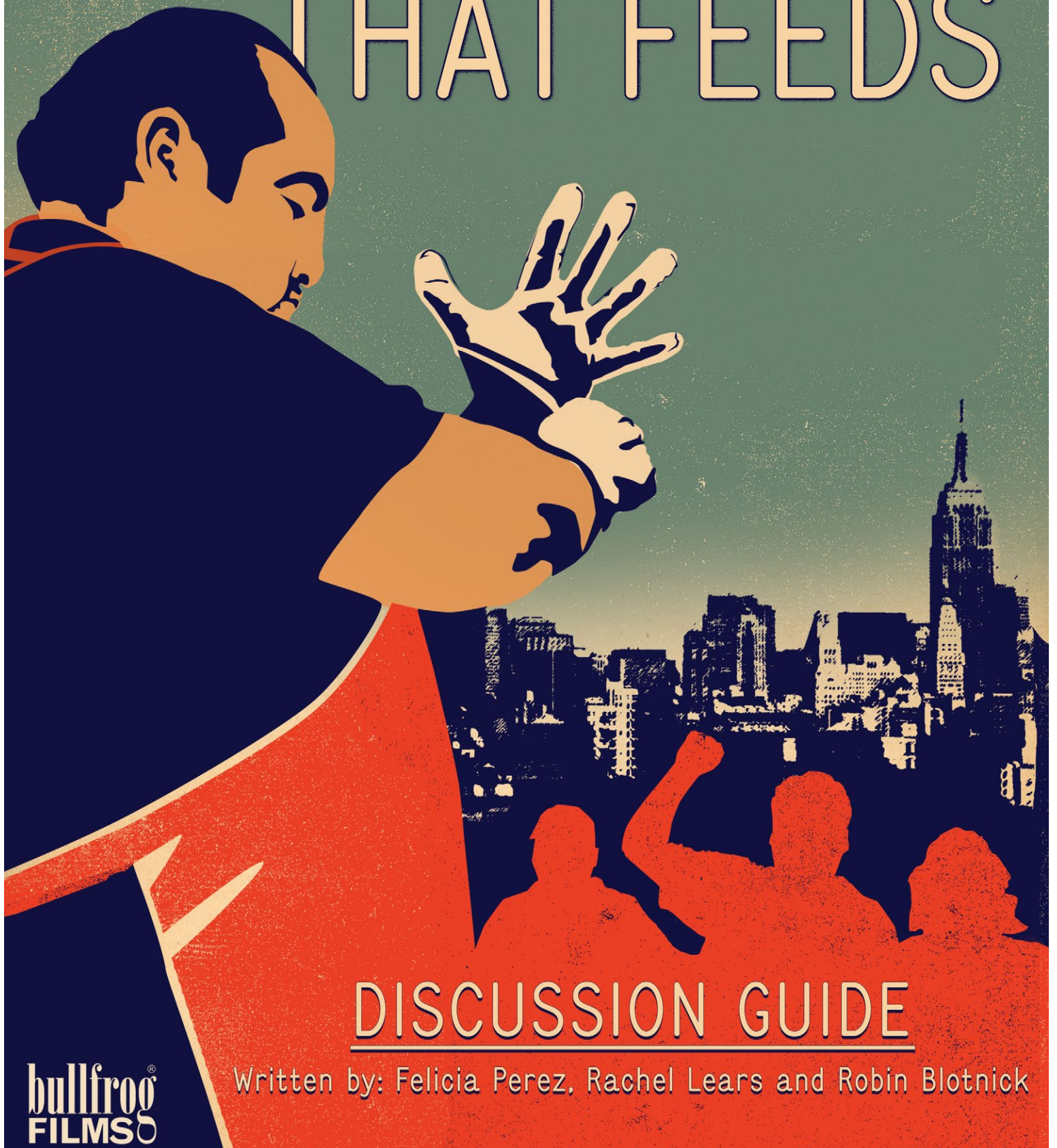


# THE HAND THAT FEEDS



## DISCUSSION GUIDE

Written by: Felicia Perez, Rachel Lears and Robin Blotnick

**bullfrog**  
**FILMS**



# The Hand That Feeds — Discussion Guide

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Photo Credit: ELEAZAR CASTILLO

*Concept by:* Felicia Perez

*Written by:* Felicia Perez, Rachel Lears and Robin Blotnick

*Special thanks to:* Jennifer Adair, Natalie Patrick-Knox, Cathy Junia, and Jackson Lears



# Letter from the Filmmakers

We made this film because we were inspired by the courage of the protagonists, and the ways that their story defies stereotypes. We wanted to understand how ordinary people find such courage in themselves, how they become transformed into innovative leaders, and what makes a successful collaboration between low-income workers and allies from a broad spectrum of racial, socioeconomic, age and religious backgrounds. The story also evoked complex themes that we aimed to explore in nuanced ways, including the fundamental tension between law and justice at the heart of all civil rights movements. The events that unfolded became an epic in miniature, a classic underdog story of courage, determination and empowerment in the face of risk and powerful opposition.

We first met Mahoma López, in April 2012 at a secret meeting in a McDonald's on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. We'd spent the previous autumn documenting the Occupy Wall Street protests. Mahoma had reached out to the Occupy movement for help with his struggle to improve conditions at his workplace — the Hot & Crusty bakery and cafe at 63rd Street and Second Avenue in New York City. At first he seemed a quiet, humble worker — the kind customers often overlook as they wait in line for sandwiches and coffee. But Mahoma would not be invisible for long.

