



[Anti-Capitalism Home](#)

- [Infoshop Home](#)
- [AMP](#)
- [Breaking Glass Press](#)
- [Calendar](#)
- [Forums](#)
- [Store](#)
- [Infoshop A to Z](#)

- Infoshop News**
- [I-News Home](#)
  - [News Archive](#)
  - [Library News](#)
  - [Prison News](#)
  - [Science News](#)
  - [Youth News](#)

- By language**
- [Deutsche](#)
  - [Español](#)
  - [Français](#)
  - [Italiano](#)
  - [Português](#)
  - [Svenska](#)

- Infoshop by Subject**
- [Activism](#)
  - [Anti-Oppression](#)
  - [Biotechnology](#)
  - [Libertarian Marxism](#)
  - [Movement Democracy](#)
  - [Pharmaceutical Industry](#)
  - [Queer](#)
  - [Sexual Freedom](#)
  - [Terrorism](#)

- Features**
- [Anarchist FAQ](#)
  - [Anti-war](#)
  - [Anti-Capitalism](#)
  - [Dear Emma](#)
  - [Economics Kiosk](#)
  - [Harrass the Brass](#)
  - [Reading Lists](#)

- Anarchism**
- [Anarchafeminism](#)
  - [Anarchist University](#)



## Fighting the Octopus

**Global Action Against Capitalism**

*Nothing ever burns down by itself - Every fire needs a little bit of help*



## IWW Calls For Citywide Walkout of Workers & Students to Protest World Trade Organization

SEATTLE, WA- On November 30th, all eyes will turn to Seattle, where the World Trade Organization's Ministerial Conference is taking place. On that day, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) urges all workers to walk off their jobs and students, out of school. The IWW encourages everyone to join the protests in Downtown Seattle, which includes a labor march from the Seattle Center at 12:30 p.m., and a march for reparations at 5 p.m. from Westlake Park to the Coleman School, site of the African-American Heritage Museum and Cultural Center.

Our intent is to help shut down the City of Seattle by refusing to supply our labor, in order to demonstrate the power of the working class. The IWW rejects the WTO and all attempts of corporate dominance.

We believe that organizing through the workplace and actively supporting community institutions is the most effective and important way to oppose the WTO. By proactively building democracy in the neighborhood and in the workplace, we are building for a new world within the shell of the old.

The IWW recognizes the WTO as a direct threat to the working class. The WTO is one of the most powerful coordinating bodies of the global economy. Created by the richest corporations and world leaders, the WTO's sole purpose is to restructure, weaken and annul labor and environmental laws that, according to the WTO, stand in the way of "economic progress." These laws were fought for and won by working people over 50 years ago.

While the WTO touts "free trade" policy as a benefit to all, our daily lives tell another story. Today people work more hours and make less than in 1971. At the same time, the world's richest people continue to amass wealth. Environmental degradation by corporations continues unabated, while the WTO guts the U.S. Clean Air and Endangered Species Acts. Political Prisoners, such as, Mumia Abu Jamal and Leonard Peltier are held by an unjust judiciary system that rules in favor of large corporations like Peabody Coal in their relocation of Indigenous Peoples and turns a blind eye to mass murder as in the case of MOVE of Philadelphia.

The WTO also intends further privatization of government functions, such as the prison system, where prisoners are given no other option than to be used as cheap labor, undercutting union strength and wage gains. It is clear that the WTO intends to accelerate class warfare on a global scale. The only solution is to oppose them by building a working class movement.

Founded in 1905, The IWW is a worldwide, industrial union open to all workers. The IWW calls for all workers to organize under one big union. Only by acting in solidarity will workers have the power to take control of our workplaces and industries, to create an economy that values people and our environment.

For more information, view our website at <http://iww.org/> or contact the Seattle General Membership Branch at 206.750.6250.

Media Contacts: Paul Palinkas, Seattle GMB 425/825-2390; E.G. Flynn, Olympia GMB 360/701-3027 (cel), [jeri@olywa.net](mailto:jeri@olywa.net); Bryan Skinner, Victoria B.C. GMB (Number Here)

### African American Heritage Museum and Cultural Center

The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) will march in support of REPARATIONS 2000 & The African American Heritage Museum and Cultural Center on November 30th, 1999 (after the WTO rallies). Gather at 5:00pm Westlake Park to rally and march to the Coleman School above the I-90 Tunnel, on 25th and S. Massachusetts Street. An encampment will follow at Museum site.

