### FW

#### I value morality as ought implies a moral obligation

**The standard is minimizing material and structural violence. Prefer:**

**The structural violence of inequality outweighs other impacts—there is an ethical obligation to address it.**

**Ansell 17** — David A. Ansell, Senior Vice President, Associate Provost for Community Health Equity, and Michael E. Kelly Professor of Medicine at Rush University Medical Center (Chicago), holds an M.D. from the State University of New York Upstate Medical University College of Medicine, 2017 (“American Roulette,” *The Death Gap: How Inequality Kills*, Published by the University of Chicago Press, ISBN 9780226428291, p. kindle 307-363)

There are many different kinds of violence. Some are obvious: punches, attacks, gunshots, explosions. These are the kinds of interpersonal violence that we tend to hear about in the news. Other kinds of violence are intimate and emotional. But the **deadliest** and most thoroughgoing kind of violence is woven into the fabric of American society. It exists when some groups have more access to goods, resources, and opportunities than other groups, including health and life itself. This violence delivers **specific blows against particular bodies in particular neighborhoods**. This unequal advantage and violence is built into the very rules that govern our society. In the absence of this violence, **large numbers of Americans would be able to live fuller and longer lives**. This kind of violence is called structural violence, because it is embedded in the very laws, policies, and rules that govern day-to-day life.8 It is thecumulative impact of laws and social and economic policies and practices that render some Americans less able to access resources and opportunities than others. This inequity of advantage is not a result of the individual’s personal abilities but is built into the systems that govern society. Often it is a product of **racism**, **gender**, and **income inequality**. The diseases and premature mortality that Windora and many of my patients experienced were, in the words of Dr. Paul Farmer, “biological reflections of social fault lines.”9 As a result of these fault lines, a disproportional burden of illness, suffering, and premature mortality falls on certain neighborhoods, like Windora’s. Structural violence can overwhelm an individual’s ability to live a free, unfettered, healthy life. As I ran to evaluate Windora, I knew that her stroke was caused in part by lifelong exposure to suffering, racism, and economic deprivation. Worse, the poverty of West Humboldt Park that contributed to her illness is directly and inextricably related to the massive concentration of wealth and power in other neighborhoods just miles away in Chicago’s Gold Coast and suburbs. That concentration of wealth could not have occurred without laws, policies, and practices that favored some at the expense of others. Those laws, policies, and practices could not have been passed or enforced if access to political and economic power had not been concentrated in the hands of a few. Yet these political and economic structures have become so firmly entrenched (in habits, social relations, economic arrangements, institutional practices, law, and policy) that they have become part of the matrix of American society. The rules that govern day-to-day life were written to benefit a small elite at the expense of people like Windora and her family. These rules and structures are powerful destructive forces. The same structuresthat render life predictable, secure, comfortable, and pleasant for many destroy the lives of others like Windora through **suffering**, **poverty**, **ill health**, and **violence**. These structures are neither natural nor neutral. The results of structural violence can be very specific. In Windora’s case, stroke precursors like chronic stress, poverty, and uncontrolled hypertension run rampant in neighborhoods like hers. Windora’s illness was caused by neither her cultural traits nor the failure of her will. Her stroke was caused in part by inequity. She is one of the lucky ones, though, because even while structural violence ravages her neighborhood, it also abets the concentration of expensive stroke- intervention services in certain wealthy teaching hospitals like mine. If I can get to her in time, we can still help her. Income Inequality and Life Inequality Of course, Windora is not the only person struggling on account of structural violence. Countless neighborhoods nationwide are suffering from it, and people are dying **needlessly young** as a result. The magnitude of this excess mortality is mind-boggling. In 2009 my friend Dr. Steve Whitman asked a simple question, “How many extra black people died in Chicago each year, just because they do not have the same health outcomes as white Chicagoans?” When the Chicago Sun-Times got wind of his results, it ran them on the front page in bold white letters on a black background: “HEALTH CARE GAP KILLS 3200 Black Chicagoans and the Gap is Growing.” The paper styled the headline to look like the declaration of war that it should have been. In fact, we did find ourselves at warnot long ago, when almost 3,000 Americans were killed. That was September 11, 2001. That tragedy propelled the country to war. Yet when it comes to the premature deaths of urban Americans, no disaster area has been declared. No federal troops have been called up. No acts of Congress have been passed. Yet this disaster is **even worse**: those 3,200 black people were in Chicago alone, in just one year. Nationwide each year, more than **60,000** black people die prematurely because of inequality.10 While blacks suffer the most from this, it is not just an issue of racism, though racism has been a unique and powerful transmitter of violence in America for over four hundred years.11 Beyond racism, poverty and income inequality perpetuated by exploitative market capitalism are singular agents of transmission of **disease and early death**. As a result, there is a new and alarming pattern of declining life expectancy among white Americans as well. Deaths from drug overdoses in young white Americans ages 25 to 34 have exploded to levels not seen since the AIDS epidemic. This generation is the first since the Vietnam War era to experience higher death rates than the prior generation.12 White Americans ages 45 to 54 have experienced skyrocketing premature death rates as well, something not seen in any other developed nation.13 White men in some Appalachian towns live on average twenty years less than white men a half-day’s drive away in the suburbs of Washington, DC. Men in McDowell County, West Virginia, can look forward to a life expectancy only slightly better than that of Haitians.14 But those statistics reflect averages, and every death from structural violence is **a person**. When these illnesses and deaths are occurring one at a time in neighborhoods that society has decided not to care about—neighborhoods populated by poor, black, or brown people—they seem easy to overlook, especially if you are among the fortunate few who are doing incredibly well. The tide of prosperity in America has lifted some boats while others have swamped. Paul Farmer, the physician-anthropologist who founded Partners in Health, an international human rights agency, reflects on the juxtaposition of “unprecedented bounty and untold penury”: “It stands to reason that as beneficiaries of growing inequality, we do not like to be reminded of misery of squalor and failure. Our popular culture provides us with no shortage of anesthesia.”15 That people suffer and die prematurely because of inequality is **wrong**. It is wrong from an **ethical** perspective. It is wrong from a **fairness** perspective. And it is wrong because **we have the means to fix it**.

#### Prioritize structural violence – Existential threats distort moral reasoning and ignore ongoing and urgent violence.