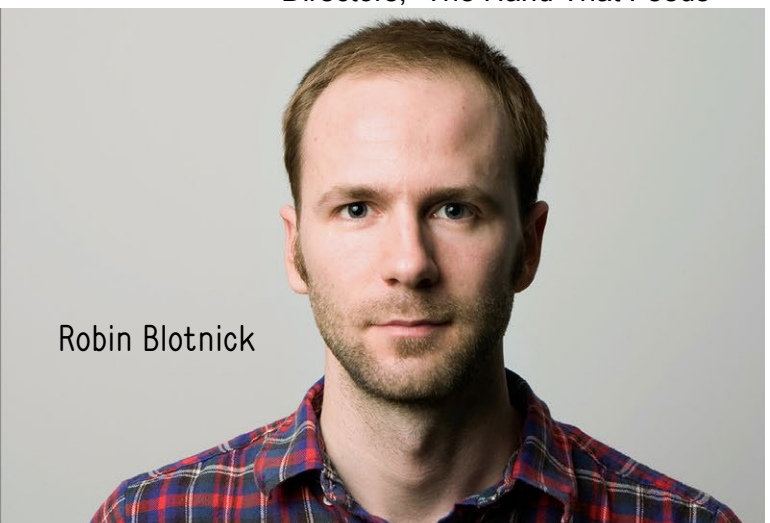
Mahoma and his co-workers filed a complaint with the New York State Department of Labor but gave up waiting for a response after several months had passed. They reached out to big unions, but were turned away because their shop was too small. In May 2012, Mahoma and his co-workers went to the National Labor Relations Board and voted to form their own independent union. This set off the chain of events documented in this film.

In the early 20th century, immigrants were at the forefront of the labor movement that helped build our middle class. Today, when low-wage jobs replace middle-income jobs at alarming rates and food service remains among the fastest growing sectors, the struggles of low-income workers and their families matter more than ever. Turning these jobs into living-wage jobs while fixing our broken immigration system would lift millions out of poverty and benefit our entire economy by increasing consumption and tax revenue. The story told in *The Hand That Feeds* is part of a growing wave of low-wage and immigrant worker organizing across New York City and around the country that has the potential to spark this kind of change. The labor of the undocumented constitutes a vital part of the American economy. Their struggle for rights, inside and outside the workplace, is an inseparable part of our democratic project.

Rachel Lears and Robin Blotnick  
Directors, "The Hand That Feeds"



Rachel Lears



Robin Blotnick





# Synopsis

At a popular bakery café, residents of New York's Upper East Side get bagels and coffee served with a smile 24 hours a day. But behind the scenes, undocumented immigrant workers face sub-legal wages, dangerous machinery, and abusive managers who will fire them for calling in sick. Mild-mannered sandwich maker Mahoma López has never been interested in politics, but in January 2012, he convinces a small group of his co-workers to fight back.

Risking deportation and the loss of their livelihood, the workers team up with a diverse crew of innovative young organizers and take the unusual step of forming their own independent union, launching themselves on a journey that will test the limits of their resolve. In one roller-coaster year, they must overcome a shocking betrayal and a two-month lockout. Lawyers will battle in back rooms, Occupy Wall Street protesters will take over the restaurant, and a picket line will divide the neighborhood. If they can win a contract, it will set a historic precedent for low-wage workers across the country. But whatever happens, Mahoma and his coworkers will never be exploited again.

This insightful and detailed look into the challenges of low-wage worker organizing is a powerful tool for sparking reflection and dialogue on issues of immigration, labor, and solidarity. The honesty of all the individuals highlighted in the film allows viewers to get a deeply personal view into the struggles and benefits of organizing for dignity and respect in the workplace, on the streets, and at home.



Photo Credit: JED BRANDT



# FAQ

## **Q: How can undocumented immigrants legally form a union?**

**A:** While it is illegal for an employer to hire a worker without proper work authorization, once that employee is hired, she is entitled to basic protections under federal, state and local labor laws. The National Labor Relations Act of 1935 guarantees the right to organize for better pay and working conditions, and the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 guarantees minimum wage and overtime. These laws apply to most employees in the US and do not exclude workers based on immigration status. Undocumented workers also have the right to safe working conditions and workers' compensation for job-related injuries.

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## **Q: This seems like a very New York story. How does it relate to the rest of the country?**

**A:** Certain state laws, like New York's Wage Theft Prevention Act, made it easier for the workers in the film to demand fair treatment. And the fact that they began organizing at the height of Occupy Wall Street in New York City in 2011-12 shaped the community support for the campaign. But the story of The Hand That Feeds is part of a larger national movement, and it gets at the heart of what's happening with jobs all over America. Since 2008, the U.S. economy is turning middle-income jobs into low-income jobs at alarming rates, and the low-wage service sector, including food service, is among the fastest growing sectors in the nation. Moreover, the vast majority of workers throughout the food chain earn poverty wages. Wage theft and the other issues faced by the workers in the film are widespread around the country— for all workers in low-wage industries, regardless of immigration status.

