



UCLA Labor Center

2025 Annual Snapshot

CULTIVATING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE



DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Dear friends,

As we reflect on 2025, we look back on a year shaped by unprecedented challenges. We faced devastating fires, the militarization of our city, and the racial profiling and kidnapping of community members off the streets of Los Angeles. These moments shook our sense of safety and disrupted daily life for workers, neighbors, vendors, and families. We also felt a deep loss with the passing of Kent Wong, a legend who helped build the foundation of our organization.

Resilience isn't taught, but something we learn out of survival. I'm proud of the work we've been able to do at the UCLA Labor Center: collaborating with our partners to support rapid response needs, providing timely research, and continuing to bring young leaders into our movement. Through it all, I am reminded that in dire times, it is community action that moves us forward.

This season, I'm especially grateful that we opened the doors of the newly-renovated James Lawson Jr. Worker Justice Center. We've been able to host meetings, wellness and planning retreats, teach-ins, and public talks. Our historic building is first and foremost a community resource, and we're so excited to share it with you. So, if you are able, please consider supporting our [capital campaign](#) so we can continue strengthening this space for everyone.

Thank you for being with us.



Sincerely,
Saba Waheed
Director, UCLA Labor Center



SCHOOL-TO-MOVEMENT PATHWAYS



In 2025, the UCLA Labor Center continued to uphold its core belief that a public university exists to serve the people. Guided by this vision, we expanded access to quality education through our various paid fellowship programs, community engagement, and innovative curricula. Our school-to-movement pathways prepare students across California to become the next generation of labor movement leaders.

DREAM SUMMER FELLOWS SUPPORTED CRITICAL IMMIGRATION CAMPAIGNS

Our 38 [Dream Summer](#) fellows worked full-time to support critical immigrant rights campaigns across the U.S. This included researching immigrant mental health and community interventions with Convivir Colorado, launching a storytelling series about Grassroot Leadership's "Participatory Defense" initiative, and uplifting the experiences of Black immigrant students with CUNY's "We Bloom Here Too" project.

LABOR SUMMER FELLOWS PARTNERED WITH LOCAL UNIONS AND WORKER CENTERS

Through [Labor Summer](#), 19 fellows partnered with 8 local unions and worker centers to build their expertise as grassroots organizers—tabling with AFT 1521 at the "Summer of Resistance" demonstrations, unionizing grocery store workers with UFCW 770, and supporting SEIU 2015's "People Are Power" campaign.



THE NONVIOLENCE EDUCATION PROJECT EXPANDED PARTNERSHIPS AND TRAININGS

This year, the [Nonviolence Education Project \(NVEP\)](#) strengthened its statewide impact by expanding its partnerships and training educators and students in nonviolence principles. Through collaborations with teacher associations, community colleges, and labor allies, NVEP led more than a dozen trainings and presentations, including a know-your-rights workshop with 70 participants, a summer fellowship with 11 students and six mentors, and the largest nonviolence training in Los Angeles history, which drew nearly 1,400 attendees.

THE LABOR SUMMER RESEARCH PROGRAM TRAINED EMERGING STUDENT RESEARCHERS

Student researchers in the [UCLA Labor Summer Research Program \(LSRP\)](#) collected data from 154 surveys and 30 interviews, revealing key issues in organizing, rising AI use in schools and workplaces, and federal policy impacts. In addition, UCLA Labor Center director Saba Waheed and LSRP alumna Hina Malik presented worker-and-learner research at an informational hearing in Paramount, California, for the [Assembly Committee on Economic Development, Growth, and Housing Impact](#).

OUR YOUNG WORKER INITIATIVE TAUGHT LABOR RIGHTS IN PUBLIC CLASSROOMS

The UCLA Labor Center's [Young Worker Initiative \(YWI\)](#) brought labor education and simulations to 665 LAUSD students across 12 schools and 30 classrooms through its partnership with the Young Workers Education Project. Over 60 UCLA undergraduates were trained to deliver the AB 800 "Workplace Readiness" curriculum, applying their learning directly in local classrooms. YWI also expanded access to worker rights education across the state by launching a new, four-module "know-your-rights on the job" curriculum for youth partners such as the Building Skills Partnership, Garment Worker Center, and Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance (KIWA).

