Low wages, erratic schedules, no health care, work-school conflicts. "Eyes on the Fries" looks beyond the stereotypes of carefree and undeserving youth to uncover a reality that millions of young working people know all too well: no matter how hard you work and how well you do in school, it can be difficult to stay afloat when you’re coming of age in a "McJob" economy. But there are ways to improve things—and young people are taking the lead.

Featuring:

ERIC SCHLOSSER, author of Fast Food Nation
JULIANNE MALVEAUX, economist
BILL FLETCHER, director of TransAfrica Forum
STUART TANNOCK, author of Youth at Work
SARA FLOCKS, co-founder of Young Workers United
and the voices of many young workers

A film by CASEY PEEK and JEREMY BLASI
Curriculum produced by the UC Berkeley Labor Center.
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"Eyes on the Fries" examines the rise of the low wage service sector and what it means for a generation of young Americans whose lives depend on it.

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Young people today are coming of age in a service economy. Companies like Starbucks, Subway, and Blockbuster are opening stores at a pace of one a day. Wal-Mart is now the nation’s largest employer. And seven of the ten jobs that the U.S. government expects to grow the most are all in the service sector: jobs like cashier, sales clerk, and fast food preparer. These jobs are low-wage, part-time, and offer few benefits, little training and no job security. Young workers, who are concentrated in service sector jobs, bear the brunt of the rapid and unregulated expansion of the low-wage service economy.

Although young workers are on the front-lines of the service economy, they have been almost completely ignored in national social policy and advocacy agendas. Other groups of marginalized workers – women, minorities, immigrants, the elderly – have all been the focus of legislative activity, community and union organizing, media publicity and academic research. Working youth who are eighteen and older – legally considered to be adults – have enjoyed no special legislative protection as do minors under the age of eighteen, no extended media or public attention, and no substantial interest groups advocating or organizing on their behalf.

The Center for Labor Research and Education at UC Berkeley commissioned the making of the video *Eyes on the Fries: Young Workers in the Service Economy* in order to reframe discussions of the economy to recognize the impact that the massive expansion of the service sector has on our nation’s youth. The voices of young workers are rarely, if ever, heard in public debates about issues that affect their lives. This video gives young workers the opportunity to talk about their struggles to survive in the service economy. The manual, written by Young Workers United, is designed to give participants the tools to talk about their jobs, analyze their role in the economy and think critically about how to improve their workplaces and their communities.

We hope that you enjoy and share the video and curriculum. We would like to thank the young workers whose willingness to share their stories made this video possible. In addition, we thank Labor Center staff members Jeremy Blasi, for producing the video, and Sara Flocks, for writing the curriculum. Thanks are also due videographer Casey Peek. Finally, we would like to thank the members of Young Workers United in San Francisco, California, who played a critical role in conceptualizing, writing and field-testing the workshops in this manual. By listening to the voices of young workers and improving their jobs, we can raise the floor for all workers in the growing service sector and create a better life for all of us.

Katie Quan, Labor Center Chair
Goals of the Training

Goals of Training:

1. To allow participants to examine their own work experiences through a critical lens, analyze the larger economic, social and political forces that shape their situation and build a sense of collectivity among the group.

2. To expose conditions for young workers in the service sector and dispel myths about young people as carefree and lazy in order to have participants reflect on their own struggles to make ends meet.

3. To understand how the economy operates today and what historical, political and social forces have shaped it over the last three decades and identify the people and groups who have influence over the economy today.

4. To examine and practice different strategies for making positive social change and to inspire and train participants to make change at their workplaces and communities.

Duration of Trainings:

1. *Eyes on the Fries* Video 24 minutes
2. Discussion 30 minutes
3. *Economics for All* workshop 1 hour
4. *Taking Control of the Economy* workshop 1 ½ hours
5. *The Right to Organize* workshop 1 ½ hours

Target Audience:

1. Students, high school or college level
2. Living Wage/Minimum wage activists
3. Trade unionists, anti-globalization activists, faith-based organizations, worker centers, youth groups, etc.
How to Use This Manual

This manual is used to give you, the trainer, all the tools and materials you need to design and conduct the training that is most appropriate for your audience, time constraints and teaching goals. The video, workshops and materials in this manual can be put together in various ways depending on the demands of the training. We recommend that you read over all of the material before using a workshop in order to familiarize yourself with the background information, key points and teaching objectives.

1. **Video and Discussion Guide:** Gives an overview of young workers in the service sector, chronicles the growth of the service sector and highlights strategies for improving jobs for young workers. The discussion guide draws out participants’ personal experiences to further analyze the service sector.

2. **Economics for All workshop:** Strengthens participants’ understanding of the economy and how it relates to their day-to-day lives. Demystifies the economy and identifies the forces that shape the economy.

3. **Taking Control of the Economy workshop:** Examines the specific ways that the current economic structure impacts our lives. Looks at what decisions and policies shape the economy, who benefits from those decisions and how we could influence the economy to benefit our communities.

4. **The Right to Organize workshop:** Introduces participants to basic workers’ rights and the reasons we have the rights we do. Introduces the concepts of power, organizing and collective action. Explores strategies for improving working conditions.

5. **Fact Sheets:** The Fact Sheets can be handed out as part of the workshops or at events showing the video.

6. **Resources:** This section provides the trainer with more sources of information and research on young workers.

There is no prescribed way to use this manual and the workshops. You may choose to only show the video and have a discussion, or decide to integrate the workshops into a week-long curriculum on the economy and workers’ rights. The workshops are designed to be adapted to different situations, and many of the activities within each workshop can be pulled out and used as a creative way to spark discussion or emphasize a certain point.
Facilitation Tips

Some Important Facilitation Skills

How would you feel if you had to go to a class on the economy? Bored? Nervous? Excited? Many people feel uncomfortable talking about the economy because it seems too complicated and confusing. They feel that only “experts” are qualified to discuss economic issues. Consequently, many people simply accept their economic situation as “just the way things are,” or worse, blame themselves for their struggles to make ends meet. One way to demystify the economy is to use participants’ own lives and experiences as a starting point for economic learning.

Think about what would be your ideal situation for learning about the economy. What would make you excited to learn? What would it be like if your ideas were listened to and taken seriously? What would it be like if you were asked tough questions that made you think instead of listening to a lecture? It isn’t hard to create a good learning environment, and you don’t have to be an expert to do it. Listening and questioning are the foundation of good learning environments.

Good Listening (Adapted: Bev Burke, et al. Education for Changing Unions)

Good listening helps the facilitator to understand what participants are feeling or thinking that may engage them during the training or may stand in the way of their learning. Participants who are listened to feel respected and valued. Good listening is a way of showing participants that their ideas are valuable and important for finding solutions to their own problems.

Tips for Good Listening

- **Good listening is not the same as being silent**: it means encouraging others to speak, letting them know that you want to hear what they have to say, and asking open-ended questions.

- **Listen with your body**: use your body language to show that you are really paying attention by sitting down with participants, making eye contact, or moving closer—whatever is culturally appropriate for the group.

- **Summarize key points**: repeat back to people what you have heard them say to let them know that you really were listening and to make sure you understood correctly what they meant.

- **Acknowledge good intentions and points of agreement**: name people’s good intentions as you understand them and ways in which people are in agreement with one another when this is true.
Good Questioning

Good questioning allows a facilitator or organizer to identify issues, clarify facts, invite differing perspectives on an issue, challenge assumptions, communicate that she or he is really listening, and demonstrate that the opinions and knowledge of the group are valuable and important. The work of answering a carefully-framed question as individuals or as a group can provide just the right amount of pressure for participants to make a “leap” of understanding, discovering knowledge they didn’t know they had.

