

# Engaged Ethnography and the Story(ies) of the Anti-Sweatshop Movement

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## Abstract

The purpose of the present study is to conceptualize engagement as both theoretical and methodological in relation to social movements. Theoretically, engagement is seen as central to activism and is addressed as a complex ontological and teleological phenomenon in relation to social movements. Methodologically, engagement is addressed in terms of (a) the role of the researcher, (b) the perspective espoused by the researcher, (c) how and why the researcher enters into and enacts with the cultural phenomenon, (d) how the researcher tends to the subjects and (e) how the researcher presents the story. This methodological approach is referred to as *engaged ethnography*. The main story (and history) of the contemporary antisweatshop movement as well as embedded stories of the movement, especially as they unfold at Purdue University (e.g., stories of the researcher's background, and stories surrounding various strategies like, hunger strikes, bringing activists from the Dominican Republic to campus, and giving yellow roses to the president, or not) are provided and discussed according to the concept of engagement.

## Keywords

antisweatshop movement, engaged ethnography, hunger strikes, narratives, reflexivity

On November 17, 2006, a handful of Purdue University undergraduates began a hunger strike. As the strike wore on they drew their full contingent to the same building, the centrally located Stewart Center, where they established an encampment in a spacious foyer. There, under occasional surveillance but little interference by university staff, they carried on their campaign, holding meetings, dispatching news and messages, and collecting hundreds of signatures on petitions. Wrapped in sleeping bags, they slept on the lobby floor when they were not attending their classes. A few savvy activists kept constant vigil via their laptops to see what media attention their efforts were receiving. Posters and banners decorated the walls and announced their concerns; liquids and vitamins sat on a cart in the corner, textbooks and knapsacks cluttered the area. Passersby sometimes looked on without question at the odd scene; others offered their support. Although they went home for showers, the strikers' bodies began to smell of decay, their breath offensive, their sleeping bags rank with sweat. By the 3rd week of the hunger strike, two of the students had to be taken to the hospital; Mark Franciose, one of the first to begin fasting, required intravenous liquids to combat dehydration, the other, Nathan Jun, needed a regimen of antibiotics and bed rest. Those who remained faithful to the hunger strike grew thin and listless, but steadfastly passionate, intensely engaged, and unquestionably dedicated to their cause—ending sweatshop labor.

The 2006 hunger strike at Purdue University is but one tiny moment in a continuing struggle in the history of labor relations. It speaks, not necessarily of victory or defeat, but of significant engagement.

Engagement, in etymological terms, stems from Latin and refers to dedicating or binding oneself by means of a pledge—*en gage*—and the derivative French form, *engage* is defined as moral commitment. On another note, engage means to meet, especially to interlock. Thus one might engage soldiers on the battlefield or engage a topic of interest or become engaged to or with another person. This last denotation is a small step from the adjective form of the word—*engaging*—as in someone who is attractive, charming, disarming. Engage also refers to a simple matter of initiating, as in engaging a machine, or entering, as in joining a conversation or discussion. Engagement, then, may vary in definition and range in its level of involvement from casual interest to the serious avowal, from the curious passerby who asks, for example, what's going on here, to the committed hunger striker who places his or her life in

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danger. In this sense, engagement is applied to or defines social movements in complex ontological as well as teleological terms; a social movement depends on engagement. I doubt, few, if any, would argue with the premise that engagement is central to social movements.<sup>1</sup>

Theoretically speaking, engagement is a phenomenon fundamental to social movements and yet little has been done to explore this aspect of activism. Instead, engagement in social movements is seen as inherently obvious and thus unremarkable, when it may well be a complex defining aspect of social movements in multiple ways and from multiple perspectives. This taken-for-granted acceptance of engagement has left it understudied as social movement scholars have focused, for decades, primarily on the life cycle of social movements (e.g., Stewart, Smith, & Denton, 1984), the rhetorical strategies and tactics employed in social movements (e.g., Bowers & Ochs, 1971), the development of identity politics in social movements (e.g., Habermas, 1981; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985), the types of ego function that define social movements (e.g., Stewart, 1999), the discursive power of constitutive rhetoric of various movements (Charland, 1987; McGee, 1975), and policy change as the result of social movements (e.g., Giugni, 2004). One exception is Stewart et al.'s (1984) inclusion of *enthusiasm* as indicative of the mobilization stage; although this approach points to how crucial engagement is to social movements, it does not make engagement central at all points of time in the life cycle of a social movement nor does it address engagement from various perspectives. Another exception is Elavsky's (2009) study of the *Live 8* movement that spun from *Live Aid*. Although Elavsky primarily focuses on the effectiveness of the movement to meet its overarching goal, he does so with a secondary focus on "civic awareness, engagement, and activism" (p. 384). Thus exploring engagement in social movements beyond what is currently provided in the literature may shed light on how social movements rise and fall, contribute to social change, and provide a politics of possibilities.<sup>2</sup>

Methodologically speaking, engagement in ethnography refers to (a) the role of the researcher, (b) the perspective from which the researcher is poised, (c) how and why the researcher enters into and enacts with the ongoing cultural phenomenon, (d) how the researcher tends to the subjects, and (e) how the researcher presents the story to others. I have attempted to highlight each of these methodological premises as I work/write my way through the following narrative of the antisweatshop movement. But first it is important to note that each of these premises is interconnected to the others. For instance, the role of the researcher is connected to the perspective that guides the work. In the following section I highlight scholarly discussions of the role of the ethnographer and the perspective.<sup>3</sup>

## Perspective and Role of the Researcher

In 1994, Vidich and Lyman provided a history of ethnography according to the major perspectives. They asserted that distinctions across perspectives included perceptions of reality, the role of communication/discourse, the driving motive of the ethnographers, and most central to the current study, the concept of engagement. Vidich and Lyman explained that for traditional modernists, detachment on the part of the ethnographer was considered crucial for an unbiased perspective to be obtained and could only be achieved through "A sufficient degree of social and personal distance" (p. 23). Ironically, the postmodern perspective, the challenge to modernism, was also grounded in a sense of detachment, according to the authors. Spretnak (1991) noted of postmodernism, and Vidich and Lyman repeated, "A sense of detachment, displacement, and shallow engagement dominates deconstructive-postmodernism" (p. 13). It may appear, then, at least on the surface, that engagement falls primarily to the province of critical and liberation theorists (including neo-Marxists, feminists, race and queer theorists, and postcolonial scholars, to name a few). But I would suggest that the above generalization concerning the lack of engagement with respect to either the traditional modernist or postmodernist movements has been oversimplified. For instance, Boaz while generally attempting to document the life of the Kwakiutl (albeit he also attempted to recreate the past historical record through staged photos) through a disengaged lens was profoundly engaged in ending racist and elitist practices among anthropologists of his day (see Clair, 2003). At the other extreme, I am not sure we should be so quick to judge postmodernists as disengaged, either. For example, Foucault's (1979) *Discipline and Punish* explores the discursive construction of punishment and the subsequent development of the modern prison system without ever talking to a prisoner; and yet, he also helped to found the Prison Information Group that gave prisoners a means to voice their concerns.

