



# Speak Out Now

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## CEO's Murder Shows the Anger at Their Whole System

The assassination of Brian Thompson, CEO of United Healthcare, has been met with an outpouring of anger at the health insurance industry. All over social media, amongst friends, at workplaces, and beyond, people have been expressing their outrage at the health insurance industry's profiteering off of our misery and death.

This reaction shouldn't come as a surprise. The words "Deny" and "Delay" were written on the bullets used to kill Thompson because these words are part of how the health insurance industry profits from the misery of millions of people. People lose their loved ones because of denied or delayed treatment. Patients are routinely denied life-saving care. And if someone receives care that the insurance company has denied, then they are saddled with enormous debt they can usually never pay back.

Profiting from our misery and death is just part of the business model of health insurance companies. Insurance companies save money when they delay care. And when they deny care to very sick patients, those patients will die sooner, and will no longer be a drain on insurance profits. Health insurers rejected 18% of all claims last year, with some denying nearly half of all claims. United Healthcare denied an estimated 1 in 3 claims. Health care debt continues to be a major cause of bankruptcy in the U.S., even as health insurance companies report record-high profits, which have more than doubled since the Affordable Care Act was enacted in 2010.

Many billionaire CEOs, along with the media, have expressed shock and outrage at this killing, expecting sympathy for Thompson's death. But instead they've been surprised by the thousands of people able to find a kind of vengeance from his death. This shouldn't be surprising, either. This is a society that does not value the lives of working-class people, millions of us who go to work sick or injured because we can't afford the medical costs or a loss of wages. The majority of working-class people can't afford an emergency expense of more than \$400. Consider all of the young people who grow up in a society with regular mass shootings, or the thousands of people brutally murdered by the police every year.

And we're supposed to feel immense sympathy for the death of a multi-millionaire CEO of a company that

makes billions of dollars by delaying and denying care to tens of thousands of people, a whole industry that profits from making our lives more miserable?

This goes way beyond health insurance. It extends to the for-profit health care industry as a whole, with skyrocketing prices, which profits by keeping staffing and patient care to a minimum. And it goes beyond health care, and reflects the whole society. As prices keep going up faster than wages, workers go deeper into debt just to survive, while the richest people in the U.S. have never been wealthier. Meanwhile, banks bring in billions of dollars a year off these debts and extra fees — again profiting at our expense. What we see here is more than just anger at a CEO or a company, or a whole industry. This is anger at an entire system, which has been expressed by people across the political spectrum, from people of all different backgrounds.

With this recent election, politicians have tried to exaggerate our differences, trying to pit working-class people against each other. But this assassination has shed light on just how much ordinary working people have in common with each other. We are the ones who do all of the work, and they are the ones who make all of the decisions that benefit them and their class at our expense, profiting off our labor, and even our death. We have way more in common with each other than with any of these corporations or the politicians they have put in charge.

This assassination has laid bare the simmering rage so many feel toward this cruel system. But while this individual act of violence may resonate with some as a form of getting back at the people in power, it is not a solution at all. Those at the top of this violent system will always be replaced. What we need is not individual acts of revenge against powerful individuals, but a movement to dismantle the whole system itself. True change can only come from our collective action, through the organized power of millions of working people.

But now we can see just how many of us share a deep anger at this system that works against us. That can be a starting point and a reminder of the enormous power working people have when we are organized together.

# Speak Out Now at BART (December 16, 2024)

## Who Sets Those Schedules?

The bids are over, for the most part. As always, it works out for some and others are just stuck with what they got. But what's with shifts having different start times, especially for TO's?

Some say, it's what the computers do. But scheduling programs only do what they are programmed to do to achieve certain outcomes. Humans write the programs.

It might be difficult for some people at BART HQ to understand that the people who make this system run have lives. And starting some days at one time and others at a different time can mess things up when you have family obligations and other responsibilities.

We all work to live, not live to work. And some of those schedules really mess up people's lives.

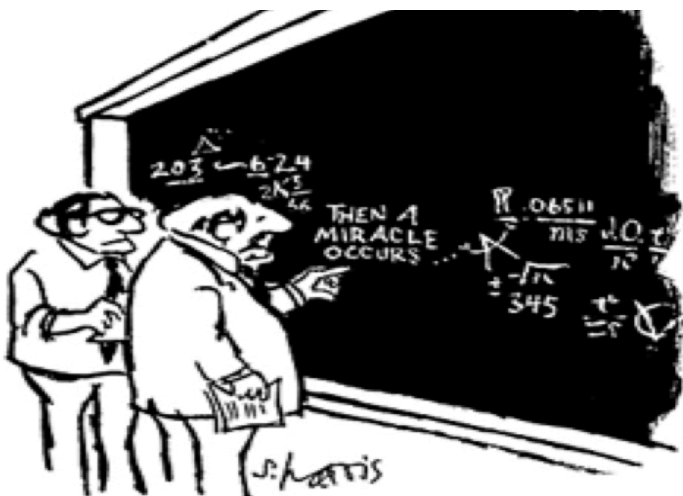
## Doing the Math

BART is the only major public transit system in the U.S. that relies so heavily on fares to fund its operations. So, what does BART do? Spend \$90 million on the new fare gates to get more people to pay to ride.

How is that working now that 10 stations have the new gates? Has there been a significant increase in revenue at those stations? But this is BART, why wait and see how it is working out and how it might work out across the system? Just go ahead with the 5.5% fare increase.

And if more people are paying, reward them by making them pay more? That should work to cover some of the huge deficit the system is facing. Really?

## Doing the Budget at BHQ



*Is this the bond measure? Or what?*

## System Service NOT "At Your Service"

There are managers and even some foreworkers who seem to think that their advice and directives are needed every time they show up in the station.

They may notice that there is something at the end of the platform that needs picking up or cleaning or even on the level above or below where the person is working. And they want it taken care of right then!

Do they really think they are needed to maintain the stations?

Workers have their routines to keep the WHOLE station clean, not to run from this scrap of paper to the next. And there are hundreds of pairs of eyes on the stations at all times (called passengers) and they will report a major spill or something worse to a Station Agent, who will notify the System Service Worker. That's called team work. And the teams work for the passengers not for people who are disrespectful and act like workers are there to serve them.

## BART in the News

BART is in the news and as usual it's the question of funding – or no funding. There are projections of a bare-bones system running trains every hour. Who will ride that, other than the regulars looking for a safe place to sleep?

Public mass transit is not a luxury, it is a necessity, not just for people without cars. But for our future and the future of life on this planet. The science is clear. We can't continue to put so much CO2 into the atmosphere without catastrophic effects. The extreme weather events of the past year are just warnings.

Transportation workers are in the best position to have an impact on people's understanding. And along with riders together that could be a powerful force.

## Happy Holidays!

Those who work with Speak Out, and the BART newsletter wish you and yours an enjoyable holiday season and maybe a break from work.

It can be a stressful season to be on the job, but can be also joyous. And the year ahead is going to be a challenging one. Our goal is to make it a year of the workers – not the bosses.

*We need and deserve much better!*