

# TAKING HISTORY TO HEART

**Total Time—1.5 hours**

## **Learning Goals**

- Share your own and learn about other members' family/community labor history.
- Explore key moments in the history of the UFCW and the labor movement.
- Discuss how we can “take history to heart”—what the implications are for our struggles today.

## **Sections —Time**

- I. Welcome, Review Goals of the Training—5 minutes
- II. Sharing Our Own History—15 minutes
- III. Labor History Timeline—30 minutes
- IV. “Making History” Video and Discussion—40 minutes

## **Materials Needed**

“Making History” DVD (available from the UFCW International Union’s Organizing Department)  
DVD player/projector (with speakers) and a screen or blank wall is needed for the video  
Pens (enough for each participant)  
3" x 5" post-it notes (enough for each participant)

## **Handouts/Worksheets**

Labor History Timeline (50 wall pieces enlarged as posters)

## **Preparing for the Workshop**

Allow ample time for set up (approx. 20 minutes) to hang the labor history timeline. The timeline wall pieces are included at the end of this section. Make sure that there is adequate empty wall space for posting the timeline. Before the training, you will need to take the timeline pages and have them blown up, poster size (22" x 28", 24" x 36", etc). If you plan to use the history timeline at multiple trainings, you may wish to have them laminated.

Decide, in advance, how you’ll attach the timeline pieces to the walls of the training room (i.e. painter’s tape, tacks, etc).

To save space, you may want to hang the image that corresponds with each history moment directly below the text.

**NOTES****I. Goals for the Training—5 mins**

Post and review the goals for the training:

- Share your own and learn about other members' family/community labor history.
- Explore key moments in the history of the UFCW and the labor movement.
- Discuss how we can “take history to heart”—what the implications are for our struggles today.

**II. Sharing Our Own History—15 mins**

Flip-chart the following directions: Select someone from your family/community and write their name and occupation on a post-it note.

Indicate if they belonged to a union and/or about their work history overall.

Explain that what people share about their family's work history does not need to be union-related. Perhaps their mother was a farmer and belonged to a farmer's cooperative. Or their grandmother cared for other people's children. Encourage people to think broadly and assure them that they can use multiple post-it notes to represent multiple people. They may also choose to write about themselves.

Tell the group that once they're done writing, they should pair up and introduce themselves to another participant and share the stories represented on their post-it notes. Explain that they have 10 minutes for these paired discussions.

**III. Labor History Timeline—30 mins**

Bring everyone back together. Ask the participants to take their post-it notes and place them on the timeline (with all of the labor history events and images) that's already up on the wall. Ask them to place the post-its on or near a history timeline wall piece that's close to the time period that their post-it represents.

In addition to placing their own histories on the wall, ask everyone to walk along the timeline. Ask them to do this with their partners from the paired

**Module Icon Key**

Flip Chart



Ideas



In Handbook

Worksheet/  
Handout



discussion. Explain that together, they should note which events and images on the timeline most interest them. Specifically, ask people (chart this):

- What events seem most relevant to what we're facing today?
- What events are new to you?
- What events would you like to learn more about?

Ask everyone to also read the post-it notes. Mention that there are many events missing and encourage the participants to add (using the post-it notes) to the timeline.

After the group has been walking around for ten minutes (or when it seems that people have had a chance to read most of the timeline), bring everyone back together.

Ask what people noticed on the timeline.

- "What moments stood out to you and why?"
- "What events seem most relevant to what we're facing today?"
- "What events are new to you (did you just learn about)?"
- "What events would you like to know more about?"
- "Are there any patterns that you noticed?"

Explain that we're now going to learn more about a few of the events mentioned on the wall.

### IV. "Making History" Video and Discussion—40 mins

Explain that there are many great films about working people and that the one we're going to watch contains three brief clips about different moments in labor history. Note: If you're short on time you may choose to only show one or two of the clips. You may also wish to show one chapter, pause the video and discuss, repeat, etc.

Each chapter of the DVD is approximately seven minutes; the first is about the Bread and Roses textile strike in Lawrence, MA, the second is about the autoworkers' sit-down strike in Flint, MI and the third is about the United Farmworkers' grape boycott in CA. Play the DVD. (20 mins)

Facilitate a large-group discussion about the film. (20 mins)

Begin the discussion after the video by asking people for general reactions. Then, ask:

- What did the video show about the relationship of unions to broader social change?
- What examples from the video apply to our situation today? What are the implications for our union?

## NOTES

Refer to this goal of the workshop: How we can “take history to heart”—what the implications are for our struggles today.



Explain that UFCW members—including everyone in the room—make history each day.

Ask what ideas the participants have for explaining this to their co-workers and for sharing more with them about labor history. Ask what history has been collected about the local union and/or of workers in the area and encourage the participants, if they're interested, to research and learn more.

