



Local 153 News

42 Broadway, Suite 1936, New York, NY 10004 (212) 741-8282

Spring 2023

A Historic First: Wesleyan Resident Assistants Win First Union Contract

More than 100 Resident Assistants (RAs) at Middletown's Wesleyan University made history today when they unanimously ratified a union contract. It is the first National Labor Relations Board-enforceable union contract anywhere in the U.S. covering RAs. The NLRB is the federal agency that oversees labor-management relations.

The union contract brings many improvements and guarantees for RAs, covering wages, stipends, schedules,

holidays, and more. It contains a non-discrimination clause, provides leaves of absences and establishes a labor-management committee. In addition, it codifies Wesleyan as a Sanctuary Campus for RAs and it sets up a grievance procedure for union members.

The students and their union won voluntary recognition from Wesleyan after obtaining signed authorization cards from 84% of the RAs and

filing a petition with the school's leadership. That petition received over one thousand signatures from students, alumni, faculty, and elected officials.

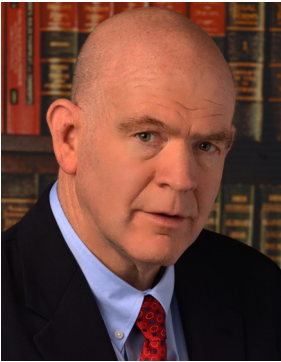
Wesleyan RAs let students in when they're locked out, facilitate evacuations during fire alarms, interface with physical plant staff when necessary, hold educational events, and even help students during mental health crises

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Barnard RAs Vote to Join Local 153



Resident Assistants at Barnard College have voted overwhelmingly to join Local 153! They are part of a growing movement of undergraduate workers and employees of nonprofits that have chosen our union to represent them. In fact, Local 153 has added more than 500 new members in the last year. Details on successful organizing drives are inside this edition of Local 153 News.



By Richard Lanigan, Business Manager

Out of Chaos . . . Great Change

Three years ago, an unprecedented and unanticipated crisis occurred. The Covid pandemic closed New York City to the point where there were no cars or people on the streets or sidewalks during rush hour.

Local 153, which has its office in the city, found itself reaching out to members, most of whom were at home, to discuss whether they would be working remotely, whether they would be working in the employer's workspace or whether it would be a combination of the two. Unfortunately, many members had not provided our union with their personal email addresses, so it was hard to reach them except through their employers' email systems. It was difficult to determine how members were getting along, particularly those working from home.

As the pandemic continued, employers downsized. For the first time we began bargaining agreements for members to work from home and for protocols to make it safe for those who remained working in their employers' workspaces. Another reality that no one anticipated is how many members would lose their jobs. Many employers saw the pandemic as an opportunity to restructure. This meant that Local 153 really needed to have a plan to

navigate this critical situation. The Local 153 Executive Board immediately asked for volunteers who would become the Finance Committee. Trying to balance all the local's needs short and long term, their work entailed extensive restructuring and cost cutting. It was a very difficult task, but it needed to be done.

Local 153 has always had a proud history of organizing. Our union's leadership team reflected on that history and instead of accepting decline began to work hard to change the circumstances and rebuild the local.

In the last 18 months, hundreds of young workers, many risking their jobs to organize, have joined Local 153. It is powerful and inspiring. Nearly one hundred Local 153 shop stewards gathered in a Zoom meeting to participate in training. We relocated the union's entire office from 14th Street, where it had been for over 50 years, to a far more cost-effective space at 42 Broadway. We upgraded our technology, hired field staff that engaged members and voters for the midterm elections. The field staff also negotiated key collective bargaining agreements. Contracts with consultants and vendors were renegotiated. Members made phone calls to support the workers at Amazon in their efforts to win unionization. Staff and shop stewards collected thousands of members' home email addresses, making it easier to communicate quickly and effectively with them. We conducted a very informative orientation program,

introducing new members to their union. We established a political action committee to educate and mobilize Local 153 members on issues of importance to working families. We completed several first contracts that give new Local 153 members job security and a voice in the workplace. And after years of uncertainty our pension is now eligible for funding relief that will ensure the retirement security of thousands of Local 153 retirees and their families.

