

+ SARAH JAFFE ON A
32-HOUR WORKWEEK

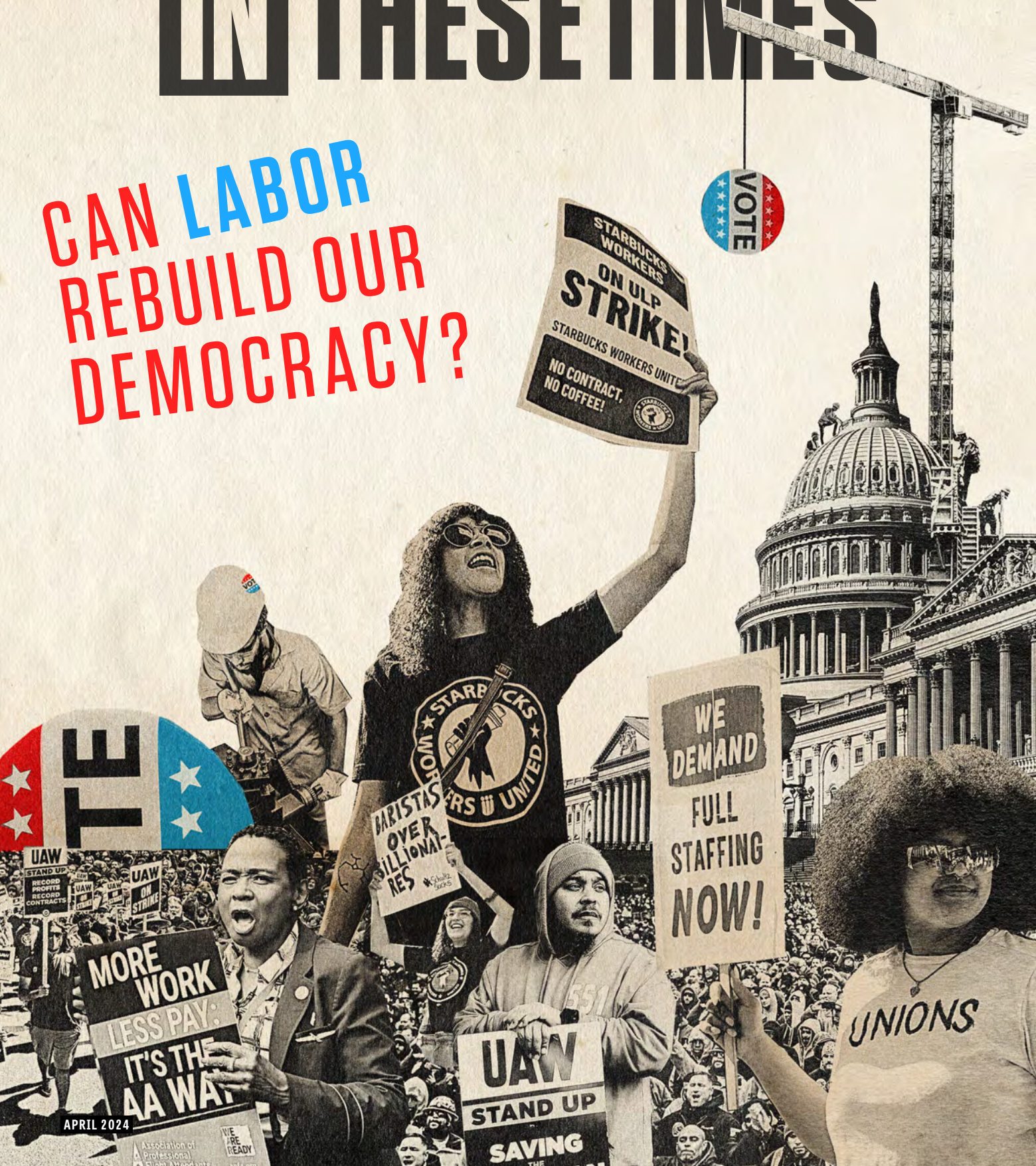
+ HAMILTON NOLAN
ON UFCW REFORM

+ KIM KELLY ON ALABAMA'S
"CONVICT LEASING"

+ SARAH LAZARE ON THE
UAW AND BELVIDERE

IN THESE TIMES

CAN LABOR
REBUILD OUR
DEMOCRACY?

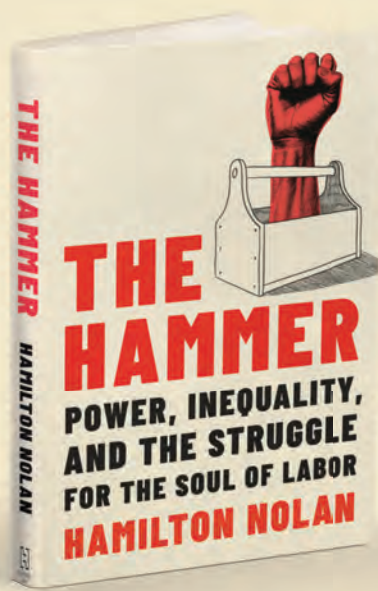


APRIL 2024

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A VITAL EXPLORATION OF THE AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT AND ITS CRITICAL PLACE IN OUR SOCIETY AND POLITICS TODAY



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Alabama's Slavery-Industrial Complex 12

Unions are suing Alabama for denying prisoners parole in order to lease their labor to places like Burger King

BY KIM KELLY



Revolt in Aisle 5

Faye Guenther's multi-year plan to revolutionize the grocery workers union

BY HAMILTON NOLAN

26



Anti-War Victory in Chicago

After Mayor Brandon Johnson's tie-breaking vote, Chicago becomes the largest U.S. city to demand an end to Israel's assault on Gaza

BY MILES KAMPF-LASSIN

9



Thank God It's Thursday

Unions push for a 4-day week

BY SARAH JAFFE

20

“ No political movement can be healthy unless it has its own press to inform it, educate it and orient it. ”
—IN THESE TIMES FOUNDER JAMES WEINSTEIN

IN THESE TIMES

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DISPATCHES

- 6 **LABOR**
How the UAW Brought Back Belvidere
BY SARAH LAZARE
- 8 **Can Tenants Take Back Bozeman?**
BY JOSEPH BULLINGTON
- 9 **Anti-War Victory in Chicago**
BY MILES KAMPF-LASSIN

CULTURE

- 34 **How Much Longer Must Palestinians Fight for Freedom?**
BY IMAN HUSAIN
- 38 **Comics**
- 40 **LABOR**
In Those Times
The Enduring Power of the Boycott
BY DAN MARSHALL

FEATURES

- 12 **LABOR**
Alabama's Slavery-Industrial Complex
BY KIM KELLY
- 20 **LABOR**
Thank God It's Thursday: Unions Push for a 4-Day Week
BY SARAH JAFFE
- 26 **LABOR**
Revolt in Aisle 5
BY HAMILTON NOLAN

DEPARTMENTS

- 3 **Editorial**
- 4 **In Conversation**
- 7 **This Month in Late Capitalism**
- 8 **Resist**
- 11 **The Big Idea:**
Good-cause eviction

ON THE COVER

Illustration by Lincoln Agnew

Can Labor Rebuild Our Democracy?

FOR SO MANY OF US, THESE ARE MOSTLY dark times interrupted by brief windows of hope—and the road ahead is daunting. No matter how this year's presidential election plays out, the contest's ultimate winner will surely be pessimism, one of the few things Americans across the political spectrum seem to be in alignment on: pessimism for the future, pessimism for possibilities of transformation, pessimism for the idea that justice will win the day.

We exist in a political system built on institutions seemingly unable to fulfill even the basic function of producing policies that huge majorities of Americans support, like lower prescription drug prices, less debt, increasing the minimum wage, a cease-fire in Gaza. It's no wonder that public polling shows, according to the Pew Research Center, that "Americans' views of politics and elected officials are unrelentingly negative, with little hope of improvement on the horizon."

There's little evidence that our political system is anything but broken, and confidence in these failing institutions—from Congress to the news media to organized religion to the Supreme Court to the White House—continues to decline.

The necessary conversations in our movement spaces are mostly quite simple: What's left? What's worth salvaging? What can we carry with us? For those of us who see the power and potential of organized workers, the questions are sharper: What has our crumbling democracy meant for working people? Where are the centers of power within our labor movements? And, most importantly, can unions and workers ultimately change the horizons we're walking toward?

(It is important to note that—from Starbucks Workers United to the United Auto Workers—we've seen some hopeful examples recently of unions setting such new horizons.)

One of our biggest challenges in answering these questions is that our politics—within labor, within our social movements—don't seem to evolve; they only stumble from crisis to crisis. We exist in an interconnected landscape that previous generations could never have imagined, but the algorithmically fueled engines of online interaction seem to divide and distract as much as they connect. The

panopticon of social media has actually served to atomize us, endangering the very idea of collective experience and action.

It would be a mistake to simply blame our pitfalls on technology. For all our talk of solidarity, we have to be honest with ourselves that our movements so rarely live up to anything that truly resembles and honors it. Part of this conundrum is a familiar dynamic—for many of us on the "practical Left," our view of the world has been defined by what we are not and the forces we are arrayed against. But the answers aren't as simple as saying "what we are for" and "what we are against," which can force us into cycles of reaction.



The necessary conversations in our movement spaces are mostly quite simple: What's left? What's worth salvaging? What can we carry with us?

Our response must be a refusal to allow our imaginations to be limited by our immediate needs—and recognize instead that the steps toward building a better world require setting our sights and horizons higher than mere survival.

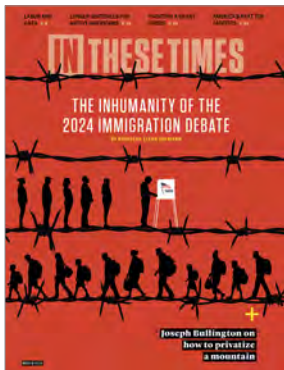
We desperately need these new horizons, and we need to raise them beyond the contours of our practicality.

Demonizing enemies is an adequate organizing strategy for the nihilist Right, which aims to hold onto power for the good of a handful of elites. If our project is not just defending democracy—but demanding and creating it—then we require a different approach.

We should open ourselves to seeing the signs of a bigger horizon wherever we can find them. Is the demand for a shorter workweek one that can help us lift our eyes? Can we imagine reconstructing our unions and organizations into ones that can respond to our real needs and hopes?

Labor is, indeed, the source of all wealth. The collective actions of those who provide that labor are the building blocks of democracy—and the way to construct new horizons.

**—ALEX HAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**



LANDING A BLOW

Bravo for Joseph Bullington's "How To Privatize a Mountain" (March). It is a thorough and engaging description of the insidious practice of federal land exchanges.

I have been monitoring exchanges in Colorado since 2009, when Western Land Group came calling to our neighborhood at the behest of two billionaires with simultaneous exchange proposals. Those experiences prompted the formation of Colorado Wild Public Lands, a nonprofit founded to watch over these practices in our state.

Bullington has eloquently described the personal toll of these exchanges and how they degrade the quality of life in communities that live around and use these lands. But the article does not discuss the larger public failings of the land exchange process.

The federal land exchange process trades important ecological, cultural and financial assets into private ownership.

There is no future protection (like conservation easements) for things like archaeological sites, sensitive species habitat and old growth forest. Nor does it protect local businesses that rely on grazing and outfitting permits for their income. The public usually loses riverfront access made ever more valuable by increased demand due to our growing populations of outdoor enthusiasts.

More importantly, the Forest Service goes to great lengths to withhold real estate appraisals from public scrutiny. This lack of disclosure perpetuates public ignorance of the financial windfall accruing to exchange proponents, and it allows the agency to circumvent informed public process.

Thank you for bringing attention to the current state of federal land exchanges. If they are to continue, we all must work to reverse current practices catering to private interests and ensure transparent processes resulting in transactions that overwhelmingly serve the public.

—ANNE RICKENBAUGH
Founding Member,
Colorado Wild Public Lands

It's not right that they can buy a few acres to block people from hundreds of public acres that now become someone's tax-free property, since no one

else can go there. There is enough public approval to change this. Something needs to be done.

—MOOSE2MOUSE
via Reddit

BIDEN AND IMMIGRATION

This is a lesson the centrist Democrats never learn ("The Inhumanity of the 2024 Immigration Debate," March): You will never be right-wing enough for the Republicans. We saw Biden talking about how tough this new border deal was and they just keep dunking on him and making him look like an even bigger fool.

—YOUNGWORKER160
via Reddit

It isn't so much Biden is letting Republicans set the terms of the debate; it's that his wing of the Democratic Party sees itself in a governing coalition with the Republican Party. To try to keep the coalition together, he tries to [move] further into their politics. Of course, the Republicans see Biden as the new Great Satan and will never team up with him on any social policy. So he is essentially trying to pet a rabid coyote with an infected tooth.

—LORD_OF_THE_BOX_FORT
via Reddit

Bending over backward while compromising all and receiving none from the other side and then suffering politically due to their spinelessness is straight out of the neo-liberal Dem playbook.

—JONATHAN H. CHILD
via Facebook

OUR LABOR, ISRAEL'S WAR

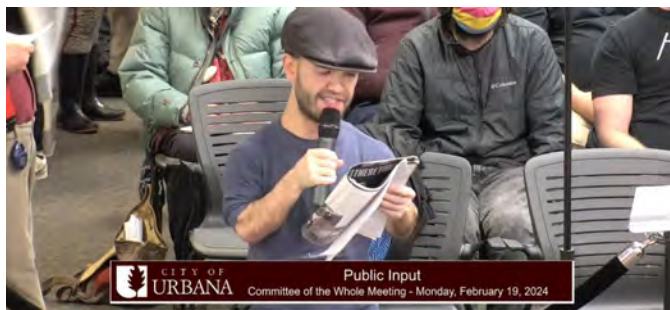
Paul Stauffer's piece, "Our Labor, Israel's War" (March), summarizes what every American should know about our individual responsibility in the horrors being put upon Palestinians in Gaza by Israel. Besides identifying the labor groups that work directly to create war supplies, Stauffer also reveals how other workers indirectly contribute to the genocide of the Palestinians. With all the urgent needs of our own citizens being ignored (healthcare, infrastructure, immigration, prison reform, climate change, education, etc.), our fractured government spends billions on their war machine—giving the Pentagon and American oligarchs our tax dollars to continue funding death instead of life around the globe. We need a revolution!

—DONNA SHANSKE
San Luis Obispo, Calif.

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Tell us what you like, what you hate and what you'd like to see more of by emailing letters@inthesetimes.com or tweeting @inthesetimesmag, or reach us by post at 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647.

ITT AS TESTIMONY



Visibly moved during public comment at an Urbana, Ill., city council meeting February 19, Benjamin Theobald urged the city to adopt a cease-fire resolution by reading Chicago teacher Dave Stieber's essay, "Our Union Called for a Cease-Fire. It's About Our Students" (Jan/Feb).

WHAT WE'RE WATCHING

"Our job is to taste free air. Your so-called boss may own the clock that taunts you from the wall, but, my friends, the hour is yours." A plethora of lines like this can be found in *Severance*, the thrilling Apple TV+ sci-fi series that follows a group of alienated employees—each having chosen to literally "sever" their work minds from their personal lives.

These characters' work-selves only get to exist while inside their employer's glossy,



sterile corporate labyrinth. Watching them attempt to turn their cynical resignation to their conditions into earnest, fearless organizing, will make you think about U.S. union activity, which has increased since the show's 2022 release.

