# Nov/Dec LD Aff

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**TRIGGER WARNING: STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE, DEATH RACISM**

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#### I affirm Resolved: A just government ought to recognize an unconditional right of workers to strike.

#### Since ‘ought’ implies a moral obligation, I value morality.

#### The criterion for achieving morality is minimizing structural violence.

#### Prefer this standard. Structural violence 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) <JG>

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 the cumulative 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 structures that 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 war not 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**.

#### Contention 1 is Income Inequality

#### Membership and bargaining power of unions are on the decline globally.

**McCarthy 19**

(Niall, data journalist covering technological, societal and media topics, May 6, “The State Of Global Trade Union Membership [Infographic],” https://www.forbes.com/sites/niallmccarthy/2019/05/06/the-state-of-global-trade-union-membership-infographic/?sh=38cd3f9d2b6e)

Even though trade union membership still has several strongholds around the world, the concept of collective bargaining has suffered a notable international decline in recent years. In 1985, average trade union membership in OECD countries was 30% and today, that has fallen to just 16%. Given economic dissatisfaction, slow wage growth and widespread inequality, there is a renewed interest in the use of trade unions for strengthening workers' collective voices and bargaining power. If progress is to be made, however, some countries are going to have far more work to do than others.

#### And, declining unionization causes massive income inequality that collapses institutional democracy – only an right to strike solve.

**Rhomberg 12** [Chris Rhomberg, Professor of Sociology at Fordham University with a PhD from UC Berkley, 2012, “The Return of Judicial Repression: What Has Happened to the Strike?,” The Forum, https://www.fordham.edu/download/downloads/id/1129/the\_return\_of\_judicial\_repression\_what\_has\_happened\_to\_the\_strike.pdf]/Kankee

The **consequences** of this regime go well beyond the fate of unionized workers, and are **damaging** for American society. In the last several decades economic inequality has **risen sharply** in the **U**nited **S**tates, as both academics and journalists have noted. During the middle of the 20th Century the distance between rich and poor in America steadily declined, but in the last quarter of the century the pattern was reversed. In the private sector labor market, wage inequality increased by 40 percent between 1973 and 2007, with declining unionization accounting for a fifth to a third of the increase (Western and Rosenfeld 2011). For more than a generation, the benefits of economic growth have gone disproportionately to corporate profits and to the top fifth of households, while incomes for the middle and bottom fifths have remained stagnant and fallen behind.For many political theorists, modern mass **democracy** requires multiple institutional spaces for **dialogue** and **decision-making** among plural collective actors, including the actors in the **workplace**. Decades of economic re-structuring have now radically altered the spaces for such dialogue, on the job, in the com munity, and in the public sphere. The **result** highlights the **historic** **dedemocratization** of the institutional regulation of labor in the United States, from the scope of collective bargaining in the workplace, to the civic spaces for group mediation, to the protection for workers’ and citizens’ rights to protest under the law. What’s Next? Recovering the Right to Collective Action The **right to strike** is **essential** to any discussion of the future of the **labor movement** in the United States. The renewal of American labor does not require the restoration of all the elements of the New Deal order, even if that were possible. It does, however, imply a challenge to the logic and legal mechanisms that reproduce the anti-union regime, including the practices of impasse and implementation, permanent replacement of strikers, and other limits on collective action. The current regime radically reduces the scope for public engagement and dialogue between the parties in the employment relationship. We need to restore the integrity of the **collective bargaining** process which rests, ultimately, on a **genuine right to strike**. This need not take the form of the institutional channeling established during the postwar accord. Rather, widening the scope of collective action could enlarge the spaces for public engagement and civic mediation among employers, unions, and community actors. That could encourage more flexibility, communication and innovation in negotiations between management and unions. It could also allow for the development of broader partnerships in support of the firm, its workers, and the local area. There is no a priori reason to credit company managers with exclusive wisdom to control the enterprise on behalf of all stakeholders. In the Detroit strike, the newspapers pursued a scorched-earth policy toward the strikers in a community that placed a high value on unionism. The newspapers lost a third of their circulation and at least $130 million and forced the dispute to go through years of litigation. It is not obvious that these actions benefitted the workplace, the community, or even the shareholders in the long run. Admittedly, reforming the law will be no easy task. Political forces in the United States make even modest labor law reform extremely difficult, and the record of union efforts to pass legislation in Congress is not encouraging. The labor movement may have to find its own ways to take back the right to collective action. As labor scholars have shown, **union growth** or revitalization in American history has frequently occurred in episodic bursts or “upsurges” (Freeman 1998; Clawson 2003). Strike mobilization is a **key driver** of these upsurges, especially in a liberal market economy with decentralized labor market institutions (like the U.S.). Such periods often coincide with the growth of new forms of organization or outreach to previously unorganized groups of workers. In the 1890s, nativeborn and Northern European immigrant skilled workers built the craft unions that came together in the **A**merican **F**ederation of **L**abor. During the 1930s, Southern and Eastern European ethnic factory workers joined the new wave of industrial unionism in the **C**ongress of **I**ndustrial **O**rganizations. Similarly, African American workers organized into public sector unions in conjunction with the civil rights movement the 1960s, and immigrant Hispanic and Asian workers form the base for union growth in low-wage service sectors today. The return of judicial repression underlines the extent of labor’s deinstitutionalization under the current regime. In response, unions have increasingly turned to innovative organizing tactics and mobilizing grassroots allies in the community. Yet, community coalitions are not a magic solution, and civil society is a competitive field no less than the economy and the state. In Detroit, the newspapers deployed tremendous resources to override the power of the NLRB and pressure from an alliance of unions, local civic leaders, and members of the reading public. The outcomes for future struggles will depend on the conjuncture of forces in the economy and the state as well as in civil society. In areas where labor and other structural inequalities coincide, where new immigrant or minority working-class communities combine with local cultures of union militancy, or where organizational and framing strategies re-define previously divided group identities, there may be greater possibilities for collective action. Moreover, the boundaries of mobilization are no longer strictly local. As corporations become larger and more globally integrated, unions have learned to use new leverage, from the strategic location of jobs in worldwide commodity chains, from regulations under national and international law, and from access to global media and civil society. Such changes may prefigure a new path of opposition to the now dominant anti-union regime.

