



JOINT SPEECH

2018 Annual Convention

Charlotte Shindler, President
George Dockins, Executive Director
Public School Employees of Washington, SEIU/Local 1948

Charlotte: I want to ask you all a simple question:

- Why are you here?
- Why did you come to this convention?
- You probably all know that since the Janus decision you have the ability to choose to not be a part of this Union
- Maybe a better question to ask is.... why are so many of our fellow brothers and sisters, not here?

George:

- Do you realize we are a union of over 28,000 members?
- Can you imagine the power we would have if all 28,000 of us were as passionate about this organization as you are?
- If we had to rent a stadium to hold our convention, because everyone wanted to attend this event, can you imagine 28,000 people in one room all as passionate as you
- Can you imagine how much we'd be able to get done?
- Can you imagine how much collective power we would have?



Charlotte: Wow, wouldn't that be great? So how do we get there George?

George: We have to go back to the original question.

- Why are you here?
- And why are they not?
- What drives you to feel the way you do about our union?
- Is it the free snacks you get at a chapter meeting? Probably not... but maybe that's good motivation to attend.
- Is it the discounts you get on theme park tickets? Sure, discounts are nice, but is that really why you're here? I'd be willing to bet it's not.

Charlotte: So George, I think what you're saying is that the free stuff, the drawings, the fun stuff is not why we're all here. But then what is? •

George:

- Well for me, it was never really about the free stuff it's about the real benefits and values we all share.

- It was about this incredible community we built, the connections we make every day, the wages, the health insurance.
- Many of you that were here last year will remember, I shared that I was not always as confident as I am today.
- I had fears, anxieties, and obstacles I faced every day, but when I joined PSE, I was no longer alone.
- I had my union family standing by me.
- A family that understood the struggles I faced, that shared my fears, that were there to help me work past them.

Charlotte: I think you're onto something.

- My first day of work I joined the union.
- I come from a long line of union families. I saw the value and the benefits in the lives of my grandparents.
- The union took care of my Papa. He had a pension which allowed him to retire at 55 and that was in 1962.
- More important, the union allowed him to spend time with his family.

- That wasn't always the case at that time. I'm sure we all agree that family time is important to all of us. I know it is to me.

George:

- Charlotte, we're all in this together. We all share the values of economic, social, and racial justice. The belief that all working people deserve rights, recognition, and respect.
- The belief all people deserve to make a living wage.
- We all value education, and equality.
- We all believe that if we stick together, we can make the world a better place for our children, our grandchildren, and our communities for generations to come.
- Right now, we're at a make it or break it point, and I know that if we stick together, we will come out of this stronger than ever.

- So how do we make our other 30,000 brothers and sisters who are not really “here” for the union, believe all of this, feel this passion, and know that they are a part of this family?

Charlotte:

- I’ll tell you how. We share with them our “why.” Our reason for being union.
- The benefits are a part of this why, but they likely already know what they’re getting from the union, it just may not mean anything to them yet.
- We can list out the benefits of the union all day long:
 - Higher wages
 - job and retirement security
 - safety in the workplaces
 - paid vacations and holidays
 - better health insurance, etc, etc, etc,
- But no one is going to care until they can connect with us. Until they know we share the same values. Until they feel the same passion you feel.

George: Health insurance, for example; it’s absolutely necessary but it may not seem all that important until you really need it.



Charlotte:

You know George, I know of a member, Sally Forst who learned the value of health insurance. Sally will you share this story with us?

Sally: No more than 3 minutes

George:

- When I hear that story, that's when I'm reminded what quality health insurance means and why it's so important.
- Sally your story is one of the "why's".
- The "why" is what's powerful, and it's how we can make that emotional connection to our fellow or potential members.

Charlotte:

- Exactly. One of the "why's" is health insurance, the why is "that when my child is sick, I don't have to debate whether or not I can afford to take them to

the doctor. I don't have to stick a band-aid on an open wound and hope for the best.

George:

- Because without a union, these rights, these benefits that we all believe every human being should have access to, could be gone in a split second.
- You all know this already, but your co-worker Jane might not. She might think that if she stops paying dues, she could get a little extra money in her paycheck each month.
- It's true, Jane could stop paying, but if every Jane, and every Bob believed this, we wouldn't have the power we need to sustain the rights we have fought so hard for.
- We wouldn't have the power in numbers to continue to bargain for better wages, better healthcare, better retirement security, and so on.

Charlotte:

- We need Jane, and we need Bob to believe in this movement, and we need them to know that without them, these rights can easily be gone.



George:

- We need to help all the Janes and Bob's out there build their own "why" so that they feel as passionately about PSE as we do.

Charlotte:

- It may not seem like it, but you all have a why.
- You all have a union story to tell.
- It doesn't need to be grand in order to mean something to someone.

George:

- All you need to do is relate with one person, find common ground in *something*, and you will make a connection.

Charlotte:

- If you can get someone else to connect with and understand your why, they might just realize their own.
- That connection can be as simple as something like, you both work in higher Ed and face the same

struggles every day, or you're both in Child Nutrition and don't work full time, but you still need health insurance, or even just that you're both women.

George:

- Because you know who the attack on unions hurts most? Women and minorities. That's the harsh reality of things. We've all know facts, women and people of color make less than white males.

Charlotte:

- It's not an easy pill to swallow, especially in 2018 when it seems like we should all be equal by now.
- We've made so much progress, but we still have a long way to go.