Tips for Good Questioning

- **Know why you are asking the question:** Before asking a question, think carefully about the purpose of the question in this training. Are you seeking specific information? Do you want to give participants a chance to begin using their voices? Are you trying to start a broader discussion? Is it time for participants to move to action?

- **Ask the right question for your purpose:** Once you are sure of what you want to accomplish with a question, word the question carefully so that participants will understand what you are asking.

- **Don’t assume you know the answer:** After asking a question: LISTEN!

- **Don’t ask questions that are really statements:** If you want to state your own opinion or add information on a topic, say it clearly rather than trying to “lead” participants with questions that aren’t real.

- **Use open-ended questions when possible:** These kind of questions can begin “What..”, “How…”, “Can you say/describe/give an example…”. Open ended questions can draw out more information and help participants to be concrete and specific.
Overview

Objectives:
1. To help participants understand the struggles of young workers and their role in the service economy.
2. To examine the forces that shaped the “new” economy.
3. To highlight ways that people have shaped the economy to benefit young people.
4. To allow participants to deepen their understanding of the information in the video through reflections on their personal experience and dialogue with other participants.

Time Required: 1 hour

Materials Needed:
- Video—“Eyes on the Fries: Young Workers in the New Economy”
- TV and VCR
- Fact Sheets (optional)

Background:
The video gives participants a large amount of information about working conditions for young people, the forces that have shaped the new economy and the ways that young people have worked to improve their situations. The discussion draws out participants’ life experiences to strengthen their understanding of the information in the video by applying it to their own lives.

Preparations:
1. Set up TV and VCR
2. Photocopy Fact Sheets
3. Review discussion questions
### Introductions and Video (30 minutes)

1. **Introduce** yourself and the video. Explain that we’re going to watch a short film about young workers in the service economy. While we’re watching, think about how the current structure of the economy affects you and your life, whether you’re a young worker or not.

2. **Play** the video.

### Video Debrief (20 minutes)

1. Ask participants to reflect briefly on the film. The following questions may be useful to provoke discussion. You may wish to adapt the questions you use to the group—young workers may need more time to talk about bad work experiences and their own struggles as working youth.

   - What did you think about the video?
   - What are some of the ways that the growth of the service sector has affected your life?
   - Is anyone here currently working in the service sector? What has been your experience?
   - What have employers done to change service sector jobs over time? Why did they? What are changes you’ve seen in your workplace?
   - What caused the changes in the economy? Why are things the way they are today?
   - What was the role of unions in shaping the economy?
   - What are some ways that people improved their situations in the video? What are some examples from your area?
   - Is there anything the video missed?

2. **Hand out** fact sheets and conclude the training.
Overview


Objectives:
1. To debunk the myth that “the economy” is only relevant to businessmen and professors.
2. To help participants reflect on their understanding of the economy and their role in it.
3. To examine both the Visible (paid) and Invisible (unpaid or illegal) Economies and understand their significance.
4. To identify the major players in the economy and understand how they influence the economy, including the participants themselves.

Time Required: 1 hour

Materials Needed:
- Flip chart paper divided in half with the top half labeled Visible Economy and the bottom half labeled Invisible Economy
- Flip chart with Players in the Economy (attachment #1)
- Blank index cards
- Markers and tape

Preparations:
1. Write up Flip Charts (see attached charts)

Note:
This symbol indicates a Tip to the Facilitator
## Introductions

1. **Introduce** yourself and the goals of the training. Have participants introduce themselves and answer the following question and write their answers on butcher paper:

   - **What is your definition of the Economy?**

2. **Review or make** the following points:

   - We are all an important part of the economy and it affects our lives every single day.

   - The economy is not like the weather. It is not neutral, nor is it governed by science or natural laws. The economy is made and run by people with their own interests and agendas. Most of those people are white, rich men.

   - The economy runs according to their values and agendas. It is based on decisions that powerful people make.

   - The economy can also be influenced by people like you and me. In order to change the economy to benefit us we have to understand how it works and who runs it.

## I. What Is the Economy? Economic Activity Card Game

1. **Explain** that we’re going to first look at how what we do on a daily basis is part of the economy.

2. **Say** that economic activity can be any activity where money is exchanged or when any work—unpaid or paid—is performed. Paid, legal work is the **Visible Economy**. Unpaid work or illegal, paid work is the **Invisible Economy**.

3. **Break** participants into small groups (about 3-5 per group). Give each group five blank index cards total. Ask participants to **brainstorm** the things they’ve done in the last week. **Have** the group write down 5 of those activities on index cards. **Tell** the groups that they have 10 minutes to finish the activity.

4. **Visit** each group to check for understanding. See the box “Economic Activity” for examples to give to participants.
5. **Ask** the group to give you their index cards and read each one out loud. Have the group decide if the activity is part of the **Visible** or **Invisible Economy**.

6. **Tape** each card on the flip chart in the proper category. Ask the following questions:
   - What activities came up the most frequently? Why?
   - Which has more cards, the Visible or Invisible economy? Why?
   - Are there any other activities you want to put up?
   - Who does the majority of the work in the Invisible Economy? Why?

**Facilitators Note:**

It’s important that participants see that the majority of their activities, whether paid or unpaid, are a vital part of the economy. From the brainstorm participants should begin to see that most work in the Invisible Economy is done by women and youth. Use “**why**” questions to draw out that their work is just as important to the economy, but valued less because the people who run the economy value it less. This will lead into the next activity about **who** are the people who run the economy.
7. **Summary:** Wrap-up the exercise by making the following points:
   - We are all players in the economy.
   - The economy depends on all of work we do—paid or unpaid.
   - Certain work is valued more than other kinds—often the kind done by women, youth, immigrants and people of color—but it doesn’t mean that it is any less important.
   - People make decisions about what work is valued most and paid most, and those decision are based on their values and interests—for example child-raising by women is not paid even though it is very important and allows men to go to work in the paid economy.

II. Who Runs the Economy?: Players in the U.S. Economy

1. **Introduce** the next activity where we identify the people and groups that have influence over the U.S. economy and how much power they have to make things go their way.

2. **Post** the chart “Players in the U.S. Economy” and read through the list with the group. Check for clarity on each Player and explain if necessary. Ask the group to then brainstorm any additional players that they would want to have on the list.

3. **Break** participants into small groups of 3-5 people. **Tell** each group that they have 5 minutes to choose the 5 most influential and important players in the economy from the list. After 5 minutes the groups should report their choices to the large group, but stay in their small group.

4. **Explain** that now each group has 15 minutes to answer the following questions about the players they chose, write them on flip chart paper and report back to the group:
   - Why did you choose these five?
   - Where does their power come from—what makes them powerful? (ex: money, elected official, use of violence—police, drug dealers)
   - How do they use their power to influence the economy?
   - What gender and race are these people/groups?
5. **Ask** each group to report-back.

6. **Ask** the group the following questions and have a discussion:
   - What would the economy look like if we ran it?
   - How can we as young people influence the economy?
   - What have other groups done to influence the economy to benefit people like us?