FREEDOM FELLOWS ADVANCED CIVIC AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE FOR BLACK WORKERS

This summer's [Freedom Fellowship](#) placed 11 fellows with organizations advancing civic and economic justice for Black workers, including the Los Angeles Black Worker Center, Essie Justice Group, and Black Lives Matter Los Angeles. Fellows gained the skills, knowledge, and mentorship needed to advance racial and economic justice through hands-on work, such as leading weekly advocacy meetings and conducting legal file reviews.

2025 FREEDOM FELLOW PROFILE: SUSIE TURNER

"This past summer, I had the incredible opportunity to intern with Black Lives Matter Los Angeles as a policy intern, where I engaged in grassroots organizing and community advocacy to combat racism, anti-Blackness, and police brutality. Throughout my placement, I shadowed inspiring local leaders, learned the inner workings of policy and legislation, and contributed to weekly advocacy meetings that brought together passionate community members. I also assisted in strategic planning at the Center for Black Power, supported families impacted by systemic violence, and helped raise thousands of dollars through community fundraising and outreach initiatives.

One of the most memorable highlights of my fellowship was being flown to Sacramento to lobby for AB7, a historic bill advancing educational equity. It was an incredible experience to be surrounded by community, to stand alongside mentors, and to help shape policy that will create lasting positive change for higher education in California."



RESEARCH JUSTICE



The UCLA Labor Center is at the cutting edge of worker-centered research. Prioritizing a research justice framework that centers the lived experience of everyday people, our research projects dive into working-class realities and recognize community expertise as a tool for change. Anchoring the research justice framework is a belief that those who are most impacted by harmful conditions deserve to be at the forefront of transformative change—challenging the traditional power structures that limit industries and research alike.

Our research has informed policies on the local, state, and national levels, shaping actionable solutions for creating safe, dignified jobs for vulnerable communities. With the rapidly evolving and increasingly inhospitable national climate around worker protections and regulatory oversight, our research continues to provide foundational data to advance worker rights. We currently have 25 active research projects, including creating a roadmap for public transit in California, a wage theft study in eight industries using a trauma-informed lens, and a Koreatown retail survey.

HIGH STAKES: THE STATE OF THE CALIFORNIA CANNABIS WORKFORCE

In May, we released the first-ever comprehensive report on California’s cannabis workforce, one of the state’s most dynamic and diverse emerging industries. From cultivation to retail, this research addresses gaps in data regarding the conditions, aspirations, and experiences of cannabis workers in California.



“This industry attracts workers with a deep passion for people and the plant, who have a vision for meaningful careers in cultivation and patient and customer care,” said Robert Chlala, report co-author and visiting scholar at the UCLA Labor Center. “But right now, workers aren’t getting the safety, stability, or opportunity that will allow them to build long-term careers that contribute to their communities.”

In an effort to authentically elevate workers’ voices, this report was spearheaded by a team of worker-researchers who engaged their peers. The team conducted more than 1,111 surveys, facilitated more than 50 in-depth interviews, presented their findings to stakeholders, and created a wide-ranging Instagram presence that included 25 livestreams on key issues facing workers and the industry.

ELEVATING WORKER VOICES WITHIN A BROADER INDUSTRY ANALYSIS

HARM TO TABLE: VULNERABILITY AND EXPLOITATION IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY MEATPACKING AND FOOD PROCESSING

In October, we released a report in partnership with the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE) and El Centro that analyzes Los Angeles County’s robust meatpacking and food processing industry.

Through direct testimonies from 47 workers—gathered during interviews and focus groups—as well as a broad literature review and a comprehensive analysis of industry and workforce data, including census and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) records, we learned how the industry is structured to take advantage of a uniquely vulnerable population of mostly immigrant workers, while undermining their ability to organize or fight for better wages and working conditions.

Alongside the report release, the UCLA Labor Center hosted a virtual panel discussion with experts in worker health and safety, inviting press and community members to learn about our findings in context. In addition, we launched and screened a [short film](#) that offers a compelling look into the historically-opaque industry.

