



WORKERS STRUGGLE BATALLA OBRERA BATAY OUVRIYE

FOR AN AUTONOMOUS WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT
SEPTEMBER 2015 • ISSUE #1

NEWS • OPINION • CULTURE • HISTORY • THEORY

150 U.S. WORKERS KILLED DAILY! FOR CAPITALISTS, WORKERS' LIVES DON'T MATTER

4,585 people every year are killed on the job, and an additional 50,000 people are killed slightly more slowly from occupational diseases. That's 150 people EVERY DAMN DAY.

In addition, capitalists subjected nearly 3.8 million workers to injuries and illnesses. Those are just the reported cases; unreported ones could be as high as 11.4 million per year.

Some might think it's going too far to blame capitalists and accuse them of killing workers on purpose. After all, business owners and investors aren't marching onto jobsites and gunning people down; these are considered accidents.

But is it an accident that on freight trains, some carrying highly flammable crude oil,

crews are being cut from two people to one? Is it an accident when construction sites have unprotected sides and edges or when guardrails are left off scaffolding platforms? Is it an accident when we breathe in toxic chemicals that we don't even know we're being exposed to? Is it an accident when farm workers are transported without seat belts?

These workers are our families, our friends, they are us. Capitalists put their bottom line over the lives of those who produce that very wealth that they enjoy. We need to start defending ourselves and each other from these cold-blooded, greedy killers.

Read the full article
at WorkersStruggle.org/murderers

*This here newsletter is written for you and by you.
Yes you! The worker. The laborer.
The waitress and the construction worker. The late night clerk at the pharmacy. The truck driver and the cleaning lady at the hospital. The maintenance man at the apt. complex. The tomato picker and fast food worker...*

With this newsletter, we aim to learn together, to organize, and to fight back.

INTRODUCING WORKERS STRUGGLE

WorkersStruggle stands for the autonomous/independent organization of workers and laborers.

Both laborers and workers are being exploited on the job with low wages, worsening conditions, lax safety standards, etc. Everywhere in the world today, we see more and more business owners wallowing in luxury while profiting off our growing misery.

Politicians or official unions will not help us. Politicians of all parties just represent the capitalists. And we don't control the official unions, which too often collaborate with the capitalists to sell us out.

The capitalists are highly organized. It's our turn! If we are to fight effectively for our interests, it is time for a broad alliance of workers and laborers to be constructed, run by all of us together! It is time for us to take up the historic role of our class and struggle against exploitation, and for a better world.

We produce all the wealth of society; the power is ours if we are willing to stand up and fight. We bear all of life's burdens, but our future is in our hands. Together with the popular masses, victory will be ours.

If you agree, join us! Let us come together in unity! Let us organize and struggle together for our rights, and to build a new world which we carry within us!

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*Individually
we are weak;
the bosses are
strong.*

*Together we
are strong; the
bosses are weak!*

WORKERS STRUGGLE

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WORK WITH US!

This newsletter is not simply for expression but is intended to be an organizing tool. We produce it collectively as we construct political relationships and do common work.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

TESTIFY!

Write about or let us interview you about your work experience and conditions.

REPORT!

Investigate and expose capitalists' crimes and workers' resistance.

TRANSLATE, PROOFREAD & DESIGN!

Share your skills to help produce and improve this publication.

SUPPORT!

Contribute funds for paper and printing costs.

DISTRIBUTE!

Give copies to your friends and coworkers, and find stores willing to carry it.

ORGANIZE!

Contact us if you're interested in organizing in your workplace or neighborhood!

RHYMES

THE DISEASE

by Ricardito Ramos

Concentration to monopoly,
privatization and the property, cops maneuver sloppily,
enforcing rules of robbery,
pacify the mass, the workings of a brutal class.

Water poisoned till it's worse than what's in the flask,
but why?

Don't even ask, triggers squeezing in our direction, yet we
stuck on shoes, the disease progresses from infection and
we have no clue.