7. **Conclude** with the following points:
   - The people who control the economy are often rich, white Christian people—especially men. They have control over resources such as money and land and have influence over the media and government.
   - The government influences how the economy runs through policies and laws—like taxes, subsidies, labor and immigration laws.
   - The way the economy runs and the policies the government makes reflect the interests of people with power. People like us—youth, people of color, working class people—don’t get the same benefits and have to struggle to survive.
   - People can build power to influence the economy to work better for everyone.
   - Some examples of other groups that have influenced the economy are: 1) unions that organize workers and have won victories such as: the weekend, overtime pay, unemployment insurance, end to child labor, minimum wage laws and increases, etc.; 2) slave rebellions, abolitionists and Civil War—ended slavery which was an unjust economic system, 3) Chicano Movement/United Farm Workers—fought for equal rights for farm workers and for immigrant workers.
   - It’s important to understand the economy because we are all a part of it. We can either chose to ignore it, or we can understand it and decide to make a difference.
Attachment #1

Understanding the Economy Workshop

Players in the U.S. Economy

- Corporations
- Employers
- Government
- Unions
- Police
- Media
- Voters
- Workers
- Immigrants
- Youth
- “La Migra” (formerly known as the Immigration and Naturalization Services, or INS; now called U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services)
Overview

Adapted from: Various trainings by Just Economics

Objectives:
1. To have participants see their role in the economy and how small economic changes can impact their lives.
2. To see how conditions at work and in the community are the result of specific decisions by powerful people.
3. To have participants see the impact that people can have on the economy and the effects it has on the economy.

Time Required: 1 hour

Materials Needed:
- Attachment #1: Four Story Cards: Mario, Lily, Maria Elena and James
- Attachment #2: Script for Workers
- Attachment #3: Script for Trainer
- Money Balls: (tennis balls or bean bags labeled “Money”)
- Signs that say the names of characters and occupations (from stories)

Preparations:
1. Photocopy personal stories
2. Make Worker Name Signs and Money Balls
3. Practice the Trainers Money Balls Script

Note:
This symbol indicates a Tip to the Facilitator
Introductions

1. **Introduce** yourself and the goals of the training. Have participants introduce themselves.

2. **Review** the theme of the training. Explain that we’re going to look at the ways that the economy affects people’s lives.

I. Understanding the Economy: Four Stories from The City

1. **Explain** that we are going to meet four characters who live in the same town. We’re going to work with these characters for the next hour. The first exercise is a discussion to learn more about each character.

2. **Break** participants into four groups and have each group send up a volunteer to the front of the room.

3. **Give** each volunteer at the front of the room one of the character stories (see attached). **Have** each volunteer read the story out loud to the large group, so that all the participants hear each character’s story. After each person has read their story, have them go back to their small groups.

4. **Hand** each small group their character’s story and the set of questions that is specific to their character.

5. **Tell** the groups that they have 15 minutes to discuss the questions and prepare to report back to the group.

6. **Have** each group re-introduce their character and report back their answers to the large group.

7. **Pose** the following questions:
   - How are these characters’ lives related?
   - Who are the people and/or groups whose decisions affect the characters’ lives?
   - What are the decisions that affect them?
8. **End** with the following points:
   - Economic conditions are based on specific decisions that people with power have made and affect all of our lives.
   - Our economic system is not a “level playing field.” No matter how hard you work, many people are at a disadvantage.
   - Employers and governments make laws, policies and decisions that affect all of us. Oftentimes businesses influence the government to make decisions that benefit employers and NOT workers.

II. Changing the Economy: Workers Take Action in The City

1. **Explain** that now we’re going to do an activity that looks at the ways that we can influence the economy and the impact that has on our communities.

2. **Ask** for the volunteers who played Mario and Lily to come up to the front of the room. Have Lily read her script out loud to the large group and then have Mario do the same. (See attached scripts.)

3. **Tell** the participants that you have “Money Balls” that represent the money that is flowing into the community and we’re going to play a game to see where money is ending up.

4. **Read** the Trainer’s Money Ball Script (attachment #3) and throw money balls to the people designated in the script.

III. Discussion

1. **Break** participants into small groups. Post the following questions and give groups 15 minutes to discuss the questions and prepare to report-back to the larger group.
• How was the community affected by the new union contract and increase in the minimum wage?

• Who paid for the increase? How did it affect business?

• What changes would you make to the economy to benefit your family and community?

• How can we set up the economy to provide for everyone’s well-being rather than to make a few people rich and a lot of people poor?

2. Bring the Large Group back together for Small group report-backs. Have a short discussion after reports.

IV. Wrap-Up

1. Summarize the discussion with the following points:

   • We have seen that we can shape the economy to benefit all people, rather than just a few rich people.

   • The economy is not a natural occurrence, rather it is shaped by powerful people everyday. We also have the power to shape it.

   • There are many examples of people standing up and taking charge of the economy. For example:

     ➢ Over 100 cities have passed “Living Wage” ordinances that increase wages for city-contracted workers.

     ➢ Millions of workers, including janitors, waiters, cashiers, room cleaners and teachers belong to unions. Unions improve working conditions, raise wages and provide health insurance to workers in their “union contracts.”

     ➢ In San Francisco in 2003, voters overwhelmingly passed a law to raise the minimum wage for ALL workers to $8.50 an hour. Young workers were an important part of a coalition to pass that law.

   • All of us have an important role in understanding and taking action to shape the economy—whether that is knowing your rights on the job, voting for pro-worker laws or forming a union where you work.
Attachment #1a: Mario’s Story
Changing the Economy Workshop

Worker #1: Mario Jackson

I am 18 years old and work part-time at Food ‘n Stuff as a Sandwich Stuffer. I go to City Community College as a full-time student. I’m majoring in Political Science and want to be a civil rights lawyer. I live with my mom and 3 younger sisters. My mom used to be a school librarian, but after budget cuts the school cut all “non-essential” programs including the library, art, P.E. and foreign languages. Now she gets work as a temp through an agency, but it’s not steady, so I help my mom out as much as I can. I pay for some of the rent and groceries and also buy my sisters’ school clothes. Luckily they qualify for free school lunches, so we save money on that.

I have financial assistance for school but since tuition went way up this year, my aid doesn’t cover everything, so I’m paying out-of-pocket this semester. Prices just keep going up, like books, the bus, food, our rent, everything, so I’m having trouble making ends meet.

I make minimum wage. In California that means I only make $6.75 an hour. I haven’t gotten a raise in a year and a half. I try to work 30 hours a week, but the boss schedules you according to his business needs so I work anywhere from 8 hours to 40 hours a week; my schedule is totally unpredictable. My shift supervisor only makes a quarter more, so I don’t think I’ll be getting a raise anytime soon. Since everything has gone up but my salary, I may have to drop out of school this semester so I can get another job.

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss what life is like for Mario.
2. What are the major problems that Mario and his family face?
3. What are the root causes of those problems?
4. Why do Mario and his family have trouble making ends meet?
5. What is the cause of his working conditions? Who benefits from them?
6. What changes would you make to improve Mario’s job? What changes would you make to improve his family’s life?

- The Federal minimum wage is $5.15 an hour.
- The California State minimum wage is $6.75 an hour.
- The San Francisco City minimum wage is $8.50 an hour.

If your state or city has a minimum wage that is higher than the federal or state minimum wage, then you are paid the higher of the two. Check with your state government to find out what the minimum wage is in your city.
Attachment #1b: Lily’s Story
Changing the Economy Workshop

Worker #2: Lily Chen

I’m 24 years old and work part-time at Safeway and nights as a waitress. I have a beautiful three-year-old daughter, Waiching. I just graduated this year from State College with a degree in International Relations and now I have over $20,000 in student loans to pay off and my baby to look after. Waiching’s father worked for city government, but he was laid off after the budget cuts. He hasn’t been able to find a job since then, so he can’t pay any child support right now.

I work at Safeway in the Bakery and make $9 an hour. I’m classified as a part-timer and am only guaranteed 24 hours a week, though sometimes I get more hours. Mostly they cut hours and the place is always understaffed. I spend my entire shift rushing around, since they no longer schedule two workers on the closing shift. Safeway is a union job, so I get good health care through the union. In this new contract Safeway demanded that workers pay for dependent care until they’ve been there 2 years. Right now I’m paying almost $300 a month for health care for Waiching. Luckily I get assistance from the city to pay for child care during the day and Waiching’s dad watches her at night.

