## 1

#### The standard is mitigating structural violence.

#### 1] The ROB is to vote for the debater who best endorses actions that criticize and expose social structures of domination and oppression. The purpose of debate education should be to train youth to challenge oppressive structures, not perpetuate them.

**Bohmer [[1]](#footnote-1)991** “Teaching Privileged Students about Gender, Race, and Class Oppression.” Teaching Sociology, Vol. 19, No. 2 (April, 1991) pp. 154-163 Susanne Bohmer

Our strong emphasis on institutional oppression is not only due to our sociological approach to social psychology; it is also an outcome of our interactions with students. Let us repeat that most of our students are white and middle class [students], with limited exposure to group diversity. Much of the material we present is new to them and often difficult to absorb. One of their major problems lies in moving from individualistic explanations to a sociological analysis. Teaching in this setting, we have found that a focus on micro-level processes is fruitful only after we have addressed the concept of institutional oppression. Without an understanding of institutional aspects students decontextualize social interactions; they equate prejudice with oppression and argue that members of privileged groups are also oppressed. This position, of course, is untenable if we want the concept to remain useful for an analysis of class, race, and gender relations in our society. Even while we emphasize institutional barriers for members of oppressed groups, we do not deny human agency by portraying oppressed individuals as trapped entirely by the confines of society. Balancing the two perspectives, however, is difficult, and the outcome depends strongly on our audience. With primarily white, middle-class students, who tend to advance individualistic explanations and who seem largely unaware of the institutional nature of oppression, we believe it is appropriate to stress barriers and limitations. If we taught a more diverse population we are certain that our discussion of oppression would focus more sharply on human agency as a potential for change. It can be both trying and challenging to integrate considerations of race, gender, and class into an introductory course on social psychology. We have experienced resistance, guilt, anger, and denial from many of our privileged students. Our greatest frustration is that students are reinforced in their resistance and denial because they experience little follow-up in other classes and have little ongoing exposure to the concepts we have introduced. We believe, however, that exposure to the concept of oppression in our classes helps at least some studentsto gain a greater understanding and appreciation for those who are different from themselves. Such exposure also leads s**ome** students to raise questions in other courses that **do not take race, gender, and class into account. These students, who we hope will** apply their knowledge to their everyday interactions with members of other groups, [**and] encourage us to find new ways of introducing race, gender, and class into the sociology curriculum.**

#### 2] Morality must start from the non-ideal circumstances we have inherited. We can never achieve the ideal consequences that ethical theories aspire for without a focus on social reality

Mills 05 Charles W. Mills, “Ideal Theory” as Ideology, 2005

I suggest that this spontaneous reaction, far from being philosophically naïve or jejune, is in fact the correct one. If we start from what is presumably the uncontroversial premise that the ultimate point of ethics is to guide our actions and make ourselves better people and the world a better place, then the framework above will not only be unhelpful, but will in certain respects be deeply antithetical to the proper goal of theoretical ethics as an enterprise. In modeling humans, human capacities, human interaction, human institutions, and human society on ideal-as-idealized-models, in never exploring how deeply different this is from ideal-as-descriptive-models, we are abstracting away from realities crucial to our comprehension of the actual workings of injustice in human interactions and social institutions, and thereby guaranteeing that the ideal-as-idealized-model will never be achieved.

#### 3] This approach to ethics justifies focus on resolving material conditions of violence. Morality isn’t just something that we strive for in a vacuum, rather, we resolve it based on the empirical world.

**Pappas 16** Gregory Fernando Pappas [Texas A&M University] “The Pragmatists’ Approach to Injustice”, The Pluralist Volume 11, Number 1, Spring 2016,

