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

# **Framework**

### **I value justice because the resolution asks us what a just society would do. This means that according to the words of the resolution, the highest value is justice.**

### **The criterion is mitigating structural violence. Structural violence is the worst impact since it is a system of violence. Systems are worse than individual instances because systems operate under a logic that justifies infinite violence against already vulnerable groups by deeming them “invisible” or “sub-human”.**

#### **A paradigm that is focused on maximizing utility is easily used to justify atrocities putting the interests of the common good over the rights of minorities.**

#### **Structural violence is built into the system we live in, only through acknowledging and thinking inclusionary can we begin to dismantle it**

*Winter*, D., *and* D. *Leighton*. "Structural violence section introduction." Accessed September 8 (19*99*): 2003.

Direct violence is horrific, but its brutality usually gets our attention: we notice it, and often respond to it. *Structural violence*, however, *is* almost always invisible, *embedded in* ubiquitous *social structures, normalized by* stable *institutions and regular experience.* Structural violence occurs whenever people are disadvantaged by political, legal, economic or cultural traditions. Because they are longstanding, structural inequities usually seem ordinary, the way things are and always have been. The chapters in this section teach us about some important but invisible forms of structural violence, and alert us to the powerful cultural mechanisms that create and maintain them over generations. *Structured inequities produce suffering and death* as often as direct violence does, though the damage is slower, more subtle, more common, and more difficult to repair. Globally, poverty is correlated with infant mortality, infectious disease, and shortened lifespans. Whenever people are denied access to society's resources, physical and psychological violence exists.

Johan Galtung originally framed the term structural violence to refer to any constraint on human potential due to economic and political structures (1969). Unequal access to resources, to political power, to education, to health care, or to legal standing, are forms of structural violence. When inner city children have inadequate schools while others do not, when gays and lesbians are fired for their sexual orientation, when laborers toil in inhumane conditions, when people of color endure environmental toxins in their neighborhoods, structural violence exists. Unfortunately, even those who are victims of structural violence often do not see the systematic ways in which their plight is choreographed by unequal and unfair distribution of society's resources.

*Structural violence is problematic in and of itself, but it is also dangerous because it frequently leads to direct violence.* Those who are chronically oppressed are often, for logical reasons, those who resort to direct violence. For example, cross-national studies of murder have shown a positive correlation between economic inequality and homicide rates across 40 nations (Hansmann & Quigley, 1982; Unnithan & Whitt, 1992). In the U.S., racial inequality in wealth is correlated with murder rates (Blau & Golden, 1986).Often elites must use direct violence to curb the unrest produced by structural violence. For example, during the 1980s, mean income disparity between whites and blacks in the same urban area predicted use of deadly force by police (Jacobs & O'Brien, 1998). Structural violence often requires police states to suppress resentments and social unrest. Huge income disparities in many Latin American countries are protected by correspondingly huge military operations, which in turn drain resources away from social programs and produce even more structural violence. Organized armed conflict in various parts of the world is easily traced to structured inequalities. Northern Ireland, for example, has been marked by economic disparities between Northern Irish Catholics-- who have higher unemployment rates and less formal education--and Protestants (Cairns & Darby, 1998). In Sri Lanka, youth unemployment and underemployment exacerbates ethnic conflict (Rogers, Spencer & Uyangoda, 1998). In Rwanda, huge disparities between the Hutu and Tutsies eventually led to ethnic massacres.

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 justice and living wages, providing prenatal care, alleviating sexism, and celebrating local cultures, will be our most surefooted path to building lasting peace.

# **Contention 1: Collective Action**

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

*Bahn et. al.* “Wage discrimination and the exploitation of workers in the U.S. labor market.” Washington Center for Equitable Growth, 15 Sep. 20*20*, <https://equitablegrowth.org/research-paper/wage-discrimination-and-the-exploitation-of-workers-in-the-u-s-labor-market/>. Kate Bahn is the director of labor market policy and economist at the Washington Center for Equitable Growth. Her areas of research include gender, race, and ethnicity in the labor market, care work, and monopsonistic labor markets.

