

The case for some common sense...

# California Stories



## California Budget 2009

The people you'll meet inside remind us to examine priorities and look harder for alternatives to grinding California into the ground...

I got my own apartment. I can pay my bills now. And my children finally have health benefits and a roof over their heads.



# karla and kids:

## from homelessness to stability

---

Karla Saenz still remembers what it was like being homeless with two young children—living in motels on L.A.’s skid row or sleeping at the Midnight Mission.

When she finally landed a job as a Cafeteria Worker at John Leichthy Middle School in Los Angeles, her little family’s situation began to turn a corner. Although she says she was grateful for any job at the time, having a union job has changed her life.

“I got my own apartment. I can pay my bills now. And my children finally have health benefits and a roof over their heads.” Her two daughters, ages seven and three, decorate their room with stuffed animals. “I’ve been homeless. I don’t want to go back there,” says Karla.

“Decision makers need to look at workers like me and see that it’s not just numbers they’re cutting. There are many, many lives at stake.”

**\$7,000,000**

The amount being cut from the  
Los Angeles Unified School  
District’s cafeteria program.

**\$300,000,000**

The amount that could be raised  
for the State’s general fund by  
charging a fee on alcohol.

Education is everyone's job.  
That's why I'm so worried about  
the recent budget cuts.

CHRISTO  
ELEMENTA  
1314 DACO



# manuel:

## the educated family

---

“Education opens doors.” Manuel Helguera, a Custodian at Dena Elementary School in East L.A., made sure he taught his children this key lesson. His eldest son graduated from USC and is working on a Masters Degree at Cal State Los Angeles. His daughter will be a freshman at Cal State Northridge. His youngest is about to start kindergarten.

Manuel is proud that his two older children started their education in the very same school where he now mops the floors, empties the trash, and scrubs the bathrooms. He has a unique perspective on public education. And it’s about all staff being involved and paying attention to the little things—like making sure a school is clean. Or confronting trouble makers who try to get on campus. Or walking a teacher to her car at night. “Education is everyone’s job. That’s why I’m so worried about the recent budget cuts,” says Manuel. With hundreds of custodians slated to be cut from the Los Angeles Unified School District, Manuel knows students will suffer the consequences. “How can children learn if the bathrooms are filthy or walls are covered with graffiti?”

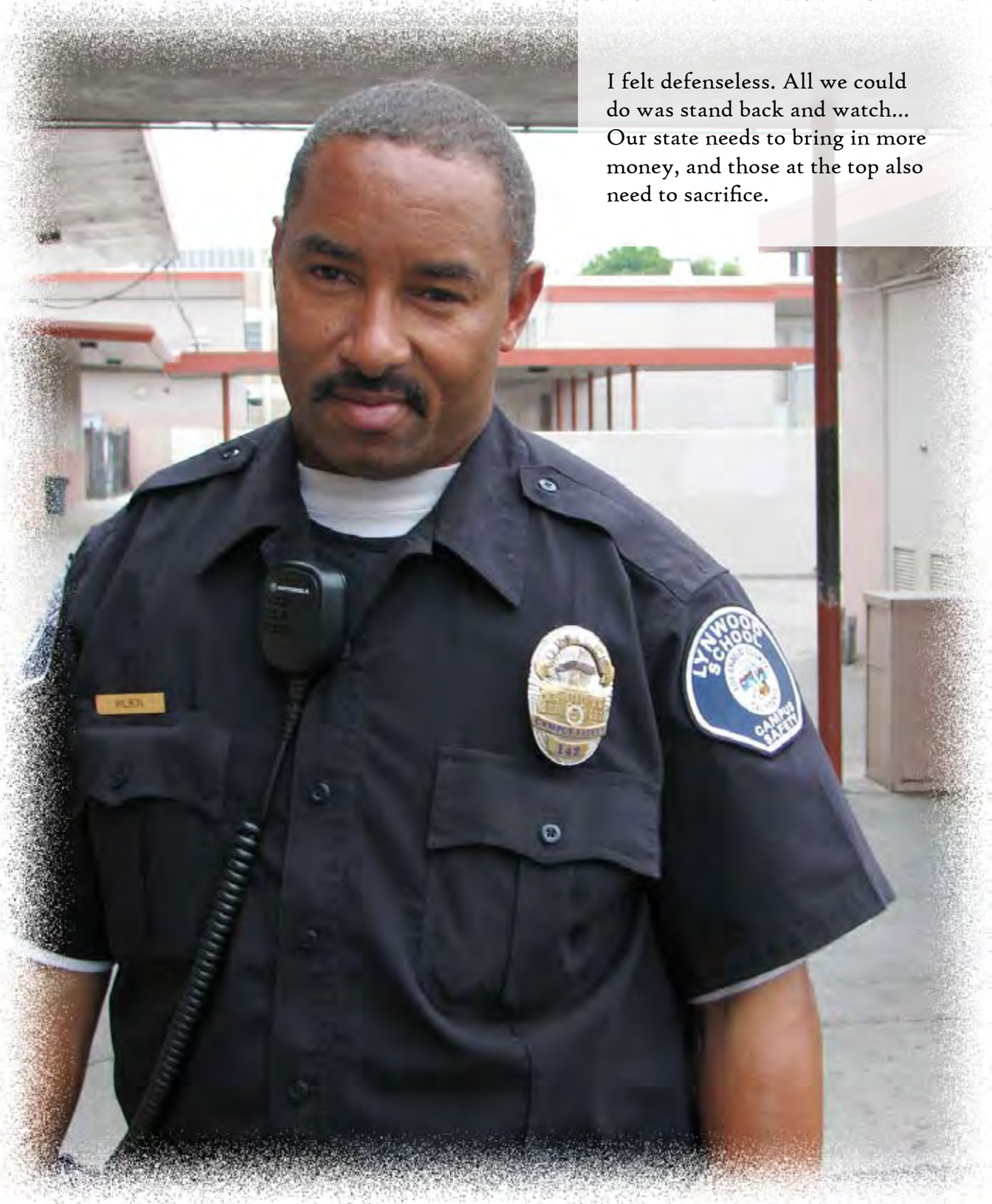
His own children’s success stories may be cut short. If he loses his job, his daughter may have to postpone her studies. “She’s already asking me for a laptop...That’s my biggest anxiety, wondering how this will affect my children’s future that I’ve worked so hard for all my life.”

