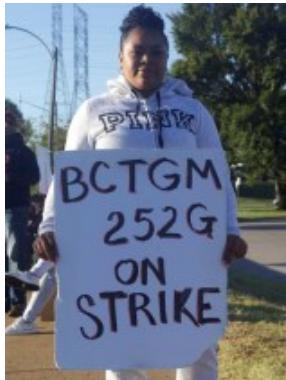


Stop Kellogg's strikebreaking!

written by Struggle - La Lucha
December 14, 2021



Trence Jackson



Jennifer Malone



Robert Hopkins



Dorothy Wilkins



Jimmie Archie and Marvin Rush

The 1,400 workers on strike against Kellogg's since Oct. 5 are fighting for all workers. Members of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers

International Union (BCTGM) are battling the company's two-tier system of wages and benefits.

The cereal killers who run Kellogg's don't believe in equal pay for equal work. Newly hired workers — called "transitional employees" by the company — [are paid around \\$12 dollars less per hour](#) than "regular" full-time workers but have to pay more for health insurance. Forget about pensions.

Kellogg's forced workers to accept two-tier [in 2015 under threat of closing](#) two of its cereal plants, including the one in Memphis, Tennessee. The year before, management illegally locked out workers in the city where Dr. King was assassinated.

Lower paid transitional workers now account for 30 percent of the workforce. Kellogg's wants to be able to increase their number while still denying them retirement benefits.

Unequal wages for the same work harms solidarity between workers while Kellogg's ran to the bank with [\\$1.76 billion in profit](#) last year. It's to the credit of workers with more seniority and higher pay that they voted down Kellogg's contract proposal that would continue this rotten inequality.

Among them was [Marvin Rush](#), an electrician and member of BCTGM Local 252G in Memphis who spoke to Jason Kerzinski of the "Progressive" magazine. "We are out here fighting against the two-wage system," said Rush, "and for the next generation of workers to have the same pay and benefits."

Kellogg's doesn't believe in an 8-hour work day and a 40-hour work week either. Forced overtime is a rule, with many union members working 72-to-84-hour work weeks.

"The worst is when you work a 7-to-7 and they tell you to come back at 3 a.m. on a

short turnaround,” said Omaha BCTGM Local 50G president Daniel Osborn in an interview with Stephen Rodrick at Rolling Stone. “You work 20, 30 days in a row and you don’t know where work and your life ends and begins.”

In the runup to the strike Kellogg’s stopped hiring workers to replace those that retired or quit. According to Osborn there were “times during Covid when we were 100 workers under what we should have.”

Many union members [think Kellogg’s did this](#) to reduce the number of workers picketing to prevent scabs and strikebreakers from entering the plant.

Thank you Venezuela!

The workers at Kellogg’s feed millions. The cornflake capitalists showed how much they appreciate these essential workers by announcing they’re hiring 1,400 strikebreakers to smash the union.

When Kellogg’s placed ads on social media for “replacement workers,” union supporters across the country flooded the company with phony résumés that gummed up recruitment.

Workers are on strike in Battle Creek, Michigan; Lancaster, Pennsylvania; Memphis, Tennessee and Omaha, Nebraska. They’re engaged in a David vs. Goliath struggle.

The 1,400 union members at these four plants are pitted against a corporation with [worldwide sales](#) of \$13.8 billion. Kellogg’s has [46 manufacturing facilities in 19 countries](#) on six continents.

With inflation soaring by 6.8%, Kellogg’s offered only 3% annual wage increases. Meanwhile [Kellogg’s CEO Steven Cahillane](#)’s pay package is \$11,663,832. That’s 279 times the typical salary of workers.

President Biden said that he was [“deeply troubled”](#) by Kellogg’s attempted recruitment of strikebreaking mercenaries. Talk is cheap Mr. President.

As the commander in chief of the armed forces, Biden could order the Pentagon to stop purchasing Kellogg’s cereals and snack products.

Contrast President Biden’s words with the actions of President Nicolás Maduro Moros of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. President Maduro supports the workers who took over the Kellogg’s plant in Maracay City in May after they were locked out over a weekend. Milton Torres, a longtime worker, is the new factory president.

As [FightBack! News reported](#), the workers now call the plant “Socialist Kellogg’s” and are continuing to help feed people in Venezuela. “The basic principles of our socialist enterprise are to dignify the work of our working class, increase the levels of production, guarantee that the equipment is highly maintained, produce good quality products, in a fair price and to be a self-sustainable company to contribute to the economic development of the country,” said the plant’s union president Orlando Contreras.

Boycott Kellogg’s!

Just as these strikers are fighting for all poor and working people, so is the company’s strikebreaking being carried out for the billionaires and banksters.

Wall Street wants the workers defeated and humiliated. That’s the answer of the one percent to millions of workers who want union protection, union wages, union health benefits and union pensions.

In 1887, the Haymarket Martyrs — labor leaders George Engel, Adolph Fischer, Albert Parsons and August Spies — were hanged in Chicago for demanding an eight hour work day. It’s outrageous that over 130 years later, workers are forced to work

72 and 84 hour weeks.

Compulsory overtime is not only dangerous and life-draining. It also prevents the hiring of young workers.

The few hundred strikers at each of the four cereal plants are not only up against Kellogg's. They're up against all the super yacht and private jet owners.

The strikers need our support. Don't buy scab cereals and other Kellogg's products. Victory to the workers!

Photos from the picket line in Memphis by Jason Kerzinski



Why John Deere strike victory is a win for all workers

written by Struggle - La Lucha

December 14, 2021

Ten thousand John Deere workers in five states, represented by the United Auto

Workers, have won their five-week strike against the giant equipment manufacturer. The victory is unequivocal.