To make ends meet, I also work nights as a waitress making minimum wage plus tips in a local restaurant, but business has been really slow and I haven’t been making that much in tips. I’m worried I might be laid off if business doesn’t pick up, but who can afford to eat out these days? If I could afford it, I would quit that job because I never get to see my baby anymore, she’s always asleep when I get home.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is life like for Lily and her daughter? How are they living?
2. What major problems do they face?
3. What are the root causes of those problems?
4. Why does she have such a hard time making ends meet?
5. What is the cause of working conditions like that? Who benefits?
6. What would you do to improve Lily’s jobs? Her life?
Attachment #1c: Maria Elena’s Story  
Changing the Economy Workshop

Business Owner: Maria Elena Sanchez

I used to have a union job making shoes for Swoosh Shoe Factory. I got good benefits and steady raises, so my husband and I were able to buy our restaurant a few years back. Recently the Swoosh Shoe Factory moved production to China and I lost my job. Since I wasn’t bringing in any extra income, we had to fire two kitchen staff and a waitress, and my daughters and I have been working in the restaurant without pay. Everything we have goes to making sure we can keep the business. My oldest daughter just graduated from high school and wants to go away to college, but we’re shorthanded and can’t afford to hire waitresses. Without the steady paycheck that I brought home, we can’t afford to pay for college, especially now that tuition has increased, so she’s working at the restaurant for the time being and wants to start community college next year.

The neighborhood is going through tough times, so business is very slow. We used to get a big lunch crowd, but a lot of people who used to work in the Swoosh Shoe factory or in the government are unemployed now so they don’t come in anymore. Since my job used to be union, I had good health insurance and dependent coverage, but now we don’t have any medical insurance. My husband is diabetic and he needs medical care, so we end up paying over $800 a month for medical insurance. We’ve had to dip into the girls’ college money to make ends meet and I’m worried that we’ll have to sell the restaurant.

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss what life is like for the Sanchez family.
2. What are the major problems that they face?
3. What are the root causes of those problems?
4. How does the economy affect their lives?
5. What will happen to the family if they have to close the restaurant?
6. What changes would you make to improve their situation? What changes would you make to improve this family’s life?
Attachment #1d: James’ Story
Changing the Economy Workshop

CEO: James Bossman, the 3rd

I, James Bossman the 3rd, am the CEO of Food ‘n Stuff, one of the fastest growing chain restaurants in the U.S. My father is James Bossman the 2nd and was the Vice-President of Swoosh Shoe Company. I went to Harvard Business School, where my dad went. My dad paid for school and expenses.

After school my dad hired me in the Cost Control department of his company. I helped start the program to move our U.S. Swoosh Shoe factories to countries where wages and overhead costs were less than in the US. We started in Mexico, but now that the government has relaxed trade laws, it’s cheaper to move production to China, Indonesia and India.

I used my Harvard Business school connections to be appointed to the board of Food ‘n Stuff. It didn’t take me too long to make it to CEO. I’ve used my knowledge of Cost Control from Swoosh Shoes to double profits at Food ‘n Stuff. We can’t send our work overseas, but I have managed to redesign the workforce to make it more cost-effective. The entire workforce is part-time and receives the minimum wage, with no pay increases unless the minimum wage goes up. We’ve redesigned the job so that it is a series of short operations, so we have almost no training costs. Many of our workers qualify for public assistance, so we don’t have to pay for medical insurance; they just get Medi-Cal. In addition the government gives us a tax credit for each low-income worker we hire from their Job Training Program, so we actually make money!

I have a wife who doesn’t work. My two sons are in private universities and I’m paying their $25,000 a year tuition myself. At home we employ a gardener, maid, cook, and pool cleaner. Last year, I brought home $20 million in total compensation. I also have an additional $5 million in unexercised stock options in the company, which continues to grow. We’re opening a store every three days across the country and our profit is increasing rapidly.

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss what life is like for the Bossmans.
2. What advantages and privileges do James and his family enjoy? How has that affected their lives?
3. How did James increase profits at Swoosh Shoes and at Food ‘n Stuff?
4. How have the changes he made affected the lives of workers in those companies?
5. How do James and his family benefit from the way the economy is set up?
Lily Chen reads:

I’m a union member at my job at Safeway. This year the union entered negotiations with Safeway CEOs for a new contract. The company had been making a lot of changes at work—they had cut our hours and made us work faster and they weren’t promoting people.

The union decided that they wanted to fight back, so they formed a Contract Action Team called CAT. The CATs decided that the most important things to fight for were: 1) Guaranteed raises every 6 months for 3 years; 2) Dependent health care for kids; 3) A guaranteed minimum of 30 hours of work each week. We educated our co-workers, passed out flyers, signed petitions and held rallies. We even threatened to go on strike.

In the end, Safeway gave in to our demands because they knew they needed the workers to make the stores run so they could make money. Without us they would have lost millions of dollars. Now I’ve been promoted and make $12 an hour and I’m guaranteed at least 30 hours a week, and I have health care for my daughter for a small co-pay!
Mario Jackson reads:

At the same time that the contract campaign was happening, Lily’s union got involved in another campaign. They helped put a proposition on the ballot in the upcoming elections that would raise the minimum wage for ALL workers in the city to $8.50. That meant that I would get almost a $2 an hour raise! That was an extra $240 a month!

The union approached the Food ‘n Stuff workers and asked if we’d get involved, since Food ‘n Stuff pays the lowest wages in town. They also approached other fast food workers, waiters, and small business owners who were struggling to compete against Food ‘n Stuff. We formed an Action Committee and talked to voters all over the city, and held actions and passed out leaflets.

The CEO of Food ‘n Stuff was really opposed to the Minimum Wage Campaign. He donated over $1 million to the campaign to defeat us, and bought TV ads saying that the increases would put him out of business. But we had research that showed his company was so profitable they could absorb the increases—and that a raise would increase business!

On election day we kicked ass! We won with 60% voting to raise the minimum wage. Now all workers in the city make at least $8.50 an hour, and I helped pass it!
Attachment #3: The Trainers’ Money Balls Script
Changing the Economy Workshop

➢ Now that Mario and Lily have the increase in the minimum wage and the new union contract, they’ll both be making almost $240 more a month. **Throw money balls to them.**

➢ Now that Lily has dependent health care she can save money on buying medical insurance and doctor’s visits for her daughter. **Throw her a money ball.**

➢ Lily and Mario, what will you do with the extra money you just got? What will you spend the money on? Will you eat out, buy more groceries, clothes? That means more money for local businesses. **Throw Maria Elena a money ball. Throw a few participants money balls.**

➢ Now that Lily is making more money she can quit her second job and spend more time with her daughter. When Lily quits her job, then an unemployed person can take that job. **Throw a money ball to a participant sitting down.**

➢ Maria Elena, now that people have more money in their pockets, they’re starting to eat out more at restaurants. **Throw her a money ball.** Where else are people eating? Yes, Food n’ Stuff too! **Throw James Bossman a ball.**

➢ Maria Elena, now that business is better, can you afford to hire someone else? **Throw a money ball to a different participant.** And maybe you can advertise and expand and hire more people! **Throw another money ball to a different participant.** And now that Safeway has a better contract, Maria Elena could work there and get better health care for her family. **Throw her another money ball.**

➢ Now that the Jackson, Chen and Sanchez families have more money, aren’t they spending it? Well, then that’s creating more jobs! **Throw out a bunch of money balls to the audience.** And with more jobs that means that business picks up for local businesses. **Throw money balls to Maria Elena.** And more jobs are created for the unemployed. **Throw money balls to participants.**

➢ People have more money so they buy things like food and clothing. They eat out at Food n’ Stuff and buy Swoosh Shoes. **Throw James Bossman a money ball.** Even though James Bossman had to pay all those raises, workers can afford to eat at his store. So even though he’s spending Money Balls, he’s making it up in business. And he hasn’t even had to give up his $20 million a year salary!
Ask: what happens when more people are making more money? They pay more in payroll taxes! Taxes may sound bad, but employers and employees pay taxes on the money they earn. It means that we have more money for public services like schools, roads, parks, libraries, etc. And when people are making more money, then they’re not using public assistance. That saves the government money. And that means that Mario’s mom may get her job back at the school! **Throw Mario a money ball. And WE get to share the rest of the money balls!**
Overview

Objectives:

1. To help participants understand the difference between their legal rights at work and what is just unfair, but legal for employers to do.
2. To have participants understand and practice collective action as a strategy for improving working conditions.

