



Introduction

Past events exist, after all, only in memory, which is a form of imagination. The event is real now, but once it's then, its continuing reality is entirely up to us, dependent on our energy and honesty. If we let it drop from memory, only imagination can restore the least glimmer of it. If we lie about the past, forcing it to tell a story we want it to tell, to mean what we want it to mean, it loses its reality, becomes a fake. To bring the past along with us through time in the hold-alls of myth and history is a heavy undertaking.

– Ursula K. Le Guin, *Tales from Earthsea*

In the spring of 2018, a wave of rank-and-file rebellion swept schools across four Republican-led states in the south and southwest US. One after another, education workers and local union activists in West Virginia, Oklahoma, Kentucky, and Arizona pushed their trade unions, school boards, and school administrations to shut schools down until their demands were met. They called on legislators to increase taxes on the wealthiest extractors of resources and labor in their respective places (namely coal, oil, and gas) to increase pay for all education workers and public employees, provide better health insurance, and restore education funding. After experiencing year after year of budget cuts, often alongside increasingly intense accountability and surveillance measures, educators said, enough.

Mass strike actions are not new to schooling since education unions formed in the early to mid twentieth century. Historian Jon Shelton recounts more than three hundred strikes in the “long 70s” that roiled cities and states across the country from New York to Oklahoma to Montana to California. Yet, for the past thirty or more years, teachers’ strikes have been few and far between and never with such widespread public support (Feldman and Swanson). Many have, very rightly, argued that the 2018 education walkouts are a new and exciting shift with deep implications for the future of labor (Friedman).

Through interviews with strike organizers across four states, our own experiences in education labor organizing, and our participation in and proximity to the strikes in West Virginia and Oklahoma respectively, this book undertakes a critically constructive study of the spring 2018 educator uprising, a part of a resurgence of teacher uprisings, including strikes in the Los Angeles Unified School District, Oakland Unified School District, Chicago Public Schools, and Denver Public Schools, among many others in the US and across the globe (Stark and Spreen). Rooting our study in a longer historical view and within a wider education justice movement perspective, we know that a revolutionary shift within the education labor movement requires looking backward just as much as we look to the present and future. It requires that we engage deeply

embedded hierarchies of power that have always existed, in some form, within the education system.

Our main purpose in writing this book is to reinvigorate the feelings of excitement and raw energy that comprised this shared collective experience among educators and all those—students, caregivers, families, community members, movement workers and scholars—involved in education labor struggles. At the same time, we hope to also encourage healthy, critical reflection to understand several salient tensions that arose and continue to arise within contemporary educator movements. The collective experience of rebellion was/is differentiated, along the lines of rank, race, class, gender, immigrant status, and geography, among other ways. Rank-and-file educators ignited the kindling of agitation among one another into militancy. They pushed hesitant centralized state union leadership to shift from decades of electoral-focused strategies to direct action, if briefly. Differences in power and voice among strike participants and those most directly impacted ensured certain visions for the struggle moved forward while others were constrained or remained marginal. We suggest that grappling with these differentiated, in-tension experiences of the strikes is important for creating and realizing shared visions of just and liberatory education in labor movement spaces. We humbly acknowledge that such critical reflection is only possible in hindsight.

Secondarily, while our study centers on K–12 education struggles, we seek to offer insights that may contribute to post-secondary academic labor organizing. While higher and lower education labor contexts and organization differ in many respects, they are indelibly connected. Issues of public disinvestment and privatization, state or institutional curricular mandates that aim to limit and repress educators who foster study of historical and ongoing social oppression, the precaritization of (all but especially the most feminized) education labor—higher and lower education struggles can and should learn from one another.

We begin by providing a summary of the strikes, then framing the strike wave within its historical context, drawing mainly on the work of teacher strike and labor history scholars. We argue the history (and present state) of teacher labor is a history of racialization and genderization and continues to be so. To understand our present moment, it is important to remember how organized teachers have, in moments, accepted narrowed forms of professionalization that understood (White) teachers as experts and, within education and educator unions, devalued ways of knowing and being incompatible with the status quo. In other moments, educators rejected White professionalization, advocating approaches to militant labor organizing accountable to the communities and social movements they worked in, with, and for. Within such a framing, our analysis of the spring 2018 strikes is driven by a desire to, as Shelton states, “show that teacher organization is at its best when it is a part of a larger social movement and when it can show how intimately related are teacher working conditions, student learning conditions, and social equality” (197).

● Teacher Strike Waves During “the Long ‘70s”: Introducing Unionisms

During the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s, strikes and direct action were a common strategy in education labor organizing. With aims toward quelling disruptive teaching labor, the capitalist and bipartisan governing classes appropriated Civil Rights-era language to promote individual choice, school privatization, and the dogma of scientific measurement as antidotes to educational inequality (Baker, “Paradoxes of Desegregation”; Shelton). In West Virginia, Oklahoma, Kentucky, Arizona, and everywhere, these reforms have disproportionately impacted students at the intersections of working class, BIPOC, immigrant, and disabled. Such neoliberal capitalist reforms, co-constitutive with legal and structural attacks on workers’ rights and capacity to organize toward more militant aims, have created a now multi-trillion-dollar global education industry (Stark and Spreen). In the past three decades, education trade unions like the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA) have largely avoided strikes and direct action in favor of lobbying for pro-public education elected officials. The successes of these neoliberal moves and the decline in education labor militancy are intricately entwined with political, racial, gendered, ethnic, and cultural tensions within the education labor movement (Shelton; Podair; Golin).

During the long 1970s of intense militancy in teacher labor, White educator unions often, yet not always, deferred solidarity with civil rights struggles for integration, community control over the curriculum and school, ethnic studies, and increasing teachers of color. Prior to school desegregation, Black teachers and Black teachers’ associations engaged social movement activity entwined with labor organizing for pay and resources equal to White teachers and schools (V. S. Walker; Hale, “On Race”). During integration, White teachers’ unions generally did not prioritize fighting against the mass push-out of Black educators, and many AFT and NEA state and local associations remained segregated until as late as the 1970s (M. Murphy; Urban). While there have long been waves of social movement unionism on the margins of the broader education labor movement, Shelton writes that, in tandem with the passage of anti-union labor law, like the Taft-Hartley Act in 1947, “anti- Communist backlash in the post-war years helped to choke off more radical forms of social movement teacher unionism” (31; Blount; M. Murphy). Andrew Feffer’s history of this era in New York City demonstrates that anti-communist AFT leaders colluded with state investigations that fired *en masse* K–12 and higher education teachers involved in social movement unions. With the marginalization, push-out, or, in some cases, imprisonment of more radical anti-racist teacher organizers, major unions in many, especially urban, places became more narrowly focused on carving out and protecting the professional status of an emergent White and Whitening middle class teaching force (Urban).