“Workers in this industry, who put food on our tables every single day, are demanding change,” said Edgar Reyes, organizer at El Centro/Center for Worker Training and Leadership. “They deserve safety and dignity in their workplace. The pride they take in their work should be met with long-term job security and advancement opportunities, not abuse and exploitation.”



IMPLEMENTING HIGH-ROAD SOLUTIONS IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY



This year, the UCLA Labor Center partnered with the Los Angeles County Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) to launch the \$17.8 million [High Road Training Partnership \(HRTF\) Fund](#). This worker-centered, industry-informed workforce development initiative empowers local employers to launch HRTFs, ultimately creating jobs with livable wages and advancement opportunities for over 1,800 county residents. The DEO couples these programs with targeted outreach, trauma-informed program delivery, flexible cash assistance, and other resources through a \$2 million Worker Equity Fund, along with hiring, retention, and advancement support aligned with the county's public workforce system.

Our staff are providing hands-on support to help 20 awardees adopt the HRTF approach by identifying solutions to shared sector challenges, such as high retirement rates and new technologies. The team is also conducting an innovative evaluation of the initiative that expands beyond traditional workforce development metrics. This project represents the culmination of a multi-year framework built by our [POWER in Workforce Development](#) team, which was first launched in 2019. POWER specializes in studying and supporting efforts that institutionalize high road solutions to addressing the systemic barriers that limit economic equity for the most marginalized communities in California.

“Before this program, I had no idea there were so many tools out there. Now I feel confident walking onto a jobsite knowing I can handle them.”



— Ashley Cornejo, a participant in the Women In Non-Traditional Employment Roles (WINTER) Apprenticeship Readiness Program supported by the HRTF Fund, who was placed in a construction union job via IBEW Local 11. This is a 10-week, tuition-free program that trains women for careers in the union building and construction trades.

ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY IN LOS ANGELES AND BEYOND

The UCLA Labor Center is committed to leveraging our university resources to build stronger movements and communities. This year, our programs provided rapid-response support in multiple forms—including know-your-rights trainings, international collaborative convenings, technical assistance for coalitions, and more.

ASIAN AMERICAN RACIAL JUSTICE (AARJ) CULTIVATED EMERGING UNION LEADERS

This year, the Asian American Racial Justice (AARJ) project deepened its commitments to centering Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities by hosting three major organizing training sessions and know-your-rights workshops. More than 70 participants were equipped with the tools to advocate for workplace rights and beyond. By hosting multilingual, rapid-response educational spaces, AARJ's ongoing collaborations with unions, students, and community organizations help bridge the gap between the labor and racial justice movements.

GLOBAL SOLIDARITY HOSTED INTERNATIONAL LABOR CONVENINGS

Our Global Solidarity project is guided by the core belief that in a global economy, unions and workers must come together across borders in order to improve their wages and working conditions. In September, we convened 250 experts, advocates, and frontline workers in Visalia, California to discuss the unfair treatment of Indigenous farmworkers who play an essential role in sustaining the state's agricultural industry. By organizing labor solidarity convenings, we regularly bring together union leaders and workers for strategic conversations that position community members as leaders and ensure that they see themselves reflected in the solutions being offered.

RE:WORK PODCAST TOLD THE PERSONAL STORY OF WORKERS

The Re:Work Podcast elevates stories of work and activism to humanize and break down economic and racial justice issues, and challenge problematic dominant narratives. In 2025, we released seven episodes centered on key workers' rights and immigration challenges, and aired on over 150 radio stations across the United States and internationally. Our productions included a two-part series created in partnership with Código Doméstico, a research project and podcast aimed at exposing work conditions for women hired as cleaners through digital apps in Central and South America.



PROVIDING STRATEGIC EXPERTISE AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

LOS ANGELES WORKER CENTER NETWORK

Since LAWCN's founding in 2016, the UCLA Labor Center has served on its steering committee, providing strategy, policy research, communications support, and technical assistance. We also leverage our partnerships with state and local agencies to develop evidence-based programs that strengthen worker protections and rights. This year, we advanced LAWCN's leadership and sustainability with:

- Rapid response, including but not limited to support for meaningful engagement on the Perdomo Vasquez V. Noem case, attorney referral for detained workers, and communications.
- Policy research support for municipal funds and food for immigrant families impacted by raids and to strengthen local labor standards enforcement at the Los Angeles Office of Wage Standards and the Los Angeles Office of Civil and Human Rights.
- Worker rights curricula that connects immigration raids to other social justice struggles, including Black Lives Matter, as well as know your rights materials for workers, employers and advocates.