Time Required: 1 and 1/2 hours

Materials Needed:

- Attachment #1: Crossing the Line script
- Attachment #2: Legal Rights at Work handout
- Attachment #3: Marla’s Story handout
- Attachment #4: Issues, Demands, Tactics flip chart and handout
- Attachment #5: Workers’ Tool Box on butcher paper and handout
- Attachment #6: Big Fish, Little Fish Cartoon Handout

Preparations:

1. Photocopy Attachments #2, #3, #4, #5 and #6 for all participants
2. Write up Attachment #4 on Flip Chart paper
3. Practice Crossing the Line script
4. Set-up room so that there is enough room for the group to line up and take five large steps forward

Note:

This symbol indicates a Tip to the Facilitator
Introduction

1. Welcome: Introduce yourself and explain that we are going to do a training about the rights workers have at their jobs and explore ways to make things better.

2. Introductions (optional): Have participants introduce themselves and answer an icebreaker question, such as: “When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?”

I. Know Your Rights at Work: Crossing the Line Exercise
(20 minutes)

1. Ask all participants to line up on one side of the room in a line, facing the facilitator. Make sure there is enough room for people to take five large steps forward. Tell participants to imagine that there is an imaginary line in the middle of the room about five steps in front of them.

2. Explain that you are going to read a series of situations that many workers have experienced at work. Then you’ll ask a question about what legal rights apply to that situation. Participants will be asked to demonstrate their answer by “Crossing the Line.”

3. Read the Crossing the Line questions (attachment #1 and below) and allow participants a few seconds to cross the line and settle in. After participants have crossed the line, read the Answer to the question along with the note in italics explaining why.

4. Have participants return to the line after every question and start again.

5. Ask participants to sit down after the last question. Facilitate a discussion asking the following questions:
   - How did you feel playing this game?
   - Who benefits from the working conditions in the game? How?
   - What similar situations at work have you had?
II. Rights vs. Wrongs: Your Legal Rights on the Job (10 minutes)

1. **Explain** that we’re going to look more closely at what legal rights we have as workers and talk about where those rights come from.

2. **Give** participants the handout on “Legal Rights at Work” (attachment #2) and give them a few minutes to look it over.

3. **Ask** the group the following questions:
   - Why do workers have the rights they do?
   - What other rights and protections would we want to have on the job?
   - Why don’t we have them?

4. **Summarize** the discussion and reiterate or make the following points (if they didn’t already come up in the discussion.)
   - The rights we have as workers are not “natural laws,” nor are they “God-given,” but are the product of decisions made by powerful people.
   - Employers often try to limit the rights that workers have in order to increase the productivity of workers, sometimes at the expense of the health and safety of workers. Employers sometimes put their profits before the well-being of workers.
   - Many of the legal rights that workers do have are the result of struggle by working people and their unions to protect all workers by creating new laws.
   - We have rights like overtime pay, minimum wage, unemployment insurance, and other rights because unions made DEMANDS on employers and the government, and got those demands to be made into law.
III. The Right To Organize: Marla’s Story (30 minutes)

1. **Introduce** this section by saying that while there are many things workers do not have the legal right to, workers do have one really important right: the right to organize.

2. **Explain** that workers have organized throughout history to build power to improve their working conditions, like we talked about in the last section. **Say** that the next exercise looks at what “the right to organize” really means.

3. **Divide** participants into small groups of 3-5 people (or 5-7 if the group is large). **Explain** that each group is going to compete against each other in a “Workplace Reality Game.”

4. **Explain** that you are going to read a story about a worker, Marla, who is having some problems at work. Each team is going to have to come up with a plan to help Marla and present it to the boss after the story. Ask the participants to pay close attention to the story.

5. **Read** Marla’s Story out loud and ask if there are any questions. **Tell** the groups that now we’re going to learn about how we can use the Right to Organize to help Marla out.

6. **Post** the Right to Organize chart (below and Attachment # 4).

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**The Right to Organize!**

**Issues:** the problems workers face at their jobs.

**Demands:** what workers want to make happen to solve the problems they have on the job. Usually demands are given to a **target** (boss).

**Tools:** the actions or series of actions workers take to build their **power** to get their demands met by the target.
7. **Ask** the group what are some of the problems that Marla faced at work. **Explain** that the problems she has are called “Issues.” Then ask them what they want to see happen to address those problems. These are their “Demands.”

8. **Ask** them if they think Marla’s boss is just going to give her what they want. **Say** that groups need to build their **power** in order to make the boss give them what they want. There are **tools** they can use to do that.

9. **Explain** that each team is going to represent Marla in this game. They have 10 minutes to come up with the **Issues** they have at Mega Mega Corp, their **Demands** and the **Tools** that they want to use to get what they want. Each team will present the plan to the Boss and the Boss will assign points to each team depending on how much they win for Marla.

10. **Say** that in order to help you out, we’ve created a Workers’ Toolbox to use. **Pass** out the Toolbox to the teams and go over the list.

11. **Give** each group 1) a copy of Marla’s Story and 2) A copy of the Issues, Demands and Tools handout. Give the groups 10 minutes to make their plans. Walk around and check for clarity.

12. **Bring** the group back together. Have each team present their Issues, Demand and Tools to the boss. Assign points to each team according to how well they do. See below for **Criteria for Assigning Points**.

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### Criteria for Assigning Points:

The objective of this exercise is for participants to understand what it means to have the right to organize. Criteria for points are:

- High points for any kind of collective action where co-workers work together or approach the boss together.
- High points for reasonable demands and appropriate use of tools.
- High points for using a series of tools that escalate in seriousness. For example, if a group starts with a petition, then a delegation and then goes on strike.
- High points for involving the community or consumers.
- Low points for individualistic actions, like quitting or legal action.
- Low points for unreasonable demands or demands that don’t match the issue identified.
13. **Declare** the winners and give them a prize (candy, etc.). **Ask** the large group the following questions. **Refer** to the criteria to explain the Boss’s reasoning for assigning points.

- What made certain groups more effective?
- What tools did you think worked well? Why?

**IV. The Definition of Organizing: Big Fish, Little Fish Cartoon**  
(10 minutes)

1. Say that what we have been practicing today is our right to organize. Explain that now we’re going to talk a little bit more about what it actually means to organize.

2. **Give** each small group the Big Fish, Little Fish Cartoon Hand-out (attachment #6). **Ask** each group to spend 5 minutes discussing the following questions:
   - What kind of power does the big fish have?
   - What kind of power do the little fish build in this cartoon?
   - What is organizing according to this cartoon?
   - What are examples of organizing you’ve done or know of?

3. **Have** groups report back ideas and write them all up on butcher paper.

4. **Explain** that all of this is organizing. One definition of organizing is: “People organize to collectively make concrete improvements in their particular situation or workplace within society.”

5. **Ask** how the exercise about Marla’s Story relates to the definition of organizing.
V. Conclusion

Conclude with the following points:

- As we have seen, organizing is an important tool for improving our workplaces and our lives, even if it is only to change very small things.