One significant example of the differences and tensions in unionism during this era is Jerard Podair’s study of the United Federation of Teachers’ (UFT’s)

series of strikes in 1968 against New York City's (OHB) neighborhood experiment in Black community control. Prior to the creation of the Black community-led OHB, during the 1930s/1940s, a small yet strong, multi-racial women-led faction of the communist Teachers Union (TU) engaged a community-based mode of organizing, developing strong relationships with students, families, and community organizations and a platform grounded in anti-racism and anti-poverty. The TU fought for many years to win leadership in the UFT (M. Murphy 170; Taylor). During the red scares of the 1940s and 1950s, the TU was decimated, with a majority of TU members arrested or fired *en masse* (Podair 170).

In the 1960s, many years of tireless grassroots organizing by a coalition of Black-led community groups, including the remaining TU organizers, won a community-elected district governing board, with hiring and firing power and control over OHB's curriculum (Podair 5). The board sought to redefine school success against narrow individualism and along the lines of community responsibility (Podair 76). The Albert Shanker-led UFT struck in response to the power carried by the local district board and the firing of several racist teachers resistant to Black curricular control. UFT leaders were particularly upset that elected board members comprised a majority of so-called "uneducated" poor Black mothers, whose movement work made the OHB experiment possible in the first place (Podair 87).

Shelton, building from the work of Podair and other teacher strike scholars, offers a more expansive argument to understand these racialized tensions and their relationship to the demise of militancy among teachers' unions during the past thirty years. Resonant with Podair, he suggests that many strikes during this era were rooted in White ethnic teachers' resistance to efforts of Civil Rights and Black Power activists to gain control over school curriculum and personnel.

Shelton further argues that such resistance was nurtured, in part, through the discursive moves of a "producerist" coalition of corporate interests and White working- and middle-class Americans to construct militant teachers' Whiteness as contingent. If one was striking, one was "flout[ing] the law and siphon[ing] off the resources of hardworking Americans" (2). In other words, a striking teacher was a "non-producer," at risk of being tainted by the anti-Black, anti-immigrant racialized tropes used to demean welfare and housing subsidy recipients. Alongside racial politics, teachers' strikes during this era hinged significantly on gender politics. Often, striking teachers were derided by city officials, school boards, and the producerist coalition, generally, as women unwilling to do women's work, like unpaid caregiving duties—grievances at the heart of many union campaigns in this era. More importantly, women teachers balked such gender policing and claimed their right to undertake so-called men's work, participating in decision-making on city, state, and school district budget-making and resource allocations.

Yet, Shelton tends to underemphasize the role and responsibility of the major teachers' unions in the marginalization and repression of social movement unionism, or ways of thinking about and practicing labor organizing toward transforming unions, schools, and society toward radical democracy and social justice aims (see Dyke; Maton and Stark). He frames teacher labor opposition to

community control more so as a clash created in the confluence of circumstances in a political moment: “Indeed, the public-sector labor movement in American cities came of age at the exact moment that, first, African American activists organized to rectify the abject inequality that New Deal liberalism helped to institutionalize, and second, cities faced both declining tax revenues and taxpayer resistance” (195). Shelton rightly points to the significance of producerist responses to teacher militancy during the long 1970s in facilitating the rise of neoliberalism. However, historians of teaching, teachers’ unions, and the McCarthy era illuminate the longer, active institutional investments of the AFT and NEA in a narrowed White teacher professionalism, and resistance efforts on the part of rank-and-file educators to democratize and practice alternative modes of unionism (Blount; Feffer; M. Murphy; Tait; Taylor).

Despite violent government repression and resistance from trade union leadership, Cindy Rottman et al. argue that marginal yet powerful feminist and anti-racist rank-and-file efforts have always existed throughout the history and present of the U.S. education labor movement. Often women- and people of color-led, such efforts understood that labor challenges within the education industry are deeply connected to intersecting issues of systemic racism, sexism, poverty, gentrification, and colonialism. More recently, the 2011 Wisconsin teacher protests against educational austerity began to popularize the tagline that “teachers’ working conditions are students’ learning conditions” (Buhle and Buhle). The 2012 Chicago Teachers Union strike, led by the more radical Caucus of Rank-and-File Educators (CORE), is one of the most recent and powerful examples of social justice unionism, with its emphasis on community organizing and antiracism (Nuñez et al.). Their demands went well beyond bread-and-butter gains to attend to the everyday living and learning conditions of their students and families (McCartin and Sneiderman). Demands were premised on analyses of the interrelations between school reform and gentrification, regressive tax increment financing policies, the decimation of public housing, and various methods through which land and wealth in the city was and continues to be upwardly redistributed to the already wealthy (Brogan 146). In 2019 and into the years of the pandemic, several major urban strikes continued to push for social justice demands, predominantly led by social justice caucuses within the United Teachers of Los Angeles, the Oakland Education Association, and again, the Chicago Teachers Union (Stark).

Throughout the book, our analysis of the 2018 strikes attends to differences and tensions in ways of thinking about the purposes and practices of union organizing in public education (unionisms, plural), differences that include orientations to militancy, union democracy, social oppression, wider social movements, and to the work of public education system in/for transforming society.

● Timeline of the Spring 2018 Strikes

Strikes are not a new phenomenon in West Virginia, Oklahoma, Kentucky, or Arizona, and educators in these places have long been on the frontlines. West

Virginia educators' 1990 statewide struggle revolved predominantly around educators' poor wages and education funding. In Oklahoma in 1990, educators struck for four days and won increased wages, smaller class sizes, and increased education funding through the passage of HB1017 (Cameron). At the time (and prior to the state's passage of anti-union Right to Work legislation in 2001), the state's major education union, the National Education Association-affiliated Oklahoma Education Association (OEA), was more robust with a much larger membership and union leaders supported and led the action. Previously, OEA called for a statewide strike in 1968, also due to low wages and education funding. In 1988, Kentucky Education Association (KEA) leaders organized a walkout in protest of the Governor's proposal at the time to cut public education funding that shut down ninety-two of the state's 178 districts (R. Walker) and engaged in statewide strikes previously during 1966 and 1970. In 1970, educators across the state struck for six days to win major investments in educators' pay and school funding (Brandt). As recent as 2004, leaders of KEA and its most populous local, the Jefferson County Teachers Association (JCTA), called for a statewide strike in response to cuts to healthcare benefits. The strike was averted after lawmakers met in special session to restore funding. Even as Arizona has had strong anti-union laws on the books since 1947, educators in two of the state's largest districts at the time, Tucson and Scottsdale, struck in 1971 and 1978 respectively, for increased wages and school funding (Eberhart-Phillips; Kennedy).