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

#### **The right to strike is the fundamental right for union negotiation**

*Myall*, James. “Right to Strike Would Level the Playing Field for Public Workers, with Benefits for All of Us.” Maine Center for Economic Policy, 17 Apr. 20*19*, https://www.mecep.org/blog/right-to-strike-would-level-the-playing-field-for-public-workers-with-benefits-for-all-of-us/.[James Myall](https://www.mecep.org/author/james-myall/) is a Policy analyst for [@MECEP1](https://twitter.com/MECEP1) . Member, Maine Permanent Commission on Racial, Indigenous & Tribal Pops. British. Recovering historian.

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

#### **Collective action, i.e. unions participating in strikes, is essential to social movements.**

Marc *Dixon and*, Vincent J. *Roscigno* “Status, Networks, and Social Movement Participation: The Case of Striking Workers.” American Journal of Sociology, May. 20*03*, <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/VRoscigno/publication/254316446_Status_Networks_and_Social_Movement_Participation_The_Case_of_Striking_Workers/links/54ce46a40cf298d656606f5d/Status-Networks-and-Social-Movement-Participation-The-Case-of-Striking-Workers.pdf>. Vincent J. Roscigno has been a professor at The Ohio State University, Department of Sociology, Columbus, United States for 25 years. Marc Dixon is a Professor and Chair, Department of Sociology with a B.A. University of Vermont, M.A. Ohio State University, and Ph.D. Ohio State University.

This article extends the understanding of social movement participation, and strike action specifically. Building on prior social movement and labor analyses, we suggested that *participation in collective action will be patterned by* both calculations associated with status position and the embeddedness of actors in networks—*networks that may condition decision making processes through information, grievance sharing, and identity building* or that may more directly pressure individuals to act. The case of a labor strike on a large university campus provided the opportunity to address these questions with appropriate and unique data. These data include straightforward measures of participation, demographics on participants and nonparticipants alike, and network indicators that are meaningful given our population of interest and the actual form of mobilization examined. Findings revealed the importance of background and workplace status, and their associations, for individual strike involvement. African American and other racial and *ethnic minority employees displayed higher levels of strike participation* relative to whites. *This is* partially *attributable to their disparate concentration in lower-paying* custodial *work.* Here, the absolute income costs of participation are lower and wage grievances arguably more pronounced—something quite evident in our qualitative observations of protest events and pickets. Maintenance and especially skilled workers, in contrast, experienced a contradictory intrastatus tension between rewards on the one hand (which decrease strike support) and *union loyalty* and history (which *increase strike support*) on the other. Indeed, once we accounted for the depressant effect of their higher incomes, these workers were the most likely to strike. Importantly, as noted in our background discussion*, this particular mobilization* framed issues broadly and mostly in material terms. This *served to bridge potential interstatus divides between black and white workers and between low- and high-skilled workers.* Such findings inform labor and social movement research given the explicit focus on the complexities of class and other background statuses in relation to action. Labor research, because of data limitations, has been somewhat limited in this regard to examinations of single occupations or relatively homogeneous workforces. Thus, variation in status impact and mobilization potential among advantaged and disadvantaged groups is often overlooked. This is unfortunate, as the status divisions and pulls specified here are relevant not just to labor mobilization but to social movement participation and persistence generally. Most movements, in fact, attempt to appeal to distinct social groups. In order to persist, they must also successfully negotiate internal status divisions. Social Movement Participation and Striking Workers 1321 Equally, if not more important, is our finding that strike participation is shaped by more than individual status, income, and identity. Networks, too, are influential. Results indicated that, above and beyond individual causes, class identity within networks and especially strike action among those in one’s unit have implications for individual involvement. Both quantitative results and supplemental ethnographic material suggest that workplace networks are crucial through grievance sharing and identity formation prior to the strike, as well as through individual decision making and calculations at a pivotal point. Here, an initial core of strikers in the unit appeared to be influential for engaging others in strike mobilization. The results also suggested, through a declining but persistent positive effect of network strike support, a possibility that there are lingering costs associated with not striking when others in one’s unit do.

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

*Day*, Meagan. “Unions Are Essential for Eliminating Racism.” Jacobin, July 20*20*, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2020/07/multiracial-solidarity-unions>. Meagan Day is a staff writer at Jacobin. She is the coauthor of [Bigger than Bernie: How We Go from the Sanders Campaign to Democratic Socialism](https://www.versobooks.com/books/3167-bigger-than-bernie).