With season two in production, there's never been a better time to enter the labyrinth of *Severance* yourself.

—THOMAS BIRMINGHAM,
FALL EDITORIAL INTERN

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

When I first read Kim Kelly's feature story (p. 12) about a lawsuit alleging forced labor in Alabama's prisons, the details almost didn't compute. "Totally unsupervised? \$200,000? Are you sure?" Kelly, an impeccable reporter, was sure: Alimireo English supervises an entire dorm of 190 prisoners by himself and does it without pay because he is himself a prisoner. Despite a 2021 acquittal and a release order, he's been denied parole. Meanwhile, his labor saves the state an estimated \$200,000 annually. The lawsuit alleges that English and others are indefinitely held for their free labor—or to work for private employers like Burger King.

Now, Alabama is spending more than \$1 billion on new prisons. It's easy to imagine the prison system swallowing up more and more residents, parole ever receding, in a dystopia worthy of Octavia Butler.

The irony is, there's no real profit in this whole scheme. The state still spends an estimated \$30,000 per prisoner each year. Imagine, instead, Alabama releasing English (and his entire low-risk dorm) one year early, with \$30,000 in their pockets. Unless anyone would choose years behind bars for \$30,000 (another dystopian scenario to reckon with), such a plan satisfies even free-market capitalist logic—Alabama saves more than \$5 million. And instead of exiting prison with no money to show for his 12-to-15-hour days, English can afford housing and a job search.

As Kelly illuminates, Alabama's exploitation of thousands like English only computes within the intertwined logics of union-busting and settler-colonial capitalism. The lawsuit itself traces today's practices to the convict leasing after chattel slavery that undercut unions and generated 73% of Alabama's revenue in 1898.

In other words, English's situation doesn't make any sense—until you realize the racism is the point.

Jessica Stites
Editorial Director

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How the UAW Brought Back Belvidere

BELVIDERE, ILL.—It's been more than five months since JC Bengtson, an autoworker for 24 years, lost his job. "I miss working," says the 55-year-old father of three daughters, all adults. "Right now, I am unemployed and waiting to hear back."

We are sitting in the union hall of United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 1268, in Belvidere,

Ill., not far from the sprawling Belvidere Assembly Plant. Bengtson worked there for 10 years before he was officially laid off in September 2023, right before his union went on strike. The auto giant Stellantis announced in December 2022 that it would permanently idle the facility that assembled the Jeep Cherokee, and by February 2023, the majority of jobs at the plant had disappeared. The company put 1,350 people out of work, though the total number of people impacted since cuts started has been far greater.

The closure was devastating to Belvidere, a town of 25,000 in northern Illinois. Several restaurants and a grocery store near the plant have already closed. The company's willingness to walk away from a plant, and a town, where it had operated since 1965 became a symbol of corporate callousness during the UAW's fall 2023 Stand-Up Strike against the Big Three: Ford, General Motors and Stellantis.

But then something stunning happened. The UAW strike won a 2023 contract that requires Stellantis to reopen the plant to produce mid-sized trucks by 2027. Stellantis also committed to locating a parts distribution hub, as well as a brand-new electric vehicle battery plant, in Belvidere. The UAW is heralding the electric vehicle plant as part of a just transition—a shift away from fossil fuels that doesn't leave workers behind.

"We went from no future to a future on steroids," Bengtson says. "My hope is to get back in there. We are waiting on the company to have a plan to bring us back."

The strike brought a closed auto plant roaring back to life, and then some. Or, at least, that's the guarantee on paper.

Bengtson is soft-spoken and careful with his words, quick to break into a smile. He has a white beard speckled with gray and showed up to our interview wearing a red UAW shirt. It

Above: Autoworker JC Bengtson points to an aerial view of the Stellantis plant in Belvidere, Ill., displayed inside the United Auto Workers Local 1268 union hall.

PHOTO BY SARAH LAZARE

THIS MONTH IN LATE CAPITALISM

seems everything in this union hall is stamped with the union's distinctive wheel logo, including the large wooden table in the conference room where we talk.

He tells me the same thing as the local's president, Matt Frantzen: We are pleased, but we will only believe it when we see the dirt being moved and the concrete being poured. They both say the company is not being forthcoming about what, exactly, the plan is, and the air is one of cautious—or outright uneasy—hope.

"It's historic that an idle plant was brought back—wow," Bengtson says. "Now the real work begins—getting them to follow through."

Stellantis announced in December it had called at least 165 employees back to work, and most are "processing parts for distribution to dealers at the warehouse located near the plant."

Bengtson is a millwright, a skilled tradesman who fixes mechanical equipment at numerous steps in the auto manufacturing process, from stamping to body to painting to assembly, as well as building maintenance. Thanks to the 2023 contract, he gets health benefits and supplemental unemployment benefit (SUB) pay amounting to around 74% of his previous full-time salary. According to Frantzen, around 815 members of the local are receiving SUB pay and are expected to get placed into jobs eventually, on top of those who returned in parts distribution. (At press time, Bengtson still had not been called back to work.)

"The fact you have an international leadership using leverage at the bargaining table to compel the employer to rescind a plant closing decision is something we certainly have not seen in many decades, if not unprecedented," says Barry Eidlin, sociology professor at McGill University who researches labor and social movements.

Under the UAW's new contract, workers have the right to strike the whole company over plant closures, as well as products and investments. So if the company does not follow through, it could have another work stoppage on its hands.

But for now, Bengtson's work stoppage is not by choice. While out of work, he has been volunteering once a month with his wife at the union hall to deliver food to community members in need, in partnership with a local food bank. The SUB pay still amounts to a significant pay cut, since he often worked more than 40 hours a week. "I want to make sure people understand we are not living high on the hog," he says.

When Frantzen describes what the future looks like for the local, honesty mixes with optimism. "This kind of extension is unprecedented," he says. "Now we are waiting on calls from the corporation. Is there work coming? How many more do you need this week?"

This article is a joint publication of In These Times and Workday Magazine.

SARAH LAZARE is the editor of *Workday Magazine* and a contributing editor for *In These Times*.

🔥 THE DEPTH OF THE U.S. HOUSING CRISIS

has reached new lows—literally. In California, multiple furnished cave encampments have been found where unhoused people have taken up residence. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court will soon rule on whether those sleeping outdoors can be arrested simply for not being able to pay rent. It's enough to make you want to crawl into a hole.



🔥 ONE IN FIVE CHILDREN IN THE UNITED STATES

is experiencing food insecurity, and more than 100 million Americans have medical debt. But even as global poverty is projected to continue for at least 200 years, the world's five richest men have seen their fortunes double since 2020—and we're set to have our first trillionaire within a decade! So remember to look on the bright side of life.

🔥 FLORIDA IS FACING AN EMPLOYMENT CRISIS

since it made immigrants more difficult to hire. Enter child labor. Republicans in the Florida House have passed a bill to allow 16-year-olds to work more than eight-hour days and more than 30-hour weeks—kids who are usually spending those hours in school. The bill's GOP sponsor unironically claims it "gets government out of [students'] way," as if protecting workers isn't exactly the point of labor law.

🔥 DESPITE THE WHOPPING \$3,500 PRICE TAG, the Apple Vision Pro virtual reality headset is being worn all over, from

subway cars to restaurants, as goggle-headed users trade real life for video images projected right into their corneas. But who are we to judge?

Maybe there's no climate collapse in the digital world.





BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA—Demonstrators and trade union members rally outside Congress in Buenos Aires on February 2 in protest of President Javier Milei's omnibus bill—a wide-ranging package to privatize public companies, increase taxes and establish an unfettered free market. Protesters called out Milei's hypocrisy for once claiming he'd cut off his arm before raising taxes. The newly elected president claimed the reforms will address the country's economic crisis, with inflation up to 200% and nearly 60% of the population below the poverty line. (Photo by Luis Robayo/AFP via Getty Images)

Can Tenants Take Back Bozeman?

BOZEMAN, MONT.—The old cracker box of an office building where Joey Morrison ran his recent mayoral campaign is under slow siege by the surrounding buildings.

Only a couple years ago, this area was a neighborhood of modest homes. Morrison explains they were all gutted, destroyed and bulldozed to make way for the walls of newly built

condos that now encroach from all sides. People used to live here, but—he gestures at the multi-story blocks of Lego-brick modern architecture—“they’re all short-term rentals now.”

Morrison co-founded a tenants union and built his mayoral campaign platform against the forces rapidly gentrifying this small city. He wanted his office here because it symbolizes the battle lines in Bozeman.

The new builds pressing in on Morrison’s campaign headquarters represent the business vision driving this area relentlessly toward its apparent destiny: to be a

sort of Western-themed amusement park positioned to grab piles of money from outdoors enthusiasts, remote workers and second-time home buyers. This vision has, for years, had the run of the place—and you can tell.

Luxury construction is booming up and down the Gallatin Valley, downtown has been overrun by boutiques full of Old West-themed pop art and high-end cowboy hats, tourists come and go from hundreds of vacation rentals, the owners of these second homes stuff their pockets—and the workers who power this economy find it

increasingly hard to live.

Many end up homeless, living in the shelter or in vehicles in vast camps on the city's margins. The number of people staying at the shelter has more than doubled in recent years. Benjamin Finegan, another co-founder of the tenants union, has seen surging housing costs push a lot of his friends and family—including his own parents—out of the area altogether.

It's all been so drastic and notoriously awful that "Bozeman" has become a one-word warning in the mouths of many Montanans—a lost cause and portent of what can happen to a town auctioned off to the outdoors industry.

Bozemanites themselves, however, are not going quietly: A spirited resistance movement led by Bozeman Tenants United exploded onto the scene recently to confront this wave of outdoory gentrification. And this movement—like Morrison—has been winning.

Morrison and Finegan helped found the tenants union after the Covid pandemic accelerated the city's affordable housing shortage. The union launched in 2022 with a campaign against second-home short-term rentals. Finegan describes the widespread frustration of seeing empty Airbnbs on every block while struggling "to find a place to live in the city you grew up in."

The city's commissioners, though, were mostly homeowners, so the main problem before the tenants union, according to Finegan, was how to make the commissioners feel renters' pain. To that end, in February 2023, the union arranged a town hall where four commissioners faced questions about where they stood

on affordable housing and short-term rentals. The 300 working-class audience members responded in real time, holding up paddles the union had handed out—one was green (for good), one red (for bad), and one was a picture of a waffle (for get a damn backbone).

"It created this very, very intense atmosphere ... that took the personal crisis that everybody in the audience was facing and experiencing in their own lives and made it a very, very public thing," Finegan says.

The strategy worked: In October 2023, the commission voted to ban whole-house short-term rentals in Bozeman. By the end of the campaign, the union, once a scrappy group of a dozen or so, boasted more than 250 dues-paying members.

The ordinance, however, only banned new short-term rentals, grandfathering in many others. Still, says Morrison, it's far better than nothing. Companies have been building developments explicitly to be luxury vacation rentals, he says, and this ordinance should at least "shut off the faucet."

As Morrison sees it, sympathy from owner-class commissioners can only get renters so far: Tenants need class allies in positions of power. The 28-year-old renter and social worker's campaign for mayor, launched in 2023, took the gentrifiers head-on. "Developers and rich investors [are] busy creating their own city," Morrison says in a campaign video titled "A Tale of Two Bozemens." "If they have their way, what most of us will be able to hope for is long commutes to come in and cut hair, wait tables or cook—strangers in our own city."

The tenants union threw its full weight behind the campaign, knocking on thousands of doors to make the election a referendum on housing and gentrification.

On Election Day, three weeks after the union's short-term rental victory, Morrison won resoundingly, knocking the incumbent mayor off the city commission. Per the city charter, Morrison will serve two years as deputy mayor before becoming mayor in 2026.

"Working people of this community have felt deeply unrepresented by City Hall," Morrison says in a recent interview with *In These Times*. "That we won, and the type of campaign we won with, is a telling moment of the winds changing in this community."

JOSEPH BULLINGTON is the editor of *Rural America In These Times*.

Anti-War Victory in Chicago

CHICAGO, ILL.—"Our tax dollars are being used to carpet-bomb civilians and force Palestinians out of their homes," Jennifer Husbands, from Chicago's North Side, said to a raucous, divided and packed City Council meeting January 31.

The council gathered to debate the Uniting for Peace resolution, which calls for an immediate end to the Israeli military's assault on Gaza.

Husbands implored that tax dollars should instead be used to support social services, such as housing, education and gun violence prevention. She ended with a line from artist Tupac Shakur: "They got money for wars but can't feed the poor."



A Palestine supporter addresses the Chicago City Council on January 31 as it discusses a cease-fire resolution, which passed, 24 to 23, after Mayor Brandon Johnson cast the tie-breaker.

Council members and commentators argued fiercely, with supporters pleading for an end to the bloodshed and opponents citing the October 7 Hamas attack as Israel's justification.

After hours of debate, the council deadlocked 23-23. Mayor Brandon Johnson—who had announced his support for a cease-fire a week prior—cast the tiebreaker in favor of the resolution, making Chicago the largest city in the nation to support an end to the violence in Gaza. Uniting for Peace also demands the release of hostages and increasing humanitarian aid.

As of mid-February, more than 28,000 Palestinians—mostly women and children—have been killed in Israel's bombardment, and more than 90% of the enclave's 2.3 million residents have been displaced. The United Nations Secretary General has called the situation a "humanitarian catastrophe."

Marty Levine, a member of the Chicago chapter of Jewish Voice

for Peace, explained that a large number of Jews do not support the Israeli government's actions. "The lessons we are required to learn from the Holocaust are that it can never happen again and we can never allow it to happen again," Levine said. "'Never again' is not for some people; it is for all."

Wearing a keffiyeh scarf, activist Rama Izar spoke of the power of continuing street protests: "We have been chanting on the streets of Chicago every single week about freedom, about liberation, about justice. ... How on earth is a cease-fire still up for debate?"

The Chicago area is home to the largest Palestinian population in the United States, with more than 18,000 Palestinians living in Cook County.

After a number of disruptions, Johnson ordered a recess and cleared the public from the gallery. When voicing his support for a cease-fire, he framed it in terms of collective liberation, saying:

"I know that for Black liberation we had to make statements that may [not have had an immediate] impact. But I'm not mayor of the city of Chicago if people weren't pushing the government to recognize people's humanity and understand the value of liberation—what it means for people, groups and nations."

At least 50 cities across the United States have passed cease-fire resolutions, including San Francisco, Minneapolis and Detroit.

Influential labor unions in Chicago and across the country—including the Chicago Teachers Union, United Auto Workers, National Nurses United and the Service Employees International Union—have called for a cease-fire, and members held a press conference in support of the resolution just days before the City Council vote. Carl Rosen, general president of United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America, described the way unions have responded as "the biggest expression for peace by the labor movement in a full generation."

In another effort to push the council to support the resolution, the day ahead of the vote, hundreds of Chicago Public Schools students walked out of class and rallied at City Hall. Kiera Hines, a junior at Kenwood Academy on the city's South Side, told Block Club Chicago: "The students and the younger generation really care about Palestinian people."

The resolution's passing is an undisputed victory for Chicago's progressive and pro-Palestine movements, which have organized and protested for months. Many of the left-wing groups that make up these movements were also instrumental to the

election of Johnson and other progressive leaders in 2023.