CALIFORNIA WORKER OUTREACH PROJECT

This year, the UCLA Labor Center became one of three UC Labor Centers to lend technical assistance to 89 organizations statewide with grants from the California Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) for worker outreach and education under the California Worker Outreach Project (CWOP). UCLA supports coalitions of grantees in Los Angeles and Orange County, San Diego and Imperial Valley, and the SoCal Black Worker Hub.



COLLABORATING WITH PARTNERS

Our work would not be possible without our community partners. Thank you to the following organizations, funders, and donors who are essential to making the UCLA Labor Center thrive:

AAPI Data	California Federation of Teachers	Comite Obrero Fronterizo-CFO
ACLU SoCal	California Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz)	Community Power Collective
AFL-CIO	California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative (CHNSC)	Confederación Centroamericana y del Caribe (COFECA)
AFL-CIO Solidarity Center (Mexico City)	California Immigrant Policy Center (CIPC)	Convivir Colorado
AFSCME United Domestic Workers	California Jobs First Jobs First Steering Committee/Initiative for the LA Region	Democracy at Work Institute (DAWI)
American Federation of Teachers (AFT)	California Labor Commissioner's Office	Earthlodge Center for Transformation
American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Local 1521	California Labor Federation	Essie Justice Group
Aliento AZ	California Senate District 28	First Gen Empower (FGE)
Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU)	California Transit Works (CTW)	Garment Worker Center
American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE)	California Workforce Development Board	Gig Workers United
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA) Los Angeles Chapter	Center for Immigration Law and Policy (CILP)	Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees (GCIR)
Black Alliance for Justice Immigration (BAJI)	Center for Policy Initiatives	Grassroots Leadership
Black Lives Matter Grassroots	Center for Worker Training & Leadership / Centro de Entrenamiento y Liderazgo Para Trabajadores ("El Centro")	Greenpeace
Black Lives Matter Los Angeles (BLMLA)	Central American Resource Center (CARECEN)	HANA Center
Borderlinks	Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy	Hand in Hand: The Domestic Employers Network
Building Skills Partnership (BSP)	Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño	Hospitality Training Academy (HTA)
California Agricultural Labor Relations Board	Child Care Providers United (CCPU)	International Longshore & Warehouse Union (ILWU)
California Black Freedom Fund	Chinese Progressive Association (CPA)	Immigrant Justice in Action Coalition (IJAC)
California Building Trades Council	City University of New York (CUNY) Undocumented and Immigrant Student Programs (USP)	Immigrant Legal Resource Center
California Coalition for Worker Power (CCWP)	Clean Carwash Worker Center	Immigrants Rising
California Democratic Party African American Caucus (CDPAAC)	Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)	Inclusive Action for the City
California Domestic Workers Coalition (CDWC)	College Track	Inland Empire Black Worker Center
California Energy Commission		Institute of Popular Education of Southern California (IDEPSCA)
		International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) 11

