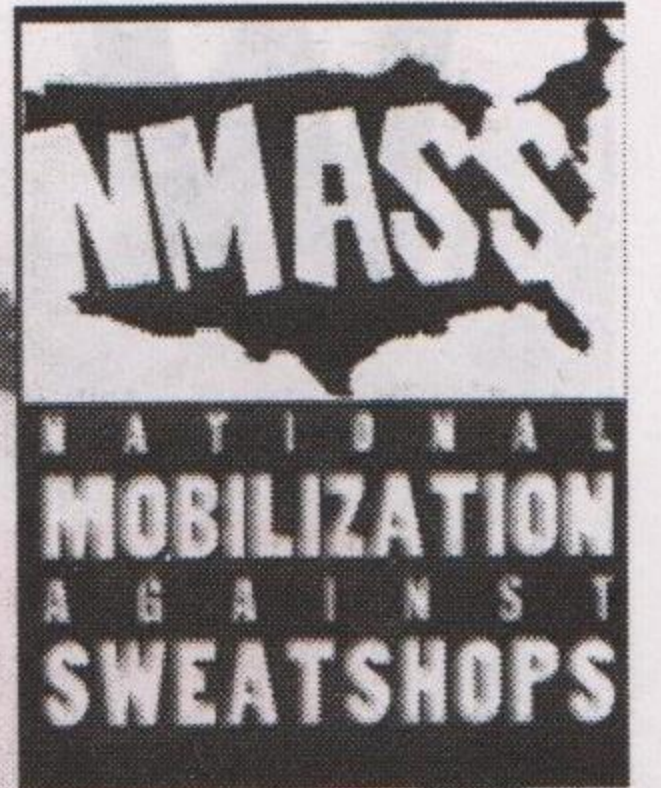


Punching the Clock



Issue 2, Summer 1999

A Publication of
The National Mobilization
Against Sweatshops

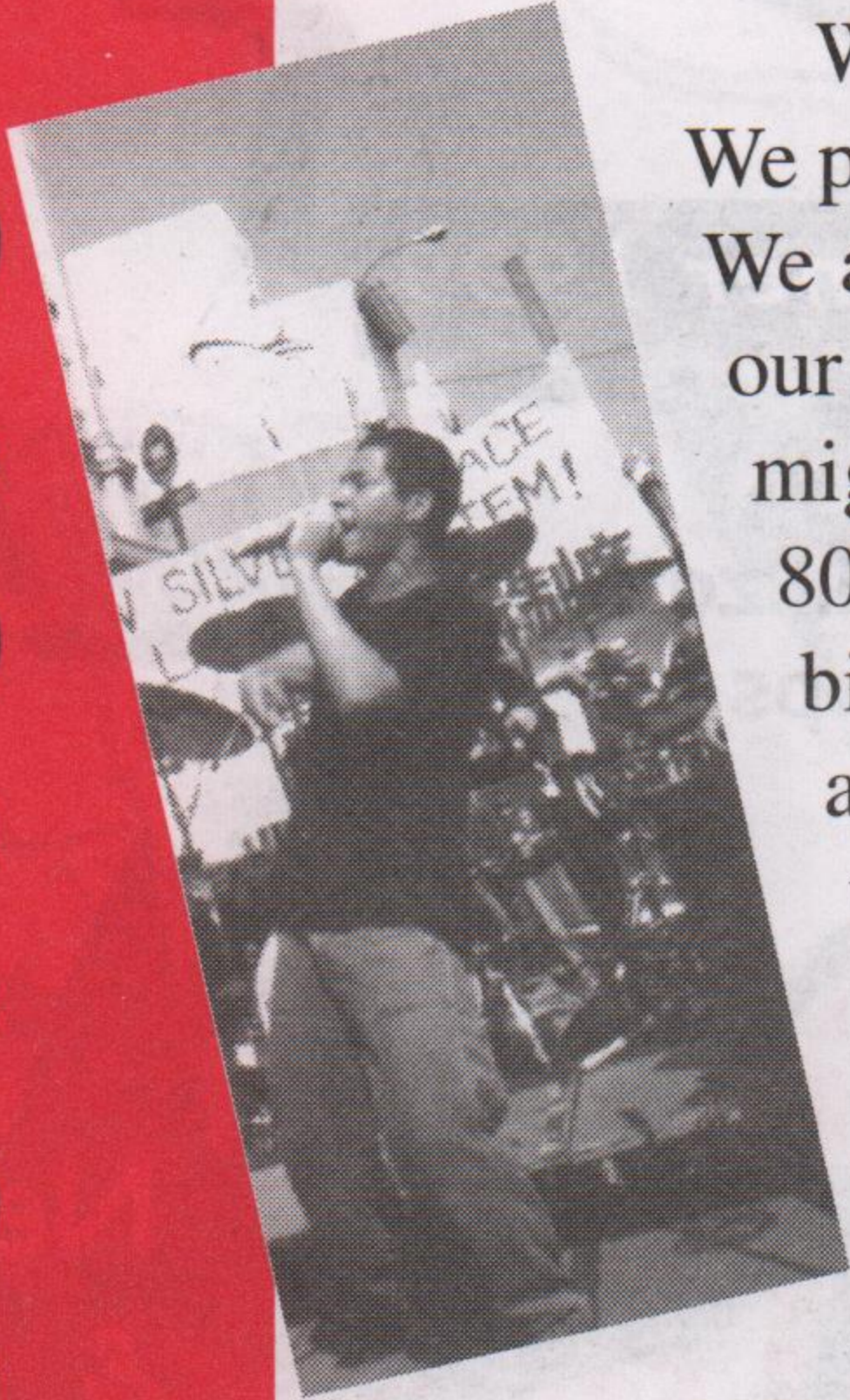
New
&
Improved

Only One Lousy Buck!!!

