

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S STRIKE NYC
CALL TO ACTION



February 2018

INTRODUCTION

New York City tends to be portrayed as the center of the world. It is an affluent city, ethnically diverse, cultured, interesting, and rich in many ways. It's also the crossroads where a myriad of people's life intersect. It remains an important global financial hub, as well as a veritable magnet for all kind of tourist and travelers. And it definitely occupies a prominent role in our collective imagination. Less emphasized, however, is another fact: New York City always has been an important scenario of class struggle. In a way, all large cities are class battlegrounds since these concentrate an incredible array of productive forces (human labor power and means of production) in a relatively small, bounded space. Thus, they tend to be at one time terrains of intense exploitation and revolutionary potential. For these reasons, large cities have been of great strategic importance for the capitalist class and, hence, also for the organized working class. New York City, as one of the major metropolis of the world, became subject to a neoliberal takeover and, particularly since the 80's, the site of a mayor attack on organized labor. The reverse of calling New York a “capital of the world” is calling it a major class battleground. In the current geography of global capitalism, NYC would be, then, an ultimate battleground.

The city and its built environment, including housing and basic provisions that make concentrations of human life possible, have frequently being considered second class issues for mainstream economics. More so, both the material conditions and the work that happens in social reproduction spaces—house, neighborhood, and so on—are usually invisibilized, taken for granted underneath that construct dubbed “The Economy”. Social reproduction, that which allows the workforce to replenish its labor power, thus, falls unaccounted mainly on women's shoulders. To make matters worse, the neoliberal hostile takeover of our city throughout these last decades, has implied a reduction of publicly available social services, outsourcing the costs of these to the workforce. The brunt of these cutbacks, unsurprisingly, falls mainly upon our city's women.

Another aspect of the neoliberal onslaught that our city's environment makes salient is migration. New York is composed and kept alive by immigrants and immigrant labor, legally recognized or, otherwise, disavowed and persecuted. More so, migrant labor in NYC represents the embodiment of the

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geography of global capitalism and its consequences. NYC has become a rich and incredibly powerful global city through its labor force —one that, we must emphasize, has always been composed by workers from all over the world that, quite naturally, retain a wide variety of attachment to their places of origin.

The current economic system requires immigrant labor as part of neoliberal economic restructuring. However, at the same time, it increasingly relies on the systematic scapegoating of immigrants and Muslims in order to assuage the anger produced by the impoverishment of workers in general--the disavowed collateral of neoliberal capitalist expansion.

As a consequence, of late, we have witnessed an intensified crackdown on immigration, and increase on policing and surveillance --particularly oriented towards working class communities of color-- and an expansion of mass incarceration and deportation. The articulation and deployment of this internal repressive apparatus, motivated by the fear of revolt, continues to become pervasive, and its long term consequences have not been sufficiently examined. Concurrently, the external and more explicit branch of American imperialism continues to operate without enough political opposition throughout the global south. Both of these tendencies, we can surmise, will remain the disavowed companion of the breach that separates global wealth from the increasingly impoverished masses.

New York, in this context, has flourished as a global metropolis, with the services and finance industries as its two pillars. However, this transformation implied a generalized neglect of the common built environment— such as affordable housing, infrastructure, and so on— which has been re-framed as secondary to major “economic concerns”. On the one one hand, the role of housing speculation in the latest financial crises is well known, though easily forgotten. On the other, the material conditions for social reproduction, that which carries the weight of production, has become increasingly neglected and, often, even openly dismantled. Attacks on social provisioning, the commons, and community control over our built environment have become increasingly common. We remain clear on this issue, though: these are attacks on the working class and, particularly, on women, the first victims of this outsourcing of the costs of social reproduction.

