# 1AC

#### Resolved: The United States should recognize an unconditional right of workers to strike.

## Framework

#### I value morality, per the use of the word ought in the resolution, asking us to evaluate the moral obligations for both sides.

#### All people share an intrinsic value that comes from our humanity—each person has inalienable, equal human worth. Regardless of race, nationality, sexual orientation, or gender, each person is born with equal rights and opportunities. There is no reason to think one person should innately be granted more privileges than another.

#### Since the resolution asks us what a just government should do, our frameworks in this debate should focus on government action.

#### Additionally, inequality is merely a manifestation of unjustified cognitive biases that make certain groups invisible.

**Psychologists Deborah Winter and Dana Leighton explain**|Deborah DuNann Winter and Dana C. Leighton.Winter|[Psychologist that specializes in Social Psych, Counseling Psych, Historical and Contemporary Issues, Peace Psychology. Leighton: PhDgraduate student in the Psychology Department at the University of Arkansas. Knowledgable in the fields of social psychology,peacepsychology, and ustice and intergroup responses to transgressions of justice] “Peace, conflict, andviolence: Peace psychology in the 21stcentury.” Pg 4-5 ghs//VA

Finally, to recognize the operation of structural violence forces us to ask questions about how and why we tolerate it, questions which often have painful answers for the privileged elite who unconsciously support it. A final question of this section is how and why we allow ourselves to be so oblivious to structural violence. Susan Opotow offers an intriguing set of answers, in her article Social Injustice. She argues that our normal perceptual cognitive processes divide people into in-groups and out-groups. Those outside our group lie outside our scope of justice. Injustice that would be instantaneously confronted if it occurred to someone we love or know is barely noticed if it occurs to strangers or those who are invisible or irrelevant. We do not seem to be able to open our minds and our hearts to everyone, so we draw conceptual lines between those who are in and out of our moral circle. Those who fall outside are morally excluded, and become either invisible, or demeaned in some way so that we do not have to acknowledge the injustice they suffer. Moral exclusion is a human failing, but Opotow argues convincingly that it is an outcome of everyday social cognition. To reduce its nefarious effects, we must be vigilant in noticing and listening to oppressed, invisible, outsiders. Inclusionary thinking can be fostered by relationships, communication, and appreciation of diversity. Like Opotow, all the authors in this section point out that structural violence is not inevitable if we become aware of its operation, and build systematic ways to mitigate its effects. Learning about structural violence may be discouraging, overwhelming, or maddening, but these papers encourage us to step beyond guilt and anger, and begin to think about how to reduce structural violence. All the authors in this section note that the same structures (such as global communication and normal social cognition) which feed structural violence, can also be used to empower citizens to reduce it. In the long run, reducing structural violence by reclaiming neighborhoods, demanding social jus- tice and living wages, providing prenatal care, alleviating sexism, and celebrating local cultures, will be our most surefooted path to building lasting peace.

#### Without addressing the root issue of structural violence targeting marginalized groups, it is impossible to solve any other issue of violence or war. This means structural violence comes first because it is the root cause of societal injustices and is the only framework that address the needs and struggles of marginalized groups.

#### Therefore, the value criterion is minimizing structural violence

## Advantage 1 – Workers

#### Advantage one is Workers

#### Labor unrest is increasing domestically, laws currently favor employers, momentum increasing for change.

Alana Semuels 10/ 8/2021 10 21, 2-24-2021, "U.S. Workers Are Realizing It's the Perfect Time to Go on Strike," Time, <span class="skimlinks-unlinked">[https://time.com/6105109/workers-strike-unemployment</span>/](https://time.com/6105109/workers-strike-unemployment%3c/span%3e/) \\GHS-DP

