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May Day: The Past and Future of Our Workers' Holiday

MAY DAY IS A HOLIDAY for the common working people that goes back to ancient times. Today, it is known as International Workers' Day, recognized in countries all over the world — but not in the United States. The irony runs deep: the modern identity of International Workers' Day was born in the U.S., yet the country that birthed it refuses to claim it. That erasure is not accidental. It reflects a capitalist war on workers — and on May Day — that goes back to the origin of capitalism itself.

The history of May Day is coming back to life in the U.S., to shake and break the power of the billionaire class, carried by a working class that has had enough. United Auto Workers (UAW) President Shawn Fain has called on all unions to align their contracts to expire on April 30, 2028 — setting the stage for a May Day strike that can shift the balance of power toward the many, not the few.

A Celebration of Our Common Life

May Day began as a celebration of spring, of fresh green, of flowers, and of the growth and abundance nature freely gives. Historian Peter Linebaugh calls this the “Woodland Epoch of History,” a time before mass deforestation, before the mass enclosure of the land into someone's private property. People “went a-Maying” into



Haymarket Martyrs' Monument in Forest Park, Illinois, depicts Justice standing guard over the body of a fallen worker.

the woods, performed outdoor theater, enjoyed each other's company and “all that is free and life-giving in the world. ... Whatever else it was, it was not a time to work. ... Therefore, it was attacked by the authorities.” (Linebaugh, “The incom-

plete, true, authentic and wonderful history of May Day”).

These attacks were part of the early development of capitalism in the 16th and 17th century — the same era as the mass burning of women as witches across Europe, the brutal disposses-

sion of indigenous peoples in the Americas, the growth of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, and the enclosure of the commons, which turned shared wealth into private property owned by the few.

In England, early capitalists had to put a lot of effort into forcing people into factories. As Linebaugh writes, “attacks on May Day were a necessary part of the wearisome, unending attempt to establish industrial work discipline.” The English Puritans treated May Day revelry as unholy, abolishing the holiday outright in 1644 to extend the hours of labor. Nathaniel Hawthorne depicts a similar story playing out in the American colonies in his historical fiction “The May-Pole of Merry Mount.” Capitalism enclosed not only land but time, turning it into endless toil for the profit of the few.

Despite attempts at repression, our ancestors kept May Day alive into the Industrial Revolution, when it became International Workers' Day.

The Rise of International Workers' Day

By the late 1800s in the industrialized United States, ten- to sixteen-hour workdays and six-day workweeks were the norm. In 1866, the National Labor Union — the first nationwide labor federation in the country — adopted the demand for an eight-hour day, as did the

NO ICE. NO WAR. WORKERS OVER BILLIONAIRES.

International Workingmen's Association, known today as the First International. The slogan: "Eight hours for work, eight hours for rest and eight hours for what you will."

1886 became "the year of the great uprising of labor." In the United States, 400,000-500,000 marched for the eight-hour day. The Knights of Labor in Louisville, Kentucky, marched 6,000 strong — Black and white — into parks that were officially closed to Black people. The Federation of Organized Trade and Labor Unions of the United States and Canada — the immediate predecessor of the American Federation of Labor (A. F. of L.)—proclaimed May 1 the day "that eight hours shall constitute a legal day's labor."

Some who fought for more time in our lives lost all the time they had. On May 3, 1886, Midwestern members of Molders Union Local 23 — who made the industrial reaping machines that fed the nation — stood on strike for the eight-hour day. Several were shot and murdered by police.

The next day, a crowd of several thousand people gathered in solidarity in Haymarket Square, Chicago, to listen to speeches about socialism, anarchism, the emancipation of labor. Police — about 200 of them — waited until 10:30 p.m., when only a couple hundred people remained, then violently attacked the workers. No one knows who threw the stick of dynamite, but in the chaos, multiple police were killed, as well as a few workers.

