



[www.1worker1vote.org](http://www.1worker1vote.org)

<https://www.facebook.com/1worker1vote>

<http://www.cincinnatiunioncoop.org>

### **Introduction:**

The 1worker1vote movement provides “how-to” solutions based on proven models of worker empowerment through ownership. The current presidential campaign debate over how to solve America’s stubborn embedded inequalities leads the national conversation right to our door. We don’t believe in the overthrow of capitalism but rather seek to show by “kick the tire” examples how virtuous cycle capitalism produces better, across the board performance metrics, civic equity, and workplace freedom to rebuild individual and community fulfillment. Our thesis is that the **Peoples’ Ownership Economy** gives rise to: the Caring Economy, the Sharing Economy, the Provisioning Economy, the Restorative Economy, the Regenerative Economy, the Sustaining Economy, the Collaborative Economy, the Solidarity Economy, the Steady-State Economy, the Gift Economy, the Resilient Economy, and the Participatory Economy with “one, worker, one vote” ownership serving as the solidarity enabling ethos for these and other evolving models.

Post 2008 Great Recession, America’s rising structural inequality triangle (mobility, opportunity, wealth) became an overriding, bipartisan sociopolitical theme (with irrefutable evidence provided by Thomas Piketty’s “Capitalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” best-seller), that is now playing out in 2016 presidential election campaigns for the first time in recent history. Stark socioeconomic reality served to bring sixty years of the Mondragon Experience into much higher nationwide visibility throughout high-impact academic, labor, socially activist, economic, business and political community engagement. A rapidly growing new U.S. socioeconomic marketplace starting with practitioner cities (e.g. New York City, Madison-Wisconsin, Cincinnati + Dayton & Cleveland-Ohio, Seattle-Washington, Boston – Massachusetts) are citing the Mondragon ecosystem experience as a platform reference.

### **THREE METRICS OF HOPE:**

- Worker-Owner employees at employee-owned businesses tend to earn more in income and retirement than their counterparts at traditional firms.
- Worker Cooperatives appear to be more resilient and have a higher rate of surviving those first five critical years.
  - Employee-owned businesses were better at maintaining their fiscal health during the last recession

### **The Cincinnati Union Cooperative Initiative (CUCI):**

Spring 2012 - after a preparation year and directly following the March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012, United Steelworkers–Mondragon USA-Ohio Employee Ownership Center union-coop template launch hosted by the USW in their Pittsburgh international headquarters atrium, ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N\\_TSwRKZ6KU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N_TSwRKZ6KU)), the Cincinnati Union Cooperative Initiative (CUCI) embraced the union-coop - Mondragon principles mission:

- <http://www.cincinnatiunioncoop.org>
- <http://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/cincinnati-experiment-with-an-economy-that-works-for-everyone/>
- [http://www.democraticpromise.org/commentary/cincinnati-union-coops\\_2015-04.html](http://www.democraticpromise.org/commentary/cincinnati-union-coops_2015-04.html)
- <http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2015/jan/16/people-powered-economy-american-workers-cooperatives>
  - Note: CUCI & 1worker1vote have interlocking co-founders

Since then and faithful to the Mondragon overriding characteristic of organic growth, the Cincinnati Union Co-op Initiative (CUCI) has been incubating, educating, and launching an integrated network of worker-owned businesses (cooperatives) that can sustain families, with the goal of breaking the cycle of poverty, and creating an economy that works for all. CUCI is following the Mondragon worker-owned co-op model, the world's most successful model for transforming a poverty stricken region into a thriving community.

As evidenced by sixty years of the Mondragon experience, an integrated network of co-ops:

1. Creates jobs (without barriers) that allow people to accumulate assets;
2. Pools resources, distributes, recycles, and multiplies local expertise and capital within a community;
3. Fills market gaps that other private businesses ignore (i.e. providing affordable healthy foods in food deserts); and,
4. Develops human & social capital, and economic independence.