Ahead of the vote, Alderman Nicholas Sposato, who opposed the measure, lamented, “They outworked us.”

Alderman Rossana Rodriguez Sanchez, a lead sponsor of the resolution and member of the Chicago City Council Democratic Socialist Caucus, told *In These Times* that “solidarity during a genocide is the most basic human response.” She added: “We fought for this resolution because our Palestinian siblings here and in Palestine deserve our solidarity in this moment and we love this city too much to let it be on the wrong side of history.”

On a larger scale, the Democratic National Convention—where the party is expected to officially nominate President Joe Biden for reelection—will be held in Chicago in August. Chicago’s formal call for a cease-fire could put the Biden administration in an uncomfortable position if it doesn’t change its unconditional support for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Meanwhile, Biden has seen his support crater among Arab Americans and young people, both key constituencies—especially in swing states like Michigan.

“Chicago matters a lot in terms of the national political landscape,” Rodriguez-Sanchez told WBEZ. “We know that the DNC is going to take place in Chicago and what Chicago does is important for the rest of the country. ... It has a ripple effect.”

MILES KAMPF-LASSIN is a graduate of New York University’s Gallatin School in Deliberative Democracy and Globalization and is senior editor at *In These Times*.

THE BIG IDEA

good-cause eviction

noun

1. Laws that protect tenants from erroneous evictions

➤ **Don’t landlords already need a “good cause” to evict someone?**

In many places, no—landlords can evict someone on a whim. One notable exception is New Jersey, which has had a good-cause eviction law since 1974. California, Oregon and Washington have joined the list in the past five years, and cities from Albany, N.Y., to Baltimore have passed their own local ordinances.

➤ **So what even counts as “good cause”?** Unfortunately for tenants, there are plenty. California’s good-cause eviction law, for instance, permits eviction for nonpayment of rent and various lease violations. In some cases, landlords can kick a tenant out if they want to move their own family into the home or just decide to stop renting it out altogether. But in these latter cases, landlords must provide one month’s rent in relocating costs and provide advance written notice.

➤ **It seems like landlords have a lot of leeway. How much could these laws actually help?**

The most common reason for eviction is nonpayment of rent, and good-cause legislation doesn’t directly address that issue (though these laws typically limit rent increases). The required advance notice does give tenants time to address issues and challenge evictions in court. Advocates say the laws also allow tenants to report problems without fear of retaliation, and one study of four California cities with good-cause laws did find a modest decrease in evictions.

“There are enough provisions for tenants. ... Someone needs to speak up for the landlords.”

—LAURA BURNS, CEO OF A LOBBYING GROUP FOR REAL ESTATE PROFESSIONALS, LAMENTING THE RISE OF GOOD-CAUSE EVICTION LAWS

And even a modest decrease can be transformative for those who benefit. Eviction is a leading cause of homelessness and can damage physical and mental health, child educational outcomes, and more.

➤ **Seems like a helpful law that’s not too burdensome on landlords. Should be easy to pass, right?**

Perhaps the clearest evidence that good-cause eviction would help tenants is that landlords hate it. Pro-landlord lobbying groups have argued that passing these laws will depress real estate prices and drive down housing construction, all while forcing “mom and pop” landlords out of cities. Advocates dispute this characterization, pointing to New Jersey and other states. According to Cea Weaver, campaign coordinator with Housing Justice for All, the pushback is “really not grounded in anything other than an ideological commitment to some sort of mythology around ownership.”

—DAYTON MARTINDALE



ILLUSTRATION BY TERRY LABAN

ALABAMA'S SLAVERY -



PHOTO BY NITASHIA JOHNSON

INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

BY KIM KELLY

Working in the freezer at Southeastern Meats, a meatpacking facility based in Birmingham, Ala., “was the worst job I’ve ever had in my entire life,” Lakiera Walker tells *In These Times*. Her 12-hour shifts were spent inside a refrigerated building as cold as 30 or 40 degrees, and she had to beg or borrow warm clothes from her friends and family because the employer didn’t provide any. She couldn’t even take solace in the idea that she was saving up money for her future, because the prison where she spent the rest of her waking hours was taking a 40% cut on top of various fees.

As an incarcerated worker, Walker’s time was not her own—even when she was being forced to use it to make money for private employers and the state of Alabama.

Walker, 36, is one of 10 plaintiffs in *Robert Earl Council aka Kinetik Justice v. Kay Ivey*, a landmark class-action lawsuit challenging what they and their supporters describe as an unconstitutional forced labor scheme in Alabama’s state prisons. They allege the state’s disproportionately Black incarcerated population is being intentionally exploited for profit. The 126-page complaint was filed in the middle district court of Alabama on Dec. 12, 2023, by the 10 currently or formerly incarcerated workers, the Union of Southern Service Workers (USSW), the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU) Mid-South Council, and

the Woods Foundation. The suit describes how incarcerated Alabamians are forced to work for free in prison and paid extremely low wages to work for hundreds of private employers—including meatpacking plants and fast-food franchises like McDonald’s and Burger King—as well as more than 100 city, county and state agencies. And it alleges that the state keeps the scheme going by systematically denying parole to those eligible to work outside jobs.

Prison labor is big business in the United States. According to a 2022 ACLU report, *Captive Labor: Exploitation of Incarcerated Workers*, incarcerated workers save prisons more than \$9 billion a year in operational costs and earn them more than \$2 billion in sales of goods and services, while the prisoners make pennies per hour. They have no

Lakiera Walker
was released
from prison
after 15 years.

say over what types of work they perform or how they're compensated for that labor, and a survey by the Bureau of Justice Statistics found that 76% of the nation's roughly 800,000 incarcerated workers are unable to refuse to work without punishment or retaliation.

None of this is unique to Alabama, but Alabama is one of only seven states that pays nothing to prisoners who work to keep its prisons running. The Yellowhammer State also has a particularly rotten reputation for how it treats its incarcerated population, with a notoriously overcrowded, dirty, dangerous and corrupt prison system. The prisoner mortality rate is five times higher than the national average.

For these reasons and more, the plaintiffs I spoke with told me that, once word spread that a class action was brewing, they jumped at the chance. There is a long list of defendants, including Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey, Attorney General Steve Marshall, three members of the Alabama Board of Pardons and Paroles, Department of Corrections Commissioner John Hamm and Transportation Director John Cooper, as well as the cities of Montgomery and Troy, Jefferson County, and a number of private employers, including Gemstone Foods, Progressive Finishes, McDonald's and Burger King. The suit charges them with violating Alabama's State Constitution—which, as of 2022, bans slavery and involuntary servitude—as well as the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act and the Trafficking Victims Protection Act.

In the case of the government officials, they're also accused of conspiring to increase the size of the Alabama prison population—which is predominantly Black—through the discriminatory denial of parole so the state can continue profiting from forced labor. “[Prisoners] have been entrapped in a system of ‘convict leasing’ in which incarcerated people are forced to work, often for little or no money, for the benefit of the numerous government entities and private businesses that ‘employ’ them,” the suit charges.

In Alabama, that charge comes with ugly historical baggage. Convict leasing—a practice of forced penal labor prevalent in the post-Emancipation South (in which incarcerated men were “leased” to private employers)—was a massive state revenue driver. Thanks to the Black Codes, a racist program to criminalize petty offenses both real and imagined, Black people were locked up at a massively disproportionate rate to their white neighbors. Many were then sent to work on plantations to fill the labor gap left by Emancipation.

“The plantation owners, as best they could, wanted Blacks to return to the same place as they had been as slaves,” historian David Oshinsky writes in *Worse Than Slavery: Parchman Farm and the Ordeal of Jim Crow Justice*. Other prisoners were “leased” out to work in coal mines, which was as good as a death sentence.

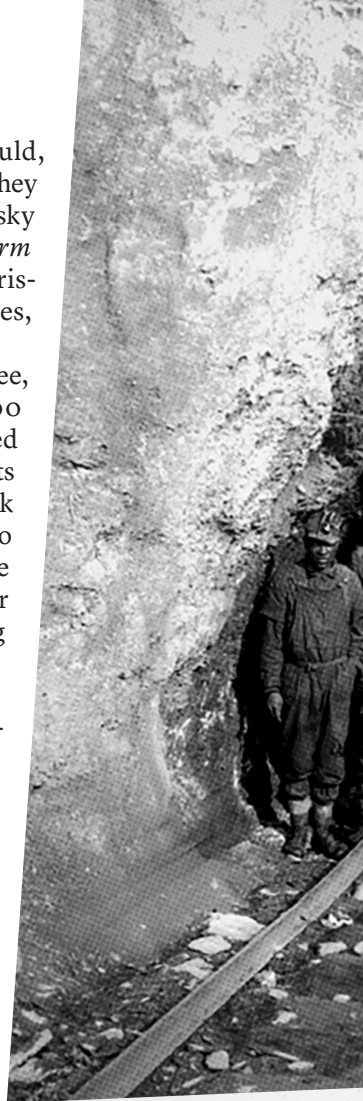
During the 1891 Coal Creek War in Tennessee, striking white miners freed more than 100 Black convict laborers who had been shipped in to act as strikebreakers. But such bright spots were few and far between. The more Black people who were imprisoned and forced to work, the more money they brought in for the state's benefit. (Is this sounding familiar, dear reader? It should.) By 1898, convict leasing fees made up 73% of Alabama's revenue.

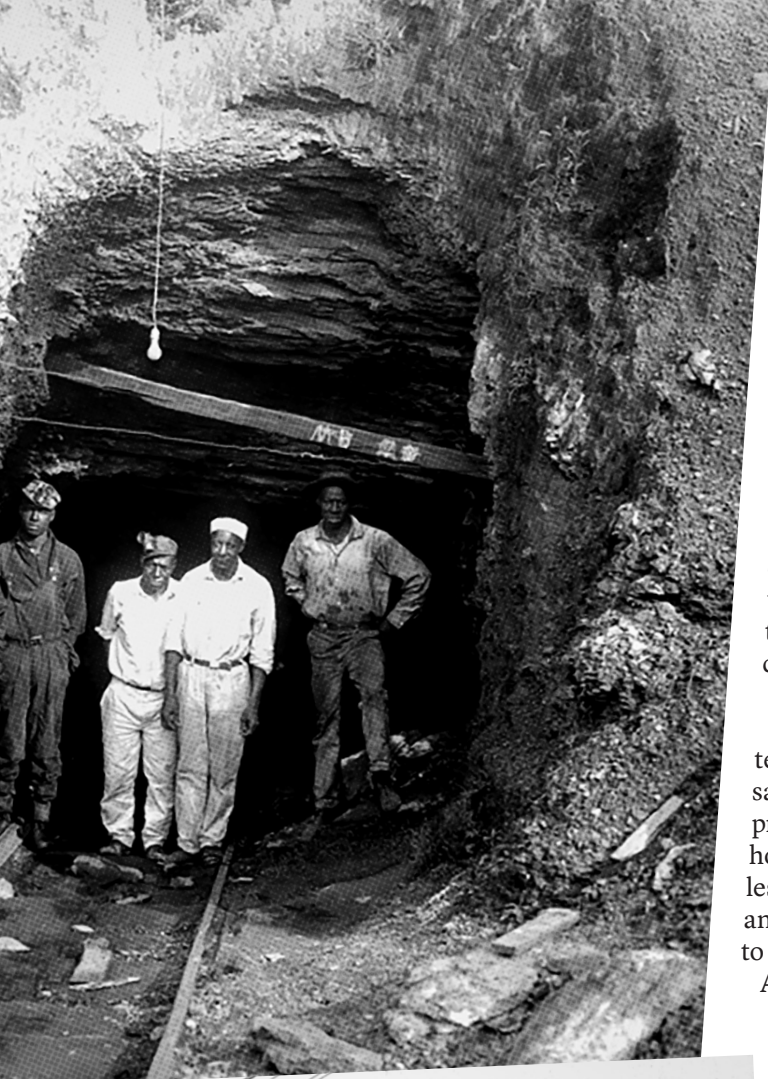
Convict leasing was formally abolished in Alabama in 1928, but prison labor has remained a significant source of income for the state. Alabama has long been one of the poorest states in the country (in 2022, its poverty rate was 16.2%). It also collects less in property taxes per resident than any other state, with rates that are enshrined in the state constitution and thus extremely difficult to change. This arrangement encourages the state's conservative leaders to look for money elsewhere.

According to the lawsuit, Alabama reaped a \$450 million benefit from forced prison labor in 2023 alone. The state takes a 40% cut of the gross earnings of all incarcerated workers laboring for private employers. It also profits from goods manufactured by incarcerated workers. The Alabama Correctional Industries website boasts a wide range of products “sold to governmental entities within the State,” including “executive chairs” and a judge's bench, and even operates a showroom in Montgomery, Ala. A lovely white gazebo purchased for the governor's mansion was made by incarcerated workers. Its current occupant, Kay Ivey, is named as a primary defendant.

The symbolism is not lost on the plaintiffs: “In those same chairs prepared by [prisoners'] hands, the ones who benefited sit on the leather and deny them freedom,” plaintiff Alimireo English tells *In These Times*.

Some of that windfall also lands on





Alabama's state and county agencies, which have saved a fortune in wage costs by extracting labor from incarcerated workers instead of paying hired personnel. Since 2018, more than 100 public employers have benefited from cut-rate labor provided by the Alabama Department of Corrections (ADOC).

Lakiera Walker worked for Jefferson County doing roadwork for approximately two years and was paid a \$2 daily wage to handle large trash removal (including a Jacuzzi). She found out that the non-incarcerated workers on her team were making \$10 per hour for the same job. One day, the lawsuit alleges, Walker's boss attempted to coerce her into unwanted sexual activity; when she refused, he wrote her up on a disciplinary offense for "refusing to work." She was then sent to work unpaid in the prison's kitchen, and when her family called the commissioner and the warden to demand something be done, no action was taken.

"It was basically just slipped under the rug," Walker says.

During Walker's time working at Southeastern Meats, she technically started at \$12 per hour, which she believes is the same as her non-incarcerated coworkers, but after the Alabama prison system got through with her check, she was only bringing home about \$100 in her weekly paycheck, which works out to less than \$2 per hour. ADOC deducts 40% of the check as a "fee" and then often adds other fees, such as a \$5 "transportation fee" to take workers to and from work.

After Southeastern Meats, Walker was sent to Burger King, where she worked right up until her release date. Once Walker left state custody, she called to collect her final check, but found it had already been sent to ADOC. After that, according to her lawyer, no one knows what happened to it. "So I'm coming out of prison with \$10 and not the check that I worked hard for," Walker explains. "You don't have to take 40% from me. I'm at home!"

During Walker's 15-year incarceration, she held a litany of unpaid jobs throughout the prison itself, too, including in the kitchen, housekeeping and healthcare. She even provided hospice care to dying patients. "The nurses really weren't interested in taking care of sickly or terminally ill people, so they would get the inmates to do it," Walker says. She says she was regularly required to work seven days a week, and she often had to work two shifts a day.

None of these prison jobs were paid, and quitting or refusing work was not a viable option. "You can't say, 'Hey, I can't go to work today,'" Walker explains. "You would go to segregation, which was solitary confinement. ... People were so tired and just hopeless at that point, they would kind of welcome solitary confinement, just to have a break."

Top: Workers look on from Banner Mine near Littleton, Ala. In April 1911, a mine explosion killed 128 workers, the majority of whom were Black men leased out by the prison system.

