

## PREPARATIONS

Prior to joining the picket line, make sure you are familiar with the basics of this particular strike: the location, the picket hours, the predicted weather, the parking areas, along with any specifics expressed by the workers and/or the union representing them. Sometimes, workers request supporters wear a specific color to show support. Other times, they may be requesting specific items be donated like food, drinks, handwarmers, etc.; while there's no obligation for a supporter to bring anything, if you are able to lend material support then we suggest you provide what the workers are specifically expressing a need for. Certain areas near the picket may be patrolled by police hired by the company to tow away unauthorized vehicles, so you'll want to know where union supporters can park. All of this information can usually be gathered by calling the union's local or by reaching out to the workers via their union's social media; often times, this important information is contained in the strike announcement by the union. Make sure you are dressed appropriately for the weather and have proper footwear for standing for long periods of time. Also, bring a bottle of water and any other refreshments you might need for your time on the picket line.

Many first-time strike supporters ask if they should create and bring their own signs. In general, the Brigade recommends against this. Larger, older unions typically provide picketers with their own signs with their specific messaging on them; it is critically important that the striking workers themselves have control and power over the message being presented on the picket line and therefore it is better to use signs provided by the union. Smaller, independent unions may encourage more informal, "homemade" signage at their picket lines; some of these unions, such as Starbucks Workers United, will often throw "sign-making parties" prior to a strike that organizers and supporters are invited to—these events obviously offer excellent opportunities to not only help with making such picket line signs, but to also interact with the workers and to learn more about the specific grievances that have led them to strike. There may be situations where supporter-made signs are allowed, even welcomed; in these situations, the Brigade highly recommends running sign designs by a union representative before bringing them to the picket line. Lastly, there are very specific types of strikes which require specific messaging, like an Unfair Labor Practices (ULP) Strike; in such instances, specific signage messaging is required for particular legal reasons, so certain messaging uniformity is paramount for signs.



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### THE PREAMBLE OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE LOUISVILLE WORKERS BRIGADE:

The establishment of the Louisville Workers Brigade is an outward, physical expression of the rising class consciousness of the working masses and the intensification of the class struggle between this majority working class against the ruling minority owning class. This intensification of class struggle—a result of the brutalized working class standing firm and using its position as the producer of all things as leverage—must be strengthened further.

The only hope the working and oppressed masses have is to organize into a cohesive, united collective—regardless of industry, employment status, race, nationality, sexual orientation, etc.—to oppose the more powerful and resourced owning class. This is the mission of the Louisville Workers Brigade: to build unity and power among working people, pushing for stronger union contracts, broader union representation, and a return to radical rank-and-file organizing that secures the most gains and victories for our class. We are not separate from the existing trade unions, but seek to educate and empower union members and non-union members alike, so that they can better participate as workers in the economic, political, and social spheres of our community. As workers ourselves, we remain intrinsically tied to and committed to the conditions of the working masses, not only in this country, but in all countries. This is why we dedicate our time, resources, and experience to the aims and goals of this cause. Only through an unwavering devotion to solidarity with all working people of this world can the workers of all countries fight for their collective empowerment and liberation.

# PICKET LINE ETIQUETTE

by



The mightiest weapon of struggle wielded by the Working Class is the strike. The strike best represents the power of Labor in the face of abuse, neglect, exploitation, and oppression by the owning class. It illustrates the productive strength of our class by intentionally and strategically freezing the gears of Labor, halting the very process of exploitative profit extraction, in order to make clear the seriousness and necessity of the demands workers claim against the bosses.

If a group of working people near you are on strike and have established a picket line outside of their workplace, you may wish to stand in solidarity with them. That's wonderful! Walking a picket line with fellow workers is one of the most powerful ways you can express support. Whether you are going to your first picket line or if you are a veteran of the Class War, The Louisville Workers Brigade is pleased to offer our short list of recommendations for proper picket line etiquette; these suggestions have come from hundreds, if not thousands, of hours of experience on the picket line by our organizers and are presented in the spirit of solidarity to our fellow workers who wish to show support to those who have courageously chosen to go on strike...

