

THE CLASS STRUGGLE CHRONICLE

Vol. II, No. 2

Saturday February 1, 2025

PUBLISHED
MONTHLY

A Publication of
**THE LOUISVILLE
WORKERS
BRIGADE**

www.louworkersbrigade.org

CONTACT US AT:

[contact@](mailto:contact@louworkersbrigade.org)

louworkersbrigade.org



SOLIDARITY FOREVER!



The **Louisville Workers Brigade** is an association of working people dedicated to educating, supporting, and uniting working class forces in the Louisville community. We organize with union and non-union workers alike.

The Brigade **educates** workers by organizing regular Educational Presentations which focus on Labor and Working Class history and issues and by producing easy-to-read literature for working people.

The Brigade **supports** workers through aid during strikes, by platforming workplace grievances, by providing counsel to workers exploring options for organizing their workplaces, and through organizing solidarity actions for workers.

Lastly, the Brigade **unites** workers by breaking down the divisions which the owning class has used to divide workers against each other and by organizing regular Community Socials where working people can meet other workers in the community and can begin to build ties of solidarity with one another.

The Brigade proudly continues the legacy of Class Struggle Unionism which understands that our present economic system is designed for the minority owning class to become unbelievably wealthy off of the labor of the majority Working Class. We reject the false notion of "peaceful coexistence" between these two rival classes whose interests are diametrically opposed to one another. Instead, we seek to heighten this class conflict by empowering workers to secure economic, political, social, and cultural power for themselves through struggle.

Though we organize in the greater Louisville community, the Brigade stands in solidarity with the diverse International Working Class and we oppose all social chauvinisms and bigotries which divide workers against each other, including sexism, misogyny, queerphobia, racism, and nativism. We believe that Working Class Liberation must always be synonymous with Women's Liberation, Black Liberation, and Queer Liberation and support the struggles of exploited and oppressed peoples everywhere.

www.louworkersbrigade.org

The Struggle Continues... Join the Movement!

By the Louisville Workers Brigade

January 1, 2025

2025 is here and the tasks facing working and oppressed people are as urgent as ever.

Last month, the Brigade outlined various ways to get involved, to organize in the new year. We began by stressing the importance of reading and studying working class and labor history and theory. We continued with a call for expanded, militant workplace organizing. Lastly, we highlighted other ways to join the Movement by organizing with a working class organization.

It's important to remember that our work in the Movement is part of a long continuum spanning across the globe and centuries of time. Those who have come before us—both recently and not-so-recently—have laid the groundwork for our contribution to the struggle today. In other words, no matter how dark the current political landscape may be, no matter how daunting the tasks are before us, it's comforting to know that we, as contemporary organizers, are not faced with the prospect of “starting from scratch,” but have the example and experiences of thousands of organizers before us.

Here, the Brigade wishes to again reiterate the three primary ingredients to becoming an effective organizer: study, mentorship, and practice! All three are essential. The study of history, economics, and theory informs our understanding of society and shapes our work according to the scientific process we, as organizers, utilize. Mentorship continues the legacy of the great organizers to come before us, ensuring inter-generational solidarity that transmits the lessons of the past. And, through practice, organizers are able to test the theory they've studied, matching it with the real-world conditions in their communities, and improving their

effectiveness through the process of action, self-criticism, and adjustment.

Just as it's important to remember the work of those who have come before us—for such legacies inspire us, teach us vital lessons in theory and praxis, and inform our understanding of scientific organizing—it is also important to know that this continuum of organizing has not ceased: it is happening in nearly every corner of the globe, live and in real-time. In nearly every community, the most politically advanced working and oppressed people, called the “militant minority” by the great William Z. Foster, are actively engaged in the struggle. Folks are organizing workplace unions, fighting social chauvinisms, educating workers, uniting students, renters, and prisoners, and are standing against imperialism, climate change, and all forms of oppression and exploitation. These contemporary organizers represent a vanguard of our class, the working class leaders who daily educate, agitate, and organize among the masses.

Last month, when Brigade organizers addressed Louisville Metro Council demanding the humane treatment of human beings incarcerated in the Louisville Metro Department of Corrections, we found the Brigade was among left-progressive allies: also there to address Metro Council were a number of other groups representing working class causes. Members of the Louisville Tenants Union were in attendance to advocate for the residents of Mt. Lebanon Senior Apartments. An organizer with Rubbertown Emergency ACTION (REACT) addressed the councilpersons about the dire environmental and workplace conditions facing the workers and residents of Rubbertown. Organizers with Get on the

Bus, a campaign organized by the Louisville Democratic Socialists of America (LDSA), demanded proper and adequate funding of our city's public transit system. And an organizer with Mask Bloc Louisville talked about the attack on residents' civil liberties through the city's mask-ban. All of these groups are active in our Louisville community, fighting for working and oppressed people. The Brigade hopes to platform their worthy causes and to find ways to coordinate and co-organize together in 2025.

