



# Teachers United: The Rise of New York State United Teachers

*Dennis Gaffney*

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*The inspiring history of NYSUT, New York State's largest union, and a powerful progressive force in the state and in the country.*

This book tells the story of the rise of New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), New York State's largest union. Using first-hand accounts by rank-and-file teachers as well as leaders, Dennis Gaffney documents how teachers, once underpaid and hopelessly divided, finally organized, lifting themselves from the underclass to the middle class to become a formidable grassroots political force able to defeat and elect U.S. senators. He describes how New York's teachers sparked the modern-day teachers' movement, and what key lessons other labor unions can learn from NYSUT's unity and success. Teachers United also shows how NYSUT has been a leader of educational reform, winning more money for education, creating smaller classes, raising academic standards, and training better teachers.

"...a fun read." — Industrial and Labor Relations Review

"...Gaffney's narrative detailing the rise of NYSUT is a positive contribution to labor history." — Register of the Kentucky Historical Society

"Anyone interested in progressive change should read Teachers United. It's a blueprint for successful grassroots organizing, describing how New York's teachers, through NYSUT, transformed themselves from a divided and politically marginalized bunch into one of the most influential and positive forces in our state and in our country." — United States Senator Charles E. Schumer (D-NY)

"Public education is among the most central functions of government in a democracy and, in New York State, NYSUT is arguably the single most influential organization in the field of education. For the first time, Dennis Gaffney tells the story of this influential group and sheds light on the rationale for teacher unionism and for teacher unity." — Richard D. Kahlenberg, author of *Tough Liberal: Albert Shanker and the Battles over Schools, Unions, Race, and Democracy*

"What a pleasure to read a modern-day labor history, so informative and consistently engaging, that brings alive the struggles of those who have built one of the most successful unions of the last half-century: NYSUT. I'd recommend this book to all students of labor history and activists who want a reminder of how vital and essential unions still are. I was inspired." — John J. Sweeney, President, AFL-CIO

"Dennis Gaffney has produced a lively narrative that keeps the action moving across many years of NYSUT union activity. He's also managed to write what amounts to a book-within-a-book, with a compelling biography of founder Albert Shanker embedded in a larger story of organized labor." — Paul Grondahl, author of *Mayor Corning: Albany Icon, Albany Enigma*

Dennis Gaffney is a freelance journalist based in Albany, New York, who has written for numerous venues over the past twenty years, including *Mother Jones*, *the Nation*, *the New York Times*, *the History Channel Magazine*, and *the Christian Science Monitor*. He has worked as a writer and video producer at WGBH, Boston's PBS station, and has written for the companion websites for *American Experience* and *Antiques*

Roadshow. A graduate of Wesleyan University with a degree in history, he is now Adjunct Professor in the Department of Journalism at the University at Albany, State University of New York.

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