#### What is the African American Heritage Museum and Cultural Center?

In 1985, after the African American community and supporters had successfully blocked the construction of a police precinct at 23rd and Yesler, activists occupied the Coleman School at 25th and Massachusetts, demanding that the vacant building be given to the community. Their plans were to develop the building into the African American Heritage Museum and Cultural Center. This began the longest building occupation in US History, lasting nearly 12 years. The City of Seattle demanded that the community allow participation of downtown business professionals on the Museum Board, in exchange for support for such a project. In 1998, the Youth Action Committee and other grassroots members of the community began to question the financial mismanagement by the City's Museum Board Chairman Bob Flowers, Program Director Pat Chandler, and other board members.

In the meantime, the community began to run programs out of the portable building on the site, from little league baseball to martial arts to a homework center, while questioning the role of the City of Seattle in the museum, and the corrupt board members in particular. Seeing this as a direct challenge to their power and as an increasing liability to their credibility, the City began to close in.

## What happened and why reparations???

On June 4th, 1998, four Seattle Police Department SWAT teams, along with two teams of FBI agents under orders from King County Executive Ron Simms and King County Councilman Larry Gossett, raided the portable trailers on the museum site. The raid was requested by former AAHM@CC chairman (and senior VP of Washington Mutual Savings Bank) Bob Flowers and former board member Charlie James (publisher of the African American Business and Employment Journal). The raid was led by Lt. Harry Bailey, (local director of Seattle's Weed and Seed program), of the Seattle Police Department's East Precinct. Since then, the Seattle public schools have backed out on their commitment of selling the Coleman School to the legal Board of the Museum. This threatened the very existence of the Project itself. The African American Community DEMANDS reparations, in that this is another example of terrorism that has been perpetrated against Africans around the world. The raid on the museum, with the complicity of the City's puppetry formerly on the Board, is yet another example of Domestic Neo-Colonialism against African People. The Museum represents the institutional base needed in the community for the future well being of African people, both culturally and materially. We are determined to take it back!

For more information, call 206-320-9321, or 706-6250, or e-mail [gda7@yahoo.com](mailto:gda7@yahoo.com) Endorsed by the African American Heritage Museum and Cultural Center and the Seattle Area IWW

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## A Time For Change

### Overview:

At present there are 1.8 million people being held under direct custody in prisons, who are being paid an average wage of less than a dollar an hour to create a myriad of products for such companies as Microsoft and Eddie Bauer. With the continued expansion of private prisons, more and more captives are forced to slave away for substandard wages, stripped of all rehabilitative pretense.

What is now created is not a vast conspiracy but a collective, reinforcing set of relationships which can be described as the Prison Industrial Complex. As with its counter-part the Military Industrial Complex, it only survives because of governmental indifference or outright encouragement.

While corporate media is familiar with the dangerous economic consequences that a private system of confinement represents, especially in the potential and actual loss of Free World employment, it deliberately ignores these issues. What it will do at every opportunity is tout the illusion of cost savings and the "rehabilitative benefits of prison labor."

### Economic Self-Defense

"The use of prison labor puts our members at a competitive disadvantage. Prison labor does not have to adhere to this country's labor laws, (i.e. minimum wage, workers compensation, unemployment compensation, collective bargaining, and other worker protection laws)," President Thomas Buffenbarger of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) stated in a letter to Federal Prison Industries Chairman of the Board, Joseph M. Aragon on 10-1-98. IAM President Buffenbarger goes on to point out the gross disparity of wages between prisoners and "Free World" workers, that products assembled at federal institutions are not subject to the same local and state taxes as private manufactures, and that competition with prison labor could artificially depress the wages and benefits of free workers in times of tight labor markets. Furthermore the federally mandatory "source status" requires that federal agencies obtain permission to purchase competitively from the private sector. Not being able to compete with prison manufacturing would have adverse impacts the ability to compete fairly for market share.

Paul Wright, editor of Prison Legal News effectively debunks the myth of the rehabilitative nature of prison labor by stating that the jobs available in prison are labor intensive, low skilled and currently being performed by exploited Third World workers. The menial skills prisoners acquire in prison are not in demand unless a released Prisoner moves to Guatemala or El Salvador. Additionally he asks even if it (prison labor) were rehabilitative, "Why aren't prisoners paid a minimum wage?"

It is clear that prison labor is not rehabilitative and does in fact have a detrimental effect on the rest of the working class. The solution to this problem is not abolishing prison labor, for it can have some positive, rehabilitative effects. The answer is that prison laborers must first be paid wage and benefits comparable to that paid on this side of the wall. Secondly, prison work environments must be held to the same safety and environmental standards as other for profit enterprises. Without these minimum standards governing the use of prison labor, it is guaranteed that confined members of the working class will be pitted against non-confined workers in breaking strikes and depressing the current standard of living which labor fought so hard to win.