The "justice system" decided it needed someone to blame. A harsh crackdown on union workers ensued. Eight anarchists were arrested and convicted of "conspiracy, with no

evidence. Three languished behind bars, one committed suicide in prison, and for the crime of believing the working class should live, four were hanged. The conviction was widely regarded as a frame-up. In fact, in 1893, Illinois Governor Altgeld pardoned the three living Haymarket Martyrs, saying they "were not proven to be guilty of the crime."

Lucy Parsons, the widow of one of the Martyrs, worked to spread their cause far and wide. Her efforts helped establish International Workers' Day, a day that was adopted by the Knights of Labor, the A. F. of L., and the Second International. Thanks to the sacrifices of our ancestors, the eight-hour day became a legal standard in the U.S., and workers had more of their own time.

Workers of the World, Unite!

This International Workers' Day, the Trump regime, backed by "Christian" nationalists, crosses borders in the most predatory ways possible — attacking the people of Venezuela and Iran, blowing up fishing boats in the Caribbean. Tech lords rake in riches for enshittifying the internet, while ICE and police make martyrs of Latine workers who cross borders to productively contribute to society.

All wealth is either given by nature or produced by work. Wealth does not come from landlords and rent-seekers collecting money simply because they already own things. May Day — International Workers' Day — is a day for the workers of the world to help each other claim the good things of life that the billionaire parasites hoard for themselves.

Karl Marx wrote, "For a thing to be sold, it simply has to be capable of being monopolized

and alienated" (*Capital, Volume Three*). Since the capitalists of the sixteenth century tried to take May Day, they have never stopped taking. Parasitic billionaires still do everything they can to enclose us, to own us, to separate us from ourselves and each other and to reap the benefits at our expense. Elon Musk dreams of owning colonies on Mars only because he dreams of owning the very air we breathe.

During the European colonization of Southern Appalachia, a few rich and favored individuals monopolized the best land, setting the pattern of poverty and elitism we all know. Today, Northeast Tennessee elites want us to subsidize the electricity costs of their data centers, they force us to pay to be spied on by Flock cameras, they criminalize homelessness while housing prices skyrocket, they steal our time with low-wage labor that forces us to get second jobs or starve.

We live under a dictatorship of the billionaires, and we demand freedom.

This is why the UAW's momentum from their phenomenal 2023 contract victory matters: convincing other unions to align their contracts to expire on April 30, 2028, is a powerful move: economic, political, and a show of solidarity all at once. A coordinated May Day action in a presidential election year could change everything.

Unions, DSA, Indivisible, and many more organizations are building toward that moment. We need all of you to help make that happen — starting today. ■

See also:

[MayDayStrong.org](https://www.maydaystrong.org)

UAW May Day 2028:
[may1.uaw.org](https://www.may1.uaw.org)



JOIN DSA TODAY

The ruling class fears nothing more than regular people getting organized. Join DSA to turn your anger into solidarity, action, and a socialist future worth fighting for. Let's build working class power and bring real democracy to our society and economy!

Visit dsausa.org to learn more & join today, then get involved with our Northeast Tennessee chapter!

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GET INVOLVED

Northeast TN DSA

Usually meets the last Wednesday of every month at 6:30 pm at the Appalachian Liberation Library in Johnson City. Email northeasttnds@gmail.com to verify.

YDSA at ETSU

Usually meets Wednesday evenings. For time & location, email ydsaetsu@gmail.com.

To Win Our May Day Demands, We Must Escape the Constitutional Bind

MAY DAY WAS BORN FROM a struggle that ran headlong into the United States Constitution. The workers who built the eight-hour movement, who struck in 1886 and rallied at Haymarket, wanted what many of us want today: an economy that works for those who do the work, freedom from state violence, and a basic guarantee that labor would not consume every waking hour of a person's life. Time and again, the Constitution — not as an abstraction, but as a functioning legal order with its anti-majoritarian design, its unelected judiciary, and its deep protections for property over people — was the weapon their enemies used against them.

