

# INDUSTRIAL WORKER

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**How Can Your  
IWW Branch Fight  
Patriarchy?**

4

**Union Settles Contract  
With Berkeley Ecology  
Center**

5

**Special: Women's  
Struggles Celebrated  
Through Song**

6

**Factory In Greece  
Under Workers'  
Control**

12

## IWW Workers Fight Wage Theft, Abuse At Portland Restaurant

By FW Barney

On Jan. 18, a group of workers from Yaw's Top Notch Restaurant in Portland, Ore., took a stand. Leading the delegation into the restaurant, the group of 10 workers was accompanied by 30 community members from We Are Oregon and the IWW. To the shock of bosses and customers (and to the smiles of kitchen staff) a worker publicly read a letter addressed to the owners and management demanding over \$1,200 in back wages that Yaw's has refused to pay. Less than a week later, with signed checks in hand, these same 10 individuals celebrated victory won through solidarity.

Yaw's Top Notch Restaurant was an East Portland staple for over 50 years. Three decades after they closed their doors, Yaw's is now back and wants you to believe that it's still the landmark it once was; a place where you can experience what it was like in the "good old days" when customers and employees were treated like members of the family.

The new Yaw's claims to be "looking for people who want more than just a

job"—something that, "goes beyond just making money." But Yaw's management has failed. To go "beyond just making money," you must first be making money. Now, Yaw's workers are demanding what was rightfully theirs and aren't going to take "no" for an answer.

The workers were supported by members of Food & Retail Workers United (FRWU), an IWW coalition of the union's food, retail, and distribution workers committed to workplace democracy and global solidarity. They received additional support from We Are Oregon—a project of Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Locals 49 and 503—which organizes against wage theft in the Portland metro area. The Yaw's workers, who took the lead in coordinating the campaign, made a commitment to each other to not give up until all 10 workers' demands were met.

Each worker involved demanded a different amount which was owed to them due to unpaid, but mandatory, meetings, trainings, and "soft opening" shifts. Yaw's also charged some workers uniform laun-



Yaw's workers celebrate a hard-won victory with over \$1,200 in back wages.

Photo: Doug Geisler

dry fees.

Standing together on Jan. 18, the workers made their demand collectively because of Yaw's repeated refusal to pay them individually. "This is the first step,"

said one worker. "Let's make sure what has happened to us doesn't happen to anyone else." The worker-led delegation of community members filed into the restaurant

Continued on 6

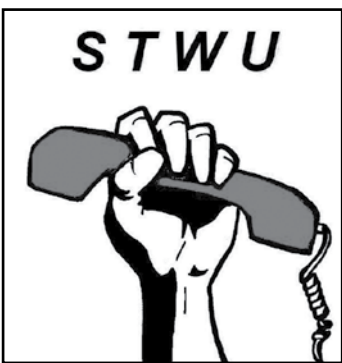
## Grand Rapids Call Center Goes Wobbly

By the Grand Rapids IWW

Employees of Star Tickets, a call center in Grand Rapids, Mich., "walked on the boss" on Jan. 23, demanding a reduction in workload, an employee grievance procedure and recognition of their union. The employees have formed the IWW Star Tickets Workers Union for mutual support and respect

on the job. Their intentions are to begin collective bargaining with owner Jack Krasula over a work environment that they say has become untenable.

"We are just exercising our legal right to form a union for our mutual benefit," said Deirdre Cunningham, a client services representative. "We have been meeting, assisting one another and acting as a



Graphic: Star Tickets Workers Union

union for some time, so [on Jan. 23] we made it official to our boss."

Star Tickets, which is located at 620 Century Avenue Southwest #300, has become the second Grand Rapids establishment whose workers have joined the IWW in just over a year. Workers at Bartertown Diner, located at 6 Jefferson Street, all joined

the IWW in 2011.

"During my time here, Mr. Krasula has routinely sent us his insights and anecdotes for success. We hope that he will respect our choice and work with us in affecting the context of our daily lives," said Star Tickets worker Alisa Stone.

For more information, visit <http://grsbuxunion.blogspot.com>.

## Solidarity With German Manufacturing Workers

By the Hamburg Wobblies

Workers of Neupack Verpackungen GmbH—a German manufacturer of wrapping materials—are on strike for better working conditions and a labor agreement. They complain about unequal and generally low wages and an arbitrary and disrespectful management style. Even though they've struggle for many weeks now (at press time), the company's proprietors have shown hardly any willingness to make concessions. They have hired foreign strikebreakers and attacked the striking workers with disciplinary warnings, dismissals and offense reports.

The German IWW supports the workers' cause and asks you to show them some international support as well.

They have launched an email campaign and prepared some pre-formulated and addressed emails to selected recipients who play a significant role in this struggle. These emails are provided in English too

and can be generated with the click of a mouse. All you have to do is to sign and send them off. You can of course change the content of the emails to personalize them if you like. It would be great if you added information from where you are writing.

The German Wobblies rely on many of you to participate, for they are still small in numbers and their only strength is in their internationality. For many long weeks now, the Neupack workers have held out in front of their factories in a grueling labor conflict. A couple of minutes in front of your computer could make a big difference in this campaign—not only to put pressure on management, but to show the workers just how much support and solidarity they have.

To send an email and find out more, visit: <http://www.iww-hamburg.org/index.html#english>.



Graphic: iww-hamburg.org



Graphic: iww-hamburg.org

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Solidarity Greetings  
for International Women's Day  
and Women's History Month



from the *Industrial Worker*

Photos: breadandrosescentennial.org







Workplace Organizing

Hire Out With The Railroad Today!

By X341189

Are you sick and tired of serving up yet another cup of coffee? Have you had it up to here with a job that pays poorly, demeans you on a daily basis and leaves you wondering if you are really cut out for this kind of work? Are you bored to tears with the same old-same old routine? Had enough of mundane tasks to the point where you are ready for something new and different? Would you like good pay and benefits, a union contract and a workplace with a tradition of labor militancy that dates back 150 years? Then hire out with the railroad!

Across the continent, the railroads big and small are hiring “trainmen” to work freight and passenger trains on the road and in the yard. No experience is necessary, though a willingness to work all hours of the day in all weather, including weekends and holidays, is certainly a must. You must be able to pass a drug screening and be willing to perform physical labor. Of course, like any other job, you must be ready to be exploited. If you can hang with this, then you are a shoe-in. See the YouTube industry propaganda piece “A Day in the Life of a Conductor” for a glimpse of the job: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GOac5bYqLRA>.

But why would you want to hire out with some Fortune 500 railroad corporation? Here’s why:

• The rail industry has been unionized longer than perhaps any other, and on the



Photo: unknown source, provided by RWU

larger “Class I” railroads the workforce is, for all intents and purposes, entirely unionized.

• The rail industry is critical to the functioning of the nation’s economy. Countless other industries are intimately related to it and depend on it for their day-to-day operations.

• The rail industry is here to stay. Unlike mining and basic extraction, it cannot play out or be replaced by other materials. Unlike manufacturing, it cannot be off-shored.

• The first industrial union was organized in rail. In 1893, the American Railway Union (ARU) was organized among all railroad workers in the United States. While it was soon crushed in the great Pullman Strike the following year, the ARU blazed the path for the industrial unionism to come later in the form of the IWW and then the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO).

• The rail industry has witnessed countless strikes and labor actions throughout its history. Major class struggle battles include the Great Railroad Strike of 1877, the Great Northern Railroad strike of 1893, the Pullman Strike of 1894, the 1922 National Railroad Shopmen’s Strike, and the post-World War II strike wave in 1946.

• Eugene V. Debs, one of the founders of the IWW, was a locomotive fireman, the leader of the firemen’s union, organizer of many rail labor “brotherhoods,” and the founder of the nation’s first industrial union, the ARU.

• While the work can be dangerous and difficult and management can be tyrannical, railroad workers enjoy good pay and benefits for blue-collar work that does not require a college education.

• The work on the railroad, while far more automated and routinized than in the past, remains invigorating, variable and interesting on a day-to-day basis.

• Railroads crisscross the continent, so railroad work is available in towns and cit-

ies across North America. Now with national agreements on the modern Class I mega-railroads, many workers have “system seniority,” allowing a worker to move around from place to place as their seniority will allow.

So what are you waiting for? Now is the time to hire out in an industrial setting and make some money. All the while you will: learn about the transportation industry, work under the terms of a union contract, become familiar with the history of the class struggle on the railroad, take part in the rank-and-file movement of railroad workers and join with your fellow workers to build the One Big Union in a key sector of the economy.

For those who would hire out in “transportation,” the new hire usually begins work as a brakeman or conductor trainee. After a specified period of time and the requisite tests, the new hire is promoted to conductor. Then at some point in the future, depending upon seniority and the “needs of the carrier,” the conductor will be selected to attend engine school. Following an extended (six months to a year) on-the-job training, s/he will be promoted to licensed locomotive engineer. If “train and engine” (T&E) is not your scene, the railroads are also hiring—although not as regularly—track maintainers, train dispatchers, signal maintainers, car inspectors, clerks, electricians, machinists, laborers and others in the shop crafts. Some of these jobs will require experience in the craft, while others will require minimal if any experience at all.

Whatever route you take, all of the Class I railroad T&E jobs are union jobs, paying between \$40,000 and \$125,000 per year with full benefits. Union mem-



Photo: unknown source, provided by Railroad Workers United (RWU)

bership is obligatory upon successful completion of a probationary period of usually 60 to 90 days upon “marking up.” The T&E employee has a choice of joining the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen (BLET), a descendant of the oldest craft union in the United States, or the United Transportation Union (UTU), an amalgamation of four old craft unions that merged in 1969. Dues usually range between \$70 and \$120 per month. Most Locals (UTU) and Divisions (BLET) hold regular monthly membership meetings.

The nation’s railroads are integral to the national economy. While a smaller percentage of the total freight shipped now moves by rail, the actual gross tonnage shipped on the railroad is greater than ever before. With the introduction of new technologies—radio, computer, sensors, satellite, microprocessors, etc...—and the elimination of thousands of jobs, U.S. railroaders are now by far the most “efficient” railway workers in the world on a basis of “ton-miles” per employee. Chicago is the rail center of the world, moving more tonnage through its limits than any other city. All large U.S. cities and many smaller ones have large rail terminals located somewhere in the greater metro area, and they are either currently—or soon will be—hiring workers.