#### The impact is mortality rates. Income inequality kills one in three people in the US through structural violence.

**Bezruchka 14**

Senior Lecturer in Global Health at the University of Washington,(Stephen, 2014, New Press, “Inequality Kills,” <https://depts.washington.edu/eqhlth/pages/BezruchkaInequalityKillsBkPubInfo14.pdf>, accessed 6/30/17, pg. 194-195, CD)

Everyone in a society gains when children grow up to be healthy adults. The rest of the world seems to understand this simple fact, and only three countries in the world don’t have a policy, at least on the books, for paid maternal leave – Liberia, Papua New Guinea, and the United States. What does that say about our understanding , or concern about the health of our youth? **Differences in mortality rates are not just a statistical concern—they reflect suffering and pain for very real individuals and families.** The higher mortality in the United States is an example of what Paul Farmer, the noted physician and anthropologist, calls **structural violence**. The forty-seven infant deaths occur every day because of the way society in the United States is structured, resulting in our health status being that of a middle-income country, not a rich country. **There is growing evidence that the factor most responsible for the relatively poor health in the United States is the vast and rising inequality in wealth and income that we not only tolerate, but resist changing.** Inequality is the central element, the upstream cause of the social disadvantage described in the IOM report. A political system that fosters inequality limits the attainment of health. The claim that economic inequality is a major reason for our poor health requires that several standard criteria for claiming causality are satisfied: the results are **confirmed by many different studies by different investigators over different time periods**; there is a dose-response relationship, meaning more inequality leads to worse health; no other contending explanation is posited; and the relationship is biologically plausible, with likely mechanisms through which inequality works. The field of study called stress biology of social comparisons is one such way inequality acts. Those studies confirm that all the criteria for linking inequality to poorer health are met, concluding that the extent of inequality in society reflects the range of caring and sharing, with more unequal populations sharing less. Those who are poorer struggle to be accepted in society and the rich also suffer its effects. **A recent Harvard study estimated that about one death in three in this country results from our very high income inequality. Inequality kills through structural violence. There is no smoking gun with this form of violence, which simply produces a lethally large social and economic gap between rich and poor.**

#### And, strong unions independently prevent workplace deaths – weakened unions lead to hundreds of thousands of deaths.