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III The body and the emergency Though the body is often presumed to be the most basic unit where urgency might be detected, only some dictionaries link urgency and the body through a ‘medical’ reference to the compelling need to defecate or urinate.5 Focusing on the different meanings of urgency runs the risk of obscuring language categories, but pushing together the two definitions – urgency as the need to defecate and urinate, and urgency as overwhelming force – is useful here, because my aim is to illustrate that the ethical work of urgency has been hijacked by an hierarchical organization of scales of moral deliberation. Specifically, our research suggests that the urgent body is cast as subjective and impulsive, while larger scales, such as the region, state or society, emerge as the scale of a rational ethics. While these are not new arguments about states (Scott, 1998) and their institutions (Foucault, 1995), geographic insights into toileting and securitizations suggest that **technocratic practices both require and perpetuate an ethical distinction between the body and the large-scale future event**, **with the latter emerging as the only legitimate site of urgent claims and thus the dominant subject of moral reasoning**.In research related to contemporary global toileting, the defecating body’s status as a legitimate ethical concern is more likely to be acknowledged when **threatening the sanitation aims of cities and states**. This is perhaps most evident in large metropolitan areas where uneven access to toilets amplifies social inequalities and human suffering (McFarlane, 2013). Jewitt’s (2011) examination of waste management in India and other countries in the Global South reveals that taboos around feces often justify inequality in two ways; first, by creating conditions of precarity through taboos in discussing personal sanitation and toilet practices, and second, by justifying social exclusion on the basis of inferior sanitation practices. The lack of access to sanitation infrastructure can also provide reasons for excluding informally settled populations from ambitiously modernizing cities. In cities like Kampala, Uganda, planners, development workers, and community organizers frame those who cannot use modern toilet facilities as threatening (Terreni-Brown, 2014a). Terreni-Brown (2014b) describes a group of female migrants selling goods outside of a large, upscale mall in Kampala, and their strategies for balancing the lack of access to a toilet with the danger and humiliation of going in the area behind their street-side location. Their desperate pain, induced by waiting hours until they can finally return to a more private location, contrasts with complaints of city planners and NGO workers who point to moral lethargy in the informal settlements that puts the city at risk. The poor, illegal, marginalized body is not a reasonable scale of urgency, nor is it the product of a thoughtful weighing of circumstances; in the face of a morally rational prioritization of a future Kampala, these bodily urgencies literally have no place in the modern city. Though toileting might be thought of as a special case of bodily urgency, geographic research suggests that the body is increasingly set at odds with larger scale ethical concerns, especially large-scale future events of forecasted suffering. Emergency planning is a particularly good example in which the large-scale threats of future suffering can distort moral reasoning. Žižek (2006) lightly develops this point in the context of the war on terror, where in the presence of fictitious and real ticking clocks and warning systems, the urgent body must be bypassed because there are bigger scales to worry about:¶ What does this all-pervasive sense of urgency mean ethically? The pressure of events is so overbearing, the stakes are so high, that they necessitate a suspension of ordinary ethical concerns. After all, displaying moral qualms when the lives of millions are at stake plays into the hands of the enemy. (Žižek, 2006)¶ In the presence of large-scale future emergency, the urgency to secure the state, the citizenry, the economy, or the climate creates new scales and new temporal orders of response (see Anderson, 2010; Baldwin, 2012; Dalby, 2013; Morrissey, 2012), many of which treat the urgent body as impulsive and thus requiring management. McDonald’s (2013) analysis of three interconnected discourses of ‘climate security’ illustrates how bodily urgency in climate change is also recast as a menacing impulse that might require exclusion from moral reckoning. The logics of climate security, especially those related to national security, ‘can encourage perverse political responses that not only fail to respond effectively to climate change but may present victims of it as a threat’ (McDonald, 2013: 49). Bodies that are currently suffering cannot be urgent, because they are excluded from the potential collectivity that could be suffering everywhere in some future time. Similar bypassing of existing bodily urgency is echoed in writing about violent securitization, such as drone warfare (Shaw and Akhter, 2012), and also in intimate scales like the street and the school, especially in relation to race (Mitchell, 2009; Young et al., 2014).¶ As large-scale urgent concerns are institutionalized, the urgent body is increasingly obscured through technical planning and coordination (Anderson and Adey, 2012). The predominant characteristic of this institutionalization of large-scale emergency is a ‘built-in bias for action’ (Wuthnow, 2010: 212) that circumvents contingencies. The urgent body is at best an assumed eventuality, one that will likely require another state of waiting, such as triage (e.g. Greatbach et al., 2005). Amin (2013) cautions that in much of the West, governmental need to provide evidence of laissez-faire governing on the one hand, and assurance of strength in facing a threatening future on the other, produces ‘just-in-case preparedness’ (Amin, 2013: 151) of neoliberal risk management policies. In the US, ‘personal ingenuity’ is built into emergency response at the expense of the poor and vulnerable for whom ‘[t]he difference between abjection and bearable survival’ (Amin, 2013: 153) will not be determined by emergency planning, but in the material infrastructure of the city.¶ In short, the urgencies of the body provide justifications for social exclusion of the most marginalized based on impulse and perceived threat, while large-scale future emergencies effectively absorb the deliberative power of urgency into the institutions of preparedness and risk avoidance. Žižek references Arendt’s (2006) analysis of the banality of evil to explain the current state of ethical reasoning under the war on terror, noting that people who perform morally reprehensible actions under the conditions of urgency assume a ‘tragic-ethic grandeur’ (Žižek, 2006) by sacrificing their own morality for the good of the state. But his analysis fails to note that bodies are today so rarely legitimate sites for claiming urgency. In the context of the assumed priority of the large-scale future emergency, the urgent body becomes literally nonsense, a non sequitur within societies, states and worlds that will always be more urgent.¶ If the important ethical work of urgency has been to identify that which must not wait, then the capture of the power and persuasiveness of urgency by large-scale future emergencies has consequences for the kinds of normative arguments we can raise on behalf of urgent bodies. How, then, might waiting compare as a normative description and critique in our own urgent time? Waiting can be categorized according to its purpose or outcome (see Corbridge, 2004; Gray, 2011), but it also modifies the place of the individual in society and her importance. As Ramdas (2012: 834) writes, ‘waiting … produces hierarchies which segregate people and places into those which matter and those which do not’. The segregation of waiting might produce effects that counteract suffering, however, and Jeffery (2008: 957) explains that though the ‘politics of waiting’ can be repressive, it can also engender creative political engagement. In his research with educated unemployed Jat youth who spend days and years waiting for desired employment, Jeffery finds that ‘the temporal suffering and sense of ambivalence experienced by young men can generate cultural and political experiments that, in turn, have marked social and spatial effects’ (Jeffery, 2010: 186). Though this is not the same as claiming normative neutrality for waiting, it does suggest that waiting is more ethically ambivalent and open than urgency.