

# Bronx produce workers fight for justice

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
January 23, 2021



Photo: Teamster Joint Council 16

*Bulletin: Because of the courage of the striking workers, and the support given to them by the community, a tentative agreement was reached Jan. 22.*

The 8.6 million people living in the Big Apple eat a lot of apples. Most of them come through the Hunts Point Produce Market in the Bronx. So does a majority of New York City's other fruits and vegetables.

A thousand workers, members of Teamsters Local 202, have gone on strike there. They're asking for a mere \$1 per hour wage increase.

They are all essential workers who've kept feeding New Yorkers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Six of the Teamsters have died of the coronavirus doing so. Another 300 have fallen ill from it.

“Don’t say we should be lucky to have a job,” [said one of the strikers](#), Hiram Montalvo, who unloads trucks. “Say thank you that we’re actually coming to work and risking our lives so that they can take care of their families as well.”

New York City is awfully expensive. It’s hard to find a one-bedroom apartment that rents for less than \$1,600 per month. Asking for a dollar more an hour is modest and necessary.

The response of the bosses has been to bring in the police. Three hundred police in riot gear attacked the picket lines after midnight on Jan. 19. Six strikers were arrested.

This is the same police force that’s arrested thousands for asserting that Black lives matter. Now they’re attacking workers on strike, most of whom are Black or Brown. That’s another reason to expel police organizations from the AFL-CIO.

Union leaders made the connection. Teamster Joint Council 16, which represents 120,000 workers, tweeted: “Hands up! Don’t shoot! We condemn the arrests of several peaceful strikers on the Teamsters picket line tonight at Hunts Point Market. These essential workers deserve their \$1 raise.”

People have already come to Hunts Point to show solidarity. Congressperson Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez skipped the presidential inauguration to join the picket line. AOC was targeted for assassination by the fascist mob that was allowed to enter the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6.

More important were the CSX workers who refused to deliver 21 railroad cars to the market on Jan. 20. As the locomotive engineer, a member of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, declared, “We’re Teamsters too!”

The produce bosses have to be made to come to the bargaining table. Behind them are bankers and other big capitalists who are trying to break the strike of 1,800

Spectrum cable workers. The 1,800 members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 3 have been striking for nearly four years.

New York City power brokers want to give the same punishment to Teamster produce workers in the Bronx. But the rich and greedy don't seem to be winning.

As [one Teamster said](#) after the CSX train reversed direction: "Another victory. Another day longer. Another day stronger. We're going to get this contract come hell or high water!"

*The writer is a retired Amtrak worker and member of the American Train Dispatchers' Association and the Transportation Communication International Union.*



---

# Meatpackers and Trump lie, workers die

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
January 23, 2021

Saul Sanchez didn't have to die from the coronavirus. The 78-year-old worker at the JBS meatpacking plant in Greeley, Colo., died on April 7. His fellow workers, his six children and 12 grandchildren mourn him.

Supervision never told Sanchez that some employees had already tested positive for the virus. "They knew their employees were testing positive for COVID-19 a week before my dad got sick," said Sanchez's daughter, Beatrice Rangel.

The world's biggest meat and poultry outfit, with sales of \$51.7 billion last year, failed to quickly provide personal protective equipment to workers. Neither did JBS make any attempt to socially distance its employees. Workers at meat and poultry plants continue to work close together on production lines, often two feet apart.

Management lied to Local 7 officials of the United Food and Commercial Workers union. Bosses claimed that Sanchez had caught the virus while on vacation when in fact he hadn't taken any time off.

Saul Sanchez spent [over 30 years of his life](#) as an essential worker at the Greeley plant. But as Beatrice Rangel said, he was "just a number" to JBS.

In addition to Saul Sanchez, five other workers died at the JBS plant in Greeley. Two hundred and ninety others have tested positive.

Weld County health officials closed the Greeley plant in April. But JBS was able to get it reopened in less than two weeks without implementing many of the safety measures that were needed. Not even all the returning workers were tested for the coronavirus.

### **'Social distancing is a nicety'**

The biggest hotspots in the United States for the coronavirus are prisons and slaughterhouses. Around [2,237 inmates at California's San Quentin prison](#) have

caught the virus. Twenty-six of them have died.

At least 203 meatpacking workers have died of COVID-19, while 42,534 meatpacking workers in 494 plants have tested positive for the coronavirus.