Bottom: The practice of "convict leasing" in Alabama (seen here in Birmingham) formally ended in 1928, but the state has continued to profit from forced prison labor.

SOURCE: BIRMINGHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY ARCHIVES

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WALKER DID FINALLY MAKE IT HOME AFTER ALL

those years of forced labor, but many others are still trapped in the system. Another plaintiff, Lee Edward Moore Jr., a genial 51-year-old Black man, has been in ADOC custody since 1997. He is currently incarcerated at William C. Holman Correctional Facility in Atmore, Ala., and was most recently denied parole in 2022. It was his fourth time being denied since 2009. He cannot for the life of him understand why.

His story spans decades and has seen him change prison “careers” many times. One of his first jobs at Holman was refitting the execution chamber; he remembers tearing out the old electric chair when the prison was switching over to lethal injections. As a highly skilled worker, he is constantly in demand, and the lawsuit describes how, over the years, he has been asked to do “plumbing, heating and air conditioning installation and maintenance, installation of phone lines, electrical work, and all manners of construction and yard work” projects for the prison. Like Lakiera Walker, Moore has been called down to the healthcare unit to help clean and provide care for fellow prisoners. For the past decade, Moore has also been asked to work on projects outside of the prison, during which he is typically left unsupervised; he’s even personally remodeled wardens’ own state-provided houses.

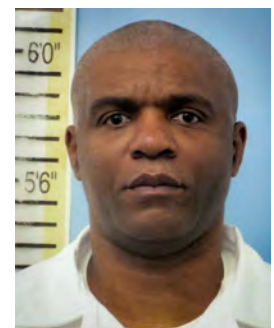
“They trust me; they know I’m not going to try to escape,” Moore explains.

His latest job has taken him back beyond the prison walls; now, Moore cuts the grass outside of death row.

Moore has not been paid a single cent for any of it, the lawsuit alleges, or received any type of tangible benefit. The biggest perk he’s ever received was a bunk in a smaller, less violent dorm reserved for certain low-risk workers. That, at least, was something; throughout our conversation, he’s clear about his desire to avoid the violence that notoriously permeates ADOC. A 2019 Department of Justice report stated that conditions in Alabama’s prisons were so egregious that they violated prisoners’ constitutional right to be protected against cruel and unusual punishment.

When I ask Moore if he ever refused to work, he explains he did feel he had the option, but generally prefers keeping busy—and staying safe. “I just do it because it’s so violent on the inside here,” he says. “I try to keep away from the trouble. I’m trying to go home, but I never have the opportunity.”

That element is the strangest part of his story. Moore’s reputation among the prison’s officials is squeaky-clean—as his lawyer interjected during our call, “Lee has the cleanest file I’ve ever seen, and he’s been in some of the toughest prisons in Alabama”—and Moore is clearly a low-risk, highly motivated individual. As the lawsuit reads, “There is no reasonable argument that he poses a threat to public safety as he has been working long hours daily since



he was first incarcerated, without pay, for ADOC, both inside and outside prison walls without incident.” Moore has paying construction jobs waiting for him once he does go home, and a wife and family desperate to see him. His stepdaughter is a parole officer, and several of Moore’s family members are in law enforcement.

The wardens at Holman continually recommended Moore for parole.

And yet, Moore’s custody level has not budged. He has not been allowed to participate in a work-release program, which would at least provide a paycheck. And his latest request for a sentence reduction was denied.

Now, Moore won’t get his next chance to come home until 2027. That’s why he joined the class action. “We’re being treated like slaves in here,” he says. “We just sit here. It’s hopeless. Trying to go for parole, there’s no hope.”

In 2015, the state of Alabama reacted to reports of dangerous overcrowding within ADOC—prisons were at 195% capacity—by enacting measures intended to parole more people while hiring more parole and probation officers, plus an effort to reduce recidivism by investing in community-based substance use disorder and mental health treatment centers. The reforms initially were a success: They reduced the overcrowding and nearly equalized parole outcomes between Black and white prisoners.

But after far-right Gov. Kay Ivey came to power in 2017, progress stopped—and began rolling back. Ivey immediately took pains to curb parole grants. The lawsuit alleges that Ivey forced parole boards to disregard the “evidence-based objective standards” for parole decisions that had increased parole



grants prior to 2018. The next year, the parole grant rate fell from 53% to 31%. It continued to plummet, and the gap between Black and white prisoners' likelihood of being granted parole widened. Between 2020 and 2022, Black prisoners were denied parole at twice the rate of white ones.

By 2022, the parole rate was 11% overall and only 7% for Black prisoners—meaning that 93% of parole-requesting Black prisoners were denied.

That's what happened to Alimireo English, a charismatic 48-year-old Black man who, according to a judge, should not be in prison right now. It's a convoluted story, but he was taken into ADOC custody in October 2020 after his parole from a previous conviction was revoked over new misdemeanor charges. A jury acquitted him of those charges on Nov. 8, 2021, and a judge ordered his release.

But instead of being back home with his family, at church with his faith community, or visiting his eldest son in New York, English is at the Ventress Correctional Facility in Clayton, Ala. His case did not come before the parole board until November 28, 2023, more than two years after he'd already been acquitted, but he was denied anyway. His next parole date is November 2024.

"They gotta keep me for another year until they can find

somebody else on the street that they can pull back in and take my place," English tells me. "If they can't replace you, they don't let you go."

His continuing incarceration has come as a heavy shock to English, who spent the time since his 2017 release staying out of trouble and building a better life for himself and his loved ones. "You don't send a man back to prison when he's got his whole life straight," English says. "My parole officer said in my hearing, [they] never had a problem with me prior to this incident. That should have been a red flag right there."

It is even more jarring given how he spends his time at his unwelcome new home. English works as a dorm representative for the facility's Faith Dorm, where he is on call 24 hours a day, seven days per week. He is responsible for the safety and well-being of 190 incarcerated men, many of them elderly or medically vulnerable. He handles custodial duties and maintenance, screens dorm visitors and is also the first responder for drug and health emergencies. In his scant free time, he runs a therapy and counseling group for his fellow prisoners. He consistently works 12 to 15 hour days and, for most of the week, he is the sole individual in charge of the dorm; a retired prison chaplain comes in to assist him a few times weekly, but otherwise English is not supervised by any corrections personnel.

As the lawsuit highlights, "Since Mr. English has been in this position, the Faith Dorm has had no fights, deaths, or overdoses."

The plaintiffs' legal team estimates that ADOC saves roughly \$200,000 a year by not having a corrections officer in that one dorm. Meanwhile, English is paid nothing. "The inmates basically run the prison, but the officers are getting compensated for it," English says. "The wages the inmates are paid for their work hasn't changed since 1927."

Several of the plaintiffs I spoke to also mentioned "institutional need," a specific designation that plaintiffs have reported is added to certain prisoners' files to signify their utility to their current facility. According to Walker and her lawyer, institutional need is yet another trick used by the ADOC to keep especially useful incarcerated workers from leaving, so the state can continue benefiting from that person's skills. It calls to mind Moore's construction skills and English's high level of responsibility.

"Most people, it stops them from going home or making parole because it says that we need you more in prison than the world needs you in society," Walker explains. "This lady, her name is Lisa Smith, she's been in prison about 30 years, and every time she comes up for parole, regardless of her crime, she's an institutional need. She can fix anything in the prison—she can probably *build* a prison—but she's not getting paid. Sometimes they won't even call in a free world contractor because she knows what to do. It's looking bleak that she will ever make it out of prison, because they need her there."

Above: Lakiera Walker, a plaintiff in the class-action Kinetik Justice v. Kay Ivey against Alabama's prison labor system, poses with her son. Other plaintiffs include (from left to right) Arthur Ptomey, Robert Earl Council (aka Kinetik Justice), Lanair Pritchett, Lee Edward Moore Jr., Jerame Cole, Michael Campbell, Alimireo English, Frederick McDole, and Toni Teare Cartwright.

* * * * *

ALIMIREO ENGLISH, LEE MOORE AND LAKIERA WALKER

see this lawsuit as a chance to speak up for themselves and the thousands of other currently or formerly incarcerated workers in ADOC who have felt freedom slip through their fingers.

“The ADOC have institutionalized inmates to the point where they’ve been in captivity so long that their hope has been completely extinguished,” English says. “And their fight to be released from this has turned into just an uncomfortable routine of prison life until they die.”

With *Robert Earl Council aka Kinetik Justice v. Kay Ivey*, they have found a new spark of hope—and some new allies. The 10 plaintiffs have been joined by two heavyweight Southern labor unions, the USSW and the RWDSU Mid-South Council. It is uncommon to see major unions speaking out so explicitly about prison labor and the plight of incarcerated workers, but USSW and RWDSU have been unequivocal in their support.

“We’re proud to join this lawsuit because we are horrified and outraged by the system of forced labor in Alabama state prisons that has kept Black incarcerated people trapped in prison,” Eric Winston, a USSW member and a cook at the Brookdale Durham assisted living center in North Carolina, tells *In These Times*. “Across the South, we know that when racism exists anywhere, it hurts workers everywhere.”

RWDSU represents thousands of workers in Alabama, predominantly in the state’s poultry plants, and also represented the workers who spearheaded the first major attempt to organize an Amazon warehouse, in Bessemer, Ala., in 2021.

Beyond the myriad social, political and economic justice issues that underpin prison labor, the proliferation of forced labor also hurts unions’ ability to organize workers and depresses wages and working conditions for all workers.

The USSW represents fast food workers throughout the South, while RWDSU counts many meatpacking workers among its members. If employers like Burger King, Southeastern Meats, KFC or Progressive Finishes (an automotive powder-coating company where plaintiffs Michael Campbell and Arthur Ptomey currently work) are able to hire incarcerated workers, pay them the bare minimum, and work them to the bone because those workers cannot call out or quit, there’s precious little incentive for them to hire outside workers.

Because of a 1977 Supreme Court decision, incarcerated workers in the United States—including those in ADOC’s work release program—are legally prohibited from unionizing.

That ruling has caused headaches for RWDSU, which represents about 200 poultry plant workers employed by defendant Gemstone Foods and 1,800 workers at fellow defendant Koch Foods. Both companies employ incarcerated workers from ADOC. As the lawsuit says, when RWDSU attempted almost a decade ago to include incarcerated workers in its collective bargaining contract with Koch Foods, the company and ADOC refused, saying the workers “could not enter into binding contracts without permission of the warden.” The issue will remain ongoing, as the union also represents several thousand other poultry plant workers throughout the state and continues to organize aggressively in that sector.

As fast-food employers in the state expand their use of prison labor, the USSW is in a similar situation. Prison labor hinders the union’s ability to “improve the working conditions of fast-food workers because it is difficult to communicate with incarcerated workers and incarcerated workers fear discipline if they advocate for better wages and working conditions,” according to the suit.

PHOTO BY NITASHIA JOHNSON





The Supreme Court decision barring incarcerated workers from unionizing has not stopped organizations like the Industrial Workers of the World's Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee, Jailhouse Lawyers Speak and the Free Alabama Movement (FAM) from organizing labor actions, strikes and protests against prison slavery, or individual prisoners from finding their own ways to dissent. The Abolish Slavery National Network is working to eliminate "involuntary servitude" exemptions for prison labor from state constitutions. It succeeded in Alabama, Oregon, Tennessee and Vermont in 2022, and eight states are considering legislation in 2024.

One of the founders of FAM, Kinetik Justice, is a plaintiff in the Alabama lawsuit. He has helped organize and lead several high-profile nationwide prison strikes since 2016. He's been in ADOC custody for the past 29 years, and he has been repeatedly punished, harassed and tortured for his work organizing

Top: Lakiera Walker, who was released from prison after 15 years, poses with her son. Left: Members of the Tennessee Student Solidarity Network gather outside Alabama's St. Clair Correctional Facility on March 2 for a solidarity protest with the Free Alabama Movement.

against forced labor. According to *The Appeal*, he spent 54 months in solitary confinement between 2014 and 2018 and has been repeatedly sent back into the hole. As he told *Democracy Now!* in 2016, "We understood our incarceration was pretty much about our labor and the money that was being generated from the prison system, therefore we began organizing around our labor and used it as a means and a method to bring about reform in the Alabama prison system." He is no stranger to filing lawsuits on his own and his fellow prisoners' behalf against ADOC, so it is fitting that this landmark class action suit bears his name.

On Dec. 21, 2023, six of the plaintiffs filed a motion seeking a preliminary injunction demanding that Alabama return to its pre-2018, pre-Ivey parole process, and calling on state officials to end the current system of forced prison labor and release individuals qualified for parole. "The harms that plaintiffs are suffering from being unjustly denied parole are extensive and irreparable," the motion reads. "There is no remedy for that lost time or liberty."

Moore put it more plainly: "I want to go home. I don't want to stay in here. We need to stand up for something."

A happy ending remains out of reach for most of the plaintiffs, at least for a little while longer, but at least one has found some peace outside ADOC. When I spoke with Lakiera Walker, the bubbly 36-year-old had left Alabama and had just started a new job as a receptionist. She feels like she lucked out.

"It's hard for us to come out here and get a job or to find somewhere to stay, because we weren't able to save any money," Walkers says. "They worked us for years and took all of our pay. ... [And then] people look at your background and say, 'Oh, she was a criminal.' But we've worked all these years in prison doing all this work. We have the drive, we have a great work ethic. ... If we're good enough to work at these free-world jobs, why are we not good enough to work in society?"

She tells me she manifested this lawsuit and this chance to finally speak out. "[A] lot of us were raised to work," Walker says. "That's not the issue. It's the injustice in things that go on behind the walls that no one knows. [It's about not] being held to do slave work. It's about being appreciated and being valued. Because at the end of the day, we're human." ■

KIM KELLY is a labor writer with *In These Times* and author of *Fight Like Hell: The Untold History of American Labor*.

THANK GOD IT'S THURSDAY:



UNIONS PUSH FOR A 4-DAY WEEK

BY SARAH JAFFE

NOTES: Shorter work weeks could save dollars and makes sense



THE UNITED AUTO WORKERS WON many of their demands in their groundbreaking, six-week strike in 2023, but one of them—despite not making it into their new contracts with the Big Three automakers—has the potential to radically shift organized labor’s priorities and unify an often fractious movement in ways not seen in decades.

The demand is for a 32-hour workweek with no loss in pay. From the beginning of the strike, the audacious proposal captured public attention beyond the usual labor watchers because it upends decades-old expectations of what unions should want, signaling the working class has priorities beyond simply holding onto jobs.

The autoworkers had struck at General Motors in 2019, but despite plenty of energy from the rank and file, a doomed leadership led a lackluster action to a contract that was half-heartedly accepted. Before that, it had been decades of concessions. But in early 2023, democratic reforms in the union swept a new leadership team, under President Shawn Fain, into power with the slogan “No Corruption. No Concessions. No Tiers.” Two-tier status had been a central grievance since the UAW accepted a lower tier for new hires during rampant deindustrialization. At the time, they were told the lower tier was necessary to keep jobs at General Motors, Ford and Chrysler (now owned by Stellantis). But the companies came screaming back to profitability, and workers on the lower tier were still making less for the same work than their more-senior colleagues.

At that time, mass layoffs or concessions weren’t the only ideas floating around, just the ones that won out politically. Economist Dean Baker suggested in articles during the Great Recession that the government subsidize companies to shorten the workweek, spreading the work among more workers and hiring, rather than firing, during the recession. The Obama administration didn’t bite, unions largely didn’t get on board, and we got a long, slow recovery.