There also exists a school of ethnography that places personal engagement and reflexivity at the forefront without necessarily demanding political involvement. The profoundly personal testaments of autoethnographers may range from personal to social, from apolitical to intensely political. Autoethnographies may provide heart wrenching personal stories as in the loss of a loved one (e.g., Alexander, 2011) or they may perform personal testaments of deprivation, frustration, or oppression as a means of making a political statement (e.g., Madison, 2011). In either case, making one's engagement visible is crucial to autoethnography, but making one's political testament or connection is not.<sup>4</sup>

With respect to engaged ethnography and the study of social movements, at the very least a reflective moment on the researcher's engagement is encouraged from both a

personal and public position. Marcus (1994) calls for critical self-reflexivity in any and all undertakings of ethnography as new postmodern/critical ethnographers

are testing the ground—always a strong engagement by authors with “what goes on” among particular subjects of study and of an equally strong reflexive engagement with their own self-making as scholars—in which qualitative social science is being remade in order to overcome authoritative models, paradigms, or methods. (p. 573)

Denzin (1994) predicts that these autoethnographic/postmodern/critical texts will represent the ethnographies of the future by being “emic, existential, political, and emotional” (p. 512). Reflexivity of one’s engagement has been grappled with by scholars from various backgrounds (see the special collection edited by Berry & Clair, 2011). Thus the engagement of the researcher is as important to the product of an engaged ethnography as is the exploration of engagement as a fundamental aspect of the phenomenon in question, in this case, a social movement. The point of this article is not to discredit any of the forms or degrees of engagement from the various perspectives, but rather to assert that a form of ethnography, called *engaged ethnography*, might take the very practice of engagement as its core concern, theoretically and methodologically.

In short, conceptualizing and enacting engagement can be considered an ambitious task and one that is both theoretical and methodological. Exploring the possibilities of making engagement central means that studying a cultural phenomenon grounded in activism/engagement should provide a rich source of opportunities for initial discussion. Notwithstanding the exploratory nature of the current endeavor, which means that it may raise more questions than it answers, this study hopes to shed some light on the matter of engagement and proposes that social movements make for an excellent starting place as social movements are by definition cultural forms of engagement. One such social movement that drew my attention, and engagement, is the antisweatshop movement.

### A Brief Contextual Background

The 2006 hunger strike, described in the introduction of this article, marked the second time that Purdue University students had undertaken a fast in an attempt to persuade university administrators to take more action toward ending sweatshop labor. The hunger strike that preceded it was held in the spring of 2000 as part of a national campaign by United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS) to bring attention to sweatshop conditions in factories around the world and to help change those conditions (see Featherstone & United Students Against Sweatshops, 2002). The hunger

strike of 2000 at Purdue University was the first such undertaking by USAS members who had held rallies, but never before held a hunger strike (Featherstone et al., 2002). Fouad Jaber and Marakah Mancini were especially active in organizing and maintaining the commitment to the first hunger strike. But it was Negin Almassi, a bright and energetic young woman with wavy, raven-colored hair who came to see me, asking if she could visit my class and explain the cause to the students.

Indeed, the cause needed explaining as most of us knew only the snippets that we had heard on television; or worse, some students took the whole affair to be a joke. For example, during the first hunger strike (2000), strikers were teased and taunted by other students who knew little if anything about the issue. Like hecklers at a comedy show, these students tempted the hunger strikers by having pizzas delivered to them at their tent encampment at the center of campus. Later, the hecklers even set up grills on the grass and barbecued meat in front of the hunger strikers. When I witnessed these actions, I accepted Negin’s request to speak to the students in the Organizational Communication class that I was teaching. She provided an engaging presentation on March 30, 2000, highlighting how campus apparel may be made in sweatshops and how this was relevant to the students. The presentation culminated in a lively question and answer session. I was amazed at how animated and engaged the students became. They wanted to know more. I decided to start gathering the story of the contemporary antisweatshop movement.

### A Brief History of the Contemporary Antisweatshop Movement

In 1996, Kathie Lee Gifford, then cohost to Regis Philbin, faced criticism that her brand label clothing, which was being sold at Wal-Mart, had been stitched by the hands of exploited workers under sweatshop conditions (Galestock, 1999), not only offshore but in New York City as well. This event marked an awakening even though Robert Reich, then Secretary of Labor, had already been campaigning for 3 years to end sweatshop abuses under the slogan of “No Sweat.”

Between 1993 and 1996, the government “recovered \$7.3 million in wages for more than 25,000 garment workers” (The Government Executive, 2012). Thus contemporary sweatshop conditions certainly existed prior to the Kathie Lee Gifford scandal and were under the watchful eye of the Department of Labor, but up until that point the public mainly perceived sweatshops as something happening offshore. In the summer of 1996, the AFL-CIO, in hopes of engaging college students in its initiatives, started a summer internship program to provide the students with firsthand experience with the labor conditions of garment and needle-workers in this country and abroad. And in the fall of 1996, many of those students and activists “gathered

in Madison Wisconsin, for the Youth-in-Action Conference” (Featherstone, 2002, p. 107).

Media attention to the problem had been increasing and between the union/worker/student activism and the exposing of the Kathie Lee Gifford scandal, public sentiments for the workers increased and complaints reached the White House. President Clinton responded to the public outcry by creating the Apparel Industry Partnership (AIP) which quickly developed into Fair Labor Association (FLA) to address labor standards (Galestock, 1999). “The FLA was to be comprised of representatives of manufacturing, human rights and religious organizations, advocate groups, and universities” (Clair, 2012). But the FLA had its critics, as well, who were concerned about the supply chain, especially small factories supplying *big name* corporations, like NIKE. “We want regular inspections by independent organizations that we can put some faith in, and not just a public relations façade,” said Hunter-Gault (see Hunter-Gault, 1996, n.p.).

To achieve this goal students became more active in the cause. In 1998, Duke University students demanded that their University sign a code of conduct as an initial show of good faith. Several universities followed suit. However, issues heated up in Washington, D.C. and “several labor unions and religious groups resign[ed] from the FLA, objecting to the excessive influence of its corporate members” (Featherstone, 2002, p. 107). The FLA proposed that it could monitor subcontractors, while those who resigned from the FLA proposed that that was a conflict of interest, since companies like NIKE sat on the Board of the FLA. The challengers charged industry could not possibly monitor itself any better than the fox could guard the proverbial chicken coup. The challengers broke away from the FLA, and, in turn, decided to start their own monitoring organization (i.e., the Worker Rights Consortium—WRC). The lines had been drawn.

