

21st Century Class Struggle

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Here are four presentations made at political education webinars sponsored by the Southern Workers Assembly. They are made up of slides and commentary, in other words a slaper (slay-per), or slides plus a paper.

Twenty-first century capitalism:

The case of Amazon page 3

Building a 21st century
working class movement 23

Why do we have to fight both
the capitalist system and their state? 40

Strategy and tactics for
the anti-capitalist struggle 60

The initial audience was workers in the southern states, but this material is important for all activists in any movement fighting for social justice.

I am an intellectual worker in Black Studies. An important part of the field of Black Studies is developing knowledge and pedagogical practices that propel curriculum on campus and in the community. Please use this slaper in your education programs.

Based on current social movements including Black Lives Matter, Black people and youth are getting interested in socialism, meaning something better than capitalism. So let's reorient our curriculum to meet their needs.

Our mission statement, "Academic Excellence and Social Responsibility," can help us make a paradigm shift. We can join DuBois in preparing for the future. DuBois was clear on what he thought about socialism:

This social revolution, whether we regard it as voluntary revolt or the inevitable working of a vast cosmic law of social evolution, will be the last manifestation of the class struggle, and will come by inevitable change induced by the very nature of the conditions under which present production is carried on. It will come by the action of the great majority of men who compose the wage-earning proletariat, and it will result in common ownership of all capital, the disappearance of capitalistic exploitation, and the division of the products and services of industry according to human needs, and not according to the will of the owners of capital...What now has all this to do with the Negro problem? First of all, it is manifest that the mass of Negroes in United States belong distinctly to the working proletariat. Of every thousand working Negroes less than a hundred and fifty belong to any class that could possibly be considered bourgeois. And even this more educated and prosperous class has but small connection with exploiters of wage and labor. Nevertheless, this black proletariat is not a part of the white proletariat. Black and white work together in many cases, and influence each other's rates of wages. They have similar complaints against capitalists, save that the grievances of the Negro worker are more fundamental and indefensible, ranging as they do, since the day of Karl Marx, from chattel slavery, to the worst paid, sweated, mobbed and cheated labor in any civilized land. ("Marxism and the Negro Problem," The Crisis 1933)

Let Black Studies and our community organizations stand on the example of our great ancestors. This is a message to and a tool for workers fighting the evil and wicked capitalist system.

—Abdul Alkalimat

Twenty-First Century Capitalism: The Case of Amazon

Southern Workers Assembly School

April 18, 2021



Southern Workers Assembly

PO Box 934, Rocky Mount, NC 27802

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All Sessions Sunday 5 pm Eastern Time,
contact us for Zoom details.

**April 18. Fighting 21st Century Capitalism:
The Case of Amazon.** How Amazon fits into
21st century capitalism. Identifying key
workplaces in your area.

**May 2. Building a 21st Century Working
Class Movement.** Who and what is the
working class. Outreaching to key workplaces.

**May 16. Organizing the Workers
Movement Today.** Capital and the State.
Winning based on issues identified by workers
in key workplaces.

May 30. The Southern Workers Assembly.
Pulling it all together. building a worker
assembly in your area

**Attend all four sessions. If you can't, come
anyway!**



The Southern Workers Assembly (SWA) is a network of local unions, worker organizations, and organizing committees, committed to building rank-and-file democratic social movement unionism (unionism with a social justice agenda, defined by and accountable to the rank-and-file) as a foundation for organizing, uniting and transforming labor power throughout the South.

SWA Core Principles: Rank-and-file democracy; national and international labor solidarity; organizing the unorganized; fighting all forms of discrimination; building a Southern labor congress; and building labor's power for independent political action.

SWA Core Demands: Repeal Taft-Hartley and Right-to-Work laws, and collective bargaining rights for all workers.

Welcome to the first session of this SWA Workers School. The next sessions are May 2, 16, and 30. This document is a version of the April 18 theory talk. Read it, share it, bring more people next time.

This session is about the political economy of capitalism. Political economy is more than economics. It's economics and it relates to power, including the power of government.

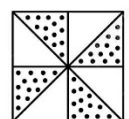
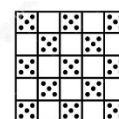
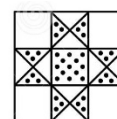
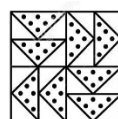
Capitalism is not fair or just. Masses of people find it hard to care for self and family while the capitalists get fat. While the pandemic hit all of us hard, 50 more Americans became billionaires. It's them versus us, and we have to get clear about it.

It's not just capitalism in general, its twenty-first century capitalism. Amazon is our

corporate example today of twenty-first century capitalism. The basics of capitalism continue the same, though.

Amazon is bringing a new way for them to do their dirty work. Getting a fix on them will help us understand what's the same, what's new, and how to build the movement we need.

The Bessemer struggle—Bamazon, the union campaign—helped wake us all up. When Black workers in the South begin to move, when workers at the bottom of the system begin to move, the entire system will change.



Q1: What is capital?

Is it money? **NO!**

It is money invested to make more money

The question is HOW



What is capital? After all it's the key concept in capitalism. Some people think it's money, like in this person's back pocket.

Sure, money is the way we buy things and pay our bills. But these are things we consume. We buy food and eat. We buy a car and eventually it gets used up.

The illusion is that everybody has a little bit of capital. But that's not the way capitalism works. That's the way we are tricked into believing that we can be part of the capitalist system, rather than being exploited by it.

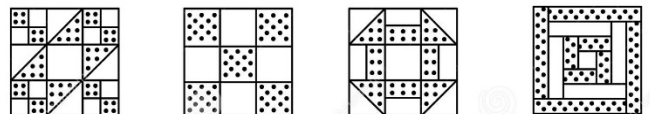
Money is capital used to make more money. And not just in any way but in a particular way. It is not going to a casino and gambling. It is not paying robbers to rob a bank.

So how does capitalism work?

This cartoon sums it up. Corporations have most of the money, and they use it to get profits. That's their sole purpose, why they are in business.

We are on the bottom, being held down by the "immorally low minimum wage." The main story of capitalism is how this arrangement is kept in place.

Our main task is to get up and take our fair share and build a safe and just society.



How does capitalism work?

Production → **Distribution** → **Consumption**

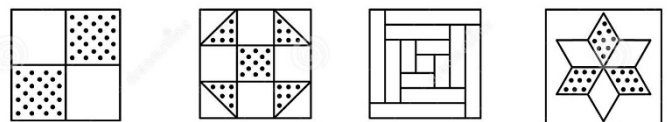


Political economy has three main aspects. First, the production of goods and services. The history of economic development is mainly about how production has been carried out, and how it has grown. Increases in food production means more people can eat and live. It is easy to see how increasing production in clothing, housing, etc. represents development. In fact, today, in this country, we have a surplus of production in many areas.

Second, their distribution into a market process. Since capitalism is about buying and selling what is produced, the main thing after production is to get goods and service to a market where they can be bought and sold. Finally, the consumption of these goods and services. Some of the goods are for people to

use up, and some of the production is for capital to use in the production of even more complex products. Steel, glass and rubber are produced to be consumed by capitalists who own auto companies to produced automobiles. The process is the same: production, distribution, consumption.

As you will see, Amazon began with a focus on distribution, actually starting with books. But you will see they do much more. They are actively planning very much more. They are leading capitalism into a new future.



Production requires
Tools, technology
Natural resources
Labor

The capitalist invests.
Those are fixed costs.
Workers provide labor.
Those costs vary.
Capitalists seek low wages.



Key issues:

- 1. The role of technology**
- 2. The conditions of work**
- 3. The scale of capital**
- 4. The role of the government**
- 5. The capacity of labor to fight back**

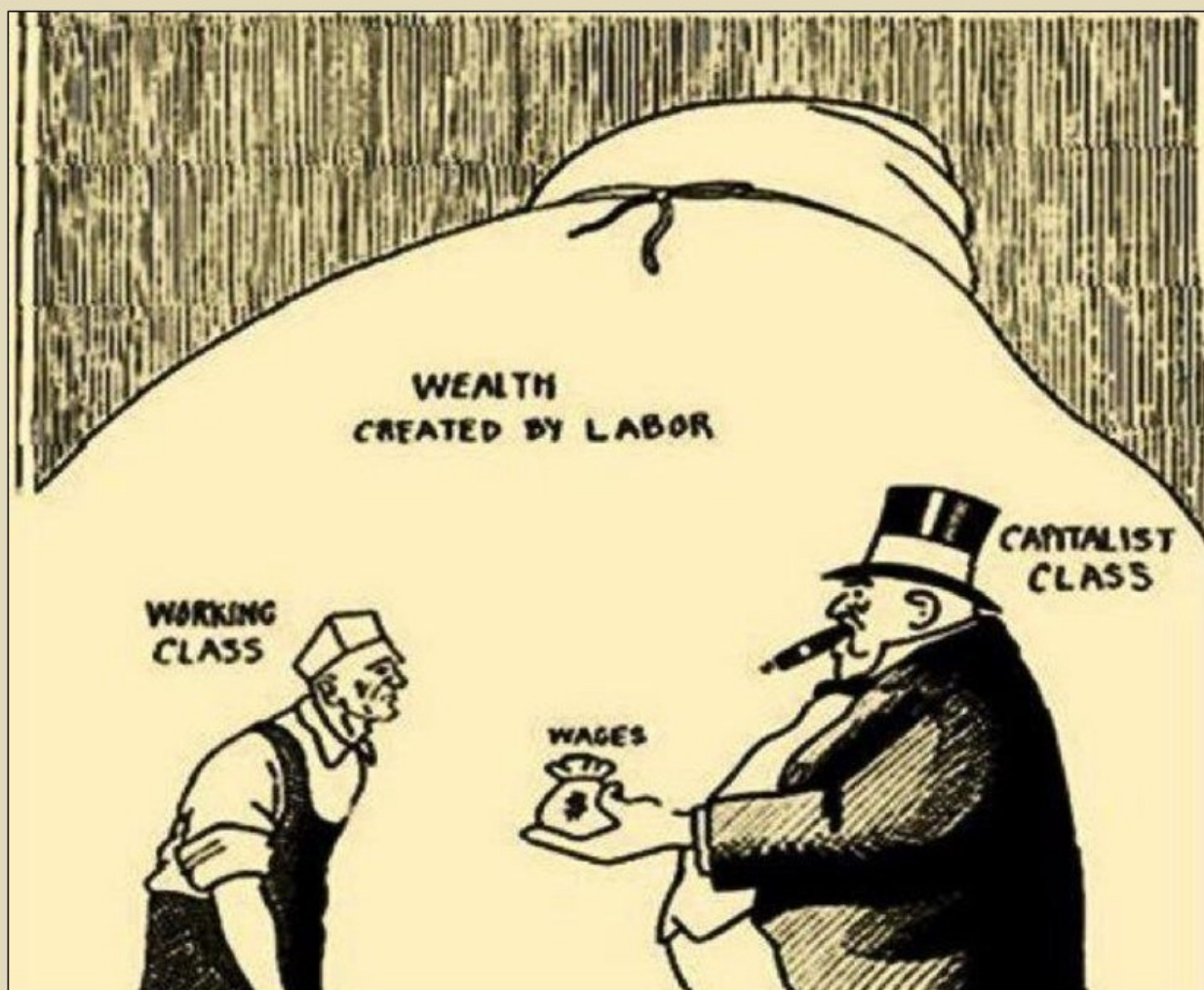
Here is how capitalism works. Natural resources are the basis for all production – wood, steel, plastics, glass, cotton, all plants and animals, even electricity. To work on these natural resources we need tools, and this is where technology comes in, whether it's a hammer, saw, or a computer and the Internet. The capitalist must own these things to operate as a capitalist. This is how a capitalist uses money, to buy and control the natural resources and the technology by the society.

In a capitalist society we own our own labor, our bodies. Slaves were owned like animals, but under capitalism we own our own labor.

But we don't own the natural resources and the technology, so we have to go to work,

find a job, or we starve, or become criminals and steal to survive. They steal the natural resources and use them up in such a vile manner that they have created the dangerous climate warming putting the planet in danger.

The capitalist invests in natural resources and technology (tools). These are fixed costs over a specific period of time. A certain amount of stuff for a price that will last a period of time. Within that time frame workers are hired to make stuff or provide services. The capitalist can vary the number of workers, can vary the hours worked, and can vary the wages being paid to those workers. That's how he manages the profit margin. More work for less pay means more profits.



Another way to think about this is that the capitalist invests in production so that each product costs so much to make. Nothing is sold at that price level. If that were true, the capitalist would make no profit. Same money gotten for the amount invested.

So, given the actual cost of production, workers work enough time to pay the capitalist back his cost (his investment) but have to keep on working. This extra work is the source of the profit taken by the capitalist. This is surplus time that creates surplus value.

There is a big difference between the wealth created by the working class and what they are paid in wages. In fact, many workers make stuff that cost more than they can buy with the wages they make. We are often

alienated from the very products and services we create.

Why is this supposed to be fair? We can work a 40-hour week, but paid wages that force us to look for welfare, food assistance, and sometimes even a homeless shelter. On the other hand, the capitalists get fat on the profits they extract from the surplus value we are forced to create.

It's been this way since capitalism began.

We have to know the historical development of capitalism in order to grab hold of it and change things up. But since it has continued to change, we have to move our understanding with it.

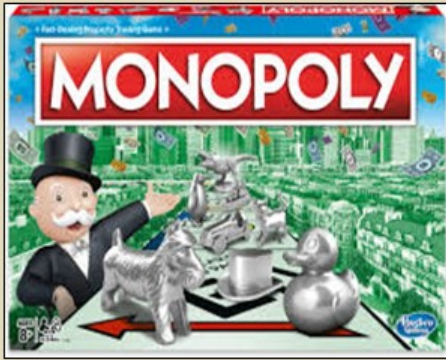
Then we look at what's new about 21st century capitalism.

Historical context is key



Amazon: \$1.7 trillion

Jeff Bezos: \$194.9 billion
(Richest man in the world)



17th Century:

merchant capitalism

18th Century:

small shop competitive capitalism

19th Century:

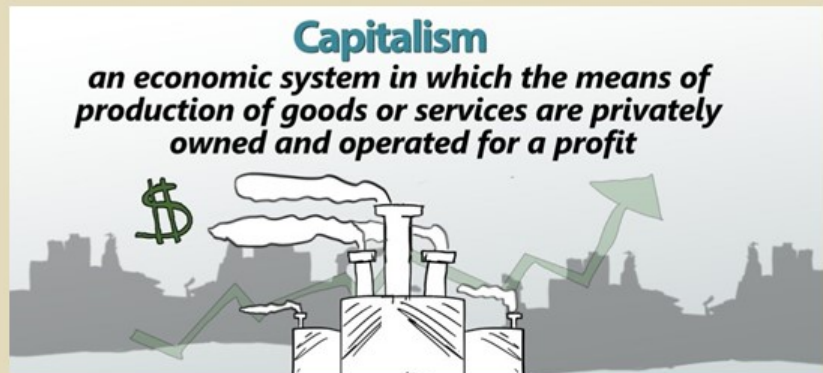
industrial, competitive capitalism

20th century:

finance, monopoly capitalism

21st century

global, AI capitalism



We can use a shorthand way to sum up the historical development of capitalism. Of course, as a global experience, any timetable is somewhat different for each country, but we can make the following generalizations.

First, the definition remains the same: capitalism is an economic system in which the production of goods or services are privately owned and operated for a profit.

It begins as a way merchants traded goods for a profit in a system called mercantilism. This was middle-man capitalism.

The shift to production was key in small shops moving from handicraft tools to machines and the invention of factories.

By the 19th century these factories became dominant. Thus was born industrial capitalism.

The 20th century brought forth the merger of industry and the banks to form finance capitalism and the systematic rise of imperialism as global domination by the leading capitalist powers.


The next major leap in capitalist development is in the 21st century. We are now in the era of advanced technology driven by computers and the Internet. We have so called smart machines, robots, 21st century machine slaves.

This is a global system. Consider this: 40% of Amazon sellers are based on China. The industrial system in the US is in deep crisis.

What is new about 21st century capitalism?



AI (Artificial Intelligence)
Digital tools
Computers
Robots
Total surveillance
Global scale
Horizontal & Vertical
integration

A black stick figure is shown in a thinking pose, with one hand on its head and a question mark above its head. It is positioned to the left of the text list.

We have to understand that capitalism is a historical system that has changed over time. One of the main changes over time is technology, the tools used in production, distribution, and consumption. Of course, this connects with different patterns of ownership and capital accumulation (meaning profits that are reinvested in natural resources and technology).

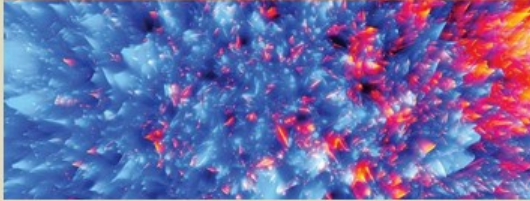
It should be clear to everyone that 21st century capitalism is about a technological revolution. Just think about where you work and how you live, and the technological innovations that have been changing your workplace, skills-sets required on the job, and how management functions. Also, and very importantly, how you communicate.

They call it AI (artificial intelligence) but actually there is nothing intelligent about it. Digital technology is about machines following a specific set of rules, the bigger the computer the more rules it can use and the faster it can work. Robots are rule governed machines. Humans can be intelligent, Robots can't be.

What has happened is that as the digital tools and computers get larger, and have more capacity and power, they are being used as machines that do allot of the work that humans used to do, and that is increasing rapidly. We are increasingly under total surveillance. This is global, whether from satellites in the sky or cellphones in our hands, data is being collected on a global level. Big brother is already here.

Hands-On **Artificial Intelligence** **on Amazon** **Web Services**

Decrease the time to market for AI and ML applications with the power of AWS



AI (Artificial Intelligence)
Digital tools
Computers
Robots
Total surveillance
Global scale
Horizontal & Vertical
integration



There are specialized technology companies, but every major corporation is using and relying on these new technologies. In fact, these technologies are the basis for the new form of corporate organization, being integrated vertically and horizontally, from the shop floor to the board room across multiple industries and financial institutions. We used to know what a company did, like what they made or what service they provided. But now, corporations are like weeds or a virus, they multiply and go in multiple directions at the same time.

Amazon is leading the way in this technological transformation. Their lead business is controlling cyberspace. They provide web services to individuals,

corporations and the government. In fact, they have had a \$600 million contract with the National Security Agency and the Pentagon.

