



A Victory for Hope: A Note about the ALU Victory with References

Posted on April 4, 2022 by Ian Rocksborough-Smith

It has been an exciting weekend for the North American labor movement with the [Amazon Labor Union victory taking centre](#) stage – adding to the victories of recent precarious service-sector workers who have organized against other corporate behemoths like [Starbucks](#). Something to consider is the important fact the ALU is made up of an incredibly diverse rank and file: in terms of age, gender, racial and ethnic backgrounds. It is importantly led by People of Color like Chris Smalls and Derrick Palmer, [whose friendship and creative DIY and social media savvy tactics \(ie. Tik Tok Union Hall\)](#) helped build this particular organizing drive and appears to have inspired the broader movement behind it.

Justine Medina, a member of the ALU organizing committee and a packer at the JFK8 Amazon warehouse reflects in [Labor Notes](#), that the “basic thing” was this: “you have an actual worker-led project—a Black- and Brown-led, multi-racial, multi-national, multi-gender, multi-ability organizing team. You get some salts with some

organizing experience, but make sure they're prepared to put in the work and to follow the lead of workers who have been around the shop longer. You get the Communists involved, you get some socialists and anarcho-syndicalists, you bring together a broad progressive coalition. You bring in sympathetic comrades from other unions, in a supporting role." Similarly, in an interview with [Jacobin](#), Angelika Maldonado, who is "half-Hispanic," reflected on the importance of reaching out specifically to different groups of workers, like her African co-workers and to Hispanic workers through organizers who could speak in their language. Maldonado also noted, "[w]hen coworkers found out I was also a mom, and that I was sacrificing all my free time to help build a union, a lot of them really saw how serious this was." This helped bridge age-gaps as co-workers could see their common experiences.

These are promising times. Despite historically low unionization rates, [recent polls](#) suggest at least 2/3 of Americans approve of labor unions – the highest approval rating since 1965. The ALU seems to have come along at exactly the right moment, when a truly representative American working class is looking for a way to organize beyond the traditional, often bureaucratic structures of the past (like the AFL-CIO) but with due attention to radical organizing strategies, such as building large coalitions, that have gotten workers the goods.

The future looks bright. Here's hoping we see more of this.

References:

<https://jacobinmag.com/2022/04/amazon-labor-union-alu-staten-island-organizing>

<https://www.thecity.nyc/2022/4/1/23007039/amazon-staten-island-union>

<https://labornotes.org/2022/04/amazon-workers-staten-island-clinch-historic-victory>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/02/business/amazon-union-christian-smalls.html>

<https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2022/04/amazon-labor-first-union-win-warehouse-staten-island-historic-smalls-jfk8/>

https://www.democracynow.org/2022/4/4/workers_organize_first_amazon_labor_union

<https://news.gallup.com/poll/354455/approval-labor-unions-highest-point-1965.aspx>

Author



• [Ian Rocksborough-Smith](#)

Ian teaches primarily U.S. history at the University of the Fraser Valley in Stó:lō / S'ólh Téméxw / Abbotsford, B.C., Canada. His research interests include public and urban history, social movements, and histories of race, labor, religion, and empire in the Atlantic world. He has published academic articles and book reviews in a variety of journals like *The Black Scholar: Journal of Black Studies and Research*, *Reviews in American History*, and *The Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* and has a book entitled: *Black Public History in Chicago: Civil Rights Activism from World War II Into the Cold War* (April/May 2018). He has written op-eds in *Canadian Dimension* and *The Conversation (Canada)* and is on the editorial team for *Labor Online* (LAWCHA). He has served as an international solidarity and human rights officer for his faculty union, local 7 of the Federation of Post-Secondary Employees of British Columbia (2021-2023).