Through mergers and affiliations, the myriad craft unions on the railroad have now been pared down to “only” 13 or so. Some are affiliated with the AFL-CIO while others are now part of the Change to Win coalition, both of which are prone to infighting and backstabbing, union scabbing and sweetheart deal-making continue, alternating between periods of truce, merger or attempted merger of the various organizations. In this environment, it is extremely common to hear talk among rank-and-filers of the need for One Big Union, one union of all crafts, and one union to represent all railroaders. Railroaders today are looking for answers beyond the narrow confines of their own increasingly irrelevant craft union. They want an organization with strength and power, one capable of taking on the huge corporations, the modern day “robber barons.”

All those who are looking for work should consider joining the struggle and hire out on the railroad. The major Class I carriers are hiring trainmen and others regularly at most rail terminals all across the country. To learn more about hiring out, check out the Railroad Retirement Board website at <http://www.rrb.gov/PandS/jobs/rrjobs.asp>. Scroll down and then check the links to the various railroads’ websites. Current jobs are listed on each site with directions on how to submit your application and resume online. To get some tips on how to improve your chances of landing a railroad job, see the website <http://www.getarailroadjob.com>.

For more information about the railroad, rail unions, the movement for rail labor unity, hiring out, training, or other questions, please email: [railfalcon@yahoo.com](mailto:railfalcon@yahoo.com).

*The author has worked as a brakeman, conductor and engineer for some time now, and is a longtime member of the IWW.*

IWW Constitution Preamble

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life. Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the means of production, abolish the wage system, and live in harmony with the earth.

We find that the centering of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands makes the trade unions unable to cope with the ever-growing power of the employing class. The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars. Moreover, the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

These conditions can be changed and the interest of the working class upheld only by an organization formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry, or all industries if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

Instead of the conservative motto, “A fair day’s wage for a fair day’s work,” we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, “Abolition of the wage system.”

It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organized, not only for the everyday struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.

Join the IWW Today

The IWW is a union for all workers, a union dedicated to organizing on the job, in our industries and in our communities both to win better conditions today and to build a world without bosses, a world in which production and distribution are organized by workers ourselves to meet the needs of the entire population, not merely a handful of exploiters.

We are the Industrial Workers of the World because we organize industrially – that is to say, we organize all workers on the job into one union, rather than dividing workers by trade, so that we can pool our strength to fight the bosses together.

Since the IWW was founded in 1905, we have recognized the need to build a truly international union movement in order to confront the global power of the bosses and in order to strengthen workers’ ability to stand in solidarity with our fellow workers no matter what part of the globe they happen to live on.

We are a union open to all workers, whether or not the IWW happens to have representation rights in your workplace. We organize the worker, not the job, recognizing that unionism is not about government certification or employer recognition but about workers coming together to address our common concerns. Sometimes this means striking or signing a contract. Sometimes it means refusing to work with an unsafe machine or following the bosses’ orders so literally that nothing gets done. Sometimes it means agitating around particular issues or grievances in a specific workplace, or across an industry.

Because the IWW is a democratic, member-run union, decisions about what issues to address and what tactics to pursue are made by the workers directly involved.

**TO JOIN:** Mail this form with a check or money order for initiation and your first month’s dues to: IWW, Post Office Box 180195, Chicago, IL 60618, USA.

Initiation is the same as one month’s dues. Our dues are calculated according to your income. If your monthly income is under \$2000, dues are \$9 a month. If your monthly income is between \$2000 and \$3500, dues are \$18 a month. If your monthly income is over \$3500 a month, dues are \$27 a month. Dues may vary outside of North America and in Regional Organizing Committees (Australia, British Isles, German Language Area).

☐ I affirm that I am a worker, and that I am not an employer.

☐ I agree to abide by the IWW constitution.

☐ I will study its principles and acquaint myself with its purposes.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

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Membership includes a subscription to the **Industrial Worker**.



# Christmas At Starbucks

By **Liberte Locke**

Starbucks is a job in which the boss is so shitty that he can lose everything in Hurricane Sandy and his sympathy only lasts a couple weeks. Workers roll their eyes and those unable to bite their tongues can't help but utter the word "karma." Disrespectful employee reviews bring everyone swiftly back to remembering that while their aunt, cousin, lover, or babysitter is still living in the dark, 27 flights up in the projects, wondering why the Red Cross is ballin' and they're living on scraps—paying for Metrocards that equal crowded shuttle buses on lines yet to be restored—this guy was inconvenienced, but only briefly. It's a victory to get to work only 20 minutes late, but of course

the boss doesn't think so. Out-of-towners are more understanding about what we've gone through than the boss who felt its effects. He's stable soon enough—a quick recovery while we struggle. The boss can't make a latte—the one who gave everyone low scores on "customer focus" when he couldn't remember a single regular's name when asked. His paycheck would imply he makes every drink himself.

Beverage sales go up, transactions skyrocket, retail sales climb while hours are cut, breaks are "forgotten," reviews are late and offensive.

A female co-worker of mine had taken enough. She settled it the way things get settled in New York. She punched the boss and broke the glass door in the store. When I came into work the next day I was sure I'd somehow be blamed for the door. The day before, Corporate (Starbucks' headquarters) finally forced me to remove all but one union pin on my uniform. This moment came after five years of court battles over wearing multiple union pins on the job (and fighting for the reinstatement of our members, including Daniel Gross). After losing four appeals, Starbucks finally won, once—and that was enough. I threw all my Starbucks-issued pins in the garbage and got a lot of sympathy from co-workers who especially respected my Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. pin that I was no longer permitted to wear. I had assumed it was some middle of the night vandalism that most Starbucks workers have become accustomed to—globally they're used to much more than broken glass. I inquired with the openers and learned of our newest folk hero. The woman who did what justified fears of firing and jail time prevented

others from doing so many times before. If karma was real (and it'd been someone higher up), I'd think that punch was for FW Daniel.

Last I heard, Starbucks was still looking for her. I don't know where she is but I know she has my respect and gratitude. How does Corporate respond to the

store doing well financially and, simultaneously, the manager being reported by workers and then finally attacked by one? They send emails applauding his "leadership." These emails are posted for everyone to see that our credit has been stolen—probably turned into a bonus that we'll never get.

Just before Christmas, Corporate decided to "thank" us. Almost every district manager (DM) in

Manhattan barged into our store during the morning rush, and loudly and badly sang a Christmas carol. Our DM came behind the counter (in the way of drinks being made) and held up a giant laminated board signed by the DMs and just said "Thanks for your...(blah, blah, blah)." She read it loudly—more to the customers as a ploy than to us as an actual "thank you." I shouted from my register, "That doesn't look like a giant check to me?!" My co-workers at the registers turned back to taking customers and said to each other loudly, "Yeah, where's our Christmas bonus, huh?"

To add insult to injury, the DMs commandeered two big tables to sit for lunch—a crowd of 10 people that have spent years trying to fire me, three of which have individually attempted, in vain, to have me arrested at pickets. They jumped the line, ordered several complicated drinks and bought most of our sandwiches—of course they wanted them warmed and some without cheese. It was on the company card, they overworked us, piss off regulars and, unsurprisingly, they DID NOT TIP. It's clear they were celebrating our hard work with a free lunch. Some workers nibbled on the shitty grocery store-bought box of star-shaped cookies they left us. I told folks that Kinkos makes those signs for 40 bucks and it'd be nice if they put \$40 in the tip jar instead. We didn't feel appreciated—we felt shit on as grown people with bills, children, and college to pay for with star-shaped cookies. Then a customer in a maintenance uniform handed me and a co-worker each a \$20 bill and said, "It's for you, Merry Christmas." We were reminded that workers take care of workers.

## How Can Your Branch Fight Patriarchy?

By **Cassandra Solanas**

Gruesome examples of women's oppression like the Delhi gang rape or the Steubenville football team get lots of headlines and head-shaking. Far more common are sexual assaults of women by men close to the victim. The culture that enables this violence is built on the everyday slights, power plays, and insults that women experience constantly. Activist circles are not immune, and activist groups often promote patriarchal structures, rape culture, and the silencing of victims. What can your branch do to promote a healthier culture, discourage patriarchal behavior, hold perpetrators accountable, and support our fellow workers? Here are a few approaches your IWW branch can take:

**1. The small stuff matters.** Find ways to disrupt implicit social power structures. Practice active facilitation: encourage all to speak and participate, not just those who volunteer. Engage in skill-sharing with new people. Be aware and skeptical of experienced men isolating and taking individual new women "under their wing." Step back from leadership and let new people step up and make mistakes. Be organized—disorganization and informality allow informal power structures

and privilege to take over. Reverse gender roles. Be productive in meetings. Value and recognize non-public, non-heroic work. Value and recognize facilitative, bureaucratic and emotional work. Encourage a culture of honest, caring criticism: give it and receive it well.

**2. Fighting patriarchy is not women's work.** Everyone must take on the labor, social risk, and emotional burden of confronting patriarchal behavior, from dominating meetings to divisions of labor to sexual assault. Take the lead from the most oppressed people in the group, but take your own initiative. Don't take someone else's lack of action as an excuse to do nothing. There is nothing "more important" to do first. Even if you weren't the target, patriarchal oppression in your community is your business. Often targets of patriarchy don't want to be a victim twice; once from the original incident and again for having friends betray them by not listening, not taking them seriously and not acting.

**3. Take complaints of patriarchal oppression seriously,** from small things like condescension in meetings to



Graphic: k-state.edu

# WOMEN WORKERS' HISTORY

## Chapter 61 The Murder of a Grandmother

**Fannie Mooney Sellins was already known as a garment workers' leader when she took an assignment as a mineworkers' organizer in the bloody coalfields of West Virginia. An effective organizer, she quickly made herself unpopular with the authorities: she was charged with "inciting to riot" and imprisoned. It took a pardon from President Woodrow Wilson to get her out of jail after six months.**

FANNIE SELLINS (1872-1919). Organizer for the garment workers, miners, steelworkers. Killed by company gunmen on August 26, 1919.

**After four tough years in West Virginia, Sellins moved to New Kensington, Pa., where she quickly became involved in the UMWA's efforts to organize the miners of the Allegheny Valley — then known as "Black Valley" because of the employers' violent opposition to union organization. She became popular among miners and their families — which made her a marked woman.**

**Miners employed by Allegheny Steel's coal company struck for higher wages and better conditions in July 1919. The company continued operations with strikebreakers; at the company's request, the sheriff stationed a dozen deputies, armed with revolvers, clubs and riot guns, in what is now Natrona Heights, Pa.**

**There had already been an arrest on Aug. 26 when Sellins arrived on the picket line. She tried to calm the mostly women and children present when the deputies clubbed, then shot to death an unarmed, 60-year-old miner named Joe Starzeleski. As Sellins urged the women to take cover, she was struck by a rifle butt, then shot at point blank range. As she lay dying, the guards pumped three more bullets into her body. Sellins was 47 years old, a grandmother and the mother of a youth killed in France, fighting in a war "to make the world safe for democracy."**

**It took four years to bring the deputies to trial; a Pittsburgh court found them not guilty. Her killer became captain of shop police in an Allegheny Valley steel mill.**

Graphic: Mike Konopacki

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Wobbly & North American News

# Union Settles Contract With Ecology Center

By John Reimann

IWW members who work at Curbside Pickup in Berkeley, Calif., settled their contract with the Ecology Center, the nonprofit that runs Curbside, on Jan. 12.