The 2018 strikes revolved around many of the same issues as the previous actions. All four states continue to be ranked at or near the bottom of average state teacher pay and education funding that disparately impact the states' most economically and racially marginalized communities. In addition to low wages and funding, each state had specific moments of catalyzation. West Virginia's struggle gained momentum due to increases in public employees' insurance premiums and the proposed privatization of their state insurance program. Kentucky public employees and educators became outraged in response to a quickly proposed pension reform bill, tacked on at the last minute to a routine wastewater treatment bill, nicknamed the Sewer Bill. Kentucky's teacher pension fund was siphoned during the 2008 recession to address state budget shortfalls. The reform, pushed by conservative lawmakers, proposed cuts to pensions, especially for new hires, to avoid restoring pre-recession funding levels and would have limited teachers' representation on the pension board. In Oklahoma, while sentiments for a walkout had been brewing for at least a year in many districts, legislators proposed and failed to pass a bill in February 2018 that would have provided educators with a \$5,000 pay increase and increased education funding, funded by tax increases. Similarly in Arizona, low wages and steep education funding cuts during the decade prior combined with the energy and momentum from other states' educator uprisings produced a political moment of possibility.

Here, we offer a general timeline of events for the spring 2018 strikes, which may be useful for reference as we narrate in more detail and historicize the actions in subsequent chapters.

Table 1. Timeline of Spring 2018 Strikes

West Virginia	February 22, 2018	Due to pressure from rank-and-file educators, especially those organized loosely with WVPEU Facebook group, WVEA and AFT-WV called for a two-day statewide strike, which eventually turned into five days.
	February 27, 2018	All the state's fifty-five counties continued to strike. On this day, state union leaders announced a handshake agreement to resolve wage raises and the imperiled public employee insurance program.
	February 28, 2018	Initially supposed to be a "cooling off" day before a return to work, educators locally organized and shared information via social media, especially via WVPEU, to continue the strike until the legislation was officially passed and signed into law.
	March 6, 2018	The legislature passed a five percent pay increase for all public employees and a sixteen-month freeze to insurance premium hikes with the promise to identify a long-term source of funding for the program.
Kentucky	March 29, 2018	Republican Governor Bevin and party leaders unveiled and quickly passed an austerity reform to Kentucky teachers' pension fund (drained to address budget shortfalls during the 2008 recession), attached to a hundreds-of-pages-long wastewater treatment legislation (dubbed the Sewer Bill).
	March 30, 2018	Union leaders called for rallies at the capitol while rank-and-file organizers called for a statewide sickout. Educators shut down more than twenty school districts.
	April 2, 2018	Union leaders continued to argue against a widespread job action. All of the state's one hundred twenty counties shut down while educators protested at the capitol. This was facilitated by more than half of districts already out on spring break.
	April 13, 2018	After Bevin vetoed proposed legislation to raise taxes to reform teachers' pension fund, educators shut down more than half of the state's public school population. Legislators eventually overrode Bevin's veto. On this day, state legislators also passed HB 169, also known as the Gang Crime Bill, which many Jefferson County educators argued would fuel the school-to-prison pipeline and fought to center in the educators' strike.

Table 1. Timeline of Spring 2018 Strikes, Continued

Oklahoma	March 8, 2018	With pressure from rank-and-file educators, the OEA called for legislators to provide a \$10,000 raise for all teachers, a \$5,000 raise for all support staff, and a restoration of \$200 million in public education funding. OEA gave a deadline of April 1 for legislators to meet demands or face a statewide walkout.
	April 2, 2018	Oklahoma educators shut down near eighty percent of the state’s public schools just after Governor Fallin signed a bill that provided \$6,000 raises for educators, relative to experience, and a \$1,250 raise for support staff, funded by a regressive increase to the tobacco sales tax and no additional public education funding.
	April 12, 2018	After nearly two weeks of striking, citing declining support among superintendents and the refusal of legislators to move on any additional legislation, OEA president, Alecia Priest, called on educators to return to work.
Arizona	April 9, 2018	Organized by members of Arizona Educators United (AEU), educators began meeting up before school, wearing red (“red for ed”) to hold weekly “walk-ins” at their school sites across the state, which grew steadily in participation during a few weeks. AEU, a grassroots, rank-and-file led group, worked together with the state union, Arizona Education Association (AEA) to prepare for a statewide strike.
	April 19, 2018	Seventy-eight percent of AEA members voted to strike, demanding a twenty percent salary increase, the restoration of education funding to pre-2008 levels, competitive pay for all support staff, permanent salary including annual raises, and no new tax cuts.
	April 26, 2018	Arizona educators begin their strike.
	May 3, 2018	Arizona educators end their strike after winning a nineteen percent pay increase, partial restoration of nearly \$400 million in pre-recession funding cuts, and a promise to restore the rest in the next five years.

● Knowing Your Enemy: The Terrain of Struggle for Public Schools and Universities

While there were specific moments of widespread outrage that created ripe conditions for the spring 2018 rank-and-file rebellion, the seeds of the strikes had been brewing for years, even decades. Public education is one, if not the major, expense for state budgets, and in each of these Republican-majority governed states, tax cuts for wealthy corporations, particularly in oil and gas industries, have long been absorbed through educational disinvestment. While union leaders struggled to develop and maintain relationships with legislators to pass educator-friendly bills, they held little sway in relation to the influence, wealth, and resources of oil and gas, among other corporate interests. State leaders illuminated their gendered and classed disdain for predominantly women educators in these places as the strikes loomed. Oklahoma's Governor Fallin likened educators to teenagers who wanted a new car, Kentucky's Governor Bevin described striking educators as frauds and accused them of leaving children vulnerable to sexual assault and drug abuse (Reilly, "How Republican Governor Matt Bevin Lost Teachers"), West Virginia's Governor Justice called teachers "rednecks," and Arizona's Governor Ducey accused teachers of being political operatives and of playing games (Ruelas and Cano).