For the month of January, *The Class Struggle Chronicle* will be highlighting some of the work of contemporary organizers and groups. We want to put a spotlight on the struggle as it currently exists today. We hope this month's focus will inspire our readers to get involved, to get organized. The path before us is dark and treacherous, but there is a path... It's a path mapped out by the march of history and a scientific analysis of the trajectory of our class society. It's a path carved into reality by organizers, both past and present. It's the path forward towards the liberation of all working and oppressed people!

An Interview with the Haywood-Cannon Caucus of the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.): Part II

By the Louisville Workers Brigade

January 5, 2025

This is the second part of a two-part interview with the Haywood-Cannon Caucus of the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.). This second part of our interview covers the mission behind the newly established Haywood-Cannon Caucus. While the Louisville Workers Brigade does not agree with or endorse every single position of the IWW or the Haywood-Cannon Caucus, we appreciate their willingness to conduct this interview and applaud their organizing efforts for the working class. The links provided in this

article have been provided by the Haywood-Cannon Caucus.

Could you tell us about the Haywood-Cannon Caucus? What are the reasons for your formation and what are your goals?

We've touched on some of the reasoning in previous answers for forming the Haywood Cannon Caucus within the IWW. As mentioned, the IWW is a shell of its former self, it has become complacent

in its own ways tied to the ideological hegemony of anarcho-syndicalism within the union. Our total membership is as big as some union locals in the mainstream unions. Our national union administration is dysfunctional with local branches languishing as a result. We seek to offer a way out, a way to revitalize the union out of the quagmire its been stuck in for some time. You can read [our founding statement](#) to see what our program promotes to reform the union into being not just organizationally functional, but to make the union relevant to the US working class once again.

It has caused commotion and even hostility from some quarters in the union, but it has also drawn a lot of support from members across the country who recognize the problems we've highlighted. Not everyone in the caucus 100% agrees with the full program, but members involved agree with the majority of the points in the program. We are working to realize these points within the union, even though this is a new project and we're starting as a minority within the union.

Probably the most contentious point in our program is the revision of the IWW constitution which prohibits support for political parties. This goes back to early debates in the union between syndicalists and those who supported the ideas of IWW cofounder Daniel DeLeon. In the original IWW constitution it was recognized that the working class has to be organized both economically and politically. Syndicalists in the union fought to have affiliation or support of working class political organization removed from the constitution, triggering a split within the union between the proponents of DeLeonism (which called for ties between the union and a working class party) and the syndicalists who promoted the idea of "no politics" in the union. This "no politics" line has continued ever since, even having a regressive clause banning "non political sects" within the union, despite the obvious

reality that there are political groupings operating within the union even before the Haywood Cannon Caucus was founded.

Beyond this we are calling for the formation of a dual card committee to coordinate among union members who're also in the mainstream unions to better realize the orientation of wobblyism within the broader labor movement. We're also calling for a reformation of our organizer training program to create an army of organizers versus the bottleneck we experience currently where only a select few are certified to hold organizer trainings for union members. We also seek to overcome the dysfunction of our union administration even if it means having a paid staff versus a common DIY attitude relying on the free labor of fellow workers to not only do their full time jobs, but to also do the duties of running the day to day tasks of the union which leads to burnout and high turnover of officer positions. There's a common fear that if we change the current structure and policy of the union we will become like the mainstream unions and engage in "business unionism" by creating another bureaucracy that will undermine our principles. To this we say that yes there's a potential for such a thing, but it's up to us as union members/employers of any officer to hold them accountable. We already have the organizational mechanisms in place to recall anyone we find unsatisfactory.

Beyond the above points we also seek to engage in a mass propaganda campaign to the US working class to promote wobblyism, as well as establish a streamlined political education program for our union members to understand how the capitalist mode of production functions and what the strategy is to realize the abolition of the wage system, aka communism.

What advice and encouragement can you give working people currently considering organizing at their workplace?

You have to be mentally prepared for a long term commitment to organize workers, even when this means the unorganized will only take tiny baby steps towards large scale organization and gaining class consciousness. We all want mass strikes right now, general strikes, all the sexy features we see from prior generations of class struggle, but the reality is we are in a historically weak position as the working class, both domestically and internationally. It's going to take a lifetime of struggle to change this current dynamic.

We would encourage anyone interested to join the union, sign up for an IWW organizer training, even if you are already a member of another union. And if what you've read here resonates with you, [consider joining our caucus](#). It doesn't cost anything, just a general agreement with our program. Help us not only revitalize the IWW, but the working class movement in general.

Is there anything else you'd like to share with our readers?