- People have organized to change very small things and very very big things throughout history. Lots of small organizing victories build on each other to make very large, important changes.

- Some important examples of organizing victories:
  - In the Civil Rights Movement, people fought to end segregation and racism. Rosa Park’s decision to not move to the back of the bus is one part of that movement.
  - Unions fought to end the use of child labor in this country. Workers formed unions to protect the little victories they were able to win.
  - Young people in San Francisco fought to increase the Minimum Wage to $8.50 an hour in 2003. Now everyone makes at LEAST $8.50 an hour because it’s a new law in San Francisco.

- All these things changed because people FOUGHT for them. The Civil Rights Movement fought to end segregation and racism in the U.S. Unions fought to end child labor, improve working conditions and to protect all workers. Young people fought for laws to give them higher wages.

- We need to do the same thing to fight for the things we want at our jobs. All our small victories can add up. Eventually we can fight for bigger and bigger things until we can improve working conditions for all workers.
1. **Question:** You get a totally stylish haircut that your friends think is super hot. Your boss does not approve and fires you. If you think the boss has the LEGAL RIGHT to fire you, cross the line.

   **Answer:** YES! *Your boss has the right to fire you. There is no legal protection from discrimination against a person’s dress or appearance (unless for religion or cultural tradition)*

2. **Question:** You have been working at Mega Corp. for 2 years and still only make $7 an hour. The boss just hired 2 new employees in the same position as you at $9 an hour and you’re really mad. If you think you have the LEGAL right to the same pay as the new workers, cross the line.

   **Answer:** NO! *Employers can pay workers however much they want as long as they follow minimum wage laws and living wage ordinances.*

3. **Question:** The boss said you could have a week’s paid vacation. Then 2 days before you’re about to go on a family vacation, the boss tells you that she’s not going to give you paid vacation time so either you can’t go on vacation or you lose a week’s pay. If you think you have the LEGAL right to paid vacation time, cross the line.

   **Answer:** No! *No law exists that entitles workers to vacations in the U.S. even if pre-approved by the employer.*

4. **Question:** You are 18 years old and the boss tells you that from now on you have to work the meat slicer but doesn’t give you any training. The last worker cut her finger off and now you’re scared to use the slicer. If you think you have the LEGAL right to refuse to use the slicer, cross the line.

   **Answer:** YES! *You have the LEGAL right to refuse work that is immediately dangerous to your health or safety, including using power equipment.*

5. **Question:** Since it’s been so busy at work recently, you haven’t been able to finish cleaning up and closing the store during your 5-hour shift. Your boss has been asking you to clock out after your shift is over and then finish cleaning up then. You’re not getting paid to clean up, but you do it anyway because you feel guilty that you haven’t been able to finish clean-up during your shift. If you think your boss has the right to make you clock out and then finish clean-up, cross the line.
Answer: **NO! You have the right to be paid for ALL hours you work, no matter what. Any “off-the-clock” work is illegal.**

6. **Question:** Your boss tells you that since there is so much downtime in between rushes at your restaurant job, they don’t give “official” breaks and you can eat at the counter when it’s slow. If you think you have the LEGAL right to a break whenever you want, cross the line.

   **Answer:** NO! You do NOT have the right to pick and choose your break time.

   **Answer:** YES! You DO have the right to a PAID ten-minute break for every four hours that you work.

7. **Question:** When you were hired at Mega Corp, you signed a document saying that you were a part-timer at 20 hours per week. Now the boss is saying business is slow and he can only give you 8-10 hours per week which means you won’t be able to pay your rent this month. If you think you have the LEGAL right to 20 hours a week like it says in the document you signed, cross the line.

   **Answer:** NO! Employers can schedule workers for any number of hours of work, as long as they pay for overtime.

8. **Question:** You are really sick of the crappy working conditions at Mega Mega Mega and the way that you get treated on the job. You decide to get together with your co-workers after your shift and talk about what you can do to improve things. You would like to organize a union at work and fight for a contract that would give you more legally protected rights on the job. Your boss tells you that you’re not allowed to have meetings like that without management. If you think you have the legal right to meet with your co-workers, cross the line.

   **Answer:** YES! YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO ORGANIZE!
Attachment #2: Legal Rights at Work
(California Wage & Hours Laws)
Rights at Work Workshop

You Have the Right to:

1. **Payment for Work:** Workers must be paid for every hour that they work. It is illegal for employers to ask workers to clock out and continue working.

2. **Minimum Wage:** Workers must be paid at LEAST minimum wage. Minimum wage in California is $6.75 per hour. Minimum wage in the City of San Francisco is $8.50 an hour.

3. **Meal and Break Periods:** Workers must be given a 30-minute, unpaid meal period for every 5 hours worked in a day. Employees must also be given a 10-minute paid rest break for every 4 hours worked in a day.

4. **Uniforms and Equipment:** Workers do not have to pay for clothing and equipment required by the job. An employer cannot deduct the cost of uniforms or equipment from the employee's pay, but the employer can require a reasonable deposit.

5. **Overtime Pay:** Workers must be paid overtime pay for every hour they work over 8 hours a day or 40 hours a week. Overtime pay is the hourly salary plus half per hour.

6. **Safe Work:** Workers have the right to refuse unsafe work. Workers also have the right to receive workers' compensation benefits from the State if they are injured on the job.

7. **Final Pay:** If you are fired or laid off from your job, all wages (including accrued, unpaid vacation time) should be paid in full at the time of termination. If you quit your job and give more than 72 hours' notice, all wages should be paid at the time you leave your job. If you give less than 72 hours' notice, all wages should be paid within 72 hours.

8. **Freedom from Retaliation:** Workers are protected from employer retaliation for reporting wage and hour, discrimination, harassment or any other violation of the law to the appropriate agencies.

9. **Right to Organize:** Workers can legally take collective action to improve working conditions. This includes joining or forming a union at the job.
Marla is a 21-year-old student in the nursing program at City College of San Francisco. She works nights as a waitress in a chain restaurant in downtown to support herself and pay for school. Although the base salary is minimum wage, she likes the job because the tips are good on the dinner shift and it she can go to school during the day.

Recently the management has been scheduling her for a lot of lunch shifts rather than dinner, which is bad because waitresses make fewer tips during the day, and because the day shift interferes with Marla’s class schedule. She also has been having problems at work because the restaurant has a “dine and dash” policy which means that if a table leaves without paying, then the waitress has to cover the tab. The rule also says that staff can’t chase customers down to make them pay once they walk out the door. Marla has had dine and dash tables twice in the last month at $50 each.

When Marla complained to her boss about the dine and dash and about her schedule, he told her it was her responsibility to watch her tables, and that if she couldn’t do her job, then he couldn’t pay her. He also said that if she wanted to work the dinner shift she would have to dress “more friendly” and wear a short skirt and mini tee shirt, instead of pants and a blouse. The boss said that it was better for business during the evening if the waitresses were “friendlier” to customers and encouraged them to stay longer with a smile.

Marla tried to be friendlier to customers and wear the skimpy uniform, but every male customer flirted with her, and one drunk guy pinched her butt and another one followed her outside after her shift ended.

Marla doesn’t want to have to sacrifice her dignity and sanity for this job, but she really needs to work the dinner shift. Tuition is going up and she already sold her car to pay for books and rent this month.
Attachment #4: Issues, Demands and Tactics
Rights at Work Workshop

**Issues:** the problems workers face at their jobs.

1. Describe the issue that you want to address at Marla’s work:

**Demands:** what workers want to make happen to solve the problems they have on the job. Usually demands are given to a **target** (boss).

