



WORKING
FILMS

PARTNERS

HOW STARBUCKS BARISTAS STARTED A LABOR REVOLUTION

DIRECTED AND PRODUCED BY CHRIS SESSIONS PRODUCED BY HILLARY DEMMON
A PRODUCTION OF BLANKET FILMS WITH THE SUPPORT OF WORKING FILMS

DISCUSSION GUIDE



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From the Director:

There's a labor resurgence growing in America unlike anything seen in decades. Much of this new organizing is taking place among younger, service sector workers. The trailblazers of this movement are a group of Starbucks baristas in Buffalo New York who began organizing a union in 2020. The Starbucks campaign was hugely influential: It brought the vicious and illegal union-busting practices of corporations into the mainstream new media, and inspired a new generation of labor activists.

Partners takes us to the front lines of the historic Starbucks union campaign. It draws from a wealth of on-the-ground-footage which has not been publicly shared until now. The Partners production team worked closely with the baristas and organizers for several years to make the film.

My hope is that *Partners* can serve as a tool to inspire organizing, and offer workers a blueprint for standing up to union-busting.

- Chris Sessions, Director of *Partners*





DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



- 1.) If you had never seen this kind of anti-union behavior before, how did it change your understanding of what workers are up against when they try to organize?
- 2.) One thing this film highlights is how much community, camaraderie, and even joy, can come from forming a union and working to improve conditions alongside your co-workers. Did that surprise you, or does it reflect your own experience?
- 3.) Corporate spying, anti-union propaganda, hiring waves to dilute votes, captive audience meetings, even closing stores. Starbucks, a company known for its friendly image, did all of this. Does that surprise you? What does it say about what other companies might try?
- 4.) Why do workers choose to take on this struggle? What does a union offer that makes those sacrifices and risks feel worth it?
- 5.) Given the level of union busting this film exposes, how can people outside of the labor movement be more supportive of workers given the struggles they go through?
- 6.) Which tactics from the film do you see yourself trying out? Are there any tactics from the film that you wish you could try but still feel unsure of or intimidated by?
- 7.) In the film, Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz argues that the organizing isn't valid because it started with insider organizers, even though hundreds of stores have since organized without a salt. Do you buy his argument? Why or why not?
- 8.) This strategy is part of Industrial Unionism, organizing across an entire industry so employers can't undercut each other. That way, wages and conditions rise for everyone. How might local organizing efforts here build that same kind of solidarity? What's possible when we organize together?
- 9.) There's an interesting contrast in the film: Starbucks executives claim that people pushing for a union hate the company, while the organizers say it's actually their love for Starbucks that drives them to unionize. One barista even said, *"I was unionizing because I love their company, it wasn't because I hated them or had it out for them"* Who do you think is right here?



1.) NO CONTACT NO COFFEE!

Stand with 12,000 Starbucks baristas at 640+ union stores: pledge not to cross the picket line if baristas go on strike!



2.) DONATE TO THE STRIKE FUND!

Contribute directly to the strike fund for union Starbucks workers. Your generosity supports SBWU baristas on the picket line. Donations of any size help working people fight and win all over the country!



3.) BECOME AN INSIDE ORGANIZER!

The Inside Organizer School is a unique program aimed at making inside organizers as effective as possible in motivating and mobilizing their co-workers. We are a collective of experienced organizers who are dedicated to bringing top level organizing skills to empower workers. We believe that workers can self-organize and take back power from corporations that have overreached and are dominating our society. We recruit, train, and place inside organizers with unions doing the real work on the ground. You can connect with the IOS to learn about becoming an inside organizer today.

www.insideorganizerschool.com/becomeaninsideorganizer