¶ In other contexts, however, our descriptions of waiting indicate a strong condemnation of its effects upon the subjects of study. Waiting can demobilize radical reform, depoliticizing ‘the insurrectionary possibilities of the present by delaying the revolutionary imperative to a future moment that is forever drifting towards infinity’ (Springer, 2014: 407). Yonucu’s (2011) analysis of the self-destructive activities of disrespected working-class youth in Istanbul suggests that this sense of infinite waiting can lead not only to depoliticization, but also to a disbelief in the possibility of a future self of any value. Waiting, like urgency, can undermine the possibility of self-care two-fold, first by making people wait for essential needs, and again by reinforcing that waiting is ‘[s]omething to be ashamed of because it may be noted or taken as evidence of indolence or low status, seen as a symptom of rejection or a signal to exclude’ (Bauman, 2004: 109). This is why Auyero (2012) suggests that waiting creates an ideal state subject, providing ‘temporal processes in and through which political subordination is produced’ (Auyero, 2012: loc. 90; see also Secor, 2007). Furthermore, Auyero notes, it is not only political subordination, but the subjective effect of waiting that secures domination, as citizens and non-citizens find themselves ‘waiting hopefully and then frustratedly for others to make decisions, and in effect surrendering to the authority of others’ (Auyero, 2012: loc. 123).¶ Waiting can therefore function as a potentially important spatial technology of the elite and powerful, mobilized not only for the purpose of governing individuals, but also to retain claims over moral urgency. But there is growing resistance to the capture of claims of urgency by the elite, and it is important to note that even in cases where the material conditions of containment are currently impenetrable, arguments based on human value are at the forefront of reclaiming urgency for the body. In detention centers, clandestine prisons, state borders and refugee camps, geographers point to ongoing struggles against the ethical impossibility of bodily urgency and a rejection of states of waiting (see Conlon, 2011; Darling, 2009, 2011; Garmany, 2012; Mountz et al., 2013; Schuster, 2011). Ramakrishnan’s (2014) analysis of a Delhi resettlement colony and Shewly’s (2013) discussion of the enclave between India and Bangladesh describe people who refuse to give up their own status as legitimately urgent, even in the context of larger scale politics. Similarly, Tyler’s (2013) account of desperate female detainees stripping off their clothes to expose their humanness and suffering in the Yarl’s Wood Immigration Removal Centre in the UK suggests that demands for recognition are not just about politics, but also about the acknowledgement of humanness and the irrevocable possibility of being that which cannot wait. The continued existence of places like Yarl’s Wood and similar institutions in the USA nonetheless points to the challenge of exposing the urgent body as a moral priority when it is so easily hidden from view, and also reminds us that our research can help to explain the relationships between normative dimensions and the political and social conditions of struggle.¶ In closing, geographic depictions of waiting do seem to evocatively describe otherwise obscured suffering (e.g. Bennett, 2011), but it is striking how rarely these descriptions also use the language of urgency. Given the discussion above, what might be accomplished – and risked – by incorporating urgency more overtly and deliberately into our discussions of waiting, surplus and abandoned bodies? Urgency can clarify the implicit but understated ethical consequences and normativity associated with waiting, and encourage explicit discussion about harmful suffering. Waiting can be productive or unproductive for radical praxis, but urgency compels and requires response. Geographers could be instrumental in reclaiming the ethical work of urgency in ways that leave it open for critique, clarifying common spatial misunderstandings and representations. There is good reason to be thoughtful in this process, since moral outrage towards inhumanity can itself obscure differentiated experiences of being human, dividing up ‘those for whom we feel urgent unreasoned concern and those whose lives and deaths simply do not touch us, or do not appear as lives at all’ (Butler, 2009: 50). But when the urgent body is rendered as only waiting, both materially and discursively, it is just as easily cast as impulsive, disgusting, animalistic (see also McKittrick, 2006). Feminist theory insists that the urgent body, whose encounters of violence are ‘usually framed as private, apolitical and mundane’ (Pain, 2014: 8), are as deeply political, public, and exceptional as other forms of violence (Phillips, 2008; Pratt, 2005). Insisting that a suffering body, now, is that which cannot wait, has the ethical effect of drawing it into consideration alongside the political, public and exceptional scope of large-scale futures. It may help us insist on the body, both as a single unit and a plurality, as a legitimate scale of normative priority and social care.¶ In this report, I have explored old and new reflections on the ethical work of urgency and waiting. Geographic research suggests a contemporary popular bias towards the urgency of large-scale futures, institutionalized in ways that further obscure and discredit the urgencies of the body. This bias also justifies the production of new waiting places in our material landscape, places like the detention center and the waiting room. In some cases, waiting is normatively neutral, even providing opportunities for alternative politics. In others, the technologies of waiting serve to manage potentially problematic bodies, leading to suspended suffering and even to extermination (e.g. Wright, 2013). One of my aims has been to suggest that moral reasoning is important both because it exposes normative biases against subjugated people, and because it potentially provides routes toward struggle where claims to urgency seem to foreclose the possibilities of alleviation of suffering. Saving the world still should require a debate about whose world is being saved, when, and at what cost – and this requires a debate about what really cannot wait. My next report will extend some of these concerns by reviewing how feelings of urgency, as well as hope, fear, and other emotions, have played a role in geography and ethical reasoning.¶ I conclude, however, by pulling together past and present. In 1972, Gilbert White asked why geographers were not engaging ‘the truly urgent questions’ (1972: 101) such as racial repression, decaying cities, economic inequality, and global environmental destruction. His question highlights just how much the discipline has changed, but it is also unnerving in its echoes of our contemporary problems. Since White’s writing, our moral reasoning has been stretched to consider the future body and the more-than-human, alongside the presently urgent body – topics and concerns that I have not taken up in this review but which will provide their own new possibilities for urgent concerns. My own hope presently is drawn from an acknowledgement that the temporal characteristics of contemporary capitalism can be interrupted in creative ways (Sharma, 2014), with the possibility of squaring the urgent body with our large-scale future concerns. Temporal alternatives already exist in ongoing and emerging revolutions and the disruption of claims of cycles and circular political processes (e.g. Lombard, 2013; Reyes, 2012). Though calls for urgency will certainly be used to obscure evasion of responsibility (e.g. Gilmore, 2008: 56, fn 6), they may also serve as fertile ground for radical critique, a truly fierce urgency for now.

