#### I affirm the resolved: a just government ought to recognize the unconditional right of workers to strike.

# Definitions

#### Workers is defined by MacMillan as…

https://www.macmillandictionary.com/us/dictionary/american/worker

someone below the [level](https://www.macmillandictionary.com/us/dictionary/american/level_1) of a [manager](https://www.macmillandictionary.com/us/dictionary/american/manager) who [works](https://www.macmillandictionary.com/us/dictionary/american/work_1) in a [particular](https://www.macmillandictionary.com/us/dictionary/american/particular_1) [company](https://www.macmillandictionary.com/us/dictionary/american/company) or [industry](https://www.macmillandictionary.com/us/dictionary/american/industry)

# Framing

#### My value is morality, defined as the difference between right and wrong. The only way to be moral is by upholding autonomy. Prefer for these reasons:

#### 1] Autonomy is a necessary part of a good life—Hassoun 15

Nicole Hassoun, Associate Professor of Philosophy at Birmingham University, comments in Arizona University’s 3rd International Conference on Philosophy:

[“Human Rights, Needs, and Autonomy” University of Arizona, ATINER 3rd International Conference on Philosophy]

Consider, first, why autonomy (understood here as just requiring reasoning and planning ability) is necessary for a minimally good life. Rewarding struggle, deep understanding, good relationships, significant achievement, virtue and so forth are some of the things that make a life go minimally well. Each of these things requires autonomy. People must be able to reason about, make, and carry out simple plans on the basis of their commitments to create and maintain good relationships. People must, for instance, be able to reason about, make, and carry out plans to talk with their friends and families for their relationships to flourish. Reasoning and planning are also necessary for developing important skills and character traits, deep understanding, significant achievement, and so forth. So, autonomy is necessary for a minimally good life. Autonomy is also partly constitutive of such a life. This is because personhood is, partly constitutive of a minimally good life and autonomy is partly constitutive of personhood. Consider, first, why personhood is partly constitutive of a minimally good life. As persons we ‘have a conception of ourselves and of our past and future. We reflect and assess. We form pictures of what a good life would be, often, it is true, only on a small scale, but occasionally also on a large scale. And we try to realize these pictures’ (Griffin, 2006, Ch. 2). These conditions for personhood are also conditions for a minimally good life. To live a minimally good life one must be able to hope and dream, to pursue one’s goals and carry out projects, to live life on one’s own terms. Those who lack a conception of being a self, persisting through time, with a past and future cannot hope or dream. Those who never pursue their conception of a good life cannot achieve their goals or carry out projects. Hence personhood is partly constitutive of a minimally good life. Consider next why autonomy is partly constitutive of personhood. Recall that autonomy requires the ability to reason, make, and carry out simple plans on the basis of one’s desires. These conditions for autonomy are also conditions for personhood. To reflect and assess in the way that personhood requires one must be able to reason. To pursue one’s conception of a good life, as persons do, one must be able to make and carry out simple plans. We can also see that autonomy is necessary for and partly constitutive of a minimally good life via examples. Suppose Aefa drifts through life making one choice then another randomly or letting others choose for her. Suppose that Aefa has not freely chosen to drift. He simply [One who] cannot reason about, make, or carry out [her] plans. Aefa cannot shape his [her] own life. He does not choose consistently enough to [and cannot] attain most of the things he [one] desires. He may end up subject to another’s will. Even if, by chance, Aefa secures many valuable things, his [One’s] life will still lack an important kind of value. His life will be like a prize won accidentally (Raz, 1998). Aefa [One without autonomy] cannot live a minimally good life because his [her] life is not truly her own.

#### 2] Performability—Autonomy is a pre-requisite for people to pursue other desires and goals. Without autonomy, one cannot have the freedom of individual choice to try and obtain other desirable aspects of life. Moreover, regardless of what ethical principle is the best, people must be able to rationally choose that principle to obey it, which requires an expression of autonomy. This makes autonomy a pre-requisite to any other moral principle as well.

#### 3] Reason—Autonomous reasoning is the only method by which people can determine their desires. However, since I am myself, I cannot determine the conclusions that another’s autonomous reasoning will bring them to. Thus, we must provide each person with the autonomy to pursue their ideas.

#### 4] We must respect autonomy to truly value the worth of individuals—Edmundson 08

Robert Edmundson, Professor of Ethics at Washington University, illustrates in Key Ethical Principles:

[Robert Edmundson. “Principle of Respect for Autonomy”. Key Ethical Principles. Scension. Professor of Ethics. Washington University in St. Louis. January 26th, 2008.]

