

ILR Worker Institute

at New York State's School
of Industrial and Labor
Relations (ILR),
Cornell University

OUR MISSION

The Worker Institute engages in research and education on contemporary labor issues, to generate innovative thinking and solutions to problems related to work, the economy, labor unions, and society. A core **value** of our work is that collective bargaining, labor unions, workers' collective representation, and workers' rights are vital to a fair economy, robust democracy, and a just society.

WHO ARE WE

The Worker Institute is the premier labor education center based at the ILR School, Cornell University, focused on theory and praxis, leading applied research, leadership development, education and training grounded in workers' voices and experiences.

WHAT DO WE DO

The Worker Institute serves as a key convener of academics, practitioners, researchers, and policy makers as integral to the process of generating and disseminating knowledge that improves the lives of workers, transforms the future of work, and advances collective bargaining rights for all workers.

For more information and to read our publications visit

<https://www.ilr.cornell.edu/worker-institute>



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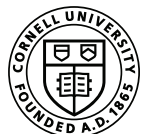
OUR PROGRAMS

- 1. Labor Leadership Development:** The programs (ULI, NLLI, and GLLI) focus on labor union/worker center movement leadership development, strategy design, and organizational change in unions and other worker justice organizations.
- 2. Research, Policy Innovation & Training:** Equity and worker rights, labor market analysis, union job creation, precarious worker research & training, immigrant worker rights, labor rights enforcement, and new forms of collective organizing and representation.
- 3. Student Engagement:** Research fellowships, annual events of Union Days, labor roundtable, social justice career fair, summer internships, etc.

NEW INITIATIVES

1. Future of Care Work: Centering Workers' Voices to Create an Equitable Care Economy*
2. Worker Center Innovation Hub*
3. Public Programming: Bridging Research & Praxis. The Institute plans to combine the team's research expertise with discussions led by labor leaders in our leadership programs, to engage in public educational forums related to unions and worker rights organizing.

*See description below



FUTURE OF CARE WORK INITIATIVE: **Centering Workers' Voices to Create an Equitable Care Economy**

Women are workers in the care economy: workers who provide care, workers who employ other care workers, and workers who need care themselves.

Discussions on the need to reform our care system often fail to recognize that jobs in the care economy are widely devalued, underpaid, and often defined by difficult, degrading working conditions. Care workers often face significant stress and trauma in these jobs, and yet face barriers to accessing care themselves—a problem made starkly visible during the Covid-19 pandemic. As these public and policy discussions to shape the future of care work advance, it is a critical moment to put the needs, voices, and experiences of care workers themselves at the center of the discussion on the future of care work. Taking care of care workers includes valuing their labor with good wages and dignified working conditions. It also includes attending to the stress, trauma, and oppression that care workers face due to the work they are doing and their position as a workforce that is devalued and made up disproportionately of women, people of color, and immigrants.

The Worker Institute is committed to advancing this conversation and developing strategies for addressing the needs of care workers.

The Worker Institute will convene advocates, care workers, labor leaders, and scholars into a network that will help build power for care workers and lift standards in the care economy by putting a public focus on the urgency of taking care of care workers. Structural solutions to raise pay and improve working conditions must be entwined with practices and policies that attend to the heavy impact of stress and trauma on care workers—taking care of care workers paves the way for them to take leadership in organizing and advocating for their needs.

Who is considered part of the care economy:

Nurses, interns and residents, home care workers, childcare workers, elder care workers, long-term care workers for people with disabilities, domestic workers (nannies and house cleaners), and childhood care and education workers.



DURING THE CONVENINGS, PARTICIPANTS WILL:

- 1. Model systems** of collective care for care workers (e.g. trained peer support networks and partnerships with community public wellness resources).
- 2. Identify and amplify models** for improving employment standards, policies, and practices across the formal and informal sectors of the care economy, including childcare, elder care, healthcare, teaching, and disability-related care.
- 3. Advance the public** discourse for raising standards and supporting innovation in the care economy.

Participants in our annual convenings will come from unions, worker centers, academia, policy centers, and government policy actors. They will share ideas, identify research needs, and strategize on policy innovation.

The convening will also seek to identify key areas for education and training that can support the long-term engagement of women leaders across industries.