Their strike began during what was popularly called “Striketober,” when tens of thousands of workers walked out in strikes across the country. Exhausted and angry after being overworked and more underpaid than ever during the pandemic, strikers at unionized workplaces big and small are refusing more concessions, even as unorganized workers have rebelled against low wages and intense work schedules by quitting their jobs.

The win at John Deere stands out as one that breaks from the pattern established by at least 40 years of anti-union offensive, exacerbated by the pandemic. It is the most significant union victory for a private sector workforce in years.

It'll take time to properly assess what has been gained in this recent upsurge, but there is no doubt that the period of historic pressure against unions and the working class in general won't go on forever.

The success of the John Deere strikers was buoyed, at least in part, by dozens of other strikes and job actions.

During the five-week strike, the union members rejected two company offers before accepting a proposal. They won substantial wage increases and an \$8,500 bonus, regained quarterly cost-of-living adjustments that were lost in the 2015 negotiations, held on to their healthcare paid 100% by the company, and improved pensions, including those for new hires.

Workers' rights to organize and fight back have been so eroded over the decades that Deere management negotiators were drunk with success. They thought they could continue to gain ground against their workforce as they have in past years.

The company's first offer of a 5% wage increase - less than the rate of inflation -

also proposed lowering pay hikes and axing pension plans for new hires. John Deere has used the two-tier wage system to beat down wages for more than 20 years.

[James Geiger told Time Magazine](#) that after 19 years of working at Deere, his wages and benefits still haven't reached the level of those hired before 1997.

The first offer was rejected by a whopping 90%. A second offer came closer on pay - an immediate 10% hike, 5% more in 2023 and 2025, an \$8,500 bonus and adding back quarterly cost-of-living adjustments.

It must have shocked the John Deere bosses that even their second offer, although a great improvement, was rejected by a 55% majority.

Working class solidarity

Over the years, the agricultural and heavy equipment company has been rewarded with government bailouts and tax credits as they shed workers by the thousands.

Like Amazon, Walmart and others, Deere — a Fortune 500 company — has profited from the suffering during the COVID-19 outbreak. The company's 2021 net income is projected to be \$5.9 billion. CEO John May received a 160% raise, bringing his pay to \$15.6 million. All of this contributed to John Deere workers' determination to turn things around.

After the second offer was voted down, support for the strike only grew. People from across the Midwest and from a variety of unions joined picket lines. A poll conducted by the Des Moines Register showed a spike in support of unions in general during the strike.

Other UAW workers raised funds and provided grocery vouchers. Stores near struck locations offered discounts on meals, free drinks, haircuts and recreational activities for strikers. The Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union donated 8,000

pounds of food.

Other Deere workers organized by the International Association of Machinists walked out in support. Teamsters and Steel Workers refused to cross the picket lines. Plumbers and Pipefitters donated funds.

Early this year John Deere bosses were ready to cash in on the infrastructure bill soon to be passed by Congress. Building bridges and fixing roads raises the need for heavy equipment built by John Deere's workforce. As early as May, Deere stock was a top pick by Wall Street insiders.

Unable to get the workers to buckle and with no prospects of finding 10,000 skilled equipment builders, John Deere was forced to make an offer that met most of the workers' demands and lifted the prospects for the entire working class. On Nov. 17, an agreement was reached and accepted by 61% of the membership.

One important difference between the second and third offers is related to Deere's "Continuous Improvement Pay Plan." CIPP is a vehicle to use workers' innovations and ideas to increase production. Each department in every plant is obligated to present ideas in video form at plant-wide meetings.

Some of the ideas are put into use to improve production. When quotas are exceeded, pay is increased. The real result is that production always rises disproportionately higher than wages. Since the inception of CIPP, Deere has repeatedly raised production quotas.

Workers have been allowed to contribute their valuable ideas but, of course, had no say in production levels. The new contract allows grievances to challenge the quotas.

The practice of linking wages and compensation to levels of production is a concession shoved down the throats of hundreds of thousands of workers as the anti-

union offensive has ground on. It is a way to artificially tie the interests of workers to the fortunes of their bosses.

The John Deere workers' challenge to that practice, among all their other great gains, is a significant development for the working class.



Killing workers, jacking-up prices: Dead animal capitalists sacrificed meat and poultry workers

written by Struggle - La Lucha

December 14, 2021

Fifty-nine thousand workers at the five biggest U.S. meatpacking companies fell ill from COVID-19. That's three times higher than previous estimates, according to the House of Representatives Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis.

[At least 269 workers died.](#) Thousands more got sick at other meatpacking companies and the poultry plants.

At the same time meat monopolists have been [sending prices through the roof](#). Over the last year beef prices shot up by over 12% while pork prices rose nearly 10%. Chicken now costs 7.2% more.

Dead workers and inflated prices created super-profits for carcass capitalists. Tyson Foods raked in [\\$3 billion in profits](#), a 48% annual increase. Cargill had the [biggest profits](#) in its 156 year history.

Cargill has no intention to share its \$28 billion in net income with the workers that produce it. The Minneapolis-based outfit announced plans to [lock out Canadian workers](#) at its High River, Alberta, plant near Calgary.

These corporations get away from this robbery because of the stepped-up monopolization since the 1970s. The White House confirmed this in a [Sept. 8 statement](#):

“In 1977, the largest four beef-packing firms controlled just 25% of the market, compared to 82% today. In poultry, the top four processing firms controlled 35% of the market in 1986, compared to 54% today. And in pork, the top four hog-processing firms controlled 33% of the market in 1976, compared to 66% today.”

The news release pointed out that “the meat-processors are generating record profits during the pandemic, at the expense of consumers, farmers, and ranchers.” And it said that “workers are risking their health and safety to keep America fed.”

‘Our plants are what they are’

So why does President Biden tolerate the Occupational Health and Safety Administration giving wrist slaps to the big packers for deadly safety violations?

