# Anti-Blackness AC

### 1: Labor Movements

#### COVID-19 has exploited black workers to deem them as essential labor. This overwhelmingly put black workers and their families at risk.

**Ford 21** Ford, M., 2021. Black essential workers’ lives matter. They deserve real change, not just lip service.. [online] Brookings. Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/research/black-essential-workers-lives-matter-they-deserve-real-change-not-just-lip-service/> [Accessed 17 November 2021].

From bus drivers to security guards to hospital orderlies, Black workers are overrepresented among COVID-19’s frontline essential workers (defined as essential workers who must physically report to jobs sites where they face elevated risks of infection). They are especially overrepresented in jobs that put workers’ and their families’ lives at risk without even a family-sustaining living wage. Black workers occupy 13% of all jobs across the economy, but they make up approximately 19% of essential jobs that pay less than $16.54 an hour, the wage necessary to meet the basic needs of a family of four.

#### This labor exploitation is rooted in historical violence against black people. After slavery, convict lease system gave rise to new forms of control of black bodies where black Americans were forced into back breaking labor. The impact was and is black death.

**Bowman 17** Bowman, Bryan. "Exploiting Black Labor After The Abolition Of Slavery". The Conversation, 2017, <https://theconversation.com/exploiting-black-labor-after-the-abolition-of-slavery-72482>.

With the help of profiteering industrialists they found yet a new way to build wealth on the bound labor of black Americans: the convict lease system. Here’s how it worked. Black men – and sometimes women and children – were arrested and convicted for crimes enumerated in the Black Codes, state laws criminalizing petty offenses and aimed at keeping freed people tied to their former owners’ plantations and farms. The most sinister crime was vagrancy – the “crime” of being unemployed – which brought a large fine that few blacks could afford to pay. Black convicts were leased to private companies, typically industries profiteering from the region’s untapped natural resources. As many as 200,000 black Americans were forced into back-breaking labor in coal mines, turpentine factories and lumber camps. They lived in squalid conditions, chained, starved, beaten, flogged and sexually violated. They died by the thousands from injury, disease and torture. For both the state and private corporations, the opportunities for profit were enormous. For the state, convict lease generated revenue and provided a powerful tool to subjugate African-Americans and intimidate them into behaving in accordance with the new social order. It also greatly reduced state expenses in housing and caring for convicts. For the corporations, convict lease provided droves of cheap, disposable laborers who could be worked to the extremes of human cruelty. Every southern state leased convicts, and at least nine-tenths [90%] of all leased convicts were black. In reports of the period, the terms “convicts” and “negroes” are used interchangeably. Of those black Americans caught in the convict lease system, a few were men like Henry Nisbet, who murdered nine other black men in Georgia. But the vast majority were like Green Cottenham, the central figure in Blackmon’s book, who was snatched into the system after being charged with vagrancy. A principal difference between antebellum slavery and convict leasing was that, in the latter, the laborers were only the temporary property of their “masters.” On one hand, this meant that after their fines had been paid off, they would potentially be let free. On the other, it meant the companies leasing convicts often absolved themselves of concerns about workers’ longevity. Such convicts were viewed as disposable and frequently worked beyond human endurance. The living conditions of leased convicts are documented in dozens of detailed, firsthand reports spanning decades and covering many states. In 1883, Blackmon writes, Alabama prison inspector Reginald Dawson described leased convicts in one mine being held on trivial charges, in “desperate,” “miserable” conditions, poorly fed, clothed, and “unnecessarily chained and shackled.” He described the “appalling number of deaths” and “appalling numbers of maimed and disabled men” held by various forced-labor entrepreneurs spanning the entire state. Dawson’s reports had no perceptible impact on Alabama’s convict leasing system. The exploitation of black convict labor by the penal system and industrialists was central to southern politics and economics of the era. It was a carefully crafted answer to black progress during Reconstruction – highly visible and widely known. The system benefited the national economy, too. The federal government passed up one opportunity after another to intervene. Convict lease ended at different times across the early 20th century, only to be replaced in many states by another racialized and brutal method of convict labor: the chain gang. Convict labor, debt peonage, lynching – and the white supremacist ideologies of Jim Crow that supported them all – produced a bleak social landscape across the South for African-Americans. Black Americans developed multiple resistance strategies and gained major victories through the civil rights movement, including Brown v. Board of Education, the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act. Jim Crow fell, and America moved closer than ever to fulfilling its democratic promise of equality and opportunity for all. But in the decades that followed, a “tough on crime” politics with racist undertones produced, among other things, harsh drug and mandatory minimum sentencing laws that were applied in racially disparate ways. The mass incarceration system exploded, with the rate of imprisonment quadrupling between the 1970s and today. Michelle Alexander famously calls it “The New Jim Crow” in her book of the same name. Today, the U.S. has the highest incarceration rate of any country in the world, with 2.2 million behind bars, even though crime has decreased significantly since the early 1990s. And while black Americans make up only 13 percent of the U.S. population, they make up 37 percent of the incarcerated population. Forty percent of police killings of unarmed people are black men, who make up merely 6 percent of the population, according to a 2015 Washington Post report.