Likely, governors (and many other state leaders) made these public epithets because they were in a serious bind. They faced pressure from below and from above. Macks Hopland, a Minneapolis educator and movement scholar, writes on Facebook of the recent 2022 Minneapolis Federation of Teachers' (MFT) strike, "As striking educators . . . knowing who our enemy is, is essential for understanding and winning the fight." In the MFT strike, as with many other unionized urban districts that have struck in recent years, at first glance, the common enemy may appear to be district negotiators or the school board. Yet, as Hopland writes, part-time employed school board members rarely have the professional expertise or day-to-day access to district activities, and much of their information is filtered through the superintendent. It may then seem that the district superintendent is the main power holder, in charge of hiring the negotiating team and who oversees the daily operations and budget of the district. Or, in the context of the statewide strikes, it may appear that state lawmakers are the main power holders, as they control the proposal and passage of legislation to fully fund public schools and universities. In response to these analyses, Hopland argues yes and no.

"Public education is one of the top expenses in all municipal [and state] budgets, and thus is one of the main tax burdens, specifically of property taxes, at the local level. Because taxation and education are by nature redistributive institutions, those with the most wealth in society try to limit their taxes for education as much as possible." Hopland argues that educators must take a wider view in understanding power. Using Minneapolis as an example, Hopland

writes that most major Fortune 500 companies target the superintendent or state lawmakers, via corporate foundations or lobbying and campaign donations, to enact reforms that benefit their interests (also see Berkshire and Lafer). Ultimately, Hopland suggests that while public sector unions may sit across the negotiating table from district leaders or in the offices of state legislators, corporate interests' power and influence filters through legislators and district leaders. He argues that understanding how power operates at all levels can better inform educators' strategies.

Public higher education faces similar challenges. With declining state investment, university leaders work to curry favor with wealthy donors, build revenue-generating arms that have little to do with public education for the common good (i.e., athletics programs), encourage faculty and graduate students to subsidize their wages through grants and for-profit product development, reduce their labor costs in whatever ways possible, and continue to raise tuition and fees. These conditions create situations in which public universities, like Erin's, host a local food shelf for the substantial number of students who can barely afford to eat and, at the same time, pay their head football coaches \$7.5 million per year in wages (Wilson).

Ralph Wilson and Isaac Kamola write that controversies around so-called leftist indoctrination on K-12 and university campuses have produced ethical, intellectual, and political debates that center the issue of free speech. Yet, they argue, "Often missing from these discussions, however, are questions about power and money" (17). Their research zooms in on one of the most powerful and far-reaching conservative political networks:

[T]he Koch donor network has an extensive track record of weaponizing free speech arguments more generally. Its members have long used the First Amendment to push back against civil rights, environmental and consumer protections, government regulation, and labor unions. Free speech arguments have been used to justify policies that shield wealthy political donors from campaign finance limits and transparency requirements, thereby maximizing their influence on the political process. (21)

They write that "a handful of plutocratic libertarian donors seek to disproportionately influence political, economic, and social life . . . Political operatives within the Koch network have long viewed higher education as a primary battlefield in the fight to remake the world according to their radical libertarian image" (28).

Like Hopland, Wilson and Kamola suggest that educators must follow the money and understand how and why neoliberal and neoconservative capitalist interests wield their influence in public education policy. Because education, and particularly public education, is a "primary battlefield," educator labor movements operate within a unique industry and comprise a critical front in the struggle for a world that makes life not only possible but just and joyful.

● Thinking Across Lower and Higher Education

The study of the resurgence in militancy may offer important insights for labor struggles in higher education, which has, like lower education, experienced significant decreases in public funding and increases in precarity for all workers, an onslaught of privatization and for-profit schemes (Bousquet), and ever-narrowing spaces for programs and departments that cannot demonstrate their value to capital. Legislation to limit and surveil the study of race, gender, and sexuality in many states affect both K-12 and higher education contexts (Pen America). Similarly, labor movements in higher education have experienced tensions and struggles between professionalization and community-based movements for educational self-determination, e.g., struggles for Native, ethnic, feminist, and queer universities (Meyerhoff). As with lower education, participation in and visions for higher education movements are differentiated by rank, class, gender, race, and indigeneity, among other ways. The early-mid twentieth century state repression of left-teacher organizing in collusion with anti-communist AFT leaders against anti-racist, anti-poverty higher education unions (like New York's College Teachers Union) led to a decline in social movement unionism and a chilling effect on the kinds of research and scholarship undertaken by academics in this era (Feffer).

Like lower education, higher education faculty and non-academic workers undertook efforts to unionize most dramatically in the 1960s and 1970s. Between 1966 and 1994, 172 faculty strikes were undertaken across the nation (Herbert and Apkarian 262). Previously, like the NEA, the early Association of American University Professors (AAUP) was resistant to unionization. In fact, "the AAUP founders went to great lengths to reject the union label" (Reichman, quoted in Herbert and Apkarian 254). With the casualization and feminization of higher education labor, today, only twenty-five percent of all higher education faculty are unionized, concentrated in the Northeast, Upper Midwest, and West Coast (Dobbie and Robinson 130). Yet, like in our 2018 "red" state contexts, majority women contingent faculty have increasingly organized outside formal unions to challenge the low wages and precarity of their working conditions (Berry).

Even as higher education experiences pressures and reforms that are inter-related with those of lower education, their struggles and movements are often articulated at a distance. Within the field of education itself, this distance is rooted in the history of the initial formation of teacher education and its eventual shift from seminaries and normal colleges (a step above secondary education) and into universities (Ogren). As Wayne Urban notes, normal colleges were relatively freer places that "exhibited substantially more signs of gender equality than colleges and universities, even those that were coeducational" (xvi). The consolidation of teacher education within higher education was bound up with the exclusion and devaluation of women's capacity to participate in the formation of the traditions of knowledge that inform curriculum and pedagogy (Grumet). As women and gender minority faculty and faculty of

color bear the brunt of casualization in higher education, so are their contributions to research and academic knowledge constrained.

In higher and lower education, teaching labor is underwaged in relation to the prestige and power associated with tenure-track (particularly private) university research labor (Kahn, "We Value Teaching" 596). Like K-12 education, higher education, too, has long grappled with decreased public funding, privatization via increased reliance on donor funding, political censure of justice-oriented academics, and threats to liberal studies in favor of social engineering (Newfield). Today, most teaching labor in higher education (upwards of seventy-five percent) is undertaken by low-wage contingent, non-tenure track faculty who are majority women and faculty of color (Schell ix). Even as many contingent faculty have sought to find ways within and outside of unions to contest, for example, denial of healthcare, low wages, and employment instability, tenure track faculty have not always joined or supported their efforts (Kahn et al.). Examples where tenure-track faculty have done so illuminate its significance. Seth Kahn, William Lalicker, and Amy Lynch-Binieck write of an example: "tenured faculty at LSU advocated for secure positions and improved compensation for their contingent colleagues by forming alliances with an activist group on their campus, even in the face of budget crises and threats of termination" (8).