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- The Hands That Feed Us: Challenges and Opportunities for Workers Along the Food Chain. Rep. Food Chain Workers Alliance, 2012. Web. 04 June 2015. <http://foodchainworkers.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Hands-That-Feed-Us-Report.pdf>

## **Q: Doesn't immigration hurt the economy and cost jobs to American citizens?**

**A:** There is broad agreement among economists that immigration boosts economic growth overall and actually has a small positive impact on the earnings of native-born workers. Immigrants start businesses at higher rates than US citizens and increase demand for consumer goods, and research also shows that influxes of both high- and low-skilled immigrant workers make the economy more efficient by filling labor market gaps in these areas. In addition, undocumented immigrants already pay billions of dollars a year in state and local taxes as well as social security that they can never claim. Within the broader positive effect of immigration on the economy, there is still some debate about whether immigration into the low-wage sector may have a small, short-



term negative effect on the poorest US-born workers. However, the Economic Policy Institute emphasizes that this problem stems from the fact that unauthorized immigrants and guestworkers lack bargaining power, which drives down wages in the industries they work in for all workers in these occupations. Numerous studies show that comprehensive immigration reform would resolve these problems and benefit the economy overall.

- “Ten Ways Immigrants Help Build and Strengthen Our Economy.” The White House. The White House, 12 July 2012. Web. 04 June 2015. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2012/07/12/ten-ways-immigrants-help-build-and-strengthen-our-economy>
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#### **Q: Don’t unions have a problem with undocumented immigrants?**

**A:** Despite the contributions of immigrant workers to the American labor movement, for much of the 20th century, many unions favored restrictive immigration policies. Their view was that immigration was a threat to American workers because immigrants took jobs away from citizens and lowered standards by accepting lower wages and worse working conditions. But in the 2010s, the AFL-CIO and other major unions and labor federations have strengthened their commitments to organizing immigrant workers, including the undocumented, and advocating for immigration reform. There is an increasing understanding in the labor movement that, because undocumented immigrant workers are often vulnerable to illegal, exploitative conditions imposed by employers, organizing them while fixing our broken immigration system will benefit all workers by raising the “floor” of labor standards.

- “Immigration Policies of American Labor Unions.” Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., 30 Jul. 2014. Web. 04 June 2015. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immigration\\_policies\\_of\\_American\\_labor\\_unions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immigration_policies_of_American_labor_unions)
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#### **Q: Are undocumented immigrants criminals?**

**A:** It is not a crime simply to live in the United States without legal status. This is known as “unlawful presence,” and it can come about for a variety of reasons, such as when an immigrant overstays a valid work or travel visa. Unlawful presence is not a crime but a civil violation, punishable by civil penalties (such as deportation and being barred from re-entry). “Improper entry,” which includes crossing the border outside of the designated crossings or eluding immigration enforcement officers, is a misdemeanor, the maximum punishment for which is 6 months jail time and up to \$250 in fines. Like other criminal offenses, this must be proved in court beyond a reasonable doubt. Although statutes of limitations exist on almost all civil and criminal offenses except for the most serious crimes such as murder and kidnapping, there is no statute of limitation for immigration offenses today. As a result, an immigrant without legal status may be deported no matter how long they have been in the country or how integrated in US society they have become.

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<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/06/13/AR2005061301460.html>

**Q: What's the difference between a workers' center and a union?**

**A:** Unions are legally recognized to represent groups of workers in collective bargaining with management on issues such as wages, benefits, and working conditions, as well as disputes over contract violations. Workers centers are community-based nonprofit organizations that offer support to low-wage, often immigrant workers who are not part of a collective bargaining entity such as a union, or who are excluded from federal labor laws.

- Fine, Janice. "Worker Centers: Organizing Communities at the Edge of the Dream." Economic Policy Institute. Economic Policy Institute, 13 Dec. 2005. Web. 04 June 2015.  
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[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Labor\\_unions\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Labor_unions_in_the_United_States)

**Q: Will higher wages hurt the economy and lead to unemployment?**

**A:** The preponderance of recent research shows that raising the minimum wage does not lower job growth, but rather leads to more economic growth by spurring more consumer spending. Increases to operating costs and prices can be minimal, and offset by increased organizational efficiency and lower workforce turnover. UC Berkeley economists recently concluded that a minimum wage hike in Oakland would 1) increase operating costs for retail by only 0.3 percent; 2) generate considerable additional income for low-wage workers that is likely to be spent on local businesses; 3) contribute to lowering turnover rate and thereby creating a more productive and efficient workforce.

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<http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/the-high-public-cost-of-low-wages/>

**Q: How did Occupy Wall Street get involved in this story?**

**A:** Laundry Workers Center was founded in Fall 2011, around the same time that Occupy Wall Street began in Zuccotti Park in New York City. LWC organizers Virgilio Arán and Nastaran Mohit were involved in the Immigrant Worker Justice Working Group, a subgroup of OWS that focused on connecting the struggles of immigrant workers to the broader movement against economic inequality. The activists that supported the Hot & Crusty campaign became involved through this group and the contact networks of its members.

**Q: At what point in the story did the filmmakers begin filming?**

**A:** We began filming about a month before the union election, after the workers had been organizing for several months. Most of the film is shot in vérité style, as the events unfolded in front of the camera. But in order to tell the part of the story that occurred before we began shooting, as well as certain events that we were not able to film for legal or logistical reasons, we used other filmmaking techniques that are common in documen-

taries. 1) We incorporated archival footage shot by the workers and organizers on their cell phones and camcorders as well as public domain footage by the NYPD. 2) We placed certain scenes that were shot later on earlier in the film to represent similar scenes that we know occurred but were not filmed. 3) For some scenes that were more general in nature, we asked the subjects to tell us in the present tense how they felt at the moments of events that had occurred in the past. 4) For some specific scenes that we were not able to shoot as they happened, we worked with those who were present to create reenactments, using a special lens and slow motion to separate these segments visually.