#### And, status quo labor laws disproportionately disadvantage black worker dissent. Any threat to exploitation results in retaliation. Action is necessary to protect the rights of black workers.

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At the same time that Black workers are more likely to hold risky, frontline essential jobs, they also face discrimination and higher risks of retaliation when they speak out. Over the last several months, thousands of essential workers have participated in walkouts, protests, and petitions to voice their frustration over inadequate safety, pay, and benefits. But persistent racial discrimination in the workplace has meant that Black workers are not treated the same as white workers when they raise these concerns. New survey data from NELP found that Black workers are more than twice as likely as white workers to have seen possible retaliation from an employer against themselves or another employee for speaking up about pandemic-related concerns. Policymakers at all levels of government should do more to protect the rights of workers who protest over safety concerns or refuse to work in unsafe conditions. These immediate efforts should go hand in hand with broader efforts to strengthen worker voice, their power, and their collective bargaining rights.

#### An unconditional right of workers to strike is uniquely key to protecting black lives. KEY to empowerment.

**Aldridge & Henry 20** (RASHEEN ALDRIDGE AND MARY KAY HENRY, “Why unions are crucial to empowering Black workers”, Fortune, July 20, 2020, https://fortune.com/2020/07/20/strike-black-lives-unions-workers/)

Amid a global pandemic devastating Black communities across the U.S., and following the horrific murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and too many other Black people, our nation is in a moment of reckoning.\* We’re grappling with a national legacy of violence and can no longer ignore the deadly impacts of structural racism. That’s why we’re joining thousands of working people and allies today in the Strike for Black Lives. We’re coming together to declare that until Black communities thrive, none of our communities can truly thrive. We know that change is possible because we’ve seen it happen when people organize to demand better. One of us, Mary Kay Henry, is the president of one of North America’s largest unions, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). And Rasheen Aldridge is a former fast food worker from St. Louis who a few years ago became the youngest Black committeeman in St. Louis history. Now, at 25, he’s the youngest Democratic member of the Missouri House of Representatives. We were first brought together in the fight for justice for Black fast food workers in St. Louis. Rasheen had been working at Jimmy John’s, making a few pennies above minimum wage. After his area manager forced him to hold a sign that said, “I made three wrong sandwiches,” and snapped a photo, he’d had enough. Rasheen and his coworkers became the first workers to go on strike in St. Louis as part of the Fight for $15 and a union movement, which SEIU has proudly supported from the start. After Michael Brown was killed by police in 2014, it became more clear than ever that the fights for economic justice and against systemic racism were inextricably linked. Fast food workers took to the streets and helped deliver interconnected demands for an end to police violence against Black people and a just economy. Even though we were pepper-sprayed and teargassed, and tanks lined the streets, the energy and resilience of young people sparked something. Ferguson created not just change for St. Louis, but for our whole country. We saw Ferguson was everywhere. It was a system that had existed for so long that said certain people’s lives don’t matter. But we still have so far to go, as the recent police violence shows. Creating a just economy and society that values Black lives requires structural change that we haven’t yet achieved. It means more workers have a voice on the job and in our democracy, because by joining together, workers can hold government and corporations accountable to ensure Black lives matter. Coming together in a union allows workers to demand