In Experience and Nature, Dewey names the empirical way of doing philosophy the “denotative method” (LW 1:371).18 What Dewey means by “denotation” is simply the phase of an empirical inquiry where we are con- cerned with designating, as free from theoretical presuppositions as possible, the concrete problem (subject matter) for which we can provide different and even competing descriptions and theories. Thus an empirical inquiry about an injustice must begin with a rough and tentative designation of where the injustices from within the broader context of our everyday life and activities are. Once we designate the subject matter, we then engage in the inquiry itself, including diagnosis, possibly even constructing theories and developing concepts. Of course, that is not the end of the inquiry. We must then take the results of that inquiry “as a path pointing and leading back to something in primary experience” (LW 1:17). This looping back is essential, and it neverends as long as there are new experiences of injustice that may require a revi- sion of our theories.¶ Injustices are events suffered by concrete people at a particular time and in a situation. We need to start by pointing out and describing these proble-matic experiences instead of starting with a theoretical account or diagnosis of them. Dewey is concerned with the consequences of not following the methodological advice to distinguish designation from diagnosis. Definitions, theoretical criteria, and diagnosis can be useful; they have their proper place and function once inquiry is on its way, but if stressed too much at the start of inquiry, they can blind us to aspects of concrete problems that escape our theoretical lenses. We must attempt to pretheoretically designate the subject matter, that is, to “point” in a certain direction, even with a vague or crude description of the problem. But, for philosophers, this task is not easy because, for instance, we are often too prone to interpret the particular problem in a way that verifies our most cherished theories of injustice.One must be careful to designate the subject matter in such a way as not to slant the question in favor of one’s theory or theoretical preconceptions. A philosopher must make an honest effort to designate the injustices based on what is experienced as such because a concrete social problem (e.g., injustice) is independent and neutral with respect to the different possible competing diagnoses or theories about its causes. Otherwise, there is no way to test or adjudicate between competing accounts.¶ That designation precedes diagnosis is true of any inquiry that claims to be empirical. To start with the diagnosis is to not start with the problem. The problem is pretheoretical or preinquiry, not in any mysterious sense but in that it is first suffered by someone in a particular context. Otherwise, the diagnosis about the causes of the problem has nothing to be about, and the inquiry cannot even be initiated. In his Logic, Dewey lays out the pattern of all empirical inquiries (LW 12). All inquiries start with what he calls an “indeterminate situation,” prior even to a “problematic situation.” Here is a sketch of the process:¶ Indeterminate situation → problematic situation → diagnosis: What is the problem? What is the solution? (operations of analysis, ideas, observations, clarification, formulating and testing hypothesis, reasoning, etc.) → final judgment (resolution: determinate situation)¶ To make more clear or vivid the difference of the starting point between Anderson and Dewey, we can use the example (or analogy) of medical prac- tice, one that they both use to make their points.19 The doctor’s startingpoint is the experience of a particular illness of a particular patient, that is, the concrete and unique embodied patient experiencing a disruption or prob- lematic change in his life. “The patient having something the matter with him is antecedent; but being ill (having the experience of illness) is not the same as being an object of knowledge.”20 The problem becomes an object of knowledge once the doctor engages in a certain interaction with the patient, analysis, and testing that leads to a diagnosis. For Dewey, “diagnosis” occurs when the doctor is already engaged in operations of experimental observation in which he is already narrowing the field of relevant evidence, concerned with the correlation between the nature of the problem and possible solu- tions. Dewey explains the process: “A physician . . . is called by a patient. His original material of experience is thereby provided. This experienced object sets the problem of inquiry. . . . He calls upon his store of knowledge to sug- gest ideas that may aid him in reaching a judgment as to the nature of the trouble and its proper treatment.”21¶ Just as with the doctor, empirical inquirers about injustice must return to the concrete problem for testing, and should never forget that their con- ceptual abstractions and general knowledge are just means to ameliorate what is particular, context-bound, and unique. In reaching a diagnosis, the doc- tor, of course, relies on all of his background knowledge about diseases and evidence, but a good doctor never forgets the individuality of the particular problem (patient and illness).¶ The physician in diagnosing a case of disease deals with something in- dividualized. He draws upon a store of general principles of physiology, etc., already at his command. Without this store of conceptual material he is helpless. But he does not attempt to reduce the case to an exact specimen of certain laws of physiology and pathology, or do away with its unique individuality. Rather he uses general statements as aids to direct his observation of the particular case, so as to discover what it is like. They function as intellectual tools or instrumentalities. (LW 4:166)¶ Dewey uses the example of the doctor to emphasize the radical contex- tualism and particularism of his view. The good doctor never forgets that this patient and “this ill is just the specific ill that it is. It never is an exact duplicate of anything else.”22 Similarly, the empirical philosopher in her in- quiry about an injustice brings forth general knowledge or expertise to an inquiry into the causes of an injustice. She relies on sociology and history as well as knowledge of different forms of injustice, but it is all in the service of inquiry about the singularity of each injustice suffered in a situation.¶ The correction or refinement that I am making to Anderson’s character- ization of the pragmatists’ approach is not a minor terminological or scholarly point; it has methodological and practical consequences in how we approach an injustice. The distinction between the diagnosis and the problem (the ill- ness, the injustice) is an important functional distinction that must be kept in inquiry because it keeps us alert to the provisional and hypothetical aspect of any diagnosis**.** To rectify or improve any diagnosis, we must return to the concrete problem; as with the patient, this may require attending as much as possible to the uniqueness of the problem. This is in the same spirit as Aon’s preference for an empirical inquiry that tries to “capture all of the expressive harms” in situations of injustice. But this requires that we begin with and return to concrete experiences of injustice and not by starting with a diagnosis of the causes of injustice provided by studies in the social sciences, as in (5) above. For instance, a diagnosis of causes that are due to systematic, structural features of society or the world disregards aspects of the concrete experiences of injustice that are not systematic and structural.¶ Making problematic situations of injustice our explicit methodological commitment as a starting point rather than a diagnosis of the problem is an important and useful imperative for nonideal theories. It functions as a directive to inquirers toward the problem, to locate it, and designate it before venturing into descriptions, diagnosis, analysis, clarifications, hypotheses, and reasoning about the problem. These operations are instrumental to its ame- lioration and must ultimately return (be tested) by the problem that sparked the inquiry. The directive can make inquirers more attentive to the complex ways in which such differences as race, culture, class, or gender intersect in a problem of injustice. Sensitivity to complexity and difference in matters of injustice is not easy; it is a very demanding methodological prescription because it means that no matter how confident we may feel about applying solutions designed to ameliorate systematic evil, **our** cures should try to address as much as possible the unique circumstances of each injustice. The analogy with medical inquiry and practice is useful in making this point, since the hope is that someday we will improve our tools of inquiry to prac- tice a much more personalized medicine than we do today, that is, provide a diagnosis and a solution specific to each patient.