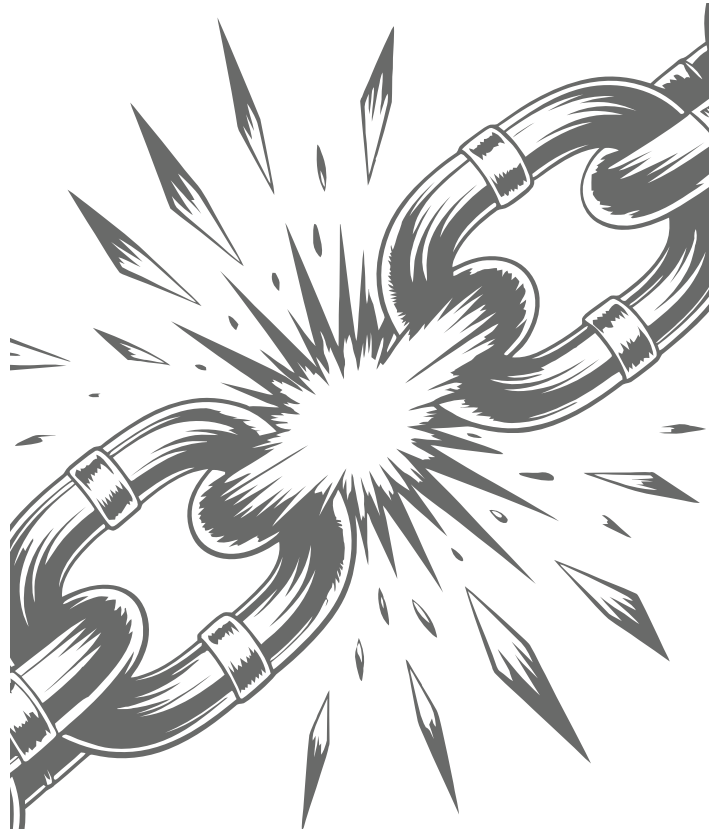
Today, “Defend the Constitution” has become a rallying cry for many who rightly oppose the Trump regime's lawlessness and contempt for democratic norms. That impulse comes from a real and legitimate place. But the history of May Day asks us a hard question: can a document that has so often been turned against working people truly be the foundation of a movement for workers' justice? Or do we need a different framework — one equal to the demands we're making this May Day?

The Constitution in the Time of Haymarket

A call to move beyond the Constitution would have surprised few American workers or poor farmers a century and a half ago. By the late 1800s, the subordinate classes in America had decades of experience on the receiving end of the US Constitution's antidemocratic and reactionary provisions. The Constitution was built around intentionally indirect systems of elections, a legislature that represented states rather than people, a judiciary whose judges were confirmed by an unrepresentative Senate, and a set of negative freedoms that favored the propertied over the propertyless — and over those

once claimed as property. Most workers saw the Constitution not as a foundation for justice, but as an obstacle to it.

The events that gave birth to May Day — the long struggle for the eight-hour workday, the great strikes of 1886, and the Haymarket rally that ended in catastrophe — can be understood as a rebellion against the Constitution and the economic and legal order it reinforced.



The eight-hour demand at the heart of those struggles ran up against the Constitution in two distinct ways.

The first was the Constitution's privileging of negative liberties — the protection of private property, for instance — over positive liberties that would affirm and expand people's rights to certain opportunities and wellbeing, such as the right to a living wage. In a world of capitalist exploitation, a constitutional order built exclusively around negative liberties handed capital a structural advantage: employers could invoke constitutional freedoms

to resist any regulation of the terms they imposed on workers.

The second obstacle was a constitutional order designed to neutralize popular victories won through political struggle. Then, as now, the federal judiciary operated without regard for public opinion, appointed through a constitutional system that flowed through an indirectly elected president and a Senate that represented states

rather than people. Time and again, those courts ruled in favor of monied interests over the people, most notoriously in *Lochner v. New York* (1905), which struck down a state law limiting bakers' working hours as an unconstitutional infringement on employers' freedom to contract. When workers turned to state legislatures to win their basic demand for “Eight Hours Work, Eight Hours Rest, Eight for What You Will,” the Constitution handed capitalists useful tools to reimpose the chokehold.