**Q: What steps did the filmmakers take to protect the film subjects from problems with Immigration and Customs Enforcement?**

**A:** None of the subjects has had any immigration troubles because of involvement with the Hot & Crusty campaign or with this documentary film. Although the manager of the store threatened to call ICE when the workers complained, there has been no evidence that he did so. When we began filming, the subjects had already decided to speak to the press about their immigration status. They were willing to risk exposing this publicly so that their story could help inspire other workers facing similar problems on the job. During the course of the filmmaking, we had several conversations with the subjects and their lawyer to confirm their willingness to participate. We also spoke to an independent immigration lawyer, who stated that she did not know of any cases of immigrants who went public about their status in the context of activism and suffered detention or deportation as a result; in her opinion, greater exposure in an activist context means greater protection. Mahoma has said that, from his perspective, undocumented immigrants confront the risk of deportation every day, and there was more to gain than to lose by being involved in the campaign and the film.

**Q: Did you talk to anyone from the company's original management?**

**A:** Before wrapping production, we reached out to all of the owners of the original 63<sup>rd</sup> Street Hot & Crusty (including the manager about whom the workers had the most complaints) to give them an opportunity to share their side of the story. Everyone declined to speak to us except for the lead investor, who agreed to talk off the record. This owner helped us clarify many details in our account and wanted to make sure we knew that he didn't personally oppose the union or its demands; in his account, the other investors hired the anti-union consultant and decided to close the store. In fact, it was this owner who helped find new investors to reopen the cafe and re-hire the workers. Yet he believed he was unfairly singled out by the organizing campaign, who regularly targeted him by name in their chants and printed materials. Because we were interested in highlighting systemic problems, not the motivations of alleged "bad apple" owners, we honored this owner's request to remain anonymous and blurred out all the names and faces used in the protesters signs, flyers and pamphlets.

**Q: How did the workers support themselves and their families while they were picketing outside the closed café?**

**A:** As mentioned briefly in the film, the workers on the picket line were able to support themselves with funds from an earlier settlement with the company for unpaid wages and overtime. The older employees who had worked in the store the longest received the largest payments and were able to stay on the picket line till the end, while newer employees were forced to look for new jobs while the store remained closed. Nearly everyone from the original group that organized returned to work at the store when it reopened under new management in January 2013.

**Q: What is the current situation for the heroes of the film?**

**A:** Please visit [thehandthatfeedsfilm.com/learn](http://thehandthatfeedsfilm.com/learn) for updated information.





# Discussion Prompts

## **General Discussion Prompts**

- What scene, character or moment struck you most, and why?
- Which person in the film do you most identify with and why?
- The name of the film is “The Hand That Feeds.” Why do you believe the filmmakers chose this name? What is its double meaning?
- In what ways do you pay attention to where your food comes from, and to who is involved in the food chain that makes your meals possible? Why does this matter to you?
- (*Choose from the list below.*) Look out for these topics as we watch the film: Organizing, Solidarity, Family, Immigration, Unions, Activism & Tactics, Religion & Faith, Labor Movement, Just & Unjust Laws, Intersectionality, Democracy, Power, Respect, Occupy Movement, Generations, Demands, Benefits, Safe Working Conditions

## **Organizing/ Movements**

- What did you learn from the film about what organizing is? How did the characters’ organizing connect them to something bigger? How did this connection to other activism and larger social movements help the workers?
- What did you learn from the film about the challenges to organizing in the workplace? What do you think gave the workers the drive and courage to keep going? Have you experienced any of the types of challenges that these workers faced? If so, how did you respond? If not, how would you respond?
- As you watch the film, what moments are important in Mahoma’s transformation from a shy worker to a leader? How, and why?
- What is solidarity? How is it different from charity or philanthropy?
- Name examples of activists or community members showing solidarity for the workers in their fight. What did they do? What do these supporters gain from showing their support? Have you ever showed solidarity with someone, or had someone show solidarity with you? How did it feel?
- At the start of the film Mahoma says he doesn’t want to “play the victim”. How does this attitude shape his and his coworkers’ struggle and their relationship with their supporters?
- Why do the workers reach out to Occupy activists? What risks do the Occupy activists take, and what risks do the workers take? What conflicts are we witnessing in the scene where Nastaran and Ben meet with Occupy activists to plan for the store occupation, and how does the group resolve the issue?
- Why did Mahoma’s wife Elizabeth oppose his organizing at first? Why did she change her mind?
- What role do traditional values like family and faith play in this story? What are some reasons a person of faith might oppose the Hot & Crusty campaign? What are some reasons she or he might support it?

## **Strategy & Tactics**

- What tactics did the workers use to pressure the company during their campaign? Which do you think were most successful and why? What tactics did the company use, and how did the workers respond?

- How does Nastaran organize the local community throughout the campaign? Who does she seem to choose deliberately to target or speak to?
- Who or what do corporations listen to? How can people put pressure on these entities? How does putting pressure on businesses differ from pressuring politicians?
- In the film, workers and organizers role-play different parts of the organizing process, such as the union election at the National Labor Relations Board. What is the benefit to role-playing before a major activity or action?
- **[84 minute version only]** What do you think happened between the two worker-leaders Gonzalo & Mahoma right after the union election? Why do you think people sometimes leave organizing work? What are some strategies groups could use to maintain unity and interest in organizing?