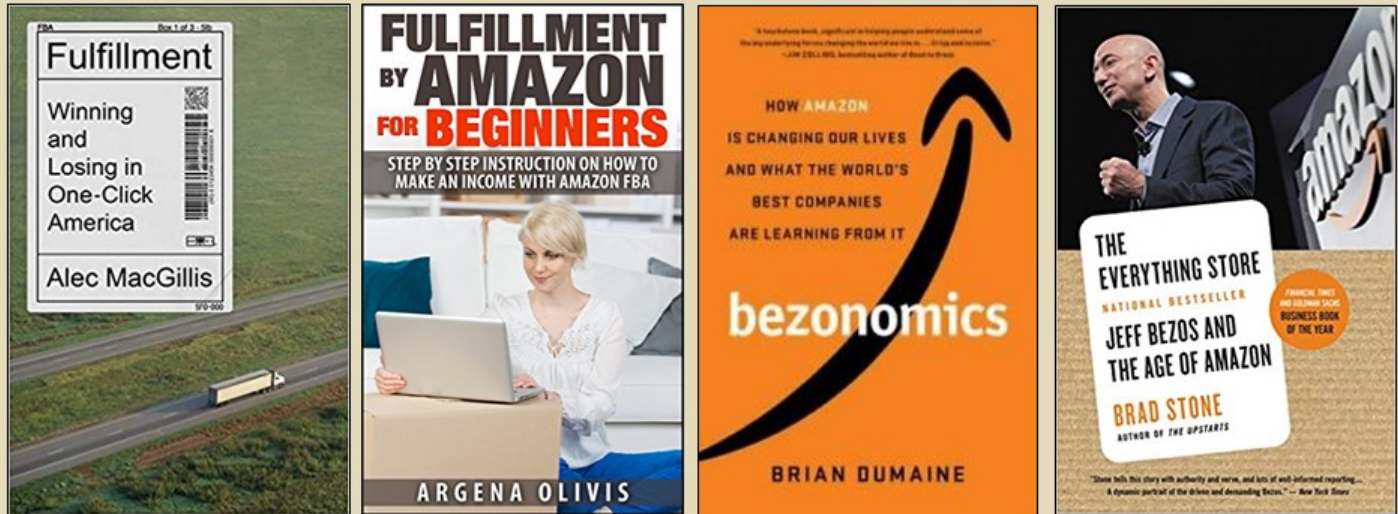
Here's how they roll. These small flat machines are robots they use to move around goods in their warehouses. They can lift more than a human, and work with a break all day.

The computers they use can manage hundreds on a warehouse floor at the same time.

They bought the company that invented these robots, and then told other users they could not get them anymore. Amazon took what they wanted and cut out their competition.

Capitalism is a cold-blooded sport, and Amazon takes no prisoners.

Why is Amazon the face of 21st century capitalism?



Amazon uses digital data to dominate markets and influence our behavior

Here are a few book titles, but the business press has created a library full of such books.

Amazon is the face of twenty-first century capitalism because it represents the most effective use of AI (artificial intelligence) to build its corporate model. Amazon has different business interests that cover all areas (distribution, but also production and consumption) – however, the foundation of Amazon, its real business, is the digital data they collect on all of us. They use this data on every aspect of what they do.

Who are the customers of Amazon? Everybody. People like each of us in this SWA school, other corporations, and the government. Amazon collects all our data and uses it to build their business in all areas.

The Amazon approach reaches out to every aspect of our lives and how society is organized. George Orwell in 1949 wrote a novel called 1984. He wrote “Big Brother is watching you” to describe the possible surveillance of fascism in the future.

We are living at that time. Amazon has eyes and ears in our homes (Alexa), on our front doors, in our workplaces, everywhere.

Think about the Trump times and compare that to what Orwell wrote: “War is peace. Freedom is slavery. Ignorance is strength.”

This is not the work of one president or one company. It is the way of 21st century capitalism.

Amazon's board: Capitalist corporations, government, law, and technology talent

A capitalist corporation uses its (paid) board of directors for information and working relationships with other corporations and government. Board connections are how the entire capitalist system works for the capitalist class, now on a global level. As of September 2020, the board of directors is:

- [Jeff Bezos](#), President, CEO, and Chairman
- [Keith B. Alexander](#), CEO IronNet Cybersecurity, former [NSA Director](#)
- [Rosalind Brewer](#), Group President, and COO, [Starbucks](#)
- [Jamie Gorelick](#), partner, [Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr](#)
- [Daniel P. Huttenlocher](#), Dean of the Schwarzman College of Computing at the [Massachusetts Institute of Technology](#)
- [Judy McGrath](#), former CEO, [MTV Networks](#)
- [Indra Nooyi](#), former CEO, [PepsiCo](#)
- [Jon Rubinstein](#), former Chairman, and CEO, [Palm, Inc.](#)
- [Thomas O. Ryder](#), former Chairman, and CEO, [Reader's Digest Association](#)
- [Patty Stonesifer](#), President, and CEO, [Martha's Table](#)
- [Wendell P. Weeks](#), Chairman, President, and CEO, [Corning Inc.](#)

A capitalist corporation uses its (paid) board of directors for information and working relationships with other corporations and government. Board connections are how the entire capitalist system works for the capitalist class, now on a global level.

So, their board is a brain trust and a networking machine that can provide intelligence, open doors, and make connections. All for the expansion of business.

Take a look:

1. The government: an NSA contact and a leading law firm based on Boston and Washington DC
2. Technological innovation: MIT, Palm and Corning
3. Mass media: Readers Digest and MTV

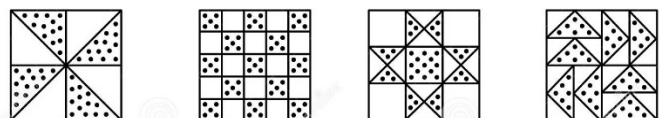
4. Retail: Starbucks and Pepsi

5. Even the NGO social welfare: Martha's Table

Amazon is covering lots of bases and firmly connects itself to the capitalist system. Note that Bezos runs the company and chairs the board and own the most stock (10%, 53 million shares) – he is in control.

What would happen if workers controlled such a corporation? What would the pay scale be? If robots would continue to do tasks, why would workers have to work a 40-hour week?

Isn't it time to think out of the box we are in?



How big could Amazon grow?

Online retail sales: \$469 billion, largest in the world

Web services: AWS 47% of market, 50% of Amazon's income

“As the global death toll from the pandemic neared one million deaths, Jeff Bezos, Amazon’s CEO, became the first person in world history to amass a personal net worth of over \$200 billion, and the corporation doubled its net profit year over year to \$5.2 billion. While millions of workers were laid off across the world, Amazon hired nearly 400 thousand more workers since 2019, increasing its (directly employed) workforce to over 1 million workers. For the blue-collar workers in warehousing and delivery, the pandemic exacerbated Amazon’s ‘extreme high churn model’ – the continual replacement of workers in order to sustain dangerous and gruelling work-pace demands.”

Pluto Press Blog

Scale is key. Amazon is already the largest company in the world in online retail sales and in servers (aws or Amazon Web Services). They are aiming for domination in many more areas.

People wonder why they bought Whole Foods. They plan to take food delivery online like books. Same with their drug prescription delivery system known as pill pack.

Amazon feeds on the crisis. People need work and they find Amazon. They pay the popular demand for wages, around \$15 an hour, but they squeeze more surplus value than most companies.

The rate of work and the penalty for “time off task” drives more workers into medical injuries than the norm for warehouse workers.

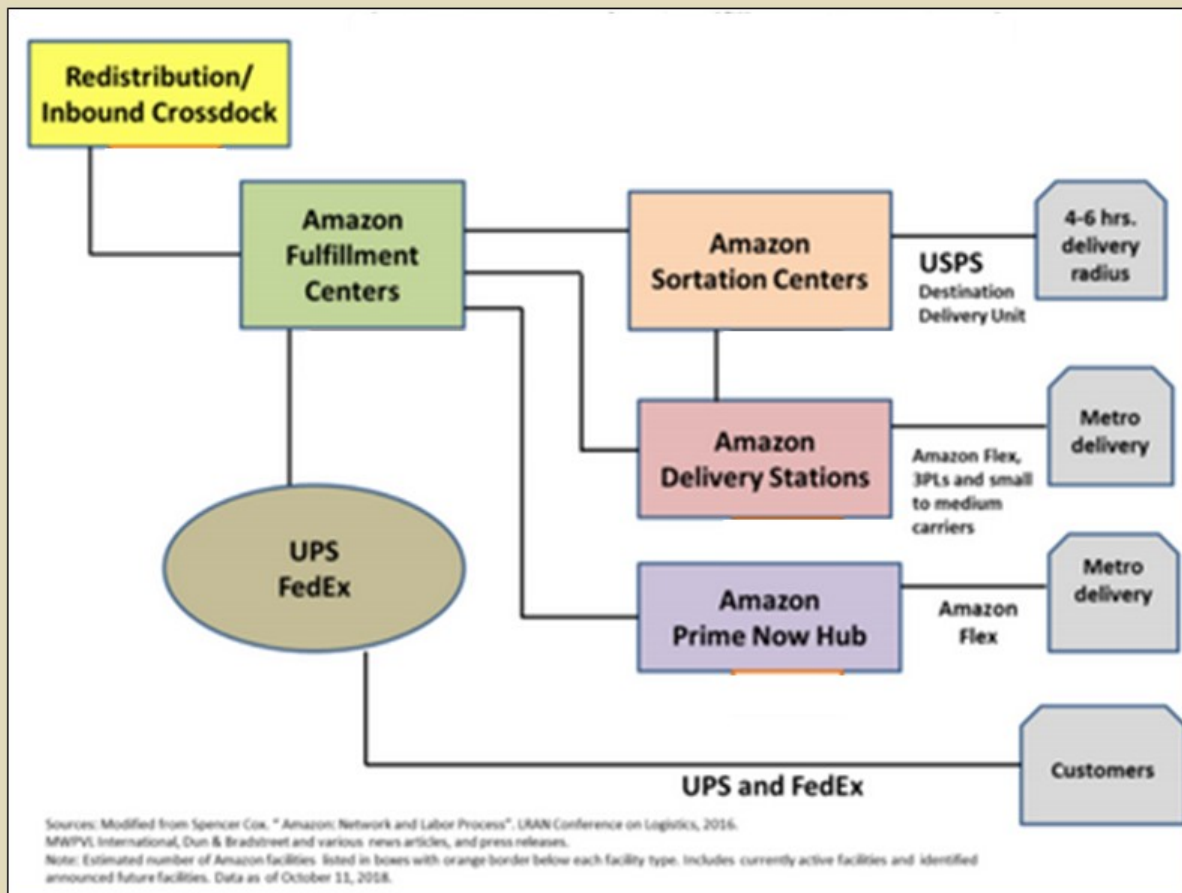
The same goes for drivers who are also timed and mapped by the digital devices that monitor their every move.

Workers don’t have time to go to the toilet. Amazon workers and drivers are urinating in pop bottles. Robots don’t have to stop work to go to the bathroom, and maybe talk to other workers during the day. So Amazon thinks, why should these human workers?

In the capitalist system, competition is everything, so the biggest employer sets the pace for the entire system.

What happens at Amazon will soon be coming to your workplace. It might already be there.

Amazon's warehouse network



This is the structure of the distribution system of Amazon. Fulfillment centers are their main warehouse system. Then good ready to ship are put out to four paths for distribution, each smaller and closer to destinations. The goal is to get the goods out faster than anybody else. It is this very system that puts the most pressure on the work force.

When they put one of their warehouses in a community major changes take place. They build giant facilities that deliver a wide variety of consumer items, from the smallest nail clip to major appliances.

These centers not only destroy the market for small shops in the community. They go one step further by destroying the market for the

big box stores. They whip their workers and drivers to deliver, and fast.

They stock their warehouses with goods that are determined by the software they use to track our consuming patterns, both as individuals and people who share the same demographic profile. They are becoming expert in predicting our behavior.

They are also perfecting the ability to change our behavior via advertising and suggesting items that their computer software says we should like.

Only the wages stay local. The surplus value is sucked out of the local community into the capitalists who own Amazon. Capitalism no longer serves the local community.

Amazon's warehouse network

Flag	Country	Facility Type	Currently Active Facilities	Future Facilities	Active Square Feet	Future Square Feet
	United States of America	Fulfillment Centers, Supplemental Centers & Return Centers	233	89	166,423,822	65,318,348
		Pantry/Fresh Food FCs	21	1	5,199,962	1,086,384
		Whole Foods Retail Grocery DCs	12	0	1,157,714	-
		Prime Now Hubs	55	0	2,055,487	-
		Inbound Sortation Centers	19	5	11,196,143	3,068,323
		Outbound Sortation Centers	67	15	24,918,170	4,561,126
		Delivery Stations (Packages)	340	175	57,550,777	31,253,631
		Delivery Stations (Heavy/Bulky)	64	36	2,321,843	2,311,205
		Airport Hubs	13	4	3,861,307	2,337,278
		SubTotal USA	824	325	274,685,225	109,936,295
SubTotal Rest of World			714	88	115,014,637	32,310,061
Global Total			1538	413	389,699,862	142,246,356

https://www.mwpl.com/html/amazon_com.html

Two important patterns show up in the Amazon network. (Since this is a private company, they don't often share their data or plans, but even so people are watching them.)

The first is that the main places are the fulfillment centers and delivery stations. These are located where Amazon thinks can get to their customers as fast as possible. These sites gather goods from suppliers, especially China, so fulfillment centers are near shipping ports and airports.

They even have facilities to take in returned items that Amazon then returns to the sellers or manufacturers. Amazon sells a lot of fakes and these are among the items returned.

Fulfillment centers and delivery stations are where the majority of Amazon workers are. This is also where Amazon makes the biggest investment in robotic technology.

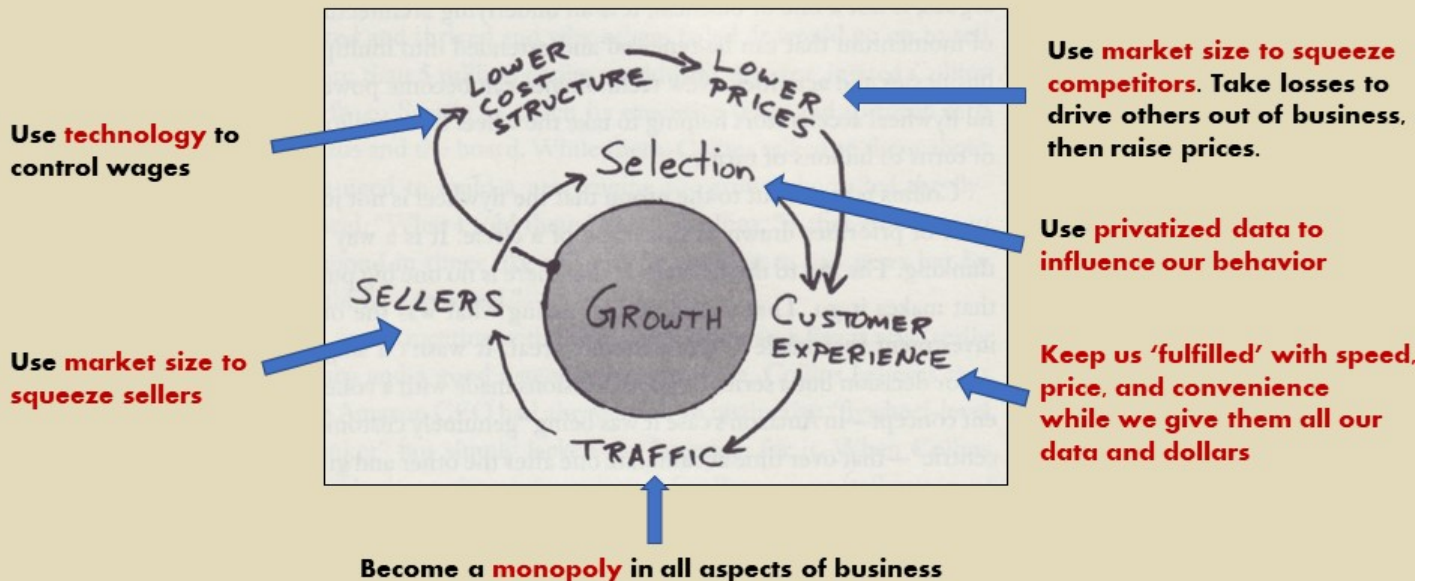
See too here the US versus global. More growth is planned in the US, but that could change, even by acquisition.

Since capitalism is a global system it operates with global standards. Workers in one country are competing with workers anywhere else in the world where similar jobs exist.

Amazon is a giant global company, the face of 21st century capitalism.

Now let's turn to its internal plan. How does it work to keep being that fastest growing company?

The Amazon strategic model – the flywheel



"The flywheel, when properly conceived and executed, creates both continuity and change. On the one hand, you need to stay with a flywheel long enough to get its full compounding effect. On the other hand, to keep the flywheel spinning, you need to continually renew, and improve each and every component."

— Jim Collins, [Turning the Flywheel: A Monograph to Accompany Good to Great](#)

Amazon adopted the flywheel as their big concept. They got it from Jim Collins. He used this as a way of thinking about how innovation in business can continue to fuel growth. Amazon took the idea and ran with it.

This graphic comes from the book *Bezonomics*. The handwritten terms define how they want the system to work. They say they focus on customer experience with lower prices and fast delivery. By having a big customer base, they draw in sellers who can get to a bigger market by selling via Amazon.

We can go deeper when we go back over this, counterclockwise to get a picture of how they make their profits. Amazon keeps their customers happy in exchange for their business and even more important, their data. And they

use this behavioral data to change what we buy next and make more money. And they gangster their competition to drive them out of business with price wars prices. Their size enables them to keep taking losses and starve out the competition.

And they use technology to control workers every move, spitting out workers who don't comply and keeping wages low. And they use their market size to squeeze Amazon's sellers, taking at least 20% of each item sold. If there is a big seller, they develop a competing product then lower the on-screen visibility of the competition.

Each of these innovations spins the flywheel faster and makes the company bigger. But #1: control and squeeze their work force.

Capitalist techniques Amazon uses to get more profits from its workers

Extend workday

Speed up work

Limit break time

Hire temps

Fire without cause

Beat anti-union drum

Minute by minute surveillance and control



Now let's examine how they exploit their workforce.

Work shifts are 10 to 12 hours. Work rates manage the speed by which workers work. This is the ultimate use of the Taylor so-called-scientific management system of time-motion study, only now they are using computers attached to GPS and motion software, so they know what you do, where you do it, and how long you do it. You get called to task and quickly fired if you get off rate.

You get three short breaks, one lunch. That includes all bathroom needs. If you violate that, you are charged with time off task, something they communicate to you on the digital monitor that is also and all the time telling you what to do next.

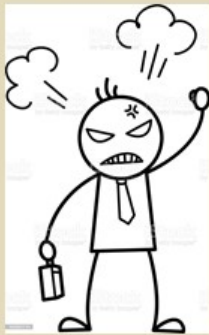
Every worker has either a blue or a white badge. White badges are temps. Blue badges are scarce and very hard to earn. Firings happen easily when below rate or too much time off task. The digital monitor spells it out. It's called churn and it's a feature not a bug. It makes unionization harder, as in Bessemer, AL.

Workers and drivers work almost alone, no talking allowed, accompanied only by robots. These mechanical slavers are just what all capitalists would like to have in its workers.

There is 100% surveillance and attempts to control every motion of the workers.

But does it always work? Is Amazon vulnerable?

Is Amazon vulnerable? YES!



**The people
united can
never be
defeated**

- 1. Workers can always find ways to resist and stop production**
- 2. Consumers can boycott and refuse to buy**
- 3. All distribution systems have chokepoints**
- 4. Amazon is too big to be allowed to exist and dominate us**



Of course, the fight goes on! Whatever they invent to exploit us, we can organize to resist. As long as their system needs us—and there's no robot that can understand and respond in the world like we can—we can build enough power to force them to change what they are doing. This is the focus of our next SWA school on May 2.

Here is where the government can play an important role in establishing regulations that legally protect the workers – minimum pay, safety, general working conditions, the right to unionize, and many more things. We will discuss this in greater depth in the third session of the SWA School.

The general public can use the boycott to fight back in the market. This is critical because

no surplus value exists without the goods hitting the market and being sold. When the goods are not selling the system freezes up.

We must always remember the words of the great labor leader Cesar Chavez: “We shall strike. We shall organize boycotts. We shall demonstrate and have political campaigns. We shall pursue the revolution we have proposed.”