greater protections and higher wages to build a better future. Black workers are the most likely to be represented by unions, and get a larger boost than white workers do from being in a union. And Black union workers are paid almost 17% more than nonunion Black workers. They’re also 15% more likely to have a retirement plan and health insurance. Unions are the best counterweight to corporate power, which is part of why corporations have fought workers for decades, pouring millions into anti-union campaigns and buying off politicians through political contributions. And today amid a global pandemic, corporations like McDonald’s, Uber, and Amazon have failed to protect workers. They are quick to claim Black lives matter, but they’ve failed to change policies that would protect the health and economic security of Black workers. The essential workers putting their lives on the line without proper PPE or paid sick days are more likely to be Black. Right now, more than half of Black workers make less than $15 an hour. Millions of workers have lost their jobs and health care. And the virus itself is devastating Black communities with high rates of infection and mortality. All of these factors have added up to an overlapping crisis of public health, a broken economy, and deadly systemic racism. That’s why today, from California to Connecticut, from Michigan to Florida, working people are demanding corporate executives and elected officials use their authority to reimagine our economy and democracy to ensure communities of every race can thrive. They need to disrupt the multigenerational cycle of poverty and allow workers to form unions to bargain for better lives. We’re demanding everyone has a voice in our democracy. And we’re demanding an end to violence against Black people at the hands of police. We know that change is possible because we’ve seen it happen. It’s the spirit of fighting for a better future that propelled one of us from a sandwich counter to the State House. And it’s in the spirit of fighting for a better future that today we strike for Black lives.

#### Contemporary labor movements are overwhelmingly possible because of black activists of the 60s. Centering their voices are uniquely key.

**Kelly 2019** (Kim Kelly, “How Black Activists Shaped the Labor Movement,” *Teen Vogue https://www.teenvogue.com/story/black-activists-shaped-the-labor-movement)*

His emphasis on supporting striking workers helped to illustrate just how firmly enmeshed the labor movement was with the greater struggle for civil rights. The [1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom](https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/march-on-washington) (generally known as the March on Washington) was organized by a coalition of [six organizations, known as the Big Six](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/08/28/big-six-march-on-washington_n_3826958.html) — the **Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the Congress on Racial Equality, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and the National Urban League.** The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters was the first predominantly black labor union [to be chartered](http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/174.html) by the [American Federation of Labor](https://www.britannica.com/topic/American-Federation-of-Labor) (AFL) and was founded by A. Philip Randolph, a major leader in both the civil rights movement and the wider American labor movement. [A labor union’s purpose](https://www.teenvogue.com/story/what-a-labor-union-is-and-how-it-works) is to improve wages, hours, and working conditions within a workplace, and it uses workers’ collective power to bargain for a legally binding contract between them and their employer — and given the rampant discrimination and racism that black workers faced, they had much to gain by organizing.

#### Black workers have been shut out of labor movements despite their contributions. Any context of a strike must recenter black workers unconditionally.

**Kelly 2019** (Kim Kelly, “How Black Activists Shaped the Labor Movement,” Teen Vogue https://www.teenvogue.com/story/black-activists-shaped-the-labor-movement)