The Covid crisis put the issue of working time back on the table. Many “essential” workers—including a wide swath of manufacturing employees—worked forced overtime and risked their lives and health. Across the country and the world, they decided enough was enough.

“It really made people reflect on what’s important in life,” Fain told me in January. Workers were deciding, he said, that working 12-hour days, seven

ILLUSTRATION BY HOWARD BARRY

days a week, cobbling together multiple jobs to scrape by “is not a life.” And so the shorter hours demand made its way from grumbling workers to the UAW’s strike demands to major headlines (“Why a four-day workweek is on the table for automakers,” among so many others).

It was “like a bolt out of nowhere,” said Juliet Schor, an economist and sociologist of work at Boston College who has researched and advocated for shorter hours for decades. “It legitimated [the demand] hugely.” Suddenly, *New York Times* editorial board member Binyamin Appelbaum was endorsing the call and urging President Joe Biden to act on it for workers across industries. “Americans spend too much time on the job,” Appelbaum wrote. “A shorter workweek would be better for our health, better for our families and better for our employers.”

Fain told me that, initially, the UAW was “laughed at, basically, when we put it out there.” Ford CEO Jim Farley complained to CNN that “if we had done that [four-day week]. ... We would have gone bankrupt many years ago. ... We’d have to close plants and most people would lose their jobs.”

In other words, it’s not a complete shock that the 32-hour week was not in the contracts the union won. But Fain doesn’t see it as a mere bargaining chip. Rather, it’s the start of a long-term strategy for the union, one he hopes the rest of labor will pick up: “I really felt it was imperative to get the dialogue going again, to try to fight for a shorter workweek and get the public thinking along those lines.”

Work-life balance was on the autoworkers’ minds as the union prepared for bargaining—long hours, overtime (whether voluntary or forced) and the ongoing mental health crisis.

“The ability for an autoworker to provide for a family or even oneself has been more and more difficult,” Charles Mitchell, a veteran Stellantis worker in Detroit, told *The Guardian*. “All the while companies are becoming more profitable and making shareholders richer while forcing mandatory 60- to 70-hour workweeks in assembly plants.”

“Our work lives and the conditions in this nation, in this world, are what lead to a lot of these mental health issues,” Fain said. “Jobs should bring dignity to people.” Too many people, he said, labor constantly, with no time off for their families or friends or “just pursuing things that you love doing.” People lose hope, he said, when all they do is work.

When he’s talking to high school students at the union’s training center, he talks about the fact that work is a process of selling your time: “The greatest resource that we have on this earth is a human being’s time.” The right wing, he noted, talks about a “right to life” when they’re talking about abortion, but that isn’t the kind

of right to life he means. “That’s a right to birth. They don’t give a damn about life,” he continued. What he wants is “a real right to life, valuing a human being’s time, valuing their health and not just when they’re born, but after they’re born and when they get old and are too old to work, too young to die.”

ESSENTIALLY EXPOSED BY COVID

THE AFL-CIO ADOPTED A RESOLUTION TWO years ago reasserting that shorter hours should be a priority for the federation that represents 12.5 million workers and they would “aggressively take up the fight for a shorter workweek and earlier retirement.”

Mark Dimondstein, president of the American Postal Workers Union, introduced that resolution on behalf of his 200,000-member union. When we spoke after the new year, he told me, “The collective bargaining process gives unions an opportunity to raise this question up. There are other ways too, such as legislation, working with allies, taking it to the streets and so on.”

Just as Fain found lessons in Covid, Dimondstein noted the global pandemic brought us new language about postal workers and so many other working people, one that perhaps unintentionally inspired a new militancy on the shop floor: “We are essential, we are key and we deserve better.”

Schor, too, saw that new common sense everywhere. When her book *The Overworked American* first came out in 1991, the conversation was very different, but now, she said, it seems people think, “It’s too much. What’s happened to us, the people in this country? We’ve been asked to do something that’s not fair. People are exhausted.”

During the pandemic, as I have written many times, workers realized their bosses didn’t care if they died. “We lost a lot of members that went to work and caught Covid and died, and one worker dying, that’s one too many,” Fain told me. “But meanwhile, the leadership of the Big Three, they’re working from home for two and three years.”

Pushed not just to keep working but to do so for longer hours in more dangerous conditions, many workers began to push back. Even before the pandemic, Donna Jo Marks, a worker at Nabisco’s plant in Portland, Ore., explained, they’d worked 12 days on, then two days off. But once Covid hit, she said, “Sometimes we would work 28 days straight and everyone above us thought, ‘Oh, well, you guys are getting compensated for it,’—but at what cost?” For a little while, they got \$2 an hour extra hazard pay, she said, but that stopped after a few months. “It just was an ugly time and people were tired and it wasn’t safe.”

Marks and her coworkers were part of the earlier pandemic strike wave, in which formally and informally organized workers went on strike against the Covid-induced speedup of work. At Nabisco, they struck

April 2024

Shorter
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for more than five weeks and won some concessions on working time, and then, Marks explained, the state legislature passed a bill further restricting the use of forced overtime for bakery workers. Nurses, teachers, warehouse workers, farmworkers and retail workers all took action around safety and the intensification of work. Demanding safety precautions, Florida farmworker Oscar Otzoy told me in 2020, “We’re seen as essential workers, but we’re not taken into account with the same urgency and the same sense of protections that other workers have. And so we think that it’s time for that to happen, for them to be able to see us.”

Employers might talk about workers being part of the family, Fain noted, but their own families were hardly risking their lives on the assembly line. To him, it dramatized the class difference in America: “The wealthy class, the billionaire class, they have a different set of rules for themselves. And then they expect everybody else to follow another set of rules that they exploit. And we’ve been conditioned as a society to think that’s OK.”

Autoworkers, Fain continued, had worked so-called alternate work schedules for years, working two days on, two days off—but those days on were 12-hour shifts, and the days off didn’t line up with the schedules of families and friends. Workers felt like zombies, without enough rest and recreation. And so they brought up scheduling questions again and again when Fain was campaigning and preparing to bargain with the Big Three.

Fain recalled visiting the union’s education center in Michigan’s Black Lake, reading old *Solidarity* magazines from the UAW’s early days in the 1930s and 1940s. “Our leadership back then was talking about a 32-hour workweek, a 30-hour workweek, and it basically goes back to mastering technology, not letting technology master us.”

When Dimondstein addressed the AFL-CIO convention in 2022 and introduced the shorter workweek resolution, he began the narrative in 1791, when Philadelphia carpenters struck for the 10-hour day. He then spoke about the beginnings of the movement for the eight-hour day and the Haymarket leaders “murdered by the government for their audacity to demand ‘eight hours for work, eight hours for rest, eight hours for what you will.’”



May Day, he noted, the international workers’ holiday, came from that particular struggle. But after landing the 40-hour week, Dimondstein noted, “the labor movement largely abandoned the fight for the shorter workweek.”

“It shouldn’t have stopped at eight hours,” he told me in January.

BUSTING THROUGH THE “AFFIRMATION TRAP”

THE UAW’S STRIKE THIS YEAR WAS A NOTABLE shift in strategy for the union, back to a militancy that challenges management’s control over the work process and products. In the “Treaty of Detroit,” the landmark contract that the UAW won from General Motors in 1950, the union made a major decision not to contest so-called management rights. The union restricted its struggles to the size of its slice of the proceeds of workers’ labor, rather than fighting to control

the workplace itself. The fight for shorter hours was one of many issues that fell by the wayside in this all-too-brief period of detente.

Fain didn't directly take aim at the Treaty of Detroit when we spoke, but he did note the philosophy of "working together" with management had been a failure: "It's a way for the company to make workers think they care about them. And meanwhile, they continue to cut jobs and make life harder on the workers."

There are far fewer members in the UAW than there were at the height of its power, and more UAW members who aren't autoworkers at all—the union represents, for example, 48,000 graduate workers and other academics in the University of California system. But the union's strategy this year was designed to make the most of smaller numbers, holding a rolling strike across the Big Three, taking workers at facilities out on a schedule designed to maximize impact and respond to offers at the bargaining table.

"The labor movement largely abandoned the fight for the shorter workweek. ... It shouldn't have stopped at eight hours."

It was a gamble that required more than just militancy to succeed. In order for the "Stand-Up Strike" to work, the union had to find a way around what Joshua Clover, in his book *Riot. Strike. Riot.*, calls the "affirmation trap"—when organized labor "is locked into the position of affirming its own exploitation under the guise of survival."

The trap is a side effect of deindustrialization under the philosophy of cooperation with management. When companies want to shut plants down anyway, the strike has less power: How do you strike to keep a plant going? Without the leverage that the strike provides, workers end up begging for their jobs and making concessions. But bringing the shorter workweek back into the discussion changes the equation: Rather than importuning the boss to keep everything the same, the shorter workweek reopens the question of workers' value outside of the plant, suggesting that "less work" might be a goal that

workers could embrace too, as long as they get a say in how that work is divided. And rolling strikes concentrated the workers' power right where and when it would hurt the most. (As a side effect, the UAW did manage to keep a plant open, the Belvidere plant in Illinois, and won the right to strike against future plant closures.)

Fain shrugged off the Ford CEO's suggestion that a shorter workweek would cause more plant closures: "They're not going to close a plant because we want a 32-hour workweek. They're not going to close a plant because we bargained a good contract. They're going to close the plant because some greedy son of a bitch at the top wants more and they want to do it to somebody else, and they want to exploit them for even less."

There's also, of course, the question of technology: Can companies, in fact, replace workers with robots or ChatGPT? This past year was the year that artificial intelligence hype hit the mainstream, but working people across industries have been fighting against the machine since the era of the Luddites. Dimondstein recalled his early days in the postal service, with the introduction of automated equipment like barcodes for sorting mail: "I was on a machine of about 18 to 20 people, a mechanized piece of equipment called the letter-sorting machine. And we were replaced by optical character readers where two people could sort at least as much mail, if not more mail, as the 18 or 20 of us."

Workers don't want to go back to the old days, Dimondstein continued, but the real question is, "Who is automation going to serve? We aren't going to stop the march of technology, but we just don't want it to serve the profits of Wall Street and the CEOs and these corporations. We want it to make life better for working people." Automation, he said, could be used to free up time, to pay workers to work less and have more leisure. "There's the old saying, we're living to work rather than working to live."

So far it's been just the opposite. Postal workers and autoworkers alike work longer hours and forced overtime, and their jobs are harder. But the new common sense around work could help to change that. Other strikes in 2023—the Writers Guild and Screen Actors Guild, for example—also centered artificial intelligence in their demands.

In Juliet Schor's research as part of a coalition including researchers from Boston College, Cambridge University and Oxford University and the organization 4 Day Week Global, she continues to find that a four-day workweek brings results to companies around the world that are "off the charts." Few of the companies are in manufacturing and none are anywhere on the scale of the Big Three, but workers report being happier, more rested and healthier. Some of the companies in their trial program are now coming up on two years and nearly all, she said, are succeeding.

Legislators are starting to take notice. Rep. Mark Takano (D-CA) first introduced a bill in Congress in 2021 to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act, reducing the standard workweek to 32 hours from 40 (meaning all workers who are not overtime exempt would get overtime pay after 32 hours), and he reintroduced it in 2023; Sen. Bernie Sanders has also endorsed the idea. Bills have been introduced in New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, New York and Maryland (where a bill was withdrawn to be reworked).

But opposition to those bills is a reminder that if workers want a shorter workweek, they'll probably have to fight for it. And that's precisely why the UAW's strike demand was significant. The union put shorter hours front and center and hasn't turned away from the issue as it turns, now, to organizing nonunion auto plants across the country, mostly in the South.

Shorter hours can be a unifying demand across plants, across the Big Three and the foreign automakers, where issues might vary but time off can provide a constant. It can link workers across industries and countries, as Schor's research shows: automakers with postal workers, architects with brewers, legal aid attorneys with graduate students. Dimondstein noted the demand also cuts across political viewpoints.

Around the world, Fain said, workers are waking up to

the fact that capitalist priorities are not serving the rest of us, and the shorter workweek can be a demand that the organization of work serve workers' interests for a change: "It's not just a UAW issue, it's not just a union issue, it's a working class issue. That's why I think our campaign resonated globally. You have the concentration of wealth going into the hands of fewer and fewer people, and something's got to give."

The postal workers are still finalizing their demands as they head into negotiations this year, but Dimondstein said, "There will be some discussions [about shorter hours] going forward because I think we all have to do our part to take up this demand. It's not going to be changed overnight, but the more we, as the labor movement, unite around core demands like this on all fronts—from collective bargaining to legislation to the streets—then the better chance we'll have of really concretely winning." ■

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“The women of 9 to 5 were gutsy and creative. Their story can inspire a new generation fighting for fair pay and fair treatment.”

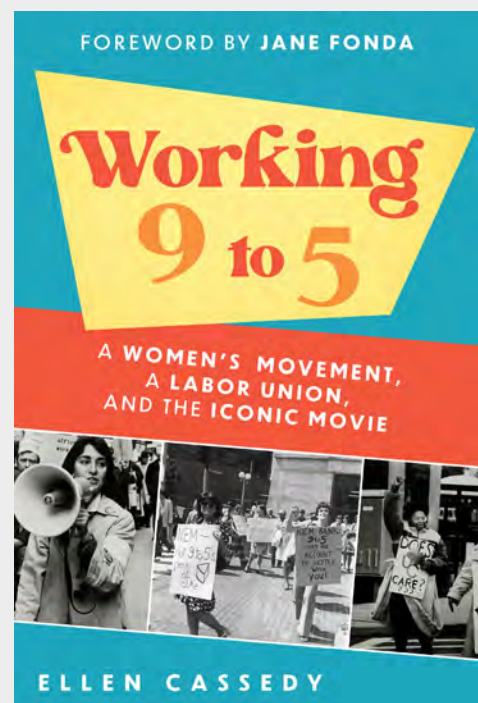
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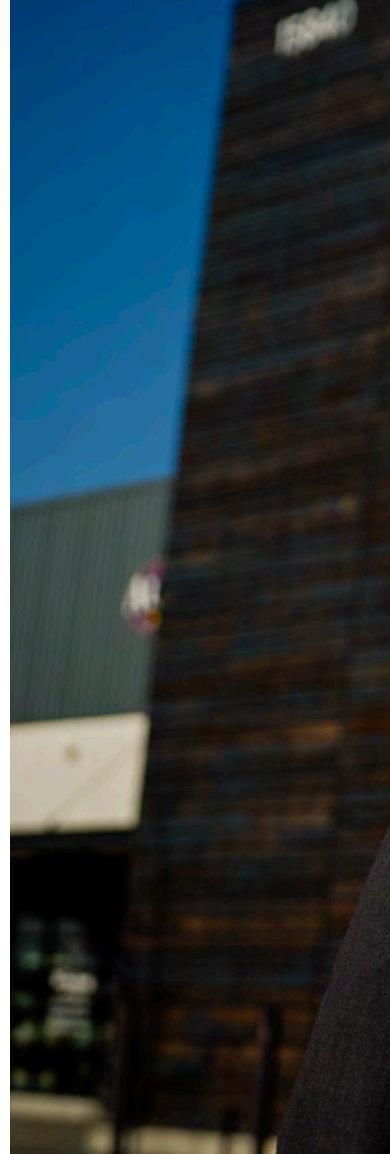
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REVOLT IN AISLE 5

Faye Guenther's multi-year plan to revolutionize the grocery workers union

BY HAMILTON NOLAN



O

n a gray October evening, half a dozen insurgents huddle around a table in an up-scale diner across the street from Sea-Tac airport, considering their battle plans.