### C1: Racial Inequality

**The current conditional system allows coercion and job loss to disincentivize a right to strike**

**Lafer and Loustaunau 20** Report • By Gordon Lafer and Lola Loustaunau • July 23. “Fear at Work: An inside Account of How Employers Threaten, Intimidate, and Harass Workers to Stop Them from Exercising Their Right to Collective Bargaining.” Economic Policy Institute, July 2020, www.epi.org/publication/fear-at-work-how-employers-scare-workers-out-of-unionizing/.

Most American workers want a union in their workplace but very few have it, because the right to organize—supposedly guaranteed by federal law—has been effectively cancelled out by a combination of legal and illegal employer intimidation tactics. This report focuses on the legal tactics—heavy-handed tactics that would be illegal in any election for public office but are regularly deployed by employers under the broken National Labor Relations Board’s union election system. Under this system, employees in workplace elections have no right to free speech or a free press, are threatened with losing their jobs if they vote to establish a union, and can be forced to hear one-sided propaganda with no right to ask questions or hear from opposing viewpoints. Employers—including many respectable, name-brand companies—collectively spend $340 million per year on “union avoidance” consultants who teach them how to exploit these weakness of federal labor law to effectively scare workers out of exercising their legal right to collective bargaining.Inside accounts of unionization drives at a tire manufacturing plant in Georgia and at a pay TV services company in Texas illustrate what those campaigns look like in real life. Below are some of the common employer tactics that often turn overwhelming support for unions at the outset of a campaign into a “no” vote just weeks later. All of these are legal under current law: Forcing employees to attend daily anti-union meetings where pro-union workers have no right to present [and]alternative views and can be fired on the spot if they ask a question.Plastering the workplace with anti-union posters, banners, and looping video ads—and denying pro-union employees access to any of these media. Instructing managers to tell employees that there’s a good chance they will lose their jobs if they vote to unionize. Having supervisors hold multiple one-on-one talks with each of their employees, stressing why it would be bad for them to vote in a union. Having managers tell employees that pro-union workers are “the enemy within.” Telling supervisors to [and]grill[ing] subordinates about their views on unionization, effectively destroying the principle of a secret ballot. At the heart of management’s campaign was the threat that workers would lose their jobs if they voted to unionize. Under the NLRA, it is legal for employers to “predict” that they will shut down if workers organize, but illegal to “threaten” closure. Insofar as they scare workers out of organizing, there is no significant difference between these, and employers often issue a combination of illegal threats and technically legal predictions. In Kumho’s case, an administrative law judge of the NLRB ultimately determined that 12 different managers (including the company’s CEO) issued illegal [and] threat[en] to close the plant or lay off employees.[48](https://www.epi.org/publication/fear-at-work-how-employers-scare-workers-out-of-unionizing/#_note48)

#### PoC are already unequal in the economy.

Bahn et. al. “Wage discrimination and the exploitation of workers in the U.S. labor market.” Washington Center for Equitable Growth, 15 Sep. 2020, <https://equitablegrowth.org/research-paper/wage-discrimination-and-the-exploitation-of-workers-in-the-u-s-labor-market/>. **Kate Bahn** is the director of labor market policy and economist at the Washington Center for Equitable Growth. Her areas of research include gender, race, and ethnicity in the labor market, care work, and monopsonistic labor markets. //ech

Not only do Black and Latinx workers experience high levels of income inequality in the United States, they also face an [even wider wealth divide](https://equitablegrowth.org/reconsidering-progress-this-juneteenth-eight-graphics-that-underscore-the-economic-racial-inequality-black-americans-face-in-the-united-states/) with their White peers.[27](https://equitablegrowth.org/research-paper/wage-discrimination-and-the-exploitation-of-workers-in-the-u-s-labor-market/?longform=true#footnote-27) In [2016](https://equitablegrowth.org/the-distribution-of-wealth-in-the-united-states-and-implications-for-a-net-worth-tax/), White families had median wealth of $171,000, while Black families’ median wealth was just $17,000—or almost 90 percent less—and Latinx families’ median wealth was $21,000.[28](https://equitablegrowth.org/research-paper/wage-discrimination-and-the-exploitation-of-workers-in-the-u-s-labor-market/?longform=true#footnote-28) (See Figure 1.) This gap simply cannot be explained by differing levels of education or income: The wealth divide in the United States has not decreased over time, even as Black Americans have achieved higher levels of education and income. (See Figure 1.) One contributor to the racial wealth divide is the [lower rates of homeownership](https://equitablegrowth.org/reconsidering-progress-this-juneteenth-eight-graphics-that-underscore-the-economic-racial-inequality-black-americans-face-in-the-united-states/) among Black Americans.[29](https://equitablegrowth.org/research-paper/wage-discrimination-and-the-exploitation-of-workers-in-the-u-s-labor-market/?longform=true#footnote-29) This divide in large part is due to the systematic blocking of Black homeownership through federal policies that fostered redlining and discrimination in housing, among other barriers to access—discrimination that began to diminish only beginning in the late 1970s and well after the wealth-creating housing boom of the previous three decades that accrued to White homeowners. And even today, while discrimination and prevention of homeownership based on race is technically illegal, the reality is that those Black and Latinx Americans who are able to purchase homes face [higher property tax burdens](https://equitablegrowth.org/misvaluations-in-local-property-tax-assessments-cause-the-tax-burden-to-fall-more-heavily-on-black-latinx-homeowners/) than their White neighbors, even within the same local property tax jurisdictions. Black Americans also face [lower rates of intergenerational mobility](https://equitablegrowth.org/research-paper/are-todays-inequalities-limiting-tomorrows-opportunities/), or the likelihood that a child will earn more than their parents when they are adults.[31](https://equitablegrowth.org/research-paper/wage-discrimination-and-the-exploitation-of-workers-in-the-u-s-labor-market/?longform=true#footnote-31) And, of course, the [disproportionate incarceration of Black Americans](https://equitablegrowth.org/overcoming-social-exclusion-addressing-race-and-criminal-justice-policy-in-the-united-states/) contributes to racial economic disparities, not only keeping a higher proportion of Black people out of the labor force for longer and more periods of time, but also [lowering their credit scores](https://equitablegrowth.org/the-never-ending-cycle-incarceration-credit-scores-and-wealth-accumulation-in-the-united-states/) and reducing their wealth-accumulation opportunities.[32](https://equitablegrowth.org/research-paper/wage-discrimination-and-the-exploitation-of-workers-in-the-u-s-labor-market/?longform=true#footnote-32) All of these systemic hurdles put Black workers at a disadvantage in the labor market by lowering their access to wealth and wealth-building opportunities. Our new theoretical model shows that wealth is an important factor in a worker’s ability to change jobs and weather the potential income shocks that come with searching for and switching to new jobs. These shocks can be as small as the lost wages from taking time off to interview or a delay in pay when transitioning to a new role, or as large as a longer period of time off resulting from an unexpected delay or issue with the transition to a new job. As the persistent racial wealth gap in the United States indicates, Black and Latinx workers—who have less access to wealth—are less able to get through potential household financial crises than their otherwise-identical White peers. This means that similar workers of different races and ethnicities have different ease and ability to navigate the labor market, making Black and Latinx workers less sensitive to wage differences between their job and others when the cost and risk of leaving their job is too high. If an employer recognizes this disparity (or holds racist views, which leads to a similar low-wage outcome), then the employer will exploit Black and Latinx workers more by offering them lower wages than their White colleagues, expanding the racial wage divide.