For more information on the UFCW's history, see <http://www.ufcw.org/about/ufcw-history/>

For a comprehensive list of labor history films and other resources, see <http://www.niu.edu/~rfeurer/labor/culture.html>

### NOTES

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# 1739

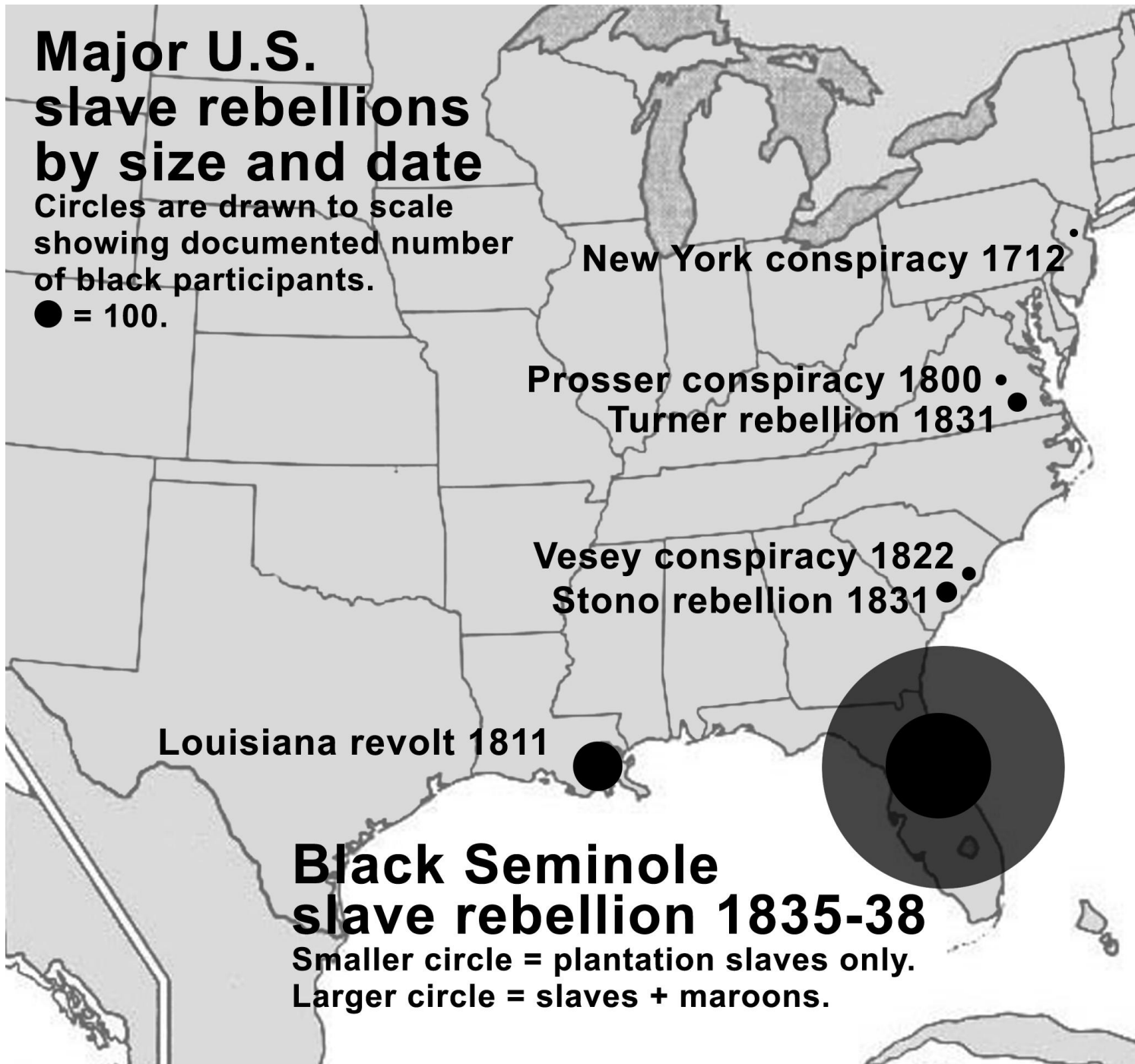
## **Stono Slave Rebellion**

The Stono slave rebellion was the largest slave uprising in the colonies prior to the revolution. In response to the rebellion, the South Carolina legislature passed the Negro Act of 1740 restricting slave assembly, education and movement. It also enacted a 10-year moratorium against importing African slaves based on the incorrect theory that domestically born slaves would resist less. It also required legislative approval for the freeing of any slaves. Congress would not pass the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment banning slavery until 1865. The hundreds of slave uprisings that occurred are critical points in early U.S. labor history.

# Major U.S. slave rebellions by size and date

Circles are drawn to scale showing documented number of black participants.

● = 100.



## Black Seminole slave rebellion 1835-38

Smaller circle = plantation slaves only.