Thousands of workers have gone on strike across the country, showing their growing power in a tightening economy. The leverage U.S. employees have over the people signing their paychecks was amplified in Friday’s jobs report, which showed that employers added workers at a much slower-than-expected pace in September. The unemployment rate fell 0.4 percentage points during the month, to 4.8 percent, the government said Friday, and wages are continuing to tick up across industries as employers become more desperate to hire and retain workers. In the first five days of October alone, there were 10 strikes in the U.S., including workers at Kellogg plants in Nebraska, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee; school bus drivers in Annapolis, Md.; and janitors at the Denver airport. That doesn’t include the nearly 60,000 union members in film and television production who nearly unanimously voted to grant their union’s president the authority to call a strike. Jess Deyo is one of nearly 700 nurses who have been on strike as part of the longest healthcare strike in Massachusetts history. For the past seven months, Deyo has reported for duty at the hospital in Worcester, Mass. where she worked as a nurse for more than 15 years, sometimes bringing her daughters, and standing outside through the chills of spring and the heat of summer. The nurses are demanding higher nurse-to-patient ratios after a harrowing 19 months of working during a pandemic. “There’s no choice to give up on the strike,” she says. “It’s bigger than us—it’s for everyone.” Jess Deyo and her daughters on the picket line in Worcester, Mass. Jess Deyo Most of these strikes aren’t counted by the federal government, which in the 1980s started only tracking strikes that involved 1,000 or more workers and that lasted one full shift or longer. There have only been 11 of those so far this year, according to government data, at places like Volvo Trucks and Nabisco. But academics at Cornell University launched a strike database on May 1 that uses social media and Google alerts to keep track of all the strikes and protests happening in the U.S., even if they involve just a few workers. The database shows a picture of growing worker activism, of small actions that tell a story of how people at workplaces small and large are feeling after 19 months of a global pandemic, says Johnnie Kallas, a PhD student who is the director of Cornell’s Labor Action Tracker. It has documented 169 strikes so far in 2021. “Workers are fed up with low pay and understaffing, and they have more labor market leverage with employers needing to hire right now,” he says. “You are seeing a little bit more labor unrest.” Of course, compared to half a century ago, there still aren’t many strikes in the U.S. There were 5,716 strikes in 1971 alone, according to government data from when the government tracked smaller strikes. And the share of unionized workers in the U.S. is near an all-time low, with just 12.1% of workers represented by unions last year. But the activism comes at a time when approval of labor unions—even among Republicans—is trending upwards—and when a low unemployment rate is giving leverage to workers who have long put up with poor conditions and pay. A Gallup poll released in the beginning of July showed that 68% of Americans approve of labor unions, higher than it had been in years and up significantly from the 48% approval in 2009 during the throes of the Great Recession. The poll also showed that 47% of Republicans said they approved of unions—the highest share since 2003—and that 90% of Democrats did. Greater income inequality, more strikes Part of the support of unions and organizing may come from Americans’ discontent with growing inequality, much as inequality a century ago galvanized a labor movement then, says Tom Kochan, a professor of work and employment research at MIT. There are a growing number of billionaires in America–708 as of August—with a net worth of $4.7 trillion as of August 17. That’s more than the total net worth of the bottom 50% of Americans. “I think the accumulated effects of the loss of good jobs in manufacturing, stagnant wages, growing inequality, and the growing disparity between executives and managers and the workforce—all of that is fueling increases in organizing,” he says. Some of this labor activism was happening before the pandemic, Kochan says, when even the government’s strike tracker showed an uptick in unrest. Teachers in states like Arizona and Oklahoma started striking in 2018 because of low pay and a lack of public funding. In 2020, NBA athletes walked out of a playoff game to protest the shooting of Jacob Blake in Kenosha, Wisc. The year 2019 saw 25 work stoppages involving 1,000 or more workers, the most since 2001. In 2017, 48% of non-unionized workers said they would vote to join a union if given the chance, higher than the share who said that in 1995 (32%) and 1977 (33%), according to [Kochan’s research](https://iwer.mit.edu/2018/08/30/who-wants-to-join-a-union-a-growing-number-of-americans/). The pandemic worsened working conditions for thousands of workers like Deyo. [Kellogg workers](https://wwmt.com/news/local/kelloggs-workers-at-battle-creek-plant-to-strike) at a plant in Battle Creek, Mich., told the local news that they were lauded as heroes for working 16 hour days, seven days a week during the pandemic, and rather than reward them, the company recently decided to offshore some of their jobs. They [went on strike](https://bctgm.org/2021/10/05/workers-at-kelloggs-cereal-production-plants-are-on-strike/) on Oct. 5. Musicians at the San Antonio Symphony [say](https://www.kens5.com/article/news/community/sa-symphony-on-strike-whats-next/273-8973f72b-d7d1-4837-ace2-fe22c29ca07b) they voluntarily accepted an 80% pay cut last season, and that the symphony then proposed first to permanently [cut their pay by 50%](https://www.sacurrent.com/sanantonio/san-antonio-symphony-musicians-strike-over-breakdown-in-contract-talks/Content?oid=27222645) and then to cut the number of full-time members from 72 to 42. They [went on strike](https://sasymphony.org/sas-contract-negotiation-updates/) on Sept. 27. Do strikes work? For their part, employers say that they’re being fair, and that workers are being unreasonable. Kellogg provides workers with benefits and compensation that are among the industry’s best, a company spokesman, Kris Bahner, said in a statement. The company says it has not proposed moving any jobs from the Ready to Eat Cereal plants, which are the plants where the workers are striking, as part of negotiations. The San Antonio Symphony said, in a statement, that the union and the symphony agreed to a 25% reduction in weekly salary for the 2020-2021 season, but that because there were fewer performances and because fewer musicians could fit on stage because of social distancing guidelines, some musicians did make 80% less than they would have made in a normal season. The symphony needs to make “fundamental changes,” a spokesperson said, and it cannot afford to spend more than it makes through ticket sales and donations. Carolyn Jackson, the CEO of St. Vincent’s, where Deyo and hundreds of other nurses are striking, says that the nurses are trying to push a 1:4 nurse to patient ratio that Massachusetts [voters rejected](https://www.wbur.org/news/2018/11/06/nurse-staffing-ratio-initiative-loses) by a large margin in 2018. The hospital has done research and decided its staffing is appropriate, and that its staffing ratios are in fact better than most other hospitals in the state, she says. Ryan says the hospital announced it was hiring 100 permanent replacement nurses in May during a COVID-19 surge, and that the striking nurses are insisting on getting their old positions back. Read More: [The Challenges Posed By COVID-19 Pushed Many Workers to Strike. Will the Labor Movement See Sustained Interest?](https://time.com/5928528/frontline-workers-strikes-labor/) That the hospital is not budging speaks to the fact that despite this increase in worker activism, workers may not gain much more power in the long run. Over the last 40 years, the government has made it much more difficult for workers to both form unions and to strike, says Heidi Shierholz, the president of the Economic Policy Institute, a progressive think tank. Amazon was able to effectively interfere in a union vote among its workers this spring, she says, preventing the union from succeeding. Of course, a hearing officer at the National Labor Relations Board has recommended that the [board throw out the results](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/02/business/amazon-union-alabama-nlrb.html) of the Amazon election and do it over, which speaks to a resurgence of government support for labor. President Joe Biden said he wanted to be “[the most pro-union President](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/09/08/remarks-by-president-biden-in-honor-of-labor-unions/) leading the most pro-union administration in American history.” Labor has support at the state and local levels too: California Gov. Gavin Newsom recently signed a packet of pro-worker bills, including one that prohibits companies from [imposing quotas](https://www.gov.ca.gov/2021/09/22/governor-newsom-signs-nation-leading-legislation-expanding-protections-for-warehouse-workers/) on warehouse workers that prevent them from following health and safety law, and another that prohibits employers from [paying workers with disabilities](https://www.gov.ca.gov/2021/09/27/governor-newsom-signs-legislation-creating-nation-leading-worker-protections-for-garment-industry-additional-measures-to-combat-unfair-pay-practices-and-improve-workplace-conditions/) less than the state’s minimum wage. And in January, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio signed a bill that forbids fast food restaurants from firing workers unless the employer has just cause, making New York City the [first jurisdiction in the country](https://www.inc.com/suzanne-lucas/new-york-city-just-changed-fast-food-employment-forever.html) that essentially ended at-will employment. But even that support may not be enough to force a widespread change of working conditions in an economy where employees haven’t had much leverage since before the Great Recession, or earlier. Even some of the recent strikes haven’t led to workers’ desired outcomes. A [five-week Nabisco strike](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/nabisco-workers-return-work-five-week-strike_n_614cb5e7e4b03d83bad09c12) recently ended with many of workers’ demands met, for instance, but the company still won the ability to pay weekend workers less than they do currently. As for Jess Deyo and the Worcester nurses, many have been forced to move on. After Deyo’s unemployment benefits ended and her health insurance premiums spiked, she decided she needed to find another job so that she could support her family. She’s a single mother. She found a job working as a nurse at a doctor’s office, where she says she feels more appreciated than she’s ever felt at work. The hours are better and she finally feels respected. But she makes $13 less an hour.