The negotiations were quite difficult. Workers wanted a raise in real wages as well as other advances. The Ecology Center, on the other hand, opened negotiations with severely concessionary demands. These included no raise in most of the years of the contract, a worse health benefit plan, and a demand that workers pay for 25 percent of the cost of the premium. Another non-economic demand was equally serious: the Ecology Center demanded that the IWW take out liability insurance for any union representative that visited the job site.

Two demands of the employer became the focus: for the workers to pay a portion of their health care premiums and that the IWW takes out liability insurance for union representatives who visit the job site. It was impossible to know if the Ecology Center really expected to win these two, but they did say that these demands were “priorities” for them. After a couple of weeks, the IWW let them know that these two were strike issues and that if the Ecology Center persisted in making these demands, there would be a strike.

Being a liberal nonprofit in the (somewhat) liberal city of Berkeley, a strike would have been very embarrassing for the Ecology Center. All the Ecology Center’s previous anti-union demands would have been brought out. This included a

demand in a previous negotiation for the elimination of a clause that protects our members if they refuse to cross a picket line. The Ecology Center actually wanted the power to turn our members into a

scab labor force! They dropped that demand when they saw that it would lead to a strike.

One major difference between these negotiations and previous ones was that many more members directly participated in them. This made the threat of worker action much more real. It also ensured that the negotiators were in more direct touch with the members themselves. Related to this was the workplace rally that the union held. Some 50 supporters turned out, and the militant mood of the workers was clear. A supervisor for the Ecology Center filmed this rally, which is an Unfair Labor Practice (ULP). The union has filed a ULP complaint with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). We do not expect any great results from this complaint, but we want to have it on the record.

The ultimate result of the contract was that the workers accepted a worse health plan. They are also getting a 3 percent raise per year, and other improvements.

In the course of the negotiations, one worker summed up the situation by saying, “You just keep taking and taking and taking, and where will it all end up?” The concessions made in this contract slowed down this process but didn’t reverse it. Sooner or later, workers will be forced to take a stand and say that this process stops here, not only for them in particular, but for all workers.



Curbside workers.

Photo: X345292

# Wobbly Webmaster Fired In Portland

By FW Rick V.

On Feb. 11 I was unceremoniously and unjustly canned from my job as a webmaster for two-plus radio stations at Alpha Broadcasting in downtown Portland, Ore. The following day, my co-worker, who was also a webmaster, was “laid off.”

This was in retaliation to my co-worker and I standing up for not only ourselves, but our other co-workers, regarding questionable decrees from above. The most recent situation, and the real game-changer that got me booted right out the door in a matter of hours, was regarding the decree that my co-workers and I were to vacate our design office and inhabit separate cubicles by the end of the week. The demand was sudden and the reasons were that: 1) apparently the room was possibly going to be used in the future for other reasons, and 2) management-types viewed our office room as a “toxic” environment with “bad” energy.

Needless to say, the first reason was total nonsense as we asked when this would actually be happening and if we could simply vacate when the office room was needed, to which no valid response was given. The second reason is wrong on numerous levels, and my co-worker and I refuted it because it simply was not true. We enjoyed working together and it made logical sense to stay in our office room. Negativity came in the form of management-types entering the office and bringing us down and also in the form of the constant employee layoffs and terminations that we were witnessing.

It was at this time that I expressed my concern that I felt retaliated against for a past situation that involved our design group taking action about another decree from our supervisor one week earlier. I felt that I was being punished by suddenly being forced to move my work setup. I also said that this felt like a demotion and that I didn’t understand what I had done to deserve this, as my work was always quite



Photo: “Don’t Forget About Rick” Facebook page

solid. I never received a write-up, verbal warning, or anything of the sort. They liked me there. This little meeting ended with an understanding that we would revisit the issue soon and talk about the developments. I agreed

to this, as I merely wanted to express myself and my concerns.

A matter of hours later, I was swiftly removed! The “reason” given by the tyrannical leaders is that I needed to do what my supervisor says, and by not doing this, they had to “part ways with me.” I made sure to note that they, indeed, retaliated against me for standing up for myself and my co-workers only a couple hours earlier, and this was a very personal vindictive attack.

I have decided not to take the company’s “hush money” that would legally shut my mouth and will instead proceed with a campaign to gain reinstatement, stop the mass firings, and bring power and protection to the workers at Alpha Broadcasting—all of whom can be terminated at any moment, without warning. I will file an Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) complaint based on proof of illegal retaliation against concerted activity regarding protection and mutual aid.

On Feb. 14, the first public rally of the “Don’t Forget About Rick” campaign was kicked off with strategic precision. It was very successful in showing everyone at Alpha Broadcasting, as well as to passersby, that I am acting to rectify my wrongful termination and that I have a network of people who support the workers still with the company.

I would be happy to supply more information to any Wobbly that would like to know more about this situation, and I have started a Facebook page as a community support group: <http://www.facebook.com/DontForgetAboutRick>. Currently, I am planning the next step in the escalation process, which will be a full-scale communications zap. Stay tuned!

Solidarity forever!

# Victory Against Landlord In Tampa

By Donald Parkinson

On Dec. 18, 2012, Carlton Williams (known as “CC” by his friends), a resident at Aaran’s Walk Apartments in Tampa, Fla., informed Jennifer Rendahl, the property owner and manager, that bedbugs had infested his apartment. Rendahl sent a maintenance worker to the unit. The worker took a quick look, told the tenant he’d have to find lodging during the extermination process, and left.

Until Hillsborough County’s Code Enforcement Department contacted her more than two weeks later, Rendahl had not once contacted CC nor had she taken any further action. She had, however, kept busy telling other residents to avoid contact with CC, clearly attempting to isolate him and overtly blaming him for the infestation of the unit.

On Jan. 3, members of the IWW and the Tampa Solidarity Network (TSOL) united with CC, delivering a letter in response to Rendahl’s injustices. This letter demanded that she exterminate the bedbugs and provide alternative lodging if necessary. Rendahl retaliated against these demands by telling CC to vacate the premises for six weeks at his expense, even though residents do not typically need to evacuate the premises for this type of extermination. She also insisted that he make these arrangements by Jan. 31 or face eviction.

On Jan. 10, after several days of leafleting around the community to share CC’s story, he found a “notice of non-compliance” on his door, demanding that he vacate the premises within seven days to comply with a section in the

lease that provides the landlord the right to terminate the lease at any point if the tenant refuses to vacate an uninhabitable apartment. Rendahl cited a “licensed pest control agency” as the authority that was insisting that CC vacate his apartment for four to six weeks. However, the pest

control agency in question did not identify itself to CC or leave a business card. Further, Florida law states that if a landlord does order a tenant to vacate the premises because of bedbugs, the duration of the evacuation shall not exceed four days.

On Jan. 16, we in the IWW and TSOL organized a picket in front of the apartment complex. Our picket received an enthusiastic response from members of the community who were eager to express that they were no friend of Rendahl. Rendahl responded to the picket by calling the sheriff, who knows her all too well since she frequently uses the police as part of her intimidation routine. However, the police and we were aware of our right to protest publicly.

On Jan. 18, Rendahl finally caved in to our demands, giving CC a letter announcing that she would treat his bedbugs.

Even though Rendahl treated CC’s bedbugs and did not evict him, she is still complicit in the mistreatment of many of her other tenants. Her racism, lack of respect, and abusive behavior are not going unnoticed. TSOL is committed to further action if necessary and will stand with all working class people who wish to resist mistreatment at the hands of their landlords and bosses.

For more information, visit: <http://www.tampasolidaritynetwork.org>.



Photo: Donald Parkinson

# Organizing An IWW Branch In St. Augustine

By X362635

In midsummer 2012, five members of the Gainesville General Membership Branch (GMB) decided that the geographical distance between the branch and St. Augustine, Fla., precluded the kind of active organizing we wanted. Since then, we have focused most of our time and resources on establishing a GMB in St. Augustine. Our goal is to establish a branch that will focus on organizing workplaces and will also have a serious focus on community organizing around worker-related issues.

We all have experience in community organizing and most of us have been to at least one IWW Organizer Training (“OT 101”). We have a good social map of the community and its social leaders from previous community organizing. Since St. Augustine is dependent on the tourism industry, most of the workforce is paid near minimum wage or classified as private contractors who end up being paid less than minimum wage. Because St. Augustine is a small town, unofficial blacklisting and wage theft are commonplace. The city, and the state as a whole, are very unfriendly towards workers. Florida is a right-to-work state and one of only two states that has no Department of Labor (DOL). Since many of the businesses here are organized in such a way as to make them exempt from U.S. DOL oversight, workers have very little recourse when they have been mistreated.

The difficulties we face include a transient work population because of poor working conditions and limited opportunities. Additionally, many of our members are full-time students who also work for a living. We set an initial goal of having 12 to 15 solid members before applying for a branch charter to ensure we won’t be constantly scrambling to maintain enough members as people graduate from school or move on to different places. We have spent a great deal of time sharing knowledge and information and finding new resources about organizing.

We have also learned from articles in the *IW* about how to organize a GMB effectively. We take new members with us when we hold one-on-one meetings with fellow workers and other union-related activities, and we continually push each other to step outside of our comfort zones as we organize. As I write this, we have 14 members and are on the cusp of applying for a charter. We are learning the nuts and bolts of forming and running a democratic and transparent union.

We have organized community actions that have gained us publicity and made our presence known. We have a small workplace campaign underway in the food service industry and have been approached by employees of a local tourism business about helping them organize. We have also played a role in rejuvenating the remnants of the radical community in this area. A new Food Not Bombs chapter is forming, as is a chapter of the Florida Student Union at the local college. May Day will be returning to the area, and we hope to have a public memorial service for Workers’ Memorial Day on April 28. We are forming alliances with local, single-issue radicals and progressives in our community. Our members have been involved in direct action regarding Native American rights, and gender identity and sexual orientation issues.

We need to identify the social leaders in communities of color and establish organizing relationships with them. We also need to develop a strategy for connecting with the working class in the surrounding rural areas. The demographics of our current outreach efforts indicate that we will not make contact with roughly 70 percent of the working people in our area unless we make changes. We are also having difficulties in scheduling meetings that are convenient for the entire membership and are working on using electronic methods to get as much participation as possible. The One Big Union IS coming, and we are going to wobble St. Augustine.