Just as the prisons are filled with Black, Indigenous and Latinx people, so are the meatpacking and poultry plants. [Seven out of every eight meatpacking employees](#) who have tested positive for COVID-19 are workers of color and/or immigrants.

Smithfield Foods is the world's biggest pork company. At its Sioux Falls, S. D., plant, 1,294 workers have tested positive for the coronavirus. Four of them died.

That doesn't seem to bother Smithfield CEO Kenneth Sullivan as much as state governments issuing stay-at-home orders. In a letter to Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts, Sullivan claimed these absolutely necessary health measures were causing "hysteria."

According to this pork boss, "Social distancing is a nicety that makes sense only for people with laptops."

[In a letter](#) to Sens. Cory Booker and Elizabeth Warren, Sullivan wrote, "Please understand, processing plants were no more designed to operate in a pandemic than hospitals were designed to produce pork. ... For better or worse, our plants are what they are."

So "for better or worse," workers had to die while [Sullivan takes home \\$14 million a year](#).

This CEO figures he can get away with such open callousness after decades of an anti-union offensive by big business. Deindustrialization has destroyed thousands of unionized workplaces.

Pork boss Sullivan's letters are reminiscent of Richard Mellon's outburst towards a group of U.S. senators after he broke a United Mine Workers union strike in 1925. Explaining why he needed to hire private gunmen, Mellon declared, "You could not run a coal company without machine guns!"

Last year the Bank of New York Mellon Corporation had assets of \$381 billion.

### **The parrot in the White House**

The springtime surge of COVID-19 throughout the meat and poultry industry frightened the dead animal capitalists. Not because workers were dying but because they might be forced to to make their factories safe.

President Trump came to their rescue. He issued an executive order on April 28 keeping the packing plants open, citing the Defense Production Act.

This order overrode union leaders and local health officials who sought to close the plants until they could be operated safely. So much for "local control" and "federalism."

Trump's decree saved the meatpackers billions while thousands more workers caught the virus. [It followed almost word for word](#) a draft written by Julie Potts, president of the North American Meat Institute.

With the presidential selection getting close, the Trump-controlled Occupational Safety and Health Administration fined Smithfield \$13,494. This election stunt works out to \$3,373.50 for each of the four workers who died at Smithfield's Sioux Falls plant or ten bucks for every employee there who tested positive for COVID-19.

Mike Perrone, president of the United Food and Commercial Workers, rightfully called this OSHA fine a ["slap on the wrist."](#)

OSHA also fined the JBS plant in Greeley, where Saul Sanchez and five other workers died, \$15,615. UFCW union members answered this insulting figure — which amounts to \$2,602.50 for each worker who died — [by demonstrating on Sept. 16](#).

Trump may be the richest scoundrel to have ever occupied the White House, but he follows orders like every other president.

When the Meat Institute or other big capitalists call, Trump answers. Poor and working people suffer. We need to fight back.



---

## **UIC: Largest strike since start of the economic crisis**

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
January 23, 2021

Chicago, Sept. 17 — The strike of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 73 and the Illinois Nurses Association (INA) at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) shows no sign of ending. Starting when the INA, representing 1,300

nurses, walked out Saturday, Sept. 12, the strike ballooned to 5,300 on Monday, Sept. 14, when Local 73 put down their brooms, keyboards and medical equipment to hit the picket lines.

Many people believe that the modern labor movement was born in a strike wave with the 1929 stock market crash that ushered in the Great Depression. In fact, the first strikes during the depression were two years later, and there weren't a large number of strikes until 1934. Since the pandemic triggered the deepest economic crisis since the 1930s, other than small strikes at Amazon and other warehouses, there have been no significant strikes to speak of.

Management at UIC certainly did not expect this strike, as the INA has never struck UIH, and Local 73 has only had one strike of several hundred workers in the professional civil service titles in 2012.

The deaths of four workers in the hospital, and the death of a nurse's spouse due to management's failure to prepare for the COVID-19 pandemic was one of the sparks that launched the strike. For the Local 73 members, their anger focused on the death of Juan Martinez, a surgical technologist who had been a founder and leader of the Technical Workers bargaining unit.