After the 2024 election results it should be apparent that the working class is offered nothing but a deadend by both capitalist parties, their politics and much of the union leadership that tailed them. We need a real alternative, we need an independent working class movement and party. This is the primary task of the working class to address. And we can make steps right now to do this, both inside the unions and outside of them. We need to study past efforts by prior generations of workers on how they attempted this, both the positive and negative aspects.

It's not a coincidence or arbitrary that we name our caucus after Big Bill Haywood and James P Cannon versus some other figures who were IWW members like

William Z. Foster and Earl Browder. Our namesakes represent a particular current that we argue correctly deal with several tendencies that deviate from the line of march towards communism, whether that be [the political indifferentism of anarcho-syndicalists](#) or the zigzagging of policy by [Foster, Browder and Co.](#) operating under the orders of Stalinism, the AFL leadership, and the degeneration of the revolutionary workers movement.

If you'd like to know more about the caucus and the lineage we identify with you can watch [a recent event we hosted with historian Bryan Palmer](#) featuring the political career of James P Cannon, as well as sign up for our study group on Cannon's summation of the IWW.

A Conversation with Collin McIntyre
About the Prison Industrial Complex

**This video was initially scheduled for release in February, but due to a mistake by the Brigade, the video was made public on our YouTube channel!*

The Brigade extends our sincere thanks to Collin for his bold honesty in sharing his story with us for this interview about the Prison Industrial Complex!



www.youtube.com/@louworkersbrigade

JOIN THE BRIGADE'S DISCORD SERVER
WHERE YOU CAN...

- STAY UP-TO-DATE ON LOCAL EVENTS AND ACTIONS
- CONNECT WITH OTHER ORGANIZERS
- DISCUSS YOUR CURRENT READING AND OTHER MEDIA CONSUMPTION
- DISCUSS CURRENT EVENTS AND NEWS
- ...AND MUCH MORE!

<https://discord.gg/DDHkEtqT4A>



Workers, Rise Up: The Power of Unionization

By Eric Reynolds

January 10, 2025

Fellow workers, brothers and sisters, we are at a turning point in the fight for dignity, justice, and equity in the workplace. Across this country, corporate executive fat cats feast off our labor while we are left to work harder, live poorer, and hope for scraps. But hope alone is not enough—we must organize, unionize, and reclaim what is rightfully ours. This is not just an article; it is a call to action, a demand for change, and a reminder of the power we hold when we stand together.

I speak to you not as an outsider, but as one of you—a worker who knows the sting of exploitation and the fire of solidarity. For 20 years, I worked as a non-union employee at UPS. I saw them strip away what we once thought was untouchable: pensions, our great health insurance, and other hard-won benefits. They replaced our union-level health insurance with something far inferior, leaving us to pay more and get less. They took and took, leaving us to carry the burden. But when we came together—when we unionized the 500 admins and specialists at UPS Worldport—we took it all back. We reclaimed our pensions. We reclaimed our great health insurance. We reclaimed our dignity.

That victory was not handed to us. It was won by the same power that has driven workers for generations: solidarity. And that same power can be yours.

The fight at UPS is not isolated. Across the country, Amazon workers are rising up against one of the largest and most powerful corporations in the world. They are facing intimidation, propaganda, and every dirty trick in the anti-union playbook. But they persist. They organize. They fight.

They fight for a living wage. They fight for safe working conditions. They fight for respect. And they show us that the bosses fear nothing more than a united workforce.

Their struggle is our struggle. The conditions may differ, but the goal is the same: to claim what is rightfully ours. A union isn't just a contract or a bargaining table. It's a declaration that workers will no longer accept crumbs while the bosses feast.

Eugene Debs once said, "The working class must be emancipated by the working class." Those words are as true today as they were over a century ago. Our salvation will not come from benevolent employers or broken political systems—it will come from us.

We are the descendants of the warriors of Blair Mountain, who faced down machine guns to demand their humanity. We are the descendants of the mill children, whose tiny hands built the wealth of the textile barons while their childhoods were stolen. We are the descendants of miners who coughed up their lives in coal dust to power a nation that forgot them.

We are the descendants of those who fought for the eight-hour day. We are the descendants of those who demanded weekends. We are the descendants of those who stood on picket lines, who faced billy clubs and who sacrificed everything to win a future for us.

They fought for justice. They fought for dignity. They fought for us. Now it is our turn to fight for them. It is our turn to fight for each other. It is our turn to fight for the workers of tomorrow.

At UPS, we didn't organize for recognition or status—we organized for survival. For me, it was about giving my son, Elijah, a better life. I want Elijah to know that his labor is valuable. I want Elijah to know that he is not alone. I want Elijah to know that the world belongs not to the bosses who exploit it, but to the workers who build it.