**Zoorob 18,** (Michael Zoorob, PhD Candidate in Government, Harvard University9-25-2018, accessed on 6-27-2020, Scholars Strategy Network, "How Unions Help Prevent Workplace Deaths in the United States", https://scholars.org/contribution/how-unions-help-prevent-workplace-deaths-united-states) ///Ivanov

**Between 1992 and 2016**, about **138,000 workers** in the United States **died in on-the-job accidents**, an important if overlooked topic in public health. Worryingly, the **number of workplace deaths has risen** in recent years, reversing earlier trends toward fewer deaths. In 2016, 5,190 US workers died on the job, marking the third consecutive year of increasing occupational mortality, and reaching the highest number of workplace fatalities since 2008. This **reversal** has **coincided with** the uptick in **adoption of anti-union legislation,** such as so-called “right-to-work” laws that prohibit labor unions from charging fees to members of the collective bargaining units they represent. If workers who benefit from union-bargained improvements do not join and pay dues, union finances suffer and so do their abilities to perform key functions. Right to work laws have recently proliferated across the United States. Since 2000, seven states – Oklahoma (2001), Michigan (2012), Indiana (2012), Wisconsin (2015), West Virginia (2016), Kentucky (2017) and Missouri (2017) have implemented this legislation. The U.S. South, a region with high rates of workplace fatalities, has had such laws for decades, and now twenty-eight states have right to work rules. Overall, the accelerated passage of right to work laws has exacerbated U.S. union decline, a trend sure to be furthered by the recent Supreme Court decision in Janus vs American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees to ban membership fees for all government employee unions. So what? Negative effect of union losses on wages and benefits are well established. But **unions** also **organize and** work to **improve safety and health**. My research explores how union declines – and right to work laws in particular – shape rates of workplace mortality at the state level. **Scholars** have **identified** several ways that **unions promote workplace safety.** Unions make complaints to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the federal agency charged with enforcing workplace safety regulations and investigating and fining companies for violations. Unionized workplaces are more likely to be inspected; and the threat of unionization may prod employers to improve workplace safety. Unionized workplaces tend to have better health insurance, which could improve the overall health of workers and reduce employee stress about medical expenses. **Union collective bargaining agreements** frequently contain language that **restricts excessive shifts and requires safety equipment** like gloves, goggles, and helmets. My research tracks changes in unionization rates and rates of workplace fatalities across the 50 U.S. states over the 25-year period from 1992 to 2016, the years for which the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries has been conducted. After controlling for other variables, the statistical model finds that unions have a protective effect on workplace fatalities across the states. Specifically, a **one-percentage point increase in the unionized workforce** was **associated with a 2.8% decline in the rate of occupational fatalities.** **By weakening unions**, right to work legislation has been associated with about a **14% increase in the rate of occupational fatalities**. These results held even when I took into account the industry patterns in states and included an overall index of policy liberalism that can account for variations in state openness to regulation. Though workplace fatalities have declined overall in the United States, the declines were greater in states with more robust unions. The implications of my study are stark. In Wisconsin, for example, from 2000 to 2016 the percentage of the workforce that was part of a union declined from about 18% to about 8%. According to the statistical model, a change of this magnitude corresponds to an increase in the predicted rate of workplace fatalities from about 3.5 to about 5 deaths per 100,000 workers. The decline of unionization – stemming, in part, from **anti-union policies** like “right-to-work” legislation as adopted by Wisconsin – may **undermine workplace safety** at the cost of human lives and limbs. As scholars have pinpointed in detail, **unions make the workplace safer**, and my new study suggests that **falling unionization rates are associated with higher rates of death on the job.** Union organizers, social reformers, and lawmakers alike would do well to consider how laws that hinder unionization might have harmful consequences for safety on the job.

