Their aim is to build power in order to make America's cities more humane, livable, democratic, diverse and environmentally sustainable. In that enterprise, LAANE and PWF are part of a broader movement to build progressive cities that can eventually sway both state and national policy.⁹³

So how will LAANE build on its almost three decades of organizing accomplishments? As noted, the work in Long Beach is critical to LAANE's future for three reasons. The first is that it represents a regional strategy – born out of the need to move a reluctant city and now paying dividends in the form of Long Beach taking up progressive measures alongside the City and County of Los Angeles. The second is that it represents a different kind of organizing: while LAANE has sometimes engaged in base-building and leadership development, Long Beach is the most sustained effort to develop an independent base rather than engage in coalition work or rely on the ability of unions to move their troops. Third, it offers a model for not only persuading elected officials to adopt its policy ideas but also for putting their own members and allies into those elected positions, thus changing the inside-outside dynamic.

In the future, LAANE will also likely place more focus on policy Implementation, a concern highlighted by the awkward roll-out of the Don't Waste LA program. This is less exciting than organizing a campaign but necessary as bureaucrats need the assistance. LAANE is now in the enviable but still difficult position of seeking to maintain momentum by both coming up with new wins while consolidating old victories.

LAANE will also need to pay even more attention to racial justice and racial equity, a topic that has gained more urgency thanks to the emergence of Black Lives Matter and the upsurge of protest in the wake of the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis in 2020. While LAANE's work lifting up low-income workers has had an impact on racial disparities – and its construction careers work has been particularly helpful to Black and Latino workers – LAANE's narrative and policy initiatives have remained more universalist in tone. It has also had challenges

retaining Black staff, and in recent years, LAANE has been more intentional about evaluating the experiences of former Black staff, recruiting new Black talent, and aligning with groups that are concerned about such issues as excess policing, over-incarceration and the need to reallocate funds from policing to prevention.

LAANE's initial core narrative was "shared prosperity" – pushing policies that distributed the benefits of economic growth to the city's low-income working class. It soon added "healthy environment" to its core policy agenda and organizing goals. But in an era in which the reality of anti-Black racism has risen to the fore, it is essential for all in the progressive movement to recognize the necessity of centering a racial justice lens. LAANE has added "racial justice" to its narrative and sought to offer labor, environmental and people-of-color constituencies an understanding that their concerns are interwoven and not separate. Maintaining and strengthening that narrative – that a healthy economy goes beyond business profits to include good jobs, decent housing, public health, clean air, immigrant integration and the dismantling of racism (including the racial wealth gap) in all aspects of society – will be part of LAANE's ongoing challenge.

All of this is particularly urgent in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. On the one hand, the coronavirus is an enormous opportunity: as a disease which reveals our social illnesses of employment precarity, racial disparities in wealth and health care, uncertain legal status and so much more, there is an opening to raise consciousness and change policy. LAANE has jumped into this, pushing, for example, Public Health Councils at workplaces in Los Angeles County which could become vehicles for worker voice. But this is just the beginning of what needs to occur for an economy in which suffering is likely and the usual business complaint that fairness will cost jobs will probably gain ground if the important work of narrative change is not central.

There is hope. As we were completing this chapter, one public official commented to us: "I have found myself at multiple times over the last several months thinking to myself I could really use some LAANE brain." What was meant here was the ability to look forward, craft a story, design new policies, build power, win political victories and pay attention to implementation, all in the service of economic, racial and environmental justice. Such an approach is needed now more than ever not just in Los Angeles but in every city and state in which the PWF affiliates operate – and hope to operate. The future of American labor, of communities of color and of an economy and environment that works for all depends on it.

Notes

- 1 Technically, Working Partnerships USA was founded before LAANE in 1995; at that time, what was to become LAANE was still operating as the Tourism Industry Development Council and the Living Wage Coalition. It is also the case the LAANE was less the creature of the local central labor council than WPUSA although the Fed did play a supportive role. See Amy Dean and David B. Reynolds, "Labor's New Regional Strategy: The Rebirth of Central Labor Councils," *New Labor Forum* 17, no. 1 (April 1, 2008): 48.

- 2 Manuel Pastor, "Contemporary Voice: Contradictions, Coalitions, and Common Ground," in *A Companion to Los Angeles*, ed. William Devereil and Greg Hise (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2010), 250–265.
- 3 Peter Dreier and Kelly Candaele, "LA's Progressive Mosaic: Beginning to Find Its Voice," August 10, 2000, <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/las-progressive-mosaic-beginning-find-its-voice/>.
- 4 We should be clear that we are not dispassionate or distant observers of LAANE: Pastor has served on the LAANE board (with some interruptions) since its earliest days, Ashley Thomas worked as a researcher for LAANE in the 2010s and Peter Dreier had been a board member since 2006. We hope that this brings us closer to the material in ways that matter for an accurate telling of the story but we are also careful throughout to be sure that our clear admiration for LAANE is coupled with an assessment of strengths, weaknesses and challenges.
- 5 Jennifer Wolch, Manuel Pastor Jr, and Peter Dreier, eds., *Up Against the Sprawl: Public Policy and the Making of Southern California*, 1st ed. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).
- 6 Raphael Sonenshein, *Politics in Black and White: Race and Power in Los Angeles* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).
- 7 Pastor, "Contemporary Voice."
- 8 For example, four food-market chains vowed to build more than 30 new supermarkets in the inner city, where the number of chain markets had declined by nearly half in the previous decade and where residents typically paid more for lower quality food than their counterparts in more affluent neighborhoods. But according to a study by Amanda Shaffer, a decade after the uprising there was actually one less chain supermarket in the riot neighborhoods. Peter Dreier, "America's Urban Crisis a Decade after the Los Angeles Riots," *National Civic Review* 92, no. 1 (2003): 35–55, <https://doi.org/10.1002/ncr.4>; Amanda Shaffer, *The Persistence of LA's Grocery Gap* (Los Angeles, CA: Occidental College, Urban & Environmental Policy Institute, Center for Food and Justice, May 2002).
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