Special

# Union Women, Can You Stand It?

By Joe Grim Feinberg

*“As we come marching, marching in the beauty of the day, / A million darkened kitchens, a thousand mill lofts gray, / Are touched with all the radiance that a sudden sun discloses, / For the people hear us singing: ‘Bread and roses! Bread and roses!’”*

Nobody seems to know exactly when, but some time after 1911 a song and an idea called “Bread and Roses” began to spread through the international labor movement. It was, apparently, about time. When James Oppenheim published his poem “Bread and Roses” in the December 1911 issue of *The American Magazine*, he attributed the song’s inspiration to “a slogan of the women in the West,” and indeed in those years the phrase seems to have been circulating among the Midwestern U.S. activists of the Women’s Trade Union League. This honorable origin was quickly overshadowed, however, by other historical developments.

The first development came on International Women’s Day, which celebrated its birth a few months before the appearance of Oppenheim’s poem. A socialist women’s movement was rising, just as “Bread and Roses” was given a tune (usually attributed to an arranger of labor and folk melodies named Caroline Kohlsaas) and began to make its rounds beyond the pages of literary magazines.

The next development was the 1912 textile workers’ strike in Lawrence, Mass., which has become known as the “Bread and Roses Strike.” No historical evidence shows clearly that the phrase “Bread and Roses,” whether song, spoken, or written, actually appeared during this strike, which was one of the largest and most successful in U.S. history, but labor legend would have it that the mostly-women strikers marched with banners declaring, “We want bread, and roses, too!” In the end, it matters fairly little whether the song inspired the strike and movement or whether the strike and movement inspired the song. Something was in the air.

*“As we come marching, marching, we battle too for men, / For they are women’s children, and we mother them again. / Our lives shall not be sweated from birth until life closes; / Hearts starve as well as bodies; give us bread, but give us roses!”*

It is interesting that the socialist movement would need a women’s movement to remind it that man does not live by bread alone. However, a corrective



Workers in the “Bread and Roses” strike of 1912. Photo: truthseekers.cultureunplugged.com

was in order to combat the increasingly one-sided economy focus of the Second International. If the struggle for socialism had taken on the appearance of muscular men who were demanding to fill their bellies—or worse, of hard-working men obediently waiting for inevitable economic development—it was high time to point out that “hearts starve as well as bodies.” Or better put: it is not just that we are unsatisfied with bread—because we still are eating only crumbs—it is that *there is no bread* unless it comes scented with roses. The material base is meaningless without “art and love and beauty,” which alone can redeem the ever-so-materialistic hunger of our ancestors:

*“As we come marching, marching, unnumbered women dead / Go crying through our singing their ancient cry 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!”*

But what are “art and love and beauty”? Are they not bourgeois categories, constructed by the separation of the refined bourgeois sphere of life from the artless, heartless, and ugly necessities of alienated labor? Does the gendering of these categories not mask the oppressive reality of working women with an idealized image of the non-working bourgeois wife? Can the proletarian achieve such fine things without unmaking herself as proletarian?

Yes, says the song, “As we come marching, marching”—the marching itself is what touches the darkened kitchens and gray mill lofts with the radiance of a “sudden sun.” The day is beautiful because the

people hear us singing: “Bread and roses! Bread and roses!” As we come marching, marching, we make beauty, we change what beauty means, we burst open the factory walls that keep beauty away.

*“As we come marching, marching, we bring the greater days. / The rising of the women means the rising of the race. / No more the drudge and idler – ten that toil where one reposes, / But a sharing of life’s glories: Bread and roses! Bread and roses!”*

This idea of a new, proletarian beauty found expression, for example, in Joe Hill’s 1914 depiction of “The Rebel Girl,” inspired by the great unionist Elizabeth Gurley Flynn who, among other things, helped organize the 1912 “Bread and Roses” strike:

*“Yes, her hands may be hardened from labor, / And her dress may not be very fine; / But a heart in her bosom is beating / That is true to her class and her kind. //... // That’s the Rebel Girl, that’s the Rebel Girl! / To the working class she’s a precious pearl. / She brings courage, pride and joy / To the fighting Rebel Boy.”*

In 1940, Woody Guthrie heaped similar praise on his “Union Maid”:

*“There once was a union maid, who never was afraid / Of the goons and ginks and the company finks / Or the deputy sheriff who made the raid. / She went to the union hall, when a meeting it was called / And when the Legion boys came ‘round she always stood her ground. // Oh, you can’t scare me, I’m sticking to the union ... / I’m sticking to the union, ‘till the day I die.”*

Nevertheless, it must be said that these gestures of sexual solidarity retained a male perspective of an ideal girl bringing joy to rebel boys, upstaging and embarrassing those sissies who are afraid to

rebel. By contrast, the most popular English-language labor song actually written by a woman is, significantly, about men:

*“If you go to Harlan County, / There is no neutral there / You’ll either be a union man / Or a thug for J. H. Blair. // Which side are you on, boys? Which side are you on? // Gentlemen, can you stand it? / Oh, tell me how you can? / Will you be a gun thug / Or will you be a man?”*

So wrote Florence Reece in 1931, during a violently suppressed Kentucky miners strike, and the words have been adapted to many a new strike since. But that strike stands out, because its two most famous protagonists were women and songwriters who lived among miners but did not (and were not permitted to) work in the mines themselves. For Reece, the woman’s role is that of an agitator who, as in Guthrie’s portrayal, upstages the less bold men, but who—unlike in Guthrie’s song—places chief responsibility on the men to get up and join her.

But Reece’s song, though it does mention bread (*“With pistols and with rifles / They take away our bread / And if you miners hinted it / They’ll sock you in the head”*), has little to say of roses. Something of roses can be found, on the other hand, in a song that probably inspired Reece, written to the same folk tune by “Aunt” Molly Jackson, the other well-known National Miners’ Union (NMU) agitator of Harlan County, Ky., 1930-1:

*“I am a union woman / As Brave as I can be; / I do not like the bosses, / And the bosses don’t like me. // Join the NMU, come join the NMU // The bosses ride fine horses / While we walk in the mud, / Their banner is the dollar sign, / Ours is striped with blood.”*

The bosses may have the sweetest bread, but the workers have a rose that does not wilt: a flag colored in struggle. The union woman demands roses, not because she is of finer, softer sensibility than men but because she was the first to recognize the beauty comes from fighting for bread.

For further information:

Timothy P. Lynch, *“Strike Songs of the Depression,”* Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2001.

Shelly Romalis, *“Pistol Packin’ Mama: Aunt Molly Jackson and the Politics of Folksong,”* Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1999.

Jim Zwick, *“Behind the Song: ‘Bread and Roses,’”* in *Sing Out! Vol. 46., no. 4 (Winter 2003), pp. 92-3.*

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*This piece was originally published in German in Malmoe, no. 58, March 2012.*

## IWW Workers Fight Wage Theft, Abuse At Portland Restaurant

Continued from 1

and requested to speak to the owner. What was management’s reaction? Workers were mockingly condescended to, the owner refused to come out of his office and workers were told they had to leave. The pictures of smiling employees that line the walls fail to hide the truth: if Yaw’s is a family, it would seem that support only goes one way, and any attempt to be heard is met with passive-aggressive animosity. The talk of community and values means nothing if, behind closed doors, theft, abuse and mismanagement is business as usual.

On the triumphant walk after the action, the sense of empowerment was evident as workers openly shared stories of being fired when they protested unfair conditions or refused to crumble in the face of the owner’s chaotic, abusive behavior. Cheers abounded as workers testified about their accomplishment and vowed to return if their demands were not met by Jan. 24. “We didn’t let them scare us!” said Sabrina, one of the workers.

They didn’t have to wait long, as the

owners and management immediately attempted damage control. Management began contacting workers individually in order to avoid paying all those involved, but solidarity won out and workers held firm to their “all or nothing” agreement. By mid-week, it looked like Yaw’s had caved as the group was told that they could come pick up their checks later in the week. However, as they insisted on coming together, they would have to be there before the restaurant opened, because management claimed that the group was “a mob” and “scary,” which might threaten their regular customers. Was it this group of parents and community members who were threatening, or was it the truth that the Yaw’s management was hiding from?

Sitting around the table of a nearby diner the group discussed how this meeting with management might play out. If management was going to change something, or leave anyone out, the workers weren’t going to stand for it. “We’re in this together all the way!” said a member of the organizing team as someone brought out the wage theft fliers that were to be

passed out to the community if all didn’t go as promised.

As the Yaw’s workers walked toward their former place of employment, the mood was tense. Moments later, there were smiles and triumphant cheers! As the workers filed out of the restaurant and gathered to take a photo with what they had earned, suddenly there were shouts and threats. “No pictures!” yelled the general manager who had overseen the settlement. As he threatened to call the police for trespassing if they didn’t leave immediately, the workers happily walked away, checks triumphantly raised in the air. They had won. Yaw’s had no power over their lives anymore.

“There are still people working there who have been stolen from,” observed one of the workers, “younger folks have kids...older folks are scared they won’t find another job. They take advantage of this.” Continuing on, another worker shared how they felt when their former co-workers saw the delegation enter the restaurant. “It was scary at first, but I saw the smiles on the faces of other workers...

I hope we gave them courage to fight, too,” said the worker.

According to their website, Yaw’s claims that they “...want you to feel that Yaw’s is really your restaurant. Our goal is to treat you like the boss, and do everything we can to make sure that you leave your restaurant happier than when you arrived.” For the first time, Yaw’s employees have made this true. Acting together as one, they have shown that they will not stand for being stolen from. But it wasn’t just about the money: “Yaw’s didn’t show respect to anybody!” said one organizer, “you busted your butts and were never showed any appreciation!” Something significant has happened in the lives of these people and they certainly left Yaw’s happier than when they arrived. Workers’ solidarity had won the day, but the fight is never over, as one worker said, “I have a very strong feeling that this is just the beginning.”

For more information, visit: <http://www.portlandiww.org>, <http://www.wearegoregon.org>, email [pdx.foodworkers@iww.org](mailto:pdx.foodworkers@iww.org), or call 503-231-5488.