## **Labor**

- What is a workers' center, and how does it differ from a labor union? What role did Laundry Workers Center play in the story? Do you think workers centers and unions play an important role in society? Why or why not?
- Why do the characters in the film believe it is important to organize low wage industries? How could organizing low-wage workers benefit communities and the economy overall?
- When Mahoma lists the workers' demands, he says that respect from management is the most important. Why do you think this was so important to this group of workers? Have you ever felt respected or disrespected in your workplace? What does it feel like? What does it look like?
- Virgilio says, "it's not just about the money... it's about power," and later a fast food worker says, "it's like a dictatorship when we go to work every day." How are campaigns like this as much about power as they are about money and benefits?
- What assumptions are the Hot & Crusty business owners making about their employees throughout the story?
- What business or services do you encounter in your everyday life where workers may face challenges similar to those that the workers in the film face? Do you know of any workers who are currently organizing? How might communities support these workers?
- The film showed some important acts of solidarity from more traditional unionists. Why was this significant? Why might traditional unions choose to organize and support undocumented workers, rather than oppose their entry into the country?
- The Hot & Crusty workers were also supported by adjunct professors from a nearby university. What are some of the reasons these "white collar" academic workers might want a union of their own?
- How might the increasing introduction of technology in the workplace affect the organizing process? For example, how could workers who are organizing respond to the introduction of an iPad that allows a customer to order food without the need for a cashier?

## **Immigration**

- What is your family's history of migration? Explain what was in your family's "suitcase full of dreams."
- What are the reasons that the characters give for migrating to the US?
- How do the stories of the workers in the film connect to broader trends of globalization?
- In the film Margarito says, "they say we are criminals, but they are the real criminals." What does he mean by this?
- How is immigration connected to labor? Were the working conditions depicted in this film unique to immigrant workers? Were the organizing challenges unique?



- How does the threat of entanglement with immigration enforcement affect undocumented workers who are experiencing labor violations? How might immigration reform affect these workers, and how might stricter immigration laws affect them?
- How do DACA and DAPA affect immigrant workers like Mahoma? How can these policies become a means to organizing more immigrant workers into the labor movement?

## History

- How is the struggle of these immigrant workers similar to or different from the struggles of immigrants in our country's past? How is it similar to or different from the struggle of African Americans for civil rights?
- Throughout American history, workers have suffered discrimination based on race and gender as well as economic exploitation. How did these various forms of domination combine to provoke the workers in the film to organize?
- Both the organizing campaign in the film and the Occupy Wall Street movement started in 2011. What aspects of this recent historical moment gave rise to a major social movement against economic inequality? In your lifetime, what social movements have you observed and how have they changed over time?
- Imagine that this movie was filmed about a labor campaign 50 years ago. How would the story be similar, and how would it be different? How about if it were filmed 100 years ago?
- In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, unions organized the US manufacturing sector, lifting many low-paid factory workers into the middle class. In what ways is it more difficult to organize service sector workplaces (like restaurants) than to organize large manufacturing plants? How did the organizers in the film respond to these challenges?
- Reforms like child labor laws, the eight-hour workday and even the weekend happened because workers in the past organized to demand a change. What are some problems that workers face today that could be challenged by organizing?

## Economy

- What are some reasons a business owner might choose to pay her workers more or offer better benefits? Are there any advantages for the owner in doing this?
- What is wage theft? Besides the workers who are directly affected, how does wage theft also hurt other workers, business owners, taxpayers and the larger public?
- Recall the moment in the film when Ben states that, "...by raising the lowest bar, we really push everything above it." What does he mean? How does this view differ from what is known as "trickle down economics"?
- The Occupy Wall Street activists who supported the workers were young people concerned with rising economic inequality. What are some reasons young people and students would support a campaign like this at this moment in history?
- Just as we often don't see "the hand that feeds" us, what are some of the many invisible contributions of laborers in our global economy? How can we make the invisible visible?
- **[84 minute version only]** Recall the moment in the film when the business owner says that the workers should simply work hard and open their own business. What is the activist's objection to this argument? What systemic obstacles in the structure of loans, credit, or the distribution of wealth might make it difficult for the workers to create their own small business? How would you respond to the business owner if you wanted to change his point of view?

## Law/ Policy

- At the end of the film, Mahoma says, "There are just laws and there are unjust laws. There is no justice unless you make your own." What are some examples of the just and unjust laws that he may be referring to?

What are some examples of unjust laws in the past? How does Mahoma's statement challenge our notion of what the law is, and how history happens?

- United States federal labor law guarantees basic workplace protections, including collective bargaining rights for employees, regardless of immigration status. However, core employment and labor laws are regularly and systematically violated in sectors that employ large numbers of immigrant workers. What are some of the factors that have allowed for this to persist?
- How do legal strategy and organizing strategy work together in this film?
- How did each side use the existing law to further their interests? How and to what extent did it protect each side's rights and interests?
- How did the particular laws and policies of New York State (such as the Wage Theft Prevention Act, or the absence of right to work laws) help make the Hot & Crusty victory possible? How would the legal context for a story like this be different where you live, or in other parts of the country?
- What new laws and policies could be enacted on the local, state and national levels to benefit workers facing the issues depicted in the film?







# Glossary

**Department of Labor** — This U.S. government body oversees the full implementation of federal labor laws that guarantee workers' rights to fair, safe, and healthy working conditions, minimum hourly wage and overtime pay, protection against employment discrimination, and unemployment insurance.