Larger circle = slaves + maroons.

# Late 1880s

## Knights of Labor

The Knights of Labor were known for their inclusiveness, accepting women and African American members (though they also supported the Chinese Exclusion Act and ignored segregation in their own Southern assemblies). They were against child and convict labor and supported equal pay for women. They also opposed the wage system, believing that cooperative efforts would allow workers to escape wage slavery. In 1886, packinghouse workers in Chicago organized with the Knights.



Women delegates at the national meeting of the Knights of Labor in 1886. Women belonged to separate associations that were affiliated with local all-male unions. (*Library of Congress*)

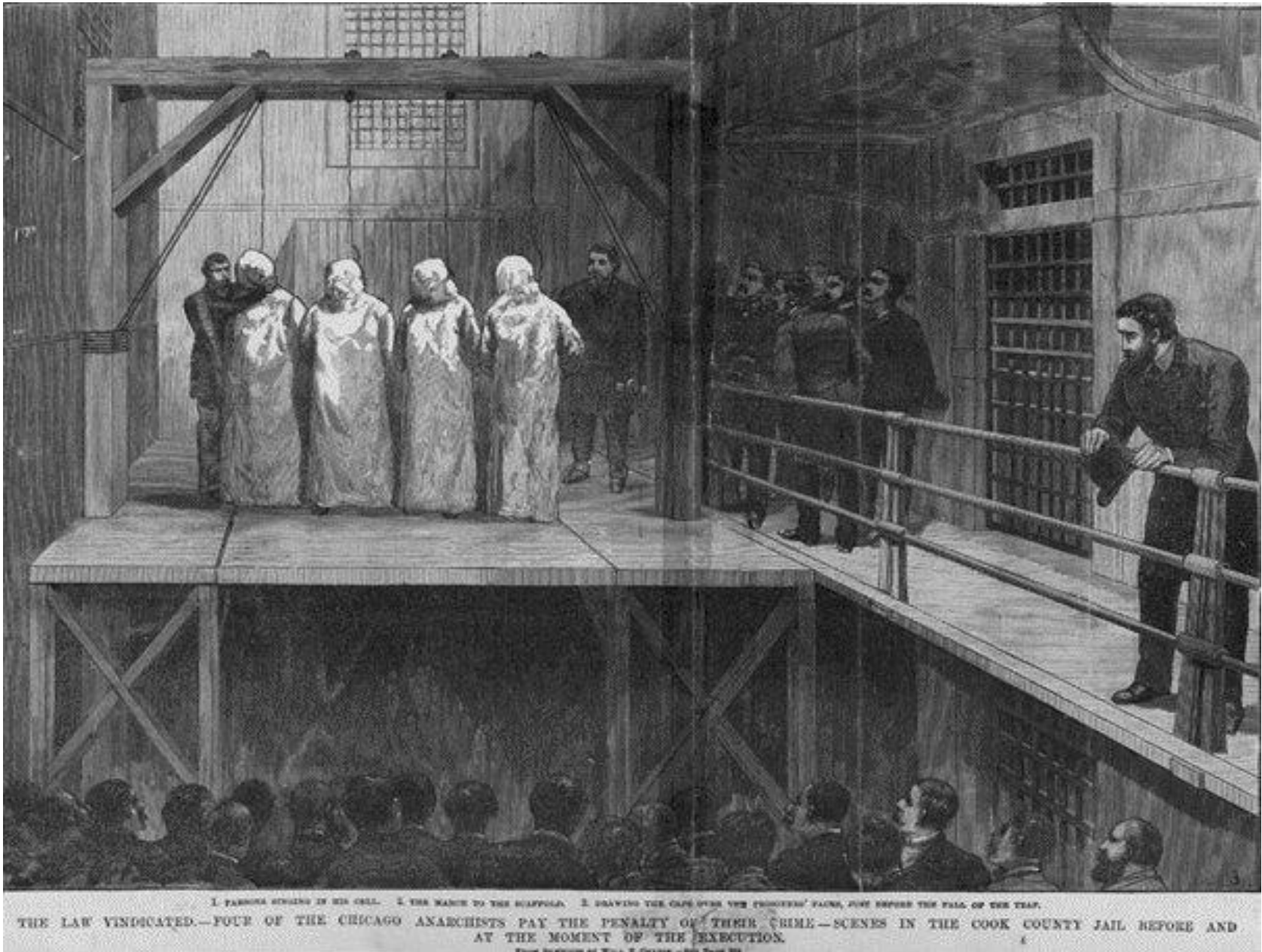


# 1886

## Haymarket

The events at Haymarket Square in Chicago mark the origin of May Day (International Workers' Day).

