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In short, my parents were union members, and I am a union member. As union membership declines throughout our country, we must make a last-stand effort to ensure the rights of all workers are maintained. Anecdotally, I know of family members who work for big corporations and are sent home if there is not enough work to do and are not paid for their time! I don’t think it is hyperbole to say that this could happen to any of us.

Please think through what union membership means for you and your family. We need to ensure that we are treated fairly and compensated equitably. The union is the only way to accomplish this goal.

David Fritz (English)
Continued college studies and future careers ranked high on the agendas of the four students who won WCCFT scholar-
ships in 2017. Consequently, Juliana Macias, Nattoina Miller, Hannah Culliton, and Timothy Kohany were well-pre-
pared to submit admirably crafted, well-researched essays in last year’s competition.

Hannah planned to use her scholarship to transfer to Liberty University and study marketing, while Nattoina set her sights on becoming a registered dietician at CUNY Lehman College. Timothy and Juliana, however, are finish-
ing their A.S. degrees here at WCC. Timothy studies engi-
neering, while Juliana is purs-
uing a degree in writing and journalism.

When asked if they thought having unionized professors whose needs are protected through collective bargaining made any difference in their educational experiences, all four scholarship winners had strong opinions. Juliana not-
ed that, “Who they are as people and their willingness to help me succeed in life probably has more to do with them” as teachers than unions do.

Hannah, on the other hand, thought that “Happy profes-
sors who enjoy their jobs and feel supported in all areas … means that I will be a happy and productive student.”

Timothy also believes that if teachers “are in a happier, more comfortable environ-
ment to teach, then that will directly relate to a happier, more comfortable environ-
ment for students to learn.”

Applicants for the 2018 Richard Rosell and Rafael Rodriguez Memorial Scholarships will choose between two topics: “The Value of Unions in the Workplace” or “The Union’s Role in Current Social Justice Issues.”

The closing date for applications is March 30. Full details are at http://researchguides.sunywcc.edu/unionscholarship.

Our membership campaign is working from the bottom up. Nearly thirty faculty, fulltime and adjunct, from departments across the College have begun providing information on how and why to join WCCFT and soliciting colleagues’ views on how the union can better serve all faculty.

We are finding many who are simply unclear about their sta-
tus. To verify your membership, check your pay statement.

GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE chair Jim Werner reports that WCCFT successfully defended members’ rights in two re-
cent cases. In one instance, a fulltime faculty member was fired pursuant to an incident which took place at a location not on the main campus or any extension site, for actions which had nothing to do with instructional duties or the Col-
lege. Arguing that there was no just cause for the firing, the Union was successful in reinstating the faculty member with full pay and benefits, as well as compensation for wages and benefits lost while the case was pending.

In the other case, a part-time faculty member at an exten-
sion site was removed from instructional duties because of a student allegation of inappropriate conduct during class. The instructor was represented by WCCFT during the en-
suring investigation, which determined that the allegation was baseless. The instructor was returned to the classroom, and the language on due process in investigating such cas-
es was significantly tightened.

WCCFT is committed to fighting for our members’ rights. If you feel you have been treated unfairly or your contractual rights have been abridged, please contact Jim Werner at jimwccft@gmail.com.

Mel Bienenfeld

What lessons can we draw from the West Virginia teachers strike? Most of the time, all of us are too busy getting by to think about what we can do to fix things — even those things that make our individual lives more difficult.

At WCC, overworked department chairs and curriculum chairs, fulltime faculty worried about promotions and rising healthcare costs, and underpaid adjunct faculty who may have no employer-paid health insurance at all, complain about their situations but have a hard time imagining any way to improve them.

There are times, however, when circumstances create the opportunity to do something. A contract campaign is one of those times (and, believe it or not, WCCFT is already working on our proposals to begin bargaining for a contract that should start on 9/1/18). It’s not too early to consider our methods and tactics.

Sometimes things become so desperate that ordinary peo-
ple take things into their own hands. After years of enduring salaries on which they could barely get by, and cut after cut in their health benefits, West Virginia teachers began meeting in their districts, using social media and whatev-
er means of communication were at hand, with no central direction but have a hard time imagining any way to improve them.

No, I am not saying we should go on strike! Public sector job actions are illegal for us as well. But the actions of union leaders, politicians, lawyers, etc., are never what wins real change. What wins is the collective power of people with common interests who can unite and are not afraid to take a stand. The courageous students at Douglas High in Florida discovered this, too, as their local efforts quickly turned into a national movement with the potential to make real change on gun safety after so many years of failure.

What WCCFT members do not will be the same as either the West Virginia teachers or the Parkland students. We will use our own creativity and intelligence to develop our own tactics. But I ask you to consider: are you willing to think differently about how you can participate in union activities and make this next contract one we can all be proud of?

Here’s 16 seconds of inspiration: https://www.facebook.
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In solidarity, Mel
WCC STUDENTS TALK UNION PART 2

BY PATTI SEHULSTER

For Nattoina, the matter was moot. She explained that she had “never really thought about it before,” but contended that, “Who they are as people and their willingness to help me succeed in life probably has more to do with them” as teachers than unions do.

Hannah, on the other hand, thought that “Happy professors who enjoy their jobs and feel supported in all areas … means that I will be a happy and productive student.”

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We are finding many who are simply unclear about their status. Some don’t even know their colleagues are union members, while others have no idea how and why to join WCCFT.

Full contract details are at http://www.sunywccft.org/2017/09/memorandum-of-agreement/

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Sometimes things become so desperate that ordinary people take things into their own hands. After years of enduring salaries on which they could barely get by, and cut after cut in their health benefits, West Virginia teachers began meeting in their districts, using social media and whatever means of communication were at hand, with no central direction from union leaders or others. Over a period of months, some realized they were amassing the strength to unify teachers across the state. Eventually, the illegal strike and the teachers’ inspiring show of strength at the Statehouse led to one of the most important US labor movement victories in decades.

To see how ordinary, non-“expert” people did this, I recommend you look at this video of a panel of three West Virginia teacher leaders. Long, but worth your time: https://www.facebook.com/jacobinmag/videos/2087299477963409/

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WCCFT NEWS

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