Also, the words of Martin Luther King are guiding the work of the SWA: “As I have said many times, and believe with all my heart, the coalition that can have the greatest impact in the struggle for human dignity here in America is that of the Negro and the forces of labor, because their fortunes are so closely intertwined.”

**Capitalism does not exist without exploiting workers.
When we fight back, we develop our power to take control.**



Every capitalist system has had critical points in the system that create vulnerable places where production and distribution can be disrupted.

There is vulnerability in one workplace, on company, even an entire industry. But that's not the main danger they face. When workers unite in their own interest, when we rise up as a class, their entire system can be put in check. Our labor is what this entire system is based on, we need to have our hand in running the entire system.

Abraham Lincoln got it right: Labor is prior to, and independent of, capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor and could never have existed if labor had never

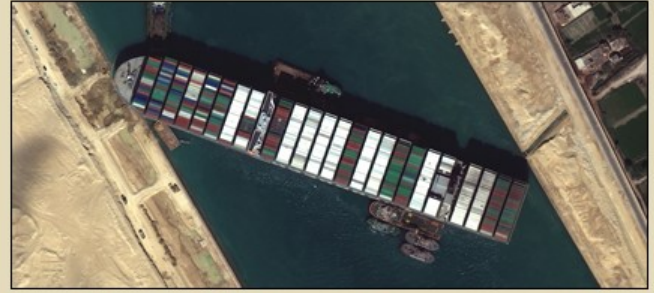
had not first. Labor is the superior of capital and deserves much the higher consideration."

Big tasks are ahead, but even today we can see examples of what is possible, what we can do if we are organized. We can grab the system in a chokehold and bring it to its knees.

Let's heed the words of Mother Jones:

"My friends, it is solidarity of labor we want. We do not want to find fault with each other, but to solidify our forces and say to each other: We must be together; our masters are joined together and we must do the same thing."

Next, a Chokepoint. How one glitch in the system brought so much to a standstill.



One stuck ship can halt global trade



Here is the most recent example of how a chokepoint can shut down global trade.

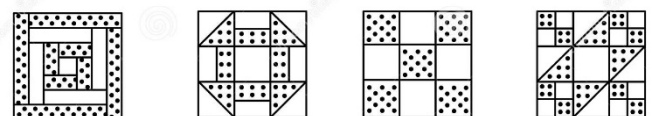
Top left you see one of the world's largest container ships—the Ever Given—trying to get through the Suez Canal that connects Asia with Europe. The ship was carrying 20,000 containers. It was as long as three football fields.

This kind of ship is only possible with the use of major technological innovations, especially the robotic cranes to load and unload. This size ship was unheard of until recently.

Turning just slightly, it got stuck for six days in the very skinny 120-mile-long Suez. Only the Panama Canal gets more traffic.

Top right shows how the ship got stuck blocking the canal. The bottom image shows how many ships were stalled, cutting off global trade. What a mess!

Production all over the world means that distribution relies on ships and planes. These two canals, the Panama and the Suez, link all the oceans together and cut distance, time, and costs of global trade.



How do workers fight against capitalists?



In one workplace?

Form a union, win right to strike



In one city?

Spread unionization and community allies

As the working class?

Build mass organizations of all workers

WHERE DO YOU WORK? WHAT INDUSTRY?

WHAT CITY? WHAT STATE?

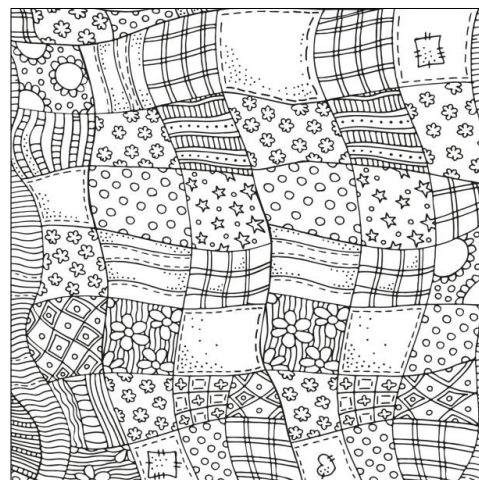


Next session looks at the working class. This last slide focuses on the context and logic of organizing a workers' movement against capital. Daily life takes places at home, in the community, and in the workplace.

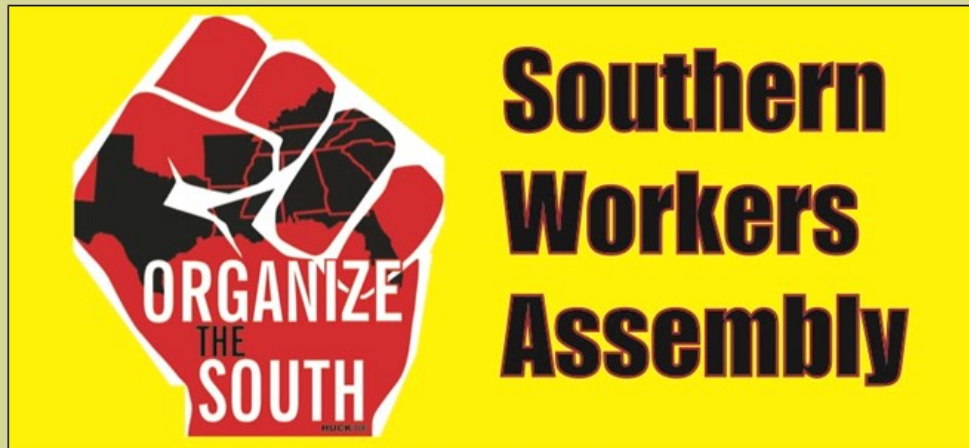
Workers in the same workplace face common conditions and get to know each other, maybe not all at once but in small groups. They know what they don't like about the job and therefore why they need to resist capital. It is not hard to figure out why we need to fight for our rights and a better quality of life at the workplace and beyond. A union is critical.

This means an autonomous organization of workers in the same workplace who can take action when necessary and possible.

With or without a union, we need to fight. A union is important, and we always fight for one. But even if we don't win a union vote, we keep trying. The main thing is to continue to build organization and increase our capacity to fight.



**Building a 21st Century
Working Class Movement
Southern Workers Assembly School
May 2, 2021**



PO Box 934, Rocky Mount, NC 27802
info@southernworker.org
<https://southernworker.org/>

All Sessions Sunday 5 pm Eastern Time,
contact us for Zoom details.

**April 18. Fighting 21st Century Capitalism:
The Case of Amazon.** How Amazon fits into
21st century capitalism. Identifying key
workplaces in your area.

**May 2. Building a 21st Century Working
Class Movement.** Who and what is the
working class. Outreaching to key workplaces.

**May 16. Organizing the Workers
Movement Today.** Capital and the State.
Winning based on issues identified by workers
in key workplaces.

**May 30. The Southern Workers Assembly.
Pulling it all together.** building a worker
assembly in your area

Attend all four sessions. If you can't, come
anyway!

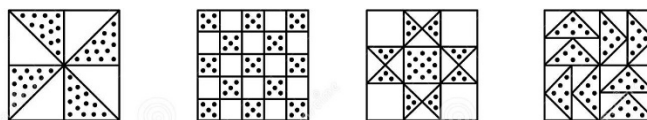
This is our second session. We intend to build on our first discussion of 21st century capitalism. Our goal is to begin the discussion of how to think about, and act, on building a working-class movement in this new 21st century environment. So, this session is about identifying who we are as a working class, helping us to think about the concept of class.

My job is to present a combination of information and inspiration. We all need some theoretical concepts about class, and who we are as a working class. Especially in these times, we also need some inspiration about the possibility of what we can do, when we unify, and realize the power that can be ours.

As we always do, we start with political economy. Why do we do this? This is really

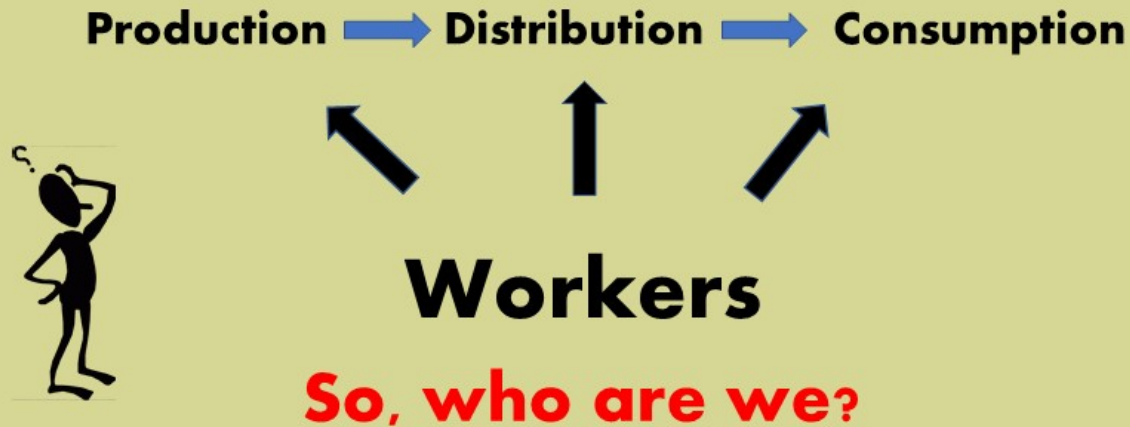
about placing our focus on what is objective, and then after that, what is subjective. We must become scientists in how we understand the 21st century political economy of capitalism. You experience this because this is what you practice every day on the job. People can think all kinds of things on a subjective level, but you know some of it is right on point, and some of it is not. Practical experience is the key.

Of course, not all of us will be quick to discard the foolishness propagated by the capitalists, with their TV, Movies, and media in general, even their schools. We have to think for ourselves. Time to get out of their box and stare reality in the face. This is what we are setting out to do in this school.



How does capitalism work?

We make it go!



Last session we started with this sequence for a political economy: production-distribution-consumption. For each of these steps it is workers who do the work. Doing the work, that's why we are called workers. And we come in all types and flavors.

Production workers make things – auto workers, steel workers, meat packing workers, even cooks and people who produce textiles. Production workers take raw materials and tools and use their labor power to make something new.

Distribution covers truck drivers, bus drivers, railroad and airport workers, but also longshore workers on the docks, and warehouse workers. These are all workers who move goods from where they are produced into the market where they can be consumed.

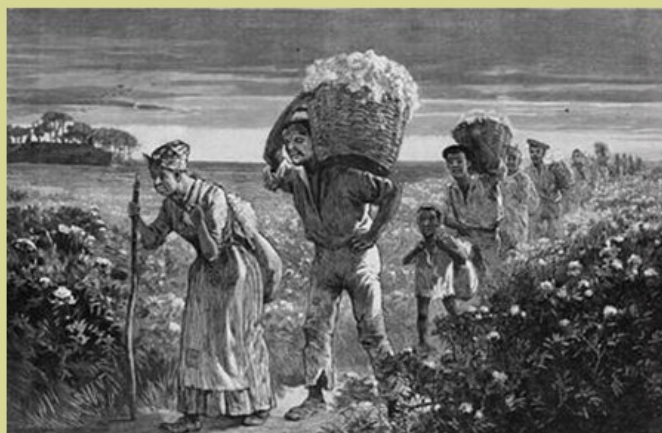
Consumption includes people like retail salesclerks, waiters and waitresses, people who work in sales whether face to face or online in a call center.

Of course, there are differences among workers, some jobs are cleaner than others, some are more dangerous than others, and some pay better. These differences are often used against us, because the capitalists are happy when they keep us divided.

But they are capitalists, and we are workers. That's the main point we have to keep focused on. They are the bosses, and on each of our jobs, usually we don't have much trouble knowing who they are, and who we are. Sometimes they try and confuse us, but we need to know who the real bosses are – who can hire and fire, who is in charge and not the flunkies who serve who is in charge, cause some workers get confused and think and act like they are a boss.

This is a fundamental issue in each workplace.

Capitalism is based on the production and sale of commodities.
In slavery, the entire 24/7 body of a worker was
bought, sold and owned.
In capitalism, we sell our ability to work, our labor power.



**19th century
slavery**



**20th century
industrial capitalism**



**21st century
AI capitalism**

Just to review - the political economy of the US has changed over the centuries. The slave system in the 19th century did not just commodify the labor power of a slave. The slave system commodified the whole slave person, African labor itself. Now at the same time this was happening in the Southern cotton fields, workers in the New England textile mills were often Euro-American children, many of whom worked over 10 hours a day, and had to sleep on the floor next to their machines. Slaves and factory workers were part of the same system, capitalist production of textiles, from the raw material of cotton to the finished products of thread and cloth.

The end of slavery brought into existence a tenant farming system, mainly sharecropping. What is interesting is that they used the same tools that were used during slavery – that didn't change until the 1940s with the mechanical cotton picker. This great technological invention increased production and

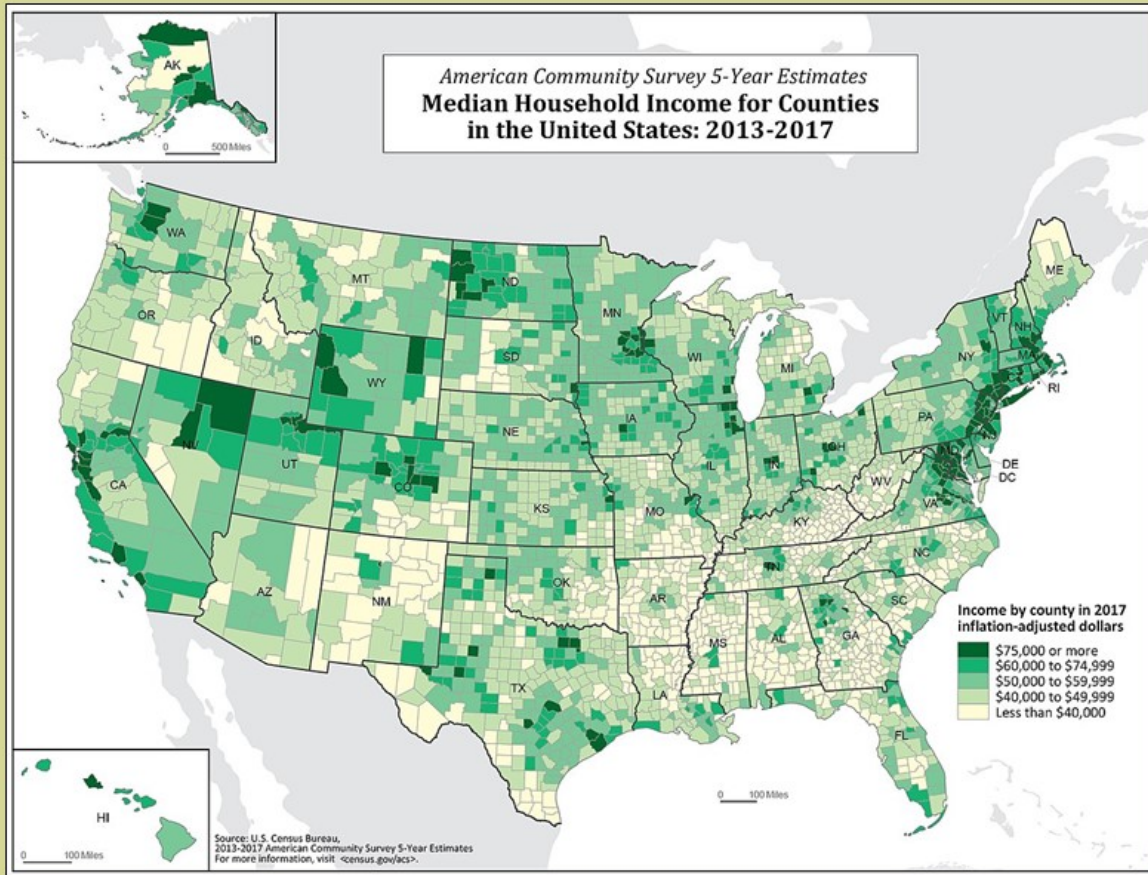
replaced cotton picking labor, kicking people out of the cotton fields. But they were drawn into industry, because of new factory technology like the mass production assembly line.

Wage workers in the 20th and 21st centuries were forced to sell their labor power. They had to organize and fight for better wages and better working conditions. This new factory system brought workers into greater social unity and coordination. This led to new forms of organization and increased the workers ability to fight for progressive social change.

But the capitalist learned from our success, and now is using new technologies (computers and robots) to try and break our social unity, to try and force us into relative isolation, where we don't work with each other. Now we work with robots and digital tools, that management uses to control us on the job.

The issue is how we define a social class.

Capitalists use stratification, or levels. Mostly of income.



So, we come to an interesting question, sort of a key element in the battle of ideas we face. What is a social class? Which one are we in? Or specific for our focus, what is the working class? Well, the first thing we need to clarify is that the capitalists have a different point of view than we need to have.

They mainly use income. This tells you how much stuff people are able to buy from them. This map gives us some good information. The higher incomes are concentrated in big cities, especially on the northeast coast – New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Washington DC metro areas.

Low incomes are concentrated in the South. Based on the official poverty rate, the South is

the poorest region at over 14%. The poverty rate is highest in Mississippi at about 20%.

But incomes have to be understood in the context of the cost of living. What cost \$20 in 1999 today would cost \$31. This is the basis for the demand to have a cost-of-living wage increase – if wages stay the same, we get poorer because prices go up.

Of course, the way capitalism works, the rich continue to pay themselves more and more. For example, during the pandemic 40 million people filed for unemployment while the billionaires increased their net worth by half a trillion dollars.

Social Class in 21st Century Capitalism

Capitalists:

Super rich billionaires

Active owners

Speculators

Middle classes

Small businesses

Elite professions

Family farms

Working class

Wage workers

Gig workers

New workers

Unemployed



Class	Owns Means of Production (Income from Property)	Purchases Labor Power	Sells Labor Power (Income from Wages)
Capitalists	+	+	—
Traditional Petty Bourgeoisie	+	—	—
Proletariat	—	—	+

Two important new developments:

1. **Class polarization**: the middle class is being forced into the working class and the billionaire class is increasing.
2. People are being forced into **permanent or long term unemployment** because of the robots, the new machine slaves

This slide gives us something to think about, how to define social class, from a working class point of view.

The table in the upper right corner gives the definition of the three main classes that exist in capitalist society. There are three key questions:

1. Does one own the means of production, a company?
2. Does one hire labor power from people to work in their company?
3. Do you have to work for wages by selling your labor power?

You can see that this gives a clear and simple definition for the three classes. Here the middle class is defined as a capitalist, but petty, without mainly relying on exploiting the labor power of others.

Of course, even the word small is tricky when applied to a business. Don't think this means mom and pop stores in the neighborhood. The U.S. Small Business Administration counts companies with as much as \$35 million in sales and 1,500 employees as "small businesses", depending on the industry. Outside this government category, companies with

less than \$7 million in sales and fewer than five hundred employees are widely considered small businesses.

On the left you see some types of people put into these three classes. This is an important topic for discussion, as there is no tight and neat way to sum this up. An interesting daily exercise, is to think about what class people are in. For example, the ones who we read about in the news, especially comparing the general news with the business news, who gets shot by the police and who is making all the money.

We need to think about our workplaces and try to describe in class terms everybody involved. That would be a wonderful exercise with your fellow workers, to make a move towards class consciousness. In fact, how about doing it with workers in multiple workplaces in your city.