For decades after Haymarket, the constitutional order

continued to deal blows to the workers' movement. When the Pullman Strike of 1894 threatened railroad capital, President Cleveland dispatched federal troops and obtained from the courts a federal injunction ordering the strike called off. Eugene Debs, the union leader who refused to comply, was imprisoned. The Supreme Court unanimously upheld the use of such injunctions against unions in its *In Re Debs* ruling, handing employers a powerful new weapon against organized labor. In the same term, *Pollock v. Farmers' Loan & Trust* struck down the federal income tax as unconstitutional, while *U.S. v. E.C. Knight* gutted anti-trust enforcement against manufacturing monopolies. In a single year, the Court mobilized the Constitution to crush labor, protect monopoly, and nullify tax reform.

Even before those rulings, people had come to see the Constitution for what it was. As legal scholar Aziz Rana documents in *The Constitutional Bind*, reformers and radicals of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era widely regarded the Constitution as an antidemocratic instrument to be overcome. The Populists' Omaha Platform of 1892 defined the Constitution's fruits as a society where “Corruption dominates the ballot-box, the Legislatures, the Congress, and touches even the ermine of the bench.” They named the Constitution's design as the problem, and many of their demands — a progressive income tax and direct election of Senators most notably — were won only through altering the Constitution, not by accepting or defending it.

Our Constitutional Bind

More than a century later, the Constitution presents most of the same barriers. For all the talk of it being a “living document,” the U.S. Constitution has remained remarkably rigid over time — widely regarded as the world's most difficult con-

stitution to change. Even the moderate assertions of positive liberties contained in the Equal Rights Amendment ran aground when confronted with the framers' anti-majoritarian order.

Yet today we face an additional obstacle: a political culture that treats the Constitution as sacred. This reverence — this “creedal Constitutionalism” — narrows our political imagination, provides cover for imperialist adventures abroad, and funnels popular outrage into channels that leave existing power structures intact. It presents what Rana calls the *Constitutional Bind*.

Our descent into Trump 2.0 is Exhibit A in the case against creedal Constitutionalism. The Constitutionally valid Electoral College installed Trump in 2016 without even a popular plurality. The unrepresentative Senate's Constitutionally valid confirmation process packed the Supreme Court. That Constitutionally packed Court, in *Trump v. U.S.* (2024), granted Trump sweeping immunity for “official” acts, emboldening the authoritarian turn of the last sixteen months. The monster was born not against the Constitution, but by it.

The Constitution and Our May Day Demands

And what of our May Day demands? **No war. No ICE. Workers over billionaires.**

In the weeks before Trump launched the US war of aggression against Iran, an SSRS poll found that only 21% of Americans favored an attack on Iran — yet a Congress unrepresentative of American opinion by constitutional design allowed the administration to forge ahead. That same Congress confirmed the pro-ICE fanatic Markwayne Mullin as DHS secretary at a time when a majority of Americans want ICE abolished. These are not failures of the administration to *live up to* the Constitution, but rather consequences of the Constitution's aversion to basic democratic accountability¹.

And the stakes are often life and death. While we demand that workers's needs come before billionaires' profits, Trump is gutting Medicare and Medicaid to bomb Iran and enrich war profiteers. Meanwhile, it is the US Constitution that grants district-drawing powers to plutocratic state legislatures, allowing them to draw district lines so that they, not the people, have the greatest say

in who represents the states in Congress.

We should not avert our eyes from the reality that is before us. We cannot call for workers over billionaires, for abolishing ICE, for taxing the rich to fund healthcare and housing — and simultaneously ask people to put their faith in a document whose mechanisms created and recreate a society in which we must call for these things.

From “Defend” to “Overcome”

None of this means abandoning the legal and political terrain entirely. We should oppose Trump's defiance of court orders — but not out of faith in the courts as such. We should oppose Trump's imperialist aggressions in Iran and elsewhere — but not on procedural grounds. We should name specific rights worth defending — but we should root these demands in a universalism that exists independent of any particular text.

“Defend the Constitution” as a first reflex is understandable. We have been raised in a political culture of Constitution veneration. But we must now have the wisdom to choose our

words carefully and the courage to state clearly that our allegiance is to a better, future world, not to a document that was designed to fail us.