By June 16, 2020, 1,294 workers at Smithfield Foods’ Sioux Falls, South Dakota, pork plant caught the virus. Four workers died because of the company’s negligence

and drive for profits. OSHA recently [fined Smithfield Foods](#) \$13,494.

That's \$10.43 for every worker who fell ill or \$3,374 for every worker that died.

United Food and Commercial Workers Local 304A, which represents workers at the Sioux Falls plant, [condemned this rotten settlement](#). The union called it "a clear failure to recognize the company's safety issues and (is) allowing the company to police itself on workers safety."

In order to stop the spread of COVID-19, health officials urge us to keep six feet apart. Meat bosses sneer at social distancing. On many meat and poultry production lines, workers are just two feet away from each other.

Then-Smithfield Foods CEO Kenneth Sullivan wrote to Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts that "social distancing is a nicety that makes sense only for people with laptops." In a letter to Senators Elizabeth Warren and Cory Booker, [Sullivan declared](#) that "for better or worse, our plants are what they are."

"For better or worse," hundreds of workers died while the dead animal capitalists collected billions more in profit. On April 28, 2020—Workers' Memorial Day—Donald Trump ordered the meat and poultry plants to remain open.

Trump's executive order came two days after John H. Tyson, CEO of his family's Tyson Foods, [placed newspaper ads](#) claiming "the food supply chain is vulnerable."

Tyson never cared how the pandemic made the workers in his slaughterhouses more vulnerable to death and disease.

Tyson's plants in Arkansas reported nearly 3,000 cases of COVID between May 19, 2020, and April 8, 2021. That's almost a third of all [the state's workplace cases](#).

Decades of union busting

Working in the packing plants has always been dangerous.

Between 2015 and 2017, an average of two workers a week had one of [their limbs amputated](#).

A century ago it was worse. People were horrified by Upton Sinclair's description in his 1906 novel "The Jungle" of a worker falling into a boiling vat. ("The Jungle" is spoiled by a racist description of Black workers.)

It was unions that turned this around. In 1917 Chicago's Union Stockyards was the largest concentration of workers in the United States.

Over 50,000 workers were employed there. Until 1957 a branch of Chicago's elevated trains went there. Two of the stations on this "el" were [named after packing companies](#): Swift and Armour.

Meatpacker bosses were among the richest of the rich. Philip Armour told how he used bigotry to divide workers: "Keep the races and nationalities apart after working hours and to foment suspicion, rivalry and even enmity among such groups." ("Down on the Killing Floor, Black and White Workers in Chicago's Packinghouses, 1904-1954")

By 1917 a quarter of the workers in the Chicago stockyards were Black. In the first years of the Great Migration, meatpacking and the steel mills were the largest employers of Black labor.

The same year a union drive was begun in the stockyards. Its organizer was the future communist leader William Z. Foster.

The ruling class used racism to stop workers from uniting. In 1919 Chicago police allowed racist white mobs to kill 23 Black people.

The 1930s were different. The United Packinghouse Workers of the CIO won union contracts for workers in Chicago and across the country. Two of the main organizers were the communists Henry Johnson and Herb March.

UPWA members fought against segregation in Chicago, Kansas City and other places. Automation allowed the wealthy and powerful to throw workers back.

Slaughterhouses moved out of Chicago and other big cities to be closer to the feedlots. After a long decline, the Union stockyards closed in 1971.

This greatly reduced an important base of support for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. when he came to Chicago in 1966. Dr. King joined the Chicago Freedom Movement to fight housing segregation. Racists hit him with a brick.

Many of the new packing houses and poultry plants have been organized by the UFCW, which includes the old UPWA locals. On [May Day in 2006](#), immigrant workers and their supporters walked out of the National Beef Packing plant in Greeley, Kansas.

That's in the southwest corner of the Sunflower State, hundreds of miles away from a big city. Meat and poultry workers are fighting back.



'Mobilizing in Our Own Name' book explored at labor center webinar

written by Struggle - La Lucha
December 14, 2021



From Clarence Thomas, author of ["Mobilizing in Our Own Name: The Million Worker March"](#):

"On Nov. 18, I was honored to have the Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies, at the University of Washington in Seattle host [a Zoom webinar for my book,](#)

'Mobilizing in our Name: Million Worker March,' organized by Andrew Hedden, Associate Director of the Center. The moderator was Professor Peter Cole, professor of history at Western Illinois University."

Panelists included Clarence Thomas, labor activist and longshore leader; Trent Willis, president ILWU Local 10 in San Francisco; Brenda Stokely, past president of Local 2015 and District Council 1707, AFSCME; Gabriel Prawl, past president ILWU Local 52 in Seattle; and Chris Silvera, secretary-treasurer (IBT), Teamsters Local 808 Long Island City, N.Y. The book's editors, Delores Lemon-Thomas, Gloria Verdieu and designer Lallan Schoenstein were present during the panel.

"Mobilizing in Our Own Name" documents the story of radical African American trade unionists from one of the most renowned radical labor organizations in the world, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 10, that defied the Democratic Party and the AFL-CIO and mobilized the Million Worker March (MWM) on October 17, 2004, at the Lincoln Memorial.

The MWM called for an independent mobilization of working people, with a workers' agenda to address the unrestrained class warfare by the captains of capital. This historic event, which was viewed on C-Span, attracted thousands of workers (organized and unorganized), immigrant rights groups, anti-war activists, community organizations, social movements, youth, and trade unionists from around the world.