But think about this. If the robots are doing the work, will some people who used to work, be permanently out of work, tossed aside? Unemployment has generally been cyclical, in and out of a job. Are we facing a time when some younger people will never have a stable job, or no job at all? Something to think about.

What is class consciousness?

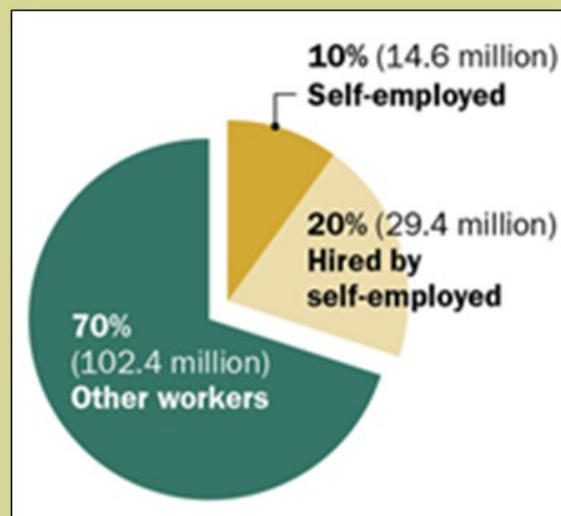
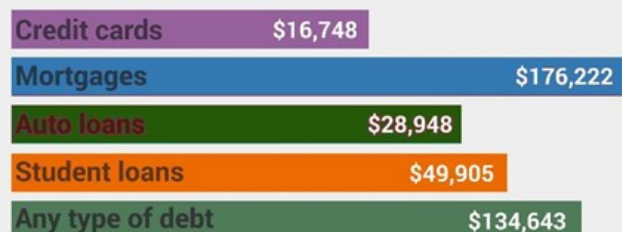
What is false class consciousness?

AMERICANS IDENTIFYING AS UPPER-MIDDLE OR MIDDLE CLASS

2015	2016
51%	58%

Types of debt

The total owed by the average U.S. household, by debt type.



We win when we face reality straight on. The capitalists win when they get us to daydream about our lives and go deep into debt. They try to hide their power.

By focusing on what people can buy, the capitalists create false consciousness. OK, what is that? First, consciousness. This is about what is actually going on, reality, that is when your subjective view of your situation is an accurate picture of what it is, the facts of your situation. False consciousness is make-believe, fantasy about what is going on. This slide tells the story.

The story is that the majority of people think they are middle class because they can consume what they want, but this level of consumption is based on going into debt. So, people are lured into living beyond their means, taking risks that keep the commodities flowing from distribution through consumption, while the people are becoming more and more controlled by being held legally responsible for paying debts off.

Only 10% of the population is self-employed (and remember this is our main definition of being in the middle class, being your own boss.) And with them, only 20% are employees, including family members. That leaves 70% of people who have to get a job, and work for somebody else.

The capitalists promote the fantasy of being above poverty, being in the middle class, even seducing us with the desire to become upper middle class, even if that only means buying a higher status car on credit.

We win when we face reality straight on. The capitalists win when they get us to daydream about our lives and go deep into debt. They try to hide their power over us, but we feel it every month when we sit down and try to pay our bills.

Capitalists try to divide us against each other.

Race
Gender
Region
Occupation
Salary
Age
Nationality
Immigration
Religion
Literacy
Culture
Sexual identity



Here is another way they play their hand. Divide to conquer.

Think about the recent history, especially put forward by the system, the point of view of European descendant Americans (WASP, white Anglo-Saxon protestant) – fight the other, fight the people who are not like us. Forget that most of us are descendants from immigrants, the enemy are the immigrants, especially from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Oh, and don't forget, we are still trying to exterminate the native peoples, because the US began as an amalgam of settler colonies.

Of course, in this scenario white people have to be against all people of color – as if white is not a color. Anyway, how many white people have native people or Black or Brown people as blood relatives, anyway.

Then there is the religious angle. We are told to hate Jews but love them and the aggression of Israel as long as they join with us in fighting against people who believe in Islam. The capitalists love the oil oligarchs in the Middle East, while demonizing the masses of Islamic workers in places like Detroit.

What about sexual identity. On the one hand, the right-wing capitalist insist that they want government to stay out of their private lives, but then they turn around and want to control the private lives of people who want to love, living in marriage with who they want to. Sexual identity is both a matter of birth and a matter of choice. So damn what. Freedom is what the fight is all about.

It's time to stop the division and embrace our diversity. Stop them from using some of us, against the rest of us.

Solidarity is the key to a workers movement: An injury to one is an injury to all!



an injury to one is an injury to all

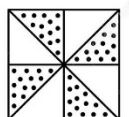
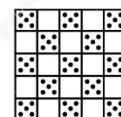
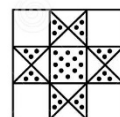
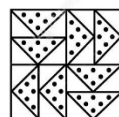
Solidarity is the key to building a 21st century working class movement. We have to embrace our diversity, in fact, we have to embrace the diversity of our entire species on this planet of spaceship earth. All human lives are precious.

The class structure of this society requires us to think in clear terms about who we are, who we need to fight with, and who we fight against.

When Black and white workers in World War II came out of a racist society they were divided. But when faced with a fascist army and forced to be in the same fox holes they quickly began to realize what side they were on and how they had to fight together against a common enemy. That's our situation today.

An injury to one is an injury to all. There is an old labor song we need to sing again – Which side are you on? This was written in 1931 by the wife of an organizer with the United Mine Workers, Florence Reece. Here are a few words from the song:

Which side are you on boys?
Which side are you on?
Oh workers can you stand it?
Oh tell me how you can?
Will you be a lousy scab
Or will you be a man?



We fight in two ways: our **workplace** and our community



Each workplace is a site of struggle. In each we have to organize, educate, and fight back.

Our power grows when we pull multiple workplaces into the same process.

Our goal is a movement of all workers in the same city.

Many will be in a union, and others will organize in any way they can.



Brothers/Sisters, now is the time!

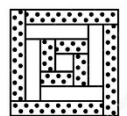
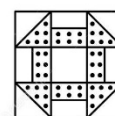
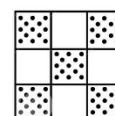
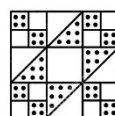
The workers movement we need to build, has to be based in our workplaces, where we gather as workers, playing our main role in the political economy of 21st century capitalism. In the workplace we make friends, people we learn to trust and count on.

There are all kinds of workplaces, and we need to connect with workers in all of them. Some places have a history of struggle and some do not. Some have been around for a long time and others are recent, newly built. Some places have unions, and most do not.

The rate of unionization used to be over 30%, but now is barely 10%. So, most workplaces need some kind of organization.

The task is to start by having a discussion in a circle of trust, people who want to hear what each thinks about, the common experience they are having in the same workplace. Of course, this then can get expanded to people who are working in the same city.

Our movement is based on small groups being linked together. Our goal is to build collective unity so we can engage in collective action. What we are proposing is righteous, we only want our fair share, our rights respected, and our humanity not violated as we work. We'll be hearing more about some of this next.



We fight in two ways: our workplace and our **community**



We live in our communities and that's where we raise our children.

Every social institution is controlled by capitalists in their interest. They control us everywhere.

The power we develop in our workplaces can be used to protect and move our communities forward.

Worker's power is what we need.

The time to think and act is now

And we need to do more than that. We have to base our organizing efforts in the workplace but extend our responsibility to the communities in which we live. Indeed, we have a responsible role to play in the entire society. Remember, we are the majority and what we think, and do, matters.

The flip side of this is that the very capitalists who tower over us in the workplace are the same ones, who run the politics, and social organizations, that govern society. We fight them when we fight on the job, and then in our communities we fight them over clean water, a safe and clean environment, an end to police violence, and for fair and democratic elections.

The capitalists run the society how they want to. They do what serves them the best. If you want to find a place that is environmentally unsafe, you don't go where the capitalists live, you go where the workers live. Is this an accident? I don't think so. The same holds for schools. We get the short end of the deal on all fronts, all the time.

Every labor organization, including all the trade unions, have to become social justice organizations. This is our society, and we have a responsibility to step up, and represent the values of justice. We have to stop the capitalist from redefining justice as two words – just us.

To win the class struggle, workers must study the system to change it



Political literacy is the key to victory

It's time to be self-critical. The capitalist wants us to think they are smarter than us, or the ones they put on TV are the smart ones. This is a bunch of crap. We know more about the workplace than they do. It's where we are every day. When they want to know about the situation, they have to do a survey, and come and ask us.

So, we have to raise the level of our game. We have to train-up for the class struggle, just like an athlete has to train.

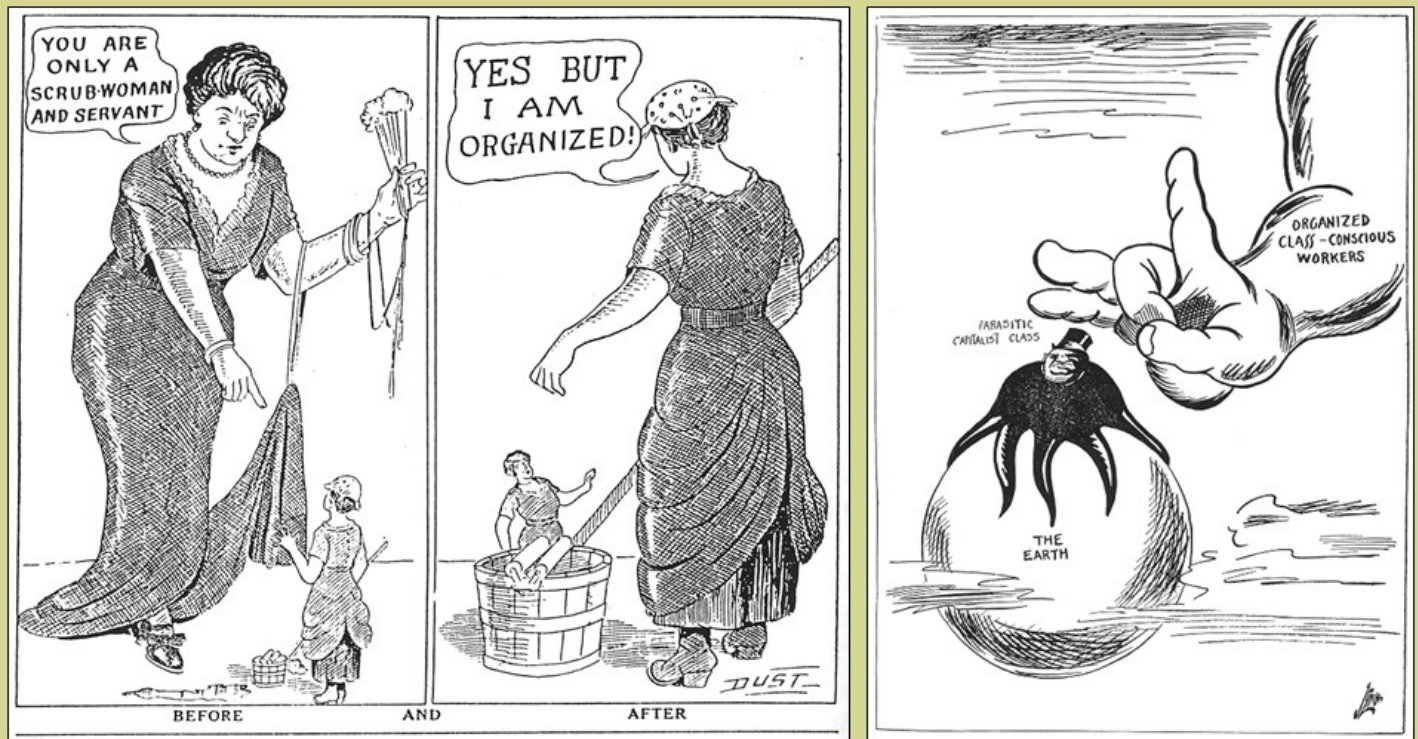
The first thing is, we have to increase our literacy. This means each one of us, has to start doing more reading and writing, this is the only way to train our minds, to get a better

grasp of language and logic. I don't mean we have to be more like them or read and quote their books. No. We have to be better representatives of our class, in our language, and with a logic that advances our interests. That means we have to learn how to quote each other, to make it plain.

We do it in worship. There are books to read and study, including the Bible and the Koran. We have to apply this same discipline to building a workers movement. One kind of study is for salvation. We also need study for our liberation. Time to become masters of our own fate. Time to get involved in life-long learning, about economics and politics.

Consciousness is key

Class conscious workers can build a mighty movement



Consciousness is key. How we think, how we perceive the world, and what we make of what is going down.

Take this slide. On the left is a good example of a class conscious worker, see the bottom of the before and after. First, a woman being told by her capitalist boss that she is low status, “only a scrub-woman and servant.” The boss thinks this will subordinate her to a weak position and rob her of the ego strength needed to fight back. But what happens.

The worker does not deny her occupation. She adds a but. But I am organized.” She is conscious of who she is, and organized, and that creates working class power. That puts her in the driver’s seat, not her boss. How can

this graphic of before and after, apply to you and your co-workers? We can all be like her.

On the right in this slide, the same point is made at a very general level, in fact the entire world can be changed if workers get their act together.

Consciousness involves literacy. It involves being able to talk effectively, to influence, and win people over to a working class point of view. Of course, this means being able to compete effectively with the arguments that the boss will put out. We are engaged in a battle of ideas, and we have to prepare ourselves to fight and win.

Organization is key

Collectivity
Democracy
Accountability
Record keeping
Consensus
Knowledge
Independence
Gender balance
Leadership
Communication
Mobilization



Also, organization is key. First is creating a collective, and of course like most things this will start out small in any given workplace, say 3 to 5 people, people that trust each other. People who are willing to study and prepare themselves for the struggle.

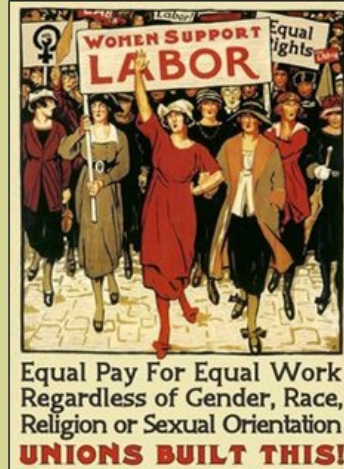
Based on knowledge about the workplace, the community, and the broader political situation (consciousness) democratic discussion in which all voices are heard and respected, a consensus can be developed. Everyone has to speak in every meeting, silence is not acceptable. Decisions based on consensus make the most sense because everybody is needed when any action is taken. Trust is important, because the work of the collective must always be considered secure information, available only to members of the collective.

Just like in production, a division of labor is needed to get things done. The key roles are chairperson to lead the meeting, a recorder to take note of all decision made and assignments accepted, and a treasurer to manage the money. Remember that freedom ain't free. This is not rocket science – this is how the PTA operates, how the church is organized, how the block club functions.

We can all learn this. Every member of the collective should practice, to learn each of these roles. Each person can learn how to run a meeting. Each person can learn how to take notes, produce minutes of a meeting.

As always, we have to pay attention to diversity and promote the leadership of women, Black and Brown people, and of course younger comrades.

Mobilization is key



First, we meet in small groups. Then we expand our network and begin to march. Like a rolling snowball we grow and build until we capture the imagination of the majority. Then we mobilize as a class.

OK. We have to become class consciousness and that means we have to train, to study and prepare ourselves for the battle of ideas. Then we add to that, organization, mastering the methods of aggregating our collective strength in a tight division of labor.

Now we can prepare to swing into action and mobilize. This is when risk taking, requires courage and commitment. When we move against them, they will hit back hard against us. But remember the slogan, an injury to one is an injury to all. When they hit back, they expose their true nature for all the workers to see.

We mobilize when we are ready, when we have organized class conscious workers ready to move. This is nothing new, and you will not be the only ones doing it.

Sometimes it makes sense to fight over something small, and obvious. It might be better toilet facilities, or better PPE. We have a good chance of winning these early struggles, and it helps to build optimism and a winning attitude.

The struggle is not a dash, but a long-distance run. We also have this global slogan. Fight, fail, fight again, fail again, fight on to victory.

Brothers and sisters, we can do this. We can win. It's our time. We have to also remember another slogan – a single spark can start a prairie fire. One small battle can jump start what we need. The mighty sit-in movement against segregation was started by four people in Greensboro, North Carolina.

Little things we can do really matter.

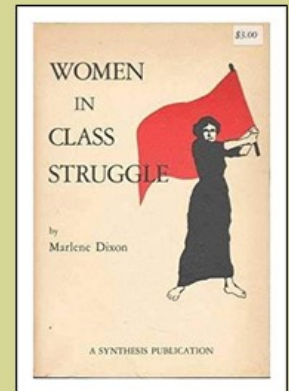
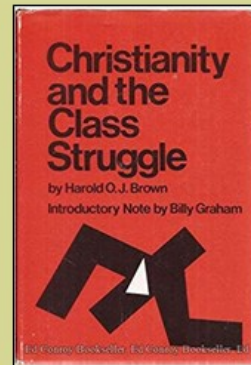
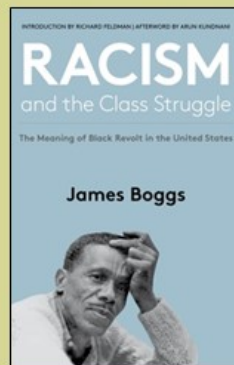
WE NEED WORKING CLASS POWER



Our daily struggle is over surplus value.

What do we need?

A shorter working day. Fewer hours, same take home pay. 30 for 40. A 4 day week. Increased pay with productivity increase.



Every worker needs a job and/or a livable income

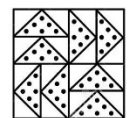
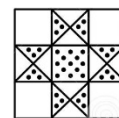
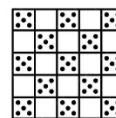
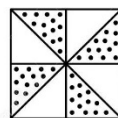
We need to think about fighting back on the very terms that they exploit us – they want to lengthen the working day, maybe we need to fight to make it shorter. In fact, make it shorter for the same or even more pay. If we don't have a good job and a livable income then we become a danger to everybody, including ourselves.

The so-called underground economy, is a site of violence and danger. Selling drugs or getting high does not escape the pain, only adds to it. Our only path forward is building working class power to confront capitalism.

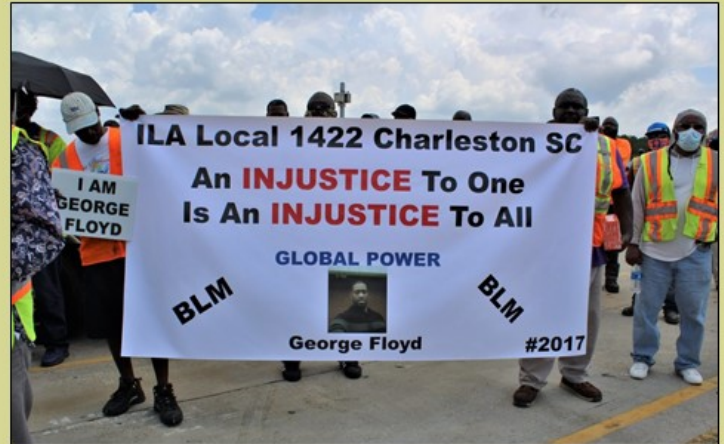
We know that every worker needs a job and/or a livable wage. This is true for Black and

Brown people. This is true for women. This is true for every moral person seeking to live a just and peaceful life. Every worker needs this.