#### **Unions are a key way to fight economic inequality**

Bahn 19 (Kate, director of labor market policy and interim chief economist at the Washington Center for Equitable Growth) "The once and future role of strikes in ensuring U.S. worker power," Equitable Growth, <https://equitablegrowth.org/the-once-and-future-role-of-strikes-in-ensuring-u-s-worker-power/> \\GHS-DP

Increasing interest in unions among U.S. workers today At the same time, there is an increasing consensus today that unions are a positive force for increasing worker power and balancing against economic inequality. In polling of support for unions and specific aspects of collective bargaining, Equitable Growth grantee Alex Hertel-Fernandez of Columbia University, along with William Kimball and Thomas Kochan of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, find that support for unions has grown overall, with nearly half of U.S. workers in 2018 saying they would vote for a union if given the opportunity. This is a significant increase from one-third of workers supporting unionization in 1995. According to their research, workers primarily value unions’ role in collective bargaining and ensuring access to benefits such as healthcare, retirement, and unemployment insurance. Strikes have historically been one of the strongest tools used by unions to ensure they have power to engage in collective bargaining. But striking was viewed as a negative attribute in the survey done by Hertel-Fernandez, Kimball, and Kochan. Yet, when they presented workers with the hypothetical choice of a union exercising strike power with other attributes of unions, such as collective bargaining, support increased. But strikes, of course, do not take place in a bubble. The wider climate of worker bargaining power and institutions that support labor organizing plays a role in making this historically crucial tool effective again. So, too, does the power of employers to resist these organizing efforts when the labor market lacks competition that would increase worker bargaining power.