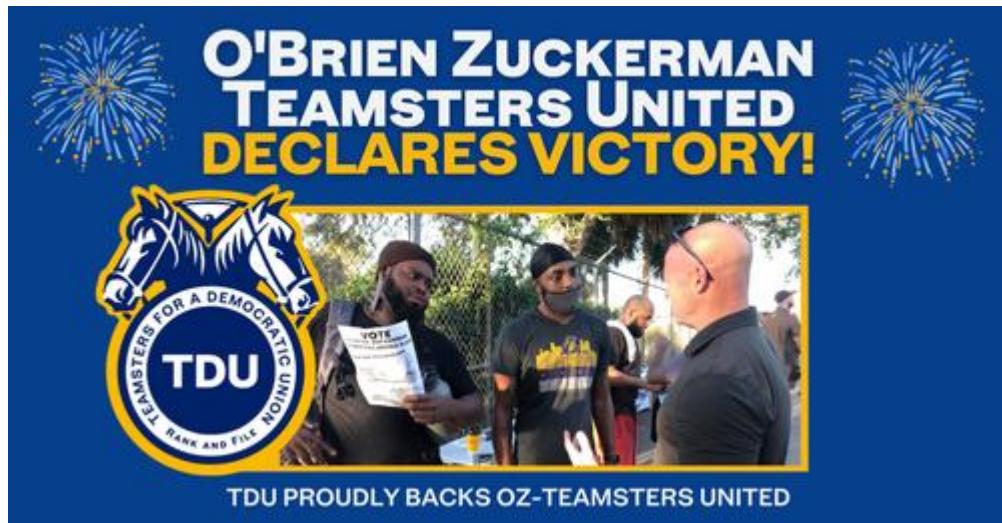
This anthology captures radical workers' actions and struggles written by activists as those events were happening through news articles, interviews, photos, posters, leaflets, and video transcripts.

For more information about the book, visit millionworkermarch.com



Teamsters United victory is historic step forward

written by Struggle - La Lucha
December 14, 2021



Washington, D.C. — Members of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) around the country have much to celebrate. For over two decades, the IBT led by Jimmy Hoffa Jr. did very little to help union members and working people. Instead,

the Hoffa Jr. regime busied itself with arranging givebacks to employers and managing the general decline of the Teamsters. Workers represented by the Teamsters saw their contracts become weaker, their union become smaller, and whatever respect they had on the job evaporate.

However, all of that is set to change now that O'Brien-Zuckerman (OZ) and their Teamsters United slate has won the election. After just the first day of counting votes to determine who would lead the Teamsters over the next five years, it became clear that a new chapter was beginning for one of the most important unions in North America.

Teamsters from the U.S. and Canada cast their ballots for International Leadership of the Teamsters throughout October and the first half of November. On November 15, the vote count began in Washington, D.C. Votes were counted by region, beginning with the Southern U.S. and then counting votes cast from the Central, East, West, and Canada. In each region of the United States, Teamsters made their demands for better leadership known, by overwhelmingly voting for Sean O'Brien and Fred Zuckerman's Teamsters United slate against the old guard leadership. In the South, Central, and East regions, over 70% of the votes went to OZ. In the West, where the old guard was strongest, over 55% of the vote went to OZ. Overall, Teamsters United emerged with a strong victory, earning about 114,000 votes compared to just 57,000 votes. OZ won with almost twice the number of votes, and over 66% of the total votes cast in the election.

Richard Blake from Teamsters Local 512 in Jacksonville, Florida, was invited to help observe the process of counting votes. "The whole facility erupted in cheers when we won the Western Region after previously winning the South, Central, and Eastern regions. We made history and elected an IBT executive board that's united to take on the employers and fight for the members," Blake commented.

The rank-and-file membership of the Teamsters sent a clear message - they are

ready for the union to fight the employers for stronger contracts and end the age of endless concessions to the bosses. Hoffa Jr. sealed his fate in 2018-2019 when he used a bogus clause in the union's constitution to approve the UPS contract, despite the membership voting to reject the weak contract three separate times.

Teamsters United had already been organizing the membership to take back their union, and eventually helped remove that bogus clause from the constitution in 2021. Sean O'Brien recognized the critical role that Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) played in removing the clause when he spoke at TDU's annual convention in October. Teamsters are already gearing up to fight for a strong contract at UPS in 2023.

The Teamsters represent workers in a variety of industries, but regardless of where they work and what they do for a living, Teamsters are fed up with the weak leadership offered by Hoffa Jr. and his handpicked successors. The on-the-ground campaigning done by Teamsters United volunteers around North America was an amazing show and earned tremendous results. Members of TDU did an excellent job helping secure the victory of Teamsters United, as did many rank-and-file members. Every leaflet handed out and every conversation with coworkers mattered. Once again, the working class showed that passion for change can overcome backwards stubbornness.

There's a long road ahead filled with struggle for Teamsters who want to fight for the working class. The victory of O'Brien-Zuckerman and Teamsters United is a big step in the right direction for unions in North America.

Source: [FightBack! News](#)



Unemployed Workers Union: We'll continue to fight!

written by Struggle - La Lucha
December 14, 2021



Nov. 3 — The Unemployed Workers Union strongly disagrees with Circuit Court Judge John Nugent's order to dismiss our lawsuit, *Harp v. Hogan*, which addressed the State of Maryland's failure to distribute much-needed federal and state unemployment benefits.

The Maryland Department of Labor's refusal to distribute already-paid-for federal benefits is an absolute disgrace. While the State of Maryland spends hundreds of thousands of dollars to defeat our lawsuit, people continue to lose their homes, cars and possessions. Families have been made bankrupt and left without food and necessities.

The fight will continue. The Unemployed Workers Union will utilize every means necessary to secure the benefits thousands of people are still owed. We will review and assess other legal strategies. We will continue protesting. We will continue to call on the General Assembly to use its power to end the suffering of unemployed workers.

Both Gov. Larry Hogan and Labor Secretary Tiffany Robinson have remained arrogant and callous in their disregard for the rights of thousands of Marylanders who have still not received their benefits.