This is especially true of women. A serious working class movement, has to bring women forward, into the ranks of the movement, especially the movement leadership. But more than this. We have to fight against the patriarchy they face, the idea that men are superior. This is promoted by the capitalists. Time for this to become a key part of our struggle, combatting gender discrimination and patriarchy in all aspects of life.



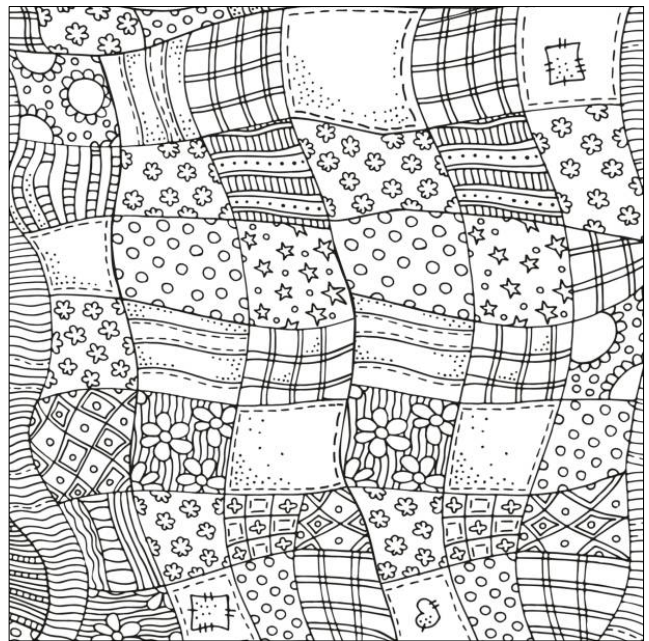
A 21st century working class movement is needed now. Organizing the south can lead the way.



We are the Southern Workers Assembly. Our fight is wherever workers are in the South. We are an organization for a fighting workers movement.

Our school is about helping you to organize where you are, to unite with others, to build the fight. We fight in our workplaces. We fight in our communities.

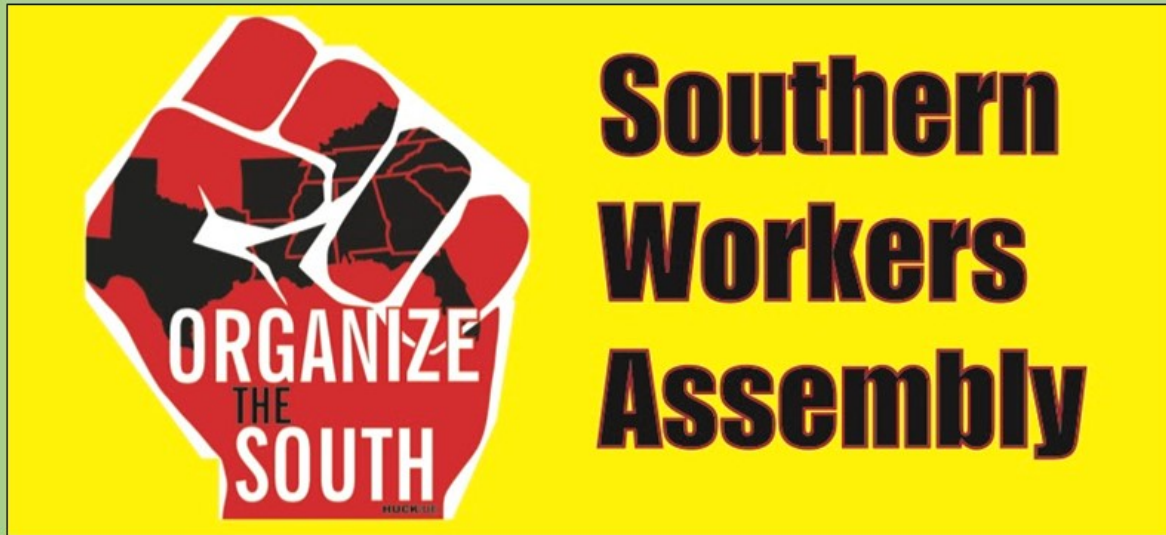
Workers have a history of struggle we can be proud of. We face the challenge of reigniting the best of that history, of building the movement we need, in every major concentration of workers, in every state. That is the challenge we put before you in this Southern Workers Assembly School.



Why do we have to fight both the capitalist system and their state?

Southern Workers Assembly School

May 16, 2021



PO Box 934, Rocky Mount, NC 27802

info@southernworker.org

<https://southernworker.org/>

All Sessions Sunday 5 pm Eastern Time,
contact us for Zoom details.

April 18. Fighting 21st Century Capitalism:
The Case of Amazon. How Amazon fits into
21st century capitalism. Identifying key
workplaces in your area.

May 2. Building a 21st Century Working
Class Movement. Who and what is the
working class. Outreaching to key workplaces.

May 16. Organizing the Workers
Movement Today. Capital and the State.

Winning based on issues identified by workers
in key workplaces.

June 6. The Southern Workers Assembly.
Pulling it all together. building a worker
assembly in your area

Attend all four sessions. If you can't, come
anyway!

This is our third school session. We started with a critique of 21st century capitalism. We followed that with a discussion of building a workers movement in that context. In this session we will focus on the political aspect of political economy. This means the state, essentially the government and how political control is the most concentrated expression of class control in a society. In fact, it is the struggle in the political realm that can most effectively unite us as a class, across workplaces, across industries, and in every location - cities, counties and states, and for the Southern Workers Assemblies throughout our region.

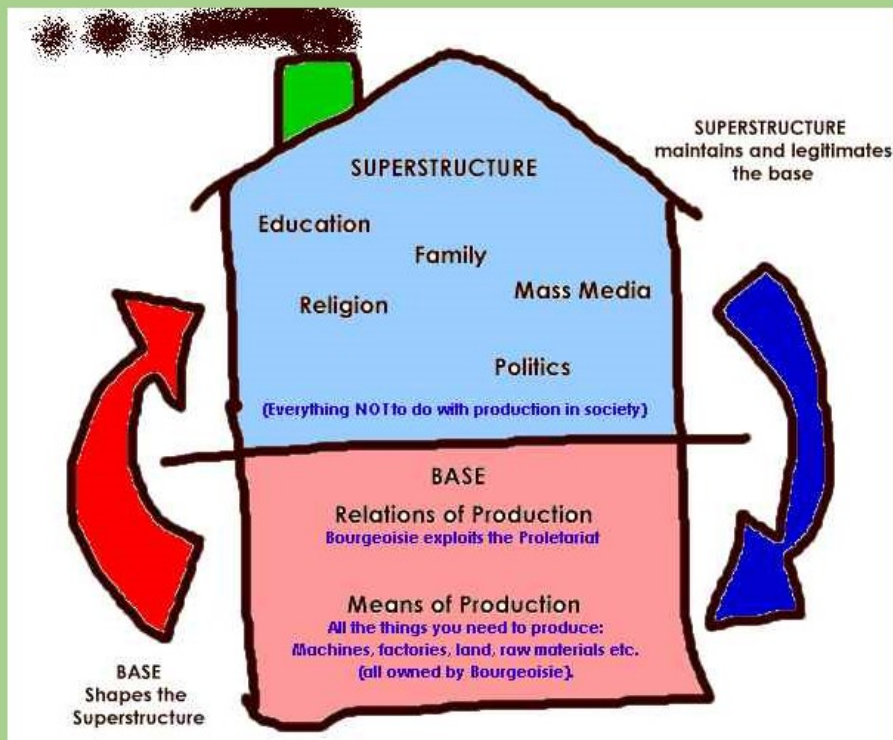
Our theory discussions are about concepts that help us see the world, help us formulate our ideas, and help us build unity. Language is

important, we need a common language to talk with each other and build consensus. We also need to enter the class struggle, firm in our point of view, and not fall victim to talking like them.

These slides and commentary are available for you to review, to study, to share with your family, friends and co-workers.

There are two aspects of fighting in the political arena. One is that we need to reform the state, to make changes in the laws that serve us, and not the capitalists. More on this. But also, there is a visionary task before us. The capitalist vision has created the government and political system we have now. Can't we do better? Once you see who set this up, and what they intended, I'm sure you will want something better.

The big picture: the base and the superstructure



The entire society is built on the economy, and that means based on our labor. There are many ways to understand how our labor fits into the superstructure of the society. **A key institution is the state (government) and politics.**

Again, political economy. This is the base of society. Everything sits on top of this. It can be called the superstructure, all of social life. Every aspect of society is controlled either directly or indirectly by the capitalist class. Of course, there is the illusion of democracy, but even democracy has a class character.

First, control of social institutions requires people to have the time and money to play these roles. That's at least one of the reasons there are not more workers in key policy making position in the private and public sectors. Media is a good example. It is no coincidence that Jeff Bezos, owner of Amazon, owns the Washington Post newspaper, the main newspaper in the nation's capital, Washington DC. Every member of Congress, and their staff, read it every day.

The government makes the rules that cover every aspect of society. The class that controls the government makes the rules. The capitalist class has ruled since the very beginning. Only in some cases have progressive reformers been able to become mayors for example. There was Samuel "Golden Rule" Jones (1846-1904) in Toledo Ohio, who took Billy clubs away from the police, set up free kindergartens, promoted public parks, and established an 8 hour day for city workers. (Henry Ford didn't do this til 1926.) There were three socialist mayors elected in Milwaukee: Emil Seidel, Dan Hoan, and Frank Zeidler.

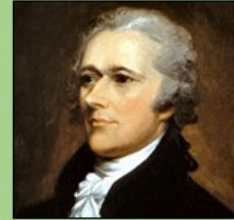
As the political economy changes, we struggle to change our politics.

What class did the founders serve?



King?

75% of the signers of the Declaration of Independence owned slaves. Of the 55 delegates to the Constitutional Convention, about 25 owned slaves. Of the first 12 presidents, 8 owned slaves.



Alexander Hamilton.
In his words he wanted the Constitution “to give to the rich and well born a distinct and permanent share in the government. They will check the unsteadiness of the mass of the people.”

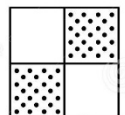
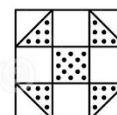
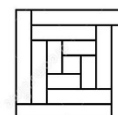
“The Constitution was ratified by a vote of probably not more than one-sixth of the adult males.”—historian Charles Beard

OK. Let's go back to the beginning. What class did the founders serve. The first give away is that the main discussion was among the owners of land, property. Remember that is a critical aspect of being a capitalist. Some wanted to make George Washington a king. Check this: he was the richest man in the country at the time. Remember last session I quoted that a single spark can start a prairie fire. Here is how George Washington put it when speaking of the discontent of the masses: “There are combustibles in every state to which a spark may set fire.”

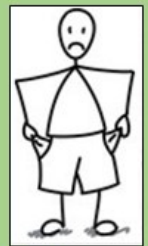
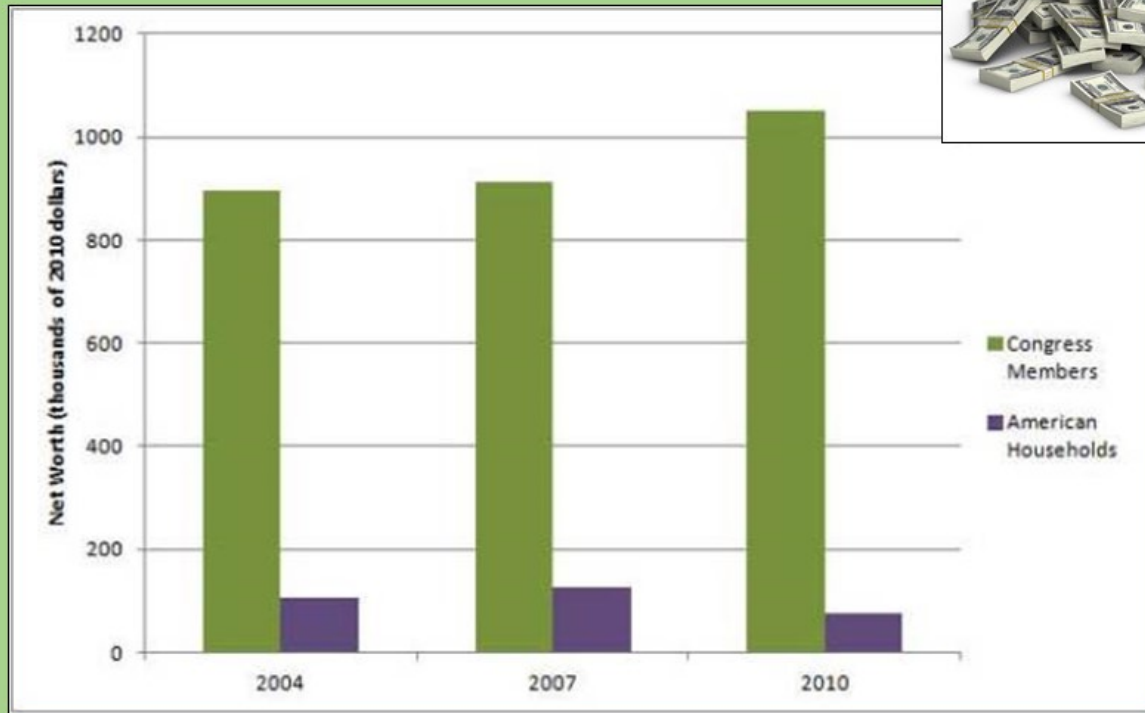
The process of formulating the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution was led by elite landowners, who also owned slaves. Even 8 of the first 12 US presidents were slave owners.

You've heard about Alexander Hamilton because of a recent Broadway musical. Well, what did he think about the Constitution. He wanted it “to give to the rich and well born, a distinct and permanent share in the government. They will check the unsteadiness of the mass of the people.” In other words, you.

Besides, these founders met in secret, and then their result was only ratified by 17% of the adult males. Making matters worse, women, African Americans and Native peoples could not vote. We're supposed to worship them and what they did. Huh? Not by a long shot.



Almost half of the house of representatives and 67% of the senate are millionaires



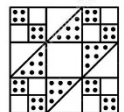
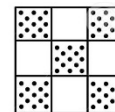
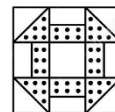
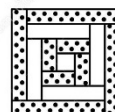
How about us?

Green, Congress members net worth. Purple, U.S. households net worth.

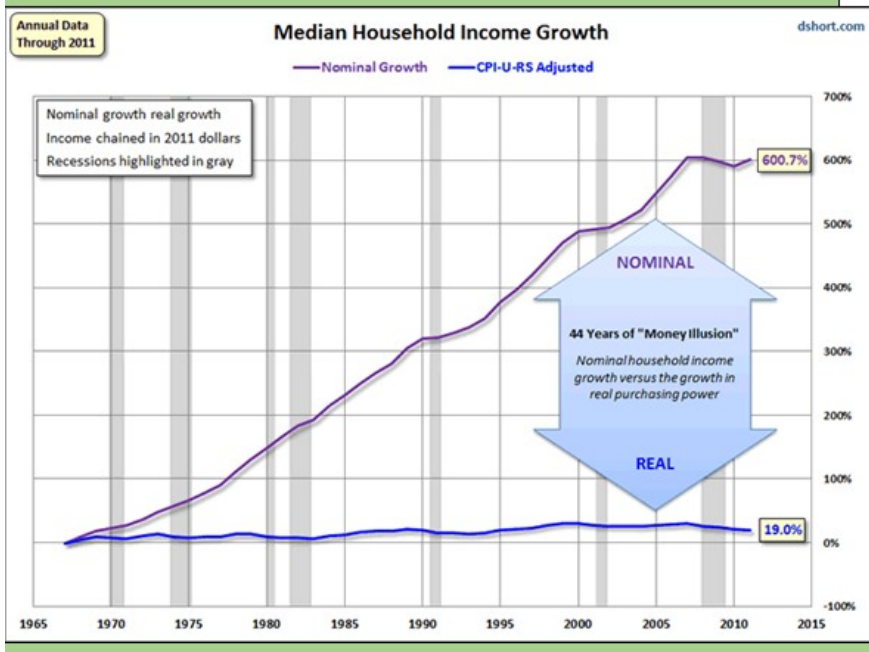
The rich continue to rule us, even after we get more of their democracy. According to democracy, the majority is supposed to rule. That's us. The people in Congress are supposed to represent us, not only in words, but in what they do. It seems that has to be us, not these people lying to us about representing us. The first and only trade union official to be elected to congress was Charles Hayes in Chicago. A former vice-president of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, he served in Congress from 1983 to 1993. However, in general, the capitalists who rule the workplaces, the economy, either get themselves elected or they pay others to represent them.

Now women can vote but even then – check it. Of the ten richest members of Congress three are women: Nancy Pelosi (\$115 million), Dianne Feinstein (\$88 million) and Suzan DelBene (\$79 million). More to our interests, the Congress passed the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution but the states did not ratify it, so there is no law that mandates women get the same pay for the same work by men.

The money game seems to dominate politics, and that means the wealthy continue to rule.



**Capitalism is for the rich,
not the rest of us, and they
pay their political staff well**

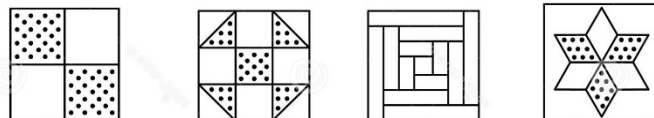


Politics pays well, or so it seems at the presidential level. Even what many consider the good guys, Obama and Clinton, they did very well for themselves. Obama increased his wealth by a factor of 13, and Clinton by a factor of 200! We are supposed to accept as normal that these top politicians make large sums of money. Obama gets \$400,000 for a one hour speech. What! The median annual household income was \$68,703 in 2019. Obama made 6 times that amount in one hour.

In the decade or so after Clinton left office, from 2001 through 2012, he made at least \$104 million in speaking fees.

On the other hand, look at the graph and see what all the rest of us face. Our income has

grown as well, well not as much at theirs, but 6 times. We're supposed to think that is progress. 600% increase. But the bubble is burst when we examine real purchasing power which rose only 19%.



THE BILL OF RIGHTS

The First Ten Amendments to the U.S. Constitution



There has been some reform, all is not totally against us. But there are no guarantees, just the possibility of struggle. So back to the US constitution. What most of us think is great, wasn't even in the constitution. They are amendments, especially the Bill of Rights, the first 10 amendments seen in this slide.

The founder couldn't agree on these rights for the people. However, the masses of people weren't idly standing by. No. They were fighting in each state, against unfair taxation, for more representation, for their rights. A good example is the Mass. Shays Rebellion of 1786-1787. Workers and farmers rose up against not being amply compensated for military service after the so-called revolutionary

war against the British, and being taxed for debts built up during the war. The Shays rebellion, along with other such uprisings, taught the founding rulers that they better pay attention to the mood and capacity of the masses prepared to revolt against them.

But these rights are on paper. The only way they are put into practice is if we make this capitalist government do what is right by us. Our power is our voice, our power is when we put our bodies in the street, our power is when we declare their power illegitimate.

When we do that. We win. For example:

The Wagner Act of 1935

Also known as the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA). Guarantees workers right to organize. Outlines the legal framework for labor unions and management relations. Protects workers. Gives a framework for collective bargaining.

**UNIONS
ARE
KEY
TO
WORKING
CLASS
POWER**

Problem

Labor Disputes



A Sit-down Strike

Guaranteed workers the right to bargain collectively and form unions w/out fear of punishment from management.