#### Contention 2 is Racial Injustice

#### Unions provide an avenue for coordination and cooperation amongst races to reduce the effects of wealth inequality. This is through the creation of new policies and demands that are better able to alleviate both racial and class inequalities.

**Geoghegan, ‘20** [Thomas Geoghegan is a Chicago labor lawyer, Published: 12/24/2020, “Labor Power Is the Key to Racial Equality: The next big American conversation about race should take place in a union hall”, The New Republic, https://newrepublic.com/article/160530/labor-law-reform-racial-equality-protecting-right-organize-act ] /Triumph Debate

**The wealth effect of union membership is a five-fold increase in wealth for every Black American who joins a union, or 486 percent. If white union members have higher wealth, and they do, that’s partly the accident of inheriting union membership in the last redoubts of organized labor, especially in the air and rail industries as well as the older building trades. But the disparity exists because union membership keeps shrinking. There is no disparity in access to union membership overall; Blacks are slightly more likely than whites to be union members. There are just very few union members.** We can think of labor law reform as a civil rights act, a form of twenty-first century Reconstruction. But it is also a form of moral Reconstruction, a way of reeducating millions in this country into the norms of citizenship. It will also go a considerably long way toward purging some of the poison of the Trump years. After the 2020 election, there were calls in the usual places—NPR, The New York Times, the non-hallucinatory media—for a national conversation on race. Fine, I’m all for it. Let a thousand more books be published. But for my entire adult life, there has been a national conversation on race. **Instead of a mere conversation, it would be preferable if whites and Blacks just went out and did something together. These national conversations are more likely to bear fruit and engender action if they take place at union halls. Americans of all races will more readily bridge divides and set old prejudices down by the side of the road if they have the opportunity to do the most important thing they can do—increase their share of not just labor income but capital income or savings—arm in arm. Together, they can lift one another out of the vicious cycle of living paycheck to paycheck.** This pursuit of self-interest would raise the moral character of Black, brown, and white working people alike. In a way, this reflects de Tocqueville’s point about the effect of New England town meetings on their participants’ moral core. As he argued, we **Americans may get involved in politics purely out of self interest, but the pursuit can end up transforming us wherever we come together to work for shared goals. We come to have a sense of public responsibility for what we have created. And at least it is enlightened altruism to make sure that race does not tear apart the much larger unions we might create. And finally, apart from either the wealth effect or the effect on moral character, it is just impossible to think there can ever be racial equity under our colossally unfair distribution of income. Under our form of capitalism, somebody is always going to be untouchable: If not Blacks locked up in blighted, redlined urban enclaves, we’ll recruit another minority group to live at the bottom of the pile. Racism today is not like racism in the 1950s and 1960s—and it’s not merely the product of income inequality but rather a different form of capitalism that has risen.** Like everything else, racism has undergone a change as the country went from a relatively egalitarian and social democratic form of capitalism that was tainted by Jim Crow to what some describe as liberal meritocratic capitalism. There is an especially chilling description in Branko Milanovic’s [Capitalism, Alone](https://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674987593): It is an unequal, rigged meritocracy—and may be on the verge of being much less liberal. **It is this form of capitalism that explains the maddening way there is so much racial progress and so much racial backsliding. It has the effect of raising some Black Americans to dizzying heights, right up to the presidency. But it has left nonwhite working people looking up from much further down than before—much like white working people have to look up, too. And it has lowered the lowest economic caste. We can defund the police, but any low-income group locked up in impoverished and neglected neighborhoods will always be vulnerable to some form of violence. The capitalism we now have is not the kind that King or Rustin or others anticipated. It was no accident that King was a kind of labor leader in his own way.** The premise of the civil rights movement, at least in the 1950s and up to the time of the Vietnam war, was to bring Blacks into organized labor, which had such great power in that day. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 places great emphasis specifically on suing to get into union membership. And with respect to most unions, though not all, that strategy was successful—except for the fact that organized labor disappeared (or more precisely, it was killed by the Republican party, big business, and an accommodating judiciary). **King was not naïve about this emerging world. He once gave a remarkable** [**speech to the AFL-CIO**](https://hornbakelibrary.wordpress.com/2016/01/18/martin-luther-king-jr-s-speech-to-afl-cio/) **in 1961 not just about race but also about finding new ways to counter both the automation and the outright deindustrialization that he saw coming. Suppose we were able to flip a switch and end racism as we know it. Even a color-blind version of our form of rigged meritocracy would still leave tens of millions of Black Americans without any security or hope of economic advancement. People at the top—the top 10 percent or so, including the fraction who may be Black—have too much financial and human capital to be dislodged. It is worse for Black Americans but bad enough for most everyone else.**