We will take our fight to the “court of the people” and we will win there!

<https://www.facebook.com/UnemployedWorkersUnion/videos/588770559135339>



Mobilizing in our own name

written by Struggle - La Lucha
December 14, 2021

<https://www.struggle-la-lucha.org/labor/page/10/>

An interview with author and labor activist Clarence Thomas

This season is being called #Striketober. Workers are showing their power by striking, and demanding better conditions. The release of the anthology, "Mobilizing in Our Own Name: Million Worker March" is timely.

Author Clarence Thomas — an African American labor activist, longshore leader, and an organizer of the 2004 Million Worker March — has been speaking at meetings and gatherings around the country. We talked with Thomas on Oct.17, the anniversary of the Million Worker March in Washington, to get his insights on the labor struggle today.

Struggle-La Lucha: Welcome to Striketober. Tell us about your new book.

Clarence Thomas: Thank you for the opportunity to have this conversation. I have been a member of International Longshore and Warehouse Workers (ILWU) Local 10 for 31 years. Though retired from the waterfront, I'm still in the struggle. After I finished the book, I first reached out to the ILWU Local 10 members. I introduced the book at the Local 10 commemoration of Juneteenth and at a Labor Fest program on July 10 where I did a book signing and reading for union members and the community.

There are Local 10 members that are featured in "Mobilizing in Our Own Name." For many, it was their first opportunity to meet an author who wrote a book about them and their union. Of course, they're very enthusiastic about the book.

Since then, most of my interactions have been through Zoom. In the past several weeks, I've begun to travel to events. I attended and sold books at the Teamsters Women's Leadership Conference that took place in Las Vegas, Nevada. We met with

workers from across the country: Louisville, Kentucky; Houston, Texas; Seattle, Washington; New York City; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and from Phoenix, Arizona. It was the first time that we had a chance to meet workers in one location from various parts of the country.

The Teamsters National Black Caucus (TNBC) invited us to the women's conference. They played a very important role in organizing the 2004 Million Worker March. Brother Chris Silvera who is the longest serving principal officer in the Teamsters, heads up Teamsters Local 808 in Long Island City, New York. Local 808 members are responsible for maintaining the track at Metro-North. Chris Silvera was the East Coast coordinator of the Million Worker March (MWM) along with sister Brenda Stokely from AFSCME DC 1707.

International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) General President, James P. Hoffa, wrote a letter praising the book and discussed its importance in terms of building labor solidarity. He expressed that the concerns of workers addressed at the Million Worker March (MWM) in 2004, are even more relevant today. Hoffa's support for the book, which features the Teamsters, is one of the reasons why we are able to reach out to IBT members all over the country.

Struggle-La Lucha: The book's title — Mobilizing in Our Own Name — tell us more.

Clarence Thomas: Oct. 17, 2021, is the 17th anniversary of the 2004 Million Work March Mobilization in Washington D.C. on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. The name of the MWM book, "Mobilizing in Our Own Name," is based on the premise that workers cannot depend on bourgeois politicians to address the issues of systemic racism, income inequality, corporate greed, workers' rights, universal health care, slashing the military budget, ending the murder of African Americans and other people of color. Today, the contradictions that are precipitated by the crisis of capitalism are greater than they were in 2004.

The MWM anthology is about radical African American trade unionists in one of the most renowned radical labor organizations of the world, the ILWU Local 10. They defied the Democratic Party and the AFL-CIO, to mobilize the Million Worker March.

As we relate the story of MWM, organized 17 years ago, to what's happening today, it is prophetic. Workers, for too long, have been put into a straitjacket as it relates to their being able to address their needs, because of their respective labor organizations are subordinated to the Democratic Party.

Struggle-La Lucha: Yes. Now there is a strikewave across the country

Clarence Thomas: This October, some 100,000 workers from across the country are withholding their labor at the point of production. No one can speak for workers like workers can speak for themselves. These actions involve workers that are organized, such as the UAW, California nurses, Kellogg's, Nabisco and John Deere. What we're witnessing is not limited to the traditional sectors of industry. Workers are coming out of the global pandemic, which highlighted the income and wealth inequality in this country.

The corporate media and economists measure the success of the economy by the number of jobs that are generated, while ignoring the quality of those jobs. What the corporate sector frames as a labor shortage is more accurately described as a living-wage shortage. It is a pay shortage, a child care shortage, a paid sick-leave shortage, a health care shortage.

In an interview, an African American woman in Battle Creek, Michigan, reportedly said that at Kellogg's, a global company, "while we prepare food for the world, we're unable to take off from work to feed our children." Kellogg's workers are being told just minutes before the end of their shift that they have to work more hours. This harkens back to the days before we had unions. This is a reflection of the capitalist crisis exacerbated by the COVID-19 epidemic.

In California where I live, a multibillionaire, a right-wing, racist capitalist who owns the Oakland A's, the Gap and other enterprises, wants to build a baseball stadium, a condominium, a hotel, as well as retail and commercial space at the third busiest port on the West Coast. This is an example of the neoliberal model of capitalism, which is a policy that makes it easier for corporations, banks and the rich to exploit the working class. This gentrification will compromise the Port of Oakland and the jobs of essential workers.

Struggle-La Lucha: The ILWU has a history of class struggle, of knowing the power of a strike.

Clarence Thomas: Henry Bridges, one of the founders of the ILWU, said during contract negotiations that the only reason why the employers were at the bargaining table was because they knew that if they did not collectively bargain with us, we were going to shut them down. They would not be able to make any profits.

That was over 80 years ago. Nothing has changed. Workers feel like they're working harder. They also feel that they have put their lives on the line during this pandemic, that they have not been protected. And that after all that they have been through, they have realized that they have to stand up and fight back.