#### In the status quo, there are legal barriers to unionizing and accessing collective bargaining – only the affirmative can help resolve that.

Enrique Lopezlira and Ken Jacobs 21, 9-3-2021, [(Enrique, is the director of the Low-Wage Work program at the UC Berkeley Labor Center. He is a labor economist, directing and conducting research on how policies affect working families, with a particular focus on how these policies impact racial and gender equity. Doctorate in Economics from Howard University) (Ken, the chair of the University of California, Berkeley Center for Labor Research and Education, where he has been a labor specialist since 2002.) "Don't Mistake the Disappointing Jobs Numbers for a Labor Shortage," No Publication, <https://www.barrons.com/articles/dont-mistake-the-disappointing-jobs-numbers-for-a-labor-shortage-51630698151> \\GHS-DP

Today’s jobs report shows a complicated picture for workers. The economy added only 235,000 jobs in August, despite near-record vacancies, while hourly wages grew faster than expected. But hold off a moment before calling it a labor shortage. Yes, some employers are experiencing difficulty filling jobs as the economy begins to recover from the effects of the pandemic. But this alone is just one part of the picture. A labor shortage means there aren’t enough workers, and that is simply not the current case. While there are plenty of workers available, there are far fewer available, willing, and able to work at the current wages being offered. In other words, it isn’t that demand for workers is too high, it’s that wages are too low. While it is true that wages have increased recently for some workers, it would be incorrect to believe that all workers now enjoy higher wages and greater bargaining power with employers. Unfortunately, the truth is millions of workers continue to earn low wages that make it nearly impossible for them to make ends meet. The pandemic has made the economic situation for low-wage workers more dire, but typical workers’ pay has been growing very slowly over the last 40 years. Economic theory states wages are tied to productivity, but this is only in theory. The reality is that since 1979 the gap between pay and worker productivity has widened significantly, with productivity growing 62% over this period, while wages only grew by 18%. But if workers are more productive than ever before, why have they received few of the benefits of this increased productivity? The answer is that a greater share of the gains are going to those at the top—through higher salaries at the high end of the income distribution, as well as ever-larger corporate profits. And this has been made even worse by the pandemic, during which the net worth of billionaires in the U.S. increased by $1 trillion at the same time that 20 million workers lost their jobs. Summer 2021 has seen some welcomed wage growth at the middle and bottom of the wage distribution. In terms of industries, the highest wage growth has been in leisure and hospitality (in restaurants and bars, for instance), which traditionally pays some of the lowest wages, and which saw the largest wage drops when Covid-19 hit. Even with these wage increases, real wages for these service-sector workers have rebounded only to prepandemic trends. For workers in these sectors to experience real improvements in earnings, wages need to grow even further. However, there is no guarantee that the recent wage growth will last, let alone that further increases will materialize. One way to help ensure a strong wage floor is by increasing the federal minimum wage, which has been stuck at $7.25 an hour since 2009. Twenty-nine states and the District of Columbia have higher minimum wages than the federal level, but that means there are 21 other states that do not. Increasing the federal minimum wage to $15 an hour, and indexing it to inflation, would help make sure all workers, regardless of where they live, receive decent pay—and that the value of their wages does not again erode over time. While the minimum wage raises the floor, more is needed to improve wages and working conditions for the rest of America’s workers. Central to achieving a broad-based improvement in pay is enabling workers who wish to do so to form unions and engage in collective bargaining. Unions have been shown to improve not just wages and benefits, but also to reduce socioeconomic disparities. Unions raise wages and increase access to benefits for all workers, with the largest gains for those who earn the least in nonunion workplaces: women and workers of color. Unions don’t only benefit their members. When more workers in an industry are unionized, pay rises across the industry. Unions also play an important role in promoting worker health and safety. As the Covid-19 crisis began, unionized workers were more likely to have access to personal protective equipment and paid sick days. Throughout the crisis, unions fought for strong worker protections on the job to reduce the spread of Covid-19 and to get the economy going again. While support for unions is high, America’s labor laws make it extremely difficult for workers to organize and win collective bargaining. In just one egregious example, currently if an employer violates the National Labor Relations Act, there are no financial penalties. The Protecting the Right to Organize Act (PRO Act), which has now passed the House of Representatives and is waiting to be heard in the Senate, would change that. The PRO Act would create stronger remedies, expand bargaining rights, and put the decision over whether or not to join a union in the hands of the workers, where it belongs. Many workers at the bottom have received raises over the last year. A growing body of evidence finds that policies which improve wages and family incomes help reduce racial disparities while having long-term, positive effects on a wide range of societal outcomes–from child and adult health to civic participation. These structural and legal factors provide an important roadmap for us to ensure a robust and sustainable recovery that works for all Americans. Whether wage increases for the majority of workers continue depends on the decisions we make as a society.