2. What demands do you want to make on the boss to address the issues that you described in #1?

**Tools:** the actions or series of actions workers take to get demands met by the **target**.

3. What tools from the Workers’ Toolbox will you use to get your demands met by the target?
Attachment #5: Workers’ Toolbox
Rights at Work Workshop

1. Quit
2. Steal
3. Goof off at work
4. Come late, leave early, take long breaks
5. Sabotage the machinery
6. Be rude to customers
7. Cuss out the boss
8. Work slow down/work to rule
9. Petition
10. Delegation
11. Wearing Buttons/t-shirts/stickers
12. Strike
13. Work and Walk (leaflet outside the store after and before your shift)
14. Wild Card—what would you do?
Attachment #6: Big Fish, Little Fish Cartoon
Rights at Work Workshop
Resources

Organizations:

- **Young Workers United (YWU):** A membership organization based in San Francisco that fights to improve the jobs that young workers have through Education, Policy and Organizing. YWU helped win an increase in the minimum wage in San Francisco to $8.50 an hour in 2003. Contact them at: workingyouth@hotmail.com or www.youngworkersunited.org

- **San Francisco Bike Messengers Association:** An innovative union/association of workers in the San Francisco courier industry – the first of its kind in the country. Website includes links to articles, union contracts, and other helpful tidbits. www.messengers.org/sfbma

- **Whole Foods Workers Unite:** After successfully organizing a major Whole Foods market in Madison, Wisconsin, these fine folks are reaching out to other Whole Foods workers nationwide to help them unionize. Website includes stories and lots of info about workers rights. www.wholeworkersunite.org

- **Powell's Bookstore Workers:** Workers at Powell’s Books in Oregon waged a historic organizing campaign and became members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union. They now have their own local, ILWU Local 5. www.ilwulocal5.com

- **Young Workers Health and Safety Project:** UC Berkeley's Labor and Occupational Health Program has launched an innovative public education initiative around workplace health and safety issues for young people. http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~lohp/Projects/Young_Workers/young_workers.html

- **The California Resource Network for Young Workers' Health and Safety:** Valuable information for working teens, parents, educators, employers, and others about safety hazards in many typical teen jobs, from fast food to agriculture, and explains California wage, hour, and child labor regulations. www.youngworkers.org

- **Canadian Labor Youth Committees:** Canadian unions are at the world's forefront of youth-labor activism. A number of unions have recently launched their own youth committees designed to reach out to young workers with information about their rights on the job and what unions do. The following are sampling of websites from this movement.
• Saskatchewan Federation of Labour Youth Committee:  
  www.sfl.sk.ca/youth/frames.html

• Ontario Federation of Labour Youth Committee:  
  http://www.ofl-fto.on.ca/youth

• Public Service Alliance of Canada Youth Web:  
  www.psac.com/youth/web/p3pub-e.html

• United Food and Commercial Workers – Canada Youth Site:  
  www.ufcw.ca/youth/index.html

• Canadian Auto Workers Starbucks Unstrike: Dedicated to  
  Starbucks workers who organized to join the Canadian Auto  
  Workers Union:  
  www.caw.ca/campaigns&issues/ongoingcampaigns/starbucks/ 
  index.asp

• Retail Workers.com: A website dedicated to disgruntled retail workers.  
  Includes dozens of articles, discussion forums, mailing lists, and an  
  opportunity for readers to send in stories about work in the retail sector.  

Resources for Teachers:

• Labor Education for the K-12 Classroom: Resource Guide for Teachers: A comprehensive guide for teachers on resources,  
  curriculum, organizations and books to teach Labor History. A product of the California Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO.  
  www.cft.org/about/comm/labor/RG02.pdf

• Collective Bargaining Education Project: This unique project of the United Teachers Los Angeles union provides high quality trainings and curriculum to high school teachers that meet the standards of the Los Angeles Unified School District.  
  www.lausd.k12.ca.us/lausd/offices/cbep

• Labor in the Schools Committee: A standing committee of the California Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO  
  www.cft.org/about/comm/labor/index.html.

• Youth, Unions and You: Teachers Resource: This fantastic teacher's guide, put together by the British Columbia Teachers' Federation and the B.C. Federation of Labour, contains dozens of thorough lesson plans for a 8th- 11th grade classes.  
  www.bctf.ca/lessonaids/online/la2039
Recommended Articles, Books and Reports:


Films and Videos:

- **Young, Organizing, and I Know My Rights Punk!** A short video and discussion guide about young people and work by the Canadian Labour Congress, filmed at their first nationwide youth conference. [www.clc-ctc.ca/web/menu/english/en_index.htm](http://www.clc-ctc.ca/web/menu/english/en_index.htm)

- **Live Nude Girls Unite**: A moving and inspiring full-length documentary about how a group of women organized the first union for strippers in the country. [www.livenudegirslunite.com](http://www.livenudegirslunite.com)

- **Golden Lands, Working Hands**: Video and curriculum for K-12 students on labor history in California. A project of the California Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO. [www.cft.org/about/comm/labor/golden.html](http://www.cft.org/about/comm/labor/golden.html)

- **Secrets of Silicon Valley**: A behind-the-scenes exposé on the downsides of the Internet revolution, focusing on temporary work and job training programs in Silicon Valley. [www.secretsofsiliconvalley.org](http://www.secretsofsiliconvalley.org)

- **The Merchants of Cool**: An excellent PBS investigative report about how corporations co-opt youth culture. [www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/cool](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/cool)
Where did all the good jobs go?
The rise of globalization has allowed companies to increasingly move production overseas in search of cheaper labor. The U.S. has lost more than 3 million manufacturing jobs since 1970. The loss of union jobs—that guaranteed workers good wages, benefits and job security—in manufacturing has caused unionization rates to plummet in the U.S. In 1954, more than 1 in 3 private sector workers was a union member. Today, fewer than 1 in 10 are. There has also been a loss of good union jobs in the public sector, such the postal service and government, as a result of a freeze in government spending and a contracting out of public jobs.

Where are the jobs now?
As US companies continue to move jobs overseas in search of lower wages, some pundits have predicted that America faces a future of becoming a nation of burger flippers. For young workers, that future is already here. Fast food, restaurant, retail and clerical jobs are by far the largest employers of youth today. McDonald’s alone claims to have employed 1 out of every 8 adults in the country at some point in their working lives. And these low wage jobs just keep on coming, not just for youth, but for all workers. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that 7 of the 10 largest growing occupations for the next decade will be in the service and retail sector, with food preparation workers leading the way.

What is wrong with these jobs?
Jobs in the overwhelmingly non-union, low-wage service sector offer none of the security or benefits of traditionally union manufacturing jobs. Wages are low, benefits such as medical insurance, sick days, and paid vacations are rare. Jobs are often part-time and temporary. On the job, workers experience problems such as overwork, chronic understaffing, abusive managers, sexual harassment, serious injury or assault. Working students often drop out of school or fail classes because of erratic scheduling and forced overtime.
### Money to Burn

**McDonald’s**  
Jim Cantalupo, CEO of McDonald’s Corp  
- **Income:** $1.4 million plus a $2.1 million bonus in 2003  
- **2002 sales:** $15.4 billion  
- **Profits:** $893.5 million

**Starbucks**  
Orin Smith, CEO  
- **Income:** $38.8 million  
- **2003 Sales:** $4.1 billion  
- **2003 Net Income:** $268.3 million

**Wal-Mart**  
H. Scott, President and CEO  
- **Income:** $21.7 million  
- **Profits:** In 2002, revenue increased 12% to $246.5 billion

**The GAP**  
Millard (Micky) S. Drexler, Former President and CEO  
- **Income:** $2.5 million  
- **Profits:** $477 million

**Subway**  
Fred DeLuca, Peter Buck, owners  
- **Income:** $80 million  
- **Profits:** $3 billion

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**How profitable are the retail and food service industries?**  
Major youth employers—such as McDonald’s, Starbucks and the Gap—today are some of the largest, most profitable corporations in the world. Subway, Starbucks and Blockbuster Video are expanding internationally at the rate of one store a day. CEOs are making millions of dollars while workers at their companies make the minimum wage.