IN THIS ISSUE: Ricanstruction Interview
• Cabbies Organize • Paralegals Speak Out
• Sweatshop Women Lead Fight for Change
• Waiters Rebel • and Much, Much More!

We're Back!!!

From the Editors



Dear Reader:

We're back! Welcome to issue no. 2 of *PUNCHING THE CLOCK*. We put this 'zine together so we could have a place to talk about our lives. We are sick of following whatever our bosses tell us, losing control over our time and throwing away our self-respect just to keep jobs that we might get fired from at any time anyway. We are sick of working 60 or 80 hours a week or working 2 or 3 jobs just to pay our rent and pay the bills - and then not having enough time left over to enjoy our lives. We are sick of sometimes being shut out of jobs because our skin is the wrong color or because we don't belong to the right union. We are sick of being told the work we do raising our children, or acquiring an education, or fighting for changes in our communities is worthless. We don't want the bosses to divide us into these different groups, to make us compete against each other for something that we all have a right to.

So we're fighting back. We're fighting the whole idea that we should be grateful for whatever jobs we get and that we should try to make our employers happy so they will treat us better. We're fighting for the right to say what is work and what the terms of our work will be.

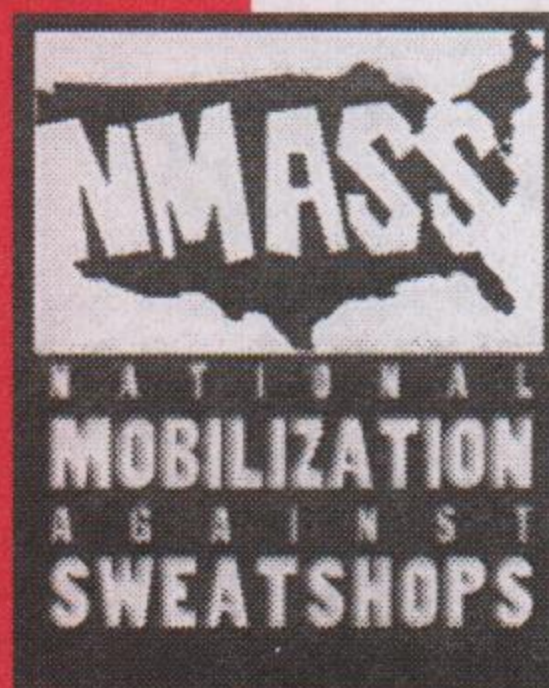
We are all working people. We are all brothers and sisters. What we do and don't do affects what the next person does and doesn't do. Regardless of where each of us came from, regardless of whether we work in a factory or in an office, regardless of the language we speak. Regardless of whether we are even employed. Mothers and prison laborers are among the hardest workers in our society!

We hope that you enjoy this issue of the 'zine. And we hope that you will tell us about your own lives, about your own job situations, about what you are dealing with...

-The Editors

The following people worked on or contributed to this issue in some way:

Chace, Camilla Chen, Alano & Richard (Ricanstruction), Yuichi Tamano, Nam Sung, Javaid Tariq, D.G. Wilson, Kiran Purohit, Ruth Herrera, Eva Herrera, Hoon Kim, Graham Wong, Alex Hogan, JoAnn Lum, Peter Lin, Martin Scott Carter, Ken Atkins, Repetoire, John Antush, Mrs. Lai, David Thorne, Angie Wu, and Dale Wittig (Resistant Strains).



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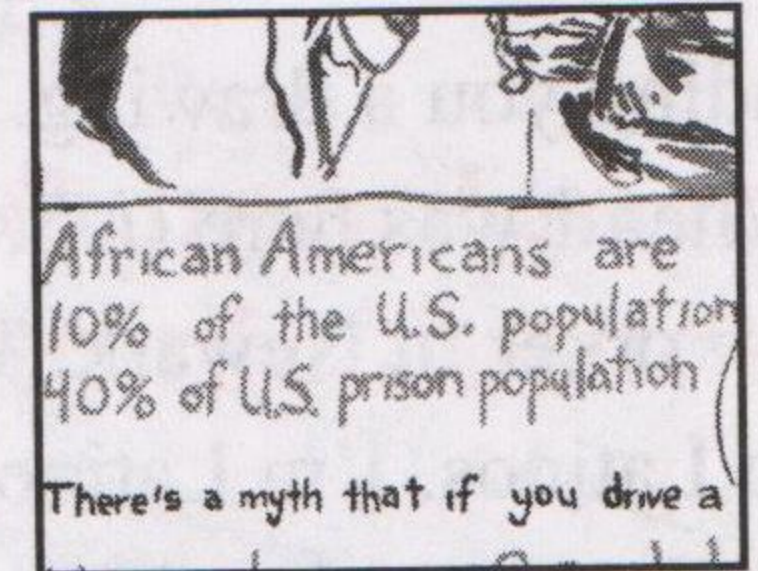
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NMASS

LETTERS

PUNCHING THE CLOCK Welcomes your letters
P.O BOX 130293
New York, NY 10013-0995

Hi,
 I'm sending you a drawing. This drawing meant a lot. When I was here (USA) working as a factory worker in Newark. The factory owner they are Latinos. I'm Latino too. They controlled the time production and all the time push on us! "Trabaja o ya sabes!" That was what they use to say. I did not want to be laid off. I worked there for 3 months. Those months looked to me as worse even to me. It was good for me as an artist, and enrich my life.

Next month (6 July) I go back to my country (Ecuador). I hope that those months will be a memory.