“Defend the Constitution” cannot be the slogan for a movement that demands workers over billionaires, no ICE, no war, healthcare and housing for all. Our slogan must instead be “A New Constitution for a New and Better Future.”

And to get there, we must build power outside and against the political system — labor and tenant unions, neighborhood assemblies, student groups, and solidarity networks like those being forged today. These are the building blocks of a movement capable of winning a constitutional order based on direct elections, proportional representation, a strong legislature, and the expansion of those positive liberties we have too long been denied. In short: democracy.

That is a constitutional future worth fighting for. It will be won not by defending the Constitution but by building sufficient people power to overcome it. ■

The Bosses Are Organized. Why Aren't We?

EVERY PROTECTION YOU HAVE AT work, every hour shaved off a seventy-hour week, every child who is not working in a factory right now, exists because workers organized and forced it.

The bosses know this. Which is why they never stopped organizing against you.

While you were working your shift, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce was spending more money lobbying Congress than any other organization in the country. While you were figuring out how to pay your rent, the American Legislative Exchange Council was writing model legislation in hotel conference rooms, handing it to state legislators, and watching it become law, here in Tennessee and in thirty other states. While you were deciding whether the union was worth the trouble,

your employer was paying a union avoidance consultant massive sums of money to make sure you decided no.

This is their business model: spending untold amounts of money to not have to pay you more or work you less.

The union-busting industry generates an estimated \$340 million a year. Consultants train managers to hold captive audience meetings, to identify and isolate organizers, to make workers feel that a union would only bring conflict into an otherwise peaceful workplace.

The conflict, of course, was already there. They just don't want you to think you can do anything about it.

“Right to work” did not spring up spontaneously in twenty-seven states. It was coordinated, funded, and exe-

cuted by a network of foundations and advocacy organizations that have been at this for decades. Tennessee passed its right-to-work law in 1947. The infrastructure that built that law is still running — in fact, it spent buckets of money in 2022 to get that law enshrined in the state constitution, and that law wasn't even facing a threat at the time.

So, if the people who own your workplace are organized into associations, coordinated through lobbying groups, advised by consultants, and protected by laws that they helped write — what does it mean that most workers are not organized at all?

It means the fight is not even. Every individual grievance, every whispered complaint in the break room, every person

who got fired for speaking up — all of it runs into an apparatus designed to absorb from the start to absorb exactly that — one person, one complaint, one firing at a time.

There is only one thing that changes that math: We organize. We build relationships with the person next to us on the line, the one across the aisle, the one who has been there twenty years and knows where the bodies are buried. We stop thinking about work as something that happens to us and start thinking about it as somewhere we have power — if we build it.

The bosses figured this out a long time ago. That is why they work so hard to make sure you don't. ■

Threads of Resistance: The 1929 Rayon Strikes in Elizabethton



Visiting Elizabethton, you're greeted by a tall figure rising into the sky: a smokestack. Faded white lettering — "BEMBERG" — runs down the red brick column and seems to mirror the faded memory of organized labor in the region. Many in East Tennessee and Southern Appalachia are at least somewhat acquainted with the hard-fought victories won by coal miners in their efforts to unionize in Harlan County and other places, but most residents of the Tri-Cities are unaware that an inspirational strike happened in their backyard.

Rayon and the Opportunistic Nature of Capitalism

During the 1920s, agriculture in East Tennessee was in decline, but textile manufacturing was on the rise. In 1926, the Bemberg rayon plant opened in Elizabethton, followed two years later by the neighboring Glanzstoff plant owned by the same German company, Vereinigte Glanzstoff Fabriken. Recent improvements in the manufacturing of viscose rayon made Elizabethton a particularly suitable location given its abundant waterways and large number of poor families seeking to supplement farming incomes with part-time wage labor. The fact that the Carter County Chancery Court voted to grant the

company tax exemptions didn't hurt either. Similar cooperations between the state and industry are abundant today as well.

