



# Speak Out Now

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## Labor Day: It's Time for Workers to Unite

Labor Day is supposedly a time to celebrate working people. Politicians often make cynical speeches saying how much they appreciate the work that ordinary people do, even as millions of workers don't even get the day off.

But Labor Day is also an opportunity to consider the situation that working people face across the U.S. — and what we can and must do about it.

Inflation is hitting workers hard, only made worse by corporate profiteering. Gas prices may have come down a little since they peaked in the early summer, but they are still crazy, all while the oil companies continue to make record profits. Rents are through the roof as many people are facing eviction. The prices of food and other household necessities are still high. The rich as a whole keep getting richer and the rest of us scramble to survive.

The situation of the working class has also become much worse in the last three years because of Covid. When health experts were telling people to stay home, most of us still had to work, not only to feed our families, but to keep the bosses' economy running. So we got hit harder by illness and death than those with more money who really could stay at home. The pandemic showed what we already knew — that society can't function without us. And we still deserve recognition and compensation for that.

And many of us lost jobs when businesses shut down. In some industries — like meatpacking, transportation and others — workers were crammed in close quarters and had high rates of infection. Healthcare workers were hit hard by non-stop work and extreme staffing shortages, and many have left the profession as a result. Now there is a serious mental health crisis among healthcare workers.

Have we seen working people fight back against these attacks on our lives? Yes, but to a limited extent. In the U.S., we have seen healthcare, education and other workers fight to protect themselves under Covid. We have seen some new union organizing against companies like Amazon, Starbucks, and some others. We are seeing railroad

workers beginning to organize against attacks on their safety and wages. And we have seen workers go on strike, but many of the fights have been isolated to individual workplaces, where it has been difficult to win major gains. So we still have a long way to go.

At work, we do everything that makes society function and makes the bosses' profits possible. But to use that strength, workers would have to be united on the same side, we'd have to join our forces in a unified fight.

This is exactly what the ruling elite doesn't want. They will do everything in their power to keep us divided. They tell us that we must rely on them and their bought-and-paid-for politicians, whether Biden or Trump or someone else. They want us to think that, as bad as things are, we can only fight back as one group of workers against one company at a time. And often the top union officials try to convince workers that we can't win and have to accept many of the attacks the corporations are imposing.

To keep workers from uniting, the bosses have throughout history tried to control us by playing us off each other. We see huge efforts to drive wedges in our unity, through racism, attacks on immigrants, attacks on LGBTQ+ people, and more. They want workers to blame each other for our problems. And it is working in some cases. Some workers would still rather unite with the ruling rich and blame some part of the working class than fight alongside other workers for a better world. The profiteers want us to attack each other while they laugh all the way to the bank.

Whether it's wages or unsafe working conditions or job security or climate disaster or the assault on reproductive rights, we need to understand that we are all workers under attack, the whole working class. And we can't continue to fall for all their attempts to divide us and tell us that we are powerless to change things. This year for Labor Day we can keep in mind that it is our work that makes the whole system run, and we have a tremendous power to really change things if we choose to use it.