#### 4] Reject big-stick impacts which push oppressed minority bodies to the back - give a new sense of urgency - waiting politics of the negative which serve to make suffering by continually delaying the aff

Elizabeth Olson 2015 (Associate Professor of Geography and Global Studies at UNC-Chapel Hill, Geography and ethics I: Waiting and urgency, Progress in Human Geography, DOI: 10.1177/0309132515595758) 6/26/17

Though toileting might be thought of as a special case of bodily urgency, geographic research suggests that the body is increasingly set at odds with larger scale ethical concerns, especially large-scale future events of forecasted suffering. Emergency planning is a particularly good example in which the large-scale threats of future suffering can distort moral reasoning. Zizek (2006) lightly develops this point in the context of the war on terror, where in the presence of fictitious and real ticking clocks and warning systems, the urgent body must be bypassed because there are bigger scales to worry about: What does this all-pervasive sense of urgency mean ethically? The pressure of events is so overbearing, the stakes are so high, that they necessitate a suspension of ordinary ethical concerns. After all, displaying moral qualms when the lives of millions are at stake plays into the hands of the enemy. (Zizek, 2006) In the presence of large-scale future emergency, the urgency to secure the state, the citizenry, the economy, or the climate creates new scales and new temporal orders of response (see Anderson, 2010; Baldwin, 2012; Dalby, 2013; Morrissey, 2012), many of which treat the urgent body as impulsive and thus requiring management. McDonald’s (2013) analysis of three interconnected discourses of ‘climate security’ illustrates how bodily urgency in climate change is also recast as a menacing impulse that might require exclusion from moral reckoning. The logics of climate security, especially those related to national security, ‘can encourage perverse political responses that not only fail to respond effectively to climate change but may present victims of it as a threat’ (McDonald, 2013: 49). Bodies that are currently suffering cannot be urgent, because they are excluded from the potential collectivity that could be suffering everywhere in some future time. Similar bypassing of existing bodily urgency is echoed in writing about violent securitization, such as drone warfare (Shaw and Akhter, 2012), and also in intimate scales like the street and the school, especially in relation to race (Mitchell, 2009; Young et al., 2014). As large-scale urgent concerns are institutionalized, the urgent body is increasingly obscured through technical planning and coordination (Anderson and Adey, 2012). The predominant characteristic of this institutionalization of large-scale emergency is a ‘built-in bias for action’ (Wuthnow, 2010: 212) that circumvents contingencies. The urgent body is at best an assumed eventuality, one that will likely require another state of waiting, such as triage (e.g. Greatbach et al., 2005). Amin (2013) cautions that in much of the West, governmental need to provide evidence of laissez-faire governing on the one hand, and assurance of strength in facing a threatening future on the other, produces ‘just-in-case preparedness’ (Amin, 2013: 151) of neoliberal risk management policies. In the US, ‘personal ingenuity’ is built into emergency response at the expense of the poor and vulnerable for whom ‘[t]he difference between abjection and bearable survival’ (Amin, 2013: 153) will not be determined by emergency planning, but in the material infrastructure of the city. In short, the urgencies of the body provide justifications for social exclusion of the most marginalized based on impulse and perceived threat, while large-scale future emergencies effectively absorb the deliberative power of urgency into the institutions of preparedness and risk avoidance. Zizek references Arendt’s (2006) analysis of the banality of evil to explain the current state of ethical reasoning under the war on terror, noting that people who perform morally reprehensible actions under the conditions of urgency assume a ‘tragic-ethic grandeur’ (Zizek, 2006) by sacrificing their own morality for the good of the state. But his analysis fails to note that bodies are today so rarely legitimate sites for claiming urgency. In the context of the assumed priority of the largescale future emergency, the urgent body becomes literally nonsense, a non sequitur within societies, states and worlds that will always be more urgent. IV Waiting and the denial of urgency If the important ethical work of urgency has been to identify that which must not wait, then the capture of the power and persuasiveness of urgency by large-scale future emergencies has consequences for the kinds of normative arguments we can raise on behalf of urgent bodies. How, then, might waiting compare as a normative description and critique in our own urgent time? Waiting can be categorized according to its purpose or outcome (see Corbridge, 2004; Gray, 2011), but it also modifies the place of the individual in society and her importance. As Ramdas (2012: 834) writes, ‘waiting ... produces hierarchies which segregate people and places into those which matter and those which do not’. The segregation of waiting might produce effects that counteract suffering, however, and Jeffery (2008: 957) explains that though the ‘politics of waiting’ can be repressive, it can also engender creative political engagement. In his research with educated unemployed Jat youth who spend days and years waiting for desired employment, Jeffery finds that ‘the temporal suffering and sense of ambivalence experienced by young men can generate cultural and political experiments that, in turn, have marked social and spatial effects’ (Jeffery, 2010: 186). Though this is not the same as claiming normative neutrality for waiting, it does suggest that waiting is more ethically ambivalent and open than urgency. In other contexts, however, our descriptions of waiting indicate a strong condemnation of its effects upon the subjects of study. Waiting can demobilize radical reform, depoliticizing ‘the insurrectionary possibilities of the present by delaying the revolutionary imperative to a future moment that is forever drifting towards infinity’ (Springer, 2014: 407). Yonucu’s (2011) analysis of the self-destructive activities of disrespected working-class youth in Istanbul suggests that this sense of infinite waiting can lead not only to depoliticization, but also to a disbelief in the possibility of a future self of any value. Waiting, like urgency, can undermine the possibility of self-care two-fold, first by making people wait for essential needs, and again by reinforcing that waiting is ‘[s]omething to be ashamed of because it may be noted or taken as evidence of indolence or low status, seen as a symptom of rejection or a signal to exclude’ (Bauman, 2004: 109). This is why Auyero (2012) suggests that waiting creates an ideal state subject, providing ‘temporal processes in and through which political subordination is produced’ (Auyero, 2012: loc. 90; see also Secor, 2007). Furthermore, Auyero notes, it is not only political subordination, but the subjective effect of waiting that secures domination, as citizens and non-citizens find themselves ‘waiting hopefully and then frustratedly for others to make decisions, and in effect surrendering to the authority of others’ (Auyero, 2012: loc. 123). Waiting can therefore function as a potentially important spatial technology of the elite and powerful, mobilized not only for the purpose of governing individuals, but also to retain claims over moral urgency. But there is growing resistance to the capture of claims of urgency by the elite, and it is important to note that even in cases where the material conditions of containment are currently impenetrable, arguments based on human value are at the forefront of reclaiming urgency for the body. In detention centers, clandestine prisons, state borders and refugee camps, geographers point to ongoing struggles against the ethical impossibility of bodily urgency and a rejection of states of waiting (see Conlon, 2011; Darling, 2009, 2011; Garmany, 2012; Mountz et al., 2013; Schuster, 2011). Ramakrishnan’s (2014) analysis of a Delhiresettlement colony and Shewly’s (2013) discussion of the enclave between India and Bangladesh describe people who refuse to give up their own status as legitimately urgent, even in the context of larger scale politics. Similarly, Tyler’s (2013) account of desperate female detainees stripping off their clothes to expose their humanness and suffering in the Yarl’s Wood Immigration Removal Centre in the UK suggests that demands for recognition are not just about politics, but also about the acknowledgement of humanness and the irrevocable possibility of being that which cannot wait. The continued existence of places like Yarl’s Wood and similar institutions in the USA nonetheless points to the challenge of exposing the urgent body as a moral priority when it is so easily hidden from view, and also reminds us that our research can help to explain the relationships between normative dimensions and the political and social conditions of struggle. In closing, geographic depictions of waiting do seem to evocatively describe otherwise obscured suffering (e.g. Bennett, 2011), but it is striking how rarely these descriptions also use the language of urgency. Given the discussion above, what might be accomplished – and risked – by incorporating urgency more overtly and deliberately into our discussions of waiting, surplus and abandoned bodies? Urgency can clarify the implicit but understated ethical consequences and normativity associated with waiting, and encourage explicit discussion about harmful suffering. Waiting can be productive or unproductive for radical praxis, but urgency compels and requires response. Geographers could be instrumental in reclaiming the ethical work of urgency in ways that leave it open for critique, clarifying common spatial misunderstandings and representations. There is good reason to be thoughtful in this process, since moral outrage towards inhumanity can itself obscure differentiated experiences of being human, dividing up ‘those for whom we feel urgent unreasoned concern and those whose lives and deaths simply do not touch us, or do not appear as lives at all’ (Butler, 2009: 50). But when the urgent body is rendered as only waiting, both materially and discursively, it is just as easily cast as impulsive, disgusting, animalistic (see also McKittrick, 2006). Feminist theory insists that the urgent body, whose encounters of violence are ‘usually framed as private, apolitical and mundane’ (Pain, 2014: 8), are as deeply political, public, and exceptional as other forms of violence (Phillips, 2008; Pratt, 2005). Insisting that a suffering body, now, is that which cannot wait, has the ethical effect of drawing it into consideration alongside the political, public and exceptional scope of large-scale futures. It may help us insist on the body, both as a single unit and a plurality, as a legitimate scale of normative priority and social care. V Feeling urgent? In this report, I have explored old and new reflections on the ethical work of urgency and waiting. Geographic research suggests a contemporary popular bias towards the urgency of large-scale futures, institutionalized in ways that further obscure and discredit the urgencies of the body. This bias also justifies the production of new waiting places in our material landscape, places like the detention center and the waiting room. In some cases, waiting is normatively neutral, even providing opportunities for alternative politics. In others, the technologies of waiting serve to manage potentially problematic bodies, leading to suspended suffering and even to extermination (e.g. Wright, 2013). One of my aims has been to suggest that moral reasoning is important both because it exposes normative biases against subjugated people, and because it potentially provides routes toward struggle where claims to urgency seem to foreclose the possibilities of alleviation of suffering. Saving the world still should require a debate about whose world is being saved, when, and at what cost – and this requires a debate about what really cannot wait. My next report will extend some of these concerns by reviewing how feelings of urgency, as well as hope, fear, and other emotions, have played a role in geography and ethical reasoning. I conclude, however, by pulling together past and present. In 1972, Gilbert White asked why geographers were not engaging ‘the truly urgent questions’ (1972: 101) such as racial repression, decaying cities, economic inequality, and global environmental destruction. His question highlights just how much the discipline has changed, but it is also unnerving in its echoes of our contemporary problems. Since White’s writing, our moral reasoning has been stretched to consider the future body and the more-than-human, alongside the presently urgent body – topics and concerns that I have not taken up in this review but which will provide their own new possibilities for urgent concerns. My own hope presently is drawn from an acknowledgement that the temporal characteristics of contemporary capitalism can be interrupted in creative ways (Sharma, 2014), with the possibility of squaring the urgent body with our large-scale future concerns. Temporal alternatives already exist in ongoing and emerging revolutions and the disruption of claims of cycles and circular political processes (e.g. Lombard, 2013; Reyes, 2012). Though calls for urgency will certainly be used to obscure evasion of responsibility (e.g. Gilmore, 2008: 56, fn 6), they may also serve as fertile ground for radical critique, a truly fierce urgency for now.