Now at our meetings workers who are trying to organize a union in their workplace make reports to the union's board or to its membership. They speak of the challenges in organizing a union. Local 153 is paying its bills, reimbursing an International Union subsidy, and welcoming a new generation of active members. It is reinventing its dormant Benefit Fund into a platform to provide retiree medical savings accounts, tax free accounts for childcare and eldercare, and other benefits.

Local 153 is an example of how determined leadership together with engaged membership can upend doom and gloom and replace it with hope and aspiration. All these decisions were made possible because the Local 153 Executive Board understood the stakes and worked together. What this means to you is that instead of a union that does not have the capacity to represent you and is forced to backpedal, Local 153 is strong and getting stronger by the week. While we know we have more to do, we have
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Out of Chaos . . . Great Change

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started to show recovery from the unprecedented challenges we faced, and we are clearly showing progress.

Author Deepak Chopra once said that all great change is preceded by chaos. In the case of Local 153's recent experience, particularly dealing

with the unprecedented impact of a pandemic, Chopra's statement has been proven true. Great change has indeed grown out of chaos!

Barnard RAs Vote to Unionize

On November 18, Resident Assistants at Barnard College voted 47-2 to join Local 153! These workers are part of a growing movement of undergraduate workers organizing for dignity and justice at work.

"I am so proud that we won our union today by succeeding in the federal election!" said Aditi Misra, a member

of the class of 2023, and a Resident Assistant since the spring of 2021. "With 47 out of 49 yes votes, we are officially entering the bargaining stage! In this next step, we look forward to negotiating a fair contract where RA voices will be heard for generations to come. If you're an RA frustrated with your college, hoping to make a change, I hope you follow suit."

"We are excited to welcome the Barnard RAs to our union family," said Local 153 organizer, Scott Williams. "These workers play a critical role at Barnard and have been particularly bold, united, and strong in their resolve to win their union. We look forward to supporting their effort for a strong contract which dignifies their hard work and their dedication to their community."

