

DISCUSSION ITEMS

No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age

- Income inequality has become a key topic in policy circles, in the media and in electoral debates. Beyond policy ideas and wishful thinking, how can today's staggering income inequality be reversed? McAlevey argues that the real challenge facing the US is a power inequality in American society. She asserts that to address income inequality, we have to first deal with the power inequality.
- On the heels of a string of US Supreme Court rulings that blew the doors open on campaign spending by big corporations and the super-rich such as the US Chamber of Commerce, the Business Roundtable, and the Koch Brothers, what will it take for ordinary working Americans to stand up to their power more effectively than we've seen in recent decades?
- Social change advocates today are focused on a combination of narrative change and on-line digital mobilizing tools. While these mechanisms generate headlines, they have yet to generate real societal change. McAlevey argues that nothing except face-to-face, bottom-up organizing can move large numbers of people past fear and everyday complacency into effective, mass action.
- The last time the US faced today's level of income inequality (the late 1920s and early 1930s), pundits had also declared the old labor unions of the craft workers "dead." And yet workers built a brand new and different kind of union movement in the mid-1930s. Are we on the cusp of a new kind of union movement to challenge today's falling standard of living? Despite the many challenges facing today's unions, including plenty of self-inflicted wounds, McAlevey lifts up examples of recent union success that point the way towards a new kind of unionism, one desperately needed to challenge income inequality.