For INA, two nurses and the spouse of another nurse at UIH died of COVID this spring. One of the nurses who died, Joyce Pacubas-Le Blanc, was Filipina. Sheila Puntal, another Filipina nurse who contracted the virus because of management's refusal to provide adequate PPE passed it to her husband, Anthony Walo, also Filipino, who died from it. Nurse Puntal gave heartbreaking expression of her pain when she spoke to a strike rally on Tuesday, of how she brought the disease home that killed her husband.

At UIC, the vast majority of Local 73's 4,000 members are Black and Latinx, and the INA's 1,300 members are mostly oppressed nationalities as well. The largest number



of nurses are Filipinos, but among the strikers there are also East Asians, South Asians, Latinx and Blacks. It is well known that disproportionately, all of these oppressed communities suffer much higher infection and death rates from COVID-19. This racist health disparity fuels much of the anger on the picket lines.

Nerissa Allegretti, a Filipina community organizer with the National Alliance for Filipino Concerns, and a health worker herself, spoke to the INA rally on Saturday, Sept. 12. “I came from a 12-hour night shift to join you this rainy day. The loss of lives of my fellow frontliners, nurses, health workers, essential workers and their families to COVID-19 could have been avoided if the UIC management acted on the need for PPE. My heart cries and is raging with fire for all the nurses and workers who are taken away from us not only because of COVID, but because management doesn’t have a heart for its workers. When management ignores us, it is just to strike! Strike is life!”

All the nurses applauded, but the Filipinos among them echoed her derision when Allegretti cursed as she spoke about the crisis-ridden economic system in their homeland such that 6,000 of their compatriots are forced to leave the Philippines daily for overseas work.

### **The nationwide rebellion emerges in the labor movement**

There was another fuse that was lit this spring with the police murder of George Floyd. The greatest uprising of protests in U.S. history has occurred since May 25, with 20 million or more people having taken part in protests. In Chicago, perhaps 200,000 have been in the streets starting on May 30, when the Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression brought 20,000 into the Loop to call for justice for George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery.

On Wednesday, strikers marched on the mansion home of Chancellor Michael Amiridis. One of the speakers was Angie Ross, a medical office specialist in physical

therapy.

Ross stated: “It’s so good to see everybody joined together here today, showing how strong we really are. I’ve been a UIC employee for over eight years, and I’ve been in the battle with you all. Management treats us like we don’t matter. If someone is essential, you take care of them. PPE should be readily available to us in the office or in patient care. Why are we underpaid? We risk our lives every day. We stepped up to the plate against COVID, now UIC needs to step up and take care of us! We are humans: treat us like a human being! We make that hospital run. We make the campus run, and if you want us to continue to make it run, you need to step up to the plate and give us what we need.”

Listening to Ross, the crowd of more than 1,000 workers was on fire. In fact, the tone of the strike by INA and Local 73 has been fired up since it began.

Ross — and Local 73 picket signs — used language from the uprising: Black lives matter. Also, Local 73 is led by its first Black president, Dian Palmer. President Palmer also led 7,000 members, overwhelmingly Black and Latinx out on strike against the Chicago Public Schools in the fall. And when the Chicago Alliance marched and drove into the Loop on May 30, Dian Palmer was there as well.

Also like the rebellion in the streets against police crimes, this strike is on the offense. SEIU strikers are not just trying to hold on to past gains, but instead demanding significant wage increases, and the nurses are demanding staffing levels like they have in California.

For all these reasons, the UIC strike is the biggest thing happening in labor in the country.

Source: [FightBack!News](#)



---

# County workers picket anti-union politician

written by Struggle - La Lucha

January 23, 2021

By a Local 1994 steward and bargaining committee member

Takoma Park, Md. — Bus drivers, librarians, nurses, clerical workers, teachers, sanitation workers — workers of all vocations — picketed the home of Montgomery County Councilmember Hans Reimer on May 16 in response to his “No” vote on the union contract that was successfully negotiated between United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1994 and County Executive Marc Elrich.

Our picket line was extremely well organized. We wore work uniforms and the number of walking pickets was limited ahead of time to the number that could socially distance safely.

Despite monies soon due the county under the multitrillion-dollar federal bailout, a majority of the term-limited council used the virus crisis as a political excuse to vote

“No.” Ambitious and posturing for future campaigns for higher office, council members hope to garner financial support from the high number of millionaires in the county.

All members of the council are Democrats. As a particularly two-faced example, Reimer was chosen for the picket line, which wrapped around the long sidewalks of his corner property. Blowing their horns, dozens of cars driven by union members and their families circled the block in addition to the walking pickets.