Sinceremente,
 Miguel



MIGUEL

Back By Popular Demand

THE NMASS ORGANIZERS SCHOOL!

Community Organizing for Control Over Our Lives and Our Time

SOME TOPICS

What is the Sweatshop System?

Can the Sweatshop System be Reformed?

Women Fighting the Sweatshop System

Why a New Labor Movement is the Solution

Fighting the Racism of the Sweatshop System

Fighting for Reforms while Undermining the Sweatshop System

Dates to be announced.

Classes will be held on Saturdays during the day.

Location at the NMASS office inside the CSWA Brooklyn Workers Center, 5411 7th Avenue, between 54 and 55 St. Course fee \$50, \$40 for NMASS members;

Scholarships Available

Contact NMASS at 718-633-97577

Mother and Daughter

And for their Health

Organize Against Long Hours

By Eva and Ruth Herrera

Eva Herrera worked in a factory dying shirts and handling chemicals for more than 10 years. She was being paid \$180 a week working more than sixty hours. She is now fighting back with a workers' compensation case for health problems and is organizing around the issues of workers' rights with the Latin-American Workers' Project, a workers' group based in Bushwick, Brooklyn, New York. Eva and her daughter, Ruth, both attended NMASS' 1997 Organizers' School and have been involved in our campaigns against long work hours and for enforcement of labor laws.

I am in the 10th grade. I go to Grover Cleveland High School in Bushwick Brooklyn, where I live.

When my mother started working at the T-shirt factory, I was two years old. It was a total change from being with your mother to being with this other person, a baby sitter. She couldn't pick me up after school. She never went to the plays we did at school, or to the Glee Club performances. My mother never came to anything. Not even my graduation from elementary school. She didn't have enough time to be with me. When she got home at around eight we hardly had time together. I was in a bad mood, and she was in a bad mood. We were fighting or crying.

In the morning it was like a big thing because sometimes I used to go to sleep late. Just be watching TV. My mom was like, "Ruth wake up! Ruth, wake up!" And she's like "Come on! I'm gonna be late for work!" So finally, I would get up, it was around 7 o'clock in the morning or 6:45. From there she would have to take me to the babysitter. And she at 7:30 at the bus station to leave, to get there around 8 o'clock. If it was possible to get there earlier the better. And when she came back it was around 8:30, 9 o'clock. Sometimes 10 o'clock at night.

I was like, "Why can't you come earlier? Why can't you do this?" So she was like, "But Ruth, I have to

give you this, I have to buy you food, I have to buy you clothes, I have to get you things for school."

I went through a process of growing up, where you finally feel like you understand your mom and feel like, "My mom works really hard for something." Slowly I started asking her,



Ruth and Eva Herrera Stand up Against Sears Support of SweatShops At Streetbeat Sportswear

"How's your boss?" And "Who's that secretary that answers the phone at your job." And just by asking questions, I learned more.

I remember one time she came home and here hair was like all up, standing up, with like, this kind of paste in it. And it had this really strong chemical smell in it. It used to be really strong. I

used to be like, "Let me see how your hair smells." And it was like, "My god!" Really bad paste was right on her hair. And she had no type of protection there.

It's like, "forget about this stupid job! Leave there."

But she was like, "Where am I going to find another job? What am I going to do? I have to pay the rent. I have to pay the bills. I have to spend money on Ruth."

I guess there was a point where I was also afraid that my mother would lose her job, or where I thought, "What are we going to do if she loses her job?"

And we always used to go to doctors. Always. There was never a time when we did not go to doctors. Because her arm used to hurt a lot. She had headaches every day. Sometimes her headaches lasted for three days. It was not like regular headaches. Her whole head hurt. And we used to go because she had pains in

her legs, her back. We went to acupuncture doctors, to nutritionists, we went to everything. There is nothing we didn't try. And it was, like, a hundred dollars for medicines or for whatever.

Many doctors would say, "you've got to rest a lot." Or, "You've got to take off all the stress." So between doctors and babysitters and stress, I was always like, "I hate this! I don't want to do this! I don't

ORGANIZERS

want to go to doctors! I don't want you to go to work."

I was more of a complaining than a supporting daughter.

Now we make the best of it. I take one day at a time. Because you never know if you're going to make it to tomorrow. And

FIGHTING LONG HOURS IS IMPORTANT TO ME

BECAUSE I SAW MYSELF UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES

I always tell my mom, "If I know I'm going to die to die tonight, I know I'm going to go happy, because at least I did what I had to do today."

Fighting long hours is important to me, Because I saw myself under these circumstances. I have seen more than other kids. And maybe there are worse conditions than my mom's. I think it's important for people to know what their rights are, so they can spend more time with their children. (It's not fair that they have to give their kids everything, the most they can, when they're working so hard just to get their little ones what they need.) It's not really worth all that, in terms of giving them everything they don't have, instead of time to spend with them. You know, "I'm doing all this because I love you." Or giving them a hug. Or just give a kiss on the cheek before they go to sleep. It's more important the sense of love that a child feels, than knowing that "Oh, my mother's going to buy me this, and I'm going to be looking so cool!" And I think it hurts more not having their parents there than not getting their favorite toy, or favorite clothing, or whatever favorite thing. And then, you never know when they will try to take your job away. Every year we go to visit my relatives in Mexico. One time when we returned from the trip we went to my mom's job. They say, "You are on the waiting list. You have to wait until one of the temporary workers leaves."

Eva Herrera (With Ruth translating).

I worked at the same place for ten years. When they started hiring more Polish and Italians, the supervisors started changing his attitude towards the Latinos, like, they are stupid. He made Latinos work longer hours than the Poles. They started hiring white people, saying they were temporary workers, but they used them to replace the Latinos who had been working there. They separated the white and Latino workers. The Latino workers had to be there right at 8am, in front of their machines and they had to stay working until the last bell rang. The others could come in late and leave five minutes early, and they gave them clothes.