Black workers have been systematically [disenfranchised for centuries](http://rooseveltinstitute.org/disenfranchisement-historical-tool-racial-exclusion/), even by progressive organizations like labor unions, so it’s important to recognize that they have been organizing and taking collective action since before the Civil War by way of [benevolent associations and worker unity organizations](https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/colored-national-labor-union). Prior to desegregation, black union members were shut out of many major labor actions. Black railroad workers took part in the [Great Railroad Strike of 1877](https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1997/summer/american-labor-movement.html), but when they sought to join the Pullman Strike of 1894, iconic socialist Eugene Debs, leader of the American Railway Union, was unable to convince the white members of his union to accept them. During the [Mine War in Appalachia](https://www.history.com/news/americas-largest-labor-uprising-the-battle-of-blair-mountain) that took place [between 1900 and 1921](https://www.wvminewars.com/history/), the United Mine Workers of America were [far more welcoming to black miners](https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1997/summer/american-labor-movement.html) than most of their affiliated unions, but the black miners still encountered prejudice and racism from their white coworkers.

## FWK

#### Thus, I affirm:

#### Resolved: a just government ought to recognize the unconditional right of workers to strike

#### The 1AC conceptualizes the unconditional right of workers to strike as a black abolitionist politics rupturing the relationship between employer and worker. Strikes are necessary to rupture white supremacy within the context of labor.

Kilgore ’19 – co-founder of Black Family Scholarship Foundation, revolutionary abolitionist activist, organized w/ Free Alabama Movement, IWW Incarcerated Worker’s Organizing Committee, and True Leap Press [Ivan Kilgore, Winter 2019, *Not Worker, But Chattel* in *Proper Nos v3*, accessed from: https://trueleappress.files.wordpress.com/2019/01/propter-nos-vol.-3-anti-non-complete.pdf, pages: 63-65] | saurish

What I convey in the following essay is a particular lesson regarding what Hortense J. Spillers calls “the intramural,”2 derived from my experience organizing side-by-side with fellow U.S. prison slaves. It is a story about the white supremacist state’s use of deprivation, terror, seduction, and organized treachery as tactics to maintain **compliance and ‘order’** among the imprisoned masses. It is a story of the past and an analysis of the present, to clarify the trajectory for our struggle moving forward—without promise, without confirmation of an eventual justice, drawing only upon our collective abolitionist faith. In what follows, I argue that a Black abolitionist politic—a set of beliefs and practices formed in opposition to the white supremacist state; struggles for life and death initiated by and for those inhabiting the social position of chattel property—**must both be definitively against “work” and against defining ourselves as “workers.”** As a number of Black Studies scholars write, **there are fundamental differences between the political category of the “worker” and that of the “slave.”** Rendered civilly dead by U.S. law, I am to the State as the slave was to the plantation Master. The same relation of coercive racist violence applies: my Black body is always vulnerable, open to an enveloping State terror. As property of the State, I exist in direct confrontation with the punitive core of capitalist relations of force. Every movement I make carries with it the possibility of authority’s lash. I am the bodily raw material that gives the prison industrial complex purpose and social meaning. Beyond recognizing the structure of violence that I inhabit, it should also be noted how the very act of naming myself—a slave held captive by the State—**as “worker” enables various tactics of seduction which operate to displace the gravity of the situation. Because job assignments are seen as a relative privilege behind these walls, we are lured into conformity and compliance to work, often merely out of a need to survive.** While I discuss this latter dilemma for the majority of this essay, I would first like to begin by unpacking the former, clarifying the structural position of the (prison) slave. There are two essential dilemmas that prisoners face when organizing as the worker-on-strike instead of the slave-in-revolt. One is that a prison strike must be organized differently, its operations conducted differently, and **requires a level of active solidarity** (from others not in our position, non-imprisoned people) **far greater than any other united workplace action**. Many on the outside need to take up more of the risk. For example, there are numerous ways that free-world people can participate in a prison strike that does not mistake symbolic action for direct, disruptive tactics. **We need mass civil disobedience, not more civic performance.** If our goal is to clog the arteries of the prison regime from within, it might be more effective to choose methods that interrupt the prison’s reproduction from without. While we are staging sit-ins, boycotts, stoppages, and refusing trays inside, freeworld activists could occupy the offices of a Department of Corrections, stage protests at a prison warden’s private house, or stage sit-ins in the buildings of government institutions and corporations that benefit from the smooth functioning of the prisoncrat’s political-industrial machine. As an outside comrade once pointed out, “phone zaps” are effective in certain historical situations, but disrupting this fascist regime requires a whole lot more. As Frank B. Wilderson argues, the worker is exploited at best, yet only shot, brutalized, or imprisoned because they engage in sabotage or forceful strike. The slave however is rendered the object of gratuitous violence as a perpetual structural constant. By missing this point and defining ourselves as imprisoned “workers,” we open ourselves up to the public’s misrecognition of the levels of risk involved with organizing on the inside. The universalist category of the worker also **fails to grasp the centrality of our captivity to the making of U.S. society’s sense of** (racial) **freedom and** (white) **civilizational ascendency** over the wretched of the earth. This, in fact, brings me to my second point, a thing much more complex to explain. That is, the fact that our enslavement by the State holds a culturally specific purpose for the society that appears driven to physically disappear us.