Our signs and chants let the neighborhood know that all of Reimer’s speeches about how much he respects and appreciates county workers are nothing but cheap talk.



---

# **J-1 workers speak out on exploitative State Department labor program**

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
January 23, 2021



"It all started with the sudden terminations of all J-1s," said Mary Lee Philline Camello, calling in from Hot Springs, Va. "Instead of receiving termination letters, we were informed via phone call, video chat or from other coworkers." On May 13,

the J-1 Workers Network held an [online press conference](#) with support from the National Alliance for Filipino Concerns (NAFCON) and Migrante USA.

The J-1 visa is granted to young workers from outside the United States who have been sponsored by U.S. employers to be placed in temporary jobs in industries like hospitality, retail and food service. Camello is one of the many J-1 workers who spoke about the challenges they face under the COVID-19 pandemic in the U.S.

These workers formed the J-1 Workers Network and launched the Support J-1 Workers campaign in response to the inaction and neglect from sponsoring employers and home and host country governments.

“Some of us still had three months left in our contracts,” Camello continued. “Some of us just arrived, and only were able to work for a week.” This leaves the J-1 workers jobless, having to spend their savings on rent, groceries and paying back the loans to their recruiting agencies — the same agencies that put them in this situation in the first place.

“We tried reaching out to our visa sponsors, and their only advice for us was to go home, or others got no response. We also tried reaching out to the Philippines Embassy, the host company and the community, but there was little to no support given.”

The J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor Program is overseen by the U.S. State Department, and is touted to “increase mutual understanding between the people of the U.S. and the people of other countries by means of education and cultural exchange.” In reality, it’s a way for U.S. employers to hire workers from overseas for far below the federal minimum wage without shouldering any of the costs of travel, housing or insurance.

These costs are passed on to the workers themselves: sponsoring employers and

recruiting agencies charge hundreds or thousands of dollars to register, which does not include the costs of travel, housing and insurance. These registration and sponsorship fees are completely unregulated and there is no limit to how much recruiting agencies can charge.

“We are liable to pay a program fee of \$5,500, which includes the \$500 registration fee, the fee for the sponsorship and the cost of health insurance,” said Jorizza Garcia, a J-1 worker living in Dallas, attesting to the fees charged by her recruiting agency. “[After the registration fee of \$500], we are given 3 to 5 days to pay the first payment of \$3,000 for us to get our training plan. If we cannot pay within 3 to 5 days, the process will be cancelled and no refund will be granted.”

After applicants pass their visa interview, they then have to pay the next \$2,000 within 3 to 5 days. If they do not, their process is cancelled without the possibility of a refund. Further, most contracts enforce a strict no-refund policy, even if the internship is terminated or the applicant departs the U.S. early.

### **Federally sponsored labor trafficking**

The J-1 visa program is essentially a labor trafficking program, in which the State Department designates recruiting agencies to promise high pay, professional job training and opportunities for cultural exchange. Of course, the young applicants find these promises empty, and instead are paid less than minimum wage in menial jobs and forced to live in overcrowded housing with other J-1 workers.

And because so many of these workers accrue debt in order to pay registration fees, they are forced to stomach wage theft, discrimination, sexual harassment and human trafficking — after all, they’re not getting a refund if they leave the job placement, and have virtually no other recourse.

With neither recourse nor assistance from employers or governments, the J-1



Workers Network composed an open letter with the following demands:

“Given these conditions, we are calling on the Philippine government to:

1. Support us with financial assistance through its Assistance to Nationals program for rent, purchasing plane tickets and reimbursement for those who have already bought a plane ticket;
2. Provide legal assistance for taxes, immigration, labor rights and other areas of concern;
3. Investigate and prosecute recruitment agencies accountable for neglect and corruption; and
4. Declare cash bonds and post-dated checks unenforceable, and refund any cash paid.

“We demand our visa sponsors and recruitment agencies to:

1. Take responsibility for the well-being and safety of J-1 workers;
2. Communicate clearly and timely with us, instead of neglecting us;
3. Assure us of our program’s restarting or extension;
4. Provide a full refund of our program fee, all miscellaneous fees and provide receipts for all payments, if program was not completed or was suddenly terminated;
5. Provide damage compensation;
6. Pay us in the full amount written in our contract; and
7. Stop the harassment of J-1 workers and our relatives in the Philippines for payments.