Solution

National Labor Relations Act (Wagner Act)



Reform

The Wagner Act of 1935 was a major breakthrough. It legitimated the collectivity of labor in struggle. This is an important role for government. The government began as an agency to protect the owners of private property. With the Wagner Act the government added a major protection for labor.

The National Labor Relations Board was created to arbitrate conflict, and guarantee workers the freedom to realize their rights when they fight against the capitalists. The National Labor Relations Board is supposed to be an independent federal agency, that protects the rights of private sector employees to join together, with or without a union, to improve their wages and working conditions. Again, this is the text on paper. When we are weak, they

fade from their responsibility. When we mobilize and get strong, we can make them do their job, and back our play.

There were many other aspects of the New Deal under FDR. For example, in 1935 the Social Security Act established retirement benefits for the mass of workers. The Fair Labor Standards Act was passed in 1938. According to this act, workers must be paid a government set minimum wage, and overtime pay must be one-and-a-half times regular pay. Children under eighteen cannot do certain dangerous jobs, and children under sixteen cannot work in manufacturing or mining or during school hours.

The Taft-Hartley Act of 1947

AKA the Labor Management Relations Act of 1947. A federal law that restricts the activities and power of labor unions. Enacted by the 80th United States Congress over the veto of President Harry S. Truman, becoming law on June 23, 1947



THE IMPACT OF THE TAFT-HARTLEY ACT

% OF AMERICAN
WORKERS IN
UNIONS IN

1948

31.2%

% OF AMERICAN
WORKERS IN
UNIONS

TODAY

10.5%

WHY?

But the good times don't last always. A mere twelve years later a reversal yanked progress into reverse. The Labor Management Relations Act was passed in 1947, called Taft-Hartley. Industrial capitalists directed Congress to bring a halt to mass unionization. They had to override the veto by President Truman. The rate of unionization had grown to over 30%, and even that was only a beginning toward the goal of a majority of workers. Now we have beaten back to just at 10%.

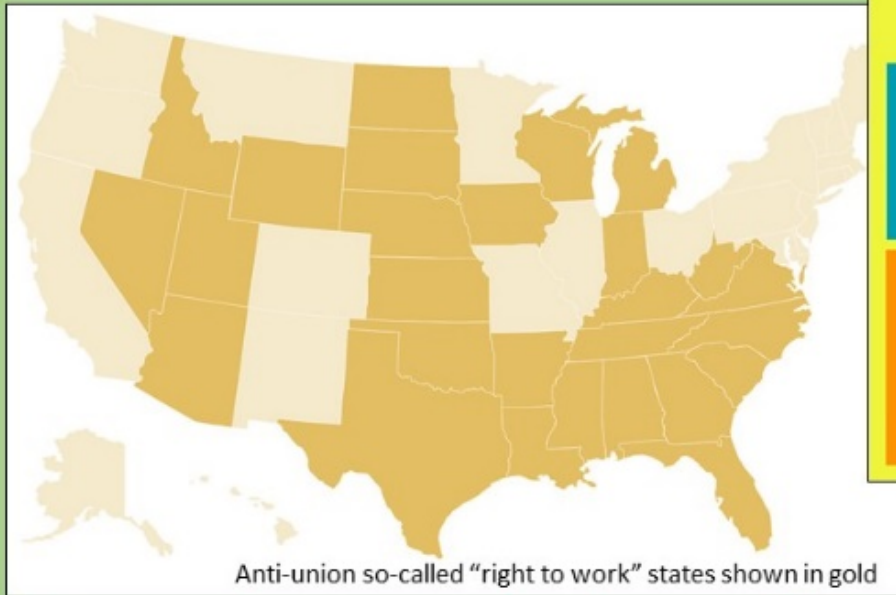
Today the rate is vastly different in the public and private sectors. Public sector workers have a unionization rate of 34.8%, but private sector workers are down to 6.3%. In the Southern states the lowest rate of unionization is in

South Carolina at 3.8% and North Carolina at 3.9%. The highest and only double digit rate is in West Virginia at 11.3%.

The answer to these declined rates of unionization should be clear to all of us. Unionization at the plant level, at the industry level, and in general, equals power for workers. Of course, this means that the organization of the union must represent the workers, and not deviate based on becoming a bureaucracy, or falling under the influence of capital. Like all aspects of this society unions have had to confront racism, patriarchy, anti-immigrant prejudice, and regional prejudice against the South.

Anti-union “right-to-work” states

More than half of the 50 states have enacted so-called “right to work” laws. They dictate that no one can be compelled to join a union or pay dues as a condition of employment. They prohibit contracts that require hiring only unionized workers.



‘Right to Work’ is

WRONG!

WAGES ↓

\$5,971

less per year than a worker in a free bargaining state

POVERTY RATE ↑

14.8%

in RTW states, compared to 13.5% in free bargaining states

HEALTH BENEFITS

16.3% ↓

of people below age 65 in RTW states are uninsured, compared to 12.4% in free bargaining states

WORKPLACE FATALITIES

54.4% ↑

higher in RTW states where unions can't speak up on behalf of workers

No unions only benefits the capitalists

At the state level of legislation, there is a pattern of what they call “Right to Work” states. What a misnomer. They should be called the right of capital to suppress union participation, to maintain greater control of their profit-making schemes against the workers.

Over half the states have this kind of retrograde legislation in blue on this map. Note that all of the South is included. This is a legacy of slavery, sharecropping and peonage, limited industrialization, and limited urbanization.

This so-called right to work legislation is wrong! Check the evidence. Comparing the

states with and those without these laws the pattern is clear.

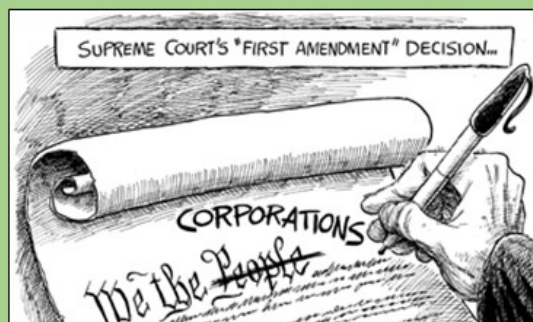
1. Wages are higher in pro union states by an average of almost \$6,000
2. Poverty rate is higher in right to work states
3. Less health benefits in right to work states
4. Workplace fatalities in right to work states up by 54% over pro union states

If facts matter, workers need unions.

These right to work laws are a political representation of the interest of capital. The interest of workers would have strong support for all forms of labor organization. This leads us back to politics and the electoral struggle.

Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission

In 2010 the Supreme Court ruled 5-4 that the First Amendment (freedom of speech) prohibits limits on corporate funding of independent broadcasts in candidate elections. The justices said that the government's rationale for the limits on corporate spending—to prevent corruption—was not persuasive enough to restrict political speech.



MONEY HAS CORRUPTED OUR POLITICS.

Right now, the vast majority of Americans **AREN'T BEING HEARD** by candidates in our political process

Most of the money in our politics comes from a small group of **MOSTLY WEALTHY, MOSTLY WHITE, MOSTLY MALE INDIVIDUALS**

Less than **10%** of contributions of \$200 or more in the 2012 presidential campaign came from communities of color

MORE THAN A THIRD of 2016 super PAC money came from just **50 DONORS**

The most recent move by capital to take democracy out of elections was in 2010. The Supreme Court ruled that corporations were like people, and how they used their money was speech, and should not be limited. This changed the electoral game. Fund raising from the corporate rich became more important than campaigning for voter support based on issues. A good example of this is that some issues are supported overwhelmingly by people of both parties, but Congress can't pass legislation because their funders say no.

In 2008, the average cost of winning a House seat was about \$1.1 million and \$6.5 million for a Senate seat. And it's more now. Is there any surprise that Congress is full of millionaires?

Also, the first billionaire president (if that is really true).

The 2020 election was the most expensive in history. The total was \$14 billion. Yeah, that's right, \$14 billion!

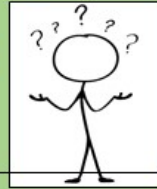
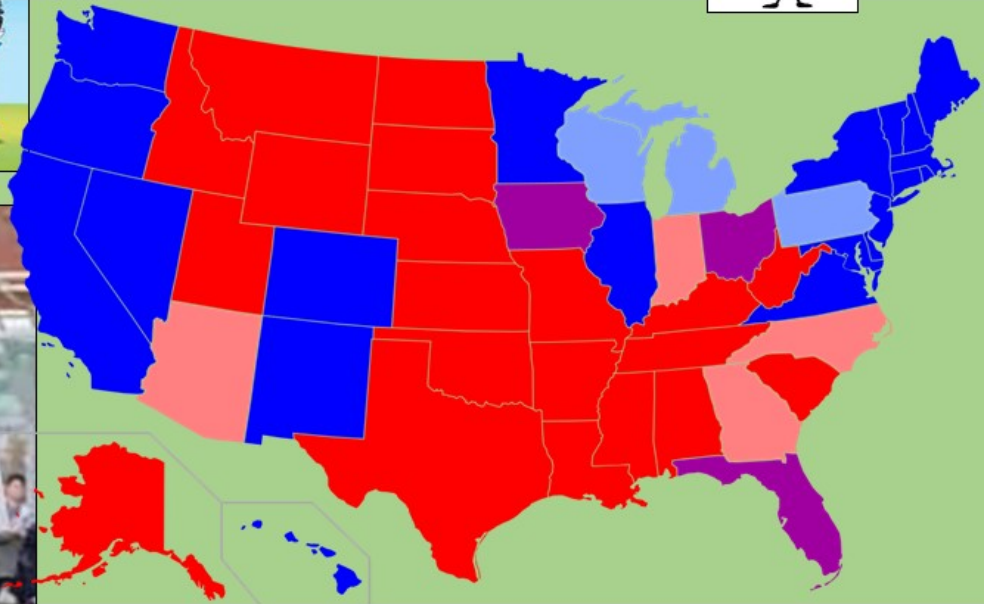
It is possible to buy a candidate, pay for an election victory, and finance legislation. Capitalism turns government into a pay to play game. Of course, they use the media to cover this, and play it out like it's democracy at work.

The key factor is false consciousness. That is how capitalists maintain control over the minds of the people. False consciousness. A militant workers movement has to end this nonsense, clarify our thinking, and set us firmly on a path forward.

Red states controlled by Republicans

Blue states controlled by Democrats

Which side are we on?

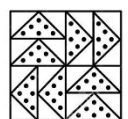
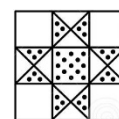
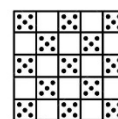
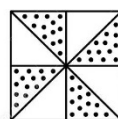


But where do we turn. The main political activity is between two political parties, both dominated by capitalists. We can't find our future in either of these capitalist parties as they currently exist. Remember, among the leaders of Congress, very rich democrats are in both the House and the Senate.

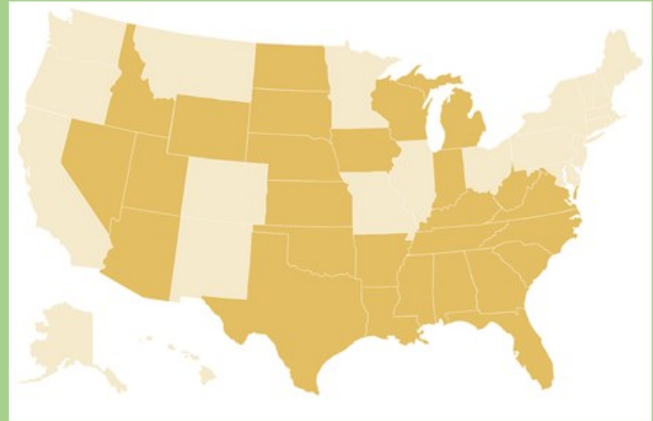
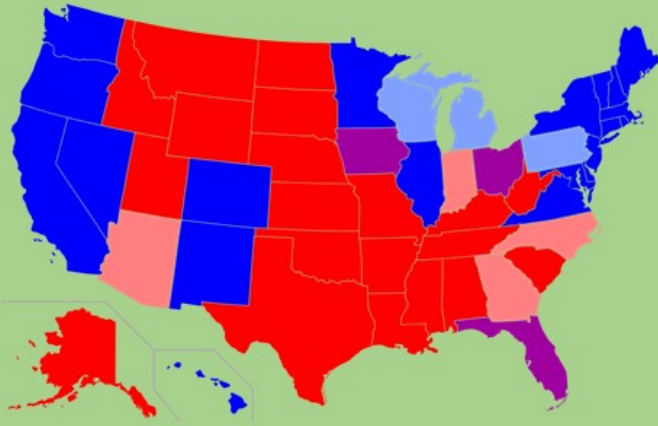
History does give us some level of hope. But history is about the past. We need something that takes us into the future, a new future, one we have never really had. In the 19th century the Republican Party embraced the abolitionists and stood for the end of slavery. Now they are the party of the racist neo-fascist militia and Qanon fanatics. In the 20th century, the Democrats led by FDR and the New Deal

created the US version of a welfare state, and then Clinton ended up ending welfare as we had known it.

Workers are in both parties. and both involve some level of false consciousness. We do what we have to in each election, but we have to be clear about what is going on and why we do what we do. The main thing is that both of these are capitalist parties and that means that workers have to find another way. We had made a move toward a Labor party in 1996, and maybe that needs to be thought about some more.



Red states controlled by Republicans
Blue states controlled by Democrats
Gold states anti-union "RTW"



One third of the 74 million who voted for Trump in 2020 earned less than \$50,000

Step one = the right to organize

On the other hand, in the day-to-day reality of politics, a political program is the art of the possible. Our need is organization of the working class, organization that enables workers to fight for their interests.

Look at these two maps. It's easy to see where the Republicans dominate, these are the states that have right to work for less laws. Of course not completely, but the pattern is clear.

We have work to do at the base of both parties. If the workers are there, that's where we have to be. It's the battle of ideas, and we have to prepare to win our brothers and sisters over to the truth, our truth.

Our tactics are mainly not within either of these parties. Our tactics are mainly in the

street, marching in mass formation to wake up our people, to point the way forward, to pressure and persuade.

Taft-Hartley has to be replaced with an even stronger law to advance the cause of organizing labor.

Partly this is about a program that can be translated into legislation. Partly this has to be about working class leaders, trade union officials and leading militants of our collective action to run for office and take control of elected office.

We are the majority. It's time we started acting like it.

How they steal elections: Gerrymandering

Gerrymandering = drawing weird districts to ensure political power. What state legislatures do after each census of the population. Dominated by rural Republicans who implement minority rule.

America's Most Gerrymandered Districts

Most gerrymandered Congressional districts in the U.S. according to compactness index*

1. Maryland's 3rd district



2. Texas's 33rd district



3. Illinois's 4th district



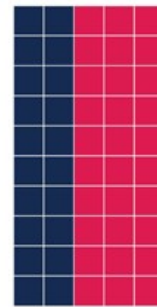
4. Texas's 35th district



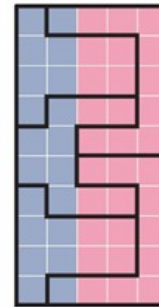
5. Louisiana's 2nd district



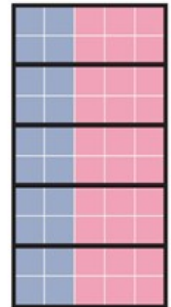
HOW TO STEAL AN ELECTION:



50 PRECINCTS
60% RED
40% BLUE



5 DISTRICTS
2 RED
3 BLUE
BLUE WINS



5 DISTRICTS
5 RED
0 BLUE
RED WINS

It's not going to be easy. In plain view, for all to see, they rig the electoral system. Here's how they do it. Every ten years the government does a census of the population. Political representation is based on population numbers. One exception. The Senate is set up for two seats allocated to each state. So Rhode Island (population of one million), Montana (one million) and Wyoming (580,000) each has the same political power in the Senate as California (39 million), Texas (30 million) and New York (20 million). That's 90 million people with the same representation in the Senate as 2 1/2 million. They still call that democracy. Majority rule?

The House of Representatives is composed of 435 seats. The allocation is based on population, first of each state, and then within each state. As

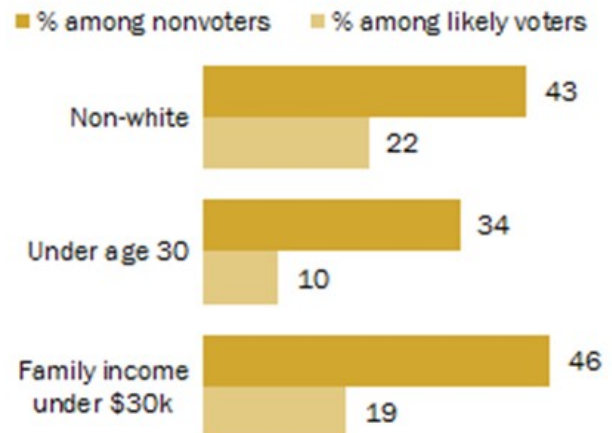
population shifts, some states gain and some lose seats. Each state legislature then takes the total population and the number of congressional seats that allocated to them and draws a new map of their districts. This is how they steal the elections, meaning here is how a minority can rule over the majority.

Power is in the hands of the state legislature, and each has bias in favor of rural areas dominated by conservative republicans. They draw the maps. Check this slide and see what kind of districts can be drawn. The tactic is gerrymandering. Again, does this like democracy?

They win when we don't vote



Wide Demographic Divides Between Nonvoters and Likely Voters



Survey conducted Oct. 15-20, 2014.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

In politics we can fight as a class

The main tool we have to fight with in the electoral arena is our vote. First and foremost, we must protect it. Especially now. We are in a fight with the right wing to stop their tactics of voter suppression. This is not a fair fight. The system is rigged. Furthermore, big money is against us, they pay for their political hacks to cheat. And when we win straight up, they charge fraud.

But we need to be self-critical. As someone once said, to be a non-voter is not to protest, it is to surrender without a fight. Yeah, we all know how most of politics is a hypocritical bunch of lying crap. But what we also need to believe is that things can be different, that change is possible

It is the political arena that we can gather all of our forces into big battles. In politics we move beyond our workplaces. We can fight as a class. We can project a workers program. We can run workers for office. We can use our organized structures to hold any elected official accountable.

Too many Black and Brown people don't vote. Too many younger people don't vote. Too many poor people don't vote. That all adds up to the fact that too many of us, working people, don't vote.

So we need a workers program, some basic political demands we can all fight for.

We fight for a worker's program:

A LIVABLE WAGE!



WHO'S HELPED BY RAISING THE MINIMUM WAGE?

WHAT PEOPLE THINK

Teenager
Works part time after school
Lives with parents
Earning extra spending money



THE REALITY

Average age: **35 years old**
88% are not teens. They're 20 or older
36% are **40 or older**
56% are **women**
28% have children
55% work **full time**
On average, they **earn half** of their family's total income

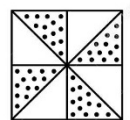
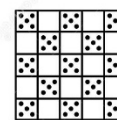
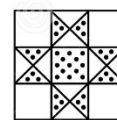
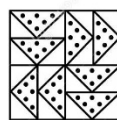


All of us can make this demand: We demand a livable wage. This is a no brainer, everybody knows this. We need income to live, as long as food, clothing, shelter, health care and all the other stuff we need costs money. It is common for people to face money running short and having to choose what to do and what not to do.