With a small staff practicing organic development and an extraordinary volunteer base, CUCI has launched four co-op initiatives and investigated feasibility of three others with these characteristics in the past three years:

- Co-ops of Co-ops- To date the majority of worker-owned co-ops in the U.S. have been isolated entities. As a result, impact on the economy has been nominal. In contrast, Mondragon, the 10th largest business group in Spain, has demonstrated that transformative scale is reached through pooling resources, building an integrated multi-sector co-op of co-ops. CUCI & 1worker1vote are creating that ecosystem one worker-owner job at a time.
- Emphasis on Education & Development of Culture – CUCI & 1worker1vote recognizes the centrality of education and training in the Mondragon experience to optimize the participation of people from all walks of life. Our movement specializes in popular education and delivers weekly on-the-job educational sessions to worker-owners that demystify financial statements, tap into people's collective intelligence about how to problem solve and build the business, work on communication skills, and integration for co-op values.
- The 1worker1vote/CUCI movement follows the principal of Open Admission - no formal education and full race, gender, faith traditions, and disabilities inclusivity. This encourages and inspires upward mobility which is part of the American dream. The effects are intergenerational, and the outcomes provide a real opportunity to break the cycle of poverty, which is paramount to the 1worker1vote/CUCI focus, purpose and expertise.

As an example, bringing co-ops to life can electrify neighborhood residents. In Northside, Cincinnati, where dozens of volunteers, non-profits, businesses, and the local community council work together for CUCI's Apple Street market – this inclusive approach has also proven true for CUCI's Our Harvest Union Coop & Sustainability Union Coop:



Jobs • Food • Farmers  
**Our Harvest**  
Cooperative

Vision: Worker owned farms and distribution and processing center for locally produced, sustainable food.

Progress:

- First Mondragon-USW model union co-op nationwide
- To date has created 15 jobs including eight worker-owners
- Business model calls for 200 jobs in five years
- A self-funded \$40k feasibility study led to a \$500k commercial loan in less than one operating year
- Practicum site for Cincinnati State's Sustainable Agriculture Management program

Working Group: CUCI, UJFOW, Mondragon, Ohio Employee Ownership Center, We Thrive!, OCCC, Ohio State University Agricultural Extension Office, and the Center for Community Change



Mission: Sustainergy is an energy efficiency contractor specializing in customized energy analysis and retrofitting electrical and heating and cooling systems.

**Progress:**

- Business Plan was completed in fall of 2013
- Launched Dec 2013 w/3 worker owner track team members and an organizing committee of 10
- CUCI & Sustainergy are playing a leading role in a coalition to enable a RACE district (Property Assessed Clean Energy) with responsible contracting in Cincinnati.

**Steering Committee:** Greater Cincinnati Building and Construction Trade Council, Mondragon, Cincinnati Union-Co-op Initiative (CUCI), Greater Cincinnati Chapter of the Blue Green Alliance

### A UNION-COOP SOLUTION:



- <http://www.wcpo.com/news/insider/for-immigrant-life-in-us-has-its-share-of-struggles-but-also-many-rewards>
  - [Sustainergy Cooperative. Worker-Owned - Facebook](#)
  - [Sustainergy - CUCI - Cincinnati Union Co-op Initiative](#)
  - [Shared Capital Makes Loan to Cincinnati's Start-up Worker ...](#)

### 1worker1vote.org:

The 1worker1vote.org movement and Cincinnati Union Cooperative Initiative emerged from the historic 2009 United Steelworkers collaboration with Mondragon in the Basque region of Spain, the world's largest network of worker cooperatives. 1worker1vote.org features a highly collaborative and inclusive ecosystem methodology resulting from over sixteen years embedded in the Mondragon Cooperative Corporation (since 1999) as well as a local living economic development municipal laboratory (the Cincinnati Union Cooperative Initiative – CUCI – founded in 2012 – mentioned above) that matches passionate community investors and funders with local organizations, projects and causes to create lasting quality of life impact. This model “Living Lab” enables individuals, on their own terms and through their own efforts, to build transformative community wealth through worker ownership based on Mondragon principles and practices.