#### Declining unionization causes massive income inequality that collapses institutional democracy – only a 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]

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 United States, 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 American Federation of Labor. During the 1930s, Southern and Eastern European ethnic factory workers joined the new wave of industrial unionism in the Congress of Industrial Organizations. 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.

#### Reviving unions is critical to restoring equal rights amongst the lower and middle class

Nussbaum 19 [Karen Nussbaum, former Director of the United States Women's Bureau at the Department of Labor with a BA from Goddard College, 2019, “Unions and Democracy,” Labor Studies Journal, https://sci-hub.se/https://doi.org/10.1177/0160449X19890523]

Nottage was commissioned to write a play about an American revolution. She chose de-industrialization. Trump had not yet been elected when the play was written, but “Trumpism” is the coda in real life. I’ve seen this story repeated in communities across the country. Many have become inured to the decline of unions but were unprepared for the rise of authoritarianism around the globe. “You can’t have a strong middle class without unions, and you can’t have democracy without a strong middle class.” That succinct analysis didn’t come from a labor leader but from Tim Collins, CEO of the private equity firm Ripplewood. Collins is not representative of business leaders, but he is right. The link between unions and the middle class is well-made. But how important are unions to democracy? Very. Workers Do with Less So Big Business Gets More The reality depicted in “Sweat” started years ago, around the time I got my start in the labor movement. I got a job as a clerk-typist in 1970 and organized my coworkers— women office workers in Boston and then nationally in 9to5, a national association and our sister organization, District 925, SEIU. We built 9to5 on the wave of women’s liberation, a term our members would have rejected. But we were confronted by corporate opposition, characterized by an abrupt shift in strategy to maximize profits in an increasingly competitive world. American employers chose to cut workers’ pay. To do that, companies had to break workers’ collective power. Business Week laid it out in stark terms in a 1974 editorial: “It will be a bitter pill for many American to swallow the idea of doing with less so that big business can have more.” Bennett Harrison and Barry Bluestone (1988) called this new strategy and the corporate restructuring and the polarization of America it created “The Great U-Turn.” Rather than compete with Germany, Japan, and Scandinavia on product quality, worker productivity, and skill level, corporations slashed wages and benefits, and outsourced jobs. I remember discovering that law offices were outsourcing the typing of legal briefs to Asia, and coming to terms with the fact that it was cheaper to have non-English-speaking workers type what to them would be nonsense characters than to employ American workers who were likely not making much more than minimum wage. Union busting firms sprang up to go after organized industries. In the 1980s and 1990s, unions suffered hallmark defeats throughout the economy: PATCO in transportation,1 Phelps-Dodge in mining,2 Hormel in food processing,3 and Caterpillar in manufacturing,4 to name a few. Union busters even went after 9to5. One seminar which focused on beating back clerical worker organizing had a slide show warning “Don’t be fooled into thinking you need to look out for the likes of Jimmy Hoffa . . . Here’s who you should be worried about” with a picture of me.5 Americans did with less so that banks and big business could have more. The wealth from productivity gains, which had been distributed relatively evenly after World War II and built the middle class, now skewed dramatically to the top. According to Joseph Stiglitz, Some 90 percent [of American citizens] have seen their incomes stagnate or decline in the past 30 years. This is not surprising, given that the United States has the highest level of inequality among the advanced countries and one of the lowest levels of opportunity. The Economic Policy Institute (2018) reports that income inequality is continuing at such a dramatic pace that federal data can’t keep up with it. From Collective Power to Self-Reliance Public consciousness changed as well. In the 1970s, when I asked working women, “who do you turn to if you have a problem on the job?” they imagined calling their Congressperson or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, National Organization of Women, or 9to5. Over the years, their view of their options narrowed: “I’d complain to a co-worker”; “I’d call my mother”; “I’d pray to God.” After some years, the most typical answer was, “No one. I rely on myself.” Shaun Barclay, international secretary-treasurer of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), remembers being part of a strong community in his poor neighborhood. The community’s cohesion was reinforced by his job as a union clerk at an organized grocery store at the age of 16. But over the years he has seen the erosion of communal values in popular culture. “When I was young, the most popular magazine was Life. It was replaced by People—not as comprehensive as Life but still pretty broad. Us came along, narrower than People, to be replaced finally by Self.” Working America, the community affiliate of the AFL-CIO, sees the effects of declining unions as they go door to door in working-class communities. With twelve million conversations over the last sixteen years, they found fewer people who had a family member in a union. Without the anchor of a labor union, Working America canvassers found that working people were vulnerable to right-wing social wedge issues, and since 2016 more explicitly racist appeals. Unions, a Cornerstone of Civic Life Unions provide trusted information to