On May 4, 1886, workers in Chicago gathered for a peaceful rally to win an eight-hour workday. An unknown person threw a dynamite bomb and eight anarchists were convicted. Even though the evidence showed that none of the defendants had thrown the bomb, seven were sentenced to death and one to a term of 15 years in prison. The death sentences for two of the defendants were commuted to terms of life in prison, and another committed suicide in jail rather than face the gallows. The other four were executed on November 11, 1887. In 1893, Illinois' new governor pardoned the remaining defendants and criticized the trial.



I. PARSONS STRUNG IN HIS CELL. 2. THE MARCH TO THE SCAFFOLD. 3. DRAWING THE CAPS OVER THE PRISONERS' FACES, JUST BEFORE THE FALL OF THE TRAP.  
THE LAW VINDICATED.—FOUR OF THE CHICAGO ANARCHISTS PAY THE PENALTY OF THEIR CRIME—SCENES IN THE COOK COUNTY JAIL BEFORE AND  
AT THE MOMENT OF THE EXECUTION.  
FROM ILLUSTRATIONS BY W. L. GILLESPIE—SEE PAGE 24

Scene from the Cook County Jail (Haymarket activists executed).

# 1890

## Retail Clerks National Protective Union

In 1888, the average retail employee earned \$10 per week for 86 hours of work while receiving no holidays, no sick pay, no pensions and no insurance. The Retail Clerks International Union, then known as the Retail Clerks National Protective Union (RCNPA), was chartered by the American Federation of Labor in 1890. At the point that it was chartered, the union was made up only of workers from the Clothing and Gents Furnishings and Shoe Store in Muskegon, Michigan. Two years later, the RCNPA chartered with seven locals, and its membership spread throughout the Midwest, including stores in Indiana, Minnesota, Colorado, Ohio and Illinois. By 1899, the union officially became an international when a local was chartered in British Columbia, Canada.



Retail Clerks, circa 1900

# 1892

## Homestead Strike

The Homestead Steel Works strike and the ensuing bloody battle remains a transformational moment in U.S. history. The skilled workers at the steel mills in Homestead were members of the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers who had bargained good wages and work rules. Homestead's management, including owner and millionaire Andrew Carnegie, were determined to lower costs and destroy workers' rights.

In the end, they employed not only Pinkertons and scabs, but also 8,000 state troops to break the union.



# HARPER'S WEEKLY

A JOURNAL OF CIVILIZATION

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, JULY 16, 1892.

TEN CENTS A COPY  
FOUR DOLLARS A YEAR



THE HOMESTEAD RIOT.—DRAWN BY W. P. RAYNER AFTER A PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID PETERSON.—[SEE PAGE 628.]  
THE FUGITIVE MEN LEAVING THE GARRIS AFTER THE SURRENDER.

# 1897

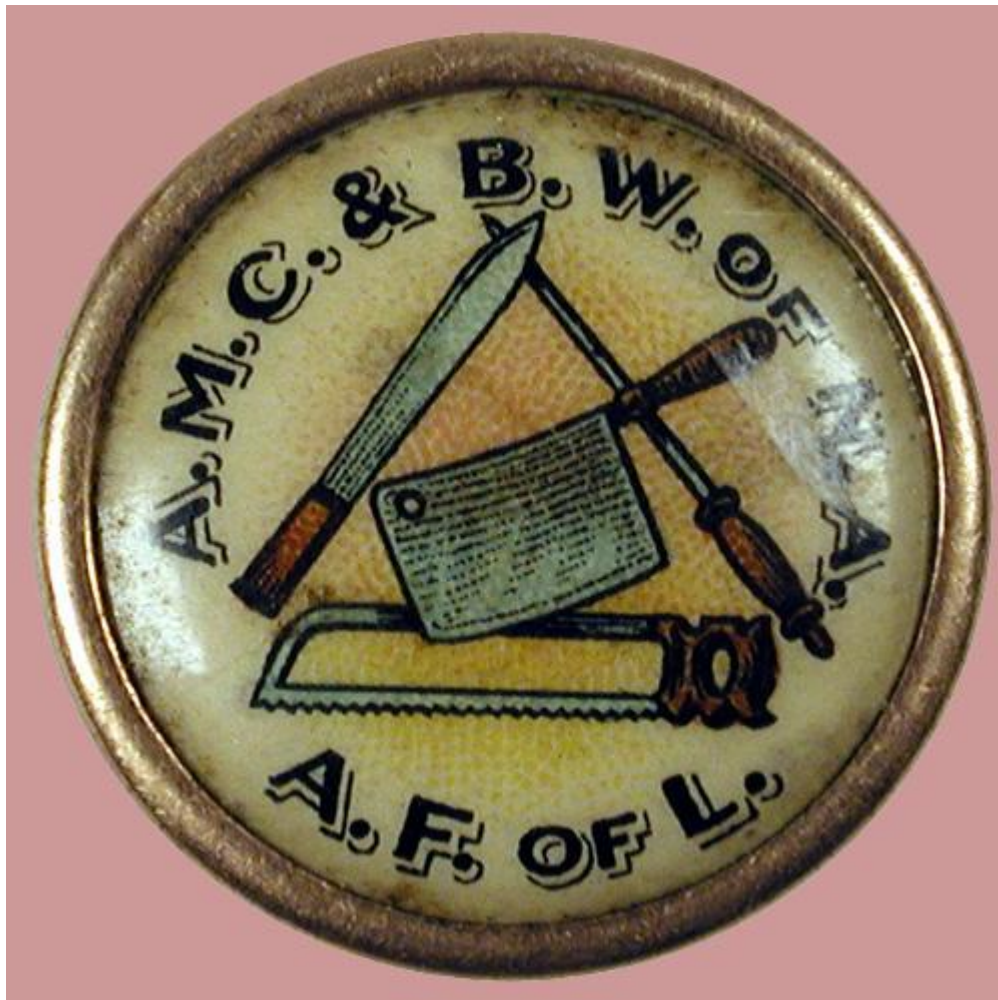
## **Amalgamated Meat Cutters, & Butcher Workmen Founded**

The Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen of North America (AMC & BW of NA) was chartered by the American Federation of Labor in 1897 with seven locals; five of them composed of mostly skilled retail workers.

In most meat packing plants, unskilled workers were the majority. Of this majority, 60 percent earned less than \$6 a week. Skilled workers were paid better, with their wages ranging from \$3 – \$3.50 a day.

In 1903, the union demanded that the wages of the skilled workers be raised by 10 percent. The following year, the union asked that the wage increase be extended to both skilled and unskilled workers.

After this demand, the companies' response was to reduce hourly rates for all workers. In 1904, the union organized a nationwide strike with 50,000 members participating. The strike ended in defeat, with a severe decline in membership as well as a long list of strikers being permanently blacklisted.





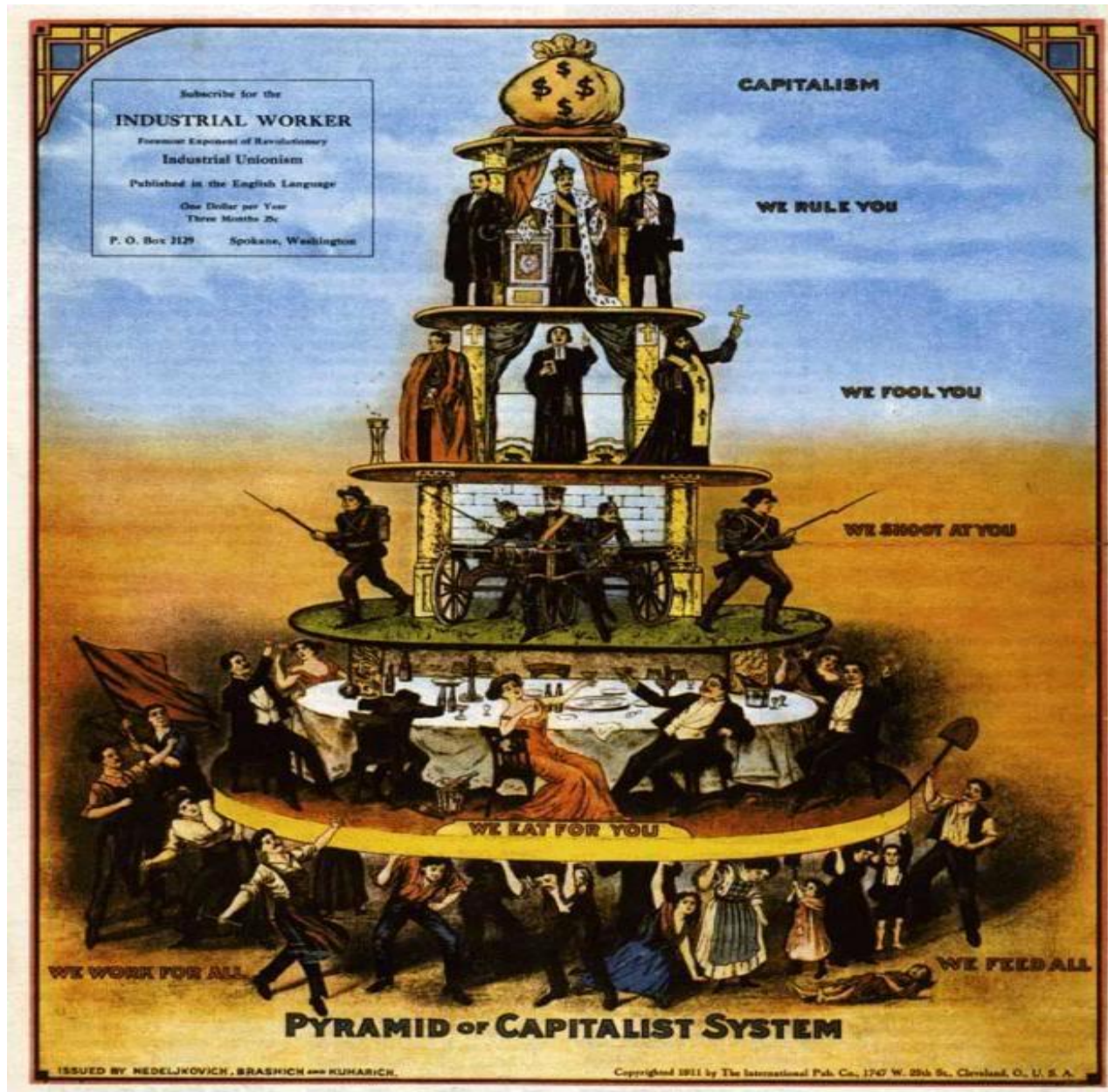
# 1905

## **Industrial Workers of the World (IWW)**

The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or the Wobblies) was formed in 1905. At its peak in 1923, the organization had around 100,000 members. IWW membership declined after government repression as part of the first Red Scare.

The IWW contends that all workers should be united as a class and that the wage system should be abolished. They are known for the Wobbly Shop model of workplace democracy, in which workers elect their managers and other forms of grassroots democracy.

The IWW continues today, organizing Starbucks workers, fast-food workers, bike messengers and others.



IWW poster circa 1911

# 1909 & 1911

## Uprising of the 20,000 & Triangle Shirtwaist Fire

In November 1909, more than twenty thousand Yiddish-speaking immigrants, mostly young women, launched an eleven-week general strike in New York's shirtwaist industry. Dubbed the Uprising of the 20,000, it was the largest strike by women to date in U.S. history. The strikers' courage forced the predominantly male leadership of the unions to revise their entrenched prejudices against organizing women.

Two years later, the fire at the Triangle Waist Company in New York claimed the lives of 146 young immigrant workers (some of whom participated in the 1909 strike), one of the worst disasters since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. The disaster spurred decades of organizing around occupational safety and health.



Striking workers in the Uprising of 20,000 (1909).

