

◆ ***Health Care is a Human Right -Defend the health Care of
UFCW, NOW!***

- ◆ By Ethel Long-Scott, Executive Director,
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(United Food Commercial Workers Rally and Appeal to build a Movement
for Health Care as an Economic Human Right!)

It's great to be here from the Women's Economic Agenda Project to join UFCW workers in what is not just a fight for their benefits, but a fight for decent lives for all of us – for everybody who worries about how to get decent health care, and how to get decent housing, and how to give their kids a decent education, and how to put decent, wholesome food on their family's table. This is a fight for all of us because the richest country in the world is determined at this point in history to make its rich people even richer by taking as much as possible away from its working people. It's waging war on its workers in every way it can. The attempt to beat UFCW workers out of hard-won benefits and salary standards is just one front in this war. We are all in this together.

We want to commend the UFCW workers for their acts of courage on behalf of our community overall. Also, I am here to focus attention on the way the employer offer makes workers more vulnerable to the shameful health care crisis in our nation. The employers would strip away the health care benefits UFCW has fought for, benefits that protect grocery workers from bobbing down in the same hopelessly inadequate system that lower wage workers have to use. Part of the reason we are

here today is that we have a better vision, a vision of an America where there is good health care for everyone, where everyone enjoys the most basic economic and human rights, an America FREE, from addiction, homelessness, hunger, joblessness, violence & poverty! We are going to rally, march, demonstrate, protest, and do every peaceable action to get the justice we need! We will not rest until that vision is won, and you need to expand this battle too, because it's bigger than just grocery employers and UFCW workers!

The women that I work with, jobless and low wage workers, are actively y engaged in fighting to bring attention to the "Faces of the Fallen," the many Americans who are suffering, rejected, unemployed, homeless and without access to the critical health care that would ease some of their suffering. We are mindful that we are in this awful predicament because the wealthiest corporations and individuals have used their money to commandeer our government, and keep it from being of the people, by the people and for the people.

Everyone here knows the enormity of the crisis, and the shame that the richest country in the world won't do better by its workers. In June Families USA made official what many of us already knew. More than 81 million people went without health insurance for at least a month in 2002 and 2003. That's almost a third of all Americans under 65. And the initial employer offer would add many supermarket workers to that group.

Under the initial employer proposal, countless numbers who do have some kind of insurance will be denied necessary care, will sacrifice

other basic necessities like heat and rent in order to pay hospital and insurance bills, will be forced into bankruptcy, will live in fear that they are one health emergency away from being homeless, hungry and destitute. The employer-based, for-profit health system we keep tinkering with has had many more than three strikes. It should be Out! **We are clear that there is no substitute for a national health care system that is federally-mandated, single-payer, and universal — everyone is covered.** We are tired of paying for our current broken system with our lives and the lives of our families. The time is now for a universal health care system where the health of all human beings is valued and affirmed!

We looked for such a system – and we found one! It's a national health insurance plan called, **Just Health Care for All. Don't take my word visit the justhealthcare.org web site on your own. By the way it would allow us to take the critical right off of health benefits OFF the bargaining table because it would be guaranteed to every resident because we are human beings.**

We are here today to start to talk about the need for a genuine solidarity movement. That starts with breaking the silence on how these big corporations, who now propose to steal hard fought benefits of your health care today, steal from all of us in so many other ways. We all need to join to build a powerful movement for economic human rights. **Together dedicated to a vision of health care for all we can build a working relationship across color lines, across cultural lines.** And we need to build it by spreading a vision of what is

possible, and what is right. We have to do this, we can't rely on the tired, weak, and inadequate proposals from both major parties.

I am reminded of Dr. Martin Luther King. Before he was killed in 1968 he switched his focus from civil rights to economic rights. That idea scared a lot of the people around Dr. King. They didn't see how you could fight poverty. They saw poverty everywhere. Dr. King was killed before he could get that poor people's movement fully organized. But the idea of a poor people's movement wouldn't die because it really was the answer. And so it's up to us to pick up where Dr. King left off. **The Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign is building a movement that unites the poor across color lines. The PPEHRC is committed to uniting the poor as the leadership base for a broad movement to abolish poverty everywhere and forever.**

Here in California and across this country The Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign fights for workers rights and poor people's rights as part of our rights as human beings. Recently we helped organize tent cities in New York, protest to hospital closings in San Jose, organized for for health care, housing, women's rights and against poverty here in Oakland as an economic human rights. We had the honor of mobilizing a major protest of 20,000 workers in New York of poor and working people from across the country to fight for our right to speech and health care as a humanright. We marched 65 blocks in sweltering heat to raise our voice not only against the elite policies of the corporations running our government but by conducting this peaceful strong protest to poverty as a human right violation we gave

voice to the working and poor people saying no more to their proposed take-aways but to building that movement Dr. King was dedicated to. WEAP and other members of the California Poor People's Economic Human Rights campaign pledged signed on to your pledge to defend healthcare for grocery workers. We consider that that is only the beginning of the fight for solidarity. Your fight today is part of a broader movement of workers as human beings and we are dedicated to build strong local, state, and regional solidarity efforts. WEAP & the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign is dedicated to doing this. Together we should fight to teach our communities about the national health insurance program called, justhealthcare.org. For more information visit our website, weap.org and www.economichumanrights.org