Wesleyan Resident Assistants Win First Union Contract

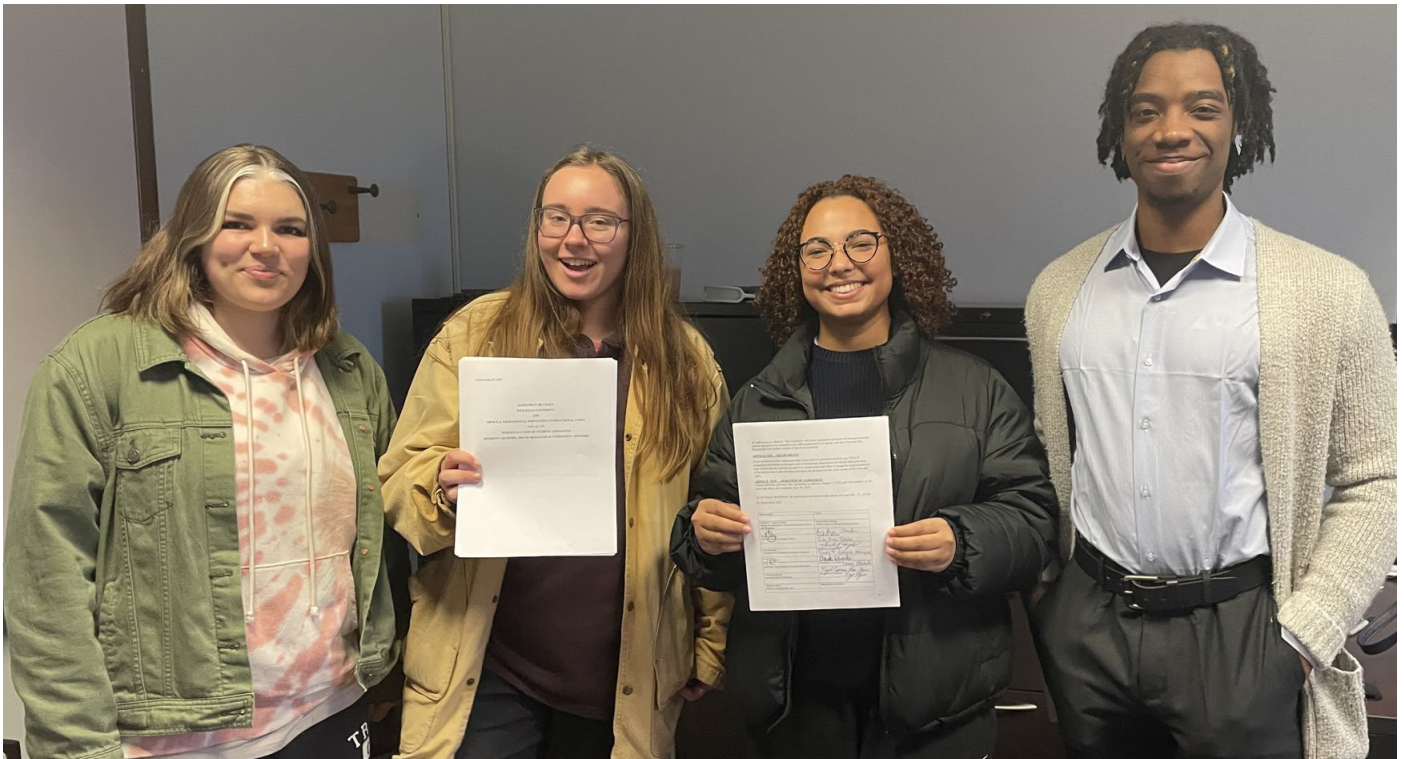
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— at all hours. Many are low-income students who rely on their pay to afford Wesleyan. Yet prior to unionizing the highest-paid RAs earned less than fifty

percent of what Wesleyan charges them for room and board.

As detailed elsewhere in this edition of Local 153 News, there is a growing

trend for Resident Assistants at other colleges choosing to unionize, including RAs at Tufts University, Barnard College and Fordham University.



Among the Wesleyan RAs celebrating their first contract are, from left to right, Claire Edwards, Ruby Clarke, Yohely M. Compres Henriquez and Nigel Hayes.

Nick Galipeau Becomes Local 153's Secretary-Treasurer

Based on a recommendation of Local 153 Business Manager Richard Lanigan, the union's Executive Board on December 13th approved the appointment of Nick Galipeau to the position of Secretary-Treasurer. The vacancy in that office occurred when Myra Hepburn retired.

Lanigan told Executive Board members he was making his recommendation based on his years working with Galipeau. "Nick has always shown strong dedication and has worked diligently on behalf of our union and its members," Lanigan said.

Nick Galipeau is a 2004 graduate of Fordham University, who put himself through college by working nights as a public school custodian. In that employment Galipeau was a member of SEIU Local 32BJ. After a brief tenure with SEIU Nick joined the Local 153 staff in 2009, serving in multiple roles ranging from Business Representative to the union's Director of Organizing.

Lanigan noted that in his 14 years at Local 153 Nick Galipeau has skillfully represented members employed at universities and hotels, as well as other shops. Galipeau completed Cornell University's Union Leadership program and he sits on the New York City Central Labor Council's Executive Board.

"Nick Galipeau is committed to a democratic and member-driven approach in our union's operations," Lanigan said.

"Throughout his 14-year tenure at Local 153 Nick has performed exemplary work in a variety of tasks, providing him with a wealth of experience that would aid him greatly in serving our union and our members as Secretary-Treasurer."

The Executive Board agreed, and Nick Galipeau is now the Secretary-Treasurer of Local 153.