#### The RTS is the fundamental right for union negotiation

Myall, James. “Right to Strike Would Level the Playing Field for Public Workers, with Benefits for All of Us.” Maine Center for Economic Policy, 17 Apr. 2019, https://www.mecep.org/blog/right-to-strike-would-level-the-playing-field-for-public-workers-with-benefits-for-all-of-us/.[James Myall](https://www.mecep.org/author/james-myall/) is a Policy analyst for [@MECEP1](https://twitter.com/MECEP1) . Member, Maine Permanent Commission on Racial, Indigenous & Tribal Pops. British. Recovering historian. //ear

All of us have a stake in the success of collective bargaining. But a union without the right to strike loses much of its negotiating power. The right to withdraw your labor is the foundation of collective worker action. When state employees or teachers are sitting across the negotiating table from their employers, how much leverage do they really have when they can be made to work without a contract? It’s like negotiating the price of a car when the salesman knows you’re going to have to buy it — whatever the final price is. Research confirms that public-sector unions are less effective without the right to strike. Public employees with a right to strike earn between 2 percent and 5 percent more than those without it.[[ii]](https://www.mecep.org/blog/right-to-strike-would-level-the-playing-field-for-public-workers-with-benefits-for-all-of-us/#_edn2) While that’s a meaningful increase for those workers, it also should assuage any fears that a right to strike would lead to excessive pay increases or employees abusing their new right. LD 900, “An Act to Expand the Rights of Public Employees Under the Maine Labor Laws,” ensures that Maine’s public-sector workers will have the same collective bargaining rights as other employees in Maine. The bill would strengthen the ability of Maine’s public-sector workers to negotiate, resulting in higher wagers, a more level playing field, and a fairer economy for all of us. Notes [[i]](https://www.mecep.org/blog/right-to-strike-would-level-the-playing-field-for-public-workers-with-benefits-for-all-of-us/#_ednref1) MECEP analysis of US Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Outgoing Rotation Group data, 1998-2017 via the Integrated Public Use Microdata System. [[ii]](https://www.mecep.org/blog/right-to-strike-would-level-the-playing-field-for-public-workers-with-benefits-for-all-of-us/#_ednref2) Jeffrey Keefe, “Laws Enabling Public-Sector Collective Bargaining Have Not Led to Excessive Public-Sector Pay,” Economic Policy Institute, Oct 16, 2015. Web. Available at <https://www.epi.org/publication/laws-enabling-public-sector-collective-bargaining-have-not-led-to-excessive-public-sector-pay/>

#### Unions create the multiracial solidarity society workers need to overcome racism

Day, Meagan. “Unions Are Essential for Eliminating Racism.” Jacobin, July 2020, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2020/07/multiracial-solidarity-unions>. Meagan Day is a staff writer at Jacobin. She is the coauthor of [Bigger than Bernie: How We Go from the Sanders Campaign to Democratic Socialism](https://www.versobooks.com/books/3167-bigger-than-bernie). //ear

There are a number of different mechanisms by which unions might decrease racism, and Frymer and Grumbach present cases for several in their paper, ranging from structural incentives for union leadership to promote racial equality to the labor movement’s institutional ties to the comparatively less racist Democratic Party. But I’ll stress one in particular: unions provide opportunities for people of different racial backgrounds and identities to not merely work side by side — which may itself relax prejudice through sheer exposure — but to work toward a common goal together, promoting cooperation, and enhancing respect and mutuality across racial lines. In many workplaces, that goal of building a strong union cannot be achieved without workers joining together.

Organizations of all kinds shape their members’ political views, broadly speaking, but unions are unique among organizations, as Frymer and Grumach note, due to the fact that they represent people based on where they work. Work is compulsory for most people of all racial backgrounds, which means that union membership can and often does (though not as a rule) feature a degree of diversity that’s higher than in other types of community formations. For example, a white Indiana warehouse worker may live in a mostly white neighborhood, and perhaps attend a mostly white church, but his or her employer hires people of all racial backgrounds, and therefore their union is likely to be more racially diverse.

But lots of workplaces are racially diverse. The distinct feature of unions is that workers from disparate backgrounds are encouraged to view their interests as bound together. And in many cases, they have opportunities to make collective decisions about how they want their union to be run, and to work together to secure common victories.

Some unions are more democratic or better at member engagement than others. Indeed this presents a strong argument for building more democratic unions, for it’s in active cooperation that people are most likely to have their inherited prejudices challenged and their worldview transformed.

Unions give people the opportunity to routinely practice multiracial solidarity. Not only that, but they incentivize it: the more cooperative union members are, the greater unity they will have heading into a workplace struggle, and the greater the eventual reward for all. In that sense, diverse democratic unions can be schools of cross-racial cooperation, which are sorely lacking and desperately needed in our racially stratified society.

#### Unions increase wages & solve poverty, and these impacts extends to even non-union workers

David Brady et al, Berlin Social Research Centerbduke University & Wzb Berlin Social Research Center, 8-30-2013, "When Unionization Disappears: State-Level Unionization and Working Poverty in the United States," SAGE Journals, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859>  Professor and Director of [Blum Initiative on Global and Regional Poverty, School of Public Policy, University of California, Riverside](https://sociology.ucr.edu/faculty/david-brady/)//ear