One woman, Carmen, was fired. And she has a baby. She had to take medicine every morning before she came to work everyday, and so she came in at 8:10 or 8:15 because she had to wait for the reaction. And so they said, "Don't come late no more." And then they fired her. Another woman fell and something happened to her spinal cord, her vertebrae. And they fired her and put a Polish person in her place. Another time a woman fell down and she went to complain and they just fired her. One woman always used to eat stuff from the refrigerator there. Once, as a joke, they put a type of glue they use in a cup in there.

She drank it. She was throwing up blood and everything. That was cruel.

One manager got fired because he tried to protect the rights of the women working there.

The also changed the work, so that two people would do the tasks that three people had done before.

They put the shirts in a big oven. Sometimes people would get burned. When they put the shirts in and then took them out sometimes there was lot of smoke. There was no ventilation and nowhere for the smoke to go. One time the

fire really leaped up and smoke came out. A woman got terrified and ran out. While she was running she fell down and hurt her arm and her leg. After she complained they fired her.

Trying to get changes is hard. There was one time when most of the workers stopped working because they hadn't been paid. They had been told the week before that they had to wait a week for their paycheck. That week they still didn't get paid. So they refused to work.

The supervisor came running in, and said, "If you don't work right now, just leave. I don't need you at all. I can replace you right now!"

Once before that they asked a woman to stay late to finish a job. She said, "No. I'm very sorry, I have to go home now." And the supervisor said, "If you don't want to do it, don't come tomorrow morning." And so she went to the Department of Labor to try to complain. The Department of Labor didn't do anything.

When we went to the Department of Labor. The woman there was like, "They can do whatever they want. They are the owners!" A couple of workers from the factory went together. The woman there was like, "Just tell me what you want. Do you want them to pay you for the salary they didn't pay you? Just tell me what you want them to pay you. After that, you're fired, you're fired. They are the owners, after all."

I got so mad, because I went to the Department of Unemployment and they told me to get a letter from a doctor saying that I can no longer do this kind of work.

And this man there we had spoken to sent us back a letter saying that I was lying and that I owed the

Department of Unemployment \$300. It's crazy, right? I got so mad, I tried to talk to the supervisor. I wanted to put in a complaint against the department. I tried to talk to the supervisor. But every time I asked for the supervisor, they said that whatever I had heard from the man I had talked to, the supervisor would say the same thing. They blocked me at every attempt to talk to the supervisor. Finally, I got a phone number from the security guard. He was nervous about giving it to me because he thought I was going to kill the guy!

"They Can do Anthing They Want They Are the Owners!"

Mrs. Lai

Worker Organizer Leader

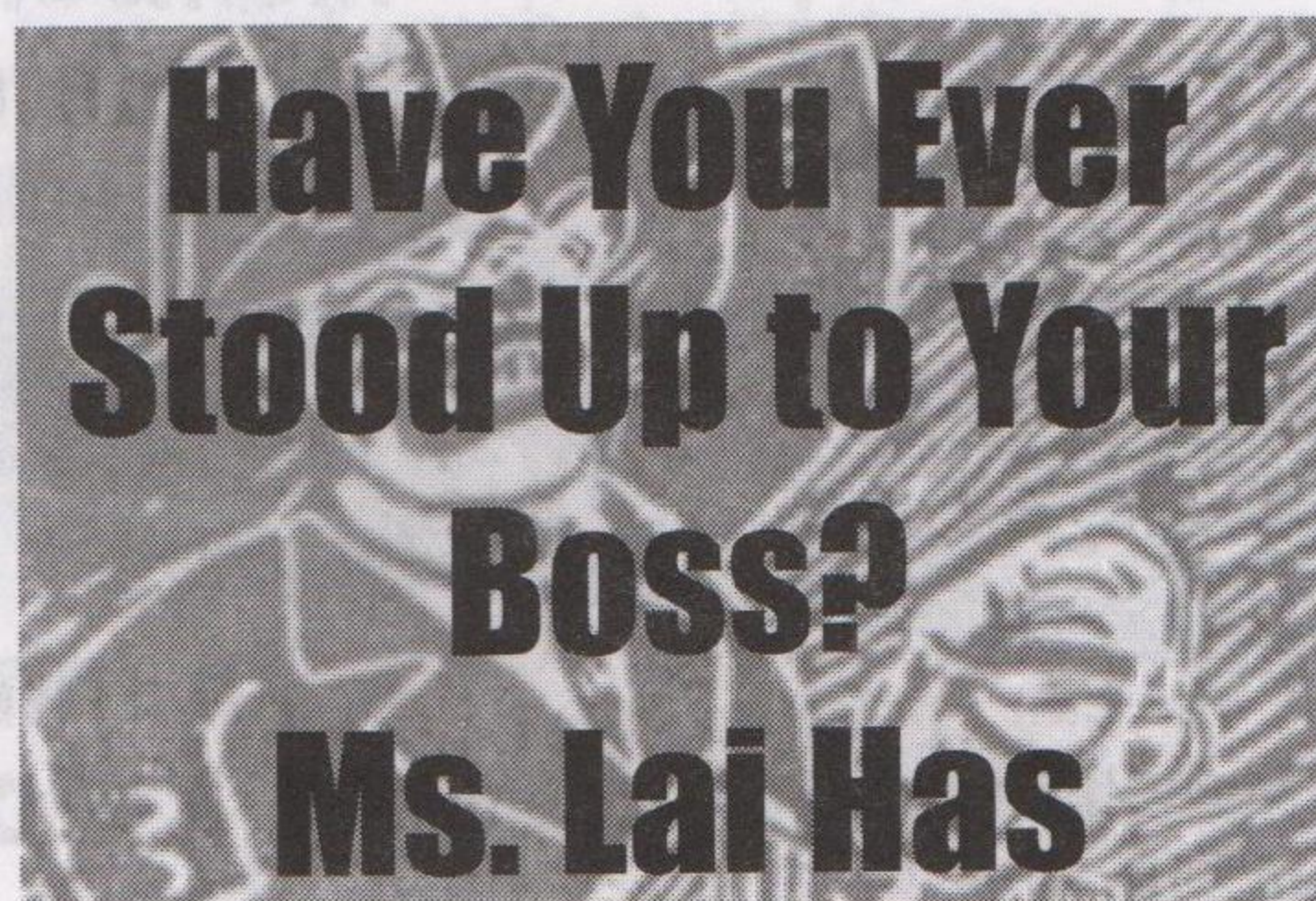
Have you ever stood up to your boss? What would happen? Many of us fear getting fired or laid off if we complain. Mrs. Lai worked at East Point factory in Manhattan for almost seven years. She was laid off three times for challenging her boss. Each time she fought successfully to be rehired. Now she's going after the manufacturer whose clothes she was making – Donna Karan. Ms. Lai's struggle shows that buying from supposedly "good" companies is no solution to the sweatshop problem, nor are monitoring agreements. The only effective monitors, and the only ones capable of ending the sweatshop system, are workers themselves, organized in our communities and workplaces.