Textile mills played a crucial part in this capitalist dispossession of self-determination. Many small-scale farmers were forced to move to mill towns for parts of the year to supplement their income. Men were not the only ones from rural households trying to improve their family's living conditions: women and children also participated in part-time work.

Women in the Workforce

Most women working at the Glanzstoff and Bemberg plants made between \$8 and \$12 a week for 56 hours' work. Rent in that area was around \$30 per month, not taking into account necessities such as groceries. Even the bus and taxi services, which ferried workers from small communities outside Elizabethton, were pricey. The men's wages in those same places? Around \$30 per week.

Working in the "finishing" side of the plants, women breathed in the rayon particulates that would be flung in the air during reeling, which could lead to a condition known as "Brown Lung". Machines in the finishing areas of the plants were also known to sever fingertips. In addition to the physical ramifications, the women were

ordered to dress "modestly" for work, were not permitted breaks longer than 10 minutes, and were often escorted to and from the restroom, lest they linger too long from their work.

While advancements in rayon production made the fiber less flammable, the harsh conditions set by management turned these mills into tinderboxes nonetheless.

Strike!

At 12:30pm on March 12, 1929, after months of demanding better wages and working conditions, 550 women walked out of the Glanzstoff plant, organized by figures such as Margaret Brown and Christine Galliher. The next day they returned and led out the rest of the workers from that plant. Within the next few weeks, workers from the Bemberg plant walked out in solidarity. Within a month, both plants in Elizabethton were effectively shut down.

The demands were simple: better working conditions and an increase in pay to match the other textile mills in the region. When plant management refused to even sit down with the strikers, Bemberg workers reached out to the United Textile Workers of America (UTW). This was not the first contact with organized labor, as Local 1630 of the UTW had been organized years before. This event, however, breathed new

life into the union. A staggering 93% of workers in both mills unionized. This, coupled with the large community support for the union, gave many hope that change was finally on the rise for the workers.

Mill management got an injunction against the workers' right to assemble and picket near the mills. Workers retaliated by blocking the roads to the plants, stopping the transportation of paperwork that would finalize the injunction. The company lawyer, George Dugger, was allegedly struck by a rock thrown by a striker as his car drove through the picket line. When he returned with law enforcement, the strikers were dispersed violently by cars driving in excess of 50 miles per hour towards them. Additionally, factory management and community members branded women strikers as "hussies" and "loose women" as punishment for defying traditional gender roles. The Ku Klux Klan burned crosses in the yards of female strikers. These tactics demonstrate how bosses and elites have long mobilized patriarchy to undermine labor movements — a strategy we see today in the attacks on queer people.

A Tentative Agreement, Corporate Backstabbing, and Violent Clashes

Arthur Mothwurf, manager of the mills, reached an initial settlement with the unions on March 22nd. The agreement promised to raise wages, establish worker committees in order to deal with further grievances, and allow strikers to return to their jobs. This decision angered the Chamber of Commerce, who viewed the unionized strikers as a threat to the promised industrialization of Elizabethton, which would almost assuredly have lined their own pockets. They kidnapped two of the prominent union organizers, drove them to the North Carolina line, and told them to not come back,

lest something drastic happen to them. The organizers, Alfred Hoffman and Edward McGrady, refused to be intimidated, and were returned to Elizabethton within a week, this time under armed union guard.

Not only were the promised wage increases not paid, almost 100 of the striking workers were fired within a few weeks. Worker's committees lodged complaints. In turn, they were also met with firings. When, on April 15th, 90 more workers were fired, the strike recommenced, with thousands of plant workers rejoining the picket line.

This time, management had the governor call in the National Guard. Machine guns became a common sight on the roofs of the plants. Detachments marched into the surrounding hollers to escort scabs — replacement workers brought in to break the strike — to the mills. Both pro- and anti-union people began to carry firearms openly. Union member and mechanical foreman, Mack Elliot, had his house in Stoney Creek blown up with dynamite. The strikers destroyed a water line to the plants in order to halt production.