members about issues and elections and boost voter civic participation. Union members are 12 points more likely to vote than nonunion workers (Freeman 2003). The passage of Right to Work laws reduced turnout by 2 percent in presidential elections (Feigenbaum, Hertel-Fernandez, and Williamson 2018). And democracy declines with union density. In states with low union density (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor 2018), new voter suppression laws (Brennan Center for Justice n.d.) were passed in ten states,6 compared to two states with high union density.7 How does the union have this impact? By engaging it’s members on politics. Consider one historical example. One million women belonged to the United Auto Workers (UAW) Union Women’s Auxiliary in the 1950s. The Auxiliary’s membership was far more than the union’s. It was the biggest political action organization in the country. The women had an ambitious agenda. They lobbied for free nurseries for working mothers, maternity leave, equal pay, and an end to job discrimination against African Americans. And, according to the UAW, the women led discussions around the dinner table with their children about the role of work and unions. Union influence on members was tested when Barack Obama ran for president in 2008. Elected labor leaders struggled with how to communicate to white members who didn’t want to vote for a black man. Rich Trumka, then secretary-treasurer of the AFL-CIO, led by example in a speech to the United Steelworkers that fall. He described meeting a woman in his home town of Nemocolin, Pennsylvania. They talked about the election. “I just don’t trust Obama,” she said. When Trumka pressed her on why, she admitted, “because he’s black.” Trumka then said, Look around. Nemacolin’s a dying town. There’re no jobs here. Kids are moving away because there’s no future here. And here’s a man, Barack Obama, who’s going to fight for people like us and you won’t vote for him because of the color of his skin. He went on to tell his steelworker audience, Brothers and sisters, we can’t tap dance around the fact that there are a lot of folks out there just like that woman. A lot of them are good union people; they just can’t get past this idea that there’s something wrong with voting for a black man. Well, those of us who know better can’t afford to look the other way. Labor leaders around the country leaned into this complicated, racially charged discussion with members. A massive member outreach campaign reached one-third of union members at the workplace, and 83 percent received mail from their unions about the election. Sixty-seven percent of union members voted for Obama that year.8 The Culinary Workers Union 226, UNITE HERE in Las Vegas is a stunning example of member political mobilization today. They represent 60,000 workers who come from 178 countries and speak more than forty languages. Despite these challenges, they have good paying, stable jobs in hotels and casinos. They are engaged and militant, and run the most impressive political outreach program in the country by building community among their members. Their members can get two months of time off to work on elections, and they have been turning the state a political “blue.” Organizers for Working America connect with working people on economic issues and find common ground outside of a workplace context through door-todoor canvassing. Canvasser Mike Logan worked on the 2017 Virginia governor’s race near Lynchburg, a very conservative part of the state. “Who are you voting for?” Mike asked a middle-aged white male voter. “The Republican.” “What’s your biggest issue?” Mike continued. “Confederate statues.” “Well, check out this petition for expanding Medicaid,” Mike pressed on. “Oh yeah, my daughter’s on Medicaid,” the voter responded, signing the petition, talking to Mike about the election, and being open to now voting for the Democrat. Those conversations resulted in moving the vote by 8 points in a part of the state that voted more than 20 points for Trump the year before.9 The Rise of Authoritarianism The democratic civic space provided by unions and the subsequent decline of unions as a countervailing force to corporate power, contributes to the appalling trends of the last fifty years: Gilded Age levels of inequality, devastated communities, and heightened civic polarization by race, religion, and ethnic origin. These conditions have led to a wave of autocratic governments around the globe. Alarm is growing. How Democracies Die (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2019) is a New York Times bestseller; The People Vs. Democracy (Mounk 2019) warns, “this may be our last chance to save democracy.” When people lose high-paying, unionized jobs they do not just lose their footing in the middle class; rather they also stand to lose a whole set of social connections that structure their lives and give them meaning. Cas Mudde (2019) in The Far Right Today describes the evolution of right-wing ideologies since World War II. “In the fourth wave, which roughly started in the 21st century, radical right parties have become mainstreamed and, increasingly normalized, not just in Europe, but across the world.” Unions, Bridging Divides I talked to union leaders in Minnesota about how they deal with the rise of anti-democratic ideologies and how they bridge divides among their members in a state that voted both for Ilhan Omar in Minneapolis and Donald Trump in the southern and northern parts of the state. “We need more organizations where people take minutes!” insisted Bethany Winkels,10 political director of the Minnesota AFL-CIO: There’s a lack of opportunity for people to experience democracy—debate issues, argue about how to spend dues money, vote, take minutes—the tools of transparency and accountability. People need to experience power on issues. They need structures and systems. Unions are a place where people can get that, and can change their minds. Political strategist Michael Podhorzer says, “there is a growing consensus that