In 1998, this conflict spawned a new student organization, the United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS). Small groups of USAS students as well as garment workers around the world began holding protests. As mentioned earlier, in the spring of 2000, a group, Purdue University Students Against Sweatshops (PSAS) held the first hunger strike that lasted 11 days and resulted in the formation of the President’s Standing (Advisory) Committee on Marketing, Licensing, and Merchandising, to determine which organization (FLA or WRC) Purdue University should join. And this is when I became “officially” involved in the movement as one of the committee members asked to research and advise the president—Should we join the FLA or the WRC? The WRC did not exist at this time as an officially documented organization; it existed only in the hearts and minds, or more specifically, in the rhetoric of the activists as a possibility for change (see Clair, 2012, for a discussion of this development as a form of *rhetorical ingenuity*).

The students had nominated me for a position on the committee and the president agreed. However, the students had nominated several other women, none of whom was selected by the president to serve. My involvement deserves its own brief story, not only for the reason that it provides the reader with additional information about the social movement but also because it provides the reader with knowledge of the biases that I bring to the study. As mentioned earlier the role of the researchers is influenced by the perspective; it is also influenced by personal history. As stated earlier, *how and why the researcher enters into and enacts with the ongoing phenomenon* is a telling part of engaged ethnography. Thus I provide a brief personal narrative below.

### **I Could Have Said, “No”: Reflecting on Personal Engagement**

I could have said, “No,” on several different occasions—when Negin first asked permission to speak to my class, when the Purdue Organization for Labor Equality (POLE, previously called PSAS) students asked me to agree to be one of their nominees for an antisweatshop taskforce committee, or when President Beering’s secretary sent a request asking me to serve on the President’s advisory committee—but I didn’t say, “No.” Why not? Reflexivity allows a researcher to discover the reasons for their own engagement (see Denzin, 1994; as well as Berry & Clair, 2011; Clair, 2011). I began by asking a simple question of myself: What really moved me to engage? And I found an answer that came from my past: Caesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers of America.

Caught smoking cigarettes and skipping classes at the angst-ridden age of 15, I discovered my parents were eager to change my wayward behaviors. A friend told my parents about a church group that planned to take a diverse group of teenagers on a bus trip to California to work for Caesar Chavez. My parents were devout Republicans who believed in unions, “made in America,” and helping small business owners; back then those were Republican values, honestly; they even voted for Nixon while espousing such commitments. My mother had boycotted grapes the summer before, explaining to us that the boycott would help end exploitive labor conditions. And so my parents were already sympathetic toward the movement, when the following summer, to keep me from trivial, if not illegal, pursuits, they sent me to work for Caesar Chavez.

I joined a busload of teens of various races, genders, sexual orientation, and classes, who were guided by a gruff-looking, no-nonsense reverend with a heart of gold who taught us about ourselves, about each other, and about the poverty of field workers. Other adults on the trip were equally helpful as we teens struggled with general angst and far too often real problems back home. But what we teens

were going through is another story; what the workers were going through is the focus of this story.

We were assigned various tasks once we arrived in Delano, California, including filling out union registration cards for workers who couldn't read or write in English, standing on the picket line near Bakersfield, clearing away debris from what would be the parking lot at the union center, building a short retaining wall near the union headquarters, and caring for infirmed workers/union members. That last task is the one that most got to me. One of the adults took two of us girls to clean an infirmed union member's home.

Chickens were clawing at dry dirt, baked by the sun, in search of food, in front of the man's home when we arrived. We were grateful to enter his small house and get out of the intense summer sun. But once inside we changed our minds about being grateful as it was hot and malodorous. The adult coordinator took the elderly man to the doctor while we stayed to clean. He had just left breakfast and we told him we would take care of the dishes. The man was thin and frail with a colostomy bag attached to his side; his eyesight was all but gone.

When I went to clear his dishes, I discovered his coffee cup and oatmeal bowl were crawling with tiny ants. All I could think of was that he wouldn't have seen them with his poor eyesight. How many had he swallowed? Were they still crawling on his arms? We washed everything, but knew the ants wouldn't be gone for long. While doing the dishes, we discovered that coffee and oatmeal were his only food stuffs.

He had spent a lifetime picking grapes, lettuce, potatoes, and other produce for the tables of America and had only a small house with a few chickens for his labor. We found no fresh food in his house. His belongings were sparse. His health tentative.

With respect to health, the same could be said for Caesar Chavez at the time, but for slightly different reasons. Chavez had food, but was voluntarily undertaking a planned hunger strike on behalf of the farm workers; his 25-day hunger strike brought attention to the plight of migrant laborers and encouraged people to maintain the boycotts. His efforts eventually culminated in the formation of the United Farm Workers of America (UFW).

Perhaps, it was memories of working for Caesar Chavez that kept me from saying, "No," to Negin Almassi. Perhaps, it was memories of my parents' adherence to an ethic grounded in respecting workers' rights that rubbed off on me. Maybe, it was the taunting of Purdue University hunger strikers with pizza and barbeque by the uninformed that ruffled my feathers and got me on board; or maybe it was all of the above. At any rate, I found myself, once again engaged in the labor movement, in the antisweatshop cause in 2000. And that same year, I agreed to serve on the president's advisory committee to undertake the task to help advise Purdue University's president as to whether we should join the FLA or the WRC.

## FLA Versus WRC

The federal government had established the FLA to monitor factories, but after religious leaders and union members left the board, the college students who felt that the FLA was weighted in favor of manufacturers insisted that universities join the WRC, a newly proposed monitoring agency, made up of some of the religious leaders and union advocates who had left the FLA. This is what drove the Purdue University students to undertake their first hunger strike in 2000—they wanted the university to join the WRC.

At that time, then President of Purdue University, Steven Beering convened a committee, titled the President's Standing Committee on Merchandise Licensing and Marketing (a.k.a. the President's Committee) as a response to the students' demands, ending the first hunger strike. The President's Committee, a group of administrators, professors, and students investigated the strengths and weaknesses of the FLA and the WRC. After several months of research, the committee advised the president to join both the FLA and the WRC. It seemed like a win-win solution, even if it would cost more. Although the FLA headed by Aurret van Heerdon leaned toward the business perspective, it did have the strength of the federal government to back its monitoring and, although the WRC held union sympathies, it had far better connections with NGOs (e.g., local churches and the Red Cross), making it better able to uncover abuses.

The president accepted our advice and Purdue University joined both affiliations and for a time the FLA and the WRC worked well together or at least worked in parallel fashion without too much tension, but this uneasy honeymoon was short-lived. Eventually, both groups realized that monitoring was an onerous task, and, in addition, each moved more in the direction of its ideological base. The FLA planned to teach managers how to be more efficient and effective by using "best practices" and "root causes"—the latest business jargon for old management. The WRC initiated a working plan for the designated suppliers program (DSP), which would provide a list of preferred suppliers—that is, those suppliers who pay a "living wage" and allow for representative employee groups or unions to organize and negotiate. These opposing ideologies caused divisiveness, to say the least. The student activists sided with the WRC's DSP plan and I came to understand why after attending a meeting of the FLA and the WRC held in Chicago in late March of 2006.