To my union brothers and sisters: get involved. Show up. Speak out. Organize your workplace. A union's power lies in its members, and without your participation, that power withers. If we are silent, we are complicit. If we are passive, we are powerless. If we are united, we are unstoppable.

To non-union workers: organize. Speak to your coworkers. Find common ground. Build a movement. You are not alone—there are allies, unions, and resources waiting to help you.

Do not fear their threats. Do not fear their lies. Do not fear their power. Fear only what happens if you remain silent, if you remain divided, if you remain under their control.

The victories at UPS and the growing movement at Amazon prove one thing: the tides are turning. Workers everywhere are awakening to the truth that we are the creators of wealth, and it is we who must claim our share.

We are the creators of value. We are the builders of nations. We are the power that drives the world. And together, we will take what is ours.

Our ancestors fought and bled for the eight-hour day, for weekends, for safety regulations. Now it is our turn to carry the torch.

They fought for freedom. They fought for justice. They fought for us. Now we fight for them. Now we fight for each other. Now we fight to win.

The time is now, fellow workers. Rise up, organize, and claim the future that belongs to us. Together, we will win.

In solidarity,

Eric Reynolds


Proud UPS Teamster



Subscribe to our channel & click the bell for notifications!

youtube.com/@louworkersbrigade

The image features a central red YouTube play button icon. Surrounding it are four video thumbnails: top-left shows William Z. Foster with text about the 1935 strike; top-right shows a man speaking with text about labor solidarity; bottom-left shows two men reading with text about class and labor literature; bottom-right shows a red graphic with text about 2024's year in review and the motto 'To Educate, To Support, To Unite.' The Louisville Workers Brigade logo is repeated on the sides.



New Video:
The Wade-Braden Case of Louisville, KY
A story of interracial solidarity

Check out the video on our YouTube channel:
youtube.com/@louworkersbrigade

The image has a green background. It includes a black and white photo of a family (Wade-Braden Case) and another photo of a group of people at a meeting. The Louisville Workers Brigade logo is in the bottom left, and the motto 'TO EDUCATE. TO SUPPORT. TO UNITE.' is in the bottom right.

Prison Abolition: The Struggle for Dignity

By Dalton Nolan

January 17, 2025

JLS is a prisoner-led prison abolition organization composed of incarcerated individuals who are struggling to dismantle the highly exploitative, brutalizing, and oppressive prison-industrial complex and the various institutions that sustain such a system. In line with this, JLS strives to raise awareness about the injustices happening in jails and prisons, the degrading living conditions of these carceral facilities, and provide political and legal resources to empower individuals to fight against their oppression. As such, the long-term vision of the JLS is the complete dismantling of the punitive prison-industrial complex and its replacement with a system based on restoration, rehabilitation, and reconciliation. In the short term, JLS fights to improve the living conditions of imprisoned human beings. Toward this aim, JLS organized the “Shut ‘Em Down” (SED) Campaign.

The SED Campaign was a coordinated campaign that sought to raise awareness of the horrid living conditions of those in jails and prisons and to demand their immediate improvement. A major objective of this campaign was to unite the organizing of those inside the jails and prisons with community organizations and supporters on the outside. Both parties were to build up support and awareness of the campaign, with those on the outside hosting a variety of events, such as letter-writings, educationals, and demonstrations. All of this was in the lead-up to the “Week of Solidarity,” a week designated by JLS as the time in which those on the inside would withhold their labor and stop all commissary spending, severely hurting the prison-industrial complex from within; meanwhile, outside

groups and individuals would organizing mass demonstrations outside of jails, prisons, and ICE facilities, with the clear aim of bringing awareness to the monstrosity that is the prison industrial complex.

To those who are aware of the horror of the prison-industrial system, the actions of JLS and other groups and individuals fighting for prison abolition are noble; however, there are many working people in the US who don’t understand the systemic problems inherent in our punitive carceral system. To many of them, prison abolition is a scary concept that threatens to release the worst elements of society upon us. This line of thinking is incorrect, but it isn’t surprising that many people hold these beliefs given how extensive the propaganda in all forms of media has come to present the prison-industrial complex and its many related institutions as the bulwark between society and the “criminals.” All of us, at one point or another, carried these beliefs. Prison abolition is a must for our society. Under our current economic system, prisons serve the interests of the owning class. This interest lies in exploiting slave labor, making money off prison contracts, privatizing services at the expense of visitors and the imprisoned folk, and removing dissenters.

The slave labor element of the prison-industrial complex is by far the most widely known, with prisons across the US forcing incarcerated people to work for pennies in exchange for making companies extremely wealthy. To drive this point home, the US’s Thirteenth Amendment outlaws slavery “except as a punishment for crime whereof

the party shall have been duly convicted,” meaning that slave labor in jails and prisons is given legal power to continue existing.