**Why do retail and fast food make so much money?**  
When today’s corporate giants first began to spread across the United States in the 1950s, they hit upon a prize formula for ensuring profitability: get rid of the career workers, who were expensive to employ and not always easy to control, and bring in a workforce of teenagers, who could be paid minimum wage and could be counted on not to want to stay in the industry for very long. In other words, turn what were once decent jobs for adults into lousy jobs for youth.

**How do they stay profitable?**  
The employers of the largest number of minimum wage workers, the food service and retail industry have spent millions fighting minimum wage increases. They figured out how to routinize the workplace to minimize training costs, increase turnover and keep wages low. Several employers, such as Wal-Mart, Starbucks and Taco Bell, face legal problems for forcing employees to work off-the-clock.
HEALTH AND SAFETY ON THE JOB

Is health & safety an issue for young workers?
Teenage workers have much higher rates of workplace injury than older workers. This is not because they are young or inexperienced, but because they are concentrated in workplaces, such as restaurants and grocery stores, that overall tend to have some of the highest rates of injury of any industry sector. The National Consumers Federation reports that in the US, every 30 seconds a teenage worker suffers a workplace injury; every 5 days, a teenage worker is killed on the job.

What can we do to make these jobs safer?
In 1997, OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) issued guidelines to prevent violence at workplaces that do business at night. The guidelines included such measures as bright lighting, security cameras and scheduling at least two workers at night. Industry groups reacted to the proposal by recruiting 108 members of Congress to block it. A report by the Los Angeles Times revealed that many of the representatives who signed the letter had recently received substantial campaign contributions from the National Restaurant Association, the National Association of Convenience Stores and other groups.

SAFETY RIGHTS AT WORK
By law, your employer must provide:
• A safe and healthful workplace.
• Training about health and safety, including information on chemicals that could be harmful to your health.
• Protective clothing and equipment.
• Payment for medical care if you get hurt or sick because of your job. You may also be entitled to lost wages.
• At least the Federal Minimum Wage, $5.15 an hour, or more depending on state and city.

You also have a right to:
• Report safety problems to the Occupational Health and Safety Agency.
• Work without racial or sexual harassment.
• Refuse to work if the job is immediately dangerous to your life or health.
• Join or organize a union.
Is youth poverty really an issue?
Wages for young adults in the US dropped more than 20% between 1979 and 1995. As the wealth gap between younger and older adults widened, youth poverty rates have grown – so that today, young adults are more than twice as likely as other workers to be among the ranks of America’s working poor. Whether it’s college students trying to cover the skyrocketing costs of tuition, young mothers trying to pay for healthcare for their children, or new families looking for their own homes to move into, many young people in this country are finding it increasingly difficult simply to make ends meet.

Why are young people poor?
Good jobs have become increasingly hard to find, and many young adults are finding themselves stuck, well into their 20s and even into their 30s, working in low-wage, dead-end jobs. Youth of color bear the brunt of inequality, exploitation, and discrimination across the board and are even more likely than white youth to be among the working poor. The bulk of young workers are concentrated in low-wage service jobs, and the rates of union membership for young workers is half that of adult workers—only 5% of young people are union members versus 11% of adults.

What are some other reasons for youth poverty?
Young people are more likely to be unemployed than adult workers and the unemployment rate for youth ages 20-24 years old is almost twice the rate for people over 25 years old. One reason for this is that young workers are more likely to be laid off than older workers. In September and October of 2001, workers ages 16-24 suffered 95% of all job losses. Young people in this age group are six times as likely as older workers to be unemployed. Once again, youth of color disproportionately suffer from unemployment—unemployment rates for African-American males in some areas is triple the rates of white youth.

Young Workers United
“Serving The People”

YWU is the first group in the country to address young workers’ issues. They

- Educate. Through materials like this, fun workshops full of games, and other trainings, they teach and learn about our rights and how to organize.
- Advocate. They helped to pass the new minimum wage in San Francisco—17,000 young people in SF now make $8.50 an hour!
- Organize. They talk to young workers everyday, help to solve problems and unify workers around respect and dignity.

For more info, email us at workingyouth@hotmail.com
The Most Expensive Years of Our Lives
The cost of going to college has skyrocketed over the last few decades. From 2002-2003 the costs of going to college have skyrocketed by 20%. In 2000 the average total tuition costs for a four-year public university was $3,362. In 2003 the average tuition costs were $6,180. Over the last two decades, the cost of going to a four-year university has shot up by 106%, while the median family income over the same period of time has inched up by 27%.

Rising Tuition, Falling Wages
At the same time that tuition is soaring, the real wages (adjusted for inflation) that young people earn have steadily dropped. From 1979-1995, the weekly earnings of young adults (age 20-24) plummeted 21%. As a result, students now have to work longer hours just to keep pace. In 1970, a student would have to work full time at minimum wage only four weeks to fund a full year’s tuition at the University of California. Now it would take twenty-six weeks of work.

Life and Debt
In order to cope with soaring tuition costs and falling real wages, students are accumulating enormous amounts of debt to fund their educations. The average educational debt for students in 2003 was $27,600. That is almost three and a half times as much as the debt students accrued in the early 1990s. From 1999-2000, 64% of college students graduated with student debt.

Eyes on the Fries Training Manual, page 51
UC Berkeley Labor Center
Minimum Wage, Maximum Rage
The History of the Minimum Wage

“I used to work at McDonalds making minimum wage. When you make minimum wage, that means the boss doesn't give a damn about you. When you make minimum wage that's like ‘Hey, if I could pay you less, I would, but it's against the law.'” —Chris Rock

What is the minimum wage?
In the 1930s, minimum wage laws were designed to guarantee a national, livable wage floor for all workers. In 2004 the federal minimum wage is $5.15 an hour. Many states have increased the state minimum wage to protect low-wage workers. The food service and retail industries employ the largest number of minimum wage earners in the nation. Not surprisingly, young workers are concentrated in these two industries as well. Nationally, there are more than 500,000 young adults between 20 and 24 years old working for the minimum wage or less. Millions more are trying to keep afloat on wages that are just a little above the minimum.

Why should we care about the minimum wage?
The federal minimum wage has not been raised in almost seven years. At its current rate of $5.15 an hour, the real value of the federal minimum wage has shrunk to 35% less than what it was in 1968.

If wages had kept pace with rising productivity since 1968, the average hourly wage would have been $24.56 in 2000, rather than $13.74. The minimum wage would be $13.80—not $5.15. Meanwhile, the cost of living and education have gone up.

There have been many initiatives to increase both the federal and state minimum wages. California’s minimum wage is significantly higher than the federal wage at $6.75 vs. $5.15 an hour. The fight to increase the minimum wage clearly frightens employers in the food service and retail industry, since they have made fortunes from their armies of minimum wage employees. These employers have spent millions of dollars to defeat national, state and city initiatives.

WE DESERVE A RAISE!
In 2003, a coalition of unions and community groups launched a campaign to raise the minimum wage in San Francisco, California from $6.35 to $8.50 an hour. The initiative was put to the voters as Proposition L in a city-wide election. The coalition rallied the support of low-wage workers and young people around the city asking them to “Vote Yourself a Raise!” Despite fierce opposition from restaurant industry groups, voters passed Proposition L by an overwhelming margin.

The minimum wage increase in San Francisco is significant because it is the first initiative of its kind passed by voters in an election. As a result, 50,000 workers in San Francisco got a raise!