unions are an agent keeping authoritarianism at bay.”11 He cites the daily work of union activists who handle grievances, bargain contracts, and organize new workers. In each instance, to be successful you have to include everyone. And success is tangible, in better wages and benefits, fair working conditions, and solidarity. He notes that studies show that union members are more likely to have racially progressive views than nonunion working people. “Can you have a liberal progressive America without unions? (Plumer 2012)” asks historian Nelson Lichtenstein? “History says no. For 200 years the existence of the union movement has been wedded to the rise of democracy. We saw this here, in South Korea, in Spain, in Africa.” And the decline of unions is wedded to the rise of the authoritarianism. A major shift by working-class voters in Brazil elected right-winger Jair Bolsonaro in October 2018. Brazilian sociologist Ruy Braga (2019) argues that “Bolsonaro’s election marked the decline of trade unions as the primary site of working-class organization; and the rise of Evangelical churches in their place” with collective identities being shaped by the church rather than by unions. Braga points to a painful symbol of this shift in influence in the working class—the sale of the labor federation, CUT, headquarters in Sao Paulo to the World Church of the Power of God. On the positive side is Tunisia, the birthplace of the Arab Spring in 2011. The union federation backed the uprising, 150,000 workers went on strike, and President Ben Ali fled the country. The Nobel Committee recognized the role of unions in promoting democracy when it granted the 2015 Peace Prize to the Tunisian General Labor Union as one of four civic society partners (the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet), which created a constitutional form of government. Solutions: Policy + Organizing We can strengthen unions and rebuild this crucial element of civic society through public policy. The key bill for broadening the rights of workers to organize in Congress is the Protect the Right to Organize (PRO) Act. It eliminates right to work provisions, expands the coverage of eligible workers, prohibits the use of permanent replacement workers during strikes, repeals the restriction on secondary activity, provides for first contract arbitration, addresses misclassification of workers and the overuse of independent contractors, and imposes much tougher penalties for employer violations. There are other bills focused on expanding bargaining rights to all public sector workers. But good legislation will need much more than rhetorical from politicians. Lynn Rhinehart, labor lawyer and former general counsel of the AFL-CIO, argues that as part of strengthening protections for workers engaged in collective action, giving workers the power to act in solidarity with each other beyond the borders of their own workplaces is key: Workers should have the right to require multiple employers to sit down and bargain with them at the same time. And the law needs to allow for strikes, picketing, and other solidarity actions by workers outside their own workplace, including up and down the supply chain.12 Rhinehart is cautious about embracing a tripartite wage board-type system to set wages for an industry. “I worry that a focus on government wage boards might undermine efforts to build strong, democratic, member-based worker organizations because of the distance this government process puts between workers and the decisions affecting their working lives.”13 Worker mobilization is key to getting new laws passed and enforced. Union organizing, including in new forms, is growing. The wave of teachers’ strikes continues throughout the country. Gig drivers are finding ways to bargain, with the help of unions including the Teamsters, National Taxi Workers Alliance, and the Machinists union. And developers in the video game industry are reacting to profit maximization at their expense, calling for unionization. These gamers are getting support from the International Association of Theater Stage Employees, which represents illustrators and others in the entertainment industry, the Writers Guild East, and a new association called Game Workers Unite. These are encouraging efforts, but still not at the scale we need to turn around historic low union density. In the meantime, we need to build intermediate forms of organization that bridge divides within the working class and promote collective power. A number of organizations are connecting with workers through membership: Working America, which reaches more than half a million working people face-to-face every year, two-thirds of whom sign up as members; Fight for $15 with organizing in 300 cities around the world; and local advocacy organizations such as Casa de Maryland, organizing immigrant workers since 1985. Building organizations that confront citizen polarization isn’t easy. Josh Lewis,14 a long-time Working America lead organizer, talked about how ugly it can get and why he perseveres. “There was a lot of hate at the doors,” Josh summed up his experience as a black organizer in white working-class communities in 2018: It was especially bad for black women. Our biggest challenge was to keep people on the job. It wasn’t enough for me to do one-on-ones with black staff. We went to Sartre in the tool box. I said, “We’re in this fight because it’s the right thing to do. We may not win. But we are fighting fascism, staring down the beast.” We expect the hostility to be worse in 2020, when the worst racists will feel backed into a corner and come out even more. But I’m not going to let them get me down. The fire in my belly is too strong. There is a crisis in democracy. We should heed Bethany Winkels’ call for democratic structures, and Josh Lewis’ challenge to have the passion and discipline that is needed. We need unions, not because they boost turnout and change a voter’s choice, but because they create the muscle memory of democratic control. Without that, democracy is lost.