**Economic Inequality** — The gap between individuals or households making high incomes and those making very little.

**Excluded Workers** — Workers who are by law or by practice excluded from U.S. labor laws. For example, the National Labor Relations Act, which guarantees the right of most employees to organize or join a union, excludes agricultural workers, domestic workers, and independent contractors, among other groups.

**Low-Wage Jobs** — Advocates use the phrase “low wage jobs/work” instead of “low skilled work/workers” in order to emphasize the treatment of the workers and working conditions instead of insinuating both a lack of real skill and social value. Policy analysts and public officials often refer to “low-wage” and “low-skilled” jobs as if the two terms were inseparable. This mistakenly assumes that if a job pays poorly, it must be because it does not call for many skills. In fact, these jobs require knowledge, patience, care and communication. Most of them require constant interaction with people, whether they are a patient in a healthcare setting, a child in a day-care center, a guest in a hotel, a tenant in an office building, or a customer in a store. Workers in low-wage jobs are the least likely to be provided healthcare coverage for themselves and their families, sick pay, family leave, retirement benefits, and flexibility to care for their children. Low-wage workplaces are often physically damaging and emotionally degrading.

**Minimum Wage** — An amount of money that is the least amount of money per hour that workers must be paid according to the law of a given state or city.

**National Labor Relations Board** — An independent federal agency charged with protecting employees' right to organize and decide whether to form or join a union. The NLRB oversees elections in which private-sector employees decide to begin or end union representation. The agency also investigates claims and facilitates settlements when employees, employers, or unions allege that their rights have been violated by unfair labor practices.

**Occupy Wall Street** — Frequently called “Occupy,” Occupy Wall Street is a self-identified group of activists that began camping in New York City's financial district in 2011 to protest economic inequality, the influence of money in politics, and other related issues. The protest quickly inspired the creation of similar encampments around the world. “We are the 99%” is known as the Occupy Wall Street protest slogan, referring to inequality between the richest 1% and the rest of the population in the United States.

**Organizing** — Coordinated efforts and actions carried out by people in order to promote their interests in their community or workplace, or to effect change around a particular issue.

**Overtime** — An amount paid for work that is done in addition to your normal working hours. This can also refer to time spent working at your job in addition to your normal working hours. The Fair Labor Standards Act defines overtime as more than 40 hours per week, and specifies what industries and occupations are covered by the law.

**Red Line or Red Lining** — The act of withholding loan funds or insurance from people who reside in neighborhoods considered an economic risk.

**Service Sector** — A labor sector made up of companies that focus their work on providing services. Such companies include those involved in the business of retail, transportation, distribution, food services, domestic work, healthcare, and many others.

**Solidarity** — Mutual support and agreement within a group, between groups of people, or across a particular issue; often takes the form of an action related to a commitment or intent to be there for each other's struggles, like joining a march, picket or boycott.

**Undocumented Immigrant** — This term refers to people living in the U.S. without proper documentation for their immigration status. While being in a country without proper documentation may be unlawful, it is not a crime (see FAQ). Therefore, many advocates prefer the term “undocumented” to “illegal” because of a growing concern that the term “illegal alien” is both degrading and dehumanizing.

**Union** — A group of workers who organize a collective bargaining unit in order to protect and further their rights and interests in the workplace.

**Wage Theft** — The illegal withholding of wages or the denial of benefits that are rightfully owed to an employee by an employer. This is particularly common in low-wage industries in the United States.

**Wage Theft Prevention Act** — A labor law that gives specific requirements to wage rates and expands the civil and criminal remedies that are available to workers when employers fail to comply with state wage laws. These laws vary by state.

**Worker Centers (or Workers' Centers)** — These are non-profit community-based organizations whose focus is to assist workers who are not already members of a collective bargaining organization (such as a trade union). Their membership is usually made up of low-wage, immigrant and/or excluded workers.







# Other Resources Take Action

## **Changing The Food Chain** <http://changingthefoodchain.org>

In collaboration with [Food Chain Workers Alliance](#), we have created an interactive map that aims to facilitate community engagement with organizations that support workers in the food system across the United States. On this bilingual website, you can learn more about the five segments of the food chain (agriculture, transportation and distribution, food processing, retail and food service), and the types of groups that offer resources to food industry workers (workers centers, unions, service organizations and advocacy groups). You can search geographically to connect with an organization near you, find out more about what's going on in your area, and support local campaigns for workplace justice or policy change. The site also houses stories about the challenges faced by food chain workers and solutions for improving their lives and working conditions. You can add your organization to the map, and share organizations and search results.

## **PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS**

*The Hand That Feeds* is being used by several national organizations and their local affiliates to advance the movement for low-wage and immigrant workers' rights. Please visit the websites of our national partners to learn more about their programs and get involved:

[Food Chain Workers Alliance](#)

[Interfaith Worker Justice](#)

[Jobs With Justice](#)

[Center for Popular Democracy](#)

[United for a Fair Economy](#)

Learn more about our national and New York-based partner organizations at [thehandthatfeedsfilm.com/take-action](http://thehandthatfeedsfilm.com/take-action)

## **Onward Project** <http://www.onwardproject.net>

Our partner Active Voice created this interactive site that features stories, data and discussion resources about immigration in the United States today. Issues explored include the contributions of immigrants to our society and economy, the integration of immigrants into communities, detention and deportation, the effects of deferred action policies on immigrant families, and immigrant youth. Some of the discussion materials include particular resources for faith communities.