Prison contracts are less widely talked about but are no less exploitative. Prison contracting is where a government contracts out the management of a jail, prison, or detention center to a company, making that institution under the purview of the company contracted. In this arrangement, private prisons make money as long as they remain open and keep people imprisoned. This means that private prisons have no material interest in trying to engage in rehabilitative or restorative services, as that would hurt their bottom-line. This profit-making scheme is further maximized by slave labor. On the flipside, public prisons, while not directly privatized and directly operated under a profit-seeking system, are in bed with companies in a variety of ways that allow for-profit schemes to infest these institutions. Whether through contracting out a particular prison service or needing to supply certain goods to a prison, these contracts can be just as lucrative as private prisons. This means that all corporations are just as invested in the continuation of the prison industrial complex, even if they do not directly operate a private prison. From visitations to commissaries to other services, whatever miniscule “savings” they have from their slave labor or whatever their loved ones have after making their bosses richer is then directly back into the pockets of the owning class. The end result is that the prison industrial complex is a system of continual supply and demand, where in the supply is working and oppressed people and the demand is the ceaseless drive for higher and higher profits.

Finally, prisons also serve as tools for silencing dissent. Throughout the history of prisons, those who challenged the dominant order of things often found themselves behind bars, with the ruling

classes of the state hoping this would destroy any ability they would have to struggle against their rule. And this state of things hasn't ended, as the US has plenty of political prisoners to this day, some who have been locked up for years. Additionally, political figures aren't the only type of dissenters to be arrested to keep them from organizing for better material conditions. The history of the labor movement is fraught with examples of the US arresting labor organizers, most commonly during strikes, with the intent of disrupting organized labor's struggle against the bosses. For example, during the Amazon strike a few weeks ago, an Amazon driver was arrested by New York City Police for stopping his van in support of the strike. This scene and many others in history demonstrate that cops are not friends of working people and that prisons are not to stop the imaginary “criminal” but a tool to enforce the state's and, by extension, the owning class's power. This characterization of prisons as a tool of the owning class is why many systemic problems continue. Rather than fund social services that address problems like homelessness, these systemic issues are criminalized, and working and oppressed people are punished for something the owning class caused itself. Some will ask, “What about violent offenders?” and while this is a valid question, it is problematic because it is placed in opposition to improving the living conditions of the majority of imprisoned folk, who are mostly non-violent offenders. What that question serves to do is not actually address a concern but make prison abolition appear naive and dangerous so that the inhumane system of the prison-industrial complex appears like the lesser of two evils, prolonging a horrendous system of exploitation, oppression, and brutalization. Must I mention the murder of Breonna Taylor and David McAtee, the systemic sexual assault of children through LMPD's Explorer Program, the violent repression of the protestors during the 2020 Black Lives

Matter uprisings in Louisville and elsewhere, the targeting of pro-Palestinian supporters across the entire country, or the further criminalization of homelessness as seen in HB5?

The Brigade first heard about the SED Campaign a few months ago when we attended a virtual meeting organized by the Tacoma International Workers of the World. We firmly believed in the cause of prison abolition, and we signed on to the campaign, quickly gathering like-minded folks to organize Louisville's participation. Our first event was a community letter-writing event at the end of August, where attendees wrote to those incarcerated in the Louisville Metro Department of Corrections (LMDC). Following this, the Brigade crafted ten demands for the Louisville Metro government and LMDC, demanding immediate improvement to the living conditions of those imprisoned in LMDC. We gathered hundreds of signatures, most of which we got while participating in the Louisville Pride Festival in September. In October, the Brigade hosted an educational featuring local organizer Sonja Wilde-de Vries, who gave an incredible talk on political prisoners in the US.

The Brigade also issued a call to action for a friend of the Brigade, Collin, who was suffering from immense pain caused by a toothache. He pleaded with the jail authorities to see a dentist but was refused, which ultimately led to Collin waking up one day with an incredibly swollen face and unbearable pain emanating from his mouth. Nonetheless, he was still asked to report to his kitchen duties. Collin reached out to us, telling us what happened, and pleaded with the Brigade to provide him with some kind of relief. The Brigade was enraged and quickly responded to his pleas, publishing a call to action on our social media, offering our followers a script to read or write when they called or emailed the jail, demanding Collin receive the medical treatment he

desperately needed. In a matter of hours, the numerous phone calls and emails broke through the jail authorities' resolve, and Collin received the medical care he needed—all within twelve hours of the initial call to action.