**\$36,000,000**

The amount being cut from the Los Angeles Unified School District’s Building & Grounds division.

**\$497,000,000**

The amount California would save if we ended the loophole that subsidizes Wal-Mart’s low-wage, no-benefits jobs through the enterprise zone programs.



I felt defenseless. All we could do was stand back and watch... Our state needs to bring in more money, and those at the top also need to sacrifice.

# wayne:

## a mentor sidelined

---

Wayne Wilson is a Security Officer at Lynwood Unified School District's Hosler Middle School. Lynwood is dealing with the massive cuts to education by instituting furlough days for workers. That means short staffing. Wayne's job is to protect students.

He and only three other officers were on duty when about 100 students participated in what he describes as a "melee" in the park next to his school. Because of the cuts, there was no briefing meeting on the day of the melee to alert officers of the brooding violence, and not enough officers to contain and stop the fighting. "I felt defenseless. All we could do was stand back and watch."

The impact of fewer workers on campus is dire. Officers don't just patrol the campus, he says. "I mentor the kids. I talk to them and try to steer them away from gangs." Wayne worries that the security and trust officers have built up with students could be lost if cuts continue. His faith and hope are what keep him active. "The politicians need to be real. Our state needs to bring in more money, and those at the top also need to sacrifice."

**\$16,500,000**

The current cumulative deficit facing the Lynwood Unified School District in 2009-2010.

**\$1,000,000,000**

California would earn nearly a billion dollars every year if we had an oil severance tax. We're the *only* oil-producing state that doesn't tax oil at the well.

I've always told my children, do something you'd do for free.



# trina:

## loving the invisible kids

---

Trina Muhammad loves a challenge. She left her career with preschool children to work with troubled teens. “Working with young children is wonderful and rewarding—but the ones who suffer are teenagers.”

“I’ve always told my children, do something you’d do for free,” says Trina. You can see in her eyes that she’s mourning the loss of a job like that. After three years of doing what she’d “do for free,” it’s almost Trina’s last day as an Educational Community Worker (ECW) at Lancaster Community Day School. Twelve of the ECW positions at the Los Angeles County Office of Education are being eliminated due to state budget cuts.

And she probably would do the job for free, if it wasn’t for the mortgage on the home where she and Walter, her husband of 23 years, have taken in a steady stream of troubled foster children. They currently have four teenagers with them. “It’s traumatizing to see our youth in so much pain. I prefer being a foster mom to teenagers who are troubled, who struggle. It’s something that God put in me,” says Trina, explaining why she and Walter only foster teens.

Walter’s hours were recently cut from 40 hours to 28. “We’re looking at options—worst case scenarios. My foster children don’t know about my situation. They have enough trauma in their lives,” she says.

**\$560,000**

The amount that the Los Angeles County Office of Education was forced to cut from its Educational Community Worker program.

**\$700,000,000**

The amount California would save if we got rid of the tax loophole that allows giant multinational corporations to shelter their profits offshore.

We are SEIU Local 99!



# who we are:

SEIU Local 99 represents nearly 40,000 employees in public and non-public organizations in early education, K-12, and community college levels. SEIU Local 99 members are: Teacher's Assistants, Playground Workers, Special Education Aides, Bus Drivers, Gardeners, Custodians, Cafeteria Workers, Maintenance Workers, Family Service Workers, and many more.

# employers:

## k-12

Compton Unified School District  
Hacienda La Puente Unified School District]  
Los Angeles Unified School District  
Lynwood Unified School District  
Pleasant Valley Unified School District  
Santa Monica Malibu Unified School District  
Torrance Unified School District

## early education

CDI, Head Start  
Mexican American Opportunity Foundation  
Options, Inc.

## higher education

Los Angeles Community College District  
Ventura County Community College District

The case for some common sense...  
**California**  
**stories**



---

2724 West 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Los Angeles, California 90005  
(213) 387-8393 • [www.seiu99.org](http://www.seiu99.org)