**Be a Conscious Consumer** — Concerned about labor conditions where you eat? In the words of Mahoma López: "Customers shouldn't be afraid to ask the workers, 'Hey, how do they treat you in your workplace? Do they treat you alright? Do they pay you alright?' It's good to show the managers that there's an outside community that cares about the workers."

Check out the Restaurant Opportunity Center's [Diner's Guide to Ethical Eating](#) to find out how you can support restaurants with better working conditions and help improve conditions at your favorite restaurants. And discover other ways to vote with your wallet for a more just and sustainable food system from [Food Chain Workers Alliance](#)'s lists of high road and union companies. To show solidarity with just a few clicks of the keyboard, visit FCWA's [Take Action box](#), and add your voice to urgent petitions benefitting workers across the food industry.

**Stories and Resources from the Food Movement** — Check out [Real Food Media Project](#) for a library of over 60 short films exploring sustainable food and farming, including workers' voices. Visit [Food Mythbusters](#) for videos, fact sheets and other resources for learning more about the food we eat and how to build a sustainable food system.



# Scene Descriptions (84 Min. Version)

## **1. Opening: Is That Minimum Wage?**

MARGARITO, a dishwasher, counts his pay on camera. MAHOMA introduces the story; “we basically started a war.”

## **2. The Atmosphere At Hot & Crusty**

Mahoma and his fellow workers discuss the conditions at their workplace.

## **3. Mahoma’s Story / Radio Interview**

Mahoma takes his sons to a playground and talks about immigrating to the US from Mexico. He and fellow deli-worker GONZALO go on the radio to discuss organizing against their employer.

## **4. Organizing With Laundry Workers Center**

Mahoma and Gonzalo reach out to VIRGILIO and BEN from Laundry Workers Center. Virgilio uses a role-playing exercise to teach Mahoma leadership skills.

## **5. Connecting With Occupy Wall Street**

Virgilio brings Mahoma to an Occupy Wall Street meeting to ask for community support.

## **6. The Demand Letter / Diana And Gretel’s Prayer**

The workers deliver a list of demands to their manager. Cashiers DIANA and GRETEL talk about the divided shop and pray for a positive resolution.

## **7. Pressuring The Management**

Assisted by NASTARAN from LWC, Mahoma and his coworkers flyer outside restaurants owned by their employers.

## **8. We Decided To Form Our Own Union**

The company agrees to negotiate, but refuses to discuss conditions going forward. The workers decide to form a union.

## **9. Margarito’s Story**

Margarito weighs the risks and benefits of joining the campaign. He’s working to support his daughter in Mexico to be the first in the family to graduate college.

## **10. The Perils Of Voting / An Unusual Visitor**

The workers rehearse the union election. An anti-union consultant shows up at the cafe.



### **11. Mahoma's Wife Elizabeth Is Not On Board**

Mahoma's wife ELIZABETH is worried about the risks Mahoma is exposing himself to.

### **12. May Day: Change Is Made By Movements**

Virgilio brings Occupy protesters to a Hot & Crusty investor's office. Marching in his first protest, Mahoma speaks about his own developing political consciousness. Ben and Nastaran discuss the wider movement.

### **13. The Union Election**

In a tense election at the National Labor Relations Board, the union wins representation.

### **14. Gonzalo's Different Path.**

The manager tries to bribe Mahoma with a stake in the company. That week, Gonzalo leaves the union.

### **15. The Café Is Closing: All Or Nothing**

After settling with the workers for back wages and overtime, the company announces that the café is going out of business. The workers and organizers decide to occupy the store.

### **16. Invitation To Occupy / One Last Offer**

Ben and Nastaran enlist Occupy activists. The company offers a deal to keep the café in business, but Mahoma rejects it.

### **17. Occupy Hot & Crusty**

On closing day, protesters take over the café, taping over security cameras. An undercover cop appears on the scene.

### **18. Arrests**

Riot police arrive and the undocumented workers disappear. Police arrest several activists. The workers form a picket line and Margarito declares they won't leave until the café is reopened.

### **19. The Worker Justice Café**

The campaign engages neighborhood residents with their own "Worker Justice Café" on the sidewalk outside the closed shop.

### **20. A New Hope. Too Good To Be True?**

Pressured by daily protests, one of the owners brings in new investors to reopen the shop. A representative, ANTHONY, assures the workers he will rehire everyone. But the landlord decides to rent the location to a rival deli chain called Pax.

### **21. The Problem Of Pax**

The organizers debate what to do and Mahoma intervenes to stop a heated argument. After a conversation with Anthony, the group sends a delegation to scare Pax away from the location.

### **22. Holding the Picket Line**

Anthony's company proposes a contract, which the union rejects. Workers picket daily to add pressure to the contract negotiations. They receive support from other immigrant workers and members of bigger unions.

### ***23. Would You Consider This a Victory?***

On their 52nd day on the picket line, the workers gather to read one more proposal from the company — and vote to approve it.

### ***24. New Beginnings / Elizabeth's Change of Heart***

New York City fast food workers walk off the job. At its first meeting, the union welcomes new employees. Mahoma helps organize a new restaurant and Elizabeth comes out to show support.

### ***25. Back To Work, But Different***

In the pre-dawn hours, a newly-renovated Hot & Crusty opens for business. Margarito and Mahoma share their final thoughts on respect, law and making your own justice.

### ***26. End Credits***





# Scene Descriptions (56 Min. Version)

## **1. Opening: Is That Minimum Wage?**

MARGARITO, a dishwasher, counts his pay on camera. MAHOMA introduces the story; “we basically started a war.” Mahoma and his fellow workers discuss the conditions at their workplace.