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## ARRIVING TO THE PICKET LINE

As mentioned before, if the union is asking for specific material aid and you are financially able to assist, the Brigade suggests bringing some of the requested supplies for the workers—be it drinks, snacks, handwarmers, etc. As also stated before, bring the supplies that you may need for yourself (a drink, handwarmers, etc.)... the Brigade highly discourages taking any of the picket supplies for yourself, even when offered by the strikers; please understand that these folks are not working, and are either not receiving any pay currently or are receiving a meager strike pay in lieu of their normal wages, and that the supplies donated to the picket line are to help them with necessities during this difficult and uncertain time; therefore, it is the strong opinion of the Brigade that picket line supplies belong to the striking workers alone and supporters should bring, for themselves, what they may need while on the picket line.

After parking in the proper and designated location, it is good practice to first introduce yourself to the picket captain(s)—the worker(s) selected to maintain order and safety on the picket line. Offer your name, the organization you represent if applicable (like The Louisville Workers Brigade!), and express that you are there to stand in solidarity with the striking workers. Ask if there are any special requests. For instance, a picket line may sometimes not move into a specific area due to crossing from public to private property and therefore striking workers may only be permitted to stand in particular areas. You may ask if the union would like you to hold a sign or, in the case of a strike with multiple picket locations, if you are needed at a specific picket site. There may be specific tasks which require attention—like moving supplies from one location to another or helping with food distribution—which you can help with if permitted.



## ON THE PICKET LINE

If not assigned to a specific task, you will undoubtedly find yourself standing on the picket line with striking workers. Here, you have the opportunity to hear, firsthand from the workers, what has brought them to strike. Hear their stories, freely express your support of and solidarity with their cause. Keep your focus and attention on their strike, avoiding other topics unless the workers themselves steer the conversation to a different subject. Do not ask for sensitive or confidential information concerning the strike or the union.

Make sure you ask for permission before taking any photos. Most pickets encourage community supporters to publicize the strike widely, but consent is a must with photo-taking. The Brigade recommends something simple like, "Would it be alright if I take some photos to drum up support for you all on social media?" The Brigade recommends focusing your photograph-taking of the workers and avoiding selfies; selfies present a self-aggrandizing image and are reminiscent of the politicians who care little about working people, but who invariably show up for a quick "photo op" with the strikers. If you are representing a Labor publication (like the Brigade's publication, The Class Struggle Chronicle!), make sure you introduce yourself as such and express that you are reporting from a pro-Labor perspective. Proper permissions should always be obtained when using names, quotes, photos, etc.

The strikers may engage in a true "picket line" (marching in a designated area, usually in a circle, while chanting)—feel free to join them in solidarity! Other picket lines may feature workers standing in pairs or in a line; in each case, ask where the workers would like you stationed. In a similar vein to the signage, the Brigade highly suggests letting the workers take the lead regarding chants, marching/not marching, etc.; it is crucial, sometimes even for legal reasons, that the workers and/or union maintain full control over their messaging. When supporting striking workers, do just that... support! and let the strikers take the lead.



If approached by the press or a community member, direct them to the picket captain or a union representative. As stated repeatedly at this point, allow the workers to control the messaging. If pressed by a

journalist or some other third party, simply express that you are there to show solidarity with the workers and leave it at that. Do not speak to a representative of the company or the police. Avoid expressing profanities, slurs, anything even vaguely resembling threats, or anything else which may harm or hinder the goals of the striking workers.

## LEAVING THE PICKET LINE AND AFTERWARDS

Before leaving, verify the area you have occupied is clean. Thank the workers for letting you join them and express your continued support and solidarity, and ask if they'd like further support moving forward; ask if they have any specific requests regarding desired picket line supplies. At your next visit, if possible, bring such supplies... and some additional friends to join in support! If you received proper permissions, make sure to share your photos and the workers' stories on social media.



We hope this brief guide to picket line etiquette has been helpful and inspires confidence in you as you join our fellow workers in the struggle against exploitation! Showing up in solidarity on the picket line is a vital show of support for striking workers. While we believe the recommendations we've presented are excellent guidelines for how to conduct yourself on the picket line, we realize each strike is different and conditions may dictate deviations from these suggestions. Always defer to the workers themselves and the union in such instances.

We wish you solidarity, power, and liberation in the Class War, Fellow Workers!

-The Louisville Workers Brigade