Despite these reasons for skepticism, we propose that state-level unionization reduces working poverty. This expectation is theoretically motivated by three literatures: (1) comparative institutions; (2) unionization and earnings; and (3) U.S. states as polities. First, the comparative institutions literature demonstrates that institutions and power relations between collective actors fundamentally shape inequalities ([Brady and Leicht 2008](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859)). Institutions and power relations organize the distribution of resources, regulate risks, allocate opportunities, and socialize normative expectations ([Brady 2009](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859); [Tilly 1998](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859)). Institutions reduce the likelihood of poverty-inducing events and mitigate the consequences when such events occur ([DiPrete 2002](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859)). Power resources theory, which animates much of the comparative institutions literature ([Brady 2009](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859); [Hicks 1999](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859); [Korpi 1983](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859); [Moller et al. 2003](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859); [Volscho and Kelly 2012](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859)), contends that class-based collective political actors shape the distribution of economic resources ([Brady, Fullerton, and Cross 2009](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859)). To make the distribution more egalitarian, the working class and poor must bond together, form organizations, and politically mobilize in elections and workplaces. Although power resources theory is traditionally used to explain welfare states, it offers a more general model of income distribution ([Brady et al. 2009](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859); [Korpi 1983](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859)). Accordingly, the level of unionization in a state is an important labor market institution, indicating the power resources of labor relative to business and other collective actors. Consistent with power resources theory, the comparative institutions literature shows that cross-national variation in earnings inequality can be explained by labor market institutions like corporatism and unionization ([Blau and Kahn 2002](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859); [Koeniger, Leonardi, and Nunziata 2007](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859); [Kristal 2010](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859)). Scholars have also demonstrated that labor market institutions can explain cross-national differences in low-wage work ([Doellgast, Holtgrewe, and Deery 2009](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859); [Gautie and Schmitt 2009](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859)), poverty ([Brady 2009](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859); [Moller et al. 2003](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859); [Plasman and Rycx 2001](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859)), and working poverty specifically ([Brady et al. 2010](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859); [Lohmann 2009](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859); [Zuberi 2006](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859)). Despite these contributions, the comparative literature’s insights have rarely been applied to the study of U.S. poverty. Second, an extensive economic and sociological literature shows that unions raise wages ([Freeman and Medoff 1984](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859); [Kalleberg, Wallace, and Althauser 1981](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859)). [Cornfield and Fletcher (2001)](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859) estimate union members receive a 20 percent wage premium over similar non-union workers. Because wages are a large share of low-income households’ economic resources, such wage advantages could lift many households out of poverty. The union wage premium even applies to low-wage workers with less skill ([Eren 2009](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859)) or less than a high school education ([Maxwell 2007](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859)). Although the U.S. poverty literature neglects unionization, scholars of low-wage work have shown powerful effects of unions ([Gautie and Schmitt 2009](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859); [Newman 1999](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859); [Zuberi 2006](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859)). Benefits of unionization have been documented for low-wage workers in hospitals ([Applebaum et al. 2003](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859)), hotels ([Bernhardt, Dresser, and Hatton 2003](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859)), call centers ([Batt, Hunter, and Wilk 2003](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859)), and casinos ([Waddoups 2001](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859)) and for temporary workers in automotive supplier firms, hospitals, and public schools ([Erickcek, Houseman, and Kalleberg 2003](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859)). These studies demonstrate how unions pressure management for higher wages, restrict the use of contingent workers whose presence would reduce wages, and regulate working conditions. Although there are benefits to being a union member, the vast majority of workers near the poverty line are unlikely to be unionized. For state-level unionization to reduce working poverty, it must have a contextual effect that spills over to non-union, low-wage workers.[4](javascript:popRef('fn4-0003122413501859')) Indeed, the literature has found such spillover effects of unionization for non-union workers. For instance, [Zuberi (2006)](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859) demonstrates how higher unionization in Vancouver versus Seattle contributes to a significantly better environment for even non-union service workers. The classic explanation—contrary to the aforementioned crowding effects—is that unionization poses a threat to non-unionized firms. To discourage unionization, proximate firms raise wages preemptively ([Freeman and Medoff 1984](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859); [Leicht 1989](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859)). [Leicht, Wallace, and Grant (1993)](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859) demonstrate that the presence of unionization in interdependent industries raises the earnings of the non-union working class. Partly because unions establish contracts that cover non-union workers, unionization also benefits non-union workers, especially in the presence of high union density ([Bernhardt et al. 2003](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859); [Neumark and Wachter 1995](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859)). Non-union firms in states with higher unionization may be forced to pay more, or else risk losing their workers to better paid union-firms. Furthermore, unions influence the moral economy by cultivating norms of equity and advocating for the expectation of higher pay for all workers. [Western and Rosenfeld (2011)](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859) argue that unions encourage labor market norms of equity (1) culturally, by disseminating egalitarian discourses; (2) politically, by influencing policy; and (3) institutionally, through rules governing labor markets. Accounting for the effect of unions on non-union wages, [Western and Rosenfeld (2011)](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0003122413501859) conclude that the decline of unionization in the United States explains one-fifth to one-third of the growth in earnings inequality since 1973. If these effects are not solely due to constraining the top of the earnings distribution, the decline of unionization has likely increased working poverty

### C2: Democracy

#### Democratic backsliding is on the rise and has reached peak levels

**Freedom House 21** [“New Report: The Global Decline in Democracy Has Accelerated.” *Freedom House*, freedomhouse.org/article/new-report-global-decline-democracy-has-accelerated. March 3rd, 2021]