#### 1] “Scenario” based probability calculus is logically bankrupt and misunderstands IR. Reject these flashy, overexaggerated, and improbable impacts.

Kanwisher 89 [Nancy Kanwisher “*Cognitive Heuristics and American Security Policy*” Published: The Journal of Conflict Resolution, December 1989, Vol. 33, No. 4] [https://www.jstor.org/stable/173995; pp. 654–656] [PDF available upon request] [Kanwisher: Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience at MIT. Ex-faculty member at UCLA and Harvard. 1999 received the National Academy of Sciences Troland Research Award. Elected to the National Academy of Sciences in 2005 and to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2009.] || SM

In a study of heuristics used in probability judgments, Tversky and Kahneman asked the participants of the 1982 Second International Congress on Forecasting to evaluate hypothetical scenarios (Tversky and Kahneman, 1983). All participants were professional forecasters and planners, and many had used scenarios in their work. One group evaluated the probability of "a complete suspension of diplomatic relations between the USA and the Soviet Union, sometime in 1983"; the other group judged the probability of "a Russian invasion of Poland, and a complete suspension of diplomatic relations between the USA and the Soviet Union, sometime in 1983." The suspension-and-invasion scenario was judged to be much more probable than the suspension-only scenario, even though the latter event is a strict subset of the former. Tversky and Kahneman call this the "conjunction fallacy," because the conjunction of two events is judged more likely than one of them, even though this is a logical impossibility. People's probability judgments seem to follow their impressions of the plausibility of different scenarios: They find the suspension-and-invasion scenario more "representative," or typical, of superpower behavior than the suspension-alone scenario, which may seem inexplicable and hence not representative. This fallible evaluation method is an example of what Tversky and Kahneman call the "representativeness heuristic." Thus, intuition tells us that the more detailed a scenario is, the more probable it is. Logically, however, the exact opposite is true. Tversky and Kahneman conclude that scenarios can usefully serve to stimulate the imagination.... However, the use of scenarios as a prime instrument for the assessment of probabilities can be highly misleading. . A detailed scenario consisting of causally linked and representative events may appear more probable than a subset of these events. This effect contributes to the appeal of scenarios and to the illusory insight that they often provide [Tversky and Kahneman, 1983: 308]. Consideration of particular war-fighting scenarios has long played a key role in strategic analysis. Herman Kahn, who developed a complex taxonomy of different possible war-fighting scenarios, argued that scenarios "serve to call attention, sometimes dramatically and persuasively, to the large range of possibilities that must be considered in strategic analysis, some of which may escape notice if an analysis is done using conventional analytic techniques" (Kahn, 1962: 144). But while Kahn correctly recommends that the scenario not be used as a "predictive device," his position reflects some psychological naivete. People find causal sequences highly compelling and will often judge a representative scenario to be more likely than any of its component events. Thus, even if the purpose of developing scenarios is not to make or influence probability judgments, this may be the unintended consequence. In fact, there is evidence that strategic priorities have in the past become distorted by overemphasizing the most extreme scenarios at the expense of less flashy but more likely ones. In 1960, although 90% of RAND studies used a bolt-out-of-the-blue surprise attack as a starting point, Herman Kahn and Tom Schelling polled their RAND colleagues and found that this was considered the least likely scenario (Herken, 1985: 205). Overemphasis on first-strike scenarios is not restricted to Hawks. Rathjens and Reed (1986) point out that while the most important arguments that Doves raised against the MX missile were that it was unnecessary and expensive, "it was most effectively opposed, however, by calling attention to its threatening characteristics as a first-strike weapon and its attractiveness as a target for a first-strike by the Soviet Union" (1986: 45). But, they contend, such arguments are unrealistic and lead to a distortion in perceptions of what are the most likely scenarios for the initiation of conflict. Thus, while scenarios may be helpful in some respects, they may distort the focus of both strategic analysis and arms control. If scenarios must be used, one way to guard against biased probability estimates might be to estimate the probability of independent components in the causal sequence and multiply them together to estimate the overall probability of the overall scenario. Unfortunately, using confidence intervals may not be very helpful, because of the strong tendency for experts to be overconfident of their estimates (Lichtenstein, Fischoff, and Phillips, 1982). At the very least, however, strategic analysts should carefully consider the consequences of providing the defense community with esoteric but deceptively compelling stories about nuclear war. It might be argued that biases in the subjective probabilities of scenarios do not matter because in "worst-case planning" probability is irrelevant; one simply prepares for the worst case - no matter how improbable - and assumes this preparation will suffice for less drastic scenarios. Two things are wrong with this argument. First, preparations for a worst-case scenario may make other undesirable events more probable. For example, preparing for what to do if deterrence fails may well increase the probability that it will in fact fail. As Les Aspin, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, said recently on the issue of MX vulnerability to surprise attack, "the chances for a true, bolt-from-the-blue surprise attack are extremely small. But even in times of crisis, our political leaders may choose not to put our nuclear forces on wartime alert for fear of triggering a nuclear shoot-out" (reported in New York Times, March 24, 1989: A 9). Thus, the overall utility of preparing for the worst case cannot be determined without assessing how such preparations affect the likelihood of that worst case and of other scenarios. Second, since the domain of possible scenarios (and the range of attributes used to characterize those scenarios) is unbounded, it is impossible to define the worst case.3 The only way to salvage the idea is to reintroduce the role of probability and deal with "worst plausible cases." But once scenario probability assessment became necessary again, the problem of psychological distortions would resurface.