"I thank Business Manager Lanigan and the Local 153 Executive Board for this vote of confidence," Galipeau said. "I look forward to working with them and the union's entire administration in providing the best possible representation for our members and their families."



Local 153 President Steve Turkeltaub and Business Manager Richard Lanigan swearing in Nick Galipeau as Local 153's new Secretary-Treasurer.

Tufts RAs Say "Union Yes!"

Resident Assistants (RAs) at Tufts University voted 99-3 in a National Labor Relations Board election to certify their labor union, the United Labor of Tufts RAs (ULTRA). The Tufts RAs are affiliating with Local 153. The union immediately began the tasks of forming a bargaining committee and initiating the collective bargaining process.

RAs at Tufts University had spent the semester organizing their unit of 142 RAs across the many on-campus residential halls and University-run houses. These student workers will join the growing number of undergraduate student workers represented by OPEIU. As reported elsewhere in this edition of Local 153 News, RAs at Wesleyan became the first NLRB-certified union members to win their first contract. ULTRA joins the large surge in organizing across higher education institutions, including recent public union campaigns among grad students all over the country.

"This is a victory for all RAs, both current and future," said David Whittingham, current Tufts RA and an organizing committee member. "We now have won a real say over our jobs, and we

look forward to productively bargaining with the university administration over our compensation, schedules, and other working conditions. With the labor movement seeing such a surge in momentum, we are excited to now be a part of it."

Tufts University is a private research university located in Medford and Somerville, Massachusetts. The university employs undergraduate students as Resident Assistants in its on-campus residence halls, where they host community programming, maintain a weeknight and weekend crisis response line, and perform various administrative duties.

"Tufts RAs are leading the charge alongside those at Wesleyan, Barnard, Grinnell, Kenyon, Dartmouth, Mount Holyoke, and elsewhere," said Grace Reckers, Local 153's lead organizer. "Undergraduate workers are raising consciousness and the movement is only growing. With first contracts coming down the pike, I think we're going to continue to see more and more undergrad workers organizing for even the most fundamental rights. These workers have been denied benefits and fair wages for far too long."

New Contract Won at ALICO

Local 153 members at ALICO (Amalgamated Life Insurance Company) have a new contract, Business Representative David Hamer-Hodges has announced.

The agreement brings a 14% total wage increase and other improvements. As an example, Juneteenth was added as a holiday. A hybrid remote work schedule of four days in, one-day remote was established, but the number of remote days can be increased with supervisor approval. The contract will allow revisits each September to see about adjustments to schedules.

The agreement, which affects the close to 200 members of

our union employed at ALICO, will also provide access for new bonuses for employees that didn't have them earlier.

The schedule of wage increases is as follows:

- 3.5% retroactive to July 1, 2022
- 4% on January 1, 2023
- 3.5% on January 1, 2024
- 3% on January 1, 2025

"I would like to thank the members of the Negotiating Committee for their good work in obtaining this agreement, and I salute the solidarity of our membership at ALICO for their dedication and solidarity." Hamer-Hodges said.



Local 153 members at ALICO celebrating their new contract.

Fordham RAs & Supporters Rally for Recognition



On Friday, February 3, over 100 Resident Advisors, students, faculty and staff joined together at Keating First at Fordham University to support the call for voluntary recognition for the Fordham RA Union. RA union leaders from Barnard College and Wesleyan University spoke in solidarity, alongside numerous RAs, former Residential Life staff, professors, graduate workers and residents. The rally was the first event hosted by the new Fordham RA Union.

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute Student Workers Announce Intent to Unionize with OPEIU 153

Resident Assistants at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI), the nation's oldest technological research university, are working to join Local 153. A petition signed by more than 75% of RA's is now in the hands of RPI President Martin Schmidt. Students are paid 80–90% less than RA's at similar sized institutions, yet required to work well over 20 hours a week overseeing up to 80 students. The students claim that RPI policies such as a policy requiring them to call campus police rather than 911 are putting them and their fellow students in dangerous situations.