## **2. Mahoma’s Story / Radio Interview**

Mahoma takes his sons to a playground and talks about immigrating to the US from Mexico. He and fellow deli-worker GONZALO go on the radio to discuss organizing against their employer.

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Mahoma and Gonzalo reach out to VIRGILIO and BEN from Laundry Workers Center.

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Assisted by NASTARAN from LWC, Mahoma and his coworkers flyer outside restaurants owned by their employers. The company agrees to negotiate, but refuses to discuss conditions going forward. The workers decide to form a union.

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Margarito weighs the risks and benefits of joining the campaign. He’s working to support his daughter in Mexico to be the first in the family to graduate college.

## **6. The Perils Of Voting / An Unusual Visitor**

The workers rehearse the union election. An anti-union consultant shows up at the café.

## **7. The Union Election**

In a tense election at the National Labor Relations Board, the union wins representation.

## **8. The Café Is Closing: All Or Nothing**

After settling with the workers for back wages and overtime, the company announces that the café is going out of business. The workers and organizers decide to occupy the shop.

## **9. Change Is Made By Movements / Invitation To Occupy**

Marching in his first protest, Mahoma speaks about his own developing political consciousness. Ben and Nastaran enlist Occupy activists.

## **10. Occupy Hot & Crusty**

On closing day, protesters take over the café, taping over security cameras. Riot police arrive and the undocumented workers disappear. Police arrest several activists and lock the doors.

### ***11. Diana And Gretel's Prayer***

Cashiers DIANA and GRETTEL share their fears and pray for a positive resolution. An idea is sparked to engage the neighborhood residents.

### ***12. The Worker Justice Café***

The locked out workers open their own "Worker Justice Café" to engage neighborhood residents.

### ***13. Mahoma's Wife Elizabeth Is Not On Board***

Mahoma's wife ELIZABETH is worried about the risks Mahoma is exposing himself to.

### ***14. A New Hope: Too Good To Be True?***

Pressured by daily protests, one of the owners brings in new investors to reopen the shop. A representative, ANTHONY, assures the workers he will rehire everyone. But the landlord decides to rent the location to a rival deli chain called Pax.

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### ***19. Back To Work, But Different***

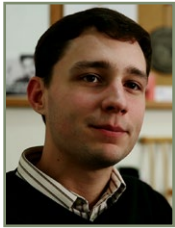
In the pre-dawn hours, a newly-renovated Hot & Crusty opens for business. Margarito and Mahoma share their final thoughts on respect, law and making your own justice.

### ***20. End Credits***





# People Featured in the Film



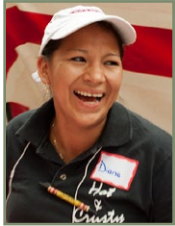
**BEN DICTOR**  
Laundry Workers Center  
Legal Team



**MAHOMA LÓPEZ**  
Hot & Crusty Deli Worker and  
lead Worker Organizer for the  
Laundry Workers Center



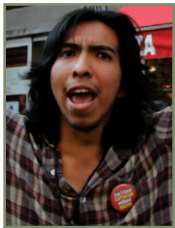
**MARGARITO LÓPEZ**  
Hot & Crusty Dishwasher  
and Worker Organizer



**DIANA O.**  
Hot & Crusty Cashier and  
Worker Organizer



**NASTARAN MOHIT**  
Laundry Workers Center  
Community Organizer



**DIEGO IBÁÑEZ**  
Occupy Wall Street  
Community Activist



**VIRGILIO ARÁN**  
Laundry Workers Center  
Founder and Organizer



## ABANDONED: The Betrayal of America's Immigrants

Through a close look at the personal impact of new immigration laws, this film depicts the severity of current detention and deportation policies.

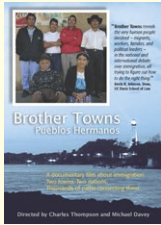
<http://www.bullfrogfilms.com/catalog/aban.html>



## ARGENTINA: Turning Around

An intimate view of new models of work, politics and community development enacted in Argentina after the country's economic collapse in the late 1990s.

<http://www.bullfrogfilms.com/catalog/argt.html>



## BROTHER TOWNS / PUEBLOS HERMANOS

An uplifting story about Jupiter, Florida's humane response to an influx of day laborers from Jacaltenango, Guatemala.

<http://www.bullfrogfilms.com/catalog/brt.html>



## CHINA BLUE

Shot clandestinely, this is a deep-access account of what both China and the international retailers don't want us to see: how the clothes we buy are actually made.

<http://www.bullfrogfilms.com/catalog/china.html>



## THE ENEMY WITHIN

The story of Britain's longest strike, the 1984-85 miner's strike, when Margaret Thatcher declared war on the unions, as told by those who lived through it.

<http://www.bullfrogfilms.com/catalog/ewith.html>



## SECRETS OF SILICON VALLEY

SECRETS OF SILICON VALLEY is a shocking exposé of the hidden downsides of the Internet revolution and also a funny and moving meditation on America's love affair with technology.

<http://www.bullfrogfilms.com/catalog/ssv.html>



## SHIFT CHANGE: Putting Democracy To Work

SHIFT CHANGE tells the little known stories of employee-owned businesses that compete successfully in today's economy while providing secure, dignified jobs in democratic workplaces.

<http://www.bullfrogfilms.com/catalog/shift.html>

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