#### 2] Slow violence is invisible and exponential – prefer it over flashpoint explanations of violence

Nixon 11 (Rob, Rachel Carson Professor of English, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor, pgs. 2-3)

Three primary concerns animate this book, chief among them my conviction that we urgently need to rethink-politically, imaginatively, and theoretically-what I call "slow violence." By slow violence I mean a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all. Violence is customarily conceived as an event or action that is immediate in time, explosive and spectacular in space, and as erupting into instant sensational visibility. We need, I believe, to engage a different kind of violence, a violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales. In so doing, we also need to engage the representational, narrative, and strategic challenges posed by the relative invisibility of slow violence. Climate change, the thawing cryosphere, toxic drift, biomagnification, deforestation, the radioactive aftermaths of wars, acidifying oceans, and a host of other slowly unfolding environmental catastrophes present formidable representational obstacles that can hinder our efforts to mobilize and act decisively. The long dyings-the staggered and staggeringly discounted casualties, both human and ecological that result from war's toxic aftermaths or climate change-are underrepresented in strategic planning as well as in human memory. Had Summers advocated invading Africa with weapons of mass destruction, his proposal would have fallen under conventional definitions of violence and been perceived as a military or even an imperial invasion. Advocating invading countries with mass forms of slow-motion toxicity, however, requires rethinking our accepted assumptions of violence to include slow violence. Such a rethinking requires that we complicate conventional assumptions about violence as a highly visible act that is newsworthy because it is event focused, time bound, and body bound. We need to account for how the temporal dispersion of slow violence affects the way we perceive and respond to a variety of social afflictions-from domestic abuse to posttraumatic stress and, in particular, environmental calamities. A major challenge is representational: how to devise arresting stories, images, and symbols adequate to the pervasive but elusive violence of delayed effects. Crucially, slow violence is often not just attritional but also exponential, operating as a major threat multiplier; it can fuel long-term, proliferating conflicts in situations where the conditions for sustaining life become increasingly but gradually degraded.

## 2

#### Striking is necessary to resist oppression, forming the very expression and demand for freedom.

**Gourevitch 18’** (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. “A Radical Defense of the Right to Strike” 7-12-2018 https://jacobinmag.com/2018/07/right-to-strike-freedom-civil-liberties-oppression”)

[**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 **the**se 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 a**n (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. Skeptics might still object that the right to strike is the wrong answer to the facts of oppression. Isn’t the proper response to push for altogether different social policies — like a universal basic income, workplace democracy, and socialized means of production — that would eliminate oppression? Why bother with the chaos and collateral injustice that strikes often unleash? The short answer is that this is a non sequitur. The question for us is, “Given the facts of oppression, what may those who suffer it do to resist it?” It does no good to ask, instead, “What would the ideal, or at least reasonably just, society look like?” The latter is its own question, but as a response to our question it is unacceptably quietist. It verges on arguing that those who are oppressed must suffer until utopia becomes possible. And anyhow, **utopia**[**only becomes possible**](https://catalyst-journal.com/vol1/no4/the-basic-income-illusion) **when the many** have taken it upon themselves to **exercise their** own collective **power to demand that utopia.** One might also object that it sounds like I am saying there are no restraints on what strikers may do. I am not saying that either. My point is to explain why a specific set of coercive strike tactics, which have been the centerpiece of the strike repertoire whenever the majority of workers have had it in their mind to walk out, are not limited by the requirement to respect those economic liberties that they violate. There are all kinds of things strikers shouldn’t do just to win a strike. But that is a complex and separate problem of political ethics — and it is one that we can only tackle once we have first acknowledged the shortcomings of liberal capitalism and the prevailing political morality that surrounds it. The stakes of all of this are high. If one does not agree that workers are generally justified in engaging in mass, disruptive, and unlawful activity as part of exercising the right to strike, then one is committed to arguing that the state is justified in violently suppressing strikes — a violence with a [long](http://www.cornellpress.cornell.edu/book/?GCOI=80140100529240) and [bloody](https://www.amazon.com/Labor-Wars-Maguires-Workers-Memorial/dp/1931859701) [history](https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/perspectives-on-politics/article/div-classtitlepolice-work-the-centrality-of-labor-repression-in-american-political-historydiv/7DF60C0EBD68C32C500D28EF215D765B). Some might very well draw that latter conclusion. But they should be clear about which side they’re choosing. Either workers are justified in resisting the use of legal violence to suppress their strikes, or the state is justified in violently suppressing coercive strike tactics. No amount of dressed-up rhetoric about liberty and justice for all can shroud that inescapable fact.

#### Lower skill, easily replaceable workers who face worse conditions and abuse must use coercive striking tactics in order to solve these oppressions.