Many contingent faculty labor unionists and activists have sought to learn from the much more highly unionized public sector of lower education. Kahn suggests that in more precarious, lower-wage higher education fields, like composition and writing studies, "our scholarly forums are becoming less labor averse," with more robust discussion and analysis of contingent faculty issues and organizing ("We Value Teaching" 593-594). While few faculty are unionized in the US, William Herbert and Jacob Apkarian noted an upsurge in higher education strikes in the years between 2012 and 2018 (42). The majority constituted graduate student-led and non-academic employee-led actions while fourteen were undertaken by faculty (28). The signs of solidarity that simultaneously striking University of Illinois-Chicago graduate student workers posted to social media to support striking K-12 educators in 2018 suggests the significance and necessity in thinking these rank-and-file movements across higher and lower education together. Both share the same enemies.

More broadly, and perhaps further suggesting the significance of studying our contemporary strike wave moment, Shelton argues that the American public largely viewed the demise of the labor-liberal coalition and the rise of neoliberal capitalism via the lens of the recurring Civil Rights era teacher strikes (20). He explains, "Neoliberalism relies on the notion that virtually every aspect of life is better off organized by a marketplace because the 'competition' sorts out the winners from the losers" (21-22). Certainly, today neoliberalism remains a strong discourse that continues to significantly shape educational policy from the top down. The widespread favorable media coverage and overwhelming public support for the recent strikes and the centrality of educators and schooling in local and national pandemic policy debates suggests that education labor

continues to be an important lens through which many people make sense of predominating political ideologies.

● Public Narratives of the Spring 2018 Strike Wave: Forefronting Intersectionality

Within the mainstream media, coverage of the teacher strikes has largely framed the struggles in terms of professional dignity. In September 2018, *TIME Magazine* dedicated its cover story to the teacher rebellion, telling the personal stories and struggles of thirteen teachers from across the strike wave states. A Kentucky teacher describes her experience:

Right now, I have a broken tooth that I can't afford to have fixed. I've had to take a sick day before because I didn't have enough gas to make it to school. I donated plasma twice before my first pay day this year just for gas money. I was really embarrassed when I first had to start doing that because I think of myself as a professional. I have a master's degree. (Reilly, "I Work 3 Jobs")

Similar stories were highlighted in the New York Times (Lowe), among other prominent media. The coverage in these influential media marked a stark shift from previous years of reporting that articulated bad teachers and their tenure protections as the root of educational failures. As Haley Sweetland Edwards' November 2014 *TIME* cover story title illustrates—"Rotten apples: It's nearly impossible to fire a bad teacher, Some tech millionaires may have found a way to change that"—discourses of neoliberal education reform were decidedly the norm. In her book, *The Teacher Wars: America's Most Embattled Profession*, journalist Dana Goldstein argues that teachers have, since the invention of compulsory common schooling, existed as scapegoats for the supposed failures of education to achieve the most progressive visions of the institution—social equality and prosperity. Yet, as many critical scholars of education suggest, the institution has and continues to accomplish what its creators intended, namely social control and assimilation into a predetermined social order (Ali and Buenavista). The romanticization of education as a progressive, inherently good project masks the powerful interests invested in weaponizing education, often in the name of progressivism, to maintain and reproduce the existing social order (Bowles and Gintis). Meanwhile, the accordance of professionalism has always been dangled in front of teachers like a carrot on a stick.

On the left, analyses of the strikes have suggested they illuminate the necessity for a renewed faith in the working class. Eric Blanc, for example, writes:

Many of the big, strategic lessons from the teachers' strikes aren't widely or universally accepted on the Left, or even among socialists. One is that the working class is still the most powerful social agent for progressive, radical change. It's sometimes hard even for Marxists to believe

this because many of us haven't seen it demonstrated in our lifetimes. But now we're seeing it in practice, and it should give us a lot of confidence about our strategy and our political priorities. ("Betting on the Working Class")

Blanc's take represents one important left narrative shaping understandings of the strikes—a renewed faith in the role of workplace organizing and the rising working class to end the worst ravages of capitalism and create a socially democratic future for all. The strike wave seemed to demonstrate to many that, against the media's imaginary of rural and/or Southern White people as ignorant and racist (cf. Vance), the working class can organize and is organizing, their class-based solidarity breaking down barriers of race, gender, and more.

Blanc's reporting on the strikes, based on his interviews with teachers and union leaders during the walkouts, engaged a tone of agitation and celebration for working-class revival. As studies of teacher strike history suggests, militancy is not the only indicator of a radical and just movement. In Chapter One and in the book more broadly, we further elaborate the significance of understanding the underlying theories of change and power (or unionisms) that inform and provoke such militancy.

Fewer media narratives emphasize the racial, generational, and gendered historical specificities of teaching, education labor, and the broader landscape and genealogy of social movements that made the strike wave possible. Editors for *Rethinking Schools*, an outlet for social, racial, and labor justice in education, call on us to understand the ways the strikes were made possible by preceding feminist and intersectional movements: "While it will take broader, sustained efforts to win all the demands raised during the strikes, the walkouts were lessons in social mobilization, led largely by women and drawing inspiration and energy from #BlackLivesMatter, #MeToo, and the March for Our Lives" (Karp and Sanchez).

Ben Jarovsky, for the *Chicago Reader*, contributes to this historicizing work, arguing the "red state revolt" was made possible by the 2012 Chicago Teachers Union strike, led by the community-based organizing of CTU president Karen Lewis and CORE. Jarovsky calls for a more nuanced approach to understanding the differences in public and Democratic Party support for Chicago teachers, fighting for a majority Black and Latinx-serving urban school district and against Democrat-supported moves to take power away from parents, students, and teachers through school privatization and related reforms. In the spring 2018 strike wave in Republican-led states, the Democratic Party was quick to support, aiming to swing the electoral political tide in these more rural states that had, as of yet, not been targeted to the same extent by school privatization proponents.

Alia Wong for *The Atlantic*, argues that media coverage of the continuing strike wave can tend to homogenize interrelated yet quite differently composed struggles. She suggests that the platform of striking Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) educators in January 2019 reflects the fact that educators

there are, unlike almost anywhere else in the US, predominantly people of color (thirty-four percent White while the majority, forty-three percent, are Latino according to district data). Many key union organizers have roots in immigrant justice, ethnic studies, and other local movements.