Authoritarian actors grew bolder during 2020 as major democracies turned inward, contributing to the 15th consecutive year of decline in global freedom, according to [Freedom in the World 2021](https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2021/democracy-under-siege), the annual country-by-country assessment of political rights and civil liberties released today by Freedom House. The report found that the share of countries designated Not Free has reached its highest level since the deterioration of democracy began in 2006, and that countries with declines in political rights and civil liberties outnumbered those with gains by the largest margin recorded during the 15-year period. The report downgraded the freedom scores of 73 countries, representing 75 percent of the global population. Those affected include not just authoritarian states like China, Belarus, and Venezuela, but also troubled democracies like the United States and India. In one of the year’s most significant developments, India’s status changed from Free to Partly Free, meaning less than 20 percent of the world’s people now live in a Free country—the smallest proportion since 1995. Indians’ political rights and civil liberties have been eroding since Narendra Modi became prime minister in 2014. His Hindu nationalist government has presided over increased pressure on human rights organizations, rising intimidation of academics and journalists, and a spate of bigoted attacks—including lynchings—aimed at Muslims. The decline deepened following Modi’s reelection in 2019, and the government’s response to the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 featured further abuses of fundamental rights. The changes in India formed part of a broader shift in the international balance between democracy and authoritarianism, with authoritarians generally enjoying impunity for their abuses and seizing new opportunities to consolidate power or crush dissent. In many cases, promising democratic movements faced major setbacks as a result. In Belarus and Hong Kong, for example, massive prodemocracy protests met with brutal crackdowns by governments that largely disregarded international criticism. The Azerbaijani regime’s military offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh indirectly threatened recent democratic gains in Armenia, while the armed conflict in Ethiopia’s Tigray Region dashed hopes for the tentative political opening in that country since 2018. All four of these cases notably featured some degree of intervention by an autocratic neighbor: Moscow provided a backstop for the regime in Belarus, Beijing propelled the repression in Hong Kong, Turkey’s government aided its Azerbaijani counterpart, and Ethiopia’s leader called in support from Eritrea. The malign influence of the regime in China, the world’s most populous dictatorship, ranged far beyond Hong Kong in 2020. Beijing ramped up its global disinformation and censorship campaign to counter the fallout from its cover-up of the initial coronavirus outbreak, which severely hampered a rapid global response in the pandemic’s early days. Its efforts also featured increased meddling in the domestic political discourse of foreign democracies, as well as transnational extensions of rights abuses common in mainland China. The Chinese regime has gained clout in multilateral institutions such as the UN Human Rights Council, which the United States abandoned in 2018, as Beijing pushed a vision of so-called noninterference that allows abuses of democratic principles and human rights standards to go unpunished while the formation of autocratic alliances is promoted. “This year’s findings make it abundantly clear that we have not yet stemmed the authoritarian tide,” said Sarah Repucci, vice president of research and analysis at Freedom House. “Democratic governments will have to work in solidarity with one another, and with democracy advocates and human rights defenders in more repressive settings, if we are to reverse 15 years of accumulated declines and build a more free and peaceful world.” A need for reform in the United States While still considered Free, the United States experienced further democratic decline during the final year of the Trump presidency. The US score in [Freedom in the World](https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2021/democracy-under-siege) has dropped by 11 points over the past decade, and fell by three points in 2020 alone. The changes have moved the country out of a cohort that included other leading democracies, such as France and Germany, and brought it into the company of states with weaker democratic institutions, such as Romania and Panama. Several developments in 2020 contributed to the United States’ current score. The Trump administration undermined government transparency by dismissing inspectors general, punishing or firing whistleblowers, and attempting to control or manipulate information on COVID-19. The year also featured mass protests that, while mostly peaceful, were accompanied by high-profile cases of violence, police brutality, and deadly confrontations with counterprotesters or armed vigilantes. There was a significant increase in the number of journalists arrested and physically assaulted, most often as they covered demonstrations. Finally, the outgoing president’s shocking attempts to overturn his election loss—culminating in his incitement of rioters who stormed the Capitol as Congress met to confirm the results in January 2021—put electoral institutions under severe pressure. In addition, the crisis further damaged the United States’ credibility abroad and underscored the menace of political polarization and extremism in the country. ”January 6 should be a wake-up call for many Americans about the fragility of American democracy,” said Michael J. Abramowitz, president of Freedom House. “Authoritarian powers, especially China, are advancing their interests around the world, while democracies have been divided and consumed by internal problems. For freedom to prevail on a global scale, the United States and its partners must band together and work harder to strengthen democracy at home and abroad. President Biden has pledged to restore America’s international role as a leading supporter of democracy and human rights, but to rebuild its leadership credentials, the country must simultaneously address the weaknesses within its own political system.” “Americans should feel gratified that the courts and other important institutions held firm during the postelection crisis, and that the country escaped the worst possible outcomes,” said Abramowitz. “But the Biden administration, the new Congress, and American civil society must fortify US democracy by strengthening and expanding political rights and civil liberties for all. People everywhere benefit when the United States serves as a positive model, and the country itself reaps ample returns from a more democratic world.” The effects of COVID-19 Government responses to the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the global democratic decline. Repressive regimes and populist leaders worked to reduce transparency, promote false or misleading information, and crack down on the sharing of unfavorable data or critical views. Many of those who voiced objections to their government’s handling of the pandemic faced harassment or criminal charges. Lockdowns were sometimes excessive, politicized, or brutally enforced by security agencies. And antidemocratic leaders worldwide used the pandemic as cover to weaken the political opposition and consolidate power. In fact, many of the year’s negative developments will likely have lasting effects, meaning the eventual end of the pandemic will not necessarily trigger an immediate revitalization of democracy.In Hungary, for example, the government of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán took on emergency powers during the health crisis and misused them to withdraw financial assistance from municipalities led by opposition parties. In Sri Lanka, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa dissolved Parliament in early March and, with new elections repeatedly delayed due to COVID-19, ruled without a legislature for several months. Later in the year, both Hungary and Sri Lanka passed constitutional amendments that further strengthened executive power. The resilience of democracy Despite the many losses for freedom recorded by [Freedom in the World](https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2021/democracy-under-siege) during 2020, people around the globe remained committed to fighting for their rights, and democracy continued to demonstrate its remarkable resilience. A number of countries held successful elections, independent courts provided checks on executive overreach, journalists in even the most repressive environments investigated government transgressions, and activists persisted in calling out undemocratic practices. Following a marred election in Malawi in mid-2019, for instance, judges withstood bribery attempts and pressure from the incumbent administration and called for new elections. Opposition presidential candidate Lazarus Chakwera then won the 2020 rerun vote by a comfortable margin. The incident represented a critical win for Malawi’s democratic institutions and set a positive example of judicial independence for other African states. In Taiwan, one of the highest-performing democracies in Asia, the government effectively suppressed the coronavirus without resorting to abusive methods, setting a sharp contrast with authoritarian China, where the regime has touted its draconian response as a model for the world. Even before the virus struck, Taiwanese voters defied a multipronged, politicized disinformation campaign from China and overwhelmingly reelected a president who opposes moves toward unification with the mainland. “Our report concludes that democracy today is beleaguered but not defeated,” said Abramowitz. “Its adversaries have grown more powerful, making the world a more hostile environment for self-government, but its enduring appeal among ordinary people—which we’ve already seen this year in places like Russia and Myanmar—bode well for the future of freedom.”

#### Protecting the right to strike is key to upholding democracy

**Kiai 17** Maina Kiai, Special Rapporteur on freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, took up his functions as the first Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association in May 2011. He is appointed in his personal capacity as an independent expert by the UN Human Rights Council. UN rights expert: “Fundamental right to strike must be preserved” 9 March 2017, United Nations Human Rights Office of The High Commissioner,