It has been proven time and time again that depending solely on the Courts or Governmental agencies to correct the current inequities of prison labor has to this date proved fruitless. In order to economically defend all workers what is needed is an association which will actively lobby on behalf of all concerned. We now introduce such a vehicle to defend the economic self-interests of all workers across the board. That medium is the National Prisoners Labor Rights Association.

### Who we Are

The National Prisoners Labor Rights Association (NPLRA) is a standing committee of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) an independent formation of socially conscious labor activists. Joining in this effort is Raze the Walls! A Prisoner Rights Advocacy group based in Seattle, Washington and operated by Prisoners all across the United States. Missouri Prisoners Labor Union, a human rights assemblage, which has a particular focus on issues directly, related to prison labor, numerous autonomous individuals AND YOU.

Our membership is extended to any person who is in agreement with this document, aims and purposes of the association and is NOT affiliated with ANY Department of Corrections, law enforcement agencies or persons who act as agents of those who represent interests counter to ours. All members are asked to support the association by providing the following amounts each month either in cash or stamps.

\$2.00 Prisoners

\$5.00 Free World People

Only those persons who are current in their dues will be allowed to vote on matters, which affect the administrative direction of the association, and to receive related publications, updates, etc. without additional payment.

### What we will do

The purpose of this association shall be to assist and promote Prisoner self-organization in pursuit of individual and institutional programs of rehabilitation. We will examine issues related to confinement with a particular focus on those directly related to prison labor performed for either the public or private sector. One of our primary missions shall be to educate the public and ourselves about issues of confinement by every appropriate means.

## We recognize

That the prison industrial complex is one job shop which produces a variety of products and services not for rehabilitative or training purposes, but for greater profits and as an attack on organized labor and the working class as a whole. Prisoners control the tone and direction of this association and that we will mirror the Industrial Union decision making structure instead of that of craft labor organizations. We choose this method of organization because it alone uniquely deals with the complex issues that we face.

That Prisoners retain certain inalienable rights as defined by the United States Constitution, Court rulings, International Treaties and documents. As such we will actively pursue our rights as defined by these named methods.

That the economic self-sufficiency of Prisoners is central to any program of rehabilitation either individual or institutional and that paying Prisoners wages comparable to Free citizens is not only rehabilitative but also is: A. A cost-effective method of saving taxpayer dollars. B. A pro-active response in order to prevent more jobs from being sentenced to prison at wages far less than what would be paid otherwise.

As such we will actively lobby that current and future laws insure Prisoners are paid at a level which measure up to those paid on this side of the wall.

Additionally we will accept and actively investigate any complaint lodged by a member. Upon finding that the complaint significantly affects a significant number of Prisoners will respond in an appropriate manner including but not limited to litigation, faxes, e-mail, etc.

What we won't do while this association encourages and assists Prisoner self-organization we will and do not encourage self-organization in pursuit of either threatening the substantive security interests of the institution or for any other reason than rehabilitation. We are not interested in nor do we encourage conduct that involves clumping other Prisoners, petty scams or escape plans. If you are considering engaging in this type of activity then GO SOME PLACE ELSE.

We will also not initiate physical contact with either staff or other Prisoners. This does not negate the principle of self-defense. At all times when confronted by illegal behavior or actions by staff we will calmly explain why such is illegal and ask respectfully that it cease. If this does not correct the problem we will use every possible administrative process at our disposal. In the event that this fails, we will ask a court to review the situation. Membership is hereby instructed to keep your hands in your pockets and if you have an issue or grievance with staff, report the offending party by contacting the NPLRA office, and take the Warden to court.

## Summary

It is clear that while there are numerous organizations dealing with issues related to confinement, of those that presently exist, none address prison labor and its direct consequences it has on the rest of working society. For those of us who are not confined, we tend to take for granted things like the eight hour workday, being compensated at a level which allows an individual to support themselves and their families without State provided aide, safe work environments, unemployment insurance, etc. For Prisoners, these things are all denied to them despite the fact they produce literally millions of dollars of goods and services. They are also used as tools to attack the current standard of living while being forced to accept substandard wages and as strike breakers.

The current system of prison labor is counterproductive for society at large. It will only change when Prisoners and concerned citizens raise their voices together and say reasonably and adamantly, it is now a time for change! Without fundamental and far reaching changes to the present system we are literally guaranteed that the only jobs one will be able to attain will be located behind prison walls.

IWW-NPLRA 5215 Ballard NW Seattle, WA 98115

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[Back to Infoshop Page](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Communities](#) | [What's New](#) | [FAQ](#) | [News](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Search](#)

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