Beyond an increase in education funding, LAUSD teachers, like their Chicago counterparts in 2012, demanded smaller class sizes, the halt of charter schools and school choice/privatization, community-based schools, and increased positions and pay for support staff, like nurses and librarians (Wong). While West Virginia and Kentucky have longer memories and legacies of militant unions in the coal and steel industries, for the most part, many of the tens of thousands of teachers involved in the “red state revolt” were participating in collective action and grassroots movement organizing for the first time and, for many, at a distance from the working class-led movements for Black, queer, Native, migrant, and other liberation movements that have historically composed the webs of organized resistance in these places.

Tithi Bhattacharya (“Why the Teachers’ Revolt Must Confront Racism”) further illuminates the importance of reading these grassroots justice movements together. She argues that we must not ignore that, in many states, increasing racial and ethnic minority public school students is directly related to justifications for decreased per pupil spending. In many states, tensions existed between strike participants urging the education labor movement to build relations of solidarity with intersecting movements and participants advocating for a “unified” front. For example, in Kentucky, some teachers and activists wanted the movement to act in solidarity with opponents of a proposed bill enabling law enforcement to stop-and-frisk suspected gang members on appearance alone. Touted as the “gang bill,” many argued that it directly affected and would criminalize Louisville’s young Black student population. Those on the side of “unification” won out, and the “gang bill” passed into law in a state that disproportionately incarcerates its Black residents. As Bhattacharya powerfully writes, “Race is not an add-on to the struggle for wages. It shapes the terrain of struggle”.

In other writing, Bhattacharya (“Women Are Leading the Wave”) also argues that media narratives overwhelmingly failed to acknowledge the actions were led predominantly by women, limiting our understanding of the broader role of gender and heteropatriarchy in the struggle for public education:

The politicians in the states where the strikes are taking place, have, over the years, shown their deep commitment to generalized misogyny: Oklahoma has the highest rate of female incarceration. Arizona is ranked first for its anti-abortion laws by the leading anti-abortion group Americans United for Life. Kentucky now only has one abortion clinic left to serve the entire state. In West Virginia, the same legislators whose laws led to the strike, are considering a bill to take out the right to abortion from the state’s constitution.

She further argues that the conditions (i.e., de-skilling, poor pay) that sparked the walkouts were a result of patriarchal structures of administration seeking to keep women and care work in their/its place. Bhattacharya's calls to intersectional feminist analyses of the movement are important for reckoning with the education system's historic and ongoing cultural violence against Native people and people of color. Scholars of the feminization of teaching have illuminated the ways White women, in particular, have historically been conscripted into the colonizing work of "civilizing" and assimilating young people into a White supremacist society (Grumet; Meiners, "Disengaging from the Legacy"). As Bhattacharya suggests, the most radical visions for what "care" might mean and look like in education has emerged from community-based intersectional feminist movements. For these movements generally, an ethic of care is deeply interwoven with collective freedom. To understand the possibilities and challenges of the new teacher uprisings, we should seriously engage with differentiated understandings of care and the visions of education implied in these.

Tendencies to celebrate teachers as the new, militant front of the American labor movement may oversimplify or avoid engaging with historical divisions and enactments of solidarity between teachers' unions and movements for feminist/queer, Black, Brown, and Indigenous self-determination. It is within this space of tension that we locate our knowledge project. We aim to engage this tension with care, nuance, and with an understanding that anti-union, reformist discourses often cleverly weaponize the language of racial equity to squash labor uprisings. These discourses are promoted by those who have the most wealth to gain by disinvesting in and privatizing public education.

● Red State Uprising

The small but important body of scholarship on neoliberal attacks on public education and histories of education labor tends to focus on major northern or coastal urban areas like New York, New Jersey, Chicago, and Detroit. As is evident from media coverage of the 2016 presidential election, the social and political context of rural states are popularly, perhaps willfully, misunderstood, often fetishized in the mainstream media as "backward." In, for example, the 2016 election coverage, these places have conveniently been represented as the contained source of the nation's ignorance and racism, a straw man covering a deeper, more complex racial and colonialist history of the violent consolidation of land and power by corporations and the wealthy elite (Dunbar-Ortiz). In recounting community-organizing across higher and K-12 education contexts in rural Indiana, G Patterson writes that "the rural bogeyman" serves to mask the ways in which institutional power is wielded to preserve a White supremacist, heteropatriarchal status quo. "[I]n framing rural areas as backward, we crowd out powerful stories of coalition and resistance taking place in those spaces—and we miss opportunities to reflect on what these stories can teach us" (66).

These states all have rich histories of worker rebellion. For example, the coal regions of West Virginia and Kentucky were simultaneously home to some of the most dangerous working conditions between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and some of the most radical, multi-racial union efforts in the United States (Huber). West Virginia in particular is responsible for one of the largest worker uprisings in the US (Battle of Blair Mountain), due in large part to the exploitative nature of coal barons, the anti-union efforts by local coal mine bosses, and the protections these mine owners received from local and state law enforcement (S. Smith). Nevertheless, the popular imagination of Appalachia is reinforced by such works as J. D. Vance's national best-seller *Hillbilly Elegy*, which suggests that the region's poverty is best explained by cultural pathology, not capitalist labor exploitation, public disinvestment, or extraction-fueled climate disaster.

We are not the only ones who have sought to examine the unique contexts of the statewide strikes of 2018. Many educator organizers who participated in these movements have contributed rich descriptions, theory, and reflections within the previous few years. Public historian Elizabeth Catte, folklorist Emily Hilliard, and teacher, writer, and activist Jessica Salfia edited a collection of essays, *55 Strong: Inside the West Virginia Teachers' Strike*, in which educators describe and reflect on their motivations, actions, and activism. The collection and Nicole McCormick's writing, "Owning My Labor," powerfully illustrates the "cultures of solidarity" (Fantasia) that emerged among the state's educators, and which contributed to their capacity to mobilize again, a year later, to strike against school privatization legislation.

In Rebecca Kolins Givan and Amy Schragger Lang's edited book, *Strike for the Common Good: Fighting for the Future of Public Education*, several organizers authored chapters that provide deeper insights into the education worker-led efforts in the South and Southwest. For example, AEU organizer, Rebecca Garelli, details the grassroots strategy and commitment to democratization in her state's Red for Ed movement. In a special issue of *Critical Education*, Oklahoma and Arizona educators undertake oral history research and candid reflection, respectively, to constructively examine their experiences and offer insights for the future of their movements (Dyke et al.; Karvelis, "Toward a Theory of Teacher Agency"). Petia Edison and Ivonne Rovira incisively synthesize the antiracist efforts of Jefferson County educators in collaboration with community-based groups toward social justice unionism and the walls they came up against in their unions and among White movement leaders. These written analyses alongside our personal interviews and conversations with many of these organizers and others informs our approach to understanding educator movements in the "red" states.

