

The Spark

May 2017

Local 888
SEIU
Stronger Together

SEIU member benefits gets major upgrade



Local 888 Secretary-Treasurer **Brenda Rodrigues** attended a special site visit to SEIU's Member Benefits headquarters to meet its staff, review its first year's progress and plans for the future.

"It's really amazing to see what Member Benefits have put together for our members," said Rodrigues. "I hope more members will take advantage of all of the new benefits that are on the website—everything from insurance and credit cards to discounts on travel and everyday items."

Visit www.seiumb.com to see how the buying power of millions of SEIU members helps the union negotiate some terrific discounts!

Below are some of the great benefits available—at no cost or obligation—just for being an SEIU member!

- **Manage finances better:** Get competitive rates on everything from credit cards to personal loans
- **Protect your family:** Benefit from group rates on a growing portfolio of insurance products
- **Cut your cost of living:** Get special discounts at thousands of stores and favorite merchants.
- **Travel for less:** Enjoy specially negotiated rates and travel programs

Members who would like Brenda to visit their chapter for an informational session should call 617 241-3300 or email brodrigues@seiu888.org

Members take action on international workers' day

Members of Local 888 marched on May 1 in communities across Massachusetts in support of International Workers Day and in solidarity with immigrants who are under attack.



In the photo are Montachusettis Opportunity Council Head Start teachers **Jonathan Dudley, Katey Komberg, Nancy Assimakopoulos, and Gloria Payton** marching on May 1 with United Neighbors of Fitchburg.



Enio Lopez marched in Chelsea with other Local 888 members along with airport workers, health care workers, and thousands of other concerned citizens. Lopez is also a Chelsea City Councilor

Raise Up gathers allies for ambitious political agenda

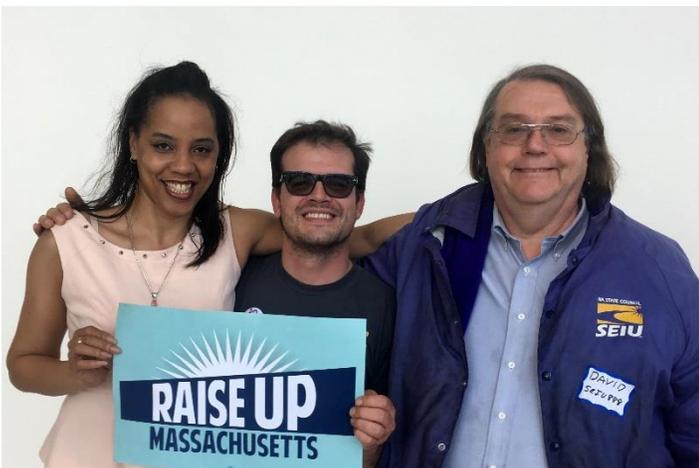
Hundreds of social and economic justice activists gathered at UMass Boston on May 6 to prepare their campaign to win an ambitious agenda: a new \$15 an hour minimum wage, paid family and medical leave, criminal justice reform, the Safe Communities Act and a constitutional amendment for a new Fair Share or millionaires tax.



Participants at the "Progress as Resistance Conference" heard inspiring speakers outline campaigns to "raise up" the standard of living for working people in Massachusetts.

This conference featured briefings on how activists can engage in campaigns to win: a \$15 Minimum Wage, Paid Family and Medical Leave, the Fair Share Amendment, ending mass incarceration, and safe communities.

Members of Local 888 are urged to [join Raise Up](#) as a volunteer for future events and actions and consider a small contribution to [support Raise Up!](#)



The conference was attended by several Local 888 members including **Damali Simmonds** and **David Reno** pictured above with Local 888 Political Director Dan Hoffer. **Jorge Vargas** and **Charlotte Killam** also attended!

Parents, educators, students are uniting for quality public education!

Last year, we won a landslide victory in Massachusetts against the forces of privatization, defeating a dangerous ballot initiative that would have drained hundreds of millions of dollars from our public schools.

Now, the struggle continues. We must stand together to resist the plans and policies of Trump, Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, and Governor Charlie Baker. *It is time to demand the public schools and colleges our communities deserve.*

By uniting our struggles, we can build a movement for racial and economic justice and fight more effectively for a just society and future.



RALLY FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

Saturday, May 20, 2:00 – 5:00 PM
Boston Common @ Beacon & Charles streets.

Parents, educators, and students are uniting to demand:

- Full funding for public education, Pre-K through college
- Debt-free public higher education
- Less testing, more learning
- Equitable access to quality education for all students

If you plan to attend the rally, please RSVP by emailing Rand Wilson at rwilson@seiu888.org

The rally is sponsored by Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance a coalition of parents, students, educators, and community and labor allies.

Member's letter on paid family leave published in Boston Globe!

Boston Water & Sewer employee **Damali Simmonds** (pictured in article at left) was upset by a recent *Boston Globe* article where the city's top management claimed that it couldn't provide paid family leave because union collective bargaining agreements prohibited implementation.

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Public defenders testify at hearing for right to collectively bargain

For the fifth year in a row, staff at the Committee on Public Counsel Services (CPCS) went to the State House on May 9 in support of legislation for collective bargaining rights.

