

A New Social Contract

The twenty-first century is a time of change and extremes. Information, money, businesses and people move from place to place, even across borders, with unprecedented speed.

But too often, only a few reap the benefits of this global change.

Too often, business, government and major institutions engage in a deadly race to the bottom, failing to meet their responsibilities to the broader community and lowering economic, environmental and health standards.

Too often, families are left to struggle with declining wages, longer work hours, and mounting debt while a few accumulate unprecedented wealth.

Too often, growing poverty, homelessness, incarceration, disease, and environmental destruction overwhelm our communities.

Too often, our children find themselves facing a hostile and violent world of shrinking and unequal opportunity.

No institution, no matter how powerful, is an island unto itself. We are all interconnected. The powerful should not grow or profit at the expense of others. When special corporate welfare checks, tax breaks, or exemptions are granted, the working poor should not be left with an extra burden. When an institution wants to expand into our community, our neighborhoods should be enhanced, not exploited.

We stand together now to insist on the preservation of the basic values enshrined in our democracy so that every family in every neighborhood of our community can prosper.

In this twenty-first century, we have the audacity to believe that every family should be sustained by a good union job; that every child's mind and spirit should be nurtured by an outstanding education; that our neighborhoods should be strengthened through affordable housing; that no one should suffer illness, injury or financial hardship because they lack access to health care. We must honor our heritage by welcoming and celebrating the vitality brought by new immigrants to our community. We believe that we must leave our children and their children with a safer, healthier environment.

We will work together to forge a new social contract between the New Haven community, its businesses, its government, and its major publicly supported institutions like Yale University and Yale-New Haven Hospital, to ensure a sustainable future for all.

We will speak truth to power.

Public Education

We will stand for equal educational opportunity for all of our children. Education instills pride in our community, and prepares our children for security and success, unleashing their full potential for creativity, leadership, and service. All our children deserve strong facilities and small classes in which to flourish. The teachers who educate, empower, and challenge them should be well-trained and well-compensated. It is a disgrace that a third of Connecticut's failing public schools should share the same city as one of the world's most prestigious universities. Our city's budget, choked by an arcane tax structure and by perverse state and federal priorities, should not have to be balanced on the backs of our children's education.

Access to Good Union Jobs

We will work together to achieve good, union jobs for every member of our community. We demand that every worker be allowed a fair process, free from intimidation or coercion, to decide to bargain collectively. Wherever individuals or communities are excluded from a workplace, we will fight for their inclusion, and for the vocational training that extends opportunity by investing in people. Where individuals and communities are kept in stratified labor grades, we will fight for the training and access they need to achieve the positions of leadership they deserve. Wherever workers toil, we will stand together to demand that they be compensated with living wages, affordable healthcare, and decent pensions, and that they be treated with dignity and respect so that they are empowered to organize themselves to participate in the decisions affecting their lives at work.

Housing

We will struggle to empower every family to achieve an affordable, livable, and secure home. We support affordable rents that provide stable communities for working families. We will resist gentrification when it tears neighborhoods apart and prevents those who work here from living here, driving ordinary working people out into the surrounding towns and onto an overburdened and expensive transportation system. Expansion plans should not destroy affordable housing without replacing it. Recognizing that the ability of families to own homes is the foundation for investment and partnership in this community, we will work together to hold business and government accountable for the obstacles placed in the way of first-time homeowners and to build neighborhoods of permanence and trust.

Health Care

We will work together to achieve affordable and comprehensive health care coverage for all. We refuse to choose between our homes and our health, or between economic security and health security. We declare that illness is not a crime, and we will resist the unconscionable use of aggressive debt collection and overcharging patients without insurance, punishing the poor for getting sick and the sick for being poor. We will work together to ensure that every non-profit hospital earns its tax-exemption by upholding its charitable mission and commitment to provide care for the entire community.

Immigrant Rights

We will welcome immigrants into our neighborhoods and into our workplaces, in honor of our nation's immigrant history and in celebration of the strength and vitality of all of our communities. We will join together in declaring that no human being is illegal, and that no worker's wages and conditions are secure as long as another worker's vulnerability is exploited. We will secure freedom for all—including freedom from want and freedom from fear—regardless of citizenship status or country of origin. We will build a society that enshrines immigrants' right to organize, together with all of us, for better lives and stronger communities.

Environmental Stewardship

We will commit ourselves and all those who would do business here to the health of our community, the stewardship of our natural resources, and the pursuit of a sustainable future. We will ensure that no one in our community subordinates long-term sustainability to short-term expediency, and will resist efforts to mortgage the health of our families so that others may turn a profit. We will work collectively to halt and reverse the devastating impact of environmental injustice on communities of color.