"RAs are told to specifically and solely call Public Safety and then the Dean on Duty for ALL Medical emergencies," said

RPI RA Dianna Stuzhuk. "This game of telephone with the lives of students on this campus is outrageous and we must not stand for it."

Union leaders say that abuse from students has gone unaddressed by the university leading some RAs to fear for their safety. Students complain that poor communication from the administration makes their jobs more difficult and less safe. "To deal with issues like this, we are paid thirty dollars every two weeks," said RA Nikolas Pepmeyer. "RAs deserve basic and assured safety, respect, and support from the administration."



Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute RAs have expressed a desire to join Local 153.

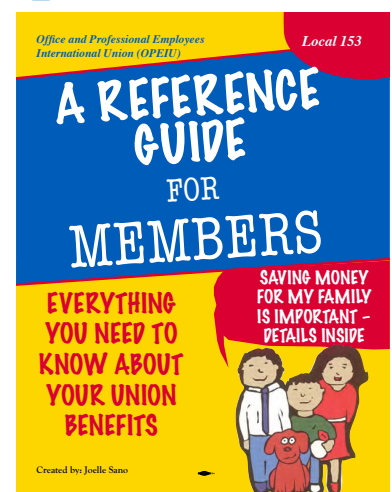
Union Membership Pays

Union membership provides not only a voice in the workplace but much more. As an example, did you know that your membership in Local 153 can help you save on different types of insurance? It can also provide savings on a host of other goods and services, enough to save you hundreds of dollars a year. Accessing these goods and services is easy, too. All of them can be found in the Local 153 Benefits Booklet, which is readily available at the union's website: opeiulocal153.org

Ready to save on restaurants and hotels? Can you use discounts on computer, phone and internet? How about discounts on dental, vision and legal services?

And are you looking to buy a home? There are two mortgage discount programs available. Plus there are lots of discounts for shopping, entertainment and travel.

To take advantage of all these savings, visit Local 153's website's section on benefits at: opeiulocal153.org/member-benefits



Local 153 Membership Benefits

▶ DEATH BENEFIT

\$5,000 Death Benefit + Additional \$2,000 OPEIU Total \$7,000.

\$5,000 AD&D Benefit + Additional \$2,000 OPEIU Total \$7,000. (Death by accident total \$14,000).

Eligibility – Membership in good standing with payment of dues for 12 months during the last 14-month period prior to death, exclusive of the month of death.

For more information, please call 212-741-8282

▶ TOWING BENEFIT

Two towing/service calls per year for members and family living in the same household, valued at up to \$100 each. You will need “producer code 74046” for “plan letter B”.

For information, call 212-741-8282

For towing and service call information, call 800-617-2677

▶ 401 (K) NATIONAL PLAN

OPEIU has established a voluntary 401 (k) program that charges considerably less management fees than standard 401 (k) plans. Members will be able to enroll in this benefit shortly.

▶ STUDENT DEBT REDUCTION PROGRAM

Students with \$10,000 or more of outstanding student debt have an opportunity each year to reduce the amount they owe.

▶ FREE COLLEGE EDUCATION BENEFIT

Members may earn tuition-free an Associate Degree online through Eastern Gateway Community College. The free college benefit provides degrees in Associate of Arts, Associate of Criminal Justice, Associate of Business Management and Associate of Arts in Early Childhood Education, with more free online degree programs to come. To obtain a brochure about this program call Local 153 at 212-741-8282 and press “7” for member benefits.

▶ GENERAL VISION SERVICES “Vision Pass”

Eyeglasses discount packages for you and your family.

Call the union for a “vision pass” 212-741-8250/8251

▶ AFL-CIO UNION PLUS BENEFITS

Discounts for services such as dental, vision, health clubs, legal services, pet and car insurance, car rentals, mortgages, etc.