This isn't some kind of an official country-wide strike effort. As a matter of fact, it's been called an unofficial General Strike. This is not something that has been called for by the leadership of the AFL-CIO whose agenda is not consistent with the needs of the rank-and-file. We, in labor, are not the junior partners of the Democratic Party.

Struggle-La Lucha: Is this what you call organizing in our own name?

Clarence Thomas: Yes! Workers must have their own agenda. They do not want to have endless wars, to live in a country where there are no living wages. Workers

want to have universal health care that is not dependent on the health care policies with their jobs. Because even when workers are unemployed, they are still workers. Workers want to be able to form a union, to send their children to college, to purchase a home. Workers do not need to be fired at the whim of a boss. They want to live in a country where there's clean water and air, and not have to deal with the impact of global warming caused by corporate greed.

The corporate media, which is very, very powerful in this country, can form attitudes that lead workers to behave against their own interest. When I viewed the striking white workers at the Battle Creek, Michigan, plant, I could not help but to think how many of them have been caught up in the issue of wearing a mask versus not wearing a mask.

I am bringing that up, because we need to understand how white supremacy impacts many of our sisters and brothers in the labor movement. When we look at the labor movement today, it is a rarity to find an African American who heads up an International Union.

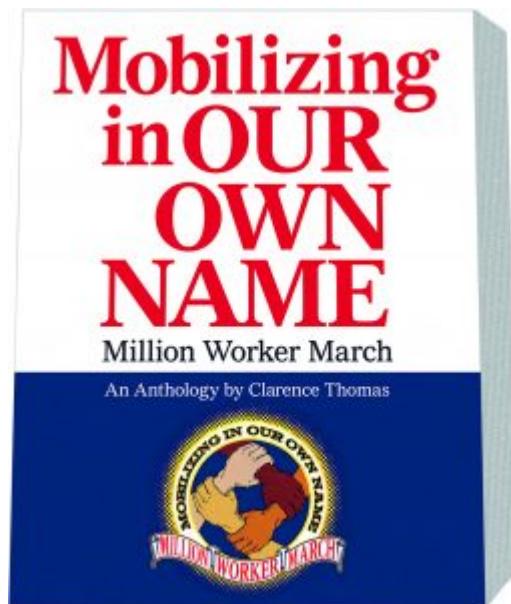
One case that I know of is Willie Adams, who is the president of the ILWU. Adams recently met with President Biden to talk about the bottleneck of the international supply chain that is impacting workers who are being forced to work 24/7 to be able to move much needed merchandise and cargo across the country.

White supremacy has negatively impacted one of the most important parts of trade unionism, and that is worker solidarity. Today's strikes that we're witnessing across the country is a very, very positive development. Workers are taking action based upon their own concerns and needs.

There has been a great deal of anti-worker propaganda. We find that many in the white working class thought that Donald Trump was going to do something for them. Well, they found out that he did not. Trump was more committed to making sure that

whites are more concerned about being white than having living wages and a pension. These strikes are a blow to white supremacy because they are building multi-racial class solidarity.

“Mobilizing in Our Own Name,” the MWM anthology is a prophetic book. It’s very important for workers to get the book in their hands.



www.MillionWorkerMarch.com

“Mobilizing in Our Own Name” documents struggles in news articles, interviews, letters, posters, photos, speeches and video transcripts.

Danny Glover who was a part of the MWM, wrote, “Those of us that are activists in the struggle and are contemporaries of my brother and comrade Clarence ‘Buzz’ Thomas, whom I’ve known since our days at San Francisco State, he has done what many of us have talked about but refused to do; write a book! This anthology captures the Million Worker March and so many subsequent struggles that really

underscores how ILWU Local 10 continues its long radical history and tradition of struggle. To quote sister Angela Davis, when we both spoke at the Juneteenth 2020 rally at the Port of Oakland, “Whenever the ILWU takes a stand, the world feels the reverberation.”

Mobilizing in Our Own Name will be inspiring and instructive to workers and activists in the future. For those of us that were part of the struggles and actions covered in this book, we realize this is “our” anthology.



Two, three, many Striketobers!

written by Struggle - La Lucha
December 14, 2021



The U.S. working class is waking up angry and defiant. More than 100,000 workers are on strike from coast to coast. Here are some of the biggest battles that broke out during “Striketober”:

- 10,000 members of the United Auto Workers are on strike at 14 John Deere plants in Iowa, Illinois, Colorado, Georgia, and Kansas. The manufacturer of construction and agricultural equipment, including tractors, is expected to rake in profits of nearly \$6 billion this year. That [hasn't stopped Deere from demanding pension cuts](#) for newly hired workers. Salaried, non-union employees are being forced to cross picket lines to try to break the strike. It's dangerous for these workers to perform jobs that they're not trained for.
- 38,000 Kaiser Permanente health care workers in California and Oregon

have authorized a strike. After 19 months of putting their lives on the line fighting COVID-19, they want better staffing and wages that get ahead of inflation.

- 60,000 members of IATSE (the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees) authorized a strike that would have shut down Hollywood. They're sick of working 14 or more hours a day so that movies can be completed. The workers' solidarity forced the studio bosses to come to a tentative agreement.
- 1,400 Kellogg's cereal workers — members of the Bakery Workers Union (BCTCM) — are on strike in Battle Creek, Michigan, and in Nebraska, Pennsylvania and Tennessee. Kellogg's CEO Steven Cahillane is [collecting \\$11.6 million this year](#) but doesn't want to pay Kellogg's workers a living wage.
- 1,100 members of the United Mine Workers are continuing their strike in Alabama against Warrior Met Coal that began April 1. The striking miners have come to New York City to confront BlackRock — that controls \$9 trillion in assets — and other big investors in Warrior Met to demand an end to their strikebreaking.
- 2,000 Catholic Health workers are on strike at three hospitals in Buffalo, New York, while 800 nurses are on strike at St. Vincent Hospital in Worcester, Massachusetts. Like the Kaiser workers on the West Coast, these essential workers are demanding more staffing for their patients. The nurses in Worcester are up against the Tenet Healthcare chain that runs 65 hospitals. Despite getting \$1 billion in federal stimulus funds and a \$1.5 billion advance on Medicare payments, Tenet [laid off a tenth of its workforce](#) in 2019. These layoffs certainly didn't help fight the coronavirus.