I started working at the factory in May 1992. I was making Donna Karan clothes, which sell for more than \$1,000 each. I was paid \$5.50 an hour. After working a month, I told the boss she was paying me too little. She gave me 50 cents more. I was doing all kinds of work – single stitching, double stitching, working as a seamstress and a presser — and still I wasn't being paid enough, so I asked the boss for another raise. By September she gave me \$6.50. That was my last pay increase. We were working 57 1/2 hours per week, usually 10 hours a day, Money through Friday and 7 1/2 hours on Saturday. We never once got overtime pay. We were a unionized factory too, with Local 22 of UNITE (the Union of Needle Industries and Trades Employees).

Working there was better than working in Chinatown factories, because we were paid by the hour instead of by the piece. So financially it was more secure. But it felt like being in a prison. If we were two minutes late we were docked one half-hour of our pay. We had to keep our heads down at all times once we started working. No looking up. No talking to anyone. Can you imagine it? A big room with rows and rows of machines and all of us sitting down, looking down and working. No going to the bathroom, no making or receiving phone calls, not even for emergencies. All those years I worked there, I never gave out my factory number to anyone except my daughters' father. One time Winnie, my daughter, was sick. Her father called me because he needed to ask where our insurance card was. He called three times and the boss kept

hanging up on him. The third time, my husband finally said, "If you don't let me talk to her, I'll sue you."

Why did I stay there if it was so bad? Well, I have to think about my two small children, Winnie and Jennifer. It takes so much to raise them. Coming from Hong Kong, I had no idea working conditions could be so bad in the U.S. It's



worse than being a slave!

Once, the boss made us all sign a piece of paper in English. I refused to sign it. I wanted to take the letter home, get it translated and bring it back the next day. But everybody else already signed. They were telling me, "Come on! It's nothing. Just sign." The boss kept saying, "If you want to work here, you have to sign it now. I'm telling you what it says." There was so much pressure, I finally signed that paper. You know what it said? That we were all getting paid in cash. So that she can avoid paying taxes.

In November 1997, the boss laid me off. She said, "Go get unemployment." One week later, I went back for my last paycheck and saw ten new people working there. I asked the boss "Why is there work for them and not for me?" She told me to leave.

So I went to the union.

They told me to go to the Department of Labor if I wanted to pursue the overtime money I was owed. But it's not just about the money. I should never have been fired in the first place. In November 1998, the court ruled that I must be reinstated. I went back to work. On the first day, other workers came up to me and asked what happened, how things were. But after that day no one spoke to me. When I went to the lunch table to eat everyone else would get up and leave. I knew the boss was meeting with the foreman and telling everyone they better not talk to me.

She didn't want me to influence people.

Six weeks later I was fired again. The boss told me, "There's no work." Again I complained to the union. Ten days later I went back to work. On December 30, the boss said she was closing the factory. She has two factories next door to each other and said she's closing mine. So on December 31, 1998 I left. I noticed the boss and the foreman were really happy I was leaving.

I knew something wasn't right, so in January I went back to the union. The representative told me that it's my fault the factory closed.

The rep said, "Because you're suing your boss, Donna Karan won't give any more contracts to him."

I told the union, "I didn't do anything wrong! The boss is the one who's wrong! You can't blame me for this!"

In February I went back to the factory for my W-2 form. I saw all the old employees still sewing Donna Karan clothes in the same factory. Maybe only the name of the factory had changed. I

ORGANIZERS

What's Donna Karan Gonna Do About Rebellious Sweatshop Workers?

told my boss, "Don't play with me! Why is it that other people have work but I don't? I want to come back to work!" She told me to get out.

I ended up getting my own lawyer. Now I'm suing both my boss and the union. The union rep had lied to me, saying the other factory owned by my boss would also be closed a month after mine closed.

I was a UNITE member for over six years. Each year I gave them \$200-300 — for what, I don't know. I found out that according to the union contract, our minimum wage should have been \$6.60 an hour. They never once showed us that contract! They didn't do anything for us.