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

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

But lots of workplaces are racially diverse. The *distinct feature of unions is that workers from disparate backgrounds are encouraged to view their interests as bound together.* And in many cases, they have opportunities to make collective decisions about how they want their union to be run, and to work together to secure common victories. Some unions are more democratic or better at member engagement than others. Indeed this presents a strong argument for building more democratic unions, for it’s in active cooperation that people are most likely to have their inherited prejudices challenged and their worldview transformed. Unions give people the opportunity to routinely practice multiracial solidarity. Not only that, but *they incentivize* it: the more cooperative union members are, the *greater unity* they will have heading into a workplace struggle, and the greater the eventual reward for all. In that sense, diverse democratic unions can be schools of cross-racial cooperation, which are sorely lacking and desperately needed in our racially stratified society.

#### **Unions provide better conditions for all workers.**

*Bahn et. al.* “Wage discrimination and the exploitation of workers in the U.S. labor market.” Washington Center for Equitable Growth, 15 Sep. 20*20*, <https://equitablegrowth.org/research-paper/wage-discrimination-and-the-exploitation-of-workers-in-the-u-s-labor-market/>. Kate Bahn is the director of labor market policy and economist at the Washington Center for Equitable Growth. Her areas of research include gender, race, and ethnicity in the labor market, care work, and monopsonistic labor markets.

There are several policy options for restoring worker power in the United States. First, policymakers can strengthen unions, expand their ability to organize workers, and make it easier for workers to form unions by passing pro-labor policies such as the [Protecting the Right to Organize Act](https://equitablegrowth.org/factsheet-the-pro-act-addresses-income-inequality-by-boosting-the-organizing-power-of-u-s-workers/), which passed in the U.S. House of Representatives but stalled in the U.S. Senate earlier this year.[42](https://equitablegrowth.org/research-paper/wage-discrimination-and-the-exploitation-of-workers-in-the-u-s-labor-market/?longform=true#footnote-42) In *boosting worker bargaining power and collective action*, [unions *limit employers’ ability to exploit workers*](https://equitablegrowth.org/working-papers/how-does-market-power-affect-wages-monopsony-and-collective-action-in-an-institutional-context/)*.*[43](https://equitablegrowth.org/research-paper/wage-discrimination-and-the-exploitation-of-workers-in-the-u-s-labor-market/?longform=true#footnote-43) Unions are proven institutions through which workers can negotiate with employers for higher pay and better, safer working conditions. The *r*ight *t*o *s*trike and act collectively *remains incredibly important for workers to be able to demand better pay and working conditions or protest unfair treatment.* [Research](https://equitablegrowth.org/what-kind-of-labor-organizations-do-u-s-workers-want/) on the types of unions and unionization benefits that the U.S. workforce wants shows how important the ability to organize and bargain collectively is to workers.[44](https://equitablegrowth.org/research-paper/wage-discrimination-and-the-exploitation-of-workers-in-the-u-s-labor-market/?longform=true#footnote-44) Not only does it help workers themselves, but *direct contact with strikes and those striking can also lead to higher overall public support* for organized labor. [One study](https://equitablegrowth.org/working-papers/do-teacher-strikes-make-parents-pro-or-anti-labor-the-effects-of-labor-unrest-on-mass-attitudes/) of the 2018 teacher strikes in the United States, for instance, showed that parents who had firsthand exposure to the walk-outs were more likely to support the teachers who were striking and more likely to join a union or support unionization.[45](https://equitablegrowth.org/research-paper/wage-discrimination-and-the-exploitation-of-workers-in-the-u-s-labor-market/?longform=true#footnote-45) Only around 10 percent of private-sector workers are union members today, but [studies](https://equitablegrowth.org/what-kind-of-labor-organizations-do-u-s-workers-want/) now show that many more nonunionized workers want to belong to one.[46](https://equitablegrowth.org/research-paper/wage-discrimination-and-the-exploitation-of-workers-in-the-u-s-labor-market/?longform=true#footnote-46) Even those workers who are not union members benefit from strong unionization thanks to [spillover effects](http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/ecs/events/seminar/seminar-papers/23%20April%202019.pdf),[47](https://equitablegrowth.org/research-paper/wage-discrimination-and-the-exploitation-of-workers-in-the-u-s-labor-market/?longform=true#footnote-47) wherein unions set job-quality standards that nonunion firms must meet in order to remain attractive and compete for workers. Earlier this year, Harvard University’s Labor and Worklife Program announced a set of policies designed to address economic and political inequality in the United States through a new legal framework that would rebalance power in the labor market.[48](https://equitablegrowth.org/research-paper/wage-discrimination-and-the-exploitation-of-workers-in-the-u-s-labor-market/?longform=true#footnote-48) The “[clean slate for worker power](https://equitablegrowth.org/clean-slate-for-worker-power-promotes-a-fair-and-inclusive-u-s-economy/)” agenda proposals include new activities for organized labor to participate in and expansions of collective bargaining coverage in graduated representation levels, as well as a path to achieve sectoral bargaining across the economy. [All of the policies proposed](https://equitablegrowth.org/factsheet-how-strong-unions-can-restore-workers-bargaining-power/) would enhance worker power and strengthen unions, ensuring that employers aren’t able to freely take advantage of their workers in order to maximize profits.[49](https://equitablegrowth.org/research-paper/wage-discrimination-and-the-exploitation-of-workers-in-the-u-s-labor-market/?longform=true#footnote-49) Likewise, repealing state-level right-to-work laws would increase unions’ power and ability to protect workers from exploitation. So, too, would repealing [the Taft-Hartley Act](https://www.nlrb.gov/about-nlrb/who-we-are/our-history/1947-taft-hartley-substantive-provisions), which allows states to pass right-to-work laws.[50](https://equitablegrowth.org/research-paper/wage-discrimination-and-the-exploitation-of-workers-in-the-u-s-labor-market/?longform=true#footnote-50)