In the emerging literature aiming to make sense of the 2018 "red" state strikes, many more scholarly and media analyses exist that analyze West Virginia and Arizona, and less attention is offered to Oklahoma and Kentucky. While we do not attend to North Carolina educators' organizing here, the work of educators, particularly those in the state's social justice caucus, Organize 2020, deserve

further attention for their part in stoking the flames of militancy in 2018. The perceptions of success in the former states and of failure in the latter states may be one important reason for this imbalance. For example, Blanc's *Red State Revolt: The Teachers' Strikes and Working Class Politics*, discusses the events in West Virginia, Oklahoma, and Arizona while Kentucky remains absent from the narrative. His analysis suggests that Oklahoma educators lacked the necessary experience to push their state union to work for them. As we detail further in Chapter Three and elsewhere, the complex racial and gendered tensions that stultified emergent rank-and-file, often women-led, organizing across the state are critical to explore and understand. Further, as Edison and Rovira illuminate in their reflections on antiracist organizing in Kentucky, complex histories and tensions exist between the state's more racially diverse urban centers and its more conservatively-governed White suburban and rural districts. The root issues that led to the different outcomes in Oklahoma and Kentucky are important sites of learning that we aim to attend to here. Further, we aim to offer analyses that might be useful for addressing the specific challenges educators faced as they necessarily move forward.

● Movement-Embedded Methodology

We as authors are interconnected to the struggles that have occurred in our respective states—Brendan in West Virginia and Erin in Oklahoma—and around the country. Brendan was a member of the WVEA and a public school teacher in the state, as well as a current member of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). He was an attendee at the 2017 WVEA Delegate Assembly, and his critical writings of union leadership led him to get involved with Jay O'Neal in organizing the WVPEU Facebook page, which served as a key site of agitation and critical information sharing. Leading up to the walkouts, Brendan worked with fellow educators and school service personnel at his high school to understand the proposed changes to their insurance, the political landscape they were facing, and the legal ramifications of following through with an unlawful walkout. He helped to organize the vote of authorization in his school and, when a walkout was called by union leadership, Brendan helped in organizing a county-wide food-drive for students alongside building representatives with the Monongalia County Education Association (MCEA).

As the strike progressed, Brendan acted as an agitator alongside fellow teachers and school service personnel. He stood on picket lines, traveled to the capitol, wrote reports on the strike, appeared on national podcasts, and maintained lines of communication between the Monongalia County Extended Services and the MCEA. When union leadership brokered an unfaithful deal with Governor Justice to end the walkouts, Brendan wrote a release statement from the West Virginia IWW demanding the strike continue until the initial demands were met, which was shared by parents and on state senators' social media pages. He served on the steering committee for the West Virginia United

caucus (WV United), a rank-and-file caucus comprising AFT-WV and WVEA members who were active during the walkouts.

Erin has worked as an early childhood educator, an adult community educator, and a teacher educator during her more than fifteen years of teaching. During her master's program in Chicago, she became involved with community-based efforts to fight against school privatization and community destabilization. She remembers her first day on the job at her university's community engagement center when the director fielded angry calls from then-Chicago Public Schools CEO Arne Duncan's office. Immigrant parents and community activists associated with the center had stormed and occupied a local official's office to protest school defunding.

After a few more years working in early childhood education, she went back to graduate school and became involved with the IWW through efforts to reignite graduate student union organizing at the University of Minnesota in the aftermath of a failed campaign to unionize with the United Auto Workers. As the efforts faltered, she began organizing with education support professionals, teachers, parents, and students with the IWW's Social Justice Education Movement (SJEM). With SJEM, she participated in campaigns against a local district's racist curriculum, for more teachers and staff of color, and to create gathering spaces for social justice educators and education activists. For the past several years, she's worked as a teacher educator at Oklahoma State University, working with and learning from so many critical, skilled, committed, and agitated teachers.

During the strike, she attended rallies at the capitol and shifted her classes, composed mainly of teachers in the Tulsa and Stillwater areas, to more closely reflect on and make sense of the strike. In its aftermath, she collaborated with a team of twelve Oklahoma educators to collect, archive, and study oral history narratives of more than fifty educators from across the state a year to a year and a half after the strike. These oral histories are archived and publicly accessible through the Oklahoma Oral History Research Program at Oklahoma State University's Edmon Low Library.

We initially met through our shared organizing networks with educators and organizers connected to the IWW. Our collaboration on this project grew out of a series of conversations where we realized, first, the significance of a detailed understanding of the relations of labor that composed the strikes. In the media, dominant narratives tended to articulate striking teachers as a united front led by their state education unions. We knew this wasn't exactly the case. Second, we share a desire to create and inspire practically useful conceptual tools for analyzing the ongoing movement that specifically attend to racial, gender, and other tensions related to hierarchical relations of power and authority within the education labor movement and between the education labor movement and wider (often community-initiated) education justice movements.

Driven by these motivations for our collective writing, after the strike wave ended, we realized the need to capture experiences in the immediate aftermath to offer a detailed and holistic perspective of what actually went down. In the

summer and fall of 2018, we formally interviewed twenty-seven key organizers, rank-and-file educators, state employees, and parent activists from all four states—West Virginia (twelve), Oklahoma (six), Kentucky (eight), and Arizona (two). We also draw significantly from the fifty-four oral history interviews Erin and her research team collected in Oklahoma between September 2019 and March 2020. For interviews we conducted in the summer immediately following the strikes (twenty-five), we re-interviewed most a year later to understand how their thinking and experiences have changed over time. We also draw on social, news, and other media discussions among education workers in these places. Our everyday work with teachers, students, and community activists in West Virginia and Oklahoma, countless more informal conversations, organizing meetings, and classroom and panel event discussions further contribute to rounding out our ground-up analysis of the walkouts.

● Understanding Theories of Power and Change (Unionisms): An Overview of the Book

Studying the internal organizational dynamics that composed the strikes, our analysis illuminates the significance of the emergence of solidarity unionism during the strike wave, or rank-and-file-led unionism where educators and staff challenged their reticent AFT- and NEA-affiliated state unions to take direct action. Further, we consider why this emergence was experienced differently across different states, and why some states and groups of people continued to mobilize in the year following to fight retaliatory legislation while others lost steam. As our chapter overview illuminates, we ground our analyses in the longer histories and legacies of race, class, and gender tensions and issues within and across social and labor movement spaces. Building on this, the book considers how members of rank-and-file-led organizations that emerged parallel to or within their unions studied and made sense of their actual and desired relation to power and the state and what this has meant for their continued organizing.