Recently the union lawyer called to say my boss was offering \$2,000 to settle everything, plus \$500-\$600 if I agreed to not go back to work. Of course I said, "No!" According to the law, I'm actually owed over \$20,000 in overtime and backwages.

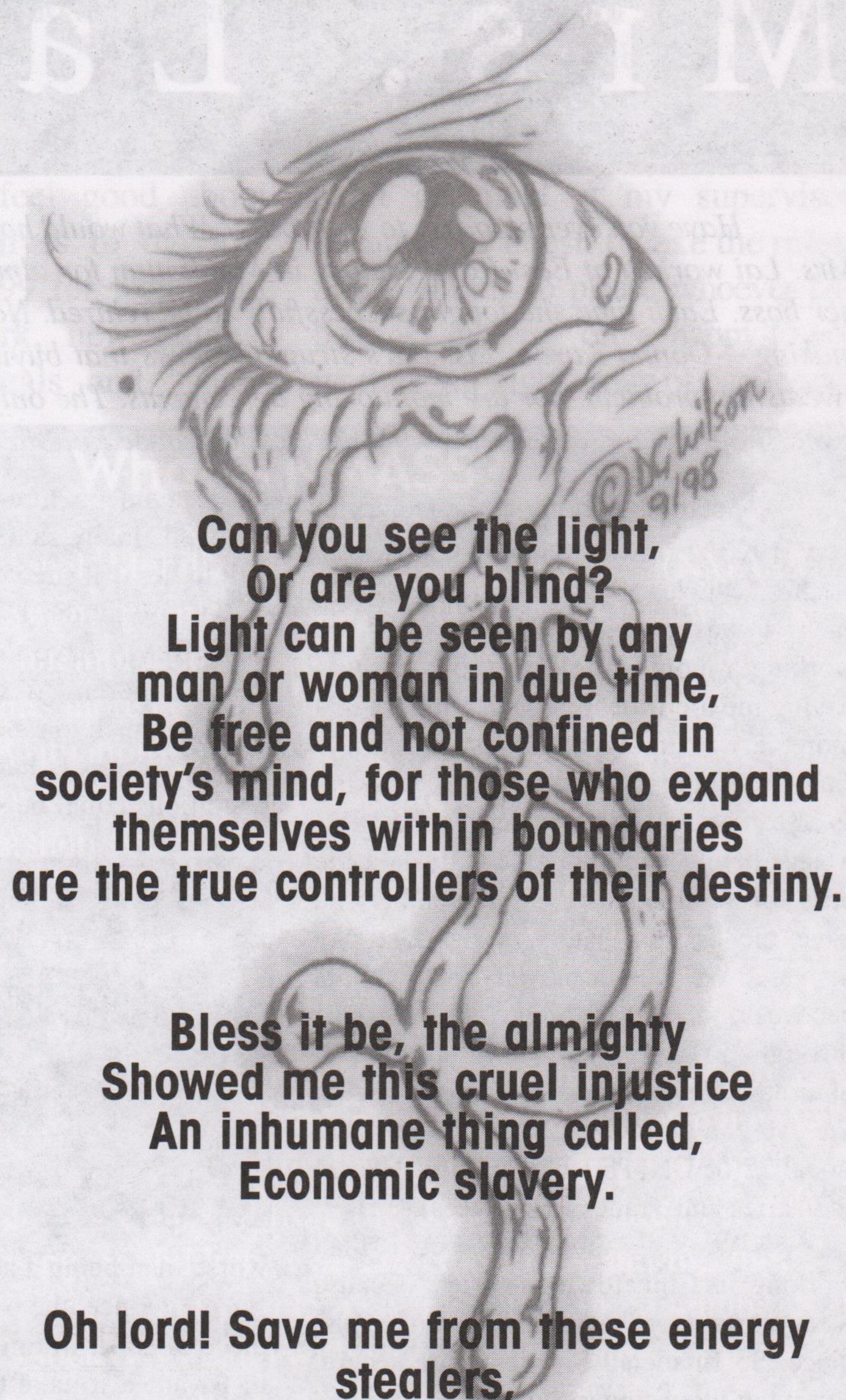
More than the money, I want to go back to work. Because of my case, all the other workers in my factory get overtime pay now. It's really not fair that other people get overtime pay because of my lawsuit, but I was fired in retaliation for the suit. If I don't go back, those workers will see how I won a court ruling to be rehired, but then was laid off and never paid what I'm owed. They would be scared of speaking up and the boss could do whatever she wants next time. But if I go back, I can watch her. She can't break the law again if she knows I am watching. Other workers at the factory and in the community will see that I fought for my rights, won my job back and got my money back too. They will see that you don't have to be afraid of going after what you deserve.

Lai Tai is active with the Chinese Staff & Workers' Association (CSWA), an independent workers' center based in New York's Chinatown. CSWA brings together Chinese workers of all trades to fight for their rights in the workplace and in the community, to challenge the sweatshop system, to counter racism and sexism, and to work for social and economic justice. CSWA is also advancing the notion that all workers should have the right to work 40 hours a week and make a livable wage, so that we can live like human beings.

Contact NMASS to find out how you can help hold Donna Karan responsible for these conditions.

CAN YOU SEE THE LIGHT?