Visit unionplus.org

▶ WORKING ADVANTAGE

Discounts for theater and events, entertainment, sporting events, shopping, travel, etc.

Visit workingadvantage.com

Create an account using ID#: 924400144

▶ SCHOLARSHIPS

Howard Coughlin, John Kelly Labor Studies, Union Privilege and Lavina Michl Wright with grants of up to \$6,500.

Visit opeiu153.org

▶ DEFENSE FUND

Where an authorized strike is called, members will receive \$290 per week.

▶ UNION SUPPORT SERVICES

For members and their families who suffer with substance abuse, depression or stress.

Call 212-741-8282

▶ PUBLICATIONS

Local 153 News and OPEIU’s White Collar.

▶ RETIREE ASSOCIATION

National Council of Senior Citizens Active on Social & Political Issues.

Call 212-741-8262

▶ EDUCATION FOR UPGRADING SKILLS

Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint Access, Web Design, Business Writing, Job Readiness and Financial Planning. Additional programs are being formed.

Call Victoria at 212-675-3210



CEO Pay Skyrockets, Again

The pay gap between workers and CEOs has reached a record high, with the average CEO earning 399 times as much as a typical worker, according to a new report by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI).

Since 1978, EPI reports, CEO pay has skyrocketed 1,460 percent. In contrast, worker compensation grew a paltry 18.1 percent during the same period.

Being in a union is the best way to close the growing wage gap. A recent paper published in Cornell University's ILR Review shows being in a union could mean you'll earn \$1.3 million more over your lifetime.

"We find that a person who spent the entirety of their career in a labor union were predicted to earn about a million dollars more over the course of their career compared to somebody who was never in a labor union," Tom VanHeuvelen, a researcher at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities and one of the paper's authors, told Business Insider.

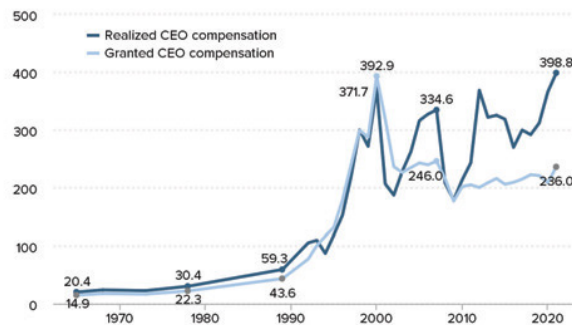
The paper also shows being a union member your entire career can have even more value than a college degree.

A person without a college degree who has been in a union their entire career on average will earn more than a

nonunion person with a college degree. Clearly, it pays to belong to a union!

CEOs make 399 times as much as typical workers

CEO-to-worker compensation ratio, 1965–2021



Notes: Average annual compensation for CEOs is for CEOs at the top 350 U.S. firms ranked by sales. Typical worker* compensation is the average annual compensation (wages and benefits of a full-time, full-year worker) of production/nonsupervisory workers in the industries that the top 350 firms operate in.

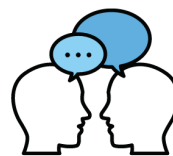
Source: Authors' analysis of data from Compustat's ExecuComp database, the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Current Employment Statistics data series, and the Bureau of Economic Analysis NIPA tables.

Economic Policy Institute

Visit OSHA on the Web

Workers can use their pcs, tablets and smart phones to visit OSHA, the nation's workplace health and safety enforcement agency! OSHA's website — osha.gov — contains information about workers rights and employer responsibilities, and it provides electronic links to many sources of information about occupational safety and health issues.

There is a wealth of valuable information available at OSHA's website. Workers can even use it to file complaints with OSHA about health and safety hazards in the workplace. The form takes about 10 minutes to fill out and is automatically transmitted for follow-up to the appropriate OSHA office.



We want to talk to YOU!
Scan the QR code to update your contact information so we can keep in touch about the latest updates, events, and opportunities with OPEIU-153!