#### The specter of the black strikebreaker operates in a space of anti-black and class discrimination.

**Arnesen 3** ERIC ARNESEN (2003) Specter of the Black Strikebreaker: Race, Employment, and Labor Activism in the Industrial Era, Labor History, 44:3, 319-335, DOI: 10.1080/002365603200012946

Reconstructing the motivations and aspirations of black strikebreakers remains frustratingly difficult.23 Largely if not entirely missing from discussions by contemporaries and historians are the voices and perspectives of black strikebreakers themselves. This should not be too surprising for, after all, strikebreakers formed no lasting organizations that might have left a paper trail record and published no newspapers or journals in which they explained their position. The black strikebreaker remains, to a large extent, a shadowy, silent figure glimpsed only through his actions or through the eyes of others. His portrait, painted by black elites, white trade unionists, and employers, is necessarily sketchy and impressionistic; it likely reflects the perspective of the observer more than that of the observed. But while the distortions produced by white employers, unionists, and journalists reflected their racial views or antipathies, those produced by the black elite reflected to a large extent its class bias. Black commentators frequently framed strikebreaking as a racial issue—as a legitimate response by African Americans to labor market discrimination and trade union exclusion. Strikebreaking was a racial issue, to be sure. But it was also a particular kind of class or labor issue as well. As much as black elites thought they spoke for black workers, their interests and perspectives could differ, sometimes subtly, sometimes sharply. Those elites’ static and often caricatured portrayals of black workers and strikebreakers are undermined by explorations of the more complex world inhabited by black workers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Two examples of black strikebreaking on the West Coast—on the Seattle docks in the World War I era and in western Washington state coal mines in the early 1890s—offer a lens into black working-class perspectives and are worth examining in detail.

#### The specter of the black strikebreaker haunts labor law. They occupy a unique space of labor activism – a strategy created by the racial barriers to collective action.

**Arnesen 3** ERIC ARNESEN (2003) Specter of the Black Strikebreaker: Race, Employment, and Labor Activism in the Industrial Era, Labor History, 44:3, 319-335, DOI: 10.1080/002365603200012946

Unlike white unionists, they did not object to his actions but rather encouraged them as a way of demonstrating loyalty and obedience to white employers and attain economic advancement.11 As for trade unions, elites admonished black workers simply to steer clear of them. This vision of black advancement rested on a clear bargain—blacks would faithfully perform the South’s labor and, in exchange, white employers would protect them and supply them with jobs and economic security. Just as their adherence to racial stereotypes prevented white labor activists from appreciating the rationale for black workers’ actions, so too did an obsession with race blind black elites to the limitations of their own advancement strategies. Few understood the genuine workplace concerns of black labor beyond access to employment; few recognized, valued, or acted upon a central fact of industrial life—the existence of black working-class activists committed to challenging their employers’ workplace practices through the trade union movement. From the 1880s through World War I, a relatively small but significant number of African Americans ignored elites’ exhortations to faithful and loyal service and embraced workplace labor activism in general, and trade unionism in particular, as vehicles for combating economic and racial inequality.12 11 A small number of black leaders, including T. Thomas Fortune, rejected strikebreaking as a viable or desirable option for black workers. “We lay it down dogmatically that the colored laborers cannot afford to antagonize the interests of white laborers, for the interests of the one and the other are identical in every particular.” Whites’ belief in blacks’ inferiority and fear of black strikebreaking, on the one hand, and black elites’ sole interest in opposing racial discrimination in access to employment through alliances with powerful whites, on the other, obscured the degree to which black workers themselves adopted a variety of strategies, from strikebreaking to labor organizing, that reflected both racial and class concerns.