The meeting was held to discuss the implementation of the DSP. Purdue's usual representative was unable to attend and I took his place. I was surprised to find that several of the Purdue University students, including Mark Franciose and Alex Cheng, both student representatives from the committee, attended the meeting as it was a good two-and-a-half hour drive from campus and the meeting would take up most of the day. Representatives for companies like Nike,

and smaller suppliers, were in attendance along with representatives from several universities. The main speakers, including the director of the FLA and the director of the WRC, sat on chairs in the front of the large hotel conference room, waiting their turn to approach the podium. I was able to put faces to names that I had only heard or seen as signatures on reports. Ironically, Aurret van Heerdon, the director of the FLA, sporting a ponytail and casual attire, appeared to contradict the stereotypical image of a business-oriented individual. Similarly defying stereotypes, Scott Nova, director of the WRC, who espouses the more liberal agenda, wore his hair short and he dressed in a business suit. They each appeared to be the quintessential examples of *don't judge a book by its cover*. Each had an opportunity to explain his proposal, beginning with the liberal-looking van Heerdon who espoused "best practices" and "root causes" through the following examples:

A company had been cited for safety violations. Once the root causes were discovered, the problem was easily resolved using business sense, he explained. It would seem that the workers did not like wearing masks as they found them uncomfortable and they complained that the gloves slowed their work. Explaining to workers that these are necessities solves the problem, he told the audience. Thus the workers in this situation were perceived as the "root cause." The director of the FLA never considered that an underlying condition for the workers wearing the masks might be the root cause. That is, he never considered the polluted air to be the "root cause."

With respect to explaining "best practices," van Heerdon told another story from the past and about a different group of workers who complained that they did not make even enough money to pay for a funeral. Funerals are important to the particular culture that van Heerdon was profiling and the family of the deceased is expected to feed a large number of relatives and friends. Aurret van Heerdon set up a system that took a small amount of money from each worker's pay check to establish a funeral fund. This practice, actually this "best practice," allowed any man to draw on the funeral fund in time of need. The "best practice" never considered raising the workers' pay.

Scott Nova, director of the WRC and advocate of the Designated Supplier Program (DSP), provided a counter-story. He said that a group of Muslim girls complained that their pay was being given to their fathers and rather than continue paternalistic practices, he made sure that the young women received their own paychecks. A follow-up investigation supported that the young workers flourished and some used their money to pay for education. These and other topics were covered at the meeting, including a legal position on the antitrust concerns of setting up a designated group of suppliers, the feasibility of the project, and the ways a group of WRC members might work together to refine the DSP.

On returning to campus, I provided a report to the President's Committee. The students were more radical; they held a rally, a sit-in, and eventually they forced their way into the president's office and chained themselves together, about the necks, with bicycle locks, all to get the University to join the WRC's new program—the DSP (Thomas, 2006). When these strategies failed, they engaged in a peaceful, but dramatic protest—the hunger strike of November–December, 2006. As the hunger strike wore on, the faculty advisor for the group, Professor Berenice Carroll, became worried about the students' health. She came to see me and together we met with the students several times and sought solutions to end the hunger strike. This is when I became even more acquainted with these fiercely dedicated and adamantly engaged students.

Once again, a part of engaged ethnography is the role of the researcher and how the researcher tends to the subject. Being able to attend to the hunger strikers' needs, in this case, helping them with their cause and keeping a watchful on their health, and to the workers at large, includes telling their story to others. I requested the Purdue University Internal Review Board (Human Subjects) allow me to tell this story in a way that puts names to faces. They agreed.

## The Purdue University Hunger Strikers of 2006

Mark Franciose has been a student leader of POLE for several years. He told me during an interview that he plans to go to law school; he had also been the student representative on the President's Committee at the time of the 2006 hunger strike. Alex Cheng kept track of whether the group's efforts were being reported in the newspapers and much more, including his acting as a representative to the committee. Sameerah Ahmad is quiet, perhaps shy, and lives above the local coffee shop. Despite her reserved personality she was a key organizer and eventually became the student president of POLE. In addition, she replaced the past student representative on the President's Committee, Rita Dongas. Rita Dongas is an articulate young woman with debate skills that have astounded the committee members, that is, she took on full professors from the business school in debate over the issue. She is entirely within her comfort zone heading rallies, debating the issues, and coordinating the students. A bull horn becomes her. Alex Hanna has an eye for the visual and has taken photographs of the group. He has also played a key role in organizing efforts. On one occasion, he joined me at a table in one of the campus cafeterias to talk about philosophy, politics, and ideology. Carlos Pereira is from Venezuela and a staunch advocate of human and worker rights. Bill Slavin, who was the first to deny himself food, also remained on the hunger strike the longest. Nathan Jun is tall and normally thin, but under the circumstances—the hunger strike, he seemed to

be disappearing. He thanked the people who had helped them, including union leaders and their faculty Advisor Berenice Carroll via their blog. Others, like Sarah King, Matt Bradney, Katie Clemens, Hope Deighton, Amanda Jones, Pat Ray, Jade Mendoza, and Sergio Corondo responded to questions from curious strangers; they spoke on behalf of the workers.

Repeatedly the students needed to make clear that the suffering in underindustrialized countries does not compare to grievances most Americans might raise at work. Forced to eat company food that had gone rancid, workers in a maquiladora were only asking that they be allowed to bring their own lunches to work. The company not only refused this request, but subtracted the cost of the rancid food from the workers' paychecks. At another factory workers were told that they could not leave even if they were sick. One worker reported "bleeding from both ends" and still his supervisor would not let him go home. American factory workers often work under extreme conditions of heat, monotony, and heavy work, but they have some recourse from abuse; these workers had none.

As the hunger strike moved into its 3rd week and the students were becoming more listless, Professor Carroll became more concerned about their health but as an activist herself she understood the students' commitment to the cause. She was one of the advocates for the Equal Rights Amendment who chained herself together with other feminists in the state capitol building in Springfield, Illinois, where the hotly contested issue came to a vote in 1982. Over the years, Professor Carroll has been a tireless activist for peace and human rights. During the hunger strike of 2006 she worked quietly behind the scenes gathering support from local politicians, religious leaders, and local citizens. She invited me to attend one of her meetings with Father Dan Davis, pastor of the campus Catholic foundation. By the end of the conversation, the somewhat reserved Father Dan was entirely on board and agreed to head a small delegation of clergy and other members of the community to urge Purdue's president to find a way to end the hunger strike.

The students repeatedly asserted that the way to end the hunger strike was by having Purdue join the DSP. Even State Representative Shiela Klinker asked the president to consider the students' request. Nevertheless, then university president, Martin Jischke officially refused to join the DSP; however, he promised that he would send a representative to the DSP meetings (Jischke, 2006). President Jischke had taken over from the outgoing President Beering and it was Jischke who had agreed to join both the FLA and WRC, but he announced on December 12, 2006, that he would not be persuaded to join the DSP.