"I don't want to get shot in New Jersey or New York, and those guys will fucking murder us," says the consigliere.

"Yeah," the boss muses. "They will hella murder us."

"I'm more afraid of some people who have threatened to shoot us out here than those people out there," says one of the generals.

"The chances of us getting shot," concludes the ringleader, "are fairly high." She smiles her omnipresent smile as she says this, to indicate it's all in good fun. Pretty much. It's definitely, mostly, sort of a joke. More or less. Her office window did get shot out not long ago. But ... nobody said changing the world would be easy.

ON FEBRUARY 6, 1919, 25,000 SEATTLE WORKERS from more than 100 different unions walked out in support of 35,000 striking shipyard workers. It was global news. The city was momentarily paralyzed by the most comprehensive display of labor power that post-WWI America had seen.

On the wall of an exhibit about the strike at the Seattle Museum of History and Industry, a small label channels the thinking of the strikers: "Where will this lead? To revolution? Power for workers? The truth is: Nobody knows where!"

A century later, the electrifying heart of Washington's labor movement can be found in a three-story office building, next to a chiropractor and a Mexican restaurant, in the town of Des Moines, which lies along the bay about 15 miles south of downtown Seattle. There, in the lobby, "educate, agitate, organize" is spelled out in neon blue cursive on the wall. A novelty claw machine holds little plastic bubbles containing bright yellow union T-shirts and beanies. This is the



headquarters of United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW) 3000.

With more than 50,000 members in Washington, Oregon and Idaho—mostly grocery and healthcare workers, along with several thousand more in retail, meatpacking and public service—UFCW 3000 is the largest local in the million-member UFCW International. It is the model of an energetic, pugnacious, organizing union, growing labor's influence steadily in one of America's most concentrated areas of corporate power. But it is also—and, really, this is why I'm here—the epicenter of a great plot to root out the rotten elements holding back the UFCW, overthrow them, and revolutionize one of the biggest private-sector unions in the country, along with the labor movement itself.

If you like scrappy bands of righteous pirates setting out on a grand caper with uncertain chances of success, well, here is the union world's version.

Above: Faye Guenther, president of UFCW Local 3000, looks on from the PCC grocery store in Burien, Wash., on February 23.

The driving force behind UFCW 3000's grand plans is Faye Guenther, the local's 47-year-old president. She is mounting a 2028 run for UFCW International president. That will, ideally, be the culmination of a multi-year strategy of rallying member support across the country to build a mighty internal caucus that wants to sweep away long-entrenched leadership and make the union more democratic, more committed to new organizing, and more willing to strike—to make one of America's biggest unions as ambitious to win the class war as Faye Guenther herself.

Guenther, who has curly blonde hair and glasses and a perpetual elvish grin playing on the corners of her lips, is notable for her willingness to say yes to any idea that will help the working class, no matter how difficult it might seem. She comes by her activism honestly. She grew up poor, in Oregon. Her father, whom Guenther suspects had undiagnosed mental health problems, was abusive. Her mother, who later was diagnosed with PTSD, left him when Guenther was a baby and traveled to eastern Oregon, eventually settling in tiny Spray, Ore., where her mom picked up work on ranches and farms. In his late 40s, her father had a

brain aneurysm and died in Gulfport, Miss., where he was living unhoused. Guenther, his only next of kin, had to fly down and take him off life support.

With the help of a friendly science teacher, Guenther got into Oregon State University in Corvallis, making her one of the first women from her high school to go to college. She became deeply involved in campus activism. By the time she graduated, she had started a full-time job at the Center Against Rape and Domestic Violence coordinating volunteers and helping domestic violence survivors, sure that she would be doing that for the rest of her life.

Then an AFL-CIO Organizing Institute recruiter, who had known Guenther as a campus activist, came and asked Guenther to join the labor movement. Her knee-jerk reaction, fueled by her impression of unions as undemocratic bureaucracies, was a strong hell no: “The labor movement is fucked up; you guys are losers.” But the recruiter persisted. As Guenther thought more about the big picture, she reconsidered.

“I was working with women who, maybe seven out of 10 were returning back to their abusers, and almost every single one of them was for economic reasons,” Guenther says. “Poor women, low-wage women don’t have a lot of options. I just felt like helping one person at a time wasn’t going to work. It wasn’t fast enough.”

Soon, she was hooked. She went to work organizing healthcare workers for Service Employees International Union in California and then for UFCW 1000 in Washington. After a few years, she made it back to Oregon, supervising organizers throughout a large part of the state. She left to go to law school at the University of Oregon before she was lured back to the union world at UFCW—with the promise that she could train to take over as the local’s attorney. Instead, she ended up running campaign after campaign, then became staff director, then secretary-treasurer, and then was elected president in 2019.

For the entire time that Guenther has been working for unions—more than two decades—she has been conscious of the ways her union was failing. She and her fellow organizers would go out for beers and grumble about the UFCW’s failure to invest in organizing and its disconnected international leadership.

Her own relationship with the leadership—particularly with Marc Perrone, the UFCW International’s president since 2014—deteriorated. In 2020, when Covid-19 struck, UFCW found itself right in the middle of the crisis. Grocery workers were being pressured to continue working as the pandemic spread, and nurses who were UFCW 3000 members were forced to wear garbage bags and unsafe masks in the early days of the pandemic, because their hospital lacked sufficient PPE.

“I got onto a phone call with Marc Perrone—he had these regional meetings—and I said, ‘We need face masks, we need PPE, and we need it fast. Or 200,000 people could die by August.’ He said, ‘Faye, let’s not be overly dramatic,’” Guenther remembers. “I knew immediately that this person



was completely out of touch.” By the end of August 2020, more than 183,000 Americans would die of Covid.

In 2022, Kroger and Albertsons announced their plan to merge, which would form the largest grocery chain in America. Such megamergers are almost always bad for workers, leading to layoffs, store closures and more monopoly-type power for the corporation. The UFCW represented more than 300,000 workers at the two companies, but the union’s international leadership pointedly declined to announce its opposition to the merger, releasing only a mealy-mouthed statement of concern, which indicated they thought there might be some opportunity for a deal with the companies.

Alarmed, Guenther and her team at UFCW 3000 pulled together a “Stop the Merger” coalition of six other locals, along with dozens of community and labor groups, to agitate and lobby against the deal. The international did not decide to formally oppose the merger until May 2023, after a great deal of internal pressure.

It marked yet another public schism between the Marc Perrone and Faye Guenther wings of the union.

Above: UFCW Local 3000 member Sam Dancy, a worker at the Westwood Village QFC in Seattle, proudly wears a Black Lives Matter pin on February 23—and led a campaign for the right to do so.

PHOTO BY JOVELLE TAMAYO



THE INTERNAL POLITICS OF LABOR UNIONS, THOUGH THEY

often remain out of view, can be every bit as dramatic as any episode of *Game of Thrones*. By 2022, Guenther and her allies at UFCW 3000 had resolved to launch a reform effort inside UFCW, with an eye on pushing a slate of reforms at the union's international convention in 2023. The atmosphere was tense—Guenther describes it as “open war.” The international union ended the \$24,000 monthly subsidy that it had been giving to support the local's organizing efforts, which Guenther interpreted as direct retaliation against her for her years of being a thorn in their side. A UFCW International spokesperson said that the end of the subsidy was not retaliatory and that “the International Executive Board conducted an independent investigation by engaging an outside law firm to look into this very question and it concluded that no retaliation took place.” UFCW International did not respond to requests to interview Perrone for this story.

On Aug. 1, 2022, the local's office in Seattle was broken into. The local later moved to its current office out in Des Moines, Wash., where Guenther arrived one day to find a bullet hole in her office window. It was still there when I visited: The bullet entered, ricocheted off the ceiling and made a hole in the wall, right over the couch where staffers sat during meetings. There is no evidence these

incidents were anything more than random crimes, but the combined effect was enough to make everyone's hairs stand on end. As recently as 2018, a local UFCW officer in New York was indicted and charged with racketeering on behalf of the Genovese crime family.

Even if all of these things were coincidences, the atmosphere of tension that Local 3000's leaders felt was very real.

Faye Guenther is a driven person. She only got involved with the labor movement because she wants to change the world. Her fundamental frustration with the way UFCW as a whole was being run was that, despite having access to many resources, it seemed totally uninterested in that goal. Perrone boasted about the union's financial strength, but its organizing budget had been cut under his leadership, and proposals at the 2023 convention to boost organizing spending were resoundingly voted down. Guenther was equally frustrated with other UFCW locals that seemed to exist as sinecures for their officers, rather than democratic, member-focused unions.

“It's a political inside club,” Guenther says. “You get your regional directors and staff. You have no accountability to the membership.” At many locals, “their boards are filled with staff. They vote themselves their raises. They don't have organizing departments. They don't mobilize their members ... [and at the international], they're not leading either. They're not pulling people together. They're not speaking out. They're not exposing the problems. Because they all want to stay in power.”

Sam Dancy, 65, has seen a lot of union locals in his 33 years as a grocery worker at the Westwood Village QFC in Seattle. He's been represented by three different ones through UFCW, traveled the country doing get-out-the-vote work for the union, and now serves as a member representative on the Local 3000 board. He says Local 3000 stands out for its transparency, its investment in members and its willingness to fight. Soon after coming in, the local won paid sick leave and more control over scheduling. In 2021, it successfully defended Dancy's right to wear a Black Lives Matter pin.

In contrast to bloated officer salaries at other UFCW locals, Dancy says, “We know where our money goes. ... They make sure we have money for strike defense, money to help other people, money to organize.” That investment in new organizing, he says, is crucial to building “strength in numbers.”

“When I was growing up, there were unions—and there was a middle class. ... Today, you just have the rich and the poor,” he says. “Every single entity should be unionized. Everyone should have a voice.” Local 3000 is trying to be the change it wants to see. Matt Loveday, who was the local's organizing director from 2020 until earlier this year, says that, from 2020 through 2023, the union added 2,738 members through new organizing. Those came in 45 separate campaign wins, 30 of which were National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) elections. Those are not staggering numbers, though they do reflect continual work by his staff of 10 organizers through the depths of the pandemic. What is staggering is that, according to Loveday, Local 3000

accounts for about 5% of the UFCW's total membership but for more than 25% of its new organizing.

"The average size of a UFCW [NLRB union election] filing is about 20, whereas the average size of one of our elections is in the mid-60s," Loveday says. "The UFCW win rate is very low. It's lower than the national average. Our win rate is about 10 points higher than the national average. They could give you some BS about, 'Oh yeah, UFCW is one of the great organizing unions.' But if you actually know what statistics to look at, it's very, very poor."

Todd Crosby, who preceded Guenther as Local 3000's president and then served as the UFCW International's organizing director until the end of 2022, saw the sharp difference between the organizing philosophies. Crosby says he brought Marc Perrone a plan for UFCW to build up to organizing 10,000 new workers per year, which Perrone rejected. Likewise, the goal of spending 20% of the international's budget on organizing—\$40 million a year—was never taken seriously.

"Perrone hasn't gotten even a quarter of the way there in his 10 years," Crosby says.

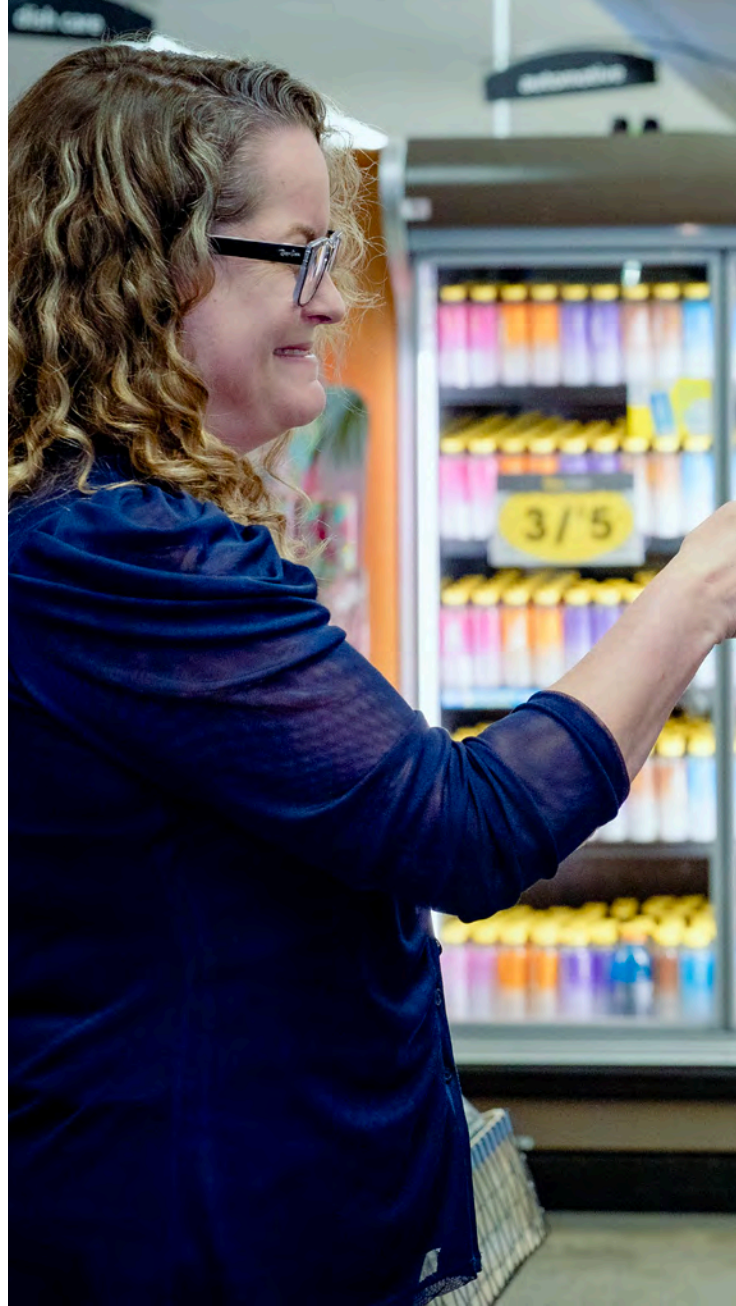
A UFCW International spokesperson disputed these figures, saying, "The numbers you cite are categorically false. While, like many unions, our organizing activity went down during the pandemic, we doubled our amount of organizing victories from 2021 to 2022, [and] have surpassed that in 2023." The union also said it devotes "more than 20% of our budget to organizing" but refused to share any specific details.

Crosby stood by his assertions about the flaws in the union's organizing strategy and budget, and he expressed skepticism about the UFCW International's denials: "What gets included in the 20%? That's the devil in the details. Is it 20% of staff? Do those staff actually work on organizing full-time? Does it include comms and political? That has never been clarified."

Crosby adds: "It is true that the organizing department budget and actual expenditures went up in 2021 and 2022. That's because both the pandemic and the shift of resources to the presidential election brought the budget/expenditures [in 2020] to almost zero."