By REPETOIRE



**Can you see the light,
Or are you blind?
Light can be seen by any
man or woman in due time,
Be free and not confined in
society's mind, for those who expand
themselves within boundaries
are the true controllers of their destiny.**

**Bless it be, the almighty
Showed me this cruel injustice
An inhumane thing called,
Economic slavery.**

**Oh lord! Save me from these energy
stealers,
Who wish to place me in their shops,
Sweat me 'til I drop,
Laughing with their hands in the pot.
Or even better, leave me going on
empty,
Shut their doors in my face,
Insisting that I try for a fast food place.**

**What a waste I say,
They say the same,
While looking in my way.**

So can you see the light

WHY I JOINED NMASS

"If there is one theme that defines my songwriting, it's been the idea of how work affects people's lives" — Bruce Springsteen

By **HOON KIM**

I first joined NMASS thinking I was joining an organization that was simply fighting sweatshops. My feeling was that I wanted to do some good, to help others who were in need, 'cause I felt tired of talking about social problems but not doing much to really change them. To my surprise, in NMASS I found a perspective that was very different from what I had previously thought the group was about and since then has challenged my own reasons for joining a group or a cause. See, there are many organizations doing positive things. One can join the Peace Corps, a church project, or an AIDS awareness group, but these organizations mostly provide services and in the process take a paternalistic attitude towards change. It's like they are saying, "you cannot change your situation without us helping you."

In reality, they rarely challenge the systemic problems we face, but simply provide a temporary relief from them. What I learned working with NMASS is that we are not fighting for the rights of workers who are working in sweatshop factories, meaning fighting for them. These workers are doing the fighting themselves! What NMASS is trying to do is to bring together young people and workers of all kinds. Whether we are conscious of it or not, we are not simply consumers, as they make us believe. We are all

workers. Whether you are a university professor, a garment or construction worker, a parent who takes care of your children, or someone with a white collar job, we are the ones producing the wealth that keeps this economic system alive.

I guess we have all heard lately about the general competitiveness of the job market, about corporate downsizing and the proliferation of part-time and temporary jobs. What we have found out in NMASS is that the sweatshop system has become a literal metaphor

**Whether we are
conscious of it or not,
we are not simply
consumers as they make
us believe.**

We are all workers

for our economic reality and has a great impact in the quality of our lives. So as workers, most of us experience the same sort of problems. Namely, not having enough say in our jobs; being afraid of speaking up if there is something we do not agree with because we might be fired; and not having control over our time, since many times we are forced to work long hours whether we like it or not.

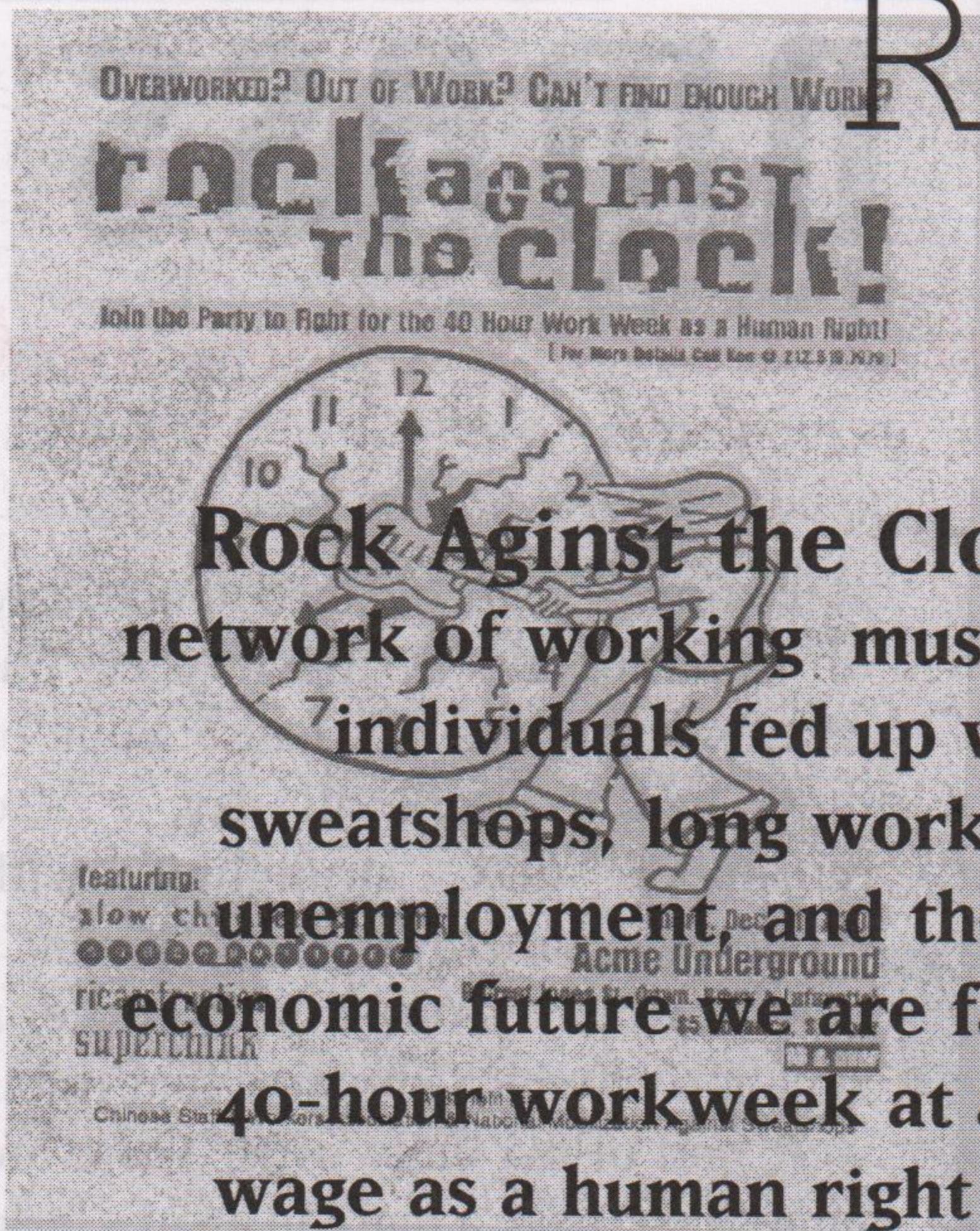
One thing I realized is how work affects our lives and the lives of our families and friends. I remember when we were kids, my older brother,

at the time 8 years old, had to take care of us until late at night when our parents came back because both of them had to work all day. I also remember how struggling with economic hardships, my parent's moods would worsen and create a situation in which shouting and fights were part of our daily lives. These are things that make a mark in a kid's head for the rest of his or her life. I guess what I'm trying to say is that we are all in the same boat. This identification as workers helps us see that we are not really that different from a worker who works in a garment factory. Meaning we are bound to the same conditions of long hours and the lack of control of our lives and our workplaces.