Fifty years of attacks

Is this current strike wave just accidental? Or is it the start of something big?

Working and poor people in the U.S. have been pushed back since the 1970s. Taking inflation into account, average [real wages have been frozen](#) since 1978.

Meanwhile, 724 U.S. billionaires [grabbed another \\$1.2 trillion](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic. Part of Microsoft founder [Bill Gates' \\$124 billion stash](#) is invested in strikebreaking John Deere.

Thousands of union strongholds were destroyed. The biggest victims of this deliberate deindustrialization were Black workers. They accounted for a quarter of U.S. auto workers and steel workers in 1970.

The median income of Black families in the Midwest plunged 36% between 1978 and 1982. The Black majority city of Detroit became [the poorest big city](#) in the United States.

Instead of young workers being concentrated in factories and other large workplaces, they were instead railroaded to the big prisons. Since 1970, [the prison population has increased](#) seven times. Prisoners are also part of the working class.

Now closed, the A.O. Smith auto frame plant in Milwaukee once employed more than 7,000 workers. Half of these workers were Black. This factory bordered [the 53206 ZIP code](#) where 62% of Black men are or have been incarcerated.

Looking at strike statistics also shows how poor and working people were thrown back. In 1970 and 1971 there were around 2.5 million workers on strike, including big strikes against General Motors and General Electric.

The United Farmworkers Union conducted strikes of Latinx, Filipino and Arab workers.

In 1974, there were 424 strikes that involved 1,000 or more workers. (The Bureau of Labor Statistics unfortunately doesn't give figures for strikes of less than a thousand

workers.)

The number of these strikes fell to 96 in 1982, 35 in 1992 and just five strikes in 2009. It [rebounded slightly](#) to 25 strikes in 2019.

Fighting back

The willingness of many workers to go on strike or just quit their jobs isn't an isolated phenomenon. It's linked to the 26 million people who marched last year to demand Black Lives Matter!

The struggles of Indigenous peoples and their allies against environmentally destructive oil pipelines are part of this fightback. So is the struggle in the U.S. colony of Puerto Rico against LUMA, the privatized electric company.

While the current number of strikes is smaller than during the working class upsurge of the 1930s, they're just as courageous. The communist leader and workers' organizer, Vince Copeland, described in 1970 how hard it is for workers to rebel:

"When a few dozen workers in a sweatshop first take fate in their hands and embark upon a strike, they have to go through a revolution in their own spirits; they have to take a chance on losing their livelihood altogether, especially if there has been no union in their shop before, and if they do not succeed in getting recognition from their boss.

"That is why it is so hard to organize the workers even on the elemental level of joining together to prevent the heel of capital from grinding them down altogether, much less organizing to overthrow imperialism and establish socialism.

"When workers lose even one hour's wages, it is often too much of a sacrifice. Those who are eternally in debt, eternally paying for the washing machine, the furniture or

the family automobile, hesitate to take off a day when they are really quite ill; how do they feel when they must face a strike of weeks' and possibly several months' duration? (From "Revolutionary implications of the GM strike.")

Today's strikes of thousands can lead to organizing millions of workers at Amazon, FedEx, Target and Walmart. The army of home health aides can win union wages and benefits and so can the millions employed in auto body shops, hotels, nursing homes and restaurants.

Two, three many Striketobers!



Union victory for NOLA city workers as council ratifies \$15 minimum wage

written by Struggle - La Lucha
December 14, 2021

On Oct. 7, the New Orleans City Council ratified a \$15-an-hour minimum wage for

city workers, effective in January. This will be \$3.81 more than the paltry \$11.19 minimum currently in place.

Because of [sky-rocketing inflation](#), \$15 dollars doesn't go as far as it did even a few months ago. Nevertheless, the raise is a major victory for the working-class movement here, and will be welcomed by city workers struggling to make ends meet.

As [reported in Struggle-La Lucha](#) back in July, the council was forced to move forward when the firefighters' union and allies marched into the chambers on July 1, right in the middle of a session. When put on the spot, the council members voted unanimously that they would find the money for a raise. Now it's official.

When the firefighters marched into the chambers on that day in July, the council was voting on a resolution to require a \$15-an-hour minimum for city contract workers. This was one year after mostly-Black [contracted sanitation workers had gone on strike](#) in the city, carrying out an unprecedented drive for unionization. At the time, this sent shockwaves through New Orleans' big and small bourgeoisie, with the owners of the garbage-collection company, Metro Services Group, crying to the press. But support for the strike was widespread, and most media coverage was sympathetic.

It should also be noted that in the summer of 2020 — when the sanitation-worker strike was ongoing — thousands of people in the city marched against racist police killings in what was really a country-wide rebellion against white supremacy; the council and mayor were certainly paying attention to these events, as they were embroiled in controversy after New Orleans police used [tear gas against protesters](#) marching across the Mississippi River bridge.

All in all, we can conclude that workers can only get concessions from the capitalists and their governments if we organize for militant fightback.



