

Workers' centers are not service or social assistance providers. The role of the centers is one of organizing struggles to obtain more just conditions of education, access to dietary needs, health care, housing, political freedom and peace, without succumbing to the pressure of corporations for increasing profit.

## **Characteristics of Workers' Centers**

In our vision, workers' centers will play a very important role in creating a new labor movement. In order to advance toward our goals we need unity amongst ourselves, we need to be able to share our experiences with open minds, and to analyze our progress to encounter possible errors and limitations of a process that is just beginning. We also need to develop our persuasive abilities to attract other people who are interested in our new model of organization and struggle, as well as to provide them with all the necessary documentation, information and opportunity for dialogue about our experiences.

### **Why should workers' centers be multi-trade and multi-industry organizations?**

This characteristic is very important because it allows us to organize workers without having to limit the category of worker due to the social sector in which she finds herself at a given moment. This is especially important considering today's worldwide economic instability. A worker can go from employed to underemployed to unemployed rapidly, just as a worker is many times forced from an industrial job to an unregulated workplace environment. Under these new conditions, workers' centers have the opportunity to develop fighting and mobilization strategies based upon the common needs of the working class. This type of organizing permits us to go beyond simply negotiating with companies and allows us to address larger common political, social, and economic issues.

### **Why is it important to organize workers both where they live and where they work?**

By organizing workers as members of a community and a class, workers' centers empower workers, helping them develop their ability to fight. This global strategy promotes unity, removing artificial divisions between workplace and community issues, allowing workers to analyze and understand collectively their reality.

### **Are workers' centers mass organizations?**

Workers' centers have a basic philosophy and principle, that given the time and necessary resources, workers are capable of developing and directing their own organizations.

Based on this principle, workers' centers are mass organizations with open membership. Workers' centers use work methods that ensure democracy in the planning, decision-making, and actions that the centers carry out. This democratic process helps workers understand the internal process of the organizations and prevents the organization from being controlled by elitist or bureaucratic forces.

### **Why do workers' centers organize and not unionize?**

Workers' centers are not unions, nor pre-union groups. Workers' centers do not represent workers in their contract negotiations. Workers' centers can support workers in their

efforts to gain a contract, but as a first step towards a more open organization with more broad-based goals.

We believe that unions are not the answer to workers' problems because these organizations limit themselves from the beginning to only fighting for reforms within the existing contract negotiation process.

This difference is important to take into consideration. Within the traditional union movement, there is a tendency to use workers' centers to unionize workers. By doing so, the unions further their own goals, guarantee the survival of their own institution, and make reforms. However, they do not question or change the premises of ideology in the United States, rather they maintain the status quo.

In contrast to this position, we see unionization as a tool, not a goal. Our goal is to organize workers in a new labor movement that goes beyond the limits of the unions, and that breaks with the methods, ideas, and forms of organizing used in the past.

### **Should workers' centers fight racism, sexism, and homophobia?**

As a result of the reorganizing of the world economy, many groups within society have become marginalized economically. This economic marginalization leads to discrimination. Groups who are most strongly victimized by economic difficulties are themselves blamed for these difficulties, and are also labeled as the source of social problems. Discrimination in turn divides the workforce and the community, distracting these workers from the real causes of their situation. The division breaks down the working communities and allows the continued domination by the economic powers, often times causing serious setbacks for the working class.

It is for this reason that it is extremely important for workers' centers to combat discrimination in whatever forms it presents itself.

Workers' centers have the responsibility to provide the space and resources to develop leadership within oppressed communities as well as to support their specific struggles and demands. In the areas where workers' centers have formed, they have taken this reality into consideration, and this should continue so that the workers' center trend can open itself to other oppressed communities.

At the same time, workers' centers recognize the cultural and language differences within the oppressed communities and work to create space so that these communities can organize themselves.

As a point of principle, workers' centers also recognize their responsibility to promote new cultural values of struggle and solidarity within the working class as a whole, through a new moral ethic and social relations within their organizations.

### **Is political education a responsibility of the workers' centers?**

Workers' centers are dedicated to profound, long-term change that means economic, political, and social power for workers. This type of dedication to radical change requires the development of a mass organization with strong community bases.

Workers' centers have to develop programs of political education that propose an organizational model combining mobilization for class demands with the development of a political consciousness that allows the working class to assume leadership in the struggle for liberation of the oppressed and exploited.