Special

# Anti-Assimilation, Radical Queer Tendencies & Class Struggle

By Gayge Operaista

*A critique of how anti-assimilation politics of many radical queer tendencies ignores class struggle, and recasts queer liberation in terms of the class struggle, countering the worst excess of identity politics with an introduction to models of class struggle.*

A really big, important concept in radical queer thought and struggle is anti-assimilation, which, at its most basic, is the idea that, “we don’t want to elevate our position in the social order by becoming as much like the straights as possible.” Clearly, there are a wide variety of possible positions that could be described as anti-assimilationist by that decision—from the communist position of “abolish the present state of things, the revolution is giving birth to a new world” to a very reformist view that just seeks to allow all genders, sexualities, expressions, etc... to be put on an equal footing. Between these two very different poles lie most people who would describe themselves as “anti-assimilationist.” In fact, I bet many who read this would point out that the very limited, reformist view of anti-assimilationism is not held by many who would use the term.

I feel that a lot of radical queers (and even anarcho-queer tendencies) tend to fall somewhere in the middle. There is the realization that things other than heteronormativity need to be abolished, but there is a serious lack of class struggle content that stems from a poor understanding of very basic concepts we use when we speak of class struggle. The root misunderstanding of many radical queers is not getting that class is a social relation. In particular, it is the relationship to the means of production.

At the most basic, we have the proletariat (the working class) that has no access to the means of making/acquiring the necessities of life, and thus must sell their labor power (go to work each day) so they can acquire said necessities. We have the bourgeoisie (capitalists), who own the means of production, and buy the labor power of proletarians so that the

labor is used to transform commodities into other commodities. They sell the commodities, and out of that, pay their workers some of the value of their labor and keep the rest of it. We call this last bit “exploitation,” as the capitalists take surplus labor value from the workers (in the sense that the worker can survive to the next day on the value they are paid in wages). Sure, we can talk about stratifications in classes, petite vs. grande bourgeoisie, etc..., but that’s really not important to the very basic understanding we’re going for here.

This understanding is central to the critique of the concept of “classism” and, if you come from an anti-oppression/social justice background, is nothing like the definition of class you’ve seen over and over. That definition revolves around sociological factors such as education level, type of work done, and cultural cues. Often times we’ll see the small business owner and the office worker both placed in a “middle class” and “working class” as code for working poor. While stratifications within classes are meaningful and worth talking about, particularly those in the working class, they’re not the core of what class is about. By ignoring the relationship to the means of production, the sociological model of class naturalizes the capitalist organization of society.

The deployment of a sociological definition of class lets one talk about classism, the idea that class is nothing but systemic prejudices where there are a hierarchy of classes going on, each one privileged over the ones below it and oppressing the ones beneath. This deployment also lets one define that class is reducible to something much like race or gender or sexuality, making it one more thing to try and undo oppression in, rather than abolish.

Thus, we have a fundamental misun-



Graphic: libcom.org

derstanding of what class is, leading to a massive strategic error in what to do about it. A strategic error that has us set aside the central goal of the anti-capitalist movement: the working class, through its self-directed struggle, as a class breaking free from capitalist social relations and destroying them. We replace this with the much less inspiring goal of getting one social class to be nicer to another.

The more important effect of this, for purposes of this discussion, is that now class can be “safely” ignored most or all of the time or reduced to some anti-oppression speak. This allows us to construct an anti-assimilationist politic that doesn’t include whether mass organizations are mainly serving bourgeois interests or proletarian interests. For instance here are two short critiques of the classic assimilationist lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) organization, Human Rights Campaign (HRC).

First, the “classism” critique:

“HRC seems to really only represent the interests of white upper middle class gender normative cis (short for cisgender, or someone whose gender identity matches their anatomical gender at birth), lesbians and gays. I think it’s classist that even when they talk about the economic benefits of marriage, they assume either partner actually has health insurance. They don’t seem to present any options for queer youth who have difficult times in their families of origins and now have to resist the military being presented to them as a way out. As an organization, HRC is pretty classist.”

Now, a more class struggle critique:

“HRC is clearly an organization that represents bourgeois interests. Their agenda comes from the top-down, and they don’t offer opportunities for working-class queers to participate in decision making processes—just raise funds and market a brand. While marriage presents real economic benefits to some working-class queers, the way HRC has made all queer struggle about marriage and channeled that struggle into electoral and legal campaigns where it is controlled by politicians and big law firms has sapped a lot of the energy to struggle from a lot of working-class queer communities. They have taken away from attempts to gain survival and moderate term needs of working-class queers: access to health care, strong self-organization of the working class to help protect ourselves from homophobia and transphobia in our workplaces and neighborhoods, networks of mutual support, and so on.”

## Inverted Hierarchies: Substituting Struggle for Liberation with Horizontal Hostility

First, to define what I mean by an inverted hierarchy: I mean the valuation of people by some trait/identity/social position, in which a community, scene, or milieu that values people in terms of that trait as the inverse of how the large society views them. For instance, people who conform to their assigned gender roles have an easier time in the larger society; in queer communities (some) gender nonconformity is often seen as making someone more queer, and often results in a better social position within the subculture. Of course, this interacts with a strong preference for masculinity in queer communities. Similar things occur around sexual practices, number of partners, etc... The specific instances are not important here, just the concept.

How does this arise? Well, without a coherent model that both has the poten-

tial to unite the majority of humanity in a common struggle and that sees exploitation and oppressions as part of a social structure (the capitalist mode of production), one is left with various oppressions floating around, sometimes intersecting, sometimes not. Even the attempts to create a coherent, overarching model that puts all oppressions (and generally views class as a system of oppression, rather than a relationship to the means of production), tends to view them as an ever-shifting mass where everyone is oppressing everyone else in some way.

This model where all straight people systemically oppress all gays, all cis people all trans people, and so forth, sets us up for a struggle of everyone against everyone. Combined with the individualism that is hyper-present in the United States, there’s a motivation to show that oneself is less of an “oppressor” than everyone else around them. Thus, what we call the Oppression Olympics occurs—everybody tries to prove they are the most oppressed, and so they are the most valid because everyone else around them is participating in their oppression. Therefore, the people who can claim the most oppressed identities get the most cred. Now, of course, there are the real effects that the actual stratifications built into the working class by things like racism and sexism have on people’s lives—the person who is the “winner” and at the top of these inverted hierarchies is generally not the worst off; they just played the game the best.

I instead propose a model that states the following:

1) The class struggle is the motor of history: the autonomous struggle of the working class and the reactions to this by capital drive history along. Social revolution can only be achieved by the working class itself.

2) Oppressions have been built into the working class and produce stratifications in it; struggle against these oppressions are part of the class struggle.

3) While some members of the working class may have privileges, both real and apparent, over other members of the working class, those privileges are far less than what could be achieved in the moderate and long term through unified struggle.

4) It is less than useful to talk about oppressions on an individual level—individual circumstances in someone’s life, although they are affected by race, gender and sexuality, mean these are not in any way strict determinants of anything on the micro-level. It’s far easier and more useful to talk about groups of, say, women, than being able to say exactly what all the effects sexism has on one woman. Besides, we struggle as a class and as sections of the class, not as individuals.

5) Identity labels don’t even work well on the individual level—there are too many shades of gray and too many fuzzy boundaries such that we can conveniently box in every single individual in an unproblematic way. Not only is determining someone’s value based on these categories undesirable, it’s also problematic.

6) While groups within the working class can and often must struggle autonomously, those struggles need to return to and generalize throughout the rest of the class as they progress. The struggle for queer liberation is not against straight people; it is part of the struggle against the bourgeoisie, as homophobia and transphobia arose out of regulations on gender and sexuality that were enforced by the bourgeoisie during the birth of capitalism to insure that there was adequate production of future labor.

Of course, nothing I am proposing for a model here is new—it merely draws on the rich libertarian communist tradition.

*This piece originally appeared in “Autonomous Struggle of the Glittertariat, Part 1 and 2.” It was reprinted with permission from the author.*

## The White Knights Of The Pro-Life Movement

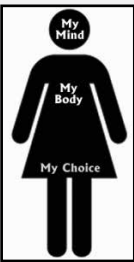
By Zac Smith

There are two ways that an opponent of abortion rights can view a woman who recognizes her right to have an abortion: as a wicked child-killer, or as a helpless maiden held captive by the pro-choice dragon.

The latter view characterizes the outlook of Abolish Human Abortion, a pro-life activist group of moderate visibility on the University of Oklahoma campus and with over 22,000 “likes” on Facebook. Appropriators par excellence, members of Abolish Human Abortion refer to themselves, utterly without irony, as “abolitionists,” and juxtapose their own images with pictures of Frederick Douglass, Harriet Beecher Stowe and Josiah Wedgwood’s “Am I Not a Man And a Brother” emblem. The circulation of graphics around social networking sites is their principle mode of activism.

Unlike some other anti-abortion-rights groups, Abolish Human Abortion prefers to depict women as victims, not perpetrators. One graphic with a vigorous 322 Facebook “shares” declares that Planned Parenthood engages in “putting women in pretty pink shirts and tricking them into believing that the key to female liberation is killing unborn children.” Another graphic, furnishing an example of the organization’s proclivity for the dramatic, depicts Planned Parenthood as an advancing Nazi army, declaring, “They are coming for your neighbor! Will you come to her rescue?”

Out of a desire to protect women from harm, these “abolitionists” end up supporting measures that deprive women of the right to govern their own bodies. No doubt, choosing to cast women as



Graphic: addictinginfo.org

helpless, and therefore blameless, victims seems an act of compassion and understanding. But, like the character Inspector Javert in “Les Misérables,” who persecutes a blameless man out of a sincere desire to do right, these are people who have gone horribly awry out of roughly benevolent but ill-considered motivations.

The fundamental error committed by these “white knights,” who have inflicted so much collateral damage in their battles against imaginary dragons, is that they neglect the importance of supporting others’ autonomy as well as their material well-being. They express their desire to prohibit abortion as a desire to save women from making a harmful decision; it completely escapes them that deprivation of the ability to direct one’s own life is the most harmful imposition of all.

In essence, the view of the “white knight” pro-lifer is that the well-being of the unenlightened cannot be risked by allowing them to make their own decisions—an attitude which can also be seen among those on the Left who fear that the salvation of the masses might be spoiled if the masses themselves, with all their ideological impurities, are allowed to interfere with the process.

Pro-lifers who condemn women who support abortion rights as “baby killers” do, to some degree, acknowledge women as autonomous beings, rather than as inert objects, blown to and fro on the winds of the pro-life and pro-choice movements. Seen from this angle, the pro-lifers who directly condemn women more fully recognize the rights of women than do the white knights.