PARTNERS, CONTINUED

Jobs with Justice	Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration	United Auto Workers (UAW)
Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance (KIWA)	Progressive Leadership Alliance Nevada	United Farmworkers Foundation
LA Commons	Public Counsel	United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Western States Council
LA Food Policy Council	Rideshare Drivers United	United for Respect
Labor Commissioner's Office	San Diego Black Worker Center	United Food and Commercial Workers #770
Liga Obrera Mexicana	Scholarfund WA	United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA)
Little Tokyo Service Center	Scholarship A-Z	United We Dream
Long Beach Workforce Innovation Network	SEIU Local 99	Warehouse Workers Resource Center
Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE)	SEIU 121 RN	Worksafe
Los Angeles Black Worker Center (LABWC)	SEIU 721	
Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO	SEIU 2015	
Los Angeles Department of Economic Opportunity	SEIU California	
Los Angeles Worker Center Network (LAWCN)	SEIU UHW-West	
Maintenance Cooperation Trust Fund (MCTF)	SEIU United Service Workers West (USWW)	
Miguel Contreras Foundation	Sierra Health Foundation	
Mixteco Indigena Community Organizing Project	Silicon Valley Debug	
National Lawyers Guild of Los Angeles	Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores y Trabajadoras del Hogar (SINACTRAHO)	
National Domestic Workers Alliance	Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)	
National Employment Law Project	Southern California Black Worker Hub	
National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC)	Southern California Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health	
National Skills Coalition	TheDream.US	
Orange County Labor Federation	Trabajadores Unidos/Workers United	
Organizing Rooted in Abolition Liberation and Empowerment (ORALE)	United Domestic Workers/AFSCME Local 3930	
PowerSwitch Action	United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) 770	
Pilipino Worker Center (PWC)	Undocumented Student Network (USN)	
	Unión Nacional de Trabajadores por Aplicación (UNTA)	
	UNITE HERE Local 11	

Thank you to all the UCLA Labor Center supporters for the 2025 fiscal year (July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025). A special thanks to the institutional and individual donors listed below who supported at the \$1,000 or more level.

Angela E. Oh	Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, Los Angeles Chapter	UC Merced Labor Center
Asian Americans Advancing Justice Southern California	Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles (LAFLA)	UCLA Center for Critical Internet Inquiry
Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI)	LiUNA Local 300	UCLA Center on Race & Digital Justice
Borderlinks	Los Angeles Black Worker Center	UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center
Building Skills Partnership	Los Angeles County Court Reporters Association	UCLA Institute for Research on Labor and Employment
Bush Gottlieb	Los Angeles County Supervisor Hilda L. Solis	UCLA Labor Studies
California Association of Professional Employees (CAPE)	Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA)	UCLA LOSH
California Federation of Teachers (CFT)	Miguel Contreras Foundation	UCLA Social Sciences
California Nurses Association (CNA)	Mr. Nathan M. Seidman	United Domestic Workers/AFSCME Local 3930
California Teachers Association (CTA)	National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC)	United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 324
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA)	New World Foundation	United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 770
Dr. Christopher L. Erickson	Rosenberg Foundation	United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Western States Council
ECMC Foundation	Rothner Segall & Greenstone	UNITE HERE Local 11
Evelyn & Walter Haas Jr. Fund	Saba Waheed	USC Equity Research Institute
Greenpeace Inc.	Schwartz, Steinsapir, Dohrmann & Sommers LLP	United Steelworkers (USW) Local 675
Hadsell Stormer Renick & Dai LLP	SEIU 2015	United Steelworkers (USW) Local 7600
IATSE B-192	SEIU Local 721	United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA)
IBEW Local 11	SEIU-USWW	Weinberg, Roger & Rosenfeld
IBEW Local 302	Southeast Asia Resource Action Center	Weingart Foundation
James Irvine Foundation	Teamsters Local 396	Worker Power
Joseph Gambrell	Teamsters Local 911	Writers Guild of America West (WGAW)
Kellogg Foundation	The California Endowment	
Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance (KIWA)	The California Wellness Foundation	
Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE)	The Estate of Bernard D. Gold	
Latino & Latina Roundtable of the San Gabriel and Pomona Valley	The Sunrise Project	
	The Workers Lab	

SUPPORT OUR WORK

For more than 60 years, the UCLA Labor Center has advanced quality employment and education for all. With a history of fostering innovative collaborations between students, faculty, workers and community partners anchored in the heart of Los Angeles, our approach to research justice, leadership development, and narrative change promotes worker justice, racial and economic equity, global labor solidarity, and immigrant rights. We accomplish our work in direct partnership with our community and supporters.

Recently, we launched a concerted effort—the [Lawson Fundraising Campaign](#)—as a way to raise support for key needs at the UCLA Labor Center. In year one, we successfully raised capital funds to help us move back into our building. In 2026, we will focus on support specifically targeted toward our young workers, fellows, and rising leaders of our labor programs.

To learn more about how to support our work, visit: labor.ucla.edu/get-involved/support.

GET CONNECTED

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