As commonly understood today, autonomy is the capacity for self-determination. Being autonomous, however, is not the same as being respected as an autonomous agent. When one respects a person’s capacity for self-determination they acknowledge the worth of that [an] individual as an independent agent. To respect an autonomous agent is to acknowledge that person’s right to make choices and take action based on that person’s own values and belief system.  The principle of respect for autonomy implies that one should be free from coercion in deciding to act, and that others are obligated to protect confidentiality, respect privacy, and tell the truth. The principle of respect for autonomy, however, does not imply that one must cooperate with another’s actions in order to respect that individual’s autonomy.

#### 5] Universality—To limit the autonomy of another person is an inherent contradiction. By doing so, we are signifying our willingness to have our own autonomy limited by another. However, to limit another’s autonomy in the first place, we must use our own autonomy. Thus, for an action to be morally right, it must be able to be performed on or by all people.

#### 6] Coercion and violence views people as a means to an end which justifies atrocities. Viewing people as ends in themselves is key to solving oppression—Farr 02

Arnold Farr (prof of phil @ UKentucky, focusing on German idealism, philosophy of race, postmodernism, psychoanalysis, and liberation philosophy). “Can a Philosophy of Race Afford to Abandon the Kantian Categorical Imperative?” JOURNAL of SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY, Vol. 33 No. 1, Spring 2002, 17–32.

Whereas most criticisms are aimed at the formulation of universal law and the formula of autonomy, our analysis here will focus on the formula of an end in itself and the formula of the kingdom of ends, since we have already addressed the problem of universality. The latter will be discussed ﬁrst. At issue here is what Kant means by “kingdom of ends.” Kant writes: “By ‘kingdom’ I understand a systematic union of different rational beings through common laws.”32 The above passage indicates that Kant recognizes different, perhaps different kinds, of rational beings; however, the problem for most critics of Kant lies in the assumption that Kant suggests that the “kingdom of ends” requires that we abstract from personal differences and content of private ends. The Kantian conception of rational beings requires such an abstraction. **Some feminists and philosophers of race have found this abstract notion of rational beings problematic because they take it to mean that rationality is necessarily white, male, and European.**33 Hence, the systematic union of rational beings can mean only the systematic union of white, European males. **I ﬁnd this interpretation of Kant’s moral theory quite puzzling.** Surely another interpretation is available. That is, the implication that in Kant’s philosophy, rationality can only apply to white, European males does not seem to be the only alternative. The problem seems to lie in the requirement of abstraction. **There are two ways of looking at the abstraction requirement that I think are faithful to Kant’s text and that overcome the criticisms of this requirement. First, the abstraction requirement may be best understood as a demand for intersubjectivity or recognition. Second, it may be understood as an attempt to avoid ethical egoism in determining maxims for our actions.** It is unfortunate that Kant never worked out a theory of intersubjectivity, as did his successors Fichte and Hegel. However, this is not to say that there is not in Kant’s philosophy a tacit theory of intersubjectivity or recognition. **The abstraction requirement simply demands that in the midst of our concrete differences we recognize ourselves in the other and the other in ourselves.** That is, **we recognize in others the humanity that we have in common.** Recognition of our common humanity is at the same time recognition of rationality in the other. We recognize in the other the capacity for selfdetermination and the capacity to legislate for a kingdom of ends. This brings us to the second interpretation of the abstraction requirement. **To avoid ethical egoism one must abstract from** (think beyond) **one’s own personal interest** and subjective maxims. That is, the categorical imperative requires that I recognize that I am a member of the realm of rational beings. **Hence, I organize my maxims in consideration of other rational beings.** Under such a principle other people cannot be treated merely as a means for my end but must be treated as ends in themselves. **The merit of the categorical imperative for a philosophy of race is that it contravenes racist ideology to the extent that racist ideology is based on the use of persons of a different race as a means to an end rather than as ends in themselves.** Embedded in the formulation of an end in itself and the formula of the kingdom of ends is the recognition of the common hope for humanity. That is, maxims ought to be chosen on the basis of an ideal, a hope for the amelioration of humanity. This ideal or ethical commonwealth (as Kant calls it in the Religion) is the kingdom of ends.34 Although the merits of Kant’s moral theory may be recognizable at this point, we are still in a bit of a bind. It still seems problematic that the moral theory of a racist is essentially an antiracist theory. Further, what shall we do with Henry Louis Gates’s suggestion that we use the Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime to deconstruct the Grounding? What I have tried to suggest is that **instead of abandoning the categorical imperative we should attempt to deepen our understanding of it and its place in Kant’s critical philosophy.** A deeper reading of the Grounding and Kant’s philosophy in general may produce the deconstruction35 suggested by Gates. However, a text is not necessarily deconstructed by reading it against another. Texts often deconstruct themselves if read properly. To be sure, the best way to understand a text is to read it in context. **Hence, if the Grounding is read within the context of the critical philosophy, the tools for a deconstruction of the text are provided by its context and the tensions within the text.** Gates is right to suggest that the Grounding must be deconstructed. However, this deconstruction requires much more than reading the Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime against the Grounding. It requires a complete engagement with the critical philosophy. Such an engagement discloses some of Kant’s very signiﬁcant claims about humanity and the practical role of reason. With this disclosure, deconstruction of the Grounding can begin. **What deconstruction will reveal is not necessarily the inconsistency of Kant’s moral philosophy or the racist or sexist nature of the categorical imperative, but rather**, it will disclose **the disunity between Kant’s theory and his own feelings about blacks and women. Although the theory is consistent and emancipatory and should apply to all persons, Kant the man has his own personal** and moral **problems. Although Kant’s attitude toward people of African descent was deplorable, it would be equally deplorable to reject the categorical imperative without ﬁrst exploring its emancipatory potential.**