Guenther told me her own vision for a UFCW that hired hundreds of new organizers and won coordinated national contracts to transform the entire grocery industry. Local 3000's secretary-treasurer Joe Mizrahi, Guenther's closest ally and consigliere, can rattle off detailed plans to organize 30,000 cannabis workers and unionize Whole Foods as an entry point to Amazon. To make those ambitions a reality, though, means making the UFCW International act more like Local 3000.

Last year, Mizrahi and Guenther resolved to make reforming the UFCW a reality. They pulled together a reform slate, headed by Guenther, as well as a host of resolutions and constitutional amendments to propose at the convention. Most meaningful was one to institute a "one member, one vote" structure that would shift power at UFCW away from insider delegates and toward members—a reform that has been integral to overthrowing entrenched leadership





PHOTOS BY JOVELLE TAMAYO

teams at other unions like the Teamsters and United Auto Workers (UAW) in recent years.

They also proposed limiting the salary of any local officer in the union to \$250,000 per year. This measure sounds modest, until you learn that 30 of the UFCW's 74 local presidents in 2023 were paid more than that, including three who were paid more than half a million dollars. When Crosby served as the UFCW International's organizing director, he made it a point to cut subsidies to locals who paid their officers more than \$300,000 a year—to send the signal “that money existed in the local for organizing. It was just misallocated to the president's salary.”

Eventually, Crosby says, those locals just started going around him and appealing directly to Perrone. (Guenther is paid less than \$200,000, and Local 3000's elected 48-person executive board consists of 45 members and three officers.)

The reformers made their voices heard—loudly—at the UFCW convention in April, but they were defeated on the floor, as they knew they would be. It was a first step.

Now, the same band of true believers are plotting to spend the years leading up to the next convention on a bootstrapped national campaign designed to refashion the entire million-member union in UFCW 3000's image: democratic, aggressively organizing, and rooted in social justice.

First, Seattle. Next, everywhere.

PUGET SOUND'S PERPETUAL GLOOMY MIST WAFTED THROUGH

the air on an early Tuesday morning in October 2023, but inside UFCW 3000's office, everything felt electric. Dozens of staffers from across the local's sprawling territory crowded into a large conference room for the biannual all-staff meeting. This one was about more than just the normal campaign and budget updates; if there is going to be a revolution inside the UFCW, it will start with the people in this room, many of whom are veterans of the 2023 convention reform fight.

“We know that we are, in my humble opinion, in a fight over the soul of UFCW,” Guenther told them. “We're in a fight for the soul of the labor movement.” Many of the staffers in the room had helped with the reform effort and attended the convention themselves, bearing witness to the jeers and cold shoulders that showed just how hard the road ahead would be.

Guenther noted the president of one of the other locals, who had been an ally, had just died; one of her deputies was attending his funeral that same day. Whether that local would remain an ally was an open question.

“We cannot rely on individual or fragile partnerships to reform UFCW,” Guenther said. “We must create a movement of members—not of elected leaders, of members—who want a different kind of union.” The UFCW's membership had sunk

Above: UFCW Local 3000 President Faye Guenther (left) greets Sam Dancy, who sits on the union's member-led executive committee, at the Westwood Village QFC in Seattle on February 23. Left: At the union office in Des Moines, Wash., Guenther shows off the local's inspirational pin board.

below where it was when she joined the union world in 1999, and she wanted everyone who worked for her to feel the urgency of that crisis: “How do you build power for low-wage workers—for grocery store workers, for food packing and processing workers, for cannabis workers? How do you build power when you’re sinking like a stone? How do you do that? I don’t know. You can’t! So we have to do something different.”

UFCW 3000, with more than 50,000 members and a pugnacious attitude, always has plenty of fights on its plate. On top of that, they are committed to getting bigger. When I asked Katie Garrow—head of MLK Labor, the central labor council for the Seattle area—about where UFCW 3000 sat in the union landscape, she immediately replied: “Their investment in organizing is like a model for the whole labor movement. ... UFCW 3000 stands as a shining example of the call to action right now, to invest in external organizing.”

During the week I spent with them, UFCW 3000 was also preparing for not one, but two, potential strikes. On Monday, Guenther, Mizrahi and several staffers crammed around a laminated table in the back corner of a teriyaki restaurant to talk through a looming strike at Macy’s, where members were fed up with low wages. On Thursday, staffers were camped out in a tiny break room at Providence Regional Medical Center in Everett, 30 miles north of Seattle, where a thousand nurses were taking a strike vote, which came in at 97% yes. (Providence workers ended up striking for five days; Macy’s workers for nine.)

Meanwhile, Guenther and Mizrahi spent Thursday and Friday at an airport motel in the midst of contract negotiations. Mizrahi was also working to arrange another meeting with Federal Trade Commission Chair Lina Khan regarding the Kroger merger. (The meetings would pay off: In February, the FTC sued to block the deal.) Rite Aid,

where Local 3000 had members, had just declared bankruptcy. On top of those things, and the staff meeting, the Israeli bombardment of Gaza had begun, and Guenther and her staff sat in on a Zoom call of labor activists discussing the issue, then added UFCW 3000’s name to the then very short list of unions demanding a cease-fire.

There was nothing about this river of work that would motivate any normal person to voluntarily undertake, in addition, a years-long project to reform a hostile and intransigent union. The motivation was ideology. The motivation was that Guenther and her allies believe the union must be better, and their work is not done until it is.

After contract negotiations concluded one night, they migrated to that upscale diner by the airport to sketch out their battle plans. Guenther whipped out a piece of paper, sectioned it off into years, and began filling in what needed to be done: 2024, 2025 and 2026 would be for building a national base of support among members of other locals, while 2027 and 2028 would be spent training reform delegates to flood the next UFCW convention. Each year, they planned on picking three or four cities to target—geographically dispersed places with UFCW locals that had members enthusiastic for reform and leaders who were not. Those cities would be the sweet spots, where the evangelistic message of democratic unionism could most easily take root.

This plan drew on the playbooks of two other internal union reform efforts: Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) and Unite All Workers for Democracy (UAWD). Guenther and her members have attended TDU conventions to learn.

UAWD, whose fight for union democracy led to the election of crusading new UAW President Shawn Fain, accomplished its task in only four years, proof that revolutions can happen fast.

Nelson Lichtenstein, a labor historian and professor at University of California Santa Barbara, notes that both the Teamsters and the UAW only instituted “one member, one vote” reforms after they were forced to in the wake of corruption investigations. The Teamsters did it in 1989 in response to a racketeering case after 13 years of agitation by reformers. The UAW made the reform in 2021 after a settlement with the Justice Department, laying the groundwork for Fain’s rise.

“The Teamsters union is actually a more decentralized union than [the UAW],” Lichtenstein notes, which accounts, in part, for TDU’s more arduous path to success. The UFCW, too, is decentralized—and there is no imminent corruption settlement to force the voting reform that seems key to defeating its incumbent leadership. But Lichtenstein points out that other unions, including the United Steelworkers, have implemented “one member, one vote” systems without a corruption scandal. There is no reason to imagine that UFCW cannot change itself without the government forcing the issue.

Guenther and her allies began kicking around targets for early 2024. Chicago? Phoenix? Boston? Perhaps Kansas, Ohio or New Jersey? And what about Canada? The scale

Carrying out this plan
would mean everyone
involved spent the next
several years using their
spare time to fly around
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workers and recruit them.



Faye Guenther discusses working conditions with Yasab Pfister in the break room at the PCC grocery in Burien, Wash., on February 23.

was intimidating. Then there were the logistical concerns. Carrying out this plan would mean everyone involved spent the next several years using their spare time to fly around the country to meet with workers and recruit them. Guenther said anyone who wanted to be on the slate with her could have one week of vacation per year but would be expected to use the rest of their vacation days visiting workers. They needed fundraising. A comms team. These things were briskly ticked off—not as obstacles, but as to-dos. (By early 2024, they had lawyers forming a new organization to house the effort, and they were focused on recruiting dozens of UFCW members to meet up at the Labor Notes convention in April, where they would decide their list of target cities.)

They discussed some more exotic possible tactics as well. One idea was to rally support to call a “special convention,” where they could force a formal consideration of one member, one vote. Even if the international leadership blocked the measure from passing, it could be a good way to draw attention to the fact that those leaders were insulating themselves from the will of the membership.

Another idea, which Mizrahi referred to as the “nuclear option,” would be for Local 3000 to pursue a full disaffiliation from the UFCW—the union equivalent of California seceding from the United States. In this scenario, the local would declare UFCW to be irredeemably broken and ask members to allow them to become a standalone union dedicated to new organizing and union democracy. This is, to be clear, a far-fetched plan, because the UFCW’s constitution makes it difficult, but introducing it as a possibility could give the reformers leverage.

It is not hard to see its appeal. Among other things, Mizrahi said, Local 3000 could stop sending \$800,000 per month to the UFCW International. “We could have another 80 staff,” he said. “Picture that we had the staff that you saw in that meeting, plus 80 organizers. What would that look like?”

It would look like the labor movement’s dream fully unleashed. What makes UFCW 3000 so remarkable is that it combines all of the real, existing, hard-won characteristics of a strong democratic union—a member-led board, national political influence, a willingness to tangle with multibillion-dollar corporations—with an additional, exceedingly rare determination to follow a purist ideology of labor solidarity wherever it leads.

Usually, it leads into new and bigger battles.

Faye Guenther does not *need* to pledge the next four years of her life to a fight to reform her heartbreakingly ossified international union. It is a fight that will be wearying and expensive. It will make her unpopular in important places. Its odds of success are uncertain. But for all the time she has invested in planning how the fight should be carried out, she has never seemed to question whether it must be done.

“Being an island does not build power,” Guenther says. “You’re always on the defense. We need to go on the offense. We need to go.” ■

HAMILTON NOLAN is an *In These Times* labor writer and author of *The Hammer: Power, Inequality and the Struggle for the Soul of Labor*.

How Much Longer Must Palestinians Sing for Freedom?

BY IMAN HUSAIN

AMID THE VIOLENCE AND destruction of Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon, Israeli forces in Beirut occupied the research center of the Palestine Liberation Organization. Before demolishing the building—including multiple bombing attempts that severely damaged the building and led to its eventual closure—the Israeli forces stole boxes of precious archival materials: manuscripts, microfilms, thousands of books. Among the haul was an original black-and-white music video for “The Urgent Call of Palestine.”

The four-minute film, shot on 8-millimeter in the mountains of Lebanon in 1972 by the Palestinian artist Ismail Shammout, features then-teenage Egyptian-born Palestinian singer Zeinab Shaath. Thin-browed and effortlessly captivating, Shaath strums her guitar with a keffiyeh around her neck, perched on a rock and dappled in sunlight filtered through surrounding olive trees. Shaath's imploring voice cuts through the Mediterranean air: “Can't you hear the urgent call of Palestine? Palestine—tormented, tortured, bruised and battered, and all her sons and daughters scattered.”

A remarkable example of Palestinian protest music in exile, “The Urgent Call of Palestine” was the title track of an EP of four songs produced by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in the early 1970s. Each song is composed by Shaath and entirely

in English. Now, more than 50 years after Shaath's urgent voice first appealed to the world—and decades after the master of the accompanying music video was stolen, left to collect dust in an Israeli military archive—the EP will be reissued March 26 on Bandcamp through the joint effort of two archival record labels: the U.S.-based Discostan and the Palestinian-led Majazz Project.

BORN IN EGYPT IN 1954, ZEINAB Shaath was the first member of her family born outside of Palestine. Her father, a Palestinian educator, moved his family to Egypt in 1947 after accepting a job in Alexandria. The Shaaths left their house behind, but they brought along the key for when they would return. Shortly after the Shaaths moved, however, the Nakba erupted; the founding of Israel expelled at least 750,000 Palestinians from their homes between 1947 and 1949, forcing them into displacement and denying their right to return.

Shaath grew up dreaming of finding her own way to contribute to the Palestinian cause. Her love for Palestine was fostered through the stories she heard from her family and their deep ties to the diasporic Palestinian community. Every week, for example, her father visited the Egypt-Palestine border to receive newly arrived Palestinian families, helping them secure food and shelter. Meanwhile, her mother (who was Lebanese) helped raise money for the refugees. And inside the Shaath family home, only Palestinian Arabic—not the local Egyptian dialect—was spoken.



Artist Zeinab Shaath performs at the 10th World Festival of Youth and Students in East Berlin during the summer of 1973.

“It was a struggle to feel that you really belonged,” Shaath says. Unlike her older siblings who had gone off to the United States to study, she didn’t yet feel old enough to participate in political debates or forge her own voice as a writer. “But your heart is with our people. We didn’t choose not to be in Palestine. There was always the longing. There was always the struggle for the injustices that were happening there.”

But Shaath did have a proclivity for music-making. She played the piano and made up silly songs. When her older sister, Mysoon, brought home a guitar and a selection of records from the United States in the 1960s—including Vietnam-era protest records by Joan Baez and Bob Dylan—Shaath was enamored. “It just kind of painted my interest in my music,” she says, “because it meshed

the activism that we lived with in our home with music.”

The 1960s, in both the United States and Palestine, were colored by burgeoning resistance movements. The anti-war movement was in full swing as Americans decried the atrocities of the U.S.-waged war in Vietnam, and the civil rights movement magnified the harrowing realities of racial oppression. In Palestine, budding armed resistance groups expanded as Israel continued its campaigns in the region. Tensions heightened during the 1967 War, during which Israel absorbed and occupied the remaining parts of historic Palestine after attacking the bordering nations of Egypt, Jordan and Syria.

The culture of resistance defies borders, and the anti-war spirit of Baez and Dylan’s iconic folkish sound would find new resolve through Shaath’s composition of



Left: Zeinab Shaath (right) joins the throng of 750,000 people who gathered from around the world for the 1973 World Festival of Youth and Students in East Berlin. Bottom: Newly discovered, the resistance music of Zeinab Shaath could be heard, in the '70s and '80s, at Palestinian festivals in Lebanon, on Egyptian radio stations and at protests throughout the United States.



“The Urgent Call of Palestine.” Shaath composed the song when she was just 16, after Mysoon handed her a poem of the same title written by a coworker’s wife, Lalita Panjabi. The songwriter’s sister locked her in her bedroom with a guitar and a challenge: to put the words to music within 24 hours. Sung in Shaath’s warbling style over a simple chord progression, the poem—already a rallying cry for resistance—transformed into a protest song. “It was really a melodic and very meaningful poem,” Shaath says. “I read it maybe two, three times, and I really got into it. And I started composing it out of nowhere.”

“The Urgent Call of Palestine” took off when Mysoon, who worked at an Egyptian English-language radio station, played it on air. Listeners flooded the station with replay requests. Soon, Shaath was performing at demonstrations and cultural events across the region, including at Palestinian festivals in Lebanon. In attendance at one

such festival was Ismail Shammout, a famed exiled Palestinian painter and friend of Shaath’s older brother. Shammout, founding director of the Artistic Culture Section of the PLO, recognized a unique opportunity in Shaath’s music—to widely disseminate a protest song about Palestinian liberation that could be heard by the Western world. He envisioned a film to accompany the music.

For Shaath, working with the PLO to produce a music video and an EP allowed her to find her niche within the movement, just as she had hoped. She refused to take any of the profits from the recording, instead giving them entirely to the PLO. “I wanted to contribute,” Shaath says. “I didn’t have money, so this was my donation.”