Nabisco starts to crumble under strike pressure, struggle continues

written by Struggle - La Lucha

December 14, 2021

After five weeks on strike against snack company Nabisco and its parent monopoly, Mondelez International, workers represented by the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers' International Union (BCTGM) voted to approve a new contract on Sept. 16-17. The union was able to partially derail the company's aggressive takeback campaign, but the struggle will continue.

Like one of Nabisco's ill-considered holiday-flavored Oreos, the strike tore off the company's comforting cookie shell and exposed the nasty filling at the center of the snack profiteer.

During the pandemic, Nabisco forced workers to take [12-to-16-hour shifts](#) to meet increased demand rather than hiring more workers. Nabisco then wanted to convert the pandemic situation into a permanent profit-grab by enshrining 12-hour, 3-day weekend shifts with no overtime pay in a new contract, while also cutting back

healthcare benefits.

Nabisco bosses' ultimatum pushed workers to take action, much like the July strike by Frito Lay workers against similar "suicide shifts." Many industries are now pushing to adopt these kinds of anti-worker policies, pioneered by online giant Amazon.com.

Workers also demanded the restoration of their pensions, which the company had unilaterally replaced with a 401k plan, and guarantees that the company was not planning to close more factories beyond two that were shut down earlier this year.

Meanwhile, Nabisco's parent company, based in Chicago, reported a [2.8 percent increase in revenue](#) in 2020 and its CEO Dirk Van de Put made nearly \$17 million last year. The corporation, which includes other subsidiaries like Barclays and Cadbury, reported [\\$5.5 billion in profits](#) in the second quarter of 2021.

Broad support for workers

The strike broke out in Portland, Ore., where 200 workers walked out on Aug. 10, and quickly spread to bakeries and distribution centers in Chicago, Aurora, Colo., Richmond, Va., and Norcross, Ga.

The union called for a boycott of Nabisco products, including Oreos, Chips Ahoy, Ritz crackers, Fig Newtons, Triscuits and Wheat Thins: "No contract, no snacks!"

The slogan was taken up by supporters across the country, including actor Danny DeVito, who tweeted his support and was punished by Twitter, which removed his "verified" status. DeVito was joined by members of the Portland Thorns, the champion National Women's Soccer League team.

Union members and community groups across the U.S. plastered shelves in grocery stores with boycott stickers and donated to a fund to support strikers and their

families.

Nabisco chose this moment to launch a major promotion with Oreo cookies featuring the popular Pokémon video game and anime characters to counter bad publicity generated by the strike. It backfired, as many gamers and gaming journalists came out in support of the strikers.

“Pokémon or no, I can do without Oreos until the countless people who make them are finally treated with a modicum of respect for their labor,” [wrote Ian Walker of Kotaku](#).

Company violence

BCTGM Local 364 in Portland was in the thick of it. This militant local led the initial walkout and built considerable community support, with weekly mass rallies and daily pickets confronting scabs hired by Nabisco/Mondelez.

The pickets were effective — so much so that Portland cops were enlisted by the bosses to ban strikers and supporters from company parking lots where they were blocking bused-in scabs and managers. They also [kicked workers off railroad tracks](#) where supply trains were unloaded.

Taking another page from the Amazon playbook, Mondelez hired Huffmaster, a “private security company” that specializes in union busting, to protect scabs and attack picketers. Huffmaster’s goons repeatedly threatened, pushed, shoved, jabbed and stomped on the feet of picketers.

Jesse Dreyer, a Teamster who came out to support the Portland picket, was badly beaten for several minutes by the anti-union goons. The attack was captured on video. [Dreyer is suing Huffmaster](#) for damages in federal court.

“It felt really personal, because I’ve been out there every single day,” [Dreyer told](#)

[the Portland Mercury](#). “They know my face, and I yell at them, ‘Shame on you,’ every single morning. It felt like they targeted me ... and got out a little bit of what they wanted to.”

On Sept. 12, [Willamette Week reported](#) that Huffmaster had posted ads to hire more goons in other cities where Nabisco workers were on strike.

Contract signed, struggle continues

The BCTGM national negotiating team [reached a tentative agreement](#) with Nabisco/Mondelez International management on Sept. 15.

Although not all details have been released, we know the company withdrew its plan to cut workers’ healthcare, including for new hires, and added a cash bonus. The union, in turn, agreed to allow the company to introduce its sought-after 12-hour, 3-day weekend shifts, with the company promising not to force any current workers to take those shifts.

On Sept. 16, the Portland local voted overwhelmingly [against the proposal](#), urging workers in other cities to do the same. However, the following day, the [contract was approved nationally](#) by a 3 to 1 margin.

Local 364 Vice President [Mike Burlingham explained](#): “This is a way for the company to remove premium pay for weekend work... This will create a divide between lower and senior employees within the bakery as junior people will be forced into this [weekend shift] should nobody volunteer. It’s still the intentional divide the company is creating, just structured in a different way.”

Nevertheless, [he told the Portland Mercury](#), the fact that Mondelez had to sit down and negotiate with the union showed how powerful the strike was. “In the nine years we’ve been under Mondelez, this is the very first time they have actually sat down and negotiated in good faith with our negotiating team. It took them five weeks to do

it.

"We always knew that Portland is a different climate than the rest of the country," Burlingham said. "We knew that there was fight in us here, and we had a lot of backing from supporters in the community to help us. I can't speak for the other locations, but if I had to guess, they might not have had that same kind of boost that we did here."

Local 364 [President Jesus Martinez added](#), "It's still going to be a fight for four years. Even though the company says they want it to be harmonious, that's if they respect the contract. But they never have and they never will."

While the Nabisco strike ended in a mixed result, it was an important step in exposing and combating the strategy of U.S. bosses to take back workers' rights in the Amazon era.

As Burlingham said: "This is the working class fight. Between Frito Lay, the Alabama coal miners' strike and us, there's a lot of people paying attention — and not just in the United States."