The Brigade concluded its participation in the 2024 SED Campaign by speaking before Metro Council on Thursday, December 12. Being the last meeting for some council people because they didn't get re-elected, Metro Council was in a prolonged self-congratulating mood that lasted for two hours, all the while keeping those who signed up to speak before Metro Council on important issues waiting and waiting and waiting. This infuriated all who were in attendance, which were local leftist and progressive groups who had no interest in applauding the "efforts" of Metro Council. In fact, we all found the self-congratulatory nature of the council people to be incredibly disrespectful and evidence of their sheer disconnect from regular working and oppressed people. This only added weight to our addresses to Metro Council. One by one, three Brigade organizers spoke before Metro Council, highlighting the horrors of the prison-industrial system, the ten demands we had on the immediate improvement to the living conditions of those imprisoned in LMDC, and the systemic neglect of imprisoned folks easily observable in LMDC. After we spoke, we stood in solidarity with the other groups that spoke on issues of funding public transportation, addressing the pollution of Rubbertown, tenants issues, etc.

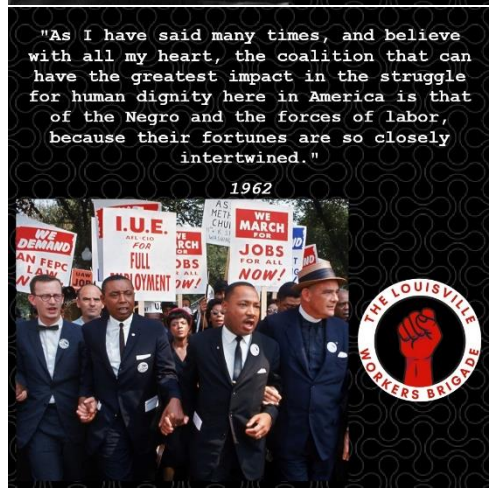
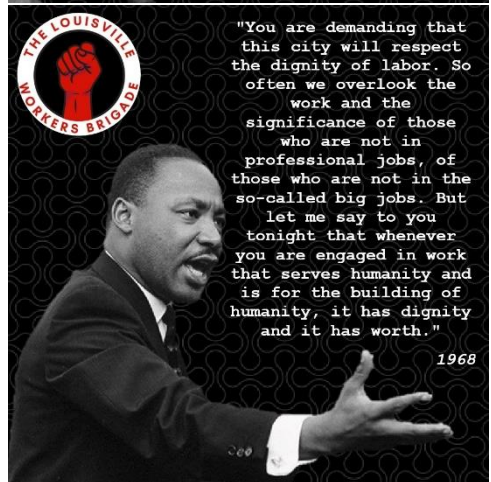
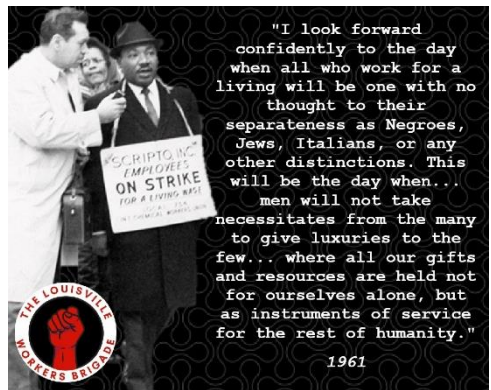
Through my radicalization, I came to despise the prison-industrial complex, but it was the SED Campaign that really revealed the problems of incarceration in the US. I don't have any direct connections to jails or prisons. I've had family who were in jail and imprisoned, but I never got anywhere close to experiencing any of that, not even as a visitor, as all of those experiences my family members went

through were before my time. So, when I began working on the SED Campaign, I came to it without any real-world experience to speak of, yet that didn't stop me from developing a greater sense of connection with those imprisoned. From going with another organizer to visit Collin in jail to hearing about how jails and prisons privatized all these services to funnel money up toward the owning class impacted me; it made me see prisons in a different light. Again, I had no love for prisons or cops before the campaign, but those few months showed me just how deep the depravity goes. I can now confidently say that jails, prisons, and cops in America under this rotten economic system are not there for the safety and protection of working and oppressed people. These rotten institutions serve either to enrich the owning class or to enrich themselves with leftover scraps. This campaign has reinforced my position on the prison-industrial complex that I will hold dear in my future organizing work.

The work of JLS and of all prison abolitionists must be lauded, but their work is not finished. 2024 has passed, and 2025 is upon us. The work of JLS and other prison abolitionists isn't just a single aspect of the movement toward the liberation of working and oppressed people but an integral part of each and every other struggle currently being waged. The fight against homeless, the fight for Queer rights and liberation, the fight for Black liberation, the fight for a contract at a unionized workplace—all of these struggles and more share the same enemy with the same forces and material at their disposal. In all of these struggles, the owning class calls upon the prison-industrial complex to crush and silence all who dare challenge the status quo, meaning that the prison-industrial complex must be destroyed for any of us to achieve true liberation. This is a lesson that was reinforced in my work on the SED campaign and is one that many new organizers need to take to heart. The

struggle of prison abolition, like most other struggles, never ceases, which means that there is no better time to get involved than now.