# 1912

## “Bread & Roses” Strike

Led by the Industrial Workers of the World, the strike of immigrant workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts grew to more than 20,000 workers at nearly every textile mill within a week. It lasted more than two months and defied the idea that immigrant workers (speaking many different languages) could not be organized. It is called “bread and roses” in reference to the workers’ call for bread (wages) as well as roses (beauty and good things in their lives).





Children of striking Lawrence, MA mill workers, 1912.

# 1910-1930

## The Great Migration

The Great Migration was the movement of 4.1 million African Americans out of the Southern United States to the North, Midwest and West. It greatly increased the number of African American workers in the North, many of whom still experienced racism and organized for change within their unions and organizations.



Picket line at the Mid-City Realty Company, Chicago, Illinois, July 1941 John Vachon, Photographer



# 1934

## Widespread Strikes!

- Minneapolis Truckers
- Seattle General
- Southern Textile Workers' "Uprising of '34"
- Toledo Auto-Lite



Hand-to-hand combat in the streets, Minneapolis Truckers' Strike 1934

# 1935

# National Labor Relations Act

# (NLRA)

The National Labor Relations Act is the federal law that allows workers to collectively bargain with their employers and take part in strikes. It does not apply to workers covered under the Railway Labor Act, farmworkers, public workers or independent contractors.

Following its passage, unions begin large-scale campaigns and actions, including coordinated strikes in the auto and steel sectors.



CIO organizing poster, circa 1935

# 1943

## **United Packinghouse Workers of America (UPWA)**

The epic two-year strike against the Morrell Company, which ended in 1937 with a union victory, helped strengthen packinghouse workers. Later that year, the Congress of Industrial Organizations formed the Packinghouse Workers Organizing Committee (PWOC). PWOC organized African American and white workers together and fought against all forms of discrimination.

In 1943, the PWOC was dissolved to form the United Packinghouse Workers of America (UPWA). By 1953, the two unions had agreed to coordinate collective bargaining with national meat packing companies.

15 years later, the UPWA and the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen of North America merged, uniting two strong unions and almost half a million members. The union of the two created one of the most powerful and progressive worker organizations seen in the history of the labor movement.