“Finally, we call on the U.S. government to:

1. Provide assistance for J-1 workers victimized and abused due to discrimination; and
2. Protect J-1 workers during disasters and emergencies like the COVID-19



pandemic.”

To follow developments, visit and “follow” the [Support J-1 Workers Facebook page](#). Please [sign their petition](#) to show support.



---

# **Sanitation workers in New Orleans on strike to demand better conditions and pay**

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
January 23, 2021

In the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, across the world workers on the frontlines of the battle against the spread of the disease have been organizing to demand that governments and employers provide them greater protection. In New Orleans, a group of sub-contracted sanitation workers who work as “hoppers” on garbage trucks have been on strike since Tuesday, May 5, to demand hazard pay and personal protective equipment (PPE).

The workers in New Orleans said they are not being provided PPE by their employers and are being exposed to coronavirus and other health hazards on the job. Due to these risks, they are demanding \$135 standard day rate plus \$150 hazard pay per day until the end of the pandemic. They also demand the provision of adequate protective equipment everyday and the 7 paid sick days hoppers are entitled to under the city's Living Wage Ordinance

The workers are not directly employed by the city, and their conditions are related to their precarious position as sub-contractors. The city of New Orleans has a \$10 million contract with Metro Services Group, a private corporation, to garbage and recycling collection services for the city. The group of sanitation workers on strike are not even hired directly by the Metro Services Group but through People Ready, an app-based temporary hiring agency.

The response of New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell to the sanitation workers' strike was essentially to deflect the responsibility towards the workers' safety on to Metro Services Group. She released a statement saying that "Metro is responsible for providing workers with the necessary items for their safety. This would include masks, gloves, etc."

Sanitation worker Greg Woods spoke to New Orleans local news and explained that many of the issues they are raising "have been going on before the coronavirus even came. We get paid late, everything is bad." He also pointed to the fact that they work grueling hours from 4:20 am until 4 pm and their pay for this labor is insufficient.

In 2015, the city of New Orleans passed a resolution to guarantee that city-contracted workers receive a living wage. According to a 2017 study by Louisiana Association of United Ways in the Orleans Parish which encompasses the New Orleans metro area, a living wage to support a family of four is \$26 per hour, much less than what the hoppers are paid who do work for the city.

The workers are also fighting for the right to form a labor union – the City Waste Union – in order to advocate for better working conditions. They drafted a [petition](#) to raise their demands with mayor Cantrell and to call on her to intervene on their behalf with Metro Services Group. The petition states, “Some of our most essential workers are not being treated with the dignity and respect they deserve. During the COVID-19 crisis, New Orleans garbage hoppers are working long, grueling shifts in bad conditions, without adequate proper protective equipment (PPE), for low pay... Our sanitation workers put their lives on the line every day to keep this city safe and clean, and now we must support them as they organize for their rights.”

New Orleans and the state of Louisiana were hotspots early on in the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States. The State of Louisiana has recorded 30,652 confirmed cases and 2,135 deaths, and 1,432 people have been hospitalized.

Source: [Peoples Dispatch](#)



# Hands off the post office!

written by Struggle - La Lucha

January 23, 2021

The post office is needed now more than ever. Postal workers are delivering prescription medicines and plenty of other mail and packages to people's homes during this health crisis.

They're doing so at the risk of their own lives. At least 44 postal workers have died of COVID-19 and over 1,200 have tested positive for the virus, says Cathy Hanson, a retired postal worker and editor for the Minneapolis Area Local, American Postal Workers Union, at [usmailnotforsale.org](http://usmailnotforsale.org).

Even capitalists need the post office. So why do Trump and his fellow billionaires want to destroy the oldest department of the U.S. government that dates back to 1775? Because the Postal Service is the largest employer of union workers in the United States.

After decades of deindustrialization, with dozens of factory towns like Detroit and Milwaukee impoverished, the post office is like an oasis of unionism. This is particularly true in the Deep South and some Western states.

The wealthy and powerful never forgave postal employees for their 1970 rebellion. The 200,000 workers who went on a wildcat strike won a victory for all poor and working people.

Fifty years ago, the starting salary of postal workers was less than \$3 per hour. On March 12, 1970, members of Congress voted themselves a 41 percent pay hike. But they offered post office employees a mere 5.4 percent raise, which was less than the inflation rate.

