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Los Angeles teachers' strike vs. school privatization

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John Parker speaking at support rally for LA teachers' strike. Photo: Reece Evans



United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA), representing more than 30,000 teachers, counselors, librarians, nurses and other school staff, waged a militant six-day strike in mid-January. They won enormous grassroots support from students, parents, the labor movement and the entire working-class community of

Los Angeles. A settlement with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) was reached on Jan. 22, and school workers returned to the job on Jan. 23.



A clear majority of teachers and school workers voted for the new contract, which includes wage increases and provisions for smaller classes, more essential staff such as nurses and counselors, reduction of standardized testing, and a community schools program meant to give more input to local residents. [Read more about the settlement](#) on the UTLA's website.



While people are still discussing the outcome and specifics of the agreement, it's clear that the UTLA's strength and overwhelming community support pushed back LAUSD and Superintendent Austin Beutner, both of whom represent corporate interests determined to destroy public education. The spread of privately run charter schools that take funding and other resources from public schools — whose students are mainly Black, Brown and working class — was a major issue in the strike.



On Jan. 18, several UTLA chapters joined with Unión del Barrio for a large press conference of students, teachers, parents and community organizations at South Central Los Angeles' Maya Angelou High School to demonstrate the broad community support for striking teachers.



Struggle □ La Lucha correspondent John Parker spoke at the press conference, representing the Harriet Tubman Center for Social Justice and the International Action Center-West Coast. Following are his remarks:



"New Orleans is the largest nationwide experiment in charter schools — and let me tell you, it fails disabled students, it fails Black and Brown students, creating forced segregation to deny working-class children a decent education. It fails communities who've lost their right to local schools, so their children now must travel two hours, leaving at 6 o'clock in the morning and getting home at 5 o'clock in the evening. It fails teachers, whose unions and job skills are forced out for temporary, unskilled teaching staff. The evidence is clear: charters

and privatization of education are means to a bitter end.



"This privatization and gutting of essential school staff and programs, this denial of a livable wage for teachers, is not an accident. This is a national phenomenon reflecting the wishes of the owners of capital. And capitalism doesn't want educated workers. As it decays, it requires cheap labor and quick profits, and quality education gets in the way of that.



"But what they require is not our concern. They can be stopped if we march, walk or roll on the picket lines side by side with teachers who have the potential to create a historic movement, like West Virginia teachers did last year when they sparked a viral movement from the South to the Midwest — a movement that benefited teachers, school workers and especially students, and inspired the imagination of our class.



"I'm a proud parent of a confident, intelligent young Black man who had his education in the LA public school system. I'll be damned if I'm going to

let some snotty-nosed, rich, privileged, self-serving representative of the owners of capital — I’m talking about Beutner now — destroy public education as it was destroyed in New Orleans.



“And I ain’t the only one. I’m a member of the Harvard Boulevard Block Club. This is my neighborhood, this is our community of Black and Brown working people united, and we’ll fight like hell to stop that destruction. We remain with UTLA, we remain with all the school workers and teachers who are defending our students’ right to a decent life that only a quality education can provide.”





Video: Firefighters solidarity with striking teachers, Jan.

22



<https://youtu.be/Jw96S2Qezxk>



<https://www.struggle-la-lucha.org/2019/01/26/los-angeles-teachers-strike-vs-school-privatization/>