

# **PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION SPEECH TO OSSTF D21 OCTU MEMBERS**

**By Lyla Miklos**

**May 7, 2025**

Good evening my fellow OSSTF D21 OCTU members.

My name is Lyla Miklos and I am running for OCTU President.

First, I want to thank every OCTU member who encouraged me to run and gave me their support, but I especially want to thank Aly Brousseau for leading the charge and being my nominator. No matter the result of tonight's election your faith and belief in me is deeply appreciated. You kept reminding me what qualities we want to see in our union leadership and I aspire to exemplify them.

I have been an education worker with the HWDSB for 16 years now. I have worked in elementary schools, secondary schools, vocational schools, special day schools, special education, international education and library services.

I have served our union as OCTU's Chief Negotiator, OCTU Branch Rep, D21's Political Action Committee Chair, OSSTF's rep on the Ontario Federation of Labour's Solidarity and Pride Committee, and as a member of OSSTF's Equity Advisory Work Group.

In my previous career, television broadcasting, I was a member of Communications Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada Local 723M and served as a Union Steward and as a member of the CHUM Locals Council.

Beyond my work in labour activism, I have also been a local community organizer with a particular focus on queer, trans and women's rights. Some of you may also know of my work in Hamilton's arts community either as the Host and Producer of Centre Stage or as a musical performer.

Over the years, I have been a guest vocalist at several churches in the city and surrounding area. There is a song by Janet Sullivan Whitaker that various church music directors have asked me to sing. It is called "The Least of These". The lyrics speak to the most vulnerable among us. The Hungry. The Homeless. The chorus ends with the line "*whatever you do to the least of these, you do to me.*" It is this imperative of looking out for those of us who are the most marginalized that drives my union activism.

Anthony Marco, the President of Hamilton & District Labour Council, and a fellow D21 OSSTF member shared in his latest Substack piece these words: *“Individual employees often lack the power to challenge superficial training programs or ineffective policies. However, workers can collectively demand meaningful change and ensure that employers are held responsible for creating workplaces that are truly safe, inclusive, and respectful for everyone.”*

I have sung many labour anthems at union rallies over the years, but the lyrics to Bread and Roses are a reminder again of what we are fighting for as education workers.

*As we go marching, marching, unnumbered women dead.*

*Go crying through our singing their ancient call for bread.*

*Small art and love and beauty their drudging spirits knew.*

*Yes, it is bread we fight for, but we fight for roses too.*

We don't want our jobs to be nothing more than just a means to an end to merely survive, we want to thrive and have lives filled with meaning, joy and beauty.

We are living in politically precarious times, but when we come together as workers the 1% had better watch out, because *“the workers united will never be defeated”*.

Last month was the anniversary of the assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In his final days he was in Memphis supporting striking sanitation workers. He shared these words with those workers: *“Let me say to you tonight, that whenever you are engaged in work that serves humanity and is for the building of humanity, it has dignity, and it has worth.”*

MLK reminds us that workers rights are human rights.

These are the values that guide me and I hope to be worthy of serving you as your OCTU President.

Thank you.