#### The ROJ is to promote critical education.

#### Giroux ‘4

Giroux, Henry. “Critical Pedagogy and the Postmodern/Modern Divide: Towards a Pedagogy of Democratization.” Teacher Education Quarterly, Winter 2004.

An oppositional cultural politics can take many forms, but given the current assault by neoliberalism on all aspects of democratic public life, it seems imperative that educators revitalise the struggles to create conditions in which learning would be linked to social change in a wide variety of social sites, and pedagogy would take on the task of regenerating both a renewed sense of social and political agency and a critical subversion of dominant power itself. Under such circumstances, agency becomes the site through which power is not transcended but reworked, replayed, and restaged in productive ways. Central to my argument is the assumption that politics is not only about power, but it also, as Cornelius Castoriadis (1996) points out, “has to do with political judgements and value choices” (p.8), indicating that questions of civic education and critical pedagogy (learning how to become a skilled citizen) are central to the struggle over political agency and democracy. In this instance, [C]ritical pedagogy emphasizes critical reflexivity, bridging the gap between learning and everyday life, understanding the connection between power and knowledge, and extending democratic rights and identities by using the resources of history. However, among many educators and social theorists, there is a widespread refusal to recognize that this form of education is not only the foundation for expanding and enabling political agency, but it also takes place across a wide variety of public spheres mediated through the very force of culture itself. One of the central tasks of any viable critical pedagogy would be to make visible alternative models of radical democratic relations in a wide variety of sites. These spaces can make the pedagogical more political by raising fundamental questions such as: What is the relationship between social justice and the distribution of public resources and goods? What are the conditions, knowledge and skills that are a prerequisite for political agency and social change? At the very least, such a project involves understanding and critically engaging dominant public transcripts and values within a broader set of historical and institutional contexts. Making the political more pedagogical in this instance suggests producing modes of knowledge and social practices that not only affirm oppositional cultural work, but offer opportunities to mobilize instances of collective outrage, if not collective action. Such mobilisation opposes glaring material inequities and the growing cynical belief that today’s culture of investment and finance makes it impossible to address many of the major social problems facing both the U.S. and the larger world. Most importantly, such work points to the link between civic education, critical pedagogy, and modes of oppositional political agency that are pivotal to elucidating a politics that promotes autonomy and social change. At the very least, critical pedagogy proposes that education is a form of political intervention in the world that is capable of creating the possibilities for social transformation. Rather than viewing teaching as technical practice, radical pedagogy in the broadest terms is a moral and political[:] practice premised on the assumption that learning is not about processing received knowledge but actually transforming it as part of a more expansive struggle for individual rights and social justice. This implies that [A]ny viable notion of pedagogy and resistance should illustrate how knowledge, values, desire, and social relations are always implicated in relations of power[.] and how such an understanding can be used pedagogically and politically by students to further expand and deepen the imperatives of economic and political democracy. The fundamental challenge facing educators within the current age of neoliberalism is to provide the conditions for students to address how knowledge is related to the power of both self-definition and social agency. Central to such a challenge is providing students with the skills, knowledge, and authority they need to inquire and act upon what it means to live in a substantive democracy, to recognize anti-democratic forms of power, and to fight deeply rooted injustices in a society and world founded on systemic economic, racial, and gendered inequalities.

#### The ROB is to vote for the debater who bolsters black voices.

#### Disobedience is key – fear the riot. The path from performance to action is the unconditional strike – a form of civil disobedience.