

Value: Minimizing Oppression-**Minimizing Oppression.** We can discuss Justice and a multitude of virtues, but if oppression of people exists, we know no other virtue is compatible. Thus, whichever side minimizes oppression should win the round. To create a better world, just societies must seek to fight against and ultimately abolish the impacts of oppression- and that means unconditionally fighting against systems that intrinsically uphold them.

Definition: . Oppression is defined by Merriam-Webster as cruel or unjust exercise of authority or power/ the continuing oppression of the underclasses.

Observation 1 - while this case is not US specific, it is important to recognize most carding and historical evidence is US based. The narrative of this case outlines that in order to be a just republic, the US government must support the unconditional right of workers to strike, just as all just governments must.

Observation 2: Unconditional, within this piece, is assumed to mean that there will not be retribution against those striking. It does not mean there cannot be provisions in place to negotiate safety (i.e. if medical professionals wish to strike, they can negotiate with their employer to still provide clinical care)

Contention 1: The Nature of Oppression is Inherent

Sub Point A- Our Duty To Prevent Oppression. Oppression is defined by Merriam-Webster as cruel or unjust exercise of authority or power/ the continuing oppression of the underclasses. It takes many forms, whether this be coorscion, violence, or over exhaustion for the sake of profit. Oppression is then, by definition, most placed upon marginalized groups. “Whether we are aware of it or not, we are all assigned multiple social identities. Within each category, there is a hierarchy - a social status with dominant and non-dominant groups. As with [race](https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/race-and-racial-identity), dominant members can bestow benefits to members they deem "normal," or limit opportunities to members that fall into "other" categories. A person of the non-dominant group can experience oppression in the form of limitations, disadvantages, or disapproval. They may even suffer abuse from individuals, institutions, or cultural practices. "Oppression" refers to a combination of prejudice and institutional [power” Liu, ‘14](https://www.ted.com/talks/eric_liu_how_to_understand_power#t-154666) This is a consistent relationship within society- those with power place their authority and wrath onto underlings, preventing mobility and perpetuating a cycle of structural violence. In our modern society, we must recognize that this continuing oppression is against our ethic aspirations in society- an abhorrent cavate of humanity that must be fought against. It is our unconditional duty as humans, in the fight to assure fruitful lives for ourselves and others, to fight together, and organize, against that which is suffering.

Sub Point B- The Workplace Is A System of Oppression- while it could be contested that individual workplaces treat their employees ethically, it must be considered that as per our above definition, a workplace is an oppressive system. “Constant surveillance. Algorithmic control of day-to-day tasks, even taking a bathroom break. Retribution against staffers who demand their companies live up to their stated values. New legal constructs that deny “gig workers” the right to worker protections that people fought to win a century ago. The balance of power between employers and employees hasn’t been this out of whack since the robber baron era.” [Clendenial, 21](https://www.fastcompany.com/90629073/workers-strike-back-inside-the-new-labor-moment). As it stands, we exist within an unjust system that unconditionally will continue to grow more oppressive onto the worker, like a parasite within a host of our society. What can we do, what can we the people, the people held within a government that must seek to right this wrong, what MUST we do? Support the right of what has historically worked- striking.

Contention 2: The Strike

Sub A- Where we are, how we got there- My [Clendenial](https://www.fastcompany.com/90629073/workers-strike-back-inside-the-new-labor-moment) card from above continues- “Amid this continuing assault on wages, benefits, and the dignity of a good job, workers are striking back. We are, in fact, living through a revivified effort among workers—more likely to be women and people of color and nurses, teachers, and AI scientists rather than soot-covered white men, but nonetheless radicalized like miners of a century ago—to secure more rights, including greater say in how their companies operate. Because empowered workers are the surest path to being able to make positive change and improve the world.”

We are entering an unprecedented era of the new general strike. Today, there are thousands of Kellogs workers standing out in the monsoons of midwest storms to protest overworking and abject conditions. This nation was built on the backs of labor in sweatshops and textile factories, those who spend weeks in smog converved streets with nothing more than a jacket on their backs covering the bruises of police battens. Men stood shoulder to shoulder, arm in arm, facing certain violence and certain oppression just for a chance at a better standard of living. Just as history has shown us, in order to demand better conditions. striking is a tried and true method of creating a stir against these systems of violence and oppression.

“The right to strike is a right to resist oppression. The strike (and the credible threat of a strike) is an indispensable part of the collective bargaining procedure. Collective bargaining (or “agreement-making”) provides workers and employees with the opportunity to influence the establishment of workplace rules that govern a large portion of their lives. The concerted withdrawal of labor allows workers to promote and defend their unprotected economic and social interests from employers’ unilateral decisions, and provide employers with pressure and incentives to make reasonable concessions. Functionally, strikes provide workers with the bargaining power to drive fair and meaningful negotiations, offsetting the inherent inequalities of bargaining power in the employer-employee relationship. The right to strike is essential in preserving and winning rights . Any curtailment of this right involves the risk of weakening the very basis of collective bargaining.” [Harvard, 19](https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2019/12/11/lim-right-to-strike/)

Elites will continue to abuse their conditions- unless there is public acknowledgement. And yet, these were met with apathy from the government, the very actor which can put in place better conditions. The truth of the matter is that in order to assure the oppressors keep in line- there has to be government support.

Sub B- The Government’s Role- Protests are rallying cries for better conditions, but without proper legislation and governmental support, there are no strong holds to prevent corporate retribution. Without legal justification (like in the Gilded Age), strikes cannot do their duty without fear of commupenace, something that may sway many workers from acting. While there is a legal framework in many countries, it is important to understand that this framework is a *reflection* of the ethical duty a just government has- to support strikes.

“Prior to the Gilded Age, government power—as the most visible form of concentrated resources and coercive authority—was largely conceptualized as something the American people needed protection from. But in the late 1800s, the proliferation of the corporate form, along with its use by industrialists to accumulate the massive surpluses of industrialization,created new private centers of power. In response, Progressive reformers began to imagine a new role for government. Rather than being a threat to individual liberty, the government could be a protector of it, by undertaking a positive role in regulating corporate power and promoting the interests of workers and consumers.” - [Yale, 21](https://www.yalelawjournal.org/forum/there-is-no-such-thing-as-an-illegal-strike-reconceptualizing-the-strike-in-law-and-political-economy#_ftnref29) It is a just government role to support the will of its people, its oppressed, working class people who for era. It exists to protect the right of people. This is the most ethical action, and one that should be *unconditionally* supported.

We are in an era of incalculable violence upon the worker within an unethical system. It is only right, it is only just, for any self-respecting government to authorize unconditional right to strike.