#### And, black labor leaders have been successful in the past, but need stronger ability to strike and make demands of corporations in order to reduce racial wealth inequalities. This will require actions by their government in order to succeed.

**Perry et al., ‘21** [Andre M. Perry is a senior Fellow at the Metropolitan Policy Program, Molly Kinder is a David M. Rubenstein Fellow at the Metropolitan Policy Program, Laura Stateler is a Senior Research Assistant at the Metropolitan Policy Program, Carl Romer is a fromer research assistant at the Metropolitan Policy Program, Published: 3/16/21, “Amazon’s union battle in Bessemer, Alabama is about dignity, racial justice, and the future of the American worker”, Brookings Institute, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2021/03/16/the-amazon-union-battle-in-bessemer-is-about-dignity-racial-justice-and-the-future-of-the-american-worker/ ] /Triumph Debate

BIRMINGHAM’S HISTORY SHOWS THAT UNIONS ARE KEY TO A PROSPEROUS BLACK MIDDLE CLASS **While the country’s decades-old labor laws make it extremely difficult for workers to form a union anywhere, the pervasive** [**right-to-work laws**](https://www.epi.org/publication/so-called-right-to-work-is-wrong-for-montana/#:~:text=So%2Dcalled%20right%2Dto%2Dwork%20(RTW)%20laws,s%20who%20enjoy%20the%20contract's) **in the South and conservative states make organizing efforts like the one in Bessemer** [**even more difficult**](https://www.epi.org/publication/black-workers-in-right-to-work-rtw-states-tend-to-have-lower-wages-than-in-missouri-and-other-non-rtw-states/). In the South, anti-labor laws are inextricably linked to the historic suppression of Black workers. **Racism in the form of no- or low-wage Black labor has been part of the growth model of racialized capitalism. And when workers are unable to collectively bargain and demand their fair share, economic growth becomes concentrated in the hands of a few. Fortunately, the Birmingham metropolitan area—home to Bessemer—has already proven that unionized Black workers can create economic growth and shared prosperity**. At the turn of the 20th century, Birmingham labor unions facilitated the establishment of a Black middle class. [Black and white miners organized](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00236566908584085?journalCode=clah20) to form the United Mine Workers (UMW) union and, together, secured better wages. Following UMW’s success, what was then known as the Alabama Federation of Labor (AFL) followed the same strategy of a racially integrated membership—in part out of fear that nonunionized Black workers would replace striking workers. **As a result, Black Alabamians earned leadership positions and spots in every committee of the AFL, and the union’s first five vice presidents were Black. This inclusive labor movement continued until the 1930s, when U.S. Steel—rife with Ku Klux Klan members—began to restrict job promotions for unionized Black workers, limiting access to senior positions they previously occupied. The Bessemer union battle comes after decades of concerted effort by business leaders and policymakers to beat back the 20th century victories of labor organizers**. From Ronald Reagan’s [breaking of the air traffic controllers’ strike](https://www.politico.com/story/2017/08/05/reagan-fires-11-000-striking-air-traffic-controllers-aug-5-1981-241252) to [Janus v. American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees](https://www.politico.com/story/2019/05/17/janus-unions-employment-1447266), these forces have eroded labor union protections, and with it, workers’ say in their workplaces. **Fixing the country’s broken labor laws to give workers like those in Bessemer a fighting chance will require major legislative change. Last week, the** [**White House issued a statement**](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/09/statement-by-president-joe-biden-on-the-house-taking-up-the-pro-act/) **backing the** [**Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act**](https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/2474)**. The legislation would** [**enable more workers to form a union**](https://www.epi.org/publication/why-workers-need-the-pro-act-fact-sheet/)**, exert greater power in disputes, and exercise their right to strike, while curbing and penalizing employers’ retaliation and interference and limiting right-to-work laws.** The PRO Act passed in the House of Representatives last week but faces long odds in the Senate due to strong Republican opposition and fierce resistance from business. Short of ending the filibuster, the act has little chance of passage. Ultimately, change will require an empowered workforce demanding it. **In the words of Frederick Douglass, “Power concedes nothing without a demand”—and that demand looks like Bessemer workers standing up to one of the most powerful companies the world has ever seen. In order for these and other workers to have a chance, they will need allies in Congress to create a more level playing field.** In 1935, the 74th Congress passed the National Labor Relations Act because of the labor movement. In 1964, the 88th Congress passed the Civil Rights Act because of the civil rights movement. Today, the 117th Congress needs similar pressure from the racial and economic justice movements. **The workers in Bessemer are doing just that, which should inspire others across the nation to demand better working conditions, higher wages, and stronger labor laws from both their own management and leaders in Washington.**