#### Thus, the value criterion is upholding autonomy.

# C1: Worker Freedom

#### [1] Capitalists are using workers as a commodity and use coercive tactics to limit their freedom.

**Gourevitch 18** Alex Gourevitch, July 2018, “A Radical Defense of the Right to Strike,” (Alex Gourevitch is an associate professor of political science at Brown University and the author of From Slavery To the Cooperative Commonwealth: Labor and Republican Liberty in the Nineteenth Century.) https://jacobinmag.com/2018/07/right-to-strike-freedom-civil-liberties-oppression

C[lass-based oppression](https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/03/working-class-capitalism-socialists-strike-power/) is inextricable from liberal capitalism. While meaningful variation exists across capitalist societies, one of the fundamental unifying facts is this: the majority of able-bodied people are forced to work for members of a relatively small group, who dominate control over productive assets and who, thereby, enjoy control over the activities and products of those workers. There are [workers](https://www.jacobinmag.com/2018/07/turning-to-the-working-class), and then there are owners and their managers. Workers are pushed into the labor market because they have no reasonable alternative to looking for a job. They cannot produce the goods they need for themselves, nor can they rely on the charity of others, nor can they count on adequate state benefits. Depending on how we measure income and wealth, about 60 to 80 percent of Americans [fall into this category](https://thenewpress.com/books/after-new-economy) for most of their adult lives. This structural compulsion is not symmetric. A significant minority of the population has enough wealth — whether inherited or accumulated or both — that they can avoid entering the labor market. They might happen to work, but they are not forced to do so. The oppression, then, stems not from the fact that some are forced to work. After all, if socially necessary work were shared equally, then it might be fair to force each to do their share. The oppression stems from the fact that the forcing is unequal —that only some are made to work for others, producing whatever employers pay them to produce. This structural inequality feeds into a second, interpersonal dimension of oppression. Workers are forced to join workplaces typically characterized by large swathes of uncontrolled managerial power and authority. This oppression is interpersonal because it is power that specific individuals (employers and their managers) have to get other specific individuals (employees) to do what they want. We can distinguish between three overlapping forms that this interpersonal, workplace oppression takes: subordination, delegation, and dependence. Subordination: Employers have what are sometimes called “[managerial prerogatives](https://books.google.com/books/about/Managerial_Prerogative_and_the_Question.html?id=NQLEBAAAQBAJ)” — legislative and judicial grants of authority to owners and their managers to make decisions about investment, hiring and firing, plant location, work process, and the like. Managers may change working speeds and assigned tasks, the hours of work, or, as Amazon currently does, force employees to spend up to an hour going through security lines after work [without paying them](https://www.oyez.org/cases/2014/13-433). They can fire workers for [Facebook comments](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/10/17/facebook-firings_n_1003789.html), [their sexual orientation](https://www.sgvtribune.com/2011/10/08/fired-gay-water-polo-coach-and-supporters-protest-at-charter-oak-board-meeting/), [for being too sexually appealing](http://www.slate.com/blogs/xx_factor/2013/07/29/borgata_babes_lawsuit_new_legal_cases_assess_discrimination_based_on_sex.html), or for not being appealing enough. They can [give](https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/71431/the-big-squeeze-by-steven-greenhouse/9781400096527/) workers more tasks than can be performed in the allotted time, lock employees in the workplace overnight, [require employees to labor](http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/money_co/2011/09/amazon-warehouse-employees-overheated-ahead-of-holiday-season.html) in extreme heat and [other physically hazardous conditions](https://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/31/us/osha-emphasizes-safety-health-risks-fester.html), or [punitively isolate](https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/caring-on-stolen-time-a-nursing-home-diary) workers from other coworkers. They can [pressure](https://www.jacobinmag.com/2018/03/labor-law-corporations-workers-political-influence) employees to take unwanted political action, or, in the case of nurses, force employees to [work for twenty-two different doctors](https://socialistworker.org/2018/07/03/nurses-are-set-to-strike-uvm). What unifies these seemingly disparate examples is that, in all cases, managers [are exercising](https://www.jacobinmag.com/2017/06/private-government-interview-elizabeth-anderson) legally permitted prerogatives. The law does not require that workers have any formal say in how those powers are exercised. In fact, in nearly every liberal capitalist country (including social democracies like Sweden), employees are defined, in law, as “subordinates.” This is subordination in the strict sense: workers are subject to the will of the employer. Delegation: There are additional discretionary legal powers that managers enjoy not by legal statute or precedent but because workers have delegated these powers in the contract. For instance, workers might sign a contract [that allows managers to require employees](https://www.aclu.org/issues/criminal-law-reform/drug-testing?redirect=workplace-drug-testing) to submit to random drug testing or unannounced searches. In the United States, 18 percent of current employees and 37 percent of workers in their lifetime [work under noncompete agreements](http://equitablegrowth.org/why-its-time-to-rethink-non-compete-agreements/). These clauses give managers the legal power to forbid employees from working for competitors, in some cases reducing these workers to near indentured service. The [contract](https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/04/verizon-wireless-strike-bernie-sanders-cwa/) that the Communications Workers of America had with Verizon until 2015 included a right for managers to force employers to perform from ten to fifteen hours of overtime per week and to take some other day instead of Saturday as an off-day. While workers have granted these prerogatives to employers voluntarily, in many cases it’s only technically voluntary because of the compulsion to work. This is especially true if workers can only find jobs in sectors where these kinds of contracts proliferate. Which leads to the third face of oppression: the *distributive effects*of class inequality. The normal workings of liberal capitalism elevate a relatively small group of owners and highly paid managers to the pinnacle of society, where they accumulate most of the wealth and income. Meanwhile, most workers do not earn enough to both meet their needs and to save such that they can employ themselves or start their own businesses. The few that do rise displace others or take the structurally limited number of opportunities available. The rest remain workers. *Dependence*: Finally, managers might have the material power to force employees to submit to commands or even to accept violations of their rights because of the worker’s dependence on the employer. A [headline example](https://jacobinmag.com/2018/06/heres-how-much-money-americas-biggest-corporations-have-stolen-from-their-own-workers) is [wage theft](https://www.epi.org/blog/wage-theft-by-employers-is-costing-u-s-workers-billions-of-dollars-a-year/), which affects [American workers](https://www.nelp.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/WinningWageJusticeSummaryofResearchonWageTheft.pdf) to the tune of $8 to $14 billion per year. Employers [regularly break](http://www.jwj.org/free-and-fair-how-labor-law-fails-u-s-democratic-election-standards) labor law, by disciplining, threatening, or firing workers who wish to organize, strike, or otherwise exercise supposedly protected labor rights. In other cases, workers have been [refused bathroom breaks](https://www.oxfamamerica.org/livesontheline/) and resorted to wearing diapers, [denied legally required lunch breaks](https://www.sfgate.com/business/article/Employers-must-pay-if-they-deny-lunch-breaks-2474407.php) or [pressured to work through them](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/14/indiana-att-technicians-class-action-lawsuit-lunch-breaks_n_1777166.html), [forced to keep working](https://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/08/business/media/ads-for-mcdonalds-and-las-vegas-aimed-at-harried-workers.html) after their shift, or denied the right to read or turn on air conditioning during break. In [particularly egregious examples](https://www.buzzfeed.com/jessicagarrison/the-new-american-slavery-invited-to-the-us-foreign-workers-f#.nmJN7Yg27), employers have forced their workers to stay home rather than go out on weekends or to switch churches and alter religious practices on