## Advantage 2 – Racial Equality

#### Black workers are overrepresented at the lowest paid jobs, and their ability to unionize has been aggressively challenged by companies such as Amazon.

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/ ]

AMAZON HAS GROWN EVEN MORE DOMINANT AND SHARED LITTLE OF ITS PANDEMIC PROFITS WITH WORKERS Black workers are [overrepresented among the risky essential jobs](https://www.brookings.edu/research/black-essential-workers-lives-matter-they-deserve-real-change-not-just-lip-service/) (like those at Amazon’s warehouses) on the COVID-19 frontlines, and especially among frontline jobs that pay less than a living wage. Black workers comprise [27%](https://www.aboutamazon.com/news/workplace/our-workforce-data) of Amazon’s workforce, compared to just [13% of workers overall](https://www.bls.gov/opub/reports/race-and-ethnicity/2019/home.htm) in the U.S. In Amazon‘s Bessemer warehouse, union organizers estimate that [85% of workers are Black](https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2021/feb/23/amazon-bessemer-alabama-union). Amazon’s disproportionately Black workforce has risked their lives during the pandemic, but the company has [shared little of its astonishing profits with them](https://www.brookings.edu/essay/windfall-profits-and-deadly-risks/). Last year, Amazon earned an additional $9.7 billion in profit—a staggering 84% increase compared to 2019. The company’s stock price has risen 82%, while founder Jeff Bezos has added $67.9 billion to his wealth—38 times the total hazard pay Amazon has paid its 1 million workers since March. Despite soaring profits, Amazon ended its $2 per hour pandemic wage increase last summer and replaced it with occasional bonuses. From March 2020 through the end of the year, Amazon’s frontline workers earned an average of $0.99 per hour of extra pay, or a roughly 7% pay increase. Amazon’s pandemic pay bump was less than half of the increased pay at competitor Costco, and a fraction of what it could have afforded from the extra profits it earned during—and largely because of—the pandemic. In fact, Amazon could have more than quintupled the hazard pay it gave its workers and still earned more profit than in 2019. And while Amazon frequently [touts](https://www.aboutamazon.com/impact/economy/15-minimum-wage) its $15 per hour starting wage, Costco’s [recent increase](https://www.npr.org/2021/02/25/971338686/costco-to-raise-minimum-wage-to-16-an-hour-this-isnt-altruism) of its starting wage to $16 per hour (despite having significantly smaller profits than Amazon) shows that $15 is a floor, not a ceiling. A DRIVE FOR DIGNITY AND RACIAL JUSTICE SEEKS TO DEFY THE ODDS Some of the workers at the Bessemer warehouse have called on Amazon to [reinstate its $2 per hour hazard pay](https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2021/03/09/amazon-union-bessemer-history/). Yet Amazon’s unwillingness to share its staggering profits with its workers is not the only—or even the primary—driver of the union effort in Bessemer. In [an essay published in The Guardian last month](https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2021/feb/23/amazon-bessemer-alabama-union), labor journalist Steven Greenhouse introduced Darryl Richardson, a 51-year-old “picker” at the Bessemer warehouse. Richardson voiced his frustration about the dehumanizing nature of his work at Amazon, including the unrelenting pace, the risk of being terminated at any point, and the constant surveillance. “You don’t get treated like a person,” Richardson said. “They work you like a robot…You don’t have time to leave your workstation to get water. You don’t have time to go to the bathroom.” As Amazon’s profits climb and its market dominance continues, workers like Richardson want a seat at the table to make their workplace humane. Bessemer’s pro-union workers face an uphill battle as they take on one of the most powerful companies in the world. Amazon’s aggressive anti-union tactics have garnered [headlines](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/amazon-warehouse-anti-union-campaign_n_604a2e8dc5b636ed3378bec0), but they are illustrative of the daunting challenges and uneven playing field facing organizing efforts in all work places. Today, [65% of Americans](https://news.gallup.com/poll/318980/approval-labor-unions-remains-high.aspx) approve of labor unions—the highest level since 2003. But after decades of [declining union participation](https://www.hamiltonproject.org/assets/files/UnionsEA_Web_8.19.pdf), only about [10%](https://www.bls.gov/news.release/union2.htm) of American workers are members of one.

#### Unions provide an avenue for coordination and cooperation amongst races to reduce the effects of wealth inequality. This is through the creatin 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 ]

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.