Bandage approaches never hit the root, just top layer
selection. Neosporin on the epidermis ignores the core,
internal organs in critical.

An illness so destructive,
the body's malfunction is the state of the conjunction,
the merging of instability and a conjuncture from which we
should rupture delays the response and credibility of the
financiers and heads of industry.

To accurately address the affliction with acuity we must
address the contradictions with organization and scrutiny,
struggle towards our formation and our unity.....



TRUCKER

SUDBURY, ON.

Otto struggles with his work schedule a great deal. He feels confused about the rules around how much he should drive and how much he is allowed to rest. He feels it is almost impossible to maintain his work schedule. He's tired all the time. "You have no life other than work, if you wanna pay your bills...I'm beat after my shifts. I come home and if it's snowing, I got a four wheel drive now, I don't even care. I used to shovel, I got a snow blower, but I don't care now, I just drive in over the snow. I'm too pooped out. I'm gonna be sixty in a couple years and I don't have that kind of - I'm pooped out. I come home and sleep my days off."

Otto's boss told him he's only allowed ten hours per day to himself. "He goes, 'Well, you know you only have eight hours to yourself; like ten hours you have to yourself. Eight hours you sleep, and then an hour to get up and an hour to go to bed; you're basically allowed ten hours to yourself every day, the rest you're supposed to be working.'"

Otto particularly struggles with the short-change part of his work schedule, when he switches from nights to days. "When you switch shifts, working day shifts, two days off, working night shifts, two days off, day shifts - it throws

you off. You get kind of dingy after a while because your body is not knowing when to get up or when go to bed anymore. You're just like a robot."

"So, basically what I'm working is twelve hours a day, four days on, and then I have two days off, and then the third day that I come back to work is still the same pay period. Fifty-four hours in one week. The day I come back to work and work that day, half of that day is for last week, and half of this day is for next week. That's really screwy. That is really screwy, man....You don't even have a choice in it, that's what I think bothers me. I feel that after 48 hours, they should be asking me, 'Do you wanna work another day? Would you like to get in another shift or not?' I'd like to have that opportunity....I don't think anybody should have to work after 48 hours. I don't want it. I might need that rest."

by herself, but that it wasn't far. "I'm scared but still I do it." "If we say anything about it [being forced to work extra hours] then they threaten us. We're scared to lose our jobs." She lives with her sister, also a garment worker. "Sometimes we say that we should move out from here, but we have no options."

"We want proper hours of work, 8 hours, which is the official law. Not more than that. We want a proper salary. The right amount for us to live. We want them to pay us on time. And we don't want to be forced to work extra hours. That's all we want."

■ ■ ■

LAUNDRY WORKER

SUDBURY, ON.

Milly stated that when she and other workers attend union meetings to try to demand accountability from the CUPE rep, they face politician tactics: "He dances around all the questions: 'I can't answer that right now. I'll look into it and get back to you.'" Milly identified stalling as the main tactic used by the union. "If we're not stalled by our employer, we're stalled by our union."

Read full interviews of Otto and Milly at WorkersStruggleSudbury.com

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GARMENT WORKER

DHAKA, BANGLADESH.

Mina, 15 years old: "I usually work from 7 in the morning until 10 or 11 at night, and sometimes until 3 a.m. They force us to work at night, midnight." I asked her how she gets home. She said she walks

FIRESTONE STRIKE

This is an excerpt from a longer article about an Iowa worker's discovery of the direct connection between a strike in the Midwest and imperialism abroad.

by Robert Allen, Iowa

a set of workers, right wing talk radio listeners, born again Christians, African Americans from the 'hood, poor white trash, Vietnamese immigrants, old patriotic men who "fought for freedom Over There", guys who finally started buying Japanese cars once they began making them "over here", it did not matter...

we knew the company was our enemy



months before the strike began I saw a newsletter from the company, all about the civil war in Liberia

I was struck by a note that rubber plantation workers had no indoor restroom facilities - I reflected on my own life in the Ozarks, we had an outhouse and had to haul clean water from miles away. So the company owned a real plantation, just like in the Old South, where company officers lived like kings and workers lived in squalor, relieving themselves outdoors, but now come these air attacks, government versus guerilla rebels, the newsletter stopped short of detailing a story that would soon unfold -- mass genocide by a fascist monster named Charles Taylor.

