

No shortcuts: organizing for power in the new gilded age

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Abstrak

Over the past two decades, labor unions in the United States have experienced a profound crisis. In spite of spending hundreds of millions of dollars on new organizing campaigns, unions have not won a major victory since 1995, and membership rates have steadily plunged. Meanwhile, corporate power has strengthened its grip, making the strength of unions more relevant than ever. What is the reason behind the downfall of the unions, and what can be done about it? *No Shortcuts* examines the ways in which unions can reverse their recent decline, arguing that despite today's extremely hostile environment, unions could win much more if they changed their organizing strategies. Through case study analysis, the book demonstrates that different organizing strategies produce different outcomes representing different levels of success, and that the reason for the decline in union victories lies not in the growing power of employers, but rather in the ways in which unions organize both members and nonmembers. Once, the workers themselves were the focus of union organizing, but organizers in the new millennium have spent most of their energy on corporate campaigns intended to weaken employer opposition to unions—making the employers, not the workers, the new center of the movement. *No Shortcuts* concludes that reversing today's inequality will require a robust embrace of unions—but of unions that are democratic and focused on bottom-up rather than top-down strategies, that place the agency for change in workers acting collectively both at work and in the communities in which they reside. Finally, the book's analysis, although focused on the organization of strong unions, has the broadest possible application: the organization of a just society.