WORKER CENTER INNOVATION HUB

A Research, Training, and Leadership Development Hub for Worker Justice Innovation

The Worker Institute serves as a key convener of academics, practitioners, researchers, and policy makers into a process of generating and disseminating knowledge that improves the lives of workers, transforms the future of work, and advances collective bargaining rights for all workers. A core **value** of the Institute's work is that collective bargaining, workers' collective representation, and workers' rights are vital to a fair economy, robust democracy, and a just society.

Based on its mission, the Worker Institute has a long record of engaging in key research and policy innovation for worker centers that represent and advance the rights of workers in precarious work arrangements, gig workers, and workers in precarious immigration status. The Institute has done this work in collaboration with key leaders in the worker economic justice movement such as the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA), National Day Laborers Organizing Network (NDLON), Food Chain Workers Alliance, Restaurant Opportunity Center (ROC), We Rise, NICE, ALIGN NY, Laundry Workers Center (LWC), Worker's Justice Project (WJP), Retail Action Project (RAP), Adhikaar, Damayan and many more.

The Worker Center Innovation Hub (“the Hub”) is a collaborative space for research and praxis that offers technical assistance on internal organizational development capacity (OD) for leaders of worker centers and economic justice organizations.



The **Worker Center Innovation Hub** will serve as a convener of economic and worker justice leaders into a network of support for worker center organizing and leadership development with the ultimate **vision** of building worker power that can lead to collective representation and bargaining rights for precarious workers in today's economy.

THE HUB WILL SUPPORT WORKER CENTER LEADERS BY PROVIDING:

1. **Technical/Research Support:**

Developing participatory research models focused on industry-wide transformation. Participatory research design can be used as a founding structure for education of leaders, organizing of members, and for conceptualizing standards-raising campaigns among workers.

2. **Cross-Sectoral Collaboration:**

Supporting networking and cross-community learning among worker center leaders. Create spaces for strategizing on industry standards-raising models while supporting individual efforts by each worker center.

3. **Transformational Leadership Development:**

Training models that venture beyond a “skills-building” approach and focus on a bold vision for growing and sustaining powerful institutions that represent the interest of workers. Grounded in an inclusion and solidarity approach, the Hub will help social justice leaders develop an institutional vision that can be sustained through the ups and downs of burnout so common in justice-driven leadership.

4. **Organizational Capacity Support:**

Helping grassroots organizations build internal capacity strategies.

Peer Training Models are a tool to catalyze grassroots leadership development that leads to strong organizing by creating powerful member leaders who become peer-trainers. Through peer learning modules, the Worker Center Innovation Hub will create empowering and relevant learning communities for workers. The curriculum/teaching style is adaptive (language, real examples, cultural adaption, literacy levels, etc.) that come from the lived experiences of member-trainers.

Ensure sustainability with ladders of leadership (trainers, lead trainers, coaches) to enable programs to keep expanding with structures of support essential for worker centers that are often minimally resourced and experience high staff turnover.

PUBLIC PROGRAMMING: **Bridging Research & Praxis**

The Worker Institute is the premier labor education and research center based at the ILR School at Cornell University focused on theory and praxis, leading applied labor market research, leadership development, education and training grounded on workers voices and focused on transformational leadership.

Through our Public Programming Initiative, the Worker Institute plans to combine our team research expertise with discussions led by labor and worker leaders in our leadership programs, to engage in public educational forums related to unions and worker rights organizing.

Policy Innovation:

Connected to the ILR Empire State Poll, the Worker Institute will produce policy briefs and conduct policy discussions with key stakeholders. Informed by the annual findings of the survey, the policy briefs will cover the following areas:

- 1. Union Organizing and Collective Bargaining Rights**
- 2. Gender Violence Prevention in the Workplace**
- 3. Rights of Workers in the Gig Economy**
- 4. Precarious and Immigrant Worker Justice**
- 5. The Future of Care Work**

The Public Programming Initiative will bring labor union leaders, economic and worker justice leaders, academic researchers, and policy advocates into ongoing conversations to advance policy solutions to problems related to work, workers, and our economy.



ILR Worker Institute

For more information on our current work in the precarious economy in support of worker center leaders, visit <https://www.ilr.cornell.edu/worker-institute/blog/reports-and-publications>. For examples of our peer-to-peer training models visit, We Rise, transforming the domestic work industry at <https://www.workersrise.org/>