#### **Strikes work at making progressive changes – teachers prove.**

*Beckett 18*: Ben Beckett is an American writer in Vienna. “Public Sector Workers Should Have the Right to Strike” 08.13.2018 AA

*Politicians have plenty to fear from striking* public *workers.* The public sector [remains](https://www.bls.gov/news.release/union2.t03.htm) a comparative bastion of union strength, with unions representing about 38 percent of public sector workers nationwide, compared to about 7 percent of workers in the private sector. [In New York state](https://www.gc.cuny.edu/CUNY_GC/media/CUNY-Graduate-Center/PDF/Press%20Room/Union_Density_2017_C.pdf), about 72 percent of public sector workers are in unions, versus 15 percent in the private sector. This year alone, *in Arizona, Oklahoma, and West Virginia, striking teachers won major concessions from* hostile, *right-wing state governments.* Reactionary politicians and capitalists from Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker to the forces behind [the Janus case](https://jacobinmag.com/2018/06/labors-choice-after-janus) understand the potential power of public unions to advance progressive causes — that is precisely why they have attacked them so viciously. Public sector workers occupy a strategic place in the labor market because so many of their jobs are critical to society’s functioning. That means the potential power of withdrawing their labor is magnified beyond their immediate job site. *The* recent *teachers’ strikes were so effective because school closures forced thousands of parents to significantly alter their routines.* The New York City transit strike of 2005 lasted only three days, but because it made transportation across the city extremely difficult, it was [estimated](http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/chaos-commuters-scramble-work-twu-hit-article-1.616088) to cost the city and businesses hundreds of millions of dollars in lost fares and revenue. And while conditions vary, public sector strikes generally have a lot of public support. One reason for that is from [nurses](https://www.jacobinmag.com/2018/07/vermont-nurses-strike-bernie-sanders) to [teachers](https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/04/chicago-teachers-union-strike-karen-lewis/) to [welfare workers](https://www.jacobinmag.com/2018/07/kim-moody-new-left-working-class-labor-notes), better conditions for the people they serve are often among public workers’ core demands. Even when strikes are not linked directly to social demands, a majority of Americans [do not support](https://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/01/us/01poll.html) weakening public sector unions. However, for unions, a comparison between the West Virginia teachers’ strike and the New York City transit strike is instructive. *West Virginia teachers organized parents and community members* for months ahead of the strike*. They tied their working conditions to children’s learning conditions, making clear how their demands would benefit virtually everyone*. Transit workers did not make such arguments, and support for their strike was nowhere near as high as that of the teachers. Public sector unions have to make clear that when they walk off the job, they are striking to benefit the people they serve as much as themselves. *When schools are closed*, when buses don’t run, when trash goes uncollected and [mail undelivered](https://jacobinmag.com/2018/05/postal-strike-1970-wildcat-rank-and-file-unions), *it affects not just the employer, but nearly everyone.* The pressure on government bosses to settle is therefore extremely high. And when public sector workers strike, they have the power to win transformative victories. From both elected officials’ and union heads’ reaction to Nixon’s right-to-strike proposal, we can see that neither side wants to face this prospect. We should make them.