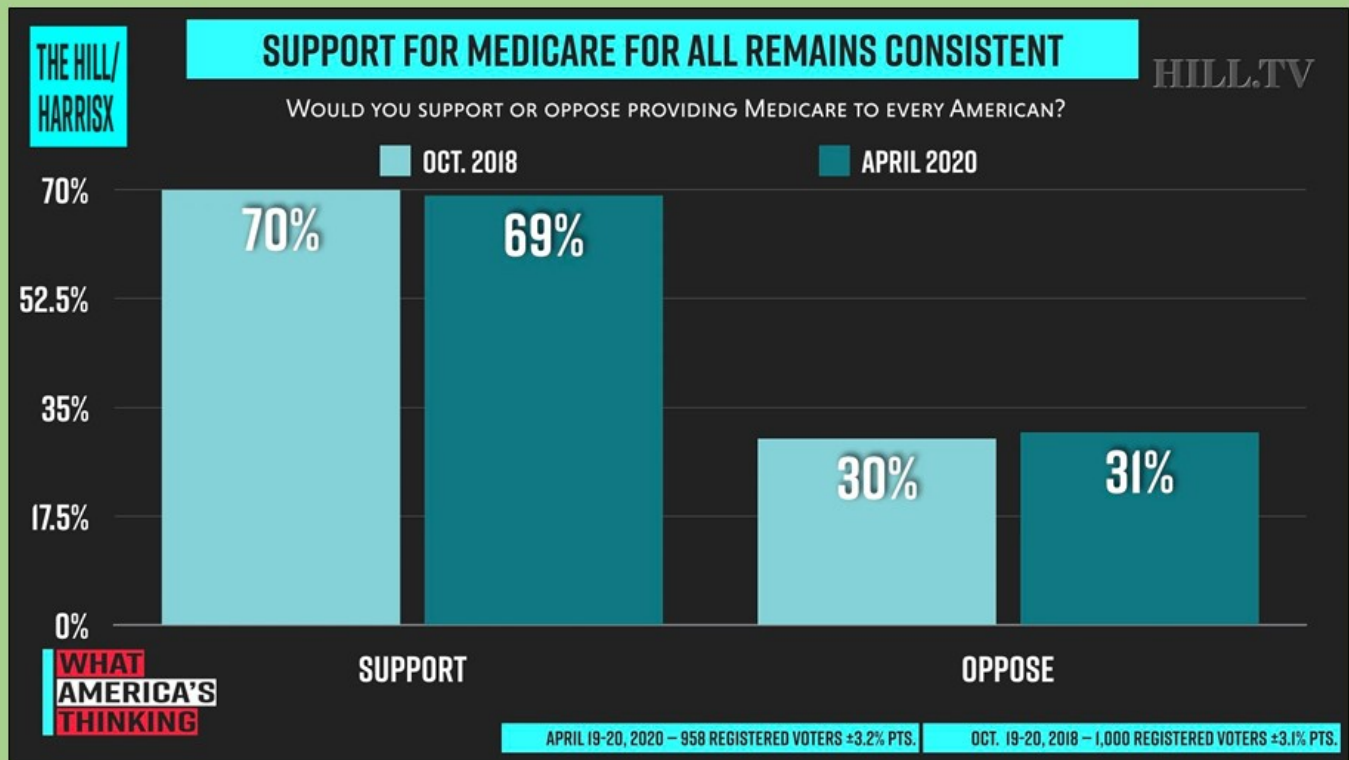
We need a better minimum wage. Check this slide. Its not about teenagers, its about most of us. We even sell ourselves short in our demands. The current national minimum wage is \$7.50. for a full time job that is an annual wage of less than \$15,000. The annual income for \$15 per hour is a little more than \$30,000. The government standard for poverty is a joke.

They say, at \$15 per hour, a family of five can be above the poverty live. Who believes that. This is the judgment by a government run by millionaires.

A livable wage means that the market has to be controlled, price controls have to be set, people's needs have to be guaranteed. People have a right to live a decent life full of joy, laughter and love in their pursuit of happiness.



We fight for a worker's program: **MEDICARE FOR ALL!**



All of us can make this demand: We demand Medicare for all. There is no more basic demand than this, for ourselves and our families. The first point is that the people of this country agree with this demand by more than two to one, 70% in favor and 30% opposed. So what's the big deal holding this up.

In a word, health care is a commodity, and the capitalists are squeezing everything they can get, and from their point of view to hell with what we want and need.

In 2018 health care costs in the US amounted to a total of \$3.6 trillion, averaging \$11,000 for every person. But of this 34.2% was in administrative costs, while under Medicare the administrative cost was down to under 7%. The

capitalists love their bureaucracy, especially in billing us and chasing us down to pay our bills.

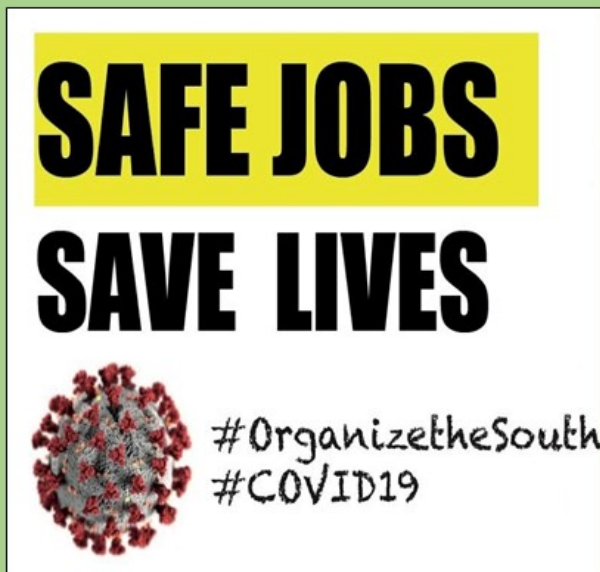
And then the insurance companies, now bigger than banks. They also employ 2.7 million employees.

In the years between 2000 and 2018, 35 big drug companies received a combined revenue of \$11.5 trillion, with a gross profit of \$8.6 trillion.

Government funding pays for a lot of the research for new drugs, then the drug companies monetize this, and sell it back to us.

One good development is that the government is forcing these research findings to be placed in the public domain. But who has the money to follow up on this?

We fight for a worker's program: **A SAFE WORKPLACE!**

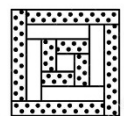
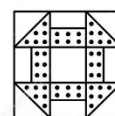
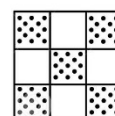
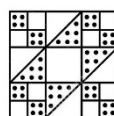


Time for OSHA to get real

A direct connection to this is our next main demand: We demand a safe workplace, because safe jobs save lives.

The struggles of the 1960s resulted in Congress creating OSHA: the Occupational Safety and Health Administration in 1970. OSHA's mission is to "assure safe and healthy working conditions for working men and women, by setting and enforcing standards, and by providing training, outreach, education and assistance." We did get some results. In 1970, on average there were 38 deaths every day on the job in the US, but by 2019 this had declined to 15 deaths a day. But damn, that's still people dying every day just by working on their job.

The crisis is that OSHA has to be bold and clear in its mandates, and it has to have teeth in its enforcement. During the pandemic under the last administration, they dropped their language down to recommendations and requirements. This also happened with the CDC: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Being nice to employers who stand by while their workers suffer injury and even death.



**We fight for a worker's program:
A SAFE ENVIRONMENT!**



OK, Here's another key demand: We demand a safe environment.

Nature is composed of a complex set of ecosystems, both on land and in the seas, as well as the atmosphere. People are part of nature, as are all animals, all life forms. But we have not had as a primary value living within the laws of nature. Rather, capitalists have tried to act as gods defying nature, and making up our own rules spontaneously based on what maximizes profit. The highest extent of this is genetic modification in plants and animals, trying to improve on what has taken millions of years by virtue of some lab experiments.

We need a green new deal. We have to go well beyond the Paris climate accord. We have to

clean up the oceans and stop using it as a garbage dump, especially with plastics and stuff that will not dissolve for many years.

This is a global challenge. The old slogan “Workers of the world unite” is no longer a political dream, it is a political urgency. We share water and air. No national borders make any difference.

A workers program is a program for the welfare and benefit of humanity. It is the moral necessity for our future. The Southern Workers Assembly has a role to play.

We fight for a worker's program: **WHAT DEMANDS DO YOU HAVE?**



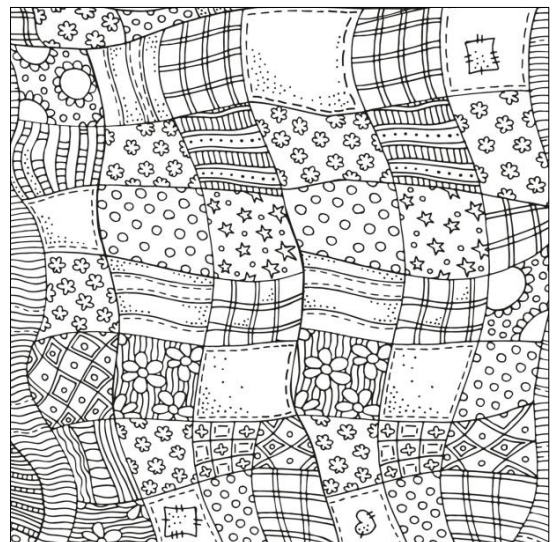
Has anyone ever asked workers in the South?
That's why we have the Southern Workers Assembly

This presentation is just a beginning. The workers program we need, the full program, will only develop when we have workers assemblies in every state, in every place where workers are concentrated. We are the voices we need for the consensus. The consensus is a mighty coming together, it is a political concentration of class consciousness.

We need to answer this question – What do the workers want? To get the answer we have to gather them together in serious discussion. When this answer captures the imagination of our class we will have the beginning of the working class power needed to transform capitalism into a system that truly gives

everyone life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Let's talk.



Strategy and Tactics for the Anti-Capitalist Struggle

Southern Workers Assembly School

June 6, 2021



PO Box 934, Rocky Mount, NC 27802

info@southernworker.org

<https://southernworker.org/>

All Sessions Sunday 5 pm Eastern Time,
contact us for Zoom details.

**April 18. Fighting 21st Century Capitalism:
The Case of Amazon.** How Amazon fits into
21st century capitalism. Identifying key
workplaces in your area.

**May 2. Building a 21st Century Working
Class Movement.** Who and what is the
working class. Outreaching to key workplaces.

**May 16. Organizing the Workers
Movement Today.** Capital and the State.

Winning based on issues identified by workers
in key workplaces.

**June 6. The Southern Workers Assembly.
Pulling it all together.** Building a worker
assembly in your area

Attend all four sessions. If you can't, come
anyway!

As indicated, this is our fourth and last session of this Spring 2021 SWA school. This is but a small step in the long march ahead of us. Study is essential for our advancement. Our school is a major resistance action against the system that oppresses us. As I have said before, for those of us who are religious, we study the Bible or the Koran or other religious texts in search of salvation. This is good. We now need to be as committed to studying politics and economics in search of liberation. That's right, without this kind of study the working class won't be able to do what must be done. Yeah, it's true, to change this society is hard work.

First, we need to review what we have covered. Everyone has not been able to attend all the sessions. Remember, also, the sessions have been taped and are available for more study.

Then we will turn to the major conceptual framework for where we are going, and how we are going to get there. This is the content for the title of this presentation: Strategy and Tactics for the Anti-Capitalist Struggle. It is important to have a deep understanding of these two terms, strategy and tactics.

What does it mean to be anti-capitalist?

First: Know what capitalism is

Second: Unite the working class

Third: Have a class analysis of state power

Fourth: Have a plan to implement struggle



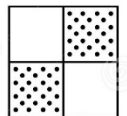
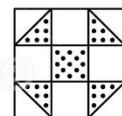
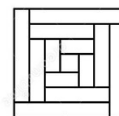
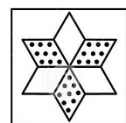
This entire school has been in answer to this question, in theory and in practice. What does it mean to be anti-capitalist? The first distinction we have to make is between a spontaneous movement and one based on class conscious workers. The difference is fighting against only the symptoms of a problem, versus sustaining a fight to solve the root cause of the problem.

So, the first issue is to know what capitalism is. Unemployment, poverty, and a host of other issues we can deal with, are the main symptoms of capitalism as our problem. But we need to understand more than this. We need to get down on the fundamentals, the basic structure of this system.

A major focus is on us, our social reality as the working class. We need to be clear about who we are and how we can unite, unite in our workplaces, in our cities, and most of all as a class everywhere we are. We then need to be clear on how the social contradictions between the capitalist and working classes are concentrated in the government and its laws.

Finally, we need a plan for our struggle.

OK, let's go a bit deeper on all of this.



Review of Session #1

What is capitalism and how do you know that



Private property:

The capitalist class owns the means of production, tools/ technology and natural resources

Labor:

The masses of people are forced to sell their labor power in order to earn money to live

Government:

Capitalists control the government and make rules that serve themselves

Profit:

Wealth is accumulated based on exploiting labor backed up by government laws

Classes:

Wealth polarizes, rich and poor, with a middle class in between

In the first session of our school, we dealt with this question: How do we know what capitalism is? We live in it every day, but we have to have concepts, words, that clarify our thinking.

Later you can review our pamphlet “What is Capitalism and How to fight it?”

For now, check these five concepts.

1. Private property
2. Labor
3. Government
4. Profit
5. Classes

The fundamental point here is that capitalism is a specific kind of class society in which the capitalist owns the means of production (specifically the tools, technology and natural

resources, the land). The vast majority of us are forced to sell our labor power as a commodity in exchange for wages. They make profit off our labor because we don’t get the value of what we produce.

So, the result is a class system in which the 1% owns the vast majority of wealth over the rest of us. Specifically, according to government data, the top 1% of Americans have a combined net worth of over \$34 trillion (or over 30% of all household wealth in the U.S.), while the bottom 50% of the population holds about \$2 trillion combined (or less than 2% of all wealth). This is the polarity of class wealth under capitalism.

Review of session #2

What is the working class and how to unite it



In the second session of our school we focused on our class, the working class. We are in history, and we change as the production forces and production relations change over time. Even as far back as 1848 Marx and Engels said this: “The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honored and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage laborers.” (Communist Manifesto)

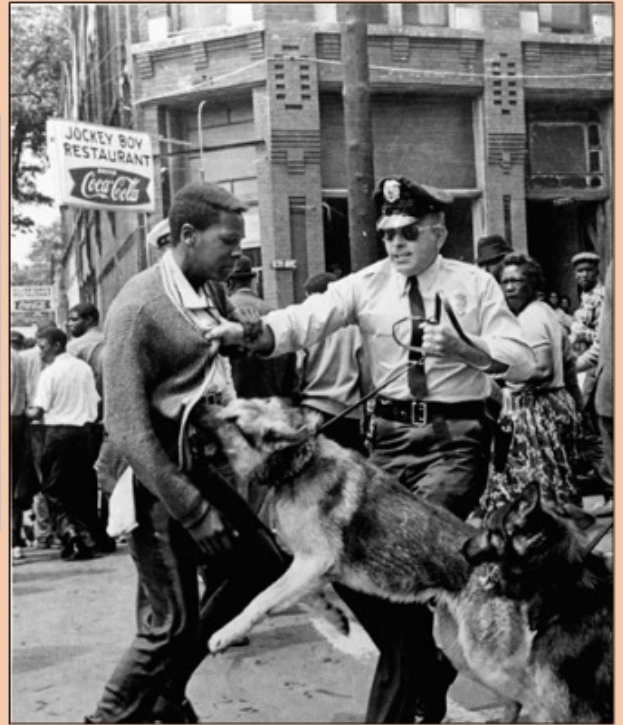
Here is what the economist Michael Zweig says today: “We should identify the class divisions as between the working class, 62 percent of the U.S. labor force—a substantial majority of the American people—and the corporate elite (or capitalist class), who make up only 2 percent. In

between these classes is the middle class (36 percent of the U.S. labor force).”

“The working class are those people with relatively little power at work—white-collar bank tellers, call-center workers, and cashiers; blue-collar machinists, construction workers, and assembly-line workers; pink-collar secretaries, nurses, and home-health-care workers—skilled and unskilled, men and women of all races, nationalities, and sexual preferences. The working class are those with little personal control over the pace or content of their work and without supervisory control over the work lives of others. There are nearly 90 million working-class people in the U.S. labor force today. The United States has a substantial working-class majority.”

Review of session #3

What is the class nature of the state and how to fight it



Following this, in our third school session, we turned to the main instrument of class control, the government, what we call the state.

The political basis of the government in the United States, its theory of democracy, is “consent of the governed.” This is included in the Declaration of Independence:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,—That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive

of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.”

This declaration is the basis for our resistance, in their own words. The more class consciousness we become, the more we can demonstrate that they do not have our consent to rule over us as they do. This slide shows the police suppressing democracy—in the 1960s and today.

What is a strategy?

**A plan of action or policy
designed to achieve a major or overall aim**



**We need a strategy
to end poverty
once and for all**

How?



**We need a strategy
to end capitalism
once and for all**

Now on to our current 4th session of our school on strategy and tactics.

The first question is “What is a strategy?” The direct answer is that a strategy is a plan of action, or policy, designed to achieve a major or overall aim. One way to answer this is about a broad jump in a track meet. Can you go farthest doing a standing broad jump or a running broad jump? By analogy, each step in the run is a tactics, a specific action that moves you closest to your goal. That’s the relationship between strategy and tactics.

So, at the bottom of this slide the key [phrase in each case is “once and for all.” A tactical move is to fight for \$15 hourly minimum wage, but that will not end poverty once and for all.

Building unions will not end capitalism once and for all. But both are necessary tactics now, both get the working class in motion around demands they understand, and are willing to fight for, at least be in the struggle to fight.

Strategy involves vision, it involves projecting a future worth fighting for. This is not about what the capitalists say is good for us. They lie. They want us to lower our goals to what they can live with. Our position has got to be, to hell with what they can live us, our focus is on our own lives. We need a real strategy for sustainable goodness, for all of us. Our happiness is what concerns us.

The fundamental dialectic: **Reform vs. Revolution**



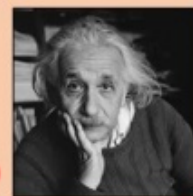
In ideological terms, in terms of political theory, we are discussing the relationship between reform and reformism. See, in political theory we have to get our minds straight on these isms. Reforms can take us step by step, toward our final goal— then there is reform as an end in itself, something we can call reformism. So, the reforms we need are reforms within a strategy designed for fundamental social change.

Some people want a revolution and that's all they talk about, acting like all reform is reformism. This we call a left error, living in the future with no feet in the present. On the other hand reformism does exist. A good example of reformism is thinking that changes

within one of the capitalist political parties will be the change we need. This is a right error.

The key relationship is always between reform and revolution. History proceeds through time, sometimes things develop over a long time and sometimes in a very short time. Sometimes there is a fight for reform after reform, sometimes with success and sometimes not. Then that magical moment happens, and a leap can take place.

It's like boiling water. The water keeps getting hot, but then it bursts into steam or in the opposite direction ice. This is the relationship between quantity and quality.