The American ambassador arranged a tense meeting in the

jungle with Taylor:

A news broadcast from the time showed that the meeting disintegrated quickly. With cameras rolling, Taylor received (Ambassador) De Vos in an anteroom furnished with a gilded white and gold Louis XV couch and chairs covered in plastic. Dark wood paneling rose above red carpet. Impeccable, Taylor wore a dark suit, with a white pocket square and red tie.

De Vos, dressed in a rumpled suit and bow tie, and large, square glasses, was sweating profusely. He greeted Taylor. Then, he introduced Ensminger, tan, fit and mustachioed.

"This is Mr. Ensminger, the director general of Firestone," De Vos said.

Taylor looked puzzled. "Oh, he works for the embassy now?"

"No, America works for him," De Vos replied.



We didn't know when the strike would be settled, but the labor relations board had ruled in the union's favor (why did it take so long, almost two years?)

and the company was forced to rehire us, so I worked my phone company job in the morning and showed up for half a shift each day at the tire factory. As I'd been locked out for over two years, I took three years' worth of vacation, worth more now since 12 hour days had been imposed. Then a tentative agreement was reached, whereupon my absences were set back to zero, and soon I had a choice to make: Quit and lose my chance at a (too stingy in my view) 13k settlement when the contract was signed? or try something different....

Read the full article at
WorkersStruggle.org/firestone

The Burn Barrel Sage

As summer turned to fall in 1994, we burned wood in metal barrels on the picket line to take the chill out of the air. We watched as scabs began to slowly increase the plant production, and were discussing the company's efforts to get us to cross picket lines. I was on fire with Marxist conviction, newly acquired, but was taken aback by the clarity of an old tire worker's analysis, who I'm sure never read Lenin's "What is to Be Done?" or Trotsky's "Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay", but proceeded to break off these nuggets: "They want you to think there's this pie, and you better get your piece of it before it's all gone. They want you to run back in there and work, 'before it's too late'. But it isn't like that, the work will still be there. There's enough work for all of us, it's just right now they want you to think there's not".

MIAMI, FL

Taxi companies are under attack from rival capitalists Uber. **Taxi drivers** from the New Directions Taxi Drivers Assoc. in Miami refused the orders of their bosses to strike against Uber, noting the unacceptable working conditions imposed by taxi companies:

- Weekly lease: \$600-\$750 - No insurance coverage at all
- Daily Shift: \$90-\$120 - If you're involved in an accident (paid \$2000)
- 12 hours Shift: \$65-\$75 to \$5000; otherwise, you're about to get fired)
- Weekly Radio Call Fees: \$60-\$85 - No vacation days at all

Their leaflet stated: *"If Taxi Companies want to call a strike, they have to reform the above conditions first. No drivers are going on strike to benefit Taxi Companies. We need to fight against UBER/LYFT and Taxi Companies' malpractice at the same time. Uber and Lyft were created by the greediness of the taxi companies. Let them deal with their monster.*

HAITI

Hundreds of workers from SOKOWA (Sendika Ouvriye Kodevi Wanament), an independent union from the Codevi Free Trade Zone on the Haitian side of the border with the Dominican Republic, affiliated with the Batay Ouvriye May

First Federation in Haiti, took to the streets last month in protest against arbitrary and illegal firings of union members and union organizers at one of the factories in this Free Trade Zone.

These workers have protested labor abuses by management using wildcat strikes, demonstrations and sit-ins in front the Department of Labor Affairs to demand that the fired workers be re-hired and to demand the dismissal of repressive and abusive management staff at the factory.