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21328&LangID=E//>

**The right to strike is also an intrinsic corollary of the fundamental right of freedom of association**. It is crucial **for millions of women and men around the world to assert collectively their rights in the workplace, including the right to just and favorable conditions of work, and to work in dignity and without fear of intimidation and persecution.** Moreover, **protest action** in relation to government social and economic policy, and **against negative corporate practices, forms part of the basic civil liberties whose respect is essential for the meaningful exercise of trade union rights.** This right enables them to engage with companies and governments on a more equal footing, and the Member States have a positive obligation to protect this right, and a negative obligation not to interfere with its exercise. Moreover, protecting the right to strike is not simply about Stat**es fulfilling their legal obligations. It is also about them creating democratic and equitable societies that are sustainable in the long run.** The concentration of power in one sector – **whether in the hands of government or business** – inevitably **leads to the erosion of democracy, and an increase in inequalities and marginalization with all their attendant consequences.** The right **to strike is a check on this concentration of power**. I deplore the various attempts made t**o erode the right to strike at national and multilateral levels**. In this regard, I welcome the positive role played by the ILO’s Government Group in upholding workers’right to strike by recognizing that ‘without protecting a right to strike, freedom of association, in particular the right to organize activities for the purpose of promoting and protecting workers’ interests, cannot be fully realized. Look to empirical evidence worldwide— strikes serve as midwives to democracy The right to strike should be a no-brainer for any self-respecting candidate who claims to care about working people. It isn’t some transitory policy fix; it’s **a fundamental human right, recognized in international law. Without the right to strike, workers have no effective recourse against unhealthy conditions, inadequate wages, or employer tyranny. Before the American labor movement began its long decline, unions made the right to strike a litmus test for supporting candidates. Labor leaders held that anti-strike laws imposed “involuntary servitude” in violation of the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. Corporate interests ridiculed this claim, arguing that the Amendment guaranteed only the individual right to quit and go elsewhere. But workers and unions held their ground. “**The simple fact is that the right of individual workers to quit their jobs has meaning only when they may quit in concert, so that in their quitting or in their threat to quit they have a real bargaining strength,” Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) General Counsel Lee Pressman explained. “It is thus hypocritical to suggest that a prohibition on the right to strike is not in practical effect a prohibition on the right to quit individually.” Labor leaders quoted the Supreme Court’s statement that the Amendment was intended “to make labor free, by prohibiting that control by which the personal service of one man is disposed of or coerced for another’s benefit which is the essence of involuntary servitude.” Although they never convinced the Supreme Court that this principle covered the right to strike, Congress did embrace the core of their claim when it protected the right to strike in two historic statutes, the Norris-LaGuardia Act of 1932 and the Wagner National Labor Relations Act of 1935. The “individual unorganized worker,” explained Congress, “is helpless to exercise actual liberty of contract and to protect his freedom of labor.” **The recent teacher strikes underscore another, equally vital function of the strike: political democracy. It is no accident that strikers often serve as midwives of democracy. Examples include Poland in the 1970s,** where shipyard strikers brought down the dictatorship, and South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s, where strikers were central to the defeat of apartheid. Even in relatively **democratic countries like the United States, workers often find it necessary to withhold their labor in order to offset the disproportionate power of wealthy interests and racial elites. During the 1930s, for example, it took mass strikes to overcome judicial resistance to progressive economic regulation. Today, workers confront a political system that has been warped by voter suppression, gerrymandering and the judicial protection of corporate political expenditures as “freedom of speech.” With corporate lackeys holding a majority of seats on the Supreme Court, workers may soon need strikes to clear the way for progressive legislation just as they did in the 1930s.**

**The alternative to democracy is violent civil wars, ethnic cleansing, and genocide---the best research confirms**

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The classic statement of Kantian peace theory applies to interstate conflict and focuses on dyadic relations between states. This leaves out the most common form of armed violence in the world today, civil conflicts and one-sided violence within states. In recent years, researchers have found evidence that the democratic peace phenomenon applies within states as well as between them. Regime type matters not only externally but internally. Mature democratic governments are not only less likely to wage war on each other, they also experience fewer armed uprisings and major civil wars and are more reluctant to use armed violence against their own citizens. As the studies below indicate, the evidence of a democratic peace phenomenon within states is strong and compelling. Walter observes a direct relationship between levels of democracy and the likelihood of internal armed conflict. In her examination of the problem of war recurrence, she finds that countries characterized by open political systems and economic well-being—i.e., developed democracies— have a much lower probability of renewed civil war than autocratic countries with low levels of economic development.91 Walter measures the degree of political openness and democratic ‘voice’ by using Polity and Freedom House indicators. High scores on these indices correlate directly with a reduced risk of civil war. She notes, as other scholars have observed, that major civil wars do not occur in mature democratic states. She concludes: It may be that liberal democracies are really the only types of regimes that can truly insulate themselves from violent internal challenges. This suggests that citizens who are able to express their preferences about alternative policies and leaders, who are guaranteed civil liberties in their daily lives and in acts of political participation, are less likely to become soldiers. Offering citizens a real outlet for their concerns and having a government that is open to democratic change considerably reduces the likelihood of a civil war.92 Civil conflicts within mature democracies are not only less frequent but also less lethal. Bethany Lacina assesses the severity of civil conflicts by measuring casualty levels according to several variables: regime type, state capacity, ethnic and religious diversity, and the impact of foreign military intervention. She finds that the political characteristics of a regime correlate significantly with differing casualty levels and are the strongest predictor of conflict severity. Democratic governments experience much lower casualty levels during civil conflict than autocratic states. Lacina’s analysis finds that civil wars occurring within democratic states have less than half the battle deaths of conflicts in non-democracies.93 State-sponsored violence against civilians is also less likely to occur in democracies than in autocracies. In his important book, Death by Government, Rudolph Rummel assembles mind numbing data and numerous examples demonstrating the myriad ways governments kill their citizens—directly through genocide and mass terror and indirectly through starvation and repression. He finds a stark contrast between the behavior of autocracies and democracies. Autocratic governments readily “slaughter their people by the tens of millions; in contrast, many democracies can barely bring themselves to execute even serial murderers.”94 Through statistical analysis, Rummel shows that genocidal killing is directly associated with the absence of democracy, holding constant other variables such as regime type, ethnic diversity, economic development level, population density, and culture.95 The lack of democracy is the most significant indicator of the likelihood of mass repression again the civilian population. As Rummel documents the appalling litany of governments murdering their own people, he is unequivocal about what he considers the necessary remedy—“The solution is democracy. The course of action is to foster freedom.”95 Barbara Harff’s research on genocidal violence comes to similar conclusions. She examines 126 cases of internal war and regime collapse between 1955 and 1997 to identify the factors that led to genocidal violence in 35 of these cases. Her results match the findings of other studies. Autocratic regimes facing state failure are three and a half times more likely to experience genocidal violence than democratic regimes facing such failure.97 She finds that genocidal violence is more likely in regimes that advocate exclusionary ideologies, an approach that is rare in mature democratic states. Harff observes that the lowest levels of mass killing occur in states with a high degree of economic interdependence, which is characteristic of mature democratic regimes.98 Her conclusion is that states are less likely to employ genocidal violence when they have inclusive democratic systems and trade extensively with other countries. As Steven Pinker notes, these findings fit well with the Kantian triad of democracy, cosmopolitanism and trade— “another trifecta” for liberal peace theory.99