A thinly disguised crack down on labor has run parallel to the neoliberal redistribution of the burden of

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social reproduction. Even if New York retains a high percentage of labor unionizing in relation to the rest of the country, these unions have been tied down by non-strike clauses, gravely limiting their position for collective bargaining. As a consequence, the precarization of labor conditions has become the rule. More so, many workers in NYC simply are not allowed to unionize. This is the case of most low wage workers--most notably in the service industry. Women constitute the majority of low wage laborers, the majority of these low-earning women are immigrants, and the undocumented among them remain the most exploited. Commonly, these women work by the hour, often for more than 8 hours a day, without a contract and, hence, vulnerable to all kind of abuses, such as wage theft, harassment and unjustified firing. As these undocumented women struggle, to begin with, in order to be able sell their labor, they are often willing to accept the worst labor conditions possible.

We believe we must make a stand. New York City's multinational and racially diverse workforce, in spite of the ongoing neoliberal onslaught, remains incredibly powerful. As part of this work force, women are subject to the most intense exploitation. However, women also retain the power to shut it down. And we have the will to show them. When working class women, immigrant women, black women, women of color, lesbians, and trans women stop, everything stops!

OUR PRINCIPLES

In 2017, we called for a women's strike around a national platform, articulated through broad feminist and anti-capitalist political principles. Our organizing process in 2018, however, has been more oriented towards building an ever wider coalition of diverse, though politically proximate radical organizations--grass-root feminist groups, unions, worker centers, cooperatives, socialist groups, immigrant rights, social justice, and community based organizations, principally. Hence, ours continues to be a feminist politics aimed to tackle the structural origins of the multiple forms of oppression, exploitation and dispossession we experience, but one increasingly focused on strategic political action. We believe the political moment demands us to build upon the commonalities found among organized responses to patriarchal capitalism coming from below, in order to construct a common front concordant with the spirit of these responses, as both working class and feminist struggles. This year we are actively engaging the most politically crucial struggles going on in the city. And, with this objective in mind, we have attempted to articulate a series of demands that can give an

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organized, cohesive voice to the ongoing battles ahead.

The massive participation on the Women's March this year revealed there is a widespread discontent not only around Trump's presidency, but most importantly, around the structural conditions that made it possible. This discontent is manifesting itself through a multiplicity of women's struggles and is a sign of the emergence of a feminist force that can not be contained anymore within the limits imposed by the democratic party and its corporate version of feminism.

We recognize that our movement derives its strength from a variety of grassroots struggles; and, as such, our aim is to take part in the radical transformation of current social relations. In contrast to mainstream liberal politics, our movement has never been oriented towards electoral gain. It represents an increasingly organized refusal to confine the horizon of social change to the terms defined by procedural democracy. More so, our movement recognizes and thoroughly embraces its global relevance—not in spite of the strength of its local roots, but because of these. It knows itself part of a global feminist struggle, perhaps one of the few serious contenders to the worldwide rise of right-wing governments and, hence, one of the most important potential embodiments of an international working class alternative.

The importance of our strategic re-appropriation of a classic labor tactics, such as the strike, as part of this international feminist movement cannot be overemphasized. However, this reclaiming also makes salient our need to redefine what counts as “labor”; the various forms it takes; what “class struggle” looks like; and what kind of transformations should be at the core of a truly radical feminist politics. We continue to work on these issues, furthering the discussions about them and inviting a larger and more diverse group of women to join us.

In NYC, we are calling women and their allies to strike during one hour from all labor, both paid and unpaid, on March 8th, 2017 from 4 to 5 pm. It has often been said a women's strike is impossible, due to non-strike clauses, precarious labor conditions, and the vulnerability that a majority of women face in the paid workplace. This impossibility is further attributed to the fact that women are the ones that bear the blunt of social reproduction, or that kind of labor that makes all other labor possible. They are, for the most part, the ones that sustain communal life; look after the built environment; and take care of

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the sick, children, disabled and elderly. We believe, in spite of these difficulties, a women's strike to be both possible and fundamental in this political moment. Therefore, we are pushing for an hour strike, relying on the power of simultaneity to make our absence unavoidably felt in our homes, neighborhoods and communal spaces; in our paid workplaces; and on the streets. We will be heard and our collective strength be known.