BANGLADESH

Statement from the Bangladesh Trade Union Federation:

We are trying to build our units in garments area. We are going with political questions, which are to prepare to capture state power by a working class movement—not by the present election system but by people's political insurrection. We also raise workers' demands: trade union rights, 8 hours working time, appointment letters, no compulsory overtime, 6-month maternity leave with wages, etc.

The wage struggle of garments workers is not a local phenomenon—it is global. So we think it is the time to establish workers' unity all over the world, which will enhance the working class movement throughout the world. It is our duty to expose capitalism-imperialism in front of the working class and people.

SUDBURY, ON

We organized two events for May Day this year. In the afternoon we showed *Memory and Muscle*, a film about the 1965 wildcat postal strike. What is noteworthy about this strike from our perspective is that these workers organized autonomously outside the structures provided for them. With this in mind, we also shared a report from a postal worker about the current struggle at Canada Post against the job-slashing Community Mail Box (CMB) tactic that Canada Post has initiated.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Throughout the country, the Union of Sugar Cane Cutters is demanding a 3rd Pension Act for sugarcane workers, medical insurance, increased pension RD \$5,000 to RD \$10,000 pesos, a wage increase, and construction and repair of housing. The workers are actively agitating around these demands, including with a march followed by a sit-in at the national palace. According to their reports, they are close to achieving their first two demands.

Read full reports from Haiti, DR and Bangladesh at WorkersStruggle.org

RECLAIM OUR HISTORY

¡NECESITAMOS UN MOVIMIENTO AUTÓNOMO DE OBREROS Y TRABAJADORES!

¡CONDUCIDO POR Y PARA LOS TRABAJADORES Y OBREROS!

¡Es hora de unirnos y luchar por nuestros propios intereses!

¡Nuestras vidas están bajo ataque, y los jefes están engordando. Los políticos y los sindicatos trabajan para los capitalistas! ¡Sólo podemos luchar por un mundo donde estamos en control de nuestras vidas. ¡No tenemos que vivir así!

“We showed *10,000 Black Men Named George* about A. Philip Randolph organizing the Pullman Porters, and our audience drew their own conclusion—the working class Irish, Italians, Jews, Chinese and more have all been in the same struggle all along as the laboring class African-Americans against exploiters! **Rememory works.**”

—Organizers in Western MA

We can only know where we are going when we know where we've been. **REMEMORY** is to re-remember where we've been, the world within us, and that we do indeed have roots of strength and resiliency as a class against exploitation. We are not formless, scattered peoples with no direction or compass. Shoulder to shoulder, let's reclaim our fortitude in these uncertain times!

We are encoded down to our flesh and blood how to assess and respond to our conditions. The past is alive in the present with memory at the core of learning and survival. When we replace the word “remember” with the more organic “rememory,” we are reminded that everything is held in memory. Individually we are weak because we do not face these conditions alone. Together, as a class, we are strong!

REMEMORY is a wordgift, creating our relation to discovering our past with awe and curiosity. Rememory is to re-remember ourselves, our collectivity, our lived and felt experiences of victory and struggle against exploitation. Our present

is more vivid, our tomorrow is more promising, because **it is only when we know where we've been that we can know where we are going.**

With rememory we discover our roots in our deeply felt experience, as a class, struggling against exploitation. When we disremember, the deliberate act of imposing forgetting, we find ourselves led by the designs capital has on our lives, deliberately positioned against us — this relation can aptly be described as **parasitism**. A key way the capitalist class maintains its survival is through making itself invisible to the host. By imposing conditions and ideas causing dis-remembering we conflate our sense of self with them. We must engage in rememory to know who we are and what we have already done!