Letter carrier and future union leader Vincent Sombrotto urged workers to fight back. The response of workers, starting in New York City, was to go [on strike on March 18, 1970](#). It was the 99th anniversary of the Paris Commune, the world's first working-class government.

President Richard "Watergate" Nixon declared a state of emergency and wanted to fire the workers. [He ordered thousands of GIs to break the strike](#).

United Mine Workers president, John L. Lewis, declared during an earlier case of presidential strikebreaking by Franklin Roosevelt that "you can't dig coal with bayonets." You can't sort or deliver mail with bayonets either.

Many of the soldiers had parents who were union members and didn't want to cross picket lines. Members of the American Servicemens' Union — an anti-war and anti-racist union of GIs — urged soldiers to support the strikers.

### **Beat back the Trump attack**

The working class — employed, unemployed and incarcerated — has been under attack for over 40 years. Reagan's breaking of the PATCO air traffic controllers' strike in 1981 was also revenge for the 1970 postal rebellion.

There've been cutbacks and givebacks at the post office. Employment has fallen from almost 800,000 workers in 1999 [to slightly less than a half-million in 2019](#).

The starting pay of part-time rural letter carriers was [cut by about \\$6 per hour](#) in the 2010 labor contract, although it rose from around \$15 to \$17 per hour in the 2015 contract.

Because of the increased use of email, [first class mail like letters has fallen](#) from 104 billion pieces in 2001 to 55 billion last year. Trump points to this decline as an excuse for more attacks.

Yet 55 billion pieces is still a lot of mail — an average of 167 letters per person annually. The Post Office is also handling more packages than ever, including 40 percent of Amazon's shipments.

Another reason all the Trumps hate the postal service is that it's [the largest employer of Black workers earning more than \\$50,000 a year.](#)

Close to 40 percent of postal workers are Asian, Black, Latinx or Indigenous. [Two-fifths of the workforce are women.](#)

The noted actor and human rights activist [Danny Glover wrote](#) about what the post office meant to him growing up:

"For my parents, both longtime postal employees and union officers, that was their community. Back then, it was mine, too. ...

"For Black families like mine, the Postal Service has long been one of the few reliable paths to the middle class.

"My parents were so proud in 1957, when they had saved enough money to buy a house. They sometimes held union meetings in our living room and had me put my seventh-grade typing skills to good use addressing envelopes for the union newsletter."

### **Rainbow coalition needed**

Trump wants to privatize the Postal Service and the Veterans' hospitals. We won't let him! Postal unions mobilized to stop Staples from selling stamps, which would have served as an excuse to fire post office employees.

Trillions of dollars have been handed out to bail out the banksters and big corporations. So why can't Congress find a few billion to save the post office?

People get ripped off by ATM fees. Why can't the post office offer savings accounts, as it did until 1967?

If Trump gets his way, many postal workers in the big cities will lose jobs and benefits. But rural areas, including Indigenous peoples living on reservations, will suffer too.

Cell phone monopolies refuse to offer service to millions of people living in remote areas, from Alaska to the Everglades. But postal workers deliver mail everywhere.

Dozens of car caravans have been organized recently. They've demanded freedom for prisoners endangered by COVID-19 and/or a moratorium on rents and mortgage payments.

We need to organize long-distance caravans to tell people that local post offices are in danger of shutting down. These caravans would strive to unite multinational metropolitan areas like Atlanta, Chicago, Los Angeles and New York City with largely white rural areas.

This rainbow coalition on wheels would run over Trump's bigotry.

One more thing. [Benjamin Franklin](#), the first U.S. postmaster general, was a racist and a slave owner. His face should be taken off the \$100 bill and could be replaced with that of Frazier B. Baker.

Baker was the Black postmaster of Lake City, S.C., who was fatally shot in 1898 by a white mob who also killed his baby daughter. [The local post office is now named after Baker.](#)

Long live the memory of Frazier B. Baker! Hands off the post office!



---

# **#MayDay2020 Chris Silvera, Teamsters Local 808 & Million Worker March organizer speaks**

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
January 23, 2021



Chris Silvera is the Secretary -Treasurer and the Principal Officer of Teamsters Local 808 in Long Island City, New York. Local 808 represents a diverse group of workers including railroad, building maintenance, factory and public sector workers.