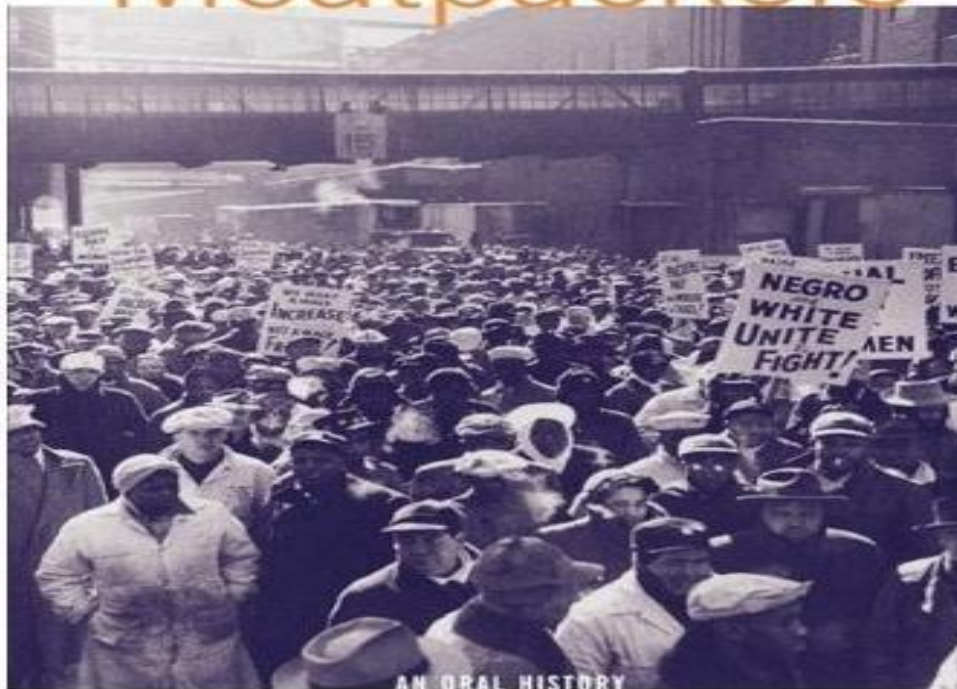
UPWA YEARLY MEMBERSHIP CARD  
 UNITED PACKINGHOUSE WORKERS OF AMERICA 19 59  
 L. U. No. 54  
 Name Roland Boyd  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Ledger No. 1367 Dept. Load Dock  
 Signed *Dave Nelson*  
 NOT GOOD AFTER DEC. 31, 1959 PWA FORM 20 PRINTED IN U. S. A.  
 SECRETARY - U. S. A.

UPWA YEARLY MEMBERSHIP CARD  
 UNITED PACKINGHOUSE WORKERS OF AMERICA 19 55  
 L. U. No. 54  
 Name Roland Boyd  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Ledger No. \_\_\_\_\_ Dept. Loading Dock  
 Signed *John C. Taylor*  
 NOT GOOD AFTER DEC. 31, 1955 PWA FORM 20 PRINTED IN U. S. A.

UPWA YEARLY MEMBERSHIP CARD  
 UNITED PACKINGHOUSE WORKERS OF AMERICA 19 58  
 L. U. No. 54  
 Name R. Boyd  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Ledger No. 1367 Dept. LF. Load Unload  
 Signed *Dave Nelson*  
 NOT GOOD AFTER DEC. 31, 1958 PWA FORM 20 PRINTED IN U. S. A.

UPWA YEARLY MEMBERSHIP CARD  
 UNITED PACKINGHOUSE WORKERS OF AMERICA 19 54  
 L. U. No. 54  
 Name Roland Boyd  
 Address 7721 Colton Drive  
 Ledger No. \_\_\_\_\_ Dept. Loading Dock  
 Signed *John C. Taylor*  
 NOT GOOD AFTER DEC. 31, 1954 PWA FORM 20 PRINTED IN U. S. A.

# Meatpackers



AN ORAL HISTORY  
 OF BLACK PACKINGHOUSE WORKERS AND  
 THEIR STRUGGLE FOR RACIAL AND ECONOMIC EQUALITY

Rick Halpern and Roger Horowitz

# 1947

## Taft-Hartley Legislation

After the largest strike wave in U.S. history in 1946, Congress passes the Taft-Hartley Act to prohibit sympathy strikes, secondary boycotts and restrict many of the most effective tactics of unions. The 1959 Landrum-Griffin Act further limits picketing rights and completely outlaws secondary boycotts.





RON MAGDEN COLLECTION - ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

ILWU float protesting the Taft-Hartley Act, 1947, HBCLS Collection



# 1950s-1970s

## Fighting for Equality

The emergence of the African American civil rights movement (Civil Rights Act passed in 1964) inspires other groups to seek equality as well.

Unions benefit from, contribute to, and are challenged by these movements.

The Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU), the A. Phillip Randolph Institute, the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA), the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LACLAA) and Pride at Work (LGBT labor) all come out of this history.



Gay Pride march, 1970s

# 1967-1970

## Farmworkers' Grape Boycott

In 1965, Mexican and Filipino grape workers in Delano, California walked off the job. An even larger strike led by the Filipinos against all the grape companies in the Delano area was supported by the UFWA. When the strike was not successful in completely halting field work, organizer Caesar Chavez led a march to California's state capitol to inspire farm workers to join the union. The UFWA then decided to call a boycott of a liquor company who owned the vast majority of the vineyards in the San Joaquin Valley.