pain of being fired and deported. There are also the many cases of systematic [sexual harassment](https://www.jacobinmag.com/2018/03/metoo-workplace-discrimination-sexual-harassment-feminism), in those wide regions of the economy where something more than a public shaming is needed to control bosses. In all these instances, employers are not exercising legal powers to command. Instead they are taking advantage of the material power that comes with threatening to fire or otherwise discipline workers. This material power to get workers to do things that employers want is in part a function of the class structure of society, both in the broad sense of workers being unequally dependent on owners, and in the narrower sense of workers being legally subordinate to employers. The oppression lies not just in the existence of these powers, nor in some capitalist bad apples, but in how these powers are typically used. Managers tend to use these powers “rationally,” to exploit workers and extract profits. Each of these different faces of oppression — structural, interpersonal, and distributive — is a distinct injustice. Together they form the interrelated and mutually reinforcing elements of class domination that are typical of capitalist societies. Defenders of liberal capitalism insist that it provides the fairest way of distributing work and the rewards of social production. They often speak in the idiom of freedom. Yet liberal capitalism fundamentally constrains workers’ liberty, generating the exploitation of one class by another. It is this oppression that explains why workers have a right to strike and why that right is best understood as a right to resist oppression. Workers have an interest in resisting the oppression of class society by using their collective power to reduce, or even overcome, that oppression. Their interest is a liberty interest in a double sense. First, resistance to that class-based oppression carries with it, at least implicitly, a demand for freedoms not yet enjoyed. A higher wage expands workers’ freedom of choice. Expanded labor rights increase workers’ collective freedom to influence the terms of employment. Whatever the concrete set of issues, workers’ strike demands are always also a demand for control over portions of one’s life that they do not yet enjoy. Second, strikes don’t just aim at winning more freedom — they are themselves expressions of freedom. When workers walk out, they’re using their own individual and collective agency to win the liberties they deserve. The same capacity for self-determination that workers invoke to demand more freedom is the capacity they exercise when winning their demands. Freedom, not industrial stability or simply higher living standards, is the name of their desire. Put differently, the right to strike has both an intrinsic and instrumental relation to freedom. It has intrinsic value as an (at least implicit) demand for self-emancipation. And it has instrumental value insofar as the strike is an effective means for resisting the oppressiveness of a class society and achieving new freedoms. But if all this is correct, and the right to strike is something that we should defend, then it also has to be meaningful. The right loses its connection to workers’ freedom if they have little chance of exercising it effectively. Otherwise they’re simply engaging in a symbolic act of defiance — laudable, perhaps, but not a tangible means of fighting oppression. The right to strike must therefore cover at least some of the coercive tactics that make strikes potent, like sit-downs and mass pickets. It is therefore often perfectly justified for strikers to exercise their right to strike by using these tactics, even when these tactics are illegal. Still, the question remains: why should the right to strike be given moral priority over other basic liberties? The reason is not just that liberal capitalism produces economic oppression but that the economic oppression that workers face is in part created and sustained by the very economic and civil liberties that liberal capitalism cherishes. Workers find themselves oppressed because of the way property rights, freedom of contract, corporate authority, and tax and labor law operate. Deeming these liberties inviolable doesn’t foster less oppressive, exploitative outcomes, as its defenders insist — quite the opposite. The right to strike has a stronger claim to be protecting a zone of activity that serves the aims of justice itself — coercing people into relations of less oppressive social cooperation. Simply put, to argue for the right to strike is to prioritize democratic freedoms over property rights.