Solidarity with and all power to incarcerated human beings and working and oppressed people the world over!



An Interview with Local Organizer, Sonja Wilde-de Vries

By the Louisville Workers Brigade

January 24, 2025

Could you tell us how you got involved in organizing? What were the first causes you organized around? How did these causes shape your view of organizing and your future work?

On my mother's side I was born into a Dutch, working class and communist family deeply involved in resistance against the nazi's. On the other side was my dad's family: southern landowners in Kentucky. After my father met my mother, he became radicalized, and they were both involved in the civil rights movement and anti-war movements.

My Dutch grandfather was held in a concentration camp for over a year for being a member of the communist party, my uncle Herbert who was Jewish, lost his parents and little sister in Auschwitz. My grandmother, with four young children, hid people fleeing the nazi's in the crawl space in her tiny apartment on the first floor. I was raised by my grandma, in that same apartment building and met some of the people who had survived the war because of my grandmother; trade unionists, Russian POW's, Jewish family's, some of them stopped by when I was a child, and told their stories. While I wanted to glorify what my grandmother did, she taught me, that we must always fight for and alongside anyone who is oppressed, in whatever way that we are able.

It's hard to pinpoint when I became active. I spoke out as a child, even though I was terribly shy. My first act of resistance was when I was a first grader, briefly in the United States during the Vietnam War, and my teacher came to gently tell the "little foreign girl" about the pledge of allegiance. I will never forget the horrified look on her

face when I responded that I would not stand for those "fascists and murderers".

As a young teenager, I learned about the Palestinian struggle from my stepfather who painstakingly showed me maps of Palestine and all the villages that had been erased by Israel's settler colonial project. This was back in the 80's. At that time i was living in Amsterdam with my family and I joined an organization fighting US imperialism in Central America, where our government was funding and training death squads to keep their very lucrative domination in place and to thwart efforts towards workers rights, literacy and other basic human rights. I remember going into what was then the red-light district in Amsterdam, to do my first canvass! I felt a solidarity with the women there and although I didn't understand it completely, I felt the issues were connected. Self Determination. Oppression. In the red-light district, the women working as prostitutes were the ones the most willing to engage and also donate to the liberations struggles in El Salvador.

Soon after, I graduated high school and moved back to Kentucky and was mentored by civil rights leaders, Anne Braden and Mattie Jones. My first campaign participation was the effort to free Imani Harris and Ben Chavis. Anti-racism and anti-imperialism as well as a strong awareness of every oppressed people's right to self-determination was deeply rooted in me at an early age, intertwined with an awareness that we could never be free under capitalism.

You've been organizing around numerous causes in Louisville for many years, from Black liberation to Palestinian liberation and so forth. How are these

struggles, as well as other struggles, connected to one another? Why is it important for organizers to operate with a big-picture view when organizing for the interest of working and oppressed people?

Understanding that the systems of capitalism and imperialism as well as their integral partners patriarchy, heterosexism, and white supremacy are all connected is key to our work. No matter where our focus is- the connections are there. It is up to us, as organizers to bring that context into everything we do.

Just looking at Kentucky, and our \$29 million per year budget for Israel and juxtaposing it against the fact that our houseless population is up by 18% across the state and that we are in the top 5 for poverty, child abuse and children with incarcerated parents, in the nation makes those connections starkly. Our police forces collaborate and train with the Israeli Defense forces on how best to suppress urban uprisings. When we study the ethnic cleansing that happened in this country with indigenous nations, we see the blueprint for what is happening in Palestine.

The people in power KNOW it's all connected. If we were half as unified as the people in power we would be powerful beyond measure!

The 21st century has been a blight on working and oppressed people, from cuts to desperately needed social services to ongoing genocides the world over to imperialist wars to the march of climate change. Why is it important now more than ever for people to get organized? What do you say to those who espouse defeatist/doomerist statements like "What's the point? Nothing is going to change"?

One of the most beautiful and hopeful things I am seeing in this last year is folks from all over making the connections between climate disaster, genocide,

poverty, attacks on trans people- all of it- and doing their work in such a way that reflects that awareness. And much of that shift has been led by BIPOC, queer, working class and poor organizers. Angela Davis said (and I am paraphrasing) " We have to fight climate disaster, or we will not have a world to win" I look at the places where indigenous people are uniting with farmers and locals affected by pipelines and fracking and that gives me hope.

We are facing a reactionary and repressive government that is turning toward being openly fascist because the empire is failing. It is going to take all of us, moving together to not just fight it, but to create something new and just. Anne Braden always said, "The most challenging times in history are also the best times to organize"

When you study history, it is full of struggle. Slavery and Jim Crow were once legal- (because those in power make the laws) and it was organizing and resistance that brought them down. History has always been filled with the struggle of the oppressed against the oppressors.