OUR DEMANDS

1. Women's Rights. We demand legal protection of women's rights, as well as policies and services that allow all women— specially working class, women of color, undocumented immigrants, lesbians and transwomen— to effectively enjoy these formal rights. Hence:

³⁵/₁₇ We demand sexual and reproductive justice, including the right of women to take autonomous decisions about whether they want to reproduce or not, when and under what conditions.

³⁵/₁₇ We demand the right of women to a life free of violence, sexual and otherwise, in all the arenas they inhabit and sustain: home, workplace, public and communal spaces.

³⁵/₁₇ We fight for an end to sex based discrimination entrenched in legislation and policy making, and in the operation of public institutions.

This is why we support: Campaigns for free and safe abortion on demand without apology and for the decriminalization of abortion in New York State, bringing state law in line with Roe v. Wade after 45 years of being unconstitutional. A vote on the NY Reproductive Healthcare Act, which will set an example for the rest of the country.

Ongoing campaigns by food service industry workers against sexual harassment.

The fight of Anne Chambers against the NYPD and the officers that sexually abused her while in custody.

2. Labor Rights are Women's Rights: We demand the protection and expansion of labor rights, with particular attention to the conditions of working class women.

³⁵/₁₇ We fight for the recognition of the labor women perform inside and outside the workplace and

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for a change in the conditions in which it is performed.

³⁵₁₇ We demand equality. Not only are women in the city still not paid equally than men for the same job, but they are usually confined to those fields that are an extension of the work performed at home into the workplace, such as care-work and the service industry. This fields tend to enjoy little social recognition, be badly paid, and be dominated by unstable and precarious labor conditions.

³⁵₁₇ We stand against women's subservient structural position within the working class. Unsurprisingly, women constitute two thirds of low wage workers. Low wage workers are particularly vulnerable to labor harassment, wage-theft and unjustified firing. Furthermore, they face multiple legal restrictions to unionizing and engaging in collective bargaining, and many of them are confined to informal labor.

For these reasons, we support: the fight for a living minimum wage; ongoing campaigns against wage-theft and labor harassment; ongoing battles for unionization and for the right to collective bargaining; ongoing campaigns for the rights of care and domestic workers; campaigns to reform the outdated legislation concerning street vending.

3. Universal Social Services. We demand universal access to adequate social services for all women, regardless of their age, color, sexual orientation and documented status.

³⁵₁₇ We believe that social services provide the material conditions that allow workers to replenish their labor power and, thus, are at the basis for all productive activity.

³⁵₁₇ We recognize that, among the working class, women are the most affected by these cuts since they are the ones socially expected to take care of the children, the sick and the elderly.

³⁵₁₇ We believe that cuts in social services entail an attack on the working class--even turning these into opportunities for a minority to profit from these.

³⁵₁₇ We demand universal access to healthcare; paid parental leave; universal access to education at all levels; and universal care for children, the disabled, and the elderly.

³⁵₁₇ We demand affordable and quality housing for all, in particular for working class women, undocumented immigrants, women of color, LBT women and their families. We demand

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protection and expansion of tenant's rights, and fully funded tenant-controlled public housing.

This is why we strongly support: the NY Health Act; campaigns for access to mental health and wrap-up services for those who are targeted the most by economic insecurity, criminalization and policing. Campaigns for free higher education and against the privatization of public schools.

Tenants campaigns to restabilize all rents; rent freeze; end vacancy bonus; close the LLC loophole; put an end to preferential rent and self-reporting of MIC and IAI costs.

Struggles around the maintenance, expansion and universal access to public transportation; campaigns in defense of the commons and of community managed public space.

4. Immigrant Rights are Women's Rights. We demand immigrant women, particularly undocumented ones, be treated equally to citizens in front of the law.

³⁵/₁₇ We believe undocumented immigrant women face the most pervasive forms of exploitation and oppression. They are not allowed to sell their labor within a frame that guarantees basic labor rights provisions, which confines them to informal, unstable and precarious jobs. They can not access most social services, since those are restricted to citizens.