**Gourevitch 18’** (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. “A Radical Defense of the Right to Strike” 7-12-2018 https://jacobinmag.com/2018/07/right-to-strike-freedom-civil-liberties-oppression”)

**Lower skill**, high-labor-supply **workers in** sectors like service, transportation, agriculture, and **basic industry** are in a different situation. These kinds of workers, in part because they are in such great supply, tend to **have less bargaining power and** therefore usually **face lower wages**, longer hours, **and worse working conditions**. **They are** also **more vulnerable to** forms of **illegal pressure**, [wage theft](https://jacobinmag.com/2018/06/heres-how-much-money-americas-biggest-corporations-have-stolen-from-their-own-workers), **and other abuses**. These are the workers we intuitively think should have the strongest case for a right to strike. Yet even if all of those workers walk off and respect the picket, **production will continue** rolling **because replacements are** much **easier to find**, train, and put to work. **The** collective **refusal to work** **doesn’t pack the same punch**. This is one reason why McDonald’s and Walmart workers have stuck to single-day strikes — they’d be replaced otherwise. **To** have a better shot of **succeed**ing, the majority of easily replaced **workers** often **have to use** some type of **coercive tactics.** **They must prevent managers from hiring replacements**, prevent replacements from taking struck jobs, **or prevent work from getting done** in some other way. To be clear, by coercive, I don’t mean violent. Historically, it has not been workers but **the state and** **employers’ private thugs** who have **committed most** of the **strike-related violence.** **Workers have suffered violence when exercising perfectly legitimate forms of coercion.** The classic coercive tactics are [sit-down strikes](http://scholarship.shu.edu/shlr/vol40/iss1/4/) (occupying the workplace to prevent work from being done) and [mass pickets](http://scholar.law.colorado.edu/articles/80/) (surrounding a workplace so no people or supplies can get in or out).

#### Right to strike is unique in leveling the playing field for public workers – tons of benefits

**Myall ’19** (<https://www.mecep.org/blog/right-to-strike-would-level-the-playing-field-for-public-workers-with-benefits-for-all-of-us/>, “Right to strike would level the playing field for public workers, with benefits for all of us”, James Myall, 4/17/2019, ”James is MECEP’s lead on the inclusive economy, including research on labor issues, gender and racial equity, and health care policy. James conducts research and impact analyses, writes educational materials, and collaborates with partners. He is skilled in data collection, research, and statistical and policy analysis. He studied public policy and management at the University of Southern Maine and holds a master’s degree in ancient history and archaeology from the University of St. Andrews in Scotland.”)

**The right** of workers **to organize and bargain** with their employer **benefits all** Mainers. **Collective bargaining leads to better wages, safer workplaces, and a fairer and more robust economy** for everyone — not just union members. The right to strike is critical to collective organizing and bargaining. **Without it**, Maine’s public **employees are unable to negotiate on a level playing field.** Maine’s Legislature is considering a bill that would give public-sector workers the right to strike. MECEP supports the legislation, and is urging legislators to enact it. The right to strike would enable fairer negotiations between public workers and the government. All of us have reason to support that outcome. **Research shows** that union **negotiations set the bar for working conditions** with other employers. And as the largest employer in Maine, **the state’s treatment of its workers has a big impact on working conditions** in the private sector. Unions support a fairer economy. Periods of high union membership are associated with lower levels of income inequality, both nationally and in Maine. Strong unions, including public-sector unions, have a critical role to play in rebuilding a strong middle class **Unions help combat inequities** within work places. **Women and people of color in unions face less wage discrimination** than those in nonunion workplaces. On average, wages for nonunionized white women in Maine are 18 percent less than of those of white men. Among unionized workers, that inequality shrinks to just 9 percent. Similarly, women of color earn 26 percent less than men in nonunionized jobs; for unionized women of color, the wage gap shrinks to 17 percent.[[i]](https://www.mecep.org/blog/right-to-strike-would-level-the-playing-field-for-public-workers-with-benefits-for-all-of-us/" \l "_edn1) 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/" \l "_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.**

#### Strikes don’t perpetuate disturbance – they are good in the long run and solve for oppression stemming the root of actual disturbance – unjust policies and social flaws. Human workers are a prereq to the economy – no humans, no economy.

Lim ’19 (<https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2019/12/11/lim-right-to-strike/>, Woojin Lim, 12/11/2019, “The Right to Strike”, Woojin Lim is a Crimson Editorial editor, is a Philosophy concentrator in Winthrop House)

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 **a**n unjust **flaw in the social order, that is, the** **recognition that the benefits from shouldering the burdens of social cooperation are not fair**ly 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. The possible hazards that arise from a strike must be weighed against the workers’ welfare and just rewards and to the community. For instance**, current graduate students who struggle in [financials](https://www.apa.org/monitor/2015/04/money-stress) and [mental health](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/258702) may be troubled with juggling teaching obligations. **If graduate students are provided with pay security and adequate dental, mental health**, and specialist coverage, their **quality of teaching and research may**[**improve**](https://cpr.bu.edu/resources/reasonable-accommodations/how-does-mental-illness-interfere-with-school-performance/)**in the**[**long run**](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6350815/). There are dangers to bystanders and neutrals when a strike occurs, but **such considerations also arise when one lays down the right to strike.**