#### [2] An unconditional right to strike allows workers to fight for their freedom. This right must be *unconditional* because limiting it threatens collective bargaining itself

**Lim 19** Woojin Lim, December 11 2019, “The Right to Strike,” (Philosophy concentrator in [Harvard] Winthrop House.) https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2019/12/11/lim-right-to-strike/

On April 9, 1969, roughly 500 student activists [took over](https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2019/04/event-commemorating-1969-harvard-strike-to-include-current-student-activists/) University Hall to protest Harvard’s role in the Vietnam War. City and state police armed with riot gear, clubs, and mace were [called](https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1994/4/22/police-raided-university-hall-pithe-following/) to remove all protesters who had vowed nonviolent resistance. In the early morning hours of April 10, over 400 police officers [stormed](https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2019/5/27/university-hall-1969/) University Hall, between 250 and 300 arrests were made, and 75 students were injured. In response, by April 11, thousands of Harvard students, teaching fellows, and faculty had gathered in Harvard Stadium to strike. Fifty years later, the Harvard Graduate Students Union-United Automobile Workers [declared](https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2019/12/3/grad-union-strikes/) a strike, fighting [for](https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2019/11/21/grad-student-strike-proposals/) increased compensation, health benefits, and neutral third-party arbitration for sexual harassment and discrimination. On December 3, over 500 demonstrators, wearing on their shoulders large blue-and-white “UAW on Strike” placards, [marched](https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2019/12/unionized-harvard-students-go-on-strike/) routes throughout the Yard. In the strike of 1969, strikers fought for social justice; in the HGSU-UAW strike of 2019, strikers press on the fight for fair wages and working conditions. The right to strike is a [right](https://jacobinmag.com/2018/07/right-to-strike-freedom-civil-liberties-oppression) to resist oppression. The strike (and the credible threat of a strike) is an indispensable part of the collective bargaining procedure. Collective bargaining (or “agreement-making”) provides workers and employees with the opportunity to influence the establishment of workplace rules that govern a large portion of their lives. The concerted withdrawal of labor allows workers to promote and defend their unprotected economic and social interests from employers’ unilateral decisions, and provide employers with pressure and incentives to make reasonable concessions. Functionally, strikes provide workers with the bargaining power to drive fair and meaningful negotiations, offsetting the inherent inequalities of bargaining power in the employer-employee relationship. The right to strike is essential in preserving and winning rights. Any curtailment of this right involves the risk of weakening the very basis of collective bargaining. Strikes are not only a means of demanding and achieving an adequate provision of basic liberties but also are themselves intrinsic, self-determined expressions of freedom and human rights. The exercise of the power to strike affirms a quintessential corpus of values akin to liberal democracies, notably those of dignity, liberty, and autonomy. In acts of collective defiance, strikers assert their freedoms of speech, association, and assembly. Acts of striking, marching, and picketing command the attention of the media and prompt public forums of discussion and dialogue. The question of civic obligations, however, remains at stake. Perhaps those disgruntled with the strike might claim on a whiff that the strike impedes upon their own freedom of movement, educational rights, privacy, and so forth. Do strikers, in virtue of expressing their own freedoms, shirk valid civic norms of reciprocity they owe to members of the community, for instance, to students? No. The right to strike stems from the premise of an unjust flaw in the social order, that is, the recognition that the benefits from shouldering the burdens of social cooperation are not fairly distributed. Strikes and protests publicize this recognition and demand reform. No doubt, work stoppages from teaching fellows, course assistants, and graduate research assistants — no sections, no office hours, no labs, no grades — may pose [inconvenience](https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2019/11/26/barham-quesada-protest/) and perhaps hardship in our present lives. Strikes may also impose a serious financial [cost](https://harvardmagazine.com/2019/11/a-harvard-graduate-student-union-strike) on both the employer and the employees. These costs and inconveniences, however, should not be ridiculed as outrageous, for they rightfully [invite](https://jacobinmag.com/2018/07/right-to-strike-freedom-civil-liberties-oppression) disruption.

#### [3] This right to strike needs to include public sector workers.

**Hiltzik 13** Michael Hiltzik, October 24 2013, “Why public employees should have the right to strikehttps://www.latimes.com/business/hiltzik/la-xpm-2013-oct-24-la-fi-mh-strike-20131024-story.html