Wobbly Arts

A Bitter Lullaby

**By John Kaniecki**  
Hello my name is Mother Jones roses are red  
I weep for all my children who haven’t been fed  
No jackets for the cold and no shoes for the frost  
Prosperity has come but with a bitter cost

My name is Mother Jones  
I sing a bitter lullaby  
Kings sit on thrones  
While workers perish and die  
Could you give me an honest answer why?  
I sing a bitter lullaby

I was a seamstress and a wage slave in my youth  
I awoke from America’s dream into the truth  
Early to rise working hard while the rich sleep late  
I’ve seen with my own eyes good cause for me to hate

My name is Mother Jones  
I sing a bitter lullaby  
Kings sit on thrones  
While workers perish and die  
Could you give me an honest answer why?  
I sing a bitter lullaby

They can break the body they can come steal the soul  
But a righteous Spirit only God can control  
And God almighty has seen their houses our prayer  
And God almighty has never set foot in there

My name is Mother Jones  
I sing a bitter lullaby  
Kings sit on thrones  
While workers perish and die  
Could you give me an honest answer why?  
I sing a bitter lullaby

I am a mother of the abused kin to the poor  
I preach revolution a necessary cure  
We’ll strike to be free from starvation wages  
And move away from these so called golden ages

My name is Mother Jones  
I sing a bitter lullaby  
Kings sit on thrones  
While workers perish and die  
Could you give me an honest answer why?  
I sing a bitter lullaby

Money is paper human beings alive  
You sip your rum while we can just barely survive  
Your possessions are too many your wealth immense  
Yet you lust for more your greed it just makes no sense

My name is Mother Jones  
I sing a bitter lullaby  
Kings sit on thrones  
While worker perish and die  
Could you give me an honest answer why?  
I sing a bitter lullaby  
From the grave hear my cry  
I live though I die  
I sing a bitter lullaby

Photo: motherjonesmuseum.org

Opinion

Guided By Great Feelings Of Love

**By X372936**  
A few weeks ago I enjoyed the experience of receiving my first tattoo. It was enthralling to watch a fellow worker imprint a work of art onto my forearm. To see the drawing on a piece of paper become a reality that is now forever a part of me as a result of the tact, patience, vision and skill of the artist was very cool. Forgive me for waxing romantic. There is a point to all of this.

The tattoo that is now upon my forearm is a solidarity fist with the letters L-O-V-E written on the knuckles. The solidarity fist is shaded in black while the letters across the knuckles are tattooed in red. To most of you the meaning of the solidarity fist and the black and red colors are quite obvious. But I want to share the meaning of the word “love” written across the knuckles. It is inspired by a quote from Che (Guevara) which goes something like this: “Let me say, at the risk of sounding ridiculous, that a true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love.” For me, being a revolutionary is preeminently about love. Yes, I am for being militant. Yes, I am for labor gaining control of both the means of production and their jobs. Yes, I am for the end of capitalism. But the motive behind all of these things, for me, is love.

It is an ever-present temptation for me to be caught up in identifying myself as a radical or revolutionary, and in a genuine sense, I am, and am proud to be so. I long for the growth of a new world that will

push out the old and ultimately replace it. I hate the old because I love myself, my neighbor, my fellow worker, and even the capitalist who is bound to a corrupting and dehumanizing system. I can make my whole identity that of “a worker.” After all, I’m damn proud to work with my brain and hands. But I’m more than a worker and so are you. I am a multi-faceted human being. I do like referring to my fellow Wobs and fellow workers-on-the-job as “fellow worker” but I generally prefer the term “sister” or “brother.” To me, it means that you and I are fellow, equal human beings; part of the one human family.

Even in writing this small article I think I feel what Che did when he said, “Let me say, *at the risk of sounding ridiculous...*” It’s disarming and fearful to speak of love. It’s what we all want but have experienced so little of. It is the impetus of solidarity, the foundation of a new world, the animus behind our opposition to hatred, oppression, exploitation, violence, war, sexism and racism. If you and I boast of being a radical and revolutionary or of merely hating capitalism, but we lack the deeper intangibles of love, the pursuit of justice, the desire for equality, and the liberation of both the oppressor and the oppressed, I fear that we may be off the mark. If we do bring in a new world where capitalism is abolished and replaced by



Graphic: deviantart.com

African Woman, African Woman!

**By Kusiima Daisy, member of the Uganda IWW**  
See how I am suffering  
A pot on my head  
A baby on my back  
Look at my clothes  
I look like a mad person  
African woman, African woman

My father did not send me to school  
Because Iam a woman  
My brothers are now ministers  
Traveling while seated  
But poor me I walk on bare feet like a cow  
African woman, African woman

They sold me for three cows  
Two goats and one jerry can of local brew  
One cow was taken by uncle  
Another one by villagers  
If I go back, they will not open for me  
African woman, African woman

Photo: Kusiima Daisy

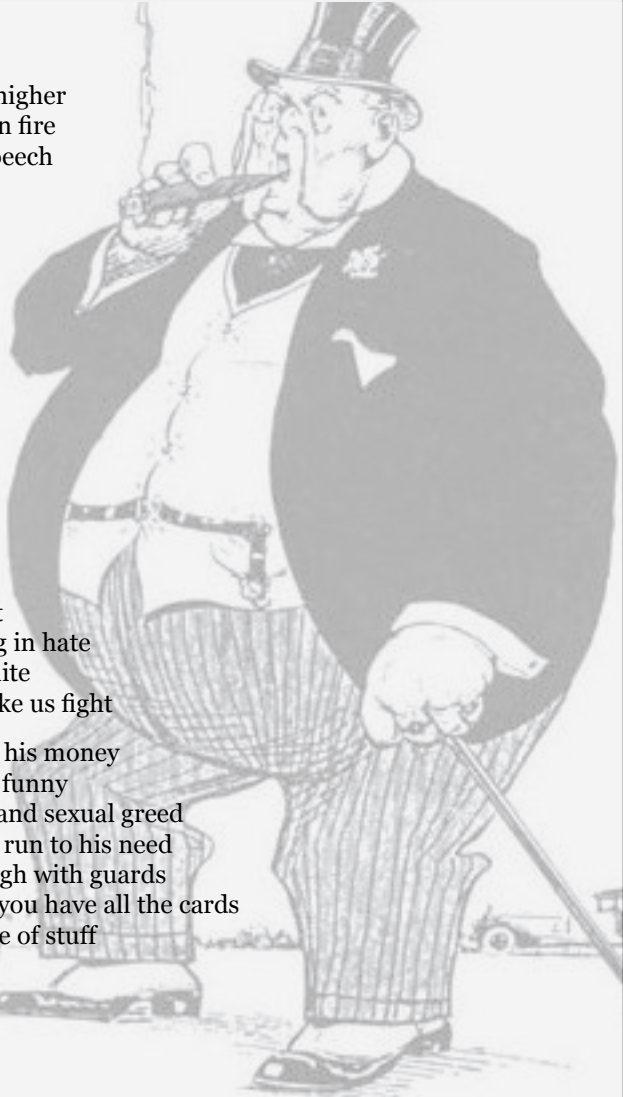


They Say

**By John Kaniecki**  
They say the fittest will rise higher  
But when we rise there is gun fire  
They say that there is free speech  
But they don’t let us teach  
Instead  
The books we read  
Are from Texas  
Where oil men  
Time and again  
Lie, cheat and steal  
To seal the deal  
And our young die  
As mothers cry  
And if we ask why  
They deny  
The youth  
The truth  
They say the country is great  
When the union is dissolving in hate  
Rich and poor, black and white  
They encourage war and make us fight

Somewhere a banker counts his money  
Laughing thinking all this is funny  
He has his heroine, cocaine and sexual greed  
At a snap of fingers servants run to his need  
His mansions have fences high with guards  
It’s like playing poker when you have all the cards  
Yet despite all the abundance of stuff  
He can never get enough  
There is no joy in his heart  
The world he will tear apart  
So his ego can grow  
They say the devil is red  
I say he’s a banker instead

Graphic: gaianeconomics.blogspot.com



of these comrades’ hearts, but it felt like there was more of an excitement about being “radical” than there was for showing a real love and solidarity with this particular community. Hopefully, I am mistaken in my assessment. Nevertheless, it was a needful lesson for me in terms of how I desire to proceed as a worker, a community member, and an organizer.

So I ask, do the words of Che register at all with your heart? If I was face-to-face with my General Membership Branch I don’t know if I would even have the boldness to say what I have written. I would be far more comfortable sputtering out a string of curse words against my employer and the evils of capitalism. To speak of love simply sounds too ridiculous. Notwithstanding, I believe that what I have written is true and that love is a great and powerful force. In a world system that is founded on exploitation, oppression, lies, death, murder and inequality, love is very radical. I am not speaking of an abstract over-emotional or sentimental idea of love. I am speaking of a practical way of treating my fellow humans, of organizing my community in such a way that necessities, resources, decision-making and labor are shared by all. A love that will make me just as proud of being “normal” in a new world as it does now to be a “radical” in the old. To wrap it up I will now make Che’s words my own, “Let me say, at the risk of sounding ridiculous, that a true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love.”



Reviews

# A Graphic Illustration Of Occupy Wall Street

McMillan, Stephanie. The Beginning of the American Fall: A Comics Journalist Inside the Occupy Wall Street Movement. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2012. Paperback, 144 pages, \$16.95.

By Dr. Zakk Flash, Curator, Central Oklahoma Black/Red Alliance (COBRA)

Stephanie McMillan, along with her illustrated comrades, recounts the burgeoning influence, successes, and failures of the global justice movement and Occupy Wall Street in particular, from hopeful inception to uncertain future in her latest graphic novel, “The Beginning of the American Fall.” The novel attempts to encapsulate the early days of the movement (and the artist’s own radical roots) through expertly illustrated comics and connective essays.

Winner of the “poor man’s Pulitzer,” the 2012 Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award, the book follows McMillan from

her beginnings as an environmentally-conscious college activist to her growing radical awakening. Narrated by McMillan (and placing her firmly in the action), the story weaves together the artist’s own sensitive reflections with socio-political context. McMillan herself comes across as a participant of great optimism and enthusiasm, tracing the arc of her own expectations with the movement’s limitations.

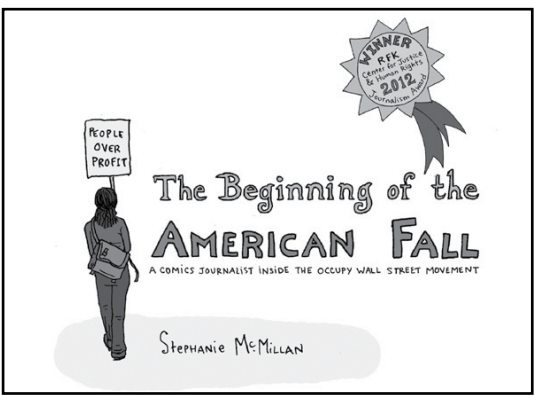
Even as the social movements of the current era draw heavily on the experiences of the 1960s in terms of slogans and courses of action, the medium of this book brings clarity and accessibility in an art form that captures the political and cultural foment of that period for a good number of today’s activists. While not precisely in the spirit of irreverent, anti-capitalist underground works like Zap Comix, the artwork does succeed in capturing the energy and emotion of Occupy Wall Street and its precursors in a style that is both engaging and clear.

