

Books & Films about Unions and Working People

Watch/read these at home, share them with friends or bring them to your next local union gathering.

Films:

10,000 Black Men Named George (2002) - Docudrama of the life of A Philip Randolph and his Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

9 to 5 (1980) - Comedy about three women office workers (Jane Fonda, Dolly Parton & Lily Tomlin) who get revenge on their sexist and exploitative boss.

An Inconvenient Truth (2006) - Director Davis Guggenheim eloquently weaves the science of global warming with Al Gore's personal history and lifelong commitment to reversing the effects of global climate change in the most talked-about documentary in recent history.

At the River I Stand (1993) - A film about the AFSCME Memphis Sanitation workers strike in 1968, where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous "I have been to the mountaintop" speech. Dr. King was assassinated the following day.

Bread and Roses (2000) - Two Latina sisters work as cleaners in a downtown office building, and fight for the right to unionize.

Erin Brockovich (2000) - An unemployed single mother (Julia Roberts) becomes a legal assistant and almost single-handedly brings down a California power company accused of polluting a city's water supply.

Fast Food Nation (2006) - A fictionalized feature based on Eric Schlosser's bestselling nonfiction expose about the fast food industry. Eating a hamburger will never be the same again!

Harlan County U.S.A. (1977) - This film documents the coal miners' strike against the Brookside Mine of the Eastover Mining Company in Harlan County, Kentucky in June, 1973.

Harlan County Wars (2000) - Holly Hunter stars as a coal miner's wife who fights for her community during the Harlan County strike.

Life and Debt (2001) - A documentary (set to a great reggae soundtrack) about the impact of globalization and multinational corporations on the island of Jamaica.

Live Nude Girls Unite! (2000) - Follows the quest of dancers at the Lusty Lady Club to form the first ever Exotic Dancers Union.

Maetwan (1987) - A labor union organizer comes to an embattled mining community that is brutally and violently dominated and harassed by the mining company.

Norma Rae (1979) - The story of Norma Rae (played by Sally Field), a southern textile worker employed in a factory with intolerable working conditions. This film won two Oscars and is considered a classic union film.

North Country (2005) - Based on a true story about female coal miners who sued their company to get equal rights in the workplace.

Occupation (2002) - The story of a 21-day living wage sit-in by Harvard University students on behalf of the service workers. The film is narrated by Ben Affleck.

Roger and Me (1989) - A humorous documentary about the closure of General Motors' plant at Flint, Michigan, which resulted in the loss of 30,000 jobs.

Salt of the Earth (1954) - The story of the New Mexico zinc miners strike that was taken over by the wives of the miners when they were prohibited from picketing. Most of the film crew was black listed in Hollywood in 1954 for producing this film.

Silkwood (1983) - The story of Karen Silkwood, a metallurgy worker at a plutonium processing plant who was purposefully contaminated, psychologically tortured and possibly murdered to prevent her from exposing blatant worker safety violations at the plant. Starring Meryl Streep, Cher & Kurt Russell.

Super Size Me (2003) - What would happen if you ate nothing but fast food for an entire month? Filmmaker Morgan Spurlock does just that and embarks on the most perilous journey of his life- to eat nothing but McDonald's for 30-days. A good (and disturbingly funny) glimpse into the McDonaldlization of society.

The Burning Season (1994) - The story of Chico Mendes (played by Raul Julia), the leader of the rubber tappers union in the western Amazon state of Acre in Brazil who was murdered by his opponents. This film puts into perspective the danger workers in around the world encounter when organizing unions.

The Corporation (2001) - Documentary that looks at the concept of the corporation throughout recent history up to its present-day dominance.

The Fight in the Fields (1997) - Documentary about Cesar Chavez.

The Grapes of Wrath (1940) - Based on Steinbeck's classic American novel. A family travels to California in search of a better life after being displaced from their farm during the Great Depression.

The Killing Floor (1985) - During World War I, a poor black Southerner travels north to Chicago to get work in the city's slaughterhouses, where he becomes embroiled in the organized labor movement.

The Triangle Shirt Factory Fire Scandal (1979) - Real-life drama of the tragic sweatshop fire in New York as seen through the eyes of four women who worked there.

This is What Democracy Looks Like (2001) - A film, shot by 100 amateur camera operators, about the enormous street protests against the World Trade Organization summit in Seattle in 1999.

Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price (2005) - A look at the impact of the retail giant on local communities.

Who Killed the Electric Car? (2006) - In 1996, electric cars began to appear on roads all over California. They were quiet and fast, produced no exhaust and ran without gasoline. Ten years later, these cars were destroyed.

With Babies & Banners (1979) - Pays tribute to the women -- some of them wives of strikers and some of them factory workers themselves -- who helped win one of the greatest victories of American labor unionism: the 1937 sit-down strike at the General Motors plants in Flint, Michigan.

Books:

Bait and Switch: The (Futile) Pursuit of the American Dream - Barbara Ehrenreich

Click, Clack, Moo - A children's book by Doreen Cronin

Confessions of a Union Buster - Martin Levitt

Holding the Line - Barbara Kingsolver

Labor's Last Angry Man - Joseph C. Goulden

Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America - Barbara Ehrenreich

Not Your Father's Union Movement - Edited by Jo-Ann Mort

Power on the Job: The Legal Rights of Working People - Michael D. Yeats

Solidarity Divided - Bill Fletcher Jr. and Fernando Gapasin

The Grapes of Wrath - John Steinbeck

The Union Member's Complete Guide: Everything You Want -- And Need -- To Know About Working Union - Michael Mauer

The Union Steward's Complete Guide: A Survival Guide - Edited by David Prosten

Troublemaker's Handbook 2: How to Fight Back Where You Work - And Win! - Jane Slaughter

Why Unions Matter - Michael D. Yeats

Wobblies: A Graphic History of the IWW-- edited by Paul Buhle and Nicole Schulman

Articles About Young Workers:

The Canadian Labor Movement's Big Youth Turn

<http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/youngworkers/canadian.pdf>

Economic State of Young America

http://demos.org/pubs/esya_5_7_08.pdf

Youth for the Win! Rising Wave Among Young People

<http://www.democracycorps.com/wp-content/files/yftw-growing-the-youth-vote.pdf>