In 1982, Silvera and Ozzie LoVerme spearheaded an organizing drive that led their co-workers on Conrail to break away from the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees and join the Teamsters. Chris was then appointed Shop Steward on Metro North Commuter Railroad in 1983.

Elected to the position of Secretary-Treasurer of Teamsters Local 808, Silvera took office in January 1990 and has been re-elected to that position to the present time. Currently, he is the longest serving principal officer in the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

During a four year long battle with Metro North, Silvera's bargaining and strike strategies led then AFL-CIO President, John Sweeney to comment in 1995 before the Association for a Better New York that Local 808's actions have re-energized the labor movement. In contrast, the MTA referred to Silvera in the New York Times as a labor terrorist. That struggle brought significant wage and benefit improvements to the workers at Metro North. Under Silvera's leadership, Local 808 is a beacon of labor activism and militancy, continuing a history of militancy since the Local was chartered in 1922.

As the leader of Local 808, Silvera is credited with negotiating a groundbreaking "shutdown agreement" with Swingline's parent company, Fortune Brands. This agreement gave the workers extended health coverage and enhanced pension benefits. Swingline workers however were victims of NAFTA and PNTR. In less than 10 years, the company moved from Long Island City to Mexico and then to China.

In 1999, Chris Silvera became the first chairman of the Teamsters National Black Caucus to be elected by membership. As Chairman of the Black Caucus, he was invited to become the Eastern region co-coordinator for the Million Worker March Movement in 2004. The following year he was a convenor of the Millions More Movement where he was one of the speakers. He called for a workers' blockade to force President Bush to rescind his Executive Order. This order suspended the Davis

Bacon Act in the rebuilding of the Gulf Coast area in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Eleven days later the President rescinded the Order.

One of the goals of the Million Worker March Movement was to reclaim May Day. This is important in moving the working class back to their roots, an activist, militant movement.

With an effective date of November 1, 2017, a contract was ratified by the members of Teamsters Local 808 that gained them an additional holiday May 1. The holiday became effective in the year 2019. Those members work at Peter Cooper and Stuyvesant Town.

Local 808 continues to work on behalf of its other members in different shops to gain May Day for all of them. We will not switch holidays, we will gain a new holiday. We will reclaim May Day for our corner of the working class.



---

## **May Day 2020: Strike, don't die for**

# **Trump and capitalism!**

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
January 23, 2021

# MAY DAY STRIKE

**Don't die for Trump, bankers, and billionaires**

**NO WORK!  
NO RENT!  
NO SHOPPING!**

Show bosses  
everywhere  
that our lives  
are more  
important  
than their  
profits.

**MAY  
1st**



[struggle-la-lucha.org](http://struggle-la-lucha.org)



When the workers of the world awaken on May 1, 2020, they will confront a global situation that is very different from just a year ago.

Then, the latest capitalist crisis was only taking shape. Now, the U.S. and global

economy are in free fall. The rapid collapse, rooted in the periodic capitalist crisis of overproduction, is spurred on and compounded by the deadly Covid-19 pandemic. In the U.S. alone, over 26 million workers lost their jobs in a mere four weeks, with more to come.

As oil prices plummet and stock markets roil, the danger of war — including world war — grows. Today, U.S. warships sail in the South China Sea as Trump escalates threats to the People's Republic of China. Iran is threatened with attack for defending its own territorial waters, while Venezuela faces the danger of invasion on phony drug trafficking charges. U.S. sanctions are exacerbating pain and misery around the globe. With Congress' help, Trump has expanded drone assassination and other war crimes that ramped up under the Bush and Obama administrations.

Here at home, workers are falling ill in large numbers as bosses and federal, state and local governments fail to provide them with adequate safety measures and personal protective equipment (PPE). The toll is being felt not only in hospitals, Amazon warehouses and grocery stores, but increasingly in meat-processing plants in the South and Midwest.

The specter of fascism hovers over state capitols with a wave of armed, white supremacist, anti-worker demonstrations egged on by the White House with funding from Big Capital. Meanwhile, in Democratic-led big cities like New York, social distancing orders are used to further criminalize Black and Brown communities. Trump and other right-wing demagogues are fueling racist attacks on Asian people with xenophobic conspiracy theories aimed at China.