In the first chapter, we develop our theoretical framework and describe the various theories of power and change that emerged and interacted. We distinguish and historicize four main (sometimes overlapping) unionisms: professionalism, business unionism, solidarity unionism, and social movement unionism. We illuminate the ways in which gender, race, and class have been articulated through these histories and theories/practices of unionism. For example, we draw on histories of the NEA to illuminate the ways in which White professionalist discourses sought to recruit primarily White women teachers to become dues-paying members while the leadership and aims of the organization were rooted primarily in the interests of predominantly White men school administrators. Conservative forms of professionalism that dominated the early NEA articulated teachers' and administrators' interests to be one and the same (improving education for the children). Alternatively, southern Black educator associations

formed through Black educators' exclusion from White unions articulated social movement-oriented forms of professionalism that understood teachers as community workers. And women, queer educators, radicals, and educators of color took up solidarity unionist approaches to organize within and exert influence over their trade and professionalist organizations. Historical instances of these solidarity and social movement efforts include the transformation of the NEA from a race-segregated administrator-dominated professional association to an integrated teacher-led trade union. To frame subsequent discussions, we conclude the chapter by introducing the various theories and practices of power and change (unionisms) that became salient during the strikes. Specifically, we discuss the emergence and significance of solidarity unionist approaches.

The middle of the book engages three core tensions that organizers and participants grappled with, rooted in issues of race, gender, and class. In Chapter Two, we address the invisibility or marginality of the colonialist and racial capitalist origins of the previous three decades of state disinvestment in public education. Extensive education scholarship has long illuminated that disinvestment and punitive state, federal, and venture capitalist interventions have disproportionately targeted communities perceived as a threat in need of state containment (cf. Ali and Buenavista). In practice, during the walkouts, signs proliferated that made connections between the decrease in education funding and, for example, the dramatic increases in state funding for youth and adult prisons. In states like Oklahoma, where one out of nine children have an incarcerated or formerly incarcerated parent (United Way OKC), these signs arose from direct experience with such containment mechanisms. In West Virginia, school overcrowding disproportionately affects Black children (Agba), and, in Arizona, the state targeted the dismantling of so-called "racist" ethnic studies programs serving the majority minority public school population (Acosta). Like many social justice caucus efforts across the nation (Asselin), organizers experienced conflicts between cultivating union democracy and directly addressing these intertwined issues, fearing loss of support among White, rural, and conservative educators and the wider public. Our analysis, resonant with Edison and Rovira, suggests that moves toward race-blind articulations of the issues did not lead to educators building collective power in each place.

In Chapter 3, we examine the ways in which gender became salient in Oklahoma. Since the development of common lower education in the US, the feminization and heterosexualization of teaching have been strategically mobilized as both a justification and means for depressing wages and disciplining workers (Blount). Some media and scholarly narratives have linked the strikes to the #MeToo movement, suggesting that newly empowered women are not buying pressures to sacrifice their lives "for the children" or put up with abusive working conditions any longer (Bhattacharya, "Women are Leading the Wave"; Russom). Histories of education labor suggests that women, especially Black, Indigenous, women of Color and queer educators, have often been militant leaders and drivers of movements for education justice (Rousmaniere, "Citizen Teacher";

Todd-Breland; V. S. Walker). We draw on these histories as a lens through which to analyze the dispersed, women- and LGBTQ-led leadership in the emergence of the strike, gendered approaches to organizing, and the challenges and possibilities for continued mobilization after 2018.

In Chapter Four, we explore what Paul Bocking describes as the key question that unions contend with: “how to deal with the state” (390). Class tensions materialized in the formation of dual power union organizations that, to varying extents in each state, resisted becoming subsumed into their trade unions’ collaboration with superintendents, elected officials, and the electoral process. Our prologue narrates one of the more powerful examples of this tension, when, on the seventh day of the West Virginia strike, teachers across all fifty-five counties rejected the state union leadership’s call to return to work after a tentative agreement had been made with Governor Jim Justice. Undertaking a truly wildcat strike, they shut down schools for another week until the agreement was signed and sealed. We engage transnational educator and social movements (Brazil, Mexico, Canada, and US social justice caucus networks) to contextualize this question within each of our states under study, illuminating the risks in state collaboration and the significance of strong, grassroots, and democratic organizations for advancing demands against austerity and related neoliberal school reform efforts.

In the final chapter, we bring together key discussions in previous chapters to consider the study’s implications for moving forward. From our analysis, we suggest that dual power organizations emerging in and through solidarity and social movement unionism were key in igniting the strikes (cf. Voss and Sherman). Organizations that engaged solidarity unionist approaches, including commitments to horizontalism and radical democratic participation of members; that engaged sincerely with conflict that arose between teachers and staff of color and White teachers’ understandings of the issues, community-based social movements’ and teachers’ unions, and hierarchies within the rank-and-file (cf. Weiner, “The Future of Our Schools”); and that maintained an oppositional (even if tentatively collaborative) orientation to business union leadership, administrators, and legislators (e.g., via forming caucuses) continued to build momentum and strength against retaliation. Our analyses and conceptual framework of various unionisms can support readers to consider their own commitments to and understandings of theories and practices of power and change in their work and organizing (cf. Maton and Stark). Further, we support readers in lower and higher education to consider how they might engage in discussions and collective study with co-workers and fellow union members to engage differences to develop and put into practice their collective commitments.

● Conclusion

Rebecca Tarlau argues that the US-based academic literature on critical pedagogy has become distanced from its international roots in social movement

organizing, while social movement scholarship has tended to minimize the question of pedagogy in organizing (“From a Language to a Theory of Resistance” 369). While critical pedagogy in the academic literature offers critiques of the education system and its role in social reproduction, studies of social movements tend to emphasize the outcomes rather than the messy, interrelational processes of organizing and political education (also see Asselin; Stark; Maton and Stark). This book aims to cross these boundaries as the theory and practice of union organizing is inherently a pedagogical undertaking. Histories of educator unionism can clarify the necessity of building union movements that are democratic and that are consistently working to understand the racial, settler colonialist, and gendered dimensions and impacts of the US education system.

As we write, many K-12 and higher education workers in our communities are working tirelessly to organize to keep their communities safe from the COVID-19 pandemic and against concerted efforts to whitewash and anesthetize our curricula. Our hope is that this book can support resurgent rank-and-file movements to grapple with their tensions in practice, tensions that have existed as long as compulsory schooling.