It would take a finely tuned instrument to measure the speed with which a strike by public employees is followed by politicians calling for a ban on this fundamental right of organized labor. Sure enough, the ink wasn’t dry on the settlement ending the recent strike by workers for the Bay Area Rapid Transit system when a candidate for the State Assembly [spoke up](https://www.latimes.com/local/la-me-cap-glazer-20131024,0,6114109.column#axzz2ieiFIBxN). He’s Steve Glazer, a Democrat running for a seat in the East Bay. “Transit is an essential public service, just like police and fire,” he says. He argues that since California bans strikes by police and firefighters, transit strikes should be banned too. That’s baloney. Glazer should just admit that he’s pandering to the voters--he’s been haunting BART stations to collect signatures for a petition to ban transit strikes--and stop trying to dress up his position as a matter of principle. It’s worth taking a quick look at the history of public employee strikes, and how they compare to strikes in the private sector. Only 11 states allow any public employees to strike, and most of those impose limits. The most common restriction is a ban on strikes by police and firefighters, for the perfectly legitimate reason that those walkouts pose an immediate threat to public safety. But is that true of strikes by teachers, transit workers, DMV clerks, park rangers, or almost any other category of public worker? Their walkouts pose an economic threat, which is very different. In fact, economic threats are the very essence of a strike. After all, if labor walkouts didn’t impose hardship on the other side or on third parties like customers, who can themselves exert pressure for a settlement, there’d be no point to striking at all. The reason that public employee strikes are outlawed in all but 11 states has nothing to do with a threat to public safety. It’s that governments are the only employers that actually have the ability to outlaw them. There isn’t an employer in the world who, given the authority, wouldn’t do the same (and cook up a threadbare rationale for how strikes in this industry would compromise public safety). Supermarket owners? Airlines? UPS? They’d all love to make strikes by their workers illegal. They just don’t have the power. That said, public employee strikes even in those 11 states are rare. As Melissa Maynard observed in the Pew Charitable Trust’s publication Stateline, last year’s Chicago teachers strike, the most high-profile public employee walkout in recent years, was [the first teachers strike in that city in 25 years](https://www.pewstates.org/projects/stateline/headlines/public-strikes-explained-why-there-arent-more-of-them-85899419275) and the first in a major city since a Detroit teachers strike in 2006. The reason for the scarcity of public worker strikes has a lot to do with the dynamics of strikes in general. Employers and employees in any job action are making a calculation based on comparative hardship. Both sides sustain economic losses--the workers go without paychecks and risk losing their jobs, the employers lose income and risk losing customers, sometimes permanently. The goal is to survive the short-term economic loss while imposing greater costs on the other side, until one side or the other cries uncle. And both sides try to enlist the sympathy and support of customers. Teamsters won a huge victory over UPS in a 15-day walkout in 1997, for example, because customers appreciated the efficiency of their UPS drivers and management looked cheap and greedy. That’s harder for public employees to achieve, in part because their customers, the taxpayers, also see themselves as their employers. And employers always hate strikes. But it’s not impossible. Teachers and public hospital nurses tend to have the greatest success, because often they can make the case that the services they provide are compromised by skinflint and inefficient management. Ask Arnold Schwarzenegger how his campaign against nurses turned out in 2006, when [he tried to cut nurse staffing ratios](https://www.labornotes.org/2006/02/california-nurses-lead-fight-against-arnold-schwarzeneggers-anti-union-ballot-measures) in state hospitals. On the other hand, BART drivers didn’t seem to have the public foursquare on their side in the recent job action. (That’s not even counting the contempt shown the BART drivers by some [overprivileged high-tech poobahs](https://www.latimes.com/business/hiltzik/la-fi-mh-bart-strike-20131021,0,1746516.story#axzz2ieiFIBxN)). But there’s no basis for the claim that public employee strikes, outside police and fire services, are uniquely dangerous or injurious to the community. Candidate Glazer complains that the BART strike forced commuters to find other means of getting to work or kept them home, hobbling the local economy. Yes, that’s right. The same thing would have happened if the transit system were privately run, as it is in some places. And strikes in any number of other private sector industries also hobble the local economy and impose hardships on some people. Milk strikes. Truck driver strikes. Telephone lineman strikes. Port strikes. Fast food worker strikes. The point in every case is not to minimize or moderate the impact, but try to stick the other side with the blame. And in that, public employees deserve no less the right than the rest of us to give it a shot.

#### [4] Strikes also promote union membership.

**Hodder et al 16** Andy Hodder/Mark Williams/John Kelly/Nick McCarthy, June 08 2016, “Does Strike Action stimulate trade union membership growth” (Andy Hodder is a **Lecturer in Employment Relations at the University of Birmingham**. Andy joined Birmingham Business School in September 2012 after completing a PhD at Keele University. Andy has conducted research on public sector union organizing and the relationship between young workers and trade unions.) https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/bjir.12188

Most of the literature on strikes has addressed one of four issues: causation, variation between sectors and countries, trends over time and the relationship between strikes and other forms of collective and individual protest. Very little research has addressed the equally important questions of strike outcomes and trade union membership despite the substantial body of research on the causes of trade union membership decline and strategies for membership growth. In this paper we reverse the usual sequence of trade union membership as a causal factor in the genesis of strikes and examine the impact of strikes on trade union membership levels. After setting out the relevant theory and hypotheses, we use a unique seven-year dataset of trade union membership joiners and leavers from a major British trade union with a substantial record of strike activity. Controlling for other possible determinants of trade union membership, we find that months in which there is strike action, whether national or local, are associated with a significantly higher rate of membership growth, measured both by the number of joiners and by the ratio of joiners to leavers. Data from new union members suggest that perceived injustice and perceived union effectiveness both motivate the decision to join.

