



# NUHW PULSE

KAISER OPTICAL

JANUARY 2019

## GEARING UP FOR BARGAINING!



### Our Optical contract ends on September 30, 2019, and we're already getting ready to win a great contract!

In the next few months, we will be electing our bargaining committee and preparing our bargaining survey. Our bargaining committee will be made up of stewards and members from both branches, as well as the lab, and will be in direct negotiation with Kaiser's bargaining team. Our bargaining survey is an opportunity for Optical members to vote for our top priorities this year.

As we get ready to bargain, it's important to stay up-to-date with bargaining currently underway with our brothers and sisters in the three other NUHW-represented bargaining units in Northern and Southern California Kaiser (IBHS, Psych-Social and HPC). These units are in simultaneous contract negotiations and coordinating statewide actions. This means that almost 4,000 workers are acting in

unison, including the statewide strike that took place last month.

We saw amazing support from many Optical workers who joined our strike to fight for adequate staffing, improved patient care, and wage and benefit parity — some of the same issues we'll be fighting for in our contract. Optical workers' show of solidarity sent an important message to Kaiser leadership that our workers united and ready to fight and win!

Pictured above, clockwise from top left: Sonia Minor and her daughter in Oakland; Kitty Ma, Terry Tang, Gloria Villaseñor, and Kat Gotong in Oakland; Kitty Ma and Lynda Flowers in Redwood City; Gloria Villaseñor leading chants in San Leandro; Terry Tang, Kitty Ma, Miguel M Posadas and Gloria Villaseñor in Oakland; Sonia Askew in South Sacramento

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## RECENT WINS AND UPDATES

In South Sacramento, we persuaded management to convert three part-timers to full-time positions. With one of our long-time opticians retiring in December 2018, shop steward Sonia Askew convinced local management to reallocate her hours to three other opticians at the branch so that each is now a 40-hour employee. We had lamented management's refusal to adequately staff South Sacramento with enough full-timers, so this is a step in the right direction.

After learning that our workers in the lab were being held to higher goals than workers in other unions, we got management to the table to discuss possible midterm changes to the incentive plan. We presented proposals that were fair and realistic, and learned that management did not understand how forces beyond workers' control could impact productivity. Management is working with labor relations to identify changes that can be made now, before formal bargaining.

## WHY DO WE NEED STRONG STEWARDS? Conversation with steward Demeka Hudson

At the March 2018 Stewards Council meeting, NUHW organizer Peter Brogan talked to some of Optical's long-time stewards about why they got involved. Here, Demeka Hudson reflects on her experience, and why it is important to have strong stewards at every branch and in every department and shift.

### **Where do you work, and how long have you been a steward?**

*I am an optician in Fremont, and I've been a steward for 15 years.*

### **Why did you become a steward, and why have you stuck around?**

*The reason I became a steward is Terry Tang. He encouraged me to become a steward when he was stepping down. I've been a steward ever since.*

### **Why is it important to have strong stewards at every branch?**

*Because we have managers who violate the contract. If you don't have a strong, professional steward who can present a clear message when management violates the contract, you're in trouble.*

*When I think a member has been wronged or there has been a violation of the contract, I will talk with the manager first and give them a chance to fix the problem. If they don't, I file a grievance.*

*A lot of people vote for stewards like it's a popularity contest, rather than electing*

*stewards who are going to be able to challenge management when they need to. We need stewards who recognize that, when they are in the role of steward, they are equal to their managers, and are comfortable pushing back.*



### **For those people in branches without a steward, what would you say to them to convince them to become one? What advice would you offer on how to be a strong steward?**

*I would say, you pay union dues every month, so why not see what it's about by getting involved as a shop steward? There are a lot of great things that come along with it, like being able to help out your co-workers and fellow union members when they really need you.*

*Whether it's management violating the contract or writing people up unjustly, stewards can make a world of difference. Every branch needs someone to go to when there is a problem or something isn't right. If we don't have that person, then management can just run amok.*

## DID YOU KNOW?

**If a temporary or short-hour employee averages 20 hours per week for a four-month period, management must then post a regular position in that branch, unless the employee was acting as an interim replacement.**

**You have the right not to cross a picket line. The federal Ninth Circuit Court, which covers California, has ruled that workers can respect the picket lines of other striking workers, even if they have a general no-strike clause in their contract.**

**There is no formal dress code for optical workers, except for in South Sacramento. Dress as you see fit, as long as you are well-groomed, your clothes are clean, and nothing you wear presents a safety concern (e.g., open-toed shoes in the lab).**