³⁵/₁₇ We demand paths to citizenship for undocumented immigrant women, as part of a comprehensive and progressive immigration reform.

³⁵/₁₇ We demand undocumented women receive full protection by the law, which allow them to sell their labor, access social services, and defend themselves when subject to abuse.

³⁵/₁₇ We demand a stop to the deportation machine, that separates women from their children and other loved ones.

³⁵/₁₇ We demand ICE out of the courts, since their presence makes women suffering from violence, at home, in the workplace and in public spaces, stay silent.

³⁵/₁₇ We stand against the construction of a wall between Mexico and the United States.

That is why we support Sanctuary cities, as well as initiatives that expand the opportunity for cooperative economies—since that is the way many undocumented women manage to sell their labor under basic conditions of human dignity. We resolutely stand against the targeting of immigrant rights

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activists, which has intensified during the current administration.

5. Racial justice. We demand an end to institutionalized racism, white supremacy and racial discrimination in general, particularly concerning black women and women of color.

³⁵₁₇ We fight against the structural conditions that value the life of black women and women of color as lesser than that of their “white” counterparts.

³⁵₁₇ We fight against the ongoing cuts on welfare expenditure, which specially affects the poorest among the poor: black women, women of color and their children.

³⁵₁₇ We stand against both the lack of protection and overt violence inflicted upon black women and women of color by state sanctioned forces and institutions.

³⁵₁₇ We denounce the statistical difference in life expectancy, infant mortality, mortality during labor, and etcetera, when it comes to black women and women of color.

³⁵₁₇ We stand against the forced sterilization of black women and women color.

We support ongoing campaigns for reparations and for the development of a Black Women Justice Platform.

6. Police State. We demand an end to the institutionalization of state violence in all its forms.

³⁵₁₇ We stand against the transformation of police officers into members of quasi-fascist forces of social control.

³⁵₁₇ We demand an end to police brutality, particularly regarding women and with an emphasis on sexual violence.

³⁵₁₇ We protest against the policies geared towards systematic persecution and criminalization, such as “broken windows” and ICE raids--which constitute a parallel police force.

³⁵₁₇ We demand an end to the policies of mass incarceration, as well as to the privatization of jails and detention centers.

³⁵₁₇ We demand an end to the policies of mass deportation and the unlawful, long term detention of immigrants without a due process.

That is why we support: ongoing campaigns for prison abolition and divestment; and the campaign for

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an Elected Civilian Review Board, in which members would be elected at the community level and would offer genuine oversight and recourse to victims of police abuse.

7. For the self-determination of peoples and against imperialism. We demand an end to imperial wars and neo-colonial projects, as well as neoliberal foreign policies.

³⁵₁₇ We stand in solidarity with the anti-capitalist and global feminist movement.

³⁵₁₇ We demand an end to violence against women and girls, sexual and otherwise, carried out by US troops and US backed forces abroad.

³⁵₁₇ We stand against any increase in military budget and the expansion of US military bases around the world.

³⁵₁₇ We demand an end to imperial wars abroad, from Syria to Yemen.

³⁵₁₇ We stand against all neo-colonial projects, from Palestine to Puerto Rico.

³⁵₁₇ We stand against the blood soaked global “drug-wars”, from Mexico to Philippines.

³⁵₁₇ We stand against extractive economic policies by industrialized countries in the global south, from uneven trade-agreements; appropriation of land and natural resources; to the imposition of structural adjustments by the IMF and the World-Bank and the perpetuation of dependency via debt.

³⁵₁₇ We resolutely stand for the self-determination of the peoples of the world and against the US covert crack-down on democratically elected governments and forces of radical social change around the global south, from Honduras and Venezuela to Egypt.

This is why we support: the liberation of Ahd Tamimi and all Palestinian political prisoners, specially children; the ongoing struggle for the self-determination of Puerto Rico and the relief of its debt; campaigns to close the military base in Guantanamo and other military bases around the world; the struggle against the recent US-backed fraud in Honduras.

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