But resistance is growing! Workers are walking out to demand PPE, health care and paid sick time, and gaining wide support and solidarity. Workers are learning how truly essential they are to society's basic functioning after decades of being told they are inconsequential or even a "disappearing" class. Car caravans across the country are demanding the release of our class siblings held in the racist U.S. prison system

and migrant detention centers, among the worst incubators for disease.

On May Day 2020, there is a new symbol of hope and renewal of the class struggle: health care workers in masks and scrubs facing down armed white-supremacist mobs calling to “reopen the economy” on behalf of the bosses, from Denver to Harrisburg, Pa., and Phoenix. Wherever possible, class-conscious workers should join these heroic health care workers’ anti-fascist counteractions, while exercising all necessary precautions to protect the safety of our families, communities and co-workers.

Trump and Wall Street, under the slogan of “open it up,” are manipulating small business owners and utilizing white supremacist and fascist groups to drive workers back to unsafe conditions, threatening the well-being of entire communities.

This is a textbook example of how capitalism uses fascist movements, built on the backs of small businesses and the middle class, against the workers in periods of deep crisis. Small business owners need to see the hypocrisy involved in these maneuvers. The big banks and billionaires have siphoned off billions of dollars in aid. The bipartisan “stimulus plan” is aimed not at helping mom-and-pop businesses, or for that matter workers, but rather bailing out the super rich.

### **Capitalism exposed**

But the rottenness of capitalism is exposed as never before. The wealthiest country on earth has proven unable to provide even the bare minimum of public health and relief to the masses. Meanwhile, the most essential workers for the life and health of the population are shown to be among the lowest paid and most oppressed, disproportionately Black, Latinx, Arab, Indigenous and Asian, women and LGBTQ2S, and migrants.

We demand that the grotesque Pentagon war budget and Big Business profits be

seized to provide a guaranteed income, health care and housing for all — including immigrants, regardless of legal status! We need to cancel rent, mortgage and debt payments! No evictions or utility shut-offs. Water and food are rights for all.

Our movement must fight against all forms of racism, including the anti-China propaganda that has led to violence against Asian people. We must fight to release those locked in jails and detention camps and oppose the disproportionate number of deaths in Black, Brown and poor communities. All deportations and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) proceedings must be stopped.

The government tosses us crumbs because we don't own the means of production that have been created with our labor. It's time for the workers and oppressed to take the reins of society in our own hands and reorganize it from top to bottom based on people's needs, not profits. While revolutionaries and socialists have utilized bourgeois elections as an arena of struggle, history has shown us that it takes a mass workers' movement, prepared to resist and fight for power and liberation.

Capitalism can't be reformed to meet the enormous challenge of economic crisis, climate collapse and pandemic. No, it's up to us to organize ourselves and build a movement to fight for political power through mass mobilization, workplace organizing and other avenues of struggle — a truly revolutionary movement for socialism.

In 1989, Cuban President Fidel Castro declared, "Socialism or death!" It was true then for Cuba, and it is true now for the workers of the whole planet. Let's put capitalism where it belongs at last: in the trash bin of history!



---

# **ILWU Local 10 says: ‘Unite all working people on May Day’**

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
January 23, 2021

Our union is facing some historic challenges. The collapse of the world economy and the threat of the coronavirus to our members, families and communities have become a life and death question. While we are designated as “essential workers,” our lives are not treated as “essential.” This, in addition to the dangerous conditions we face daily on the job. We have taken action at the Port of Oakland to ensure the health and safety of our members and the community which is adjacent to the port.

This isn’t just about longshore workers here, but throughout the world who face the virus: automation, privatization, deregulation and union busting by governments and employers. Our union has historically been in the forefront of the struggle to unite all working people on May Day. It is precisely because of solidarity with our communities and working people around the world that we have been able to survive.



The Trump government is moving to destroy our union and the lives of all working people. They have weakened and marginalized OSHA protection for maritime workers, as well as other transportation workers, which is leading to the collapse of the global economy and the entire population of the United States. If you cannot protect longshore workers' health and safety, all lives in the country are at risk.

On Friday, May 1, we have informed the employer that we will have a stop work meeting as the Longshore Caucus has voted to do every May Day. This will be Local 10's fifth consecutive May Day action.

Donald Trump has designated May 1 as the date to "Reopen the Economy." Let us show the way forward for all working people by our action as we have done in the past.

An injury to one is an injury to all!

ALL OUT FOR MAY DAY!

International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10