Icons that trigger memory and immediate knowing work as a formula to aid in rememory. Icons can be a film, a poem, a symbol, or a dance. What icon can you introduce to spark rememory of our collective struggle? Email us your ideas: workersstruggleberkshires@gmail.com

RECOMMENDED VIDEO:

10,000 Black Men Named George

During the Great Depression, jobs were scarce for working class people, especially African-American workers. Working as a porter for the Pullman Rail Company was one option that came with undignified and unpredictable tipping, compounded by pay discrimination as darker complexion employees took home a third as much pay as their lighter complexioned counterparts.

This film is the true story of Asa Philip Randolph, a journalist and organizer fighting to give a voice to these forgotten workers who together carried the effort to organize and form the first recognized African-American workers' union in the U.S.



NON-JOBS DON'T COUNT: THE WORKING CLASS PERSPECTIVE ON THE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

BATAY OUVRIYE

Nou menm nan Batay Ouvriye, nou wè jan patwon yo ak leta fè youn pou pran avantaj sou do nou. Nou wè jan leta bay patwon wout lib pou yo maltrete nou kè poze, pou yo vòlè nou kè poze. Nou wè konplo patwon ak leta pou kenbe salè nou ba. Nou wè jan salè minimòm lan pa fouti pèmèt nou viv. Nou wè jan leta fè tyoul patwon nan dilatwa pou manke ajiste salè minimòm lan. Nou wè jan patwon yo pwofite lavichè pou desann salè nou jouktan nou pa ka menm fè kòb manje ak transpò. Nou wè jan boujwa yo toujou ap monte tarif yo pandan y ap fòse nou travay siplemantè san yo pa peye nou.

Nou menm nan Batay Ouvriye, nou wè a chak fwa nou menm ouvriye n ap manifeste pou defann dwa nou, se lè sa a nou wè tout kalite zam pwente sou nou : zam lapolis, zam Minista, zam atache, zam patwon... Nou wè yo tout fè youn kont nou.

Se konsa tou, nou menm nan Batay Ouvriye, nou wè nou tout, n ap fè youn kont yo tou. Nou wè se ansanm pou nou kanpe anfas atoufè sa yo : ansanm nou pi fò pase yo, ansanm laviktwa se pou nou ! Ansanm nou ka vini ak yon lòt kalite lavi pou nou fini ak lespwatasyon, pou nou fini ak enjisitis, pou nou fini ak lamizè.



In early July there was some debate over how many Americans are actually out of work, i.e., the “real” unemployment rate. The Bureau of Labor Statistics, an agency within the US Department of Labor, put the official number at a laughable 5.3%, down from 6.1% the previous year. (When counting those who have given up but say they still want to work, and part-timers who want to work full-time, they admit the number should be raised to 10.4%). Political clown Donald Trump estimates it at 18%. Former Reagan administration Budget Director David Stockman puts it at a more realistic 42.9%

But none of those bloodsuckers are counting it right. They can't, because they take for granted their own capitalist definitions of “employment,” “underemployment,” and “unemployment.” This is like snakes describing the reality of horses. Those who should define those categories are the ones living them. For working people it is not a numbers game, but a deeply problematic social relationship. ...

The central point to focus upon right now is this: at bare minimum, “employment” should provide us and our families with certain basics: a comfortable home, a broad and stimulating education, quality clothing, restful vacations, high-quality food and medical care, convenient and cheap

transportation. These are the basic human rights of everyone who lives in a functioning society, yet we've been so conditioned to deprivation that these simple necessities have become wild fantasies. We yearn for them when buying lottery tickets, dreaming of beating ridiculous odds in the hope of easing the intolerable stress of constant hassles and personal financial disasters.

What capitalists count as “jobs”—part-time gigs that don't even let us feed ourselves properly—are not worthy of that name. The same goes for day labor, temp work, being

subcontracted out, coming out of retirement, freelancing, internships, and other forms of slave labor.