"Despite the fact that all other agencies in the Commonwealth have the right to form unions,



Left to right -- Attorneys Jennifer Coliflores, Nathan Wong and Rachel Scotch testifying before the Joint Committee on Public Service.

hundreds of public defenders and support staff who work for CPCS are denied this basic right because we were left out of the state collective bargaining law," said **Rachel Scotch**, a public defender at the Malden district office, at a statehouse hearing on Senate Bill 1426 and House Bill 1426 before the Joint Committee on Public Service. "When our clients suffer, the whole system suffers. This isn't just about our livelihoods, it's about people's lives."

"I was hired in 2011, with 53 other public defenders, one of the largest hiring groups in CPCS. In the Worcester Office, out of my hiring class, there only remains myself and one other attorney -- and that office started off with seven attorneys," said **Nathan Wong**, a Public Defender in Worcester. "At CPCS, we don't have the expectation that we'll receive regular pay raises. We are paid lower than workers at all other state agencies who do similar work. Working at CPCS should not be considered a stepping stone to private practice, it should be a career. Passing legislation that gives us a path to choose collective bargaining could stabilize turnover and improve our services."

"We are passionate and dedicated. All we want is a voice at work so we can better advocate for our

clients and have a say in our own future," said **Jennifer Coliflores**, a public defender with the Worcester Superior Court Office who also testified at the hearing.

"The legislation, An Act relative to the collective bargaining rights for employees of the Committee for Public Counsel Services (S.1426 and H.1426) has more support this session than ever before," said SEIU Political Director Dan Hoffer. "With 113 House co-sponsors and 28 Senate co-sponsors, this is the first session the bill has bi-partisan support with eight House republicans and two Senate Republicans signing on."

The public defenders and staff are cautiously optimistic about gaining a vote in the legislature this year.

More information about the campaign is at www.seiu888.org/massdefenders.

Globe letter... *Continued from page 2*

With help from staff at Local 888, Simmonds wrote to the *Globe* pointing out that the state Attorney General's office and the Treasury Department both negotiated paid family leave with union employees in 2016 during the middle of their collective bargaining agreements.

SEIU Local 888, has repeatedly requested a similar arrangement from the city.

"The city says, "If Mayor Walsh could wave a wand tomorrow and give paid parental leave to everybody in the world he would," wrote Simmonds. "Let's be clear: our unions are not standing in the way. Mayor Walsh, why don't you wave that wand now?"

Simmonds' letter was published on April 25.

Members are encouraged to write to their local papers about issues of concern. If you would like assistance with editorial contacts or help refining your message, contact rwilson@seiu888.org.



Coming Attractions

National Association of Letter Carriers Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive

Saturday, May 13
Your mailbox/front door!

Working in partnership with the AFL-CIO Labor Liaison Network, United Way and a host of other partners, members of the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) get food into the cupboards of those in need. All people need to do is place a bag of unopened, non-perishable food next to their mailbox before their letter carrier delivers their mail on Saturday, May 13th, and the carrier will do the rest. Once collected, the food is taken back to the postal station, sorted, and delivered by union volunteers to area food banks or pantries.

We ask you to please publicize, promote and most importantly, participate in the May 13th NALC Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive.

For more info: please contact Yael Foa, National Community Engagement United Way Program Coordinator, at 202-639-6245 or yfoa@afclio.org

SEIU Local 888 Executive Board meeting

Wed, May 17, 10am – 4pm
SEIU Local 888, 25 Braintree Hill Office Park, Braintree, MA

The Executive Board is the governing body of Local 888. It is authorized and empowered to take all lawful action consistent with our Constitution and by-laws.

Coalition for Social Justice's Banquet and Awards Ceremony

Thu, May 18, 6pm – 9pm
Venus de Milo, 75 Grand Army of the Republic Hwy, Swansea, MA

Please join the Coalition for Social Justice's 22nd Annual Banquet and Awards Ceremony. We will be honoring our volunteers and reflecting on the past year's work. Tickets: \$30 (includes dinner)



Rally for Public Education

Sat, May 20, 3:00 – 5:30pm

Boston Common

Stand up for students, public schools and colleges. Fight efforts by Trump, DeVos, Baker & Peyser to gut our education system. Demand full funding, debt-free higher education and the schools are communities deserve.

Sponsored by the Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance.

BOSTON HOME CENTER SPRING EXPO

May 20, 9:00 am – 1:00 pm

Madison Park HS, 75 Malcolm X Blvd, Boston

Learn everything you need to know about

Home-ownership! Free Classes! Register at bostonhomecenter.com

Classes on Homebuying 100, Strategic Money Management Plan, Financial Assistance Workshop, DIY or Hire a Home Repair Contractor?, Boston Home Repair Funding Programs, and Healthy Homes.

WILD 31st Annual Summer Institute Women Fighting for Social, Economic and Racial Justice. June 23 – 25, 2017

Bridgewater State University, 131 Summer Street, Bridgewater, MA 02324

The Women's Institute for Leadership Development (WILD) is a multiracial, multicultural women's organization founded in 1986 by women labor activists and labor educators to empower women to become effective leaders in their workplaces, unions, communities and in the Massachusetts labor movement.

Local 888 has Summer Institute scholarships for members! Contact: Brenda Rodrigues 617-241-3300 or email brodrigues@seiu888.org

Do you want to distribute the Spark to your coworkers?

To receive multiple copies of the Spark, indicate how many copies you would like on an online subscription form at: <http://tinyurl.com/z713jdm> or just email the information to: rwilson@seiu888.org

