



MADE IN L.A.

Organizing and Workers Rights Conversation Guide

Made in L.A. is a story about immigration, the power of unity and the courage it takes to find your voice. Made in L.A. follows the remarkable story of three Latina immigrants working in L.A. sweatshops and their struggle for self-empowerment as they embark on a three-year odyssey to win basic labor protections from a clothing retailer.

Starting the Conversation

This brief guide is intended to spark conversation, build awareness and motivate Made in L.A. viewers to learn more and get involved. We hope that participants using this guide try to understand one another and expand their thinking by sharing viewpoints and listening actively. Controversial topics often make for excellent discussions. But by their nature, those same topics can also give rise to deep emotions and strongly held beliefs. We hope the questions below help guide you through an engaging and enlightening conversation.

To find out more about Made in L.A. and how to get involved, to view the Made in L.A. Event Planning Toolkit or to explore conversation guides on other issues, please visit www.MadeInLA.com.

Discussion Questions

Describe a moment in the film that you felt connected directly to your life and current work. What was it about that moment that impressed you?

In Made in L.A. Lupe says, “*When people start to organize, they stop being victims.*” How does organizing help people “stop being victims” even when that very organizing can bring about risks (reprisals, being fired and so on)?

A worker at a Garment Worker Center meeting resists pressure that he take responsibility for using the megaphone at the next protest, saying, “*Each of us has our own type of leadership that we like the most.*” What different kinds of leadership do you see modeled in the film? Do you agree with Lupe that everyone should use the megaphone? What kinds of leadership roles would you feel most comfortable taking?

What are some similarities between the workers in Made in L.A. and workers you know?

Explain the “pyramid of power” that Lupe uses to describe the power of workers uniting. What do you think of this analysis? Do you think the women in Made in L.A. could have had the same impact if they were working to fight Forever 21 on their own?

Organizing provides the “strength in numbers” that is sometimes essential in enabling the most marginalized members of our society to speak out. What are some recent instances where you have seen organizing make an impact?

How did this collective effort improve conditions or society?

What did you learn from the film about the difficulties and rewards of sustaining a protest? What tactics were used to discourage or derail the protesters? How can organizers and workers effectively respond to such tactics? How did organizing impact the lives of the women featured in *Made in L.A.*?

At the end of the film, we hear Lupe say, "*The more I learn, the lonelier I feel.*" What do you think she meant? Why?

Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA)

Why is it important that working people be able to bargain for better wages, benefits and working conditions? How does this film illustrate the need for new legislation in this area?

What key changes would the EFCA make if passed? How would these changes regarding workers rights improve Maria, Lupe and Maura's experiences?

How might Maria, Lupe and Maura's struggles have been different if they were union members?

In *Made in L.A.* we see the large Beverly Hills home of Forever 21's CEO. According to research by United for a Fair Economy, America's workers are putting in more hours than ever but continue to struggle to pay the bills while the CEOs of large U.S. companies averaged \$10.8 million in total compensation in 2006. How would the EFCA help level the playing field for workers like Lupe, Maria and Maura?

The Impact of Organizing: Connections to other issues in *Made In L.A.*

At the beginning of the film, Maria says, "*We had no other option but to fight.*" Now that you have seen the full story, why did she think it was her only option? What else could be done to provide workers like Maria with other options to address workplace complaints and work-related injustices?

Lupe says, "*Most immigrants come to this country thinking there are lots of jobs. Well, there are many jobs, but they're jobs of exploitation.*" Why are most of the jobs available to immigrants like Lupe "jobs of exploitation" like we see in the garment factories? How does lack of documentation make immigrant workers vulnerable to exploitation?

What could be done to prevent employers from exploiting undocumented workers? Besides the workers themselves, who would benefit from protecting the rights of these workers? What might happen to the wages of other workers if undocumented immigrants were granted legal status?

The leaders of the fight in *Made in L.A.* are all women. Why might that be? How might this have had an impact on how this victory was won? How did the women overcome their fears and concerns? What were the sources of their strength?

How do you see the fight for workers' rights as connected to other key issues of our time including corporate globalization and women's rights? What sorts of changes would help improve the conditions of low-wage workers?

Taking Action

What are some labor issues in your community that you feel need community support? How would you go about nurturing support for these issues?

Did the film inspire you to take action in your life? What steps can you take today to create positive change in your work situation? How can you and the other people at this screening today take action to support working people?

Is there current legislation you can support to improve the conditions of workers in your area?

Does the organization hosting this event have suggestions about how you can get involved supporting workers rights and organizing efforts?



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