# **Contention 2: Class Domination**

#### **Racism is inevitable as long as a capitalist society is upheld**

*Calathes*, Professor of Criminal Justice at New Jersey City University, *‘17*

(William, 10/12/17, Contemporary Justice Review: Issues in Criminal, Social, and Restorative Justice, “Racial capitalism and punishment philosophy and practices: what really stands in the way of prison abolition, Volume 20, MLiao)

From prior to its inception, the United States has had a *political economy built through the extraction of surplus value from racialized bodies (e.g. indentured servitude, dispossession of indigenous lands, chattel slavery)* that are connected to ‘racially ontological hierarchies of space, which *permit*ted *the hyper-exploitation of* certain (*colorized) bodies and lands’* (McIntyre & Nast, 2011, p. 1466). *Racialization is the core quality of capitalism because capitalism needs race to exploit*, and the promotion of racial animus has been a core practice of the dominant white elite class. This exploitative racialized structural arrangement, however, has historic origins that predate this nation.

#### **The right to strike is the right to resist oppression – it allows workers to check the unilateral nature of the bargaining process**

*Lim ’19:* Woojin Lim. “The Right to Strike”. December 11th, 2019. The Harvard Crimson.<https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2019/12/11/lim-right-to-strike/>. FD

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.*

#### **Striking is a human right – it’s key to resisting the worst aspects of neoliberalism**

*Ewing ’10*: Keith Ewing. “Yes, Striking is a Human Right”. The Guardian. March 26th, 2010.<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/libertycentral/2010/mar/26/ba-strike-human-rights>. FD.

It begins with the International Labour Organisation's [convention on the right to organise and bargain collectively](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_of_Association_and_Protection_of_the_Right_to_Organise_Convention,_1948) of 1948, which a British Labour government was the first to ratify; followed by the [Council of Europe's social charter](http://www.coe.int/T/DGHL/Monitoring/SocialCharter/) of 1961, which a British Tory government was the first to ratify; followed, in turn, by the UN's [international covenant on economic, social and cultural rights](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cescr.htm) of 1966. The British government has been told by the international human rights community that it must relax the existing legal restrictions and stop treating a lawful strike as a breach (rather than a suspension) of the worker's contract of employment. If our law met our international obligations, it would not be possible for [bully boy Willie Walsh](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2010/mar/25/ba-strike-letter-academics-walsh) unilaterally to [withdraw the travel perks](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/transport/7526928/BA-chief-Willie-Walsh-says-loss-of-strikers-travel-perks-not-negotiable.html)of BA crew, as announced this week. But more than that – international law requires us to allow workers and their unions to take solidarity and sympathy action to help fellow workers in dispute. It is, after all, one of the purposes of joining a union – mutual aid in times of need, though not in Britain. Just as Walsh is allowed to engage in [secondary action](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2010/mar/25/ba-strike-letter-academics-walsh) by using other companies to carry his passengers, so (says the international human rights community) the union should have the right to call on other unions to put real economic pressure on BA by refusing to handle its planes. Labour, of course, is paralysed by its *neoliberal love of the free market*, which it *places above its weak commitment to the rule of law*. But help may be at hand. The European court of human rights has recently ruled that the right to freedom of association in article 11 of that treaty must include the right to strike, and has suggested that the scope and content of that right must reflect as a minimum the standards set by the ILO. This opens the possibility of British unions recovering from the Strasbourg court the rights lost in the political process. So let us say it loudly, and let us say it clearly: *the r*ight *t*o *s*trike *is a human right; it should be better**protected* than it is; and the British *government should take steps now* to comply with its international obligations. The exercise of the right to strike is the mark of free society, where discord is accepted as normal, and conflict regarded as healthy. The real question we should be asking is not why do people strike, but why they do not do so more often? To respond by saying that workers are all happy bunnies compared with their forebears would not be the right answer. Strikes may be inconvenient and they may be frustrating. So is the exercise of other human rights. But *if you don't want strikes, it is up to you to provide a better answer to the* problem of the bully *employer who can tear up contracts and impose unilateral changes to working conditions knowing that workers have* no option but to accept, and *no meaningful* legal *redress* in the courts. In the meantime, where is the Equality and Human Rights Commission, and where is the rest of the human rights brigade ([Liberty](http://www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk/) and [Justice](http://www.justice.org.uk/enterb/index1.html))? It's about time you [put your weight behind workers](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2010/mar/26/ba-strikers-deserve-public-support) who exercise their human rights, and do so against the ugly background of the rightwing press in full spate.