I saw the hunger strikers the following day; they wore a variety of emotions on their faces—disbelief, anger, frustration, and disappointment. They had fasted for over 3 weeks, while attending classes, taking final exams, and meeting

with different supporters and they did not feel ready to give up. I reminded them that President Jischke had given an inch by agreeing to send an observer to the DSP meetings who would then report back to him. I was trying to give them a way to save face, a reason to end their hunger strike and a ray of hope. My comments did little to appease the students; they had slept on the cold, hard floors of Stewart Center on behalf of exploited workers. They had fasted for weeks. They had made placards and given speeches. Their decision to continue or to end the hunger strike would not be made lightly, they assured me. They needed time to think about the situation. They met privately that evening and decided to end the hunger strike, but also decided that ending the hunger strike would be done in such a way as to increase public awareness of the issues.

After 26 days and 11 hours, the students gathered together and broke bread, pita bread, on the steps of Hovde Hall, just outside the president's office. Union supporters, reporters, and sympathetic faculty and students attended. Although the hunger strike ended, the students did not stop advocating for workers' rights and they prided themselves on having made the issue more visible through their hunger strike—more than 80 articles ran in a variety of newspapers, magazines, and tabloids. At the local level, the students gave interviews to the *Indianapolis Star*, WBAA, *Journal & Courier*, *Purdue Exponent*, WLFI 18, as well as Ball State and Purdue-Calumet campus newspapers (see Purdue Hunger Strike Update, 2006) and managed to get their picture and an article in *The Nation* magazine (see Rothberg, 2006). Part of their prepared statement promised the following: ". . . this campaign is not over. While the hunger strike has ended after more than 26 days, we are stronger than ever . . . you'll be seeing a lot more of us come spring semester." During the spring semester of 2007 they did indeed regain their visibility by implementing new strategies, one of which was to bring one of the workers from the Dominican Republic to campus.

At the heart of ethnography, of course, is the study and writing of culture or cultural phenomenon, which may radiate outward expanding the researcher's world as the researcher becomes more deeply engaged. Obviously, I had been learning about the culture of student activists and the cultural phenomenon of sweatshops, but now I was to begin learning about the world of a worker/activist—Yenny Perez's world.

### **Yenny Perez, the Voice of the Workers, Speaks From the Heart**

Zach Knorr, International Campaigns Coordinator for United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS), who had once been a student at UC-Riverside and activist for the antisweatshop movement at that campus, helped the Purdue students arrange a trip for one of the Dominican Republic

workers from the BJ&B factory, Yenny Perez, to come to the United States and tell her story. Alex Cheng sent me an email in March of 2007 asking if I would be willing to house Yenny Perez while she visited the campus. The students sent me a brief, translated statement from Yenny's story, the first lines read,

I am so worried about what I will do if this factory closes. It will be so hard to find a job. As a pregnant woman, I know I will not be able to find work. On top of that, I am a known trade unionist. They don't hire trade unionists here.

I agreed to house Yenny Perez and her two traveling companions, Zach Knorr and Victoria Cepeida-Mojarro, her translator. As an engaged researcher I continued to tend to the needs of the activists.

They arrived late Thursday night, March 29, 2007. It was nearly 11:00 p.m., they had been traveling most of the day and arrived exhausted. I watched from my front porch as they stepped out of the car and made their way to the front door. Zach Knorr, a tall young man, introduced himself and then his companions. Victoria Cepeida-Mojarro translated for Ms. Perez. Yenny Perez, 31, the single mother of four children—three boys and one girl—appeared painfully thin for being 5 months pregnant. I hugged her gently, and then took her to the guest room where she immediately went to sleep. Zach and Victoria stayed up late, making plans for the rest of the tour. The following morning I interviewed Zach Knorr and Yenny Perez. Victoria Cepeida-Morajjo translated and occasionally answered additional questions that I had about her role at USAS.

Zach and Victoria had awoken before Yenny. Each in turn, with Zach first, joined me in our family's spacious kitchen/dining room. I served them coffee and pastries, yogurt, and fruit. I asked Zach how he had become involved with the global labor movement.

"I was looking for a way to get involved and I saw a flyer on campus [UC-Riverside] for USAS. Later, I heard about the DSP model from USAS at a conference in Austin, Texas." The conference that Zach was referring to was held in 2005. He told me that students and workers came together to develop the model [the DSP]. "Some of the students had been interns" who had seen firsthand what was happening in the factories. I was reminded of what I saw firsthand when I had worked for Caesar Chavez. Zach went on to explain the DSP, which he considers one of the most important developments in the last 10 years for dealing with labor abuses.

The Designated Supplier Program (DSP) is designed to address "supply chain" issues, since "codes of conduct and monitoring won't actually do that," Zach explained. In the past, the FLA and the WRC monitored factories and found abuses, but enforcing a code of conduct had been nearly impossible; monitoring thousands of small factories from

Mexico to Indonesia is not easy. Some factories, when exposed for abuses, simply shut down and open up in another country under another name. The DSP plan is designed to take care of that by having "the workers take the lead." The DSP suggests that as factories prove they have met codes of conduct as reported by the workers through worker representative groups, in essence unions, they would receive verification from the WRC. Then the WRC would provide a list of compliant factories for licensees, like Nike, to choose. In short, the WRC would designate which factories have a solid reputation. Nike and other licensee (i.e., those companies which are licensed to put university logos on apparel) could send orders to the designated suppliers.

Zach added that major players, like Nike, need to take responsibility for workers who supply their products. He said, "The DSP is merely a way of enforcing this. The BJ&B [could have been] a model factory," he added. But it wasn't.

The BJ&B was a Korean-owned factory that opened in the Dominican Republic. The garment workers were hired to sew baseball caps and supply corporations, like Nike. Early on, abuses were reported at the BJ&B factory and when workers tried to organize they were met with opposition from management. Eventually, BJ&B closed its doors. When Yenny Perez joined us in the kitchen, she told me about life at BJ&B.

Yenny Perez looked refreshed after a solid night's sleep. She took fruit and pastry and then joined us at the table, later, she tried yogurt for the first time. She wore a bright red T-shirt and she had pulled her long, black hair back into a ponytail. She looked much younger than her 31 years. I asked about her family background and her work life. Victoria translated.

Yenny Perez comes from a large family with 15 siblings. The country is 85% Catholic and Yenny said that the Catholic Church helps the workers in their fight against abusive conditions. She began working as a domestic at the age of 13 to help support her family. In 1991, she started working part-time or seasonally at BJ&B. Eighty percent of the 1,800 employees were women. I asked her why she had been selected to tour the country giving speeches. "Because of my experience in the unionization and my knowledge of BJ&B," Yenny said. Although Ms. Perez has only a ninth-grade education, she took a leading role in unionizing the workers and became the union secretary. I knew that Yenny was slated to speak on campus in just a few hours and she was meeting with administrators before her rally speech. I promised to meet her again at the rally on campus and that I looked forward to hearing her presentation. I wrapped up the interview by asking her whether she writes her own speeches or speaks from the heart. "I speak from the heart," she told me.