#### Oppressions will not stop insofar as strikes are not available and strikes are effective

**Chibber 16’** (“Why the Working Class?”, Vivek Chibber, 3/13/2016, Vivek Chibber is a professor of sociology at New York University. He is the editor of *Catalyst: A Journey of Theory and Strategy*., https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/03/working-class-capitalism-socialists-strike-power/)

There are many things that people need to lead decent lives. But two items are absolutely essential. The first is some guarantee of material security — things like having an [income](https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/08/universal-basic-income-socialist-libertarian/), [housing](https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/11/public-housing-social-welfare-crisis-affordable-gentrification/), and [basic health care](https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/02/gaffney-single-payer-sanders-healthcare-obamacare-aca-clinton/). The second is being free of social domination — if you are under someone else’s control, if they make many of the key decisions for you, then you are constantly vulnerable to abuse. So, **in a society in which most** people don’t have job security, or have jobs but [can’t pay their bills](https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/07/tsipras-syriza-referendum-debt-euro/), in which they have to **submit to other people’s control, in which they don’t have a voice in how laws and regulations** are made **— it’s impossible to achieve social justice. Capitalism** is an economic system that **depends on depriving** the vast majority of people of these essential **preconditions for a decent life. Workers** show up for work every day knowing that they **have little job security;** they are paid what **employers** feel is consistent with their **main priority,** which is making **profits, not the well-being** of employees; they work at a pace and duration that is set by their bosses; and **they submit** to these conditions, not because they want to, but **because** for most of them, **the alternative** to accepting these conditions **is not having a** **job** at all. This is not some incidental or marginal aspect of capitalism. It is the defining feature of the system [capitalism]. Economic and political **power is in the hands of capitalists, whose only goal is to maximize profits**, which means that **the condition of workers is**, at best, **a secondary** concern to them. And that means that the system is, at its very core, unjust. It follows that the first step to making our society more humane and fair is to reduce the insecurity and material deprivation in so many people’s lives, and to increase their scope for self-determination. But we immediately run into a problem — the political resistance of elites. Power is not distributed equally in capitalism. Capitalists decide who is hired and fired, and who works for how long, not workers. **Capitalists also have the most** political **power,** because **they can do things like lobby**, fund political **campaigns, and bankroll** political **parties.** And since they are the ones who benefit from the system, why should they encourage changes in it, changes that inevitably mean a diminution in their power and their bottom line? The answer is, **they don’t take** very kindly **to challenges, and they do their best to maintain the status quo.** Movements for progressive reform have found time and again that whenever they try to push for changes in the direction of justice, they come up against the power of capital.Any reforms that require a redistribution of income, or come from the government as a social measure — whether it’s health care, [environmental regulations](https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/12/naomi-klein-climate-change-this-changes-everything-cop21/), [minimum wages](https://www.jacobinmag.com/2013/10/beyond-fast-food-strikes/), or [job programs](https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/01/supreme-court-scalia-fisher-texas-bakke-affirmative-action-civil-rights/) — are routinely opposed by the wealthy, because any such measures inevitably mean a reduction in their income (as taxes) or their profits. What this means is that progressive **reform efforts have to find** a source of **leverage,** a source of **power that will enable them to overcome the** resistance of the **capitalist class** and its political functionaries. **The working class has this** power, for a simple reason — **capitalists can only make their profits if workers show up to work every day, and if they refuse** to play along, the **profits dry up** overnight. And if there is one thing that catches employers’ attention, it’s when the money stops flowing. Actions like **strikes** don’t just **have the potential to bring particular capitalists to their knees, they can have an impact** far beyond, on **layer after layer of other institutions that** directly or indirectly **depend on them — including the government**. This ability to crash the entire system, just by refusing to work, gives workers a kind of leverage that no other group in society has, except capitalists themselves. This is why, if progressive social **change requires overcoming** capitalist **opposition** — and we have learned over three centuries that it does — then **it is of** central **importance to organize workers so that they can use that power.** Workers are therefore not only a social group that is systematically oppressed and exploited in modern society, they are also the group best positioned to enact real change and extract concessions from the major center of power — the bankers and industrialists who run the system.They are the group that comes into contact with capitalists every day and are tied in a perennial conflict with them as a part of their very existence. They are the only group that has to take on capital if they want to improve their lives. There is no more logical force to organize a political movement around. And this isn’t just a theory. If we look back at the conditions in which far-reaching reforms have been passed over the past hundred years, reforms which improved the material conditions of the poor, or which gave them more rights against the market ­— they were invariably based on working-class mobilization. This is true not only with the “color-blind” measures of the welfare state, but even with such phenomena as [civil rights](https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/08/alabama-hammer-and-hoe-robin-kelley-communist-party/) and the [struggle for the vote](https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/02/chartism-feargus-oconnor-democracy-suffrage-thomas-paine/). Any movement that extended benefits to the poor, whether they were black or white, male or female, had to base itself on a mobilization of working people. This was true in Europe and the Global South as much as it was in the United States.It is this power to extract real concessions from capital that makes the working class so important for political strategy. Of course, the fact that workers also form the majority in every capitalist society and that they are systematically exploited only makes their plight all the more pressing. This combination of moral urgency and strategic force is what places the working class at the center of socialist politics.

1. “Teaching Privileged Students about Gender, Race, and Class Oppression.” Teaching Sociology, Vol. 19, No. 2 (April, 1991) pp. 154-163. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)