



Speak Out Now

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Labor Day: Not Just Another Holiday

When we think of Labor Day we usually think of barbecues, picnics or maybe just the start of football season. Labor Day usually signals the end of summer and a time to be with friends, family and coworkers to enjoy a well-deserved day off – if we are lucky enough to get it. Like many other holidays, we've lost sight of what it was first meant to celebrate.

Labor Day was born out of the fight for a shorter workweek. In 1882, many workers were working 12-hour days, up to seven days a week while masses of people were unemployed and looking for work. Why should so many be overworked while so many people were out of work? Less hours for those at work means more hours for those without jobs.

On Monday, September 5, 1882, twelve years before Labor Day became an official holiday, workers seeking to shorten the workweek organized a march calling for shorter hours, higher pay, safer working conditions and a holiday to celebrate labor. As the movement grew, the march became an annual event and spread to other cities and states, and by 1886 cities were declaring the first Monday in September a workers' holiday and a year later several states began to do so as well.

In 1894, facing increased working hours, cuts in wages and cuts in jobs, workers decided enough was enough and staged a nationwide strike that shut down the nation's railroad system. Troops were sent in by the federal government to end the strike with violence and protect the profits of the owners. After the strike, politicians declared Labor Day a national holiday. This was a victory for the workers but also a way for politicians to improve their image.

A lot may have changed since 1882 but some things are still the same. There are still too many of us working too many hours while millions of us can't find work at all. The solution is still the same: an organized struggle is needed for full employment and less work, without any cuts in wages.

Two days off a week is not enough. It's like we have one day to recover from the prior workweek and a day to get ready for the next workweek. Instead of just one day a year to celebrate what we've worked and struggled for, we should be able to celebrate every week – with less work and no cut in pay. What would the world for working people be like if we had three, four, or even five days off per week all year long with no cut in our wages?

With all the work that needs to be done, millions of people without jobs could immediately find work. Hospitals, schools, restaurants, transportation, every business would have to hire more workers to cover the shifts of our extra days off.

We would feel less stressed outside of work. Our workload could be reduced. We all know what the workplace is like when we come back from vacation or when we have had an extra day off. It is actually nice to be there – people seem less rude and friendlier because we actually got to rest. That could be the way it is all the time.

There wouldn't just be changes in the workplace but in our personal lives as too. With more time to unwind and de-stress, we could take care of our homes, spend time with loved ones, or even enjoy a hobby. We could take our children to museums or watch them play sports without worrying about being exhausted by the time Monday comes.

Compared to 1979, we are working about four and a half more weeks per year. Since 2008 how much we do per hour has increased by 18%, which is like adding an extra day per week. More days off with the same pay isn't even a crazy idea – it's not even breaking even compared with all the extra work we are already putting in.

Labor Day only comes once a year and by Tuesday we're already back at work, counting down till our next free moment. This is not the only way it has to be. We deserve better for our lives. We should not live just to work. We should be able to work and actually enjoy our lives too.

The State of the Working Class

Records are being set, boundaries are being pushed, and new norms are transforming American society. While there are record highs in the stock market and massive amounts of wealth being created, life for many in the working class is falling apart.

Wasted Wealth:

According to Forbes Magazine, there are 32 billionaires in San Francisco with a combined wealth of \$87 billion! Mark Zuckerberg, of Facebook, is the wealthiest man in the Bay Area with \$56 billion. What could we do with that money?

Where's Our Golden Parachute?

Thirty-five percent of all adults in the U.S. have less than \$1,000 in their savings account, while 34% said they actually don't have any savings at all. This is in one of the richest countries in the world!

Hungry For Change:

Nearly 50 million Americans, including 13 million children, live in households that lack the means to get enough food regularly. That means one in five children go to bed hungry every night.

Our Mental Health:

With all that we are forced to deal with many turn to drugs to help cope or numb the pain. Sixty five percent of North Americans take prescription medications daily, 43% take mood-altering prescriptions regularly. And roughly 60,000 people died last year from opioid abuse. What an indictment of our society. If hope & economic opportunity existed we wouldn't see this.



And he'd like to make it smaller

Gentrification in the Bay Area

Working class people in the Bay Area have been struggling to cope with skyrocketing housing costs.

Within the past three years, the average cost of a home in Oakland went from \$500,000 to \$700,000, a 20% increase! If a family of four in San Francisco makes less than \$105,000 they are considered low income! The same goes for a family in Alameda County making \$80,000. Whose wages have gone up that much? No one! Many people are forced to move farther and farther out to cities like Stockton, Manteca and Tracy, leading to miserable commutes and hours of life wasted behind the wheel.

Some people blame higher paid workers in the tech industry, who are often young and white, for gentrification. They can bring a certain arrogance and more expensive businesses follow them into the neighborhood. But these people are just pawns for the real estate developers. The big developers are making a killing by tearing down once affordable housing or other businesses and replacing them with luxury, market rate housing.

People in places like the Mission in San Francisco or West and Downtown Oakland have been forced to live with poverty and underdevelopment for decades. The wealth has existed that could change these conditions but it isn't a priority because it's not profitable.

If there are any changes where we live, they should be done on our terms, not on our backs!

Pushing Us Onto The Streets

More and more tent cities are popping up all around us. In Alameda County homelessness shot up 39% in the past two years. In East Palo Alto, in the shadow of Silicon Valley, an estimated one-third of school children were homeless last year.

How many of us are just a few paychecks away from not being able to cover rent and could find ourselves without a roof over our heads?

A system that denies people basic rights like housing is one that needs to be thrown out!

Join us at our next forum:

***We Are The Majority!
We Can Defend Ourselves!***

Who are these far right fascist groups? And how can we organize our forces to stop them?

**Saturday, September 23 at 7pm
South Berkeley Senior Center
2939 Ellis St. (Berkeley)**