#### And, challenging racial injustice is a prior ethical question— it makes violence structurally inevitable and foundationally negates morality making defenses of utilitarianism incoherent.

**Memmi, 2000** (Albert, Professor Emeritus of Sociology @ U of Paris, Naiteire, Racism, Translated by Steve Martinot, p. 163-165)

The struggle against racism will be long, difficult, without intermission, without remission, probably never achieved. Yet, for this very reason, it **is a struggle to be undertaken without surcease and without concessions.** One cannot be indulgent toward racism; one must not even let the monster in the house, especially not in a mask. To give it merely a foothold means to augment the bestial part in us and in other people, which is to diminish what is human. **To accept the racist universe to the slightest degree is to endorse fear, injustice, and violence**. It is to accept the persistence of the dark history in which we still largely live. it is to agree that the outsider will always be a possible victim (and which man is not himself an outsider relative to someone else?. Racism illustrates, in sum, the inevitable negativity of the condition of the dominated that is, it illuminates in a certain sense the entire human condition. The anti-racist struggle, difficult though it is, and always in question, is nevertheless one of the prologues to the ultimate passage from animosity to humanity. In that sense, we cannot fail to rise to the racist challenge. However, it remains true that one’s moral conduit only emerges from a choice: one has to want it. It is a choice among other choices, and always debatable in its foundations and its consequences. Let us say, broadly speaking, that the choice to conduct oneself morally is the condition for the establishment of a human order, for which racism is the very negation. This is almost a redundancy. One cannot found a moral order, let alone a legislative order, on racism, because racism signifies the exclusion of the other, and his or her subjection to violence and domination. From an ethical point of view, if one can deploy a little religious language, racism is ‘the truly capital sin. It is not an accident that almost all of humanity’s spiritual traditions counsels respect for the weak, for orphans, widows, or strangers. It is not just a question of theoretical morality and disinterested commandments. Such unanimity in the safeguarding of the other suggests the real utility of such sentiments. All things considered, we have an interest in banishing injustice, because injustice engenders violence and death. Of course, this is debatable. There are those who think that if one is strong enough, the assault on and oppression of others is permissible. Bur no one is ever sure of remaining the strongest. One day, perhaps, the roles will be reversed. All unjust society contains within itself the seeds of its own death. It is probably smarter to treat others with respect so that they treat you with respect. “Recall.” says the Bible, “that you were once a stranger in Egypt,” which means both that you ought to respect the stranger because you were a stranger yourself and that y ou risk becoming one again someday. It is an ethical and a practical appeal—indeed, it is a contract, however implicit it might be. In short, the refusal of racism is the condition for all theoretical and practical morality because, in the end, the ethical choice commands the political choice, a just society must be a society accepted by all. If this contractual principle is not accepted, then only conflict, violence, and destruction will be our lot. If it is accepted, we can hope someday to live in peace. True, it is a wager, but the stakes are irresistible.

#### Thus, I respectfully ask for an affirmative ballot.