After leaving my home, Yenny Perez met with a Purdue University administrator. He later told me that Yenny had

trembled nervously while presenting her case and that he had not thought of himself as such a scary person. From there she went to the rally.

At the rally, POLE students and USAS representatives organized a space, supplied bull horns, and raised a sign announcing Yenny Perez as the featured speaker in the commons. The weather cooperated; it was sunny and warm on Friday, March 30, 2007. Students began drifting over to the rally; they sat on the grass. A few professors stood by and the local Catholic priest, Fr. Jim Barnett, who had been unable to meet with students during the hunger strike as he had been undergoing knee surgery, attended to show his support. He has been an activist throughout his lifetime. We stood together until Sameerah Ahmad invited me to supply a brief history on the antisweatshop movement before Yenny Perez's speech. Sameerah, for all her shyness, did a lovely job of welcoming the students to the rally, talking about the featured speaker and introducing me. Following the brief historical and political overview that I gave, I told the growing crowd that we have learned from each other and now it's time for us to learn from one of the workers and that I was honored to introduce Yenny Perez, who did indeed speak from the heart as she had promised and translators repeated her words through the bull horn.

In the beginning, when we started the union we were very, very, very discreet because when the company found out what we were doing they came and got us and took us out into the yard [that surrounds the factory] . . . They made us pick up trash [as a punishment for starting a union and a way to keep them away from the other workers]. Other workers couldn't talk to the union organizers. They would be fired if they talked to us. After much strategizing we made our way back into the factory. [Before the union,] I didn't have a problem with my boss, but others had big problems. I joined the union and helped make flyers. In one of the flyers, I had a photo of myself and my four children with the words—*Join the union for yourself and your children*.

Yenny Perez then described the long struggle to unionize, which concluded with the fact that they had

finally reached a majority . . . Thus, we could bargain collectively. Despite the collective bargaining agreement [which Zach felt would have made the BJ&B company a model factory, management ignored the union,] laid off workers [and eventually closed the factory]. Yenny explained that the fact that the union was not notified [ahead of time] of the closing led the union team to assure workers that everything was fine. This made the union look very bad,

Yenny told us.

"Management said, since the beginning of the union, they were losing clients." On February 22, 2007, the company

thanked the workers, but it is closing because there are no clients left—Nike stopped placing orders . . . Nike said that they had a new sewing pattern that Dominican Republic workers were not qualified to perform. The union conducted an investigation and found that Nike had orders but had forwarded them to Bangladesh. This is the basis of our struggle. It was the only factory in town . . . Some women are turning to domestic work and even prostitution,

Yenny reported.

At the end of the speech, Purdue University students asked questions, which led to the following answers: [What did you make for Purdue?] "We made baseball caps for Purdue University." [How much were you paid?] "We made \$9.00 a week before the union; we made \$34.00 a week after unionization." [Are there other unionized factories in the area?] "Ours was the first factory to organize." [What would happen, if there wasn't a union?] "It's possible some would work there anyway. When there is nothing else. Some could take it, others could not." [How many hours did you work?] "We worked 10-12 hours a day." [Was there any child labor?] "The youngest worker was 15 years old." [What kind of abuses took place?] "One woman had a fever and chills, they wouldn't let her leave" "There were daily abuses." There were many other answers to additional questions, the last one of which was—Have you seen the factory do anything to damage the environment? Yenny Perez replied, "The worst damage is the closure."

Yenny Perez later confirmed that the BJ&B workers were more than qualified to sew any patterns that Nike brought to them. And she told us that she liked her job. She was proud of her ability to work the machines that put the labels into the baseball caps.

This is why several Purdue University students and others like them have undertaken hunger strikes—for people like Yenny Perez and her children. Before she left, I gave Yenny small gifts for her children, crayons and paper for the younger ones and a Frisbee for the older boys; she had never seen a Frisbee. And I gave Yenny a journal in which to keep the story of her travels.

Yenny Perez's visit raised awareness, but did not persuade the university to join the DSP. The committee met again, several members seemed to want more support for the allegations that the workers were making, that the WRC was making. At last the confirmation came in a joint statement released by the WRC and the FLA on May 11, 2007. Both monitoring agencies had met with BJ&B representatives in Santo Domingo. The meeting was coordinated by the International Textile, Garment, and Leather Workers'

Federation and chaired by General Secretary, Neil Kearney. The statement concluded that the FLA and the WRC agreed that violations did in fact occur at the BJ&B factory including the lack of severance pay for all workers, the absence of collective bargaining, and the neglect of notification of the closing. These are considered breaches of the guidelines by the WRC and the FLA as well as the code of conduct signed by universities and the Dominican Republic labor laws. The FLA and WRC recommended that BJ&B come into compliance with the code of conduct and enter into dialogue with the union concerning collective bargaining and appropriate severance pay. The FLA and WRC also hinted at their own internal struggles with each other, noting in the statement that they did not agree on all aspects, but did agree on those listed in the statement and each organization held the right to issue additional statements. Of course, none of this will bring back Yenny's job, which is what she most wanted. Nor would this secure that Purdue University would join the DSP. Yet, the students, at that time, held great hope for that to happen and for good reason.

### Drawing Premature Closures

As mentioned previously, presentation of the culture or cultural phenomenon under study is a key aspect of engaged ethnography. Engaged ethnography attempts to unapologetically provide a narrative account of an incomplete and unfolding story that begs public attention and demonstrates personal and or civic engagement from a wide variety of people and perspectives. The narrative might be told via various media (articles, books, documentaries, etc) and through a variety of genre and styles (narrative, performance, poetry, journalism, etc.). Speaking of writing ethnography, Richardson (1994) pointed out that much can be learned in the writing stage of ethnography, specifically "about yourself and your topic" (p. 516). But when to close the project or end the scholarly engagement may tempt scholars to create artificial endings. Artistic endings that come full circle may provide convenient, compelling and aesthetic endings that satisfy the researcher, and most readers, but they must be considered carefully, as I learned from this project.

In addition to considering closure, the researcher needs to address the multiplicity of stories that contribute to the overall narrative. The main narrative being told may be comprised of, or accompanied by, numerous stories, each one deserving of attention (see Clair, 2006). Furthermore, the main narrative may be situated within a grand narrative as Lyotard (1979) describes it; in this case, the antisweatshop narrative is situated within the grand narrative of capitalism. The embedded narratives that comprise the main narrative may offer a sense of closure, with a beginning, middle, and end, but that should not lead the researcher to create a premature closure on the general narrative. Just as

the antisweatshop movement has a long history that precedes the current look at the contemporary antisweatshop movement beginning with the Kathie Lee Gifford story, it similarly has a future that may stretch on for decades to come. Drawing from the postmodern perspective, it is important to note that what a researcher presents is always partial. With that caveat in mind, I present the following embedded story of yellow roses for a president, which appears to have an ending, and yet . . .