1worker1vote was constituted in Q1 2014 to grow this movement nationwide organically and today we're in more than sixteen cities in various degrees, working with more than thirty unions and hundreds of community activists and networks, on a self-funded, sweat equity basis. A good way to understand us is to envision a catalytic economic development swarm focused on expanding worker ownership into profitable enterprises and laying the groundwork

for inter-cooperating ecosystems or integrated networks. We are the antithesis of a top-down, vertical organization and continue to prove that our approach elicits bipartisan support.

Starting in the spring of 2014, 1worker1vote.org set out to demonstrate that widespread workplace equity and democratic participation can return America to its original system of individual and local community ownership. We're now developing a nationwide cadre of unionized, worker-owned-and-managed cooperatives to overcome domestic structural (racial, gender, geographic) inequalities of opportunity, mobility, and income. A growing multitude of like-minded local and national organizations are working with us to help existing businesses transition to a union co-op structure and to launch new union co-op businesses.

Our threefold intent is to:

1. Defeat embedded structural inequalities by deploying tested and proven hybrid ownership models (starting with the union-co-op template);
2. Build and launch profitable, worker-owned-and-managed enterprises in the context of inter-cooperating ecosystems, drawing on sixty years of the Mondragon experience;
3. Co-design projects and tools that can replicate and scale (the complete 1worker1vote.org mantra is: "listen, learn, include, co-design, co-build, co-launch, co-measure, co-replicate and scale").

The 1worker1vote brings as many alternate and organized labor communities as possible into the nation's worker owner quadrant through hybrid empowerment models starting with the union-coop template. We align these start-ups and hybrids with triple bottom-line business advocacy leaders such as the American Sustainable Business Council (ASBC) with over 250,000 business members; the Ohio Employee Ownership Center (OEOC), the National Cooperative Bank (NCB), the New Economy Coalition (NEC), the Chicago Manufacturing Renaissance Initiative, and many others. Our "Living Lab", The Cincinnati Union Cooperative Initiative (CUCI), is a member of the U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives (USFWC). Additionally, we work closely with Mondragon's Cooperative Consultancy, LKS, who, together with the Young Foundation in the UK, cooperate on developing Regional Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialization (RIS3) that has resulted in transformation templates for Croatia, Belfast and Montreal.

**"Labor is prior to and independent of capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor, and could never have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is the superior of capital, and deserves much the higher consideration."  
-President Abraham Lincoln's First Annual Message to Congress, December 3, 1861-**

Today's structural inequalities require new structural solutions. With single class equity and one worker-one vote ownership principles front and center, America's workers can liberate their workplaces within a virtuous capitalist framework that rewards hard work, self-reliance, bootstrapping, competitiveness, entrepreneurialism and innovation, and performance. These are bipartisan values, historical American values but missing a fundamental and profound retuning, societal reset, and local living economy reboot which the 1worker1vote.org approach outlines and delivers.

The "legitimacy" behind the creation of "hybrid models" beginning with the union-coop model (extending perhaps to a convergence of BCORPS and ESOPS to create "B-ESOPS", or BCORPS and COOPS to launch "B-COOPS") is really proven through the sustaining businesses and jobs that are created. In that effort we have the world before us but with more transformational examples to point to every single day.

**"In fact co-operation is merely an extension to the industrial life of our people of our great political system of self-government. That government itself is founded upon the great doctrine of the consent of the governed, and has its corner stone in the memorable principle that men (and women) are endowed with inalienable rights. This great principle has a clearly defined place in cooperative organization. The right of each individual in any relation to secure to himself (and herself) the full benefits of his (and her) intelligence, his (and her) capacity, his (and her) industry and skill are among the inalienable inheritances of humanity".**

– excerpt taken from the 1886 bill proposed by U.S. Senator Leland Stanford, Founder of Stanford University, for the United States to form worker cooperatives - (edits inserted by 1worker1vote.org) -

<http://dynamics.org/~altenber/PAPERS/BCLSFV/>

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