freedoms over property rights

#### **Class domination results in forms myriad of oppression and causes poverty.**

*Gourevitch ’12*: Alex Gourevitch. “A Radical Defense of the Right to Strike”. Jacobin. July 12th, 2018.<https://jacobinmag.com/2018/07/right-to-strike-freedom-civil-liberties-oppression>. FD.

[Class-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.

#### **Strikes are an articulation of worker power over production – they refuse capitalist organization of labor and halt the operation of capitalist society**

*Tronti 1966*

“Workers and Capital.” Tronti, Mario. 1966.<https://libcom.org/book/export/html/42233>

Mario Tronti was the principal theorist of the radical political movement of the 1960s known in Italy as operaismo and in the Anglophone world as Italian workerism, a current which went on to inform the development of autonomist Marxism. His “Copernican revolution”—the proposal that working class struggles against exploitation propel capitalist development, which can only be understood as a reaction that seeks to harness this antagonism—has inspired dissident leftists around the world.

Adam Smith says - and Marx comments on the accuracy of his observation -that the effective development of the productive power of labour begins when labour is transformed into wage labour, that is, when the conditions of labour confront it in the form of capital. One could go further and say that the effective development of the political power of labour really begins from the moment that labourers are transformed into workers, that is, when the whole of the conditions of society confront them as capital. We can see, then, that the political power of workers is intimately connected to the productive power of wage labour. This is in contrast to the power of capital, which is primarily a social power. *The power of workers resides in their potential command over production*, that is, over a particular aspect of society. Capitalist power, on the other hand, rests on a real domination over society in general. But the nature of *capital* is such that it *requires a society based on production*. Consequently production, this particular respect of society, becomes the aim of society in general*. Whoever controls* and dominates *it controls* and dominates *everything*. Even if factory and society were to become perfectly integrated at the economic level, nevertheless, at a political level, they would forever continue to be in contradiction. One of the highest and most developed points of the class struggle will be precisely the frontal clash between the factory, as working class and society, as capital. *When* the development of *capital's interests in the factory is blocked, then the functioning of society seizes up: the way is* then *open for overthrowing* and destroying *the very basis of capital's power*. Those, however, who have the contrary perspective, of taking over the running of the "general interests of society", are committing the error of reducing the factory to capital by means of reducing the working class, that is, a part of society, to society as a whole. Now we know that the productive Dower of labour makes a leap forward when it is put to use by the individual capitalist. By the same token, it makes a political leap forward when it is organised by social capital. It is possible that this political leap forward does not express itself in terms of organisation, whereupon an outsider may conclude that it has not happened. Yet it still exists as a material reality, and the fact of its spontaneous existence is sufficient for the workers to refuse to fight for old ideals - though it may not yet be sufficient for them to take upon themselves the task of initiating a new plan of struggle, based on new objectives. So, can we say that we are still living through the long historical period in which Marx saw the workers as a "class against capital", but not yet as a "class for itself"? Or shouldn't we perhaps say the opposite, even if it means confounding a bit the terms of Hegel's dialectic? Namely, that the workers become, from the first, "a class for itself" - that is, - from the first moments of direct confrontation with the individual employer - and that they are recognised as such by the first capitalists. And only afterwards,after a long-terrible, historical travail which is, perhaps, not yet completed, do the workers arrive at the point of being actively, subjectively, "a class against capital". A prerequisite of this process of transition is political organisation, the party, with its demand for total power. In the intervening period there is the refusal - collective, mass, expressed in passive forms - of the workers to expose themselves as "a class against capital" without that organisation of their own, without that total demand for power. The working class does what it is. But it is, at one and the same time, the articulation of capital, and its dissolution. Capitalist power seeks to use the workers' antagonistic will-to-struggle as a motor of its own development. The workerist party must take this same real mediation by the workers of capital's interests and organise it in an antagonistic form, as the tactical terrain of struggle and as a strategic potential for destruction. Here there is only one reference point - only one orientation - for the opposed world views of the two classes - namely the class of workers. Whether one's aim is to stabilise the development of the system or to destroy it forever, it is the working class that is decisive. Thus the society of capital and the workers' party find themselves existing as two opposite forms with one and the same content. And in the struggle for that content, the one form excludes the 'other. They can only exist