McMillan is no stranger to this type of illustrated social commentary; she’s drawn and overseen the syndication of the daily Minimum Security strip since 1999 as well as the acclaimed Code Green weekly. Her work as an activist with One Struggle, Hands of the Haitian People Coalition, and Stop the Machine provide her work as an artist a voice more directly empathetic than the newspapers, even as they cover the same events.

McMillan is a gifted illustrator and “The Beginning of the American Fall” succeeds as a profoundly honest graphic primer, but the work is not without its own limitations. The panels, which are colorful and often hopeful, fail to capture the messiness of radical movement-building and the insanity of the capitalist death spiral. The pared-back visual style relies too heavily, at times, on accompanying observations to drive the message home. Fawning platitudes from peripheral characters on the nature of resistance seem to blunt the story somewhat, especially in regards of what is to be done. Non-objective writing gives way to promotion of other activists and their work. Perhaps this is to serve as introduction, but often it seems more like simple sponsorship. The condensed format of the book makes it difficult to overcome some of these barriers, but McMillan succeeds admirably in her analysis and explanation of the global justice movement, making these issues insignificant in the whole of the work.

No one claims this volume to be definitive. While it is tempting to criticize the book for what it does not include, the subtle, yet powerful story presents a compelling and persuasive argument for justice.

As a biographical narrative, the story is a sympathetic portrayal of an attempt towards an egalitarian, bohemian and



Graphic: stephaniemcmillan.org

completely rebellious future. Snippets from speeches and books incorporated into the narrative provide an opportunity for an engaged audience to seek more. The visual approach and accessibility of the work provides a jumping-off point that is simple, honest, and an insight into the cultural impulses of the moment.

McMillan’s tale is generally more interested in the human story than official documentation. It isn’t a comprehensive examination but one that dissects a system that has increasingly been shifting wealth upwards.

“The Beginning of the American Fall” steers clear of the gentrified graphic novel trap, daring to repudiate capitalism while knocking those who use populist sloganeering without deeper analysis. McMillan gamely identifies reformist attempts to make a gentler capitalism as a palliative to nullify radicalization and should be commended.

Occupy Wall Street has elicited wildly divergent opinions as to what the movement means in the short-run and what the future portends. With nimble illustration and idealistic wonder, Stephanie McMillan has contextualized her personal insight on the movement and what it means for planetary survival, egalitarianism and real human freedom. She’s made a damn good read while doing so.



A page from “The Beginning of the American Fall.”

Graphic: dailycartoonist.com

# The Importance Of Self-Reflection In Achieving Revolutionary Change

Ananth, Sriram. Across the Sabarmati. Broken Shackles Press, 2012. Paperback, 254 pages, \$14.99.

By FW db

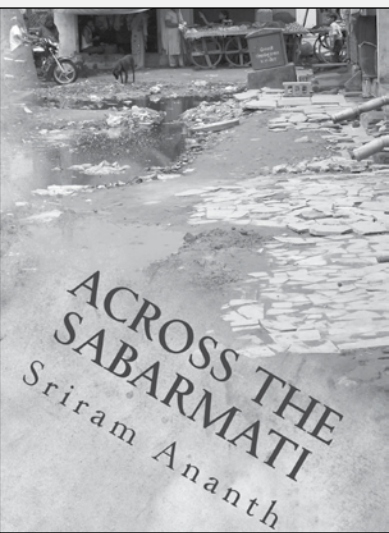
How do people change? What are the steps that it takes for someone from a privileged class, gender and ideological position to become a revolutionary?

What failures might we suffer along the way? What lines do our movements still need to overcome?

What does this mean in real life? In my life?

To me, these are the questions asked and unpacked in the insightful “Across the Sabarmati”—a new and first novel by one-time Fellow Worker Sriram Ananth.

And despite the author’s insistence that the “quality of writing hovers between mediocre and average,” the book unfolds with compelling and daring self-reflection, unpacking his experiences in the aftermath of a recent grisly history that is both important and largely unknown outside the author’s native India—the Hindu fascist riots in Gujarat that killed thousands of innocent working class



Graphic: acrossthesabarmati.files.wordpress.com

Muslims and others in the winter of 2002.

It is also a stunning portrayal of a particular period of time of street-level fascism in India, one that is perhaps gone, but perhaps not. Fascist upsurges are an inevitable consequence of the racist capitalism that defines our lives, and can only be stopped by eliminating its roots in the system itself, an important insight well beyond India. This warning and lesson

transformed the author into adulthood, birthed him a new life, and burdened him too with the question of revolution and solidarity across class lines and now, across oceans as well.

As part of an internationalist workers’ movement and as an organization of new, experienced, and growing organizers who are increasingly facing the need to diversify who we organize with, honest books like this are an invaluable contribution to our collective coming of age.

I can only hope that more workers take the time to write the important realities of their lives, stresses, mistakes, repetitions and all. After all it is in our lives—not in a fantasy—that we have a world to win.

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Analysis

# “Sheltered” Sweatshops: No Lifeline For Disabled Workers

By Jordana Sardo,  
Freedom Socialist

Employed in a publicly funded sheltered workshop in Beaverton, Ore., Paula Lane has earned as little as 40 cents an hour. Lane, who has autism and an anxiety disorder, works with 100 other people with mental and physical disabilities. She is also a plaintiff in a class action lawsuit, the first of its kind, filed in January 2012 against the state of Oregon. The case of *Lane v. Kitzhaber* seeks to find these segregated job programs in violation of the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the 1973 Rehabilitation Act.

Sheltered workshops hire people with disabilities to do simple labor, such as folding bags, packaging gloves, and shredding paper. The only non-disabled people that the workers interact with are staff and managers. Their jobs don’t offer training for advancement, and environments can be noisy, crowded and hazardous.

While promoted as stepping stones to mainstream employment, these ghettoized workplaces are often nothing more than sweatshops. The National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) published a scathing critique, called “Segregated and Exploited: the Failure of the Disability Service System to Provide Quality Work.” The report said that these job sites “have replaced

institutions in many states as the new warehousing system,” one that “keeps people with disabilities in the shadows.”

### Sweatshop Wages Made Legal

A provision in the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) allows employers to pay disabled workers subminimum wages according to supposed productivity, based on a percentage of what someone in the integrated workforce would make. Curtis Decker, NDRN’s executive director, writes that most workers are paid “only a fraction of the minimum wage, while many company owners make six-figure salaries. Many people profit off their labor.” Businesses running the workshops can receive government subsidies equaling as much as 46 percent of their annual revenue.

Segregated workshops began in the United States in the mid-1800s, when the Perkins Institute for the Blind created jobs “sheltered” from competition with nondisabled workers. Compared with institutionalization, the concept was considered cutting edge and grew in popularity.

A different light was cast on sheltered workshops with the 1963 passage of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act. The act prioritized support and opportunities that promote independence, productivity, and integration into the broader community,

with an emphasis on employment. However, an amendment broadened the FLSA definition of disability, and this increased the number of workers that could be paid below the federal minimum wage and made sheltered workshops more prevalent.

Ten years later, the 1973 Rehabilitation Act stressed the importance of comparable wages, including for those with significant disabilities. But in 1986, the FLSA was amended again to remove any specific minimum wage floor for people with disabilities, making it even more profitable for employers to exploit them.

Supporters claim sheltered workshops provide a safety net for disabled people and are even more important now because of how hard the economic crisis has hit disabled workers, whose unemployment rate rose to a staggering 77 percent in 2011. But super-exploitation in segregated warehouse conditions is barbaric, not a remedy.

### Lawsuit Could Set Precedent

*Lane v. Kitzhaber* alleges that Oregon violates the ADA and Rehabilitation Act because of its overuse of sheltered workshops and “failure to timely develop and adequately fund integrated employment services.” It asks the federal court to direct the state to provide the services disabled workers need to participate in



Developmentally disabled workers do services for a job placement agency.

Photo: socialism.com

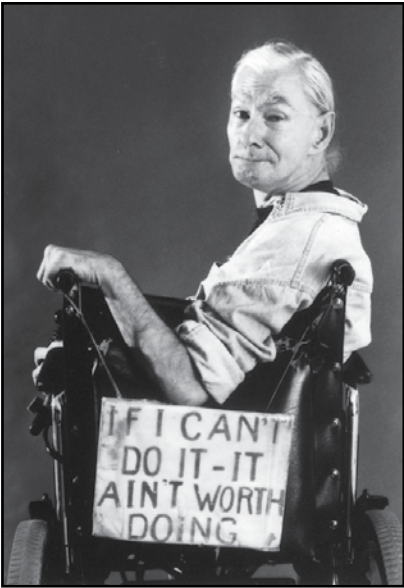


Photo: Matt Gatton, truelives.org

mainstream, integrated settings. The case goes to trial in 2014.

Opposition to sheltered workshops is growing. The U.S. Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division filed an amicus brief supporting the Oregon plaintiffs. The National Council on Disability voted to develop model legislation that would phase out subminimum wage programs, and the National Federation of the Blind organized informational pickets against Goodwill.

Sheltered workshops need to be replaced with humane job opportunities that provide living wages, training and respect. Like other victories for civil rights, it will take a mass movement to end this appalling discrimination. And, because disabled employees are workers, organized labor should lend its strength to that movement.

*This piece originally appeared in Freedom Socialist newspaper, Vol. 34, No. 1, February-March 2013.*

Opinion

# One Wobbly’s Idea For A Five-Point Plan To Overturn Capitalism

By X364060

The economic system of capitalism is the heart of our suffering and oppression. The current planners of our economy are not doing a very good job. This is made evident by high levels of hunger, homelessness, unemployment and underemployment; the state of the health care industry; and current environmental conditions amongst many other factors.

We supposedly believe in democracy, but economic democracy is conveniently taboo.

In the IWW, we believe that the working class can organize to take democratic control of the means of production—the economy. We can plan production in a way that meets everyone’s physical needs first, emotional, intellectual and other comfort needs second, and that successfully provides all able workers with useful employment for four hours a day. The result would be a non-exploitative, just and ethical society where all suffering is kept to a minimum.

Today, we seem to be in a special era. European general strikes, the Occupy movement, Chicago teachers strikes and Walmart workers strikes, along with an impending climate catastrophe for humanity in the next 10 or so years signal the need for a unified movement. We need a movement for a fair and democratically-planned economy with no waste and no division of class: a movement for an economic revolution.