Grassroots organizing and resistance is the only thing that has ever made a real difference. If we re-directed the resources and energy that go into the elections every four years, to use in more radical grassroots organizing imagine what we could do! And educating people as to the nature of this system that CANNOT be reformed is our work. We will have to be creative, we will have to go beyond our comfort zones, we will have to work with people we don't agree with on everything, and we will need to be in the streets, in the places of power, in the courts- but we can build something very powerful and beautiful in this way- we can build the world we want to see in our organizing.

What work are you currently involved in right now? What groups do you volunteer with and which ones are you organized with?

Right now I am involved in cultural organizing- there is a reason that repressive powers have often gone after poets and other artists first. We need to connect to struggles across all lines of identity and across the world and one way we can do that powerfully is through poetry. It also gives us sustenance. Direction. Information. Inspiration. We also need to organize concretely for the defense and survival of our most vulnerable populations and look for guidance from those who are most affected by the oppression and violence of our system. This is the work I am part of now. What I always tell people is find the work you resonate with most- if you are religious, work within your places of worship, if you are a student, organize in your high school or university etc. We do not all need to be doing the same things- but we do need to have an understanding about the system that we are fighting. About the nature of racial capitalism, white supremacy, patriarchy etc. so that we bring that into whatever work we are doing, whether it is leading a strike, defending trans and immigrant rights, protecting water rights or gathering poets. We need to think in terms of liberation. We need to allow our comrades to have moments of despair and doubt and sorrow- it's what makes us human. We also need to bring more joy and camaraderie and mutual aid into our movements.

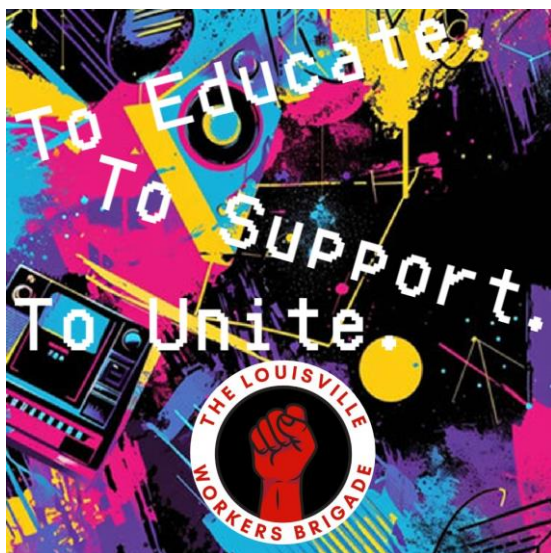
Is there anything else you'd like to share with our readers? Any wisdom to share from your many years involved in the myriad of struggles for the liberation of working and oppressed peoples?

When I feel down, I often think of something Anne Braden said:

"In every age, no matter how cruel the oppression carried on by those in power, there have been those who struggled for a different world. I believe this is the genius of humankind, the thing that makes us half divine: the fact that some human beings

can envision a world that has never existed."

We must envision and fight for that world now more than ever.



February Educational Presentation

"The Civil Rights Movement & Anti-Racist Organizing Today"

Featuring veteran organizer,
Walter Tillow

Tuesday February 18th at 6:15pm
@ the Northeast Regional Library
(15 Bellevue Dr. Louisville, KY 40223)

Walter Tillow is a lifelong organizer & activist who found his start in the Civil Rights Movement when he joined the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in the 1960s. His life of dedication to the Movement has included work in anti-racist, working class, solidarity, and communist politics. For his organizing work around "The Cuban Five" case, he was awarded the Friendship Medal by the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP). He is a leader and founding member of Marxian-Leninism Today and is still highly active in local and global politics.

THE CLASS STRUGGLE CHRONICLE

The Class Struggle Chronicle is the publication of **The Louisville Workers Brigade**. It is a free, worker-run newspaper that circulates both online and physical copies.

The primary purpose of *The Class Struggle Chronicle* is to offer coverage of working class issues, particularly involving organized Labor, in the Louisville, Kentucky area.

We are an unabashedly pro-worker publication, seeking to contribute to the class struggle against the owning class who daily exploits, oppresses, and demoralizes laborers here in Louisville and the world over.

We publish articles on topics ranging from union organizing efforts, strikes, worker grievances, worker-related issues, etc. Submissions from Louisville workers are encouraged and accepted, but are subject to review and editing by the editorial staff of *The Class Struggle Chronicle*. Submissions can be sent to csc@louworkersbrigade.org.



To Educate.

To Support.

To Unite.



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.

www.louworkersbrigade.org

contact@louworkersbrigade.org

SOLIDARITY FOREVER!