This was a success and soon other grape producers were forced to sign contracts. Chavez sent representatives throughout the country to coordinate boycott meetings and fundraising efforts. For the next four years, the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee decided to boycott all table grapes; receiving wide public support. The boycott was the most successful in American history and in 1970, the pressure of the ongoing boycott resulted in the signing of contracts that provided many workers with better conditions.



UFW President Cesar Chavez, farmworkers and their families march in 1966.

# 1970

## Postal Strikes & OSHA Created

More than 200,000 U.S. Post Office workers in fifteen states engage in a wildcat strike to force Congress to raise wages. It is the first major strike by federal employees, for who striking is illegal.

Following more than a century of organizing, Congress passes the Occupational Safety and Health Act requiring employers to ensure workplace safety.



Striking Letter Carriers in 1970 shout at a picket line.

# 1968

## Memphis Sanitation Strike

Citing years of poor treatment, discrimination, dangerous working conditions, and work-related deaths, some 1,300 African American city sanitation workers walked off the job in protest and sought to join the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME).

The mayor of Memphis declared the strike illegal and refused to meet with local African American leaders. Carrying signs that read “I am a Man,” the workers brought national attention to the disrespect they experienced on the job.

The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. visited Memphis to address the strikers and was assassinated.





Striking sanitation workers in Memphis, TN, 1968.



# 1979

## **UFCW Formed**

The merger of the Retail Clerks and the Amalgamated Meat Cutters Union in 1979 united two union powerhouses, both with a long history of fighting for justice and economic security for working people. It was this merger that gave life to the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union.



# 1981 PATCO

The newly-elected Reagan administration signals its hostile intent to organized labor when it fires thousands of striking Professional Air Traffic Controllers (PATCO).

More than 400,000 union members participate in labor's first Solidarity Day demonstration in Washington, D.C., to protest the Reagan administration's labor policies and the firings.



PATCO workers strike, 1981

# 2000

## **Organized Labor Reverses Position on Immigration**

The AFL-CIO announced a historic change in its position on immigration. Reversing the traditional stance of labor, the federation declared that it would no longer press to reduce high immigration levels or call for rigorous enforcement of failed immigration laws. Instead, it would support general amnesty for undocumented workers and push for real immigration reform.

The change is a victory for immigrants and their allies who have been organizing within their unions and leading campaigns for decades. In 2003, union members come together for an “Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride” across the country.



Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride, NYC 2003



# 2003

## Southern California

### Grocery Strike

64,000 courageous members at Albertson's, Kroger and Safeway go on strike for 141 days. Through the members' willingness to stay out on the picket line, the UFCW was able to blunt the threat of wage and healthcare cuts.

Many of the strikers were part-time workers and their struggle struck a chord with the public throughout southern California. For weeks on end, consumers stayed away from the supermarkets involved in the dispute, resulting in significant financial losses for the companies.



2003 Southern California Grocery Strike

**2008**

# **UE Sit-Down Strike at Republic Windows & Doors**

Given no notice that their plant would be closing, the 240 workers of the Goose Island factory began an organized sit-down strike. The sit-in lasted until the workers reached a successful settlement with the factory and its creditors (including Bank of America & JP Morgan Chase) over severance, vacation time, and health care benefits.



Workers and family members during the Republic Windows & Doors Factory Occupation, 2008



# **2008 Smithfield Workers in Tar Heel, NC Join the UFCW**

After 16 years of difficult organizing effort supported by the UFCW, workers at the Smithfield Packing Plant in Tar Heel, NC, finally obtained union recognition and a collective bargaining agreement that greatly improved their wages, benefits and working conditions. This was a huge success for the more than 4,000 Smithfield employees who are now represented by UFCW Local 1208 (the local union number reflects the date the workers gained union recognition, December, 2008).



Smithfield workers in Tar Heel, NC on the day of the union vote, 2008



# 2000-Present

## Walmart Workers Stand Up

In 2000, Walmart workers in Jacksonville, TX make history by organizing together to join the UFCW.

In 2011, nearly 100 Associates representing thousands of Organization United for Respect at Walmart “OUR Walmart” members from across the country deliver a Declaration of Respect to Walmart executives (this action is repeated, with more associates, in 2012 and 2013).

In 2012, thirty Walmart warehouse workers in Southern California walk off the job to protest inhumane conditions. They’re joined by fifty other workers on a six-day march that draws national attention. Later that year, hundreds of Walmart workers, supported by thousands of allies, hold direct actions on Black Friday, sending a strong message on the store’s busiest day.

In 2013, OUR Walmart members joined with union, community and student allies for a historic, national “Summer of Respect.”



OUR Walmart members and supporters in California following the warehouse workers' march, 2012