Her use of English, she realized, was key. Shaath composed three additional songs for the EP using English translations of poems that animated Palestinian resistance. Palestinian national poet Mahmoud Darwish’s “Identity Card,” for example, became the lyrics for Shaath’s song “I Am an Arab,” which also appears on the record. Darwish, who was accustomed to hearing his poetry sung in Arabic, was delighted by Shaath’s English version: “Write down: I’m an Arab! I am a name without a title, steadfast in this frenzied world.”

“Everybody knows, in the Arab world, about the Palestinian story,” Shaath says. “We need to educate people on the outside. We don’t need to

reeducate people who already know the history; we need to send the word out. And so English is the way to do it.”

While traveling with her resistance music, Shaath found herself catapulted into an international leftist revolutionary movement. In 1973, she performed at the 10th World Festival of Youth and Students as part of the Palestinian delegation—which included Yasser Arafat (then-chairman of the PLO) and Angela Davis (a featured speaker). More than 750,000 people traveled to what was then East Berlin, joining in solidarity against war and imperialism worldwide. On large event stages and in streets teeming with young people, Shaath sang. Afterward, Shaath was one of five Palestinian delegates invited to perform in Moscow and Tbilisi.

“It was the most amazing, vibrant time to be able to talk to people from anywhere,” Shaath recalls. “It was about activism, liberation and freedom.”

SHAATH RECORDED MORE MUSIC, IN ARABIC and English, in the following decades. She moved to the United States to attend university, fell in love and started a family, and pursued a career in pharmacology. When she left Egypt, she brought a copy of the EP and the film—though she admits she wasn’t sure how best to preserve it, which caused some damage—while the original (its most valuable form) had been stowed in the PLO’s cultural archives in Beirut for safekeeping before Israel’s invasion of Lebanon.

For years, Shaath believed the original film had been burned by Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in 1983, during the destruction of the PLO research center. But, in 2017, she was contacted by Israeli researcher and curator Rona Sela, who had “discovered” the film within Israel’s military archives and had worked tirelessly to declassify it. Even Sela, however, was not granted access to the original. She had to work with a digital copy, which remained stamped with IDF insignia.

Shammout and Shaath’s film is just one drop in the ocean of cultural objects that have been stashed by the IDF. Though the Palestinian cultural materials stored within the colonial archive are preserved, access to the materials is entirely controlled by the colonial power—and strategically kept out of the hands of the indigenous people to whom it rightfully belongs. This practice contributes to the erasure of Palestinian cultural history and perpetuates the false narrative that, preceding the Israeli state, Palestine was a “land without people for a people without a land,” Shaath says.

An alternative means to preserve “The Urgent Call of Palestine” would arrive in 2021, after Arshia Haq, DJ and founder of the music collective Discostan—a record label specializing in the Southwest Asia and North Africa region—saw a fellow record collector posted the iconic vinyl. Haq was immediately “pulled in” by Shaath’s voice and enlisted the help of her Discostan collaborator, Jeremy Loudonback, to scour the internet in hopes of finding Shaath to ask about reissuing the music.

“I thought if they revive my record, that’s really cultural preservation, as far as how Palestinian cultural music and music of different kinds of eras tells the story of the diaspora and the suffering under occupation,” Shaath says. “All your history can be reflected through music.”

With Shaath on board, Haq and Loudonback joined with Mo’min Swaitat, a Palestinian artist and archivist who founded Majazz Project, a Palestinian research platform and archival record label. They used copies of the film

and EP that were available in the Shaath and Shammout family archives for remastering, operating entirely outside of colonial collections. Though “The Urgent Call of Palestine” had faced erasure by Israeli forces and ultimately receded from the popular imagination, it had lived on in the hearts of those who had known it.

“It has always been there,” Shaath says. “It’s just that somebody gave it a new life.”

WHEN THE PROJECT TO REISSUE “THE URGENT Call of Palestine” first began, no one could have foreseen the unprecedented scale of atrocities against Palestinians that would be committed by Israel after October 7. As this story went to press, more than 30,000 Palestinians had been killed by Israel’s genocidal campaign, many of Shaath’s family members among them.

While traveling with her resistance music, Shaath found herself catapulted into an international leftist revolutionary movement.

And, just as Shaath once did, the Palestinians on the ground who have broadcasted the genocide of their people have made their appeals in English.

For Shaath, the new resonance that her songs have taken on in the current moment makes their revival all the more imperative—“Can’t you hear the urgent call of Palestine? There’s a genocide out there!” But their acute relevance in and of itself is haunting and heartbreaking.

“When I did this 50 years ago, things were not as bad as they are today,” Shaath says. “And it just makes me very sad and emotional that those songs are still being played, and nothing has happened. Nothing has gotten better. As a matter of fact, it got worse for my people.”

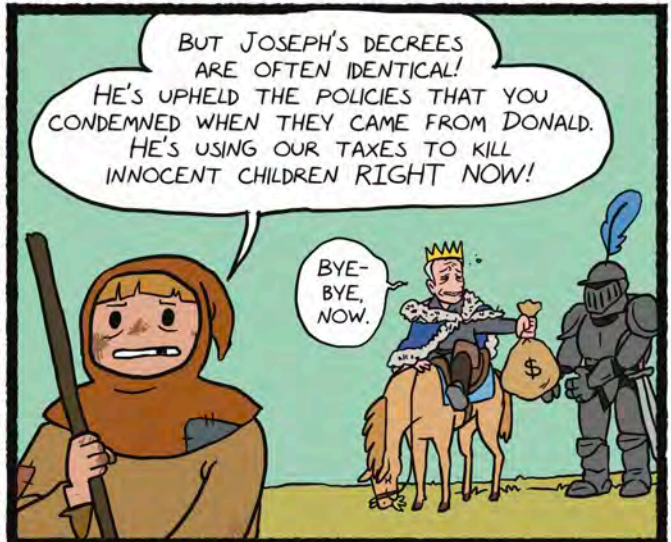
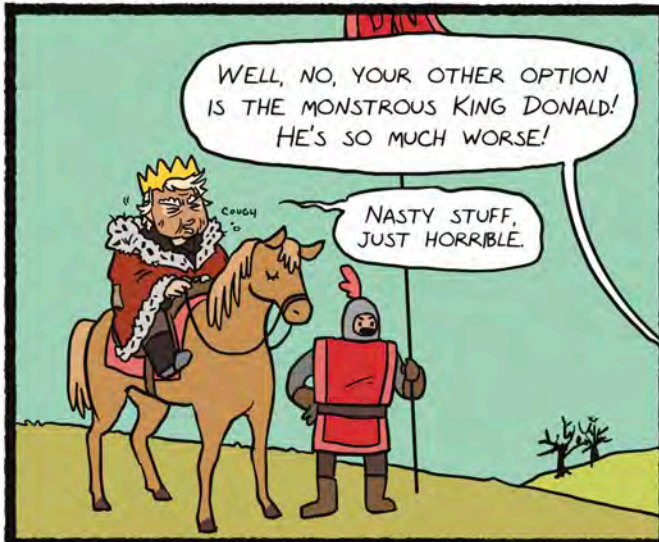
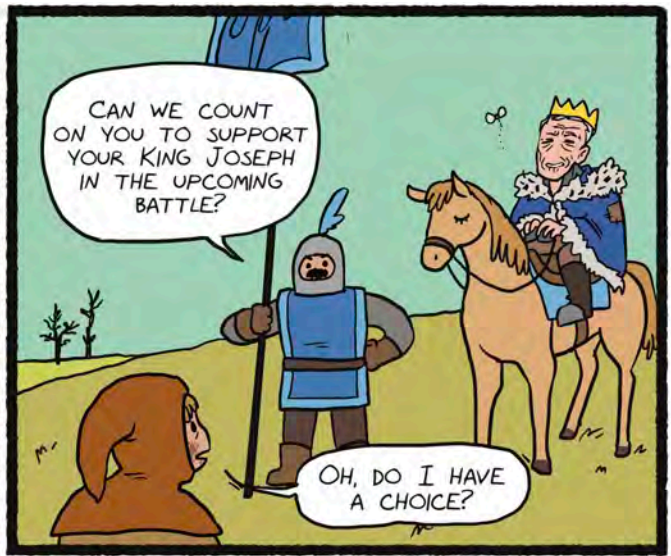
Half a century ago, Shaath sang a song that called out to the world. Her resolute and defiant voice remains a glowing beacon, guiding us along the path to liberation: “Liberation

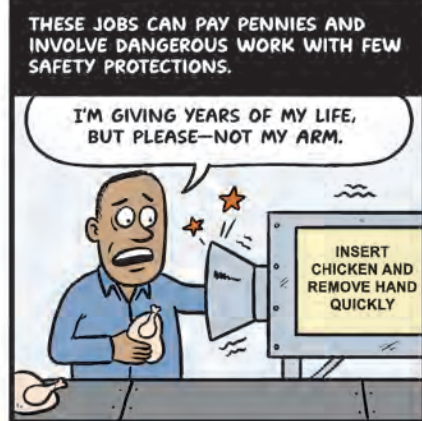
banner, hold it high for Palestine. Let us do or die.” She hopes that, this time, the world won’t look away. ■

IMAN HUSAIN is a writer, artist and fact-checker based in Brooklyn, New York. She is a former *In These Times* intern and a current intern at *The Nation*.



THE URGENT CALL OF PALESTINE will be re-released March 26, digitally and on vinyl, by Discostan and Majazz Project.





TOM TOMORROW



The Enduring Power of the Boycott

Israel's assault on Gaza, and the ongoing genocide, have brought renewed attention to one of the oldest and most-trusted weapons in the fight for justice: the boycott. The Palestinian-led movement for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel traces its roots back nearly two decades, with McDonald's and Starbucks two of its current high-profile "organic" targets, especially as McDonald's has donated meals to Israeli soldiers.

Boycotts can effectively unite workers and consumers against such behemoths. In 1977, Dan Marschall reported on the role of workers, unions, students and consumers in a boycott against the J.P. Stevens & Co. textile corporation, one of the largest textile producers in the United States. The fight illustrates how leveraged, collective power creates real change.

Meanwhile, as for McDonald's, we're not lovin' it.



IN 1977, DAN MARSHALL WROTE: What is it like to work for J.P. Stevens, the second largest textile company in the United States? "It's like being on the chain gang ... except no guns. Just pressure. Pressure all the time," says Mildren Whitley, a Stevens' worker in Roanoke Rapids, N.C.

After 26 years at Stevens, Whitley had a radical mastectomy and asked to be placed on a lighter job. "My supervisor told me that I could go ask the welfare for help. He informed

me that I could either run the job no matter what it did to me, I could quit, or else he would fire me," she says.

Whitley's story is not unique. She and other Stevens' employees describe company practices in *Testimony: Justice vs. J.P. Stevens*, a 22-minute color film produced by the Citizen's Committee for Justice for J.P. Stevens Workers. It is currently touring the country as part of a nation-wide consumer boycott of Stevens' products.

Testimony is a moving, personalized documentary about the shocking working conditions in Stevens' facilities and the determination of its workers— young and old, black and white—to unionize. Designed as an educational/organizing resource for the boycott, the film is mainly set in Roanoke Rapids, where 3,500 workers voted in 1974 for representation by the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers union (ACTWU).

The backbone of the film is the individual testimonials of Stevens' workers about safety conditions, racial discrimination, the health hazards of cotton dust and the attempts by Stevens to defeat the union with a barrage of often-illegal tactics.

Maurine Hedgepeth, a Stevens worker with three children, testifies about being illegally fired for "talkin' union." She began work in the mills in 1957. After appearing before the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) in 1964, she went on pregnancy leave. "On Christmas Eve they fired my husband, after him bein' a loom fixer for 25 years," she explains. "In January, when my leave was up, they wouldn't give me my job back. They told us if any of us was goin' to get any work we would have to leave town to do it, because nobody would hire us."

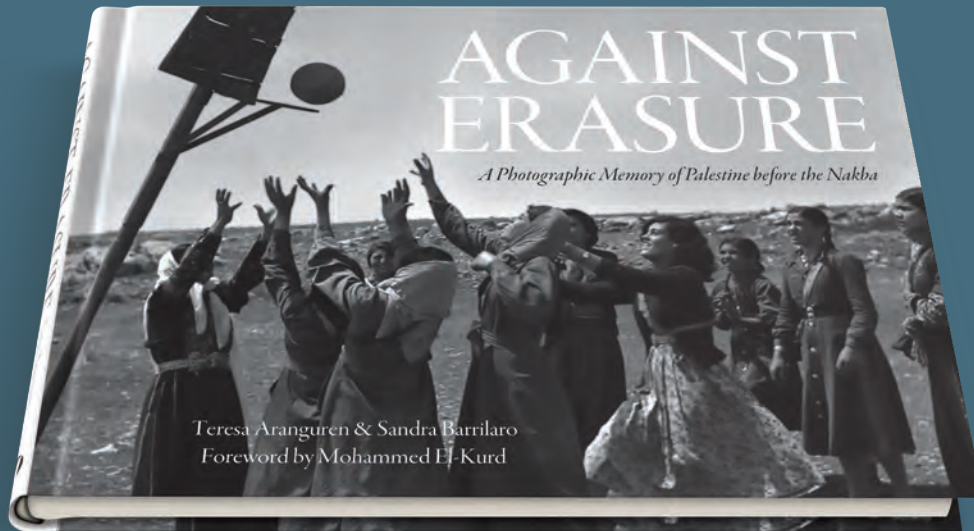
The union will apparently push to organize other Stevens plants in the fall, after the boycott is in full swing. The boycott has already brought together an impressive array of progressive organizations: labor unions, church groups, civil rights organizations, students and community groups.

"And so a long, grinding battle is now under way," concludes *Testimony*. "It is too late for us that're sick," says Lucy Taylor, a victim of brown lung disease from breathing cotton dust. "But for the people working in the plants, and for our children and grandchildren that're coming on after us, we ask to help us. Boycott J.P. Stevens."

This article has been edited for length. Visit InTheseTimes.com to read it in full.

"Celebrating our heritage, our cultural roots, our love for life, for freedom, for justice becomes more necessary than ever. This book helps us do so."

—Omar Barghout

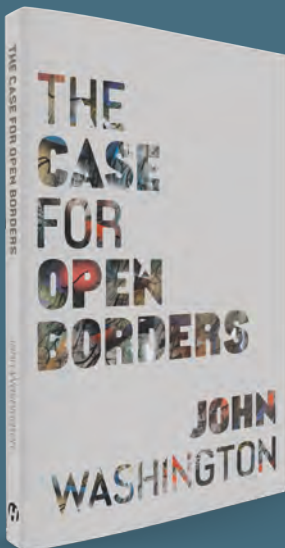


Against Erasure

A Photographic Memory of Palestine Before the Nakba

Edited by Teresa Aranguren and Sandra Barrilaro

Foreword by Mohammed El-Kurd

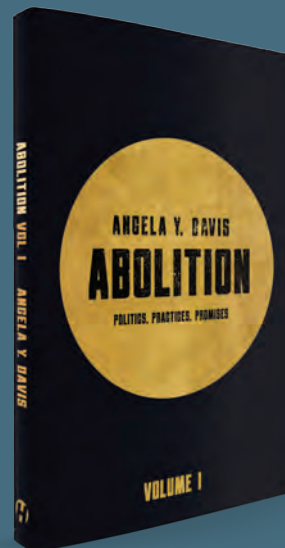


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John Washington

"A powerful and convincing case for human solidarity and cooperation for which Washington provides a roadmap."

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