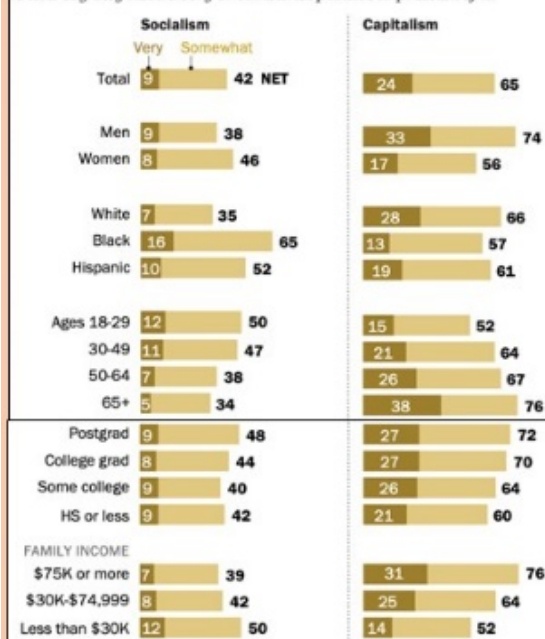


Why socialism?

I am convinced there is only *one* way to eliminate these grave evils, namely through the establishment of a socialist economy, accompanied by an educational system which would be oriented toward social goals. In such an economy, the means of production are owned by society itself and are utilized in a planned fashion. A planned economy, which adjusts production to the needs of the community, would distribute the work to be done among all those able to work and would guarantee a livelihood to every man, woman, and child. The education of the individual, in addition to promoting his own innate abilities, would attempt to develop in him a sense of responsibility for his fellow men in place of the glorification of power and success in our present society.—**Albert Einstein**

Sizable racial and ethnic, age, gender and income differences in views of 'socialism' and 'capitalism'

% who say they have a very or somewhat positive impression of ...



Notes: Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted April 29-May 13, 2019.

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In the history of political economy, anti-capitalism is often referred to as socialism.

Here is what the scientist Einstein had to say:

"I am convinced there is only one way to eliminate these grave evils, namely through the establishment of a socialist economy, accompanied by an educational system which would be oriented toward social goals. In such an economy, the means of production are owned by society itself and are utilized in a planned fashion. A planned economy, which adjusts production to the needs of the community, would distribute the work to be done among all those able to work and would guarantee a livelihood to every man, woman, and child. The education of the individual, in addition to promoting his own innate abilities, would

attempt to develop in him a sense of responsibility for his fellow men in place of the glorification of power and success in our present society."

The dominant discussion by the political mainstream in this country goes nuts when positive discussion of socialism comes up. But what do we think? Check the survey data. Yeah, following the mind control that the capitalists have in place, all demographic groups have majority positive views of capitalism. OK. But check the views on socialism. A majority of Blacks and Latinos approve. The less money you make, the less education you have, and the younger you are, then the more you approve of socialism.

Strategic tools

1. **A vision**
2. **Organization**
3. **Leadership**
4. **A plan**



But now, in our school, we need to turn away from the “isms” and focus on our immediate situation. What are the strategic tools we need, you know, on the real.

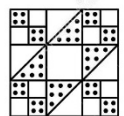
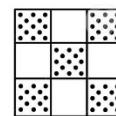
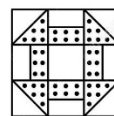
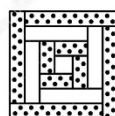
One way to sum this up is that we need four basic things: a vision (goals, where we are going, what are we fighting for), an organization to unite us, clarity about leadership, and a plan of action.

Clearly, we advocate a two-step. On the one hand, the established move for workers, at the workplace, and the industry level, is to form a union. This is a weak spot on the labor front in the South—we don’t have as many unionized shop as we need, and this damn Taft-Hartley rule needs to be smashed, because even when

we get a union we don’t always have all the workers involved.

The main thing is that we advocate organization, any form that’s possible. Workers need organization. Our main organizational tactic is to form a Workers Assembly on a citywide basis. Yes, each workers assembly will become part of our network making up the Southern Workers Assembly.

The South has been the most economically and politically backward area of the country. But when the South moves, the country wakes up. Our strategy speaks to this.



Toward a Strategic Vision



If you can
imagine your
future, you are
a visionary.
Visualize a
future that
excites and
inspires you.

Property:

from capitalist to worker controlled

Labor:

from unorganized to fully unionized

Government:

from plutocracy to dual power

Profit:

surplus value used for the public good

Classes:

from exploitation to cooperation

Our vision, in our words, for our future

We started out by referring to five key aspects of capitalism: property, labor, government, profit, and classes. We have a strategic vision about all of this. This is a future we can get excited about, one we can use to inspire our entire class, the working class.

We aim to move from a capitalist controlled political economy to one controlled by workers. We have been controlled and our goal is to have control, we must be masters of our own fate.

We aim to move from being unorganized to being fully unionized, united in our capacity for full collective bargaining, a process in which we have power.

We aim to end this plutocracy, rule by the rich and powerful, to dual power, when the workers have enough power to end the unchallenged power of the capitalist class.

We aim to end the use of the surplus value appropriated for the personal use of the capitalists to put it instead to the purpose of the public good, focusing on life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness for all of us.

We aim to end this class system based on exploitation, to one based on cooperation, in fact this extends from the economy to all aspects of society.

We build Workers Assemblies for workers power



The foundation of our movement is workplace organizations. We link together such organizations in one city, then build unity with the social movements, especially the liberation movements of Blacks, Latinx, and Women.

Workers Unity = Workers Power

OK, that's what we want. So what. Who are we? Why do we matter?

Clearly, as isolated individuals and small groups we are not a formidable force, but when we unite we change the political landscape.

Our focus is on uniting workers, is on building power bases in every city and state, the power of the working class. The foundation of our movement is workplace organizations. Where unions exist, we support them, and where they are being built we join in solidarity. We did this with the Bessemer Amazon struggle, and that struggle continues. The main issue is the organization of workers.

We go further than that because there are social forces we must unite with. Our movement to unite workers, also has the strategic goal of uniting with the Black liberation movement, the Latinx liberation movement, and the women's liberation movements as the main allies. This reflects their quantitative and qualitative importance.

But because we unite against all forms of oppression and exploitation, we also stand in unity with the struggle of our aging brothers and sisters, our LGBTQ brothers and sisters, our comrades from all oppressed nationalities, and so many others. The more unity we can build the more power we will have.



To me, a leader is a visionary that energizes others. This definition of leadership has two key dimensions: a) creating the vision of the future, and b) inspiring others to make the vision a reality.

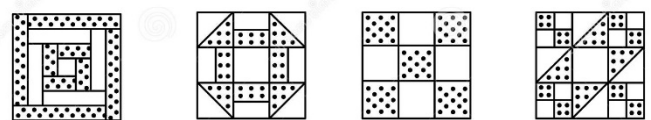
A leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves.—Lao Tzu

To do this we need leaders. But we got to be clear about this. We don't need people who get the big head, who think of themselves as better than, and above the rest of us. No, we need real people, who want to build a real movement. That means respecting and working with us, listening to us, and helping us sum up and build a consensus that realizes our class consciousness.

And check the slide. Lao Tzu places a challenge before all of us as leaders: A leader is best when people barely know she exists, when her work is done, her aim fulfilled, they will say: We did it ourselves."

There is also a quote from Eugene Debs that makes sense about leadership: "I am not a

Labor Leader; I do not want you to follow me or anyone else; if you are looking for a Moses to lead you out of this capitalist wilderness, you will stay right where you are. I would not lead you into the promised land if I could, because if I led you in, someone else would lead you out. You must use your heads as well as your hands and get yourself out of your present condition; as it is now the capitalists using your heads and your hands."



A strategic plan is composed of tactics

Where are we going? How are we going to get there?

Form a committed core

Key contacts in multiple workplaces

Organize discussions, identify issues

Organize recruitment to expand the groups

Study the issues and prepare to attack

Recruit a militant minority

Set up local process for communication

Create a network of multiple workplaces and locations

Create slogans to concentrate political line, educate, agitate, and mobilize

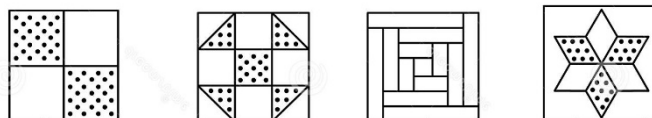
Plan campaigns of collective action that unite workers & community activists

Leadership is an organizational role, a role with a purpose. The tactical purpose of leadership is to help build out collectivity. First, the focus at workplaces we have identified as building small groups, what we call committed cores. This is a circle of brothers and sisters who have united around a consensus about the problems being faced, within a broader strategic framework like the one we have been discussing in these school sessions. A committed core knows the risks, knows what's at stake, and is prepared to throw down, and act. But the committed core also knows that more is needed.

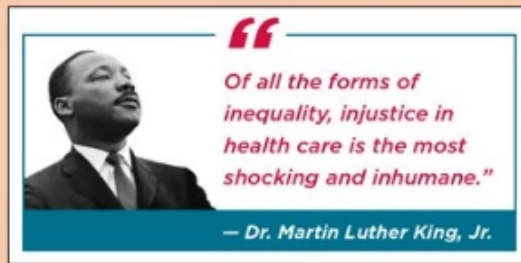
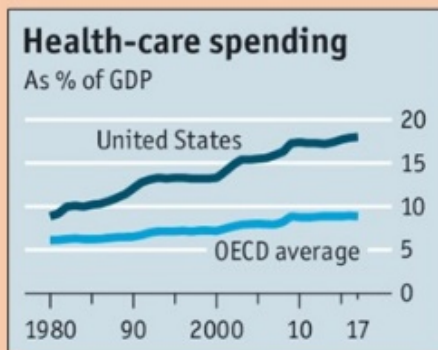
The committed core must then do outreach to connect with others willing to act, this we call the militant minority. Militant because it is

willing to take action – sign a petition, hand out leaflets, join a picket line, speak out at a public meeting. These sorts of actions are part of the tactical tool kit for every stage of the workers movement.

But they will still be a minority, a relatively small part of the overall labor force in any given workplace. But that's really all we need. A militant minority can move our politics forward the way we want.



Slogans: What are they? How to use them?



MEDICARE FOR ALL

Same slogan used 3 ways

Educational

Set a curriculum for study

Agitational

Organize a consensus

Action

Focus mass action



One of the great tools we have is a slogan. A slogan is always in short words, like poetry, a powerful message in a few words.

This is often the result of incredible creativity by people when they get into the struggle, being able to sum up the issues and put them in such a way that people understand, that people connect the slogan with their own thinking and can make it their own. When the masses grab hold of a slogan, they are not quoting anybody else. The slogan becomes their voice.

A slogan has to be understood in context:

1. At the beginning a slogan has education value. We have to break it down, get into

the definitions of words, share data, especially key statistics that make the problem clear. This is when the slogan has an educational function.

2. There is also the agitational function of a slogan. Raising it in the context of meetings, mass gatherings in order to build a consensus, like advertising, the more people hear it, the more they get comfortable with it and feel like it belongs to them.
3. And finally, the slogan become the focus of mass action. This is when we fight for its realization.

Mass Action is how we exercise the power of the working class



Yes, indeed, mass action is how we exercise the power of the working class.

These companies don't exist without us. The buses don't run, the mail isn't delivered, the goods are not produced, the restaurants don't serve. Nothing works without us. They are trying to get the robots to take our place so they don't have to pay us. The problem with this strategy is that if they don't pay us, then nobody will have the money to buy what the robots make. Poof, there goes their profit. They got a problem.

We protest in mass action for three main reasons:

1. To educate and inspire people to join us.

2. To build power as an organizational strategy, sometimes this means disruption to measure how much power we have at any given time.
3. To force the capitalist to change, to impose our will.

The critical issue is how our mass action tactics are steps on our long journey for social transformation. When we win in one workplace, we will realize we need all the workplaces. When many act, we realize we need a functional network, specifically in a Workers Assembly. We will realize the need for our regional network to be brought together into the Southern Workers Assembly. Workers united in motion. But we will need even more than this for the anti-capitalist struggle.

Anti-Capitalism Struggle

Unite with the Black Liberation Movement

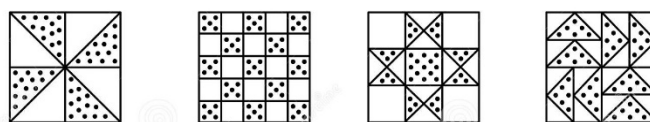


For starters, especially in the South, we need to connect the workers movement with the Black liberation movement. Only by accepting the legitimacy of the organic fighting forces of Black people rising up in defense of their community, only by accepting their right to self-determination, can we realize the revolutionary meaning of the slogan “Black and White Unite to fight!”

Racism is one of the main tools the capitalist class uses to keep the working class divided. This is a foundation for false consciousness. If white workers can be taught that Black people are their main enemy, then the capitalist class can hide and continue to rob them of the surplus value. In fact, they can bribe white

workers by paying them a little more, giving them more promotions, petty privileges. But none of this ends the class exploitation over both Black and white workers.

This is a dialectical process of fighting racism within the workers movement, and then joining with the Black community in fighting racism in the society as a whole. A good example is the great March on Washington in 1963. It was advanced with the generous support of the United Auto Workers. Now is the time to transform all trade unions into social justice organizations.



Anti-Capitalism Struggle

Unite with the Latinx Liberation Movement



Again, more is needed still. The workers movement needs to unite with the Latinx liberation movement. Sections of the working class are dominated by Latinos, as we have seen in many meatpacking facilities as well in much field labor.

Two critical issues are involved. We have the need for a full revision of the immigration policies. No worker is an alien in this country of mainly immigrants. Capitalism recognizes no borders for itself as it roams all over the work as imperialism, as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and all kinds of agreements like NAFTA. The capitalist state gets all concerned with borders to control

workers. What a contradiction. This has got to be fixed.

Another issue is the self-determination of the Puerto Rican people. The US is a colonial country that defies its own history of fighting to be free from the British, but now colonizes others. The workers movement has the dual task of embracing Puerto Rican workers in the US, and then supporting the people on the island, backing their democratic desires through acts of self-determination.

One of the great steps is to make sure we include Spanish as a language of record in what we do as a working class. It's time for us to embrace our class in all its diversity, and yes, unity takes effort.

Anti-Capitalism Struggle

Unite with the Women's Liberation Movement



**A WOMAN'S PLACE IS IN HER UNION:
HOW THE PRO ACT WILL HELP WOMEN WORKERS**

THURSDAY, APRIL 8TH | 7 P.M. ET

BUILD BACK BETTER WITH UNIONS
PASS THE PRO ACT

Facebook LIVE YouTube LIVE Twitter LIVE

SECRETARY TREASURER ATL CIO	PRESIDENT MINNAPOLIS REGIONAL LABOR FEDERATION	PRESIDENT/SECRETARY TREASURER NEBRASKA STATE AFL-CIO	PRESIDENT WISCONSIN STATE AFL-CIO	PRESIDENT APWU PHILADELPHIA	PRESIDENT OHIO COALITION OF LABOR UNION WOMEN



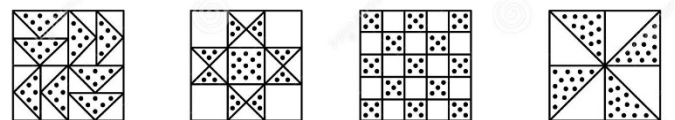
Finally, at least in this presentation, is the need for workers to be united with women in their fight against patriarchy, the misguided notion that men are superior to women.

In terms of public policy this has to involve getting the Equal Rights Amendment passed, not only by maintaining congressional backing, but taking on the long march through the state legislatures – this is battle that must be waged, must be won.

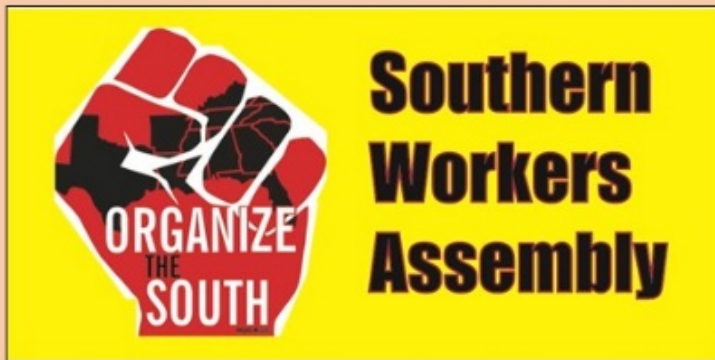
Within the organization of the labor movement, the trade unions, women must be embraced as leaders, and all forms of gender discrimination must be taken on as priority issues to fight—pay levels, promotions, sexual abuse, and anything else.

We need contract negotiations that cover the needs of family life around childbirth and childcare.

Solidarity is key to our unity – remember an injury to one is an injury to all.



We fight everyday for reforms as part of the strategic fight for social transformation



Join us!

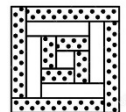
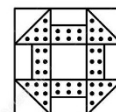
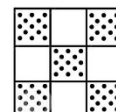
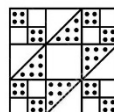
Let's review the main points.

The first is that the day-to-day struggle is about fighting for change, making the reforms that are needed. Remember that most politics is about the struggle for the possible, choosing fights that we can win. We need this to build our forces, to grow our strength. Of course, we will lose many battles, but at the beginning we need to play to win. This is about measuring our strength, planning carefully, and striking when and where the masses are ready to take up the struggle.

But it is with our vision that we fight on to the new battles. With our vision, with our strategic goals, we can fight on whether we win or lose any given battle.

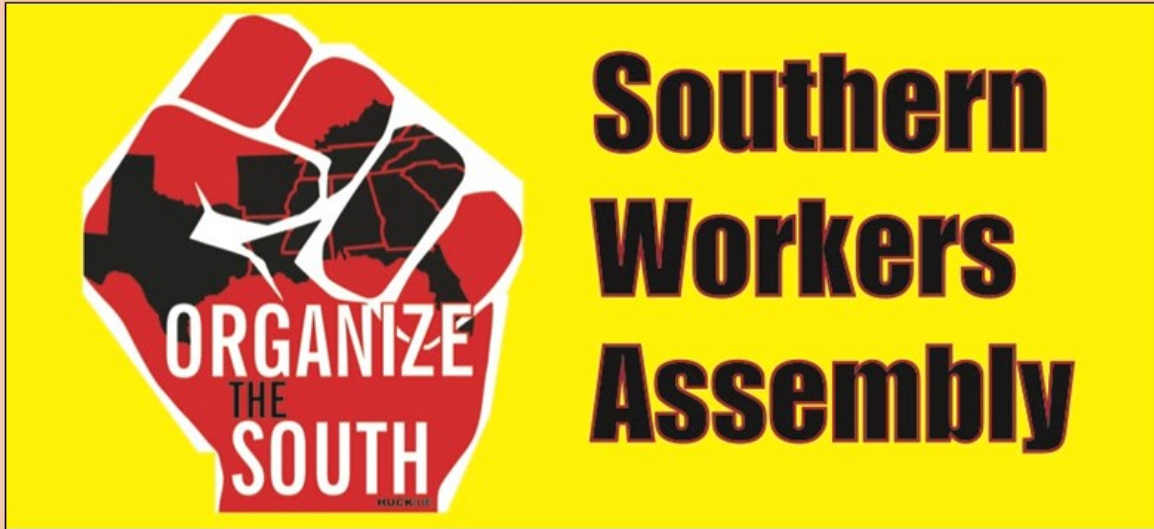
Remember the key slogan that we advance by: Fight, fail; fight again, fail again; fight on to victory.

The Southern Workers Assembly is a strategy for building a workers movement in the South. From a national perspective the SWA is an essential element in any national strategy. The most backward and rightwing forces have strong bases in the South and that needs to be confronted and destroyed. Only a regionally organized working class can do this.



The future is possible
El futuro es posible

Questions? Comments?



OK, lets talk! Join us!