### The Story of Yellow Roses for a President

On May 7, 2007, Purdue University welcomed its 11th president, France Córdova, the first woman, the first Latina, and the first soccer mom (as she pointed out) to become president of Purdue University. Following her acceptance speech, President Córdova answered questions from the audience at which time Jade Mendoza, a visual and performing arts student, one of the hunger strikers and treasurer for POLE, asked Córdova about her stand on the sweatshop issue. President Córdova replied that she would "love to talk" with the students about the issue and that when she joined the University of California–Riverside she had been met by a small group of students who surprised her with "an unannounced sit-in at my office." They demanded to know where she stood on workers' rights and the DSP. Zach Knorr, a UC-Riverside graduate confirmed that they had been more than annoying. "Basically, we gave her a ton of shit for a year and she got really tired of us," Zack said. Since then, the University of California System has offered its "full and enthusiastic engagement with the universities and other stakeholders related to the DSP, with the goal of helping to create the conditions necessary to allow implementation to occur in a timely manner."<sup>5</sup> With respect to Córdova in particular, Zach told fellow hunger striker, Rita Dongas, "She actually knows it [DSP] and understands it and has gone on record before as supporting it." This gave the Purdue students reason for hope.

With respect to the students at UC-Riverside, Córdova added in her opening address to the Purdue community, "In the end they gave me a dozen yellow roses. Hopefully, you will do the same." With that said, the students sanguinely engaged President Córdova over the next 3 years. During that time, the President listened thoughtfully, adjusted herself to a new locale, politically speaking that is, as unlike California, Indiana is generally a red state, not a union state and Purdue University is not a unionized campus, whereas UC-Riverside is a union campus. I attended university meetings; at one such meeting in 2010, President Córdova asked, "What has changed since President Jischke's decision not to join the DSP?" She was looking for a valid reason to overturn his decision. Most of us felt the previous reasons should have been enough, nevertheless, I responded

by telling the president that the MultiFiber Act has now caused a change in practices. The act is influential in the swift movement of the clothing industry to relocate to mainland China, shutting down factories in other areas, often without warning and often illegally. Furthermore, I told her that we (members the president's standing committee) had recently been informed of forced labor (prison inmates) in the People's Republic of China being assigned to produce logo goods. She silently considered what I said; I knew that silence meant that I had failed to persuade her. The student activists thanked me for my attempt, "You rocked," one of the students told me. But I felt defeated. By the fall of 2010, President Córdova had not only refused to support the DSP but she also no longer requested the advice of the president's standing committee on such issues. The committee was quietly disbanded in 2010.

Sadly, this year, 2011, the president of Purdue University announced her retirement. She finishes her term without ever receiving yellow roses from the Purdue student activists. The students, however, have not given up the cause. The resilience and engagement of the student activists and worker organizers demonstrates dogged determination. When I asked one student why he felt the university decided not to sign onto the DSP, he answered with one word—"Yet." Maybe those yellow roses will go to another Purdue University president.

## Conclusion

Engaged ethnography is a holistic way of approaching cultural studies, including social movements; it is both theoretically and methodologically driven by the concept and practice of engagement. Theoretically, engaged ethnography explores a culture or cultural phenomenon with a focus on engagement from any of several and various perspectives or points of view. In this study, I highlighted the aspects of a 10-year-long study of the antisweatshop movement, thus incorporating a critical perspective on behalf of the workers, but engaged ethnography need not be restricted to critical theory (feminist theory, queer theory, race theory, or postmodern theory). It is possible to explore topics in an engaged way that may have little political overtones (the death of a parent, the loss of a child, the magic of falling in love), which are equally valid cultural phenomenon. And although I allowed a critical theory to guide my work, postmodernism surfaced in recognizing the partiality of any story and the layered and embedded narrative structures that can be found. As stated previously, methodologically, engagement in ethnography refers to the role of the researcher, the perspective from which the researcher is poised, how and why the researcher enters into and enacts with the ongoing cultural phenomenon, tends to the subjects, and presents the story to others. I have attempted to highlight each of these methodological premises as I

worked/wrote my way through the narrative of the anti-sweatshop movement.

My focus here has been on the engaged participants, which may demonstrate a limitation of this study. Future research might focus on the disengaged, the apathetic, and outright opposed. I wish I had done more interviews with the uniformed or apathetic as they should not be left out of these kinds of studies. How is indifference perpetuated? I wish I had interviewed the student opposition, instead of assuming they were uniformed. For example, what made other students taunt the hunger strikers in 2000? And what made student reporters write that the student activists were the ones who are naïve in 2006?

The background stories of each of the activists would have been eye-opening and it is a limitation of this study to have only shared my own in any detail. Nevertheless, reflecting on my own background story, whether I came to be involved in the United Farm Worker's movement by coincidence or not, in turn, contributed to the explanation of my involvement in the antisweatshop movement many years later, shedding light on engagement. Since 1996, union organizers have been coordinating experiences for young people, especially college students, to visit workers in underindustrialized and less affluent countries, which may affect student involvement. The willingness of the students to undertake a hunger strike on the behalf of the workers may stem from their firsthand engagement with workers who have little to eat and sometimes are made to pay for rancid food, just as I met the man who had nothing but oatmeal and coffee in his house.

For me, living in the States and working at a university led me to think of the heart of the movement as the efforts of the students, but indeed, the workers have been equally if not more involved. They were early innovators in the development of the DSP strategy. And they were active on the factory floor. Many organizers lost their jobs. They are central to the movement even if distant from the average American's view. Does the strategy of bringing the workers to college campuses help to educate and engage students in the movement? Does it create a sense of connection? And what becomes of the worker-activists? How are their lives affected after they return home? Engagement and perceived geopolitical distance deserves further study. Yenny Perez helped me to see this and made me wonder what research has been or should be done on the outcomes of workers in general and union organizers more specifically; when and where and with whom does engagement begin and end? How does engagement relate to responsibility? Conquergood (1994) remained connected with the gang members he studied, setting an example for future scholars. Follow-up studies are crucial. This project has been 10 years in the making and even it would benefit from asking, what became of the engaged and outspoken? Yenny told me that some of her female friends, workers from the factory who have lost their jobs, have already turned to prostitution. Yenny doesn't

want to become a prostitute. The union job as activist, speaker, and organizer, traveling the United States campus circuit, saves her from this dilemma, but keeps her from her family. Women's issues, in particular, are more than deserving of further attention.

As mentioned earlier, social movement scholars have explored the ego-function of social movements (Stewart, 1999). Addressing whether a movement is guided by people who focus on "others" (be they other people, animals, or the environment) or people who focus on self (e.g., women in the women's movement) has led to some novel insights about social movements. Interestingly, the contemporary antisweatshop movement contains both ego-functions and at least one more. In general, workers protest on their own behalf, students protest on behalf the "other" (i.e., the workers) as did the Catholic priests (both in the Dominican Republic and in the United States) and labor leaders may overlap between both functions, concerned about self and other. But ego-function may be even more complicated than multiple ego-function within one social movement. For example, Yenny Perez is indicative of the complex nature of ego-function as she stated she had had no problems with her bosses, but other workers had; she became engaged for them and for her children; for future generations; simultaneously, she works on behalf of herself and other. Future research of this overlapping of ego-function might provide further insight into the complex nature of engagement.