George:

- The good news is that we know unions are our vehicle to make a change and to achieve economic, racial, and social equality.
- In fact, we know that unions are already making this possible.



Charlotte:

- Unions ensure ALL workers are payed equally and fairly, regardless of their gender or race.
- In a recent study of unions' effect on inequality..... it found, that more unions..... means more income equality.

George:

- The New York Times reported that in research going all the way back to the 1930's, that during years and in states where workers were more likely to be unionized, income inequality was lower.

Charlotte:

- Susan Dynarski, a professor of education,..... at the University of Michigan said.....in that same article, *“Before I trained as an economist, I spent six years as an organizer, forming unions among secretaries, library workers, and lab assistants at Harvard and the University of Minnesota.*

- *I saw firsthand the increased economic security that unionization brought these predominantly female workers, in the form of higher wages, more generous pensions, and paid maternity leave.”*

George:

- That quote resonated with me because she’s speaking to the fact that she’s seen these incredible wins in jobs that by and large employ women, much like many of the classifications in PSE.
- In fact, many unions, just like ours, are made up of most female members, and when women unionize, it helps close the wage gap and gets us closer and closer to full income equality. As an example, our delegation this weekend, is over 80% female.
- The bad news is that with the onslaught of recent negativity toward unions and attacks from extremist groups attempting to weaken us, incomes in the United States are now as unequal as they were in the 1920’s. The fear is that if unions are weakened further, the gap between the rich and the poor, and between men and women... will widen.

Charlotte:



- But, have no fear, because there is good news. First of all, unions aren't dead.
- We all know that. You all are in a union right now. Not only are you in a union..... but you are in a *strong* union. We prepared for these attacks..... and we've been prepared for a long time now..... for a case..... like Janus to occur.

George:

- And we are still going strong. Union workers earn about 20% more than non-unions workers in similar jobs. Remarkably, even though unions have steadily decreased since their peak in the 1930's, this fact has held steady.

Charlotte:

- We all know Unions don't just benefit union workers, they also affect the earnings of non-union workers in the same area.



George:

- So that means, when you advocate for good union jobs, and when we organize more schools and universities, we're not only helping ourselves and the workers we bring into this organization, we're helping *everyone* in our communities.

Charlotte:

- Through our efforts advocating for unions, we are literally making history, and creating a better world for our children, our Grandchildren, and the generations that come.
- We truly are building a legacy.
- Every rally,
- every conversation,
- every sign,
- every social media post is making a difference. You are building a better tomorrow every single day.
- And I can't thank you enough for joining me in this never-ending fight to build and sustain the middle class,



- by fighting to end poverty,
- by fighting for income equality,
- by fighting for a more just and fair economy,
- and by fighting for an even better America.

George:

- Today and for the rest of this weekend, as we continue our union business, as we get into the nitty gritty, as your mind starts to wander, and your eyes start to glaze over, and your energy is just depleting.
- I want you to remember everything Charlotte and I talked to you about today.
- I want you to ask yourself, what is your legacy? Why is what we're doing today, and tomorrow, and the next day, important?

Charlotte:

- And what are you doing specifically to make a difference? To make your mark on history. To change the world.
- That may seem like a big thing, but it's not.



- You've heard the facts and you know that the work we're doing really can and does make a difference, and you are an important part of this work.
- After all, you *ARE* the union. The union isn't just some entity, or machine that magically raises your wages and gives you health insurance. The union is each-and every-one of you fighting for one another.
 - ✓ You are sitting at the bargaining table negotiating your wages with your employers.
 - ✓ You are advocating for better politicians, and better leaders that will change our laws, change our policies, and fight for our education system and our wellbeing.
 - ✓ You are doing this work, and therefore, you are changing the world, little by little.

George:

- And if we lose just one of you, we are weaker. *But* if we gain just one of you, we are stronger.
- Keep the energy, keep the momentum we have built over the past 70 years because in the end, we know that it all will make a difference.



- We will be indestructible to our opponents and those that not only wish to weaken us... but make us extinct.
- So, we have two questions for you to keep in mind for the rest of this weekend, and the rest of your union filled lives.

Charlotte: What is your why?

George: And what is your legacy?

Charlotte: We ask these two specific questions..... because it's possible....the future of PSE likely depends on your answers.

- We asked earlier....what brought you here..... we wish there was time to ask each and every one of you, about your.... “why”. But there isn’t..... However.... we feel it’s important to take the time to have your voices heard.
- So
 - Annie Carlson will you come share your “why”?
 - Thank you, Annie,.....
 - Jennifer White will you come share your “why”?
 - Thank you Jennifer.

George: Can you feel that Passion?



- You see, we have to tap into that.!If PSE is to survive and thrive in the future, we must capture that passion, and share it with the 30,000 members that are not here...

Charlotte:

We need to remind all of them, we belong together..... in this community..... this family..... that we have, **here**.... in this room. We can expect **no** less from each other...

George:

- As outside forces attempt to tear our family apart, after 70 years of members fighting for everything we have.
- We must always remember the sacrifices they made... the sacrifices their families made. Those sacrifices cannot and will not be forgotten.

Charlotte:

- I'm proud of the members that came before us and... I'm especially proud of the members **AND** staff in this room today...



- Now... sisters and brothers, it falls on us, its **our** turn to carry the torch.

George: You will be remembered in the **History of PSE**, as those who stood up to the attacks on **everything PSE stands for**.... This moment ***will*** be your legacy...

Charlotte: Let this battle begin..... because we say..... after 70 years, Not on our Watch!