If we can't make a living, then what we have is not “employment.” We are working (too hard, too much, and not enough), but we are, in reality, unemployed. Because the labor-management marketplace is set up to be wildly skewed in favor of the latter, we are being forced to sell our labor power and our services at a severe loss. No sane capitalist would sell anything at a loss, yet they expect us to do so (while trying to convince us that if our situation is ameliorated, for example by higher wages, the economy will collapse and we will all starve). They persuade us to make up the shortfall on volume—multiple jobs—which not coincidentally allow them to avoid paying healthcare and other benefits that accrue to full-time workers. Other options they offer us include inadequate minimum wage adjustments, credit cards, student loans, payday loans, drug dealing, or pimping out sections of our homes on Airbnb (a modern version of the Depression-era coping mechanism of “taking in boarders”). What they never allow into the conversation is paying wages that provide an actual living.

Read the full article at
WorkersStruggle.org/Nonjobs

We Need a Working Class Movement

Those who run the world are making more while we get less. Worldwide, business owners profit off our growing misery. Capitalists are like vampires, literally reproducing their whole lives off our blood, sweat, and tears. They pay us bare minimum to survive even as they steal more and more from us, roaming the world looking for cheaper labor.

Workers and laborers around the world are forced to compete, but we are not enemies and should not fight each other. We need to organize, on our own terms, fighting for our interests, to form working class solidarity and organizations within and across countries.

Historically workers have fought for every workplace "benefit": the 8-hour day, safety regulations, sick and vacation days off, etc. These were not granted to us by some "kind" bosses, they were concessions fought for tooth and nail, against those who would otherwise exploit us worse and kill us off much faster. Imagine what millions of workers could do today if we are organized--we could fight for what belongs to us!

It's time for autonomous organizations of workers and laborers to build a mass movement strong enough to challenge those who exist off our misery.

Our Role

We workers and laborers must organize ourselves and struggle for a world in which we who work decide our own future, instead of living lives dictated by the greed and parasitic necessity of a lazy bunch of bosses. We are one class with the same interests, facing the same enemy, no matter our complexion, gender, nationality, etc. We have to take back our long history of struggle and connect it with the current deteriorating situations we face, so we can develop our theory and strategy to advance. Let's reclaim our historic task of being the gravediggers of this vicious, exploitative, and murderous global mode of production called capitalism.

We must organize to fight collectively and not become prey to capitalist politicians and organizations that misdirect our justified rage into voting booths and other channels of the very system exploiting and dominating us. Through the ups and downs of our movement, we must persist!

**Let's Pick up Our Historic Task and Fight Back!
Join Workers' Struggle!**

6 PRINCIPLES OF WORKING CLASS STRUGGLE

1) Class antagonism. There is no reconciliation possible between the workers and the capitalists (company/owners/bosses/management). Workers are not "exchanging labor for a fair wage" but are being robbed by their class enemy. Exploitation is inherent in the relationship. Even if we win concessions, we must never be satisfied.

2) Collectivity. There is no way to win this struggle as individuals. Working class unity is crucial.

3) Combativeness. There is no way to win by cooperating with the enemy, being subsumed by them, or avoiding confrontation with them, but it must be through struggle—whatever level of struggle corresponds to the capacity we have at a given time.

4) Internal democracy. Our organizations must function internally with democratic practices. Each member should be encouraged to participate fully and openly state their views. We don't want bureaucratic structures or foot soldiers, but for every individual to increase their capacity for the strength of the collective.

5) Class autonomy. We must make sure that our struggles are in our class interests, and not inadvertently serve the interests of other classes. The working class must lead, self-manage and control its own struggle, and not be led by capitalist proxies (establishment unions that collaborate with management, NGOs, politicians, legalistic means). Even if we use those entities in specific situations as we build our capacity, like bringing in unions or lawyers, they must be under the control of autonomous workers organizations.

6) Internationalism. The capitalists are an international class, and so are workers. We have more in common with one another as workers across borders than we do with the capitalists in our home countries. National borders were arbitrarily set up by capitalists in the first place—they cross them at will, while limiting our freedom to do so. We need to build solidarity with workers globally to strengthen our common struggle. "Workers of the world: Unite!" is not just a slogan, but is a guide to action.