In addition, I am fascinated by the rhetorical ingenuity of the workers and student activists. They have created an imaginative solution via the design of new organizations, which exist in word only, that is, they exist through constitutive rhetoric. Neither the WRC nor the DSP originally existed as an organization and yet the activists (students, workers, union leaders, religious leaders, etc.) all spoke as if these organizations already existed. I have taken up this topic in another article (see Clair, 2012), but with respect to engaged ethnography, I wonder, how is it that people become engaged with the *becoming*, the idea, the hope or dream, or possibility. In the case of the WRC, even the opponents spoke as if the WRC existed before it ever had enough members to carry out its function or address its goals. The FLA rhetorically engaged the idea as if it already existed, specifically calling the WRC a "fledgling organization," suggesting that the WRC is an organization; it may not have been as mature or prepared to undertake the work of the FLA at that particular time, but it was recognized as an organization. This granted the WRC organizational status. As for the DSP, the proponents discussed the DSP as if it already existed, as well. Universities were asked to join the DSP even when no DSP formally existed. The opponents, however, seem to recognize the rhetorically ingenious strategy the second time it is used and maneuver around it by never calling the DSP an organization, fledgling or otherwise. These rhetorically ingenious strategies and counterstrategies deserve even

more attention in relation to how inventiveness and imagination might act to further engage people, giving them renewed energy.

Furthermore, I am enamored by the resilience of the activists to never give up. I provided the example of the young man, who when asked after years of efforts to get the DSP passed why he thought it failed to be accepted by the president of Purdue University, answered, "Yet." His comment reminded me not to give up. His resilience, persistence, and thorough engagement deserve additional study. Resilience and determination in social movement activism will require persistence on the part of engaged ethnographers who will not be able to give up either. I wanted to put this project to bed years ago, but the story will not sleep; it continues to unfold and in dramatic ways, which raises additional questions: Is it the youthfulness of the activists? Is it the continual matriculation of students that keep the activists fresh and hopeful? Is it the diversity of students? Is it the Union's development of programs that take students to sweatshops and bring workers to the United States to speak? or Is it the development of fresh strategies like the DSP that keeps the movement alive? Only additional and more focused research can tell.

In addition, engaged ethnography requires a "situated approach" (Denzin, 1994) that places the movement not only within a broad history but also a broad geopolitical stance, which must be fluid enough to move between the macro and the micro levels and everything in between to understand the past motives as well as the future implications of engaging in the social movement. If not for the Kathy Lee Gifford sweatshop factory fiasco in New York City, the average American might not have seen their place in the antisweatshop movement or what they could do to alleviate such scenarios. Media attention brought the story to the public. Outrage on the part of U.S. citizens led Clinton to take action. Media exposure was crucial and should be studied further for its role in exposing sweatshops and for engaging people. In addition, the students' activism brought attention to the issues across U.S. campuses and beyond through local and national media outlets. Gaining this attention may have been the direct result of relying on a traditional tactic—the hunger strike. But the effectiveness of the hunger strike remains in question; the hunger strike worked to persuade administrators in the 2000 situation and failed to move administrators in the 2006 situation. Thus a full review of the political reasons behind the successes or failures should be considered.

For example, perhaps, the lame duck status of the outgoing President Beering in 2000 allowed him the freedom to make a more liberal move (forming the committee and promising the students that he would seriously undertake the possibility of joining the WRC) while the early candidacy of President Córdova kept her from making such a political move.

Based on the above, it is easy to see that this particular engaged ethnography provided a significant number of

findings and perhaps raised even more questions. Indeed, there are so many questions that rise to the surface based on this initial effort to place engagement at the forefront that several studies could be undertaken to further explore the phenomenon in this and other social movements in the future. Engagement, which is so central to social movements (theoretically and methodologically), is in dire need of further exploration, especially if we are to search out and attempt to understand how we can create a world of possibilities for social change.

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### Notes

1. The etymological and denotative discussions of the base word engage rely on two sources: Skeat (1963) and The Concise Oxford Dictionary, (1982).
2. As for written treatises, the politics of possibilities can be traced to Plato's *Republic* and Socrates' dialogues conjecturing the means to utopian society, but modern writers tend not to go back quite that far. Instead, contemporary scholars lean on the works of Marx and Nietzsche to discuss "a world of possibilities" (Clair, 1998) and a "politics of possibilities" (Nordhouse & Shellenberger, 2007), but not without caveats against Nietzsche's misogyny (Clair, 1998) and Nietzsche's elitism (Nordhouse & Shellenberger, 2007). Prominent contemporary scholars who assert the call for imaginative possibilities in education include Paulo Friere, Paul Willis, and Henry Giroux—all of whom have influenced the politics of possibilities movement. A recent contribution by Elavsky (2010) explores the intersection of social movements and pedagogy to "foster greater global awareness and engagement" (p. 175). A list could be provided for each of the various disciplines, but for the purposes of this study I turn to contemporary efforts in qualitative research and ethnography, which have been discussed by Denzin (1994), Fine (1994), and Marcus (1994). Fine argued that "most qualitative work has refused to engage intentionally with the politics of justice" (p. 76). She provides exceptions within her chapter citing race theorists, feminists, and critical scholars. Denzin calls for more reflexivity in order for us to pursue more imaginative solutions and engaged responses to the world around us. And Marcus calls for critical self-reflexivity in any and all undertakings of ethnography so that scholars provide a "testing the ground—always a strong engagement by authors with 'what goes on' among particular subjects of study and of an equally strong reflexive engagement with their own self-making as scholars" (p. 573). This, Marcus tells us, will reduce authoritarian models and open onto new possibilities. And this is what will lead us into what Lincoln and Denzin (1994) call the Fifth Moment.
3. Social movements can be studied from a variety of perspectives that call upon engagement. For example, one could be very engaged in an archival analysis of historical documents from an era long ago, but this type of archival analysis limits the possibilities of engagement to one type. Engaged ethnography allows one to move between the past and the present relying on texts (current and past), interviews, observations, as well as participant observation, plus reflexivity and its varied means, messages, and outcomes.
4. Autoethnography can be traced to the work of Hayano (1982), but has been most fully developed under the tutelage of Ellis and Bochner (1996) and Ellis and Flaherty (1992) with emphasis on the personal, subjectivity, and reflexivity.
5. This quote is taken from the University of California's letter posted on the Workers' Rights Consortium web page signed and dated by President Robert C. Dynes—May 6, 2006 and is addressed to the chancellors of the different UC branches. President Córdova's acceptance speech is available through Purdue University News Service.

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## Bio

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