#### [5] Unions stand for the freedom of all workers.

**EPI 17** Economic Policy Institute, August 24 2017, “Today’s labor unions give workers the power to improve their jobs and unrig the economy,” (The Economic Policy Institute is a 501 non-profit American, left-leaning think tank based in Washington, D.C., that carries out economic research and analyzes the economic impact of policies and proposals.) https://www.epi.org/press/todays-labor-unions-give-workers-the-power-to-improve-their-jobs-and-unrig-the-economy/

In a comprehensive new report, [***How today’s unions help working people***](https://www.epi.org/133275/pre/63e519b0745a6ebccaabe9ee34f7293de2c368784db59f1ac372cecaf10786fa/), EPI researchers detail how collective bargaining plays an essential role in today’s labor market, by raising working people’s wages and supporting a fair and prosperous economy as well as a vibrant democracy—and how workers’ freedom to join together and bargain with their employer is under attack. “Unions raise workers’ wages and strengthen their rights at work, but they also give working people a voice in our democracy,” said EPI President Lawrence Mishel. “We will never again see consistent robust middle-class wage growth or a healthy democracy without first rebuilding collective bargaining.” The report provides updated statistics on who today’s unions represent and where they are strongest. The authors point out that labor unions are more diverse than ever before: Union members include dental hygienists, graduate students, and digital journalists, as well as manufacturing workers and public-sector employees. About two-thirds of union workers age 18 to 64 are women or people of color. 14.5 percent of black workers age 18 to 64 are covered by a collective bargaining agreement, compared with 12.5 percent of white workers and 10.1 percent of Hispanic workers. “Today, more than 1 in 9 workers are represented by a union,” said EPI Policy Director Heidi Shierholz. “By exercising their freedom to join together and negotiate their wages and working conditions, workers gain a voice through their union. But that freedom is increasingly under threat. Anyone who supports working people or a healthy democracy should stand up and support unions and collective bargaining.” Collective bargaining is an important force in reducing inequality and ensuring that low- and middle-wage workers are given a fair return on their work. As productivity has risen over the last several decades, wages have remained flat for the majority of working people, while skyrocketing for those at the top. Union decline can explain one-third of the rise in wage inequality among men and one-fifth of the rise in wage inequality among women from 1973 to 2007. Among men, the erosion of collective bargaining has been the largest single factor driving a wedge between the middle class and the top 1 percent. Working people in unions use their power in numbers to secure a fairer share of the income they create. On average, a worker covered by a union contract earns 13.2 percent more in wages than a peer with similar education, occupation, and experience in a nonunionized workplace in the same sector. But importantly, collective bargaining also raise wages for nonunion workers—as an economic sector becomes more unionized, nonunion employers pay more to retain qualified workers, and norms of higher pay and better conditions become standard. If union density had remained at its 1979 level, weekly wages of *nonunion* men in the private sector would be 5 percent higher today. “The lack of collective worker power helps explain why workers’ wages have been stagnant for the past 40 years,” said Mishel, “and why working people are so frustrated—as they have not reaped any of the gains of an improving economy.” Unions help close racial wage gaps, by creating pay transparency, correcting salary discrepancies, establishing clearer terms for raises and promotions, disproportionately boosting the wages of lower-wage workers, and helping workers who have been discriminated against achieve equity. Hourly wages for women represented by unions are 9.2 percent higher on average than for comparable nonunionized women, and black and Hispanic workers get a disproportionate boost from unionization compared with their white counterparts. Despite decades of attacks by corporate interests and their political allies, we are seeing a resurgence of interest in collective bargaining, especially among young people. The report notes that unions are especially appealing to young workers. 55 percent of 18- to 29-year-old workers view unions favorably, compared with 46 percent of workers age 30 and older.

#### Reductions in workers’ wages and abuses of their rights are a limitation of autonomy because workers are forced to work under conditions which they did not reasonably agree to. When workers can’t quit because they need wages, employers can ignore their demands and exert their will over them. This is coercion by employers in the pursuit of increased wealth and control, meaning that it is not universalizable and is thus immoral.

#### An unconditional right to strike is the only way to guarantee workers a means of retaining their freedoms. It applies pressure on employers to provide workers with conditions that they fully comply with, which is a reclamation of their freedom and autonomy. Thus, voting Affirmative is the only moral option.