This can happen through a seven-year campaign initiated and led by the IWW. As a practical goal, a specific date of May 1, 2020, could be set. By this date all workers in all industries would transition to a workers’ council structure or—if the boss is being stubborn—we could stop acknowledging our boss’s and owner’s word and authority, occupy our workplaces, organize nested workers’ councils along the industrial union branch lines, and continue production and other workplace roles on our own terms: production for

use, not for profit. Occupation and repossession of our workplaces is lawful and ethical based on all the surplus value we have been “loaning” our bosses and owners for so long.

Former bosses and owners would be promoted from thieves to members of the working class. They would now have the privilege to engage in fulfilling work. The most competent workers would be promoted by democratic means to workers’ councils responsible for the following five areas: production quality, production quantity, workforce quality, workforce quantity, and equitable distribution of wealth. Workers’ councils—and not bosses—would now be responsible for these things.

The unemployed would be re-skilled and employed in the industries most important to the well-being of society: agriculture, food preparation and distribution, energy, housing, manufacturing of necessities, transportation, commu-

nication and education. The workforce, now containing the entire unemployed population, would be much larger than at present. Work hours could be reduced and workers redistributed to industries where they are needed most for the well-being of ALL members of society.

Now, having created an economy that is democratically controlled by workers and that meets everyone’s needs, political reformism becomes valid and beneficial. Revolutionizing the economy in this way would have already solved the problems of hunger, homelessness, healthcare, poverty, unemployment, unaffordable education, debt, Wall Street and the military industrial complex. Other problems of politics like the prison system, international policy, climate change, peak energy, political democracy and drug laws could now be reformed using our constitutional process. We would be able to fix our remaining problems without a debate about whether or not reformism props up the



Graphic: J. Pierce

capitalist system as capitalism will have ceased to exist.

### Five-point plan/timeline: Building from the bottom up

**2013:** IWW branches pass “Economic Democracy 2020” resolutions to convert our workplaces into worker-run institutions by May 1, 2020, and encourage other labor organizations to join the movement by passing similar resolutions. Workers begin organizing workers’ councils (job branches and industrial union branches) into a workable network.

**2014:** Workers organize workers’ councils statewide and at their workplaces, and organize a nested workers’ council structure.

**2016:** Workers’ councils begin meeting in their respective countries and plan the reorganization of production which will proceed after the economic revolution.

**2018:** Workers’ council nested structure is refined and international meetings begin to organize a global production strategy.

**2020:** Conversion of workplaces to worker-run institutions peaks leading up to May 1, 2020, with X percent of workplaces globally being controlled by the working class using democratic means through a nested workers’ council structure, that is, job branches and industrial union branches.

Capitalism falls and is replaced by economic democracy. The political system can now be reformed. This is a proposition for creating a new world within the shell of the old: one that is more just and democratic.

From this perspective, working for the long-term goal of replacing capitalism with a successful system at the same time fulfills our short-term goals of unionizing for our daily struggles. Of course, all the details remain to be worked out from the bottom-up in the messy democratic process. Is a unified Left possible?



# World Labor Solidarity

A COLUMN BY THE  
INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY COMMISSION

The IWW formed the International Solidarity Commission to help the union build the worker-to-worker solidarity that can lead to effective action against the bosses of the world. To contact the ISC, email [solidarity@iww.org](mailto:solidarity@iww.org).

## Migrant Olympic Workers Exploited In Russia

By Mathieu Dube

The Olympics are a scandalous display of opulence and, considering that a lot of people in this world are going hungry, consist of wasted resources. The preparations for the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia, are making a bad thing even worse. Human Rights Watch has released a report called "Race to the Bottom: Exploitation of Migrant Workers Ahead of Russia's 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi," which outlines particularly despicable exploitation of migrant workers that are building the state-of-the-art sites that will host the Olympics. The constructions have also caused expropriation of the local population without adequate compensation to make room for the numerous buildings that will host the athletic elite and the world media. The Russian government has furthermore enacted new policies to repress reporting on the issues brought forth by the Olympics preparations.

There are currently 70,000 workers building 136 sites to transform the small resort town into an Olympic city. Of these, there are 16,000 migrant workers from neighboring countries like Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Serbia, among others. The workers typically earn 55 to 80 rubles an hour, which roughly equates to between \$1.80 and \$2.60 (USD). The migrant workers face difficult working conditions such as 12-hour days with little rest, sometimes with only one day off a month. No overtime pay is being given, which is contrary to Russian law, which specifies a 40-hour week as well as at least one day off per week. The Human Rights Watch report is based on interviews with 66 migrant workers. Some of them reported that they were constantly cheated out of their pay, never receiving the full amount they were promised and in some cases were even denied their wages for weeks or months. They had to work a full month or even two before being given any form of remuneration. Some workers had their passports confiscated, didn't have access to employment contracts and lived in overcrowded and unsanitary employer-provided housing. Some workers who complained about their poor treatment were expelled from Russia after the employers reported them to the governmental authorities. In this position, a lot of workers prefer to suffer



Graphic: sportsfeatures.com

the abuse rather than demand fair and adequate conditions. This specific case exemplifies the vulnerability of workers when the workforce is made more "flexible," as is wanted by the current cheerleaders of neo-liberal capitalism.

What the *Wall Street Journal* called "Europe's largest construction project" in an article on Aug. 13, 2012, also caused the re-settling of about 2,000 families. In some cases, the government evicted the families by force, bulldozed their homes and didn't provide any compensation. The case of the Khlitov family is notably telling. Their two-story house, which hosted a man, his wife, his daughter and son-in-law as well as two grandchildren of young age was demolished last year. The Russian authorities claimed that they lived there illegally in order to expropriate them without compensation. The family had been paying taxes on the property and the land had been registered with the state for construction in 1994. Regardless, on Sept. 19, 2012, court bailiffs removed the family from their home and destroyed it to accommodate the construction of the Olympics infrastructure.

The Russian government, in a now-typical fashion, has started to restrict the capacity of journalists to report on the problems the Olympics are causing to the population and to the workers. They have also increased limitations on freedom of assembly. The government has enacted laws restricting the power of people to demonstrate and has re-criminalized libel which deters the press from naming contractors that exploit workers. Blogs and non-media websites that have reported on the Olympics preparations have been subjected to "denial of service" attacks in order to prevent access to the information they provide.

The report is available online on the Human Rights Watch website: <http://www.hrw.org>.



Graphic: blowe.org.uk

## Italian Solidarity With Hospital Strike In Florence

By John Kalwaic

On Dec. 12, 2012, workers at the Careggi University Hospital in Florence, Italy, called for a strike in protest of the agreement between management and the Italian Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro (CGIL) and Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori (CISL) unions. A demonstration took place that was called by the independent Confederazione dei Comitati di Base (COBAS) union and the anarcho-syndicalist Unione Sindacale Italiana - Asociación Internacional de los Trabajadores (USI-AIT); around 300 workers took part, including delegates from the Uil Careggi. They brought their union flags and the flags of COBAS; the



USI-AIT strike in Florence.

Photo: libcom.org

Unione Sindacale Italiana (USI) was also present. Both unions reported that they were satisfied with the rally.

With files from Libcom.org.

## U.S. Longshore Workers Block Walmart Shipment



Workers and activist block goods in South Carolina.

Photo: workers.org

By John Kalwaic

In response to a deadly factory fire that took place at a Walmart supplier in Ashulia, Bangladesh, on Nov. 24, 2012 (see "Deadly Factory Fire Spurs Protests," January/February *IW*, page 12), activists targeted a ship called the Maersk Carolina

that was set to unload Walmart goods at Port Elizabeth, N.J. At this action, which occurred on Dec. 18, activists tried to block the shipment in protest of Walmart's unsafe factory conditions in Bangladesh. The activists received a good reception from the longshore workers but were driven away by the police. On Dec. 20, in Charleston, S.C., activists once again tried to block a shipment of Walmart goods from the Maersk Carolina. This time the activists were successful, at least for a time, in blocking the shipment, as longshore workers from the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) joined in and refused to unload the Walmart goods. The ILA was on the verge of a strike when the incident happened and may have spurred the action.

With files from Labor Notes and Workers World.

## Spanish Locksmiths Refuse To Aid In Foreclosures

By John Kalwaic

In 2012, more than 50,000 families in Spain were evicted for failing to pay rent or were foreclosed on for not being able to pay their mortgages. According to *The World*, banks and government authorities have been evicting or foreclosing on an average of two families a day in recent months in the Pamplona region. A handful of people committed suicide after learning they would be evicted. In response, a dozen or so locksmiths in Pamplona have been refusing to aid the banks in evicting or foreclosing people from their homes by refusing to change



Graphic: mooreslockandkey.com

the lock on the doors. One locksmith, Iker de Carlos, told local television stations the he and his fellow locksmiths could no longer ignore suffering of local residents.

"We're people, and as people we can't continue carrying out evictions when people are killing themselves," De Carlos was quoted as saying in *The World*, referring to the suicide of a woman who jumped from her balcony as authorities arrived to evict her.

The bank cannot officially foreclose on a home unless the lock is changed.

With files from The World.

## Factory In Greece Under Workers' Control

From Libcom.org

As national unemployment in Greece climbs to 30 percent while workers' income is approaching zero, the workers of Vio.Me. have decided to take action into their own hands. Sick and tired of empty promises and unpaid taxes by their employer since May 2011, the workers at Vio.Me., a building materials factory in Thessaloniki, who have been withholding their labor as the factory was abandoned by the employers, declared their determination not to fall prey to a condition of perpetual unemployment, but instead to struggle to take the factory in their own hands and operate it themselves. Through a formal proposal dated October 2011 they have been claiming the establishment of a workers' cooperative under full workers' control, demanding legal recognition for their own cooperative, as well as for all the others to follow. At the same time they have been demanding the money required to put the factory in operation, money that in any case belongs to them as they are the ones who produce the wealth of society. The plan was drawn up and met with the indifference of the state and of trade union bureaucracies, but it was received with great enthusiasm



Workers of Vio.Me. at the factory.

Photo: libcom.org

by the world of the social movements, which, through the creation of the Open Initiative of Solidarity in Thessaloniki and afterwards with similar initiatives in many other cities, have been struggling for the past six months to spread the message of Vio.Me. across society.

In a statement about their factory control, the workers wrote:

"The struggle should not be limited to Vio.Me. In order for it to be victorious it should be generalized and spread to all the factories and businesses that are closing down, because only through a network of self-managed factories will Vio.Me. be able to thrive and light the way towards a different organization of production and the economy, with no exploitation, inequality or hierarchy."

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