In the aftermath, over 1,200 strikers were arrested, a second (nearly identical) agreement was reached, and workers returned to better pay and a new manager who set about trying to divert workers away from the question of power and rights by conceding a company union and recreation leagues.

Weaving the Threads of the Past into a Mighty May Day Tapestry

While the agreement seemed to placate the demands of the strikers, new management carried on the traditions of its predecessors: shirk on raises, punish union members, and obfuscate any complaints brought to them.

In this seemingly dim light, we must remember the legacy left behind by the Elizabethton strikes. Similar, and even more violent, strikes were occurring across the US, especially in the southern textile mills in cities like Gastonia, NC and Greenville, SC. This wave of people

power eventually resulted in the biggest organized strike in the US at that point in history: the 1934 US Textile Workers Strike. 400,000+ participants chose the labor movement instead of the looms.

This May Day, when the oppressive forces of capitalism threaten to rip our lives to shreds, remember that the most effective way to hold the tapestry of humanity together is by the strong stitching of solidarity. ■

The *Northeast Tennessee Organizer* is a publication of the Northeast Tennessee chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America. All labor is donated.

'Citations for articles in this issue: northeasttndsa.org/newspaper/issue6

Recommended Reads

These books are available for checkout from the Appalachian Liberation Library in Johnson City.

The Constitutional Bind : How Americans Came to Idolize a Document That Fails Them

by Aziz Rana

Revealing how the current constitutional order was forged over the twentieth century, The Constitutional Bind also sheds light on an array of movement activists—in Black, Indigenous, feminist, labor, and immigrant politics—who struggled to imagine different constitutional horizons.

The Incomplete, True, Authentic, and Wonderful History of May Day

Peter Linebaugh

"May Day is about affirmation, the love of life, and the start of spring, so it has to be about the beginning of the end of the capitalist system of exploitation, oppression, war, and overall misery, toil, and toil."

Organizing Tips for Everyday Workers

1. Don't Quit. Organize!

Everyone's situation is different, but if you can do so, stay on the job and organize to change the things at your workplace that aren't working for you. Organizing is the best way to make your bad boss regret their crappy practices. Chances are that your co-workers have some of the same problems.

2. Talk to Your Co-Workers

Don't go it alone. As workers, our power comes from collective action alongside our co-workers. Find out about others' concerns. Ask them questions and listen to their answers. Share your own concerns with trustworthy people, but follow the rule of one mouth, two ears. We organize people by listening and showing them we hear them. Identify the issues that are widely and deeply felt in your workplace and take those issues seriously. Common issues include unmanageable workloads, substandard equipment, and unpredictable scheduling — and more. Help people overcome their fear by finding their righteous anger.

3. Find Places Where You Can Talk and Build Solidarity

What the boss doesn't know can't hurt you. Where are the places you and your co-workers can speak freely? This could be the proverbial water cooler, a smokers' corner, a break room, or anyplace away from prying ears. Find solid people and establish a means of communicating outside of work: a text thread, an after-work hangout, or the like. Bosses try to divide us in many ways — backstabbing gossip, pitting us against each other for small rewards, racism,

anti-woman or anti-queer sexism. Organizers build solidarity between co-workers.

4. Map Who Has Influence

The most powerful co-worker on your shift may not have a title. Identify the co-worker everyone respects and listens to. When they speak up, others follow. Talk to them about your issue. Their buy-in is worth more than a dozen casual supporters.

5. Every Collective Action Matters

Solidarity is a muscle that gets stronger with exercise. Strikes are the most powerful weapon we have as workers, but they are like the Solidarity Olympics, and you have to build up to them. Any action that you and your co-workers take together to improve your conditions builds the collective power to achieve what none of you could alone.

6. Document Everything

Keep a shared record of incidents, promises made, and responses received. When workers compare notes, patterns emerge, and patterns are evidence. A single complaint is easy to brush off. A pattern documented by ten people is much harder to ignore.

7. Learn from Experience

Make connections and get support from labor movement organizations. There's no need to go it alone and you don't have to reinvent the wheel. You can start by contacting the Emergency Workplace Organizing Committee at workerorganizing.org.