

Out of the Lab, into the Street

An Oral History of the 2022 UAW Strike at the University of California

Aleida García Aguirre, with Molly Vine and Patrick Dexter

Out of the Lab, into the Streets tells the story of how academic workers built the largest strike in the history of American higher education and set a new standard of militancy in one of the fastest growing sectors of the labor movement. In doing so, these workers also taught organizers everywhere lessons about the effectiveness of collective power cemented through worker-to-worker organizing, militant escalation strategies, and cross-union solidarity.

On November 14, 2022, academic workers of the University of California began a strike that brought workers out of the lab and into the streets for six weeks to fight for more equitable working conditions. The strike was a point of arrival and a process at the same time. It was the hard-fought achievement of a short- and long-term history of union organizing and a learning practice for workers across campuses, disciplines, job classifications, political affiliations, and identities. This book documents the everyday and on-the-ground making of union organizing and power building.

The nine workers who gave lengthy testimonies for this project challenge preconceptions about the advantages and difficulties of organizing in higher education. They make insightful analyses of how being active union members transformed them personally and reshaped their approach to science and education.

Union organizers and other activists will find lessons and reflections on core topics for the labor movement: how to build a worker-led union, the practical meaning of democracy during mass action, dissent and unity amongst workers, and how to measure a fight's success. Within these nuanced accounts of militant organizing, everyone will find inspiration to keep collective power alive and keep fighting for a better future.

ABOUT THE EDITORS

Aleida García Aguirre is an independent history researcher specializing in the study of processes of subjectivation of young revolutionaries in Mexico and Latin America during the seventies, and the social history of student movements and armed organizations in provincial Mexico during the Cold War. She has been awarded a Doctoral Scholarship by the Ministry of Education of Argentina, a Fulbright Scholarship, and has worked as a professor in various institutions in Mexico, and in Human Rights Research for the Mexican Secretaría de Gobernación (Secretariat of the Interior). She is the author of *Memorias inquietas. De estudiantes rurales a guerrilleros urbanos* (Restless Memories: From Rural Students to Urban Guerrillas). She lives in Oakland, California.

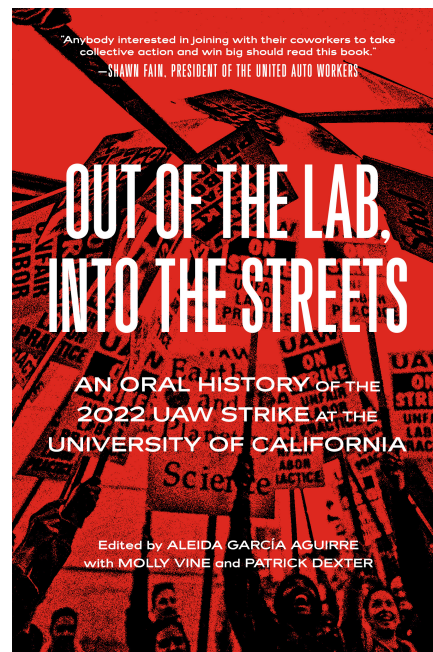
Molly Vine became a UAW member while earning an MFA in documentary film at San Francisco State University. Following grad school, she directed and produced documentaries related to labor and social movements. She then went on to become one of the lead organizers in the 2022 UAW strike at UC. Molly now works as a UAW organizer focused on helping workers form new unions and lives in Oakland.

Patrick Dexter became a member of UAW 2865 while earning a masters of urban and regional planning degree at UCLA. In 2020 he joined the campaign to form Student Researchers United-UAW and then became a lead organizer with UC-UAW during the 2022 strike. He now works as an organizer for UAW Region 6 and lives in Los Angeles.

ACCOLADES

"Collective power is built from the ground up. We can create the future we deserve through solidarity, determination, and courage. That's how student and graduate workers built and led and won a historic strike at the University of California. Their journey to victory is a roadmap for workers everywhere—whether you're in a classroom, a lab, or on the front lines of any labor union. In their own words, nine academic workers show us how they organized, escalated and won real change—and how we can, too."

—Sara Nelson, International President of the Association of Flight Attendants—CWA



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