together for the brief period of the revolutionary crisis. The working class cannot constitute itself as aparty within capitalist society without preventing capitalist society from functioning. As long as capitalist does continue to function the working class party cannot be said to exist. Remember: "the existence of a class of capitalists is based on the productive power of labour". Productive labour, then, exists not only in relation to capital, but also in relation to the capitalists as a class. It is in this latter relationship that it exists as the working class. The transition is probably a historical one: it is productive labour which produces capital; it is the fact of industrial workers being organised into a class that provokes the capitalists in general to constitute themselves as a class. Thus we see that - at an average level of development - workers are already a social class of producers: industrial producers of capital. At this same level of development the capitalists, themselves, constitute a social class not of entrepreneurs so much as organisers: the organisers of workers through the medium of industry. A history of industry cannot be conceived as anything other than a history of the capitalist organisation of productive labour, hence as a working class history of capital. The "industrial revolution" necessarily I springs to mind: This must be the starting point of our research if we are to trace the development of The contemporary form of capital's domination over workers, as it increasingly comes to be exercised through the objective mechanisms of industry, and also the development of capital's capacity to prevent these mechanisms being used by workers. This would lead us to see that the development of the relationship between living labour and the constant part of capital is not a neutral process. Rather, it is determined, and often violently so, by the emerging class relationship between the collective worker and the whole of capital, qua social relations of production. We would then see that it is the specific moments of the class struggle which have determined every technological change in the mechanisms of industry. Thus we would achieve two things: one, we would break free of the apparent neutrality of the man-machine relationship; and two, we would locate this relationship in the interaction, through history, of working class struggles and capitalist initiative. It is wrong to define present day society as "industrial civilisation". The "industry" of that definition is, in fact, merely a means.' The truth of modern society is that it is the civilisation of labour. Furthermore, a capitalist society can never be anything but this. And, in the course of its historical development, it can even take on the form of "socialism". So.... not industrial society (that is, the society of capital) but the society of industrial labour, and thus the society of workers' labour. It is capitalist society seen from this point of view that we must find the courage to fight. *What are workers doing when they struggle against their employers?* Are they not they, above all else, *saying "No" to the transformation of labour power into labour*? Are they not, more than anything, *refusing to receive work from the capitalist*? Couldn't we say, in fact, that stopping work does not signify a refusal to give capital the use of one's labour power, since it has already been given to capital once the contract for this particular commodity has been signed. Nor is it a refusal to allow capital the product of labour, since this is legally already capital's property, and, in any case, the worker does not know what to do with it. Rather, stopping work - *the strike*, as the classic form of workers' struggle - *implies a refusal of the command of capital as the organiser of production*: it is a way of saying "No" at a particular point in the process and a refusal of the concrete labour which is being' offered; it is a momentary.' blockage of the work-process and it appears as a recurring threat which derives its content from the process of value creation. The anarcho-syndicalist "general strike", which was supposed to provoke the collapse of capitalist society, is a romantic naivete from the word go. It already contains within it a demand which it appears to oppose - that is, the Lassallian demand for a "fair share of the fruits of labour" - in other words, a fairer "participation" in the profit of capital. In fact, these two perspectives combine in that incorrect "correction" which was imposed on Marx, and which has subsequently enjoyed such success within the practice of the official working class movement - the idea that it is "working people" who are The true "givers of labour", and that it is the concern of workpeople to defend the dignity of this thing which they provide, against all those who would seek to debase it. Untrue...The truth of the matter is that the person who provides labour is the capitalist. The worker is the provider of capital. In reality, he is the possessor of that unique, particular commodity which is the condition of all the other conditions of production. Because, as we have seen, all These other conditions of production are, from the start, capital in themselves - a dead capital which, in order to come to life and into play in the social relations of production, needs to subsume under itself labour power, as the subject and activity of capital. But, as we have also seen, this transition into social relations of production cannot occur unless the class relation is introduced into it as its content. And the class relationship is imposed from the very 'first moment and by the very fact that the proletariat is constituted as a class in the face of the capitalist.