So being with NMASS has changed my perspective. I am not in it anymore to simply help others or to do some service for those in so-called "need." I am in it for myself. See, it's not about charity but about self-interest, 'cause as a worker, I'm vulnerable to those same conditions. I guess what is at stake here is the idea of self-empowerment, about taking control of one's life. But to do this, we can not do it alone. We need to come together as workers and build a larger movement around a common struggle for control of our time. And you don't even need to join NMASS, we think this is something beyond this one organization. If you can relate to this perspective, you can take it to your community and spread the message and organize around issues pertaining to all workers' rights.

This is what I have learned working with NMASS for this past year or so.

ROCK AGAINST THE CLOCK!



Rock Against the Clock is a network of working musicians and individuals fed up with sweatshops, long work hours, unemployment, and the bleak economic future we are facing. The 40-hour workweek at a living wage as a human right for all.

Music is a way we can build a new culture to end this sweat shop system.

Here is why we formed Rock Against the Clock:

SUPERCHINK: Using rap and funk we talk about Asian-American history, anti-asian violence, media representations and martial arts movies. We fully support the struggle to abolish inhuman working conditions. Much love to all the brown and yellow brothers and sisters!
Rock Against the Clock!

SUBCOMMITTEE: We are laborers in the material and metaphysical sense(s) and we are activists in the musical sense. We want to collaborate in the formation of new political cultures and paths of resistance.

RICANSTRUCTION: To end this indignity called sweatshops all of us who are downpressed, or who simply give a damn, must stand in true solidarity and struggle for human rights and human dignity.

SLOW CHILDREN PLAYING: "Twenty-five cents in a worn hat is not enough/ to feed the voices in your head when you sleep at the night/ You drown in footsteps of the lonely people walking/ of the business people coughing from ties around their necks"



Bert Wang of SUPERCHINK Takes the Head off a SNAKE

Sub-Committee at a Rock Against the Clock Benefit for NMASS



Birthmark Rocks a demonstration at New Silver Palace



Chambers of the Sweatshop System: Prison Labor

WHO'S NEXT!

by CHACE

The national increase of incarceration and sweatshop industries has been a growing plague within poor communities, particularly among blacks and Latinos. From being a cheap-labor worker, to unemployed person, to criminal, to convict labor, the trend comes full circle and the only fuckers smilin' are Big Business and Big Government officials.

The prison population was 300,000 in the 1970s. Today there are nearly 2 million incarcerated. Liberals and conservatives are sitting pretty off profits while expanding slave labor in the American economy.

WHAT THE FUCK?

In 1995 government prison industries had sales of \$2 billion. Since 1990 thirty states have legalized the contracting of prison labor to private companies. Across the nation prisoners are doing such work as data entry for Chevron, making telephone reservations for TWA, raising hogs, shoveling shit, digging graves, and making circuit boards, limousines and waterbeds. They're even makin' lingerie for Victoria's Secret. Privately operated prisons have generated \$82 million from sales of products and services made by prison labor.

Spalding golf balls are packed by "captive labor" in Hawaii. In Lockhard, Texas, inmates held in private prisons owned by the Wackenhut Corporation build and fix circuit boards, which are used by companies such as Dell, IBM, and Texas Instruments. In 1994 a Chicago-area Toys-R-Us used a night shift of slave labor to re-stock shelves. The

state of Oregon uses its prison laborers to make McDonalds uniforms and blue jeans called "Prison Blues." The jeans generated \$4.5 million in sales. American Express and General Electric have invested in the growing prison industry in Oklahoma and Tennessee. Tennessee prisoners stitch together jeans for Kmart and JC Penny and produce \$80 wooden rocking ponies for Eddie Bauer. Investment houses, construction companies, architectural firms and support services such as food, medical, transportation and furniture, all stand to profit from prison expansion and prison labor.

In 1995 alone, 150 new prisons were built and filled. Wages in government prison industries are as low as 13 cents per day. Louisiana, Arkansas, Georgia and Texas do not give prisoners wages at all for their labor.

Supporters say institutionalized slave labor "offers inmates vocational opportunities for legitimate means of livelihood upon their release from custody." Since 1980 women in prison industries have been attaining "vocational opportunities" in the areas of reupholstery, fabric production, laundry and data entry.

Cont'd on Pg. 12

"The Prison population was 300,000 in the 1970's. Today there are 1.6 million incarcerated"

PRISONS

From Pg. 11

Meanwhile, outside unemployment in black and Latino communities reaches levels 50 percent higher than the national average. Ninety-two percent of women in prison reported an income of less than \$10,000 per year before their arrested.

The Department of Corrections maintains that work is voluntary. However, each day worked reduces a prisoner's sentence by one day. Therefore, those who refuse to work will serve twice as long a sentence as the inmates who agree to work. Soon companies like Sears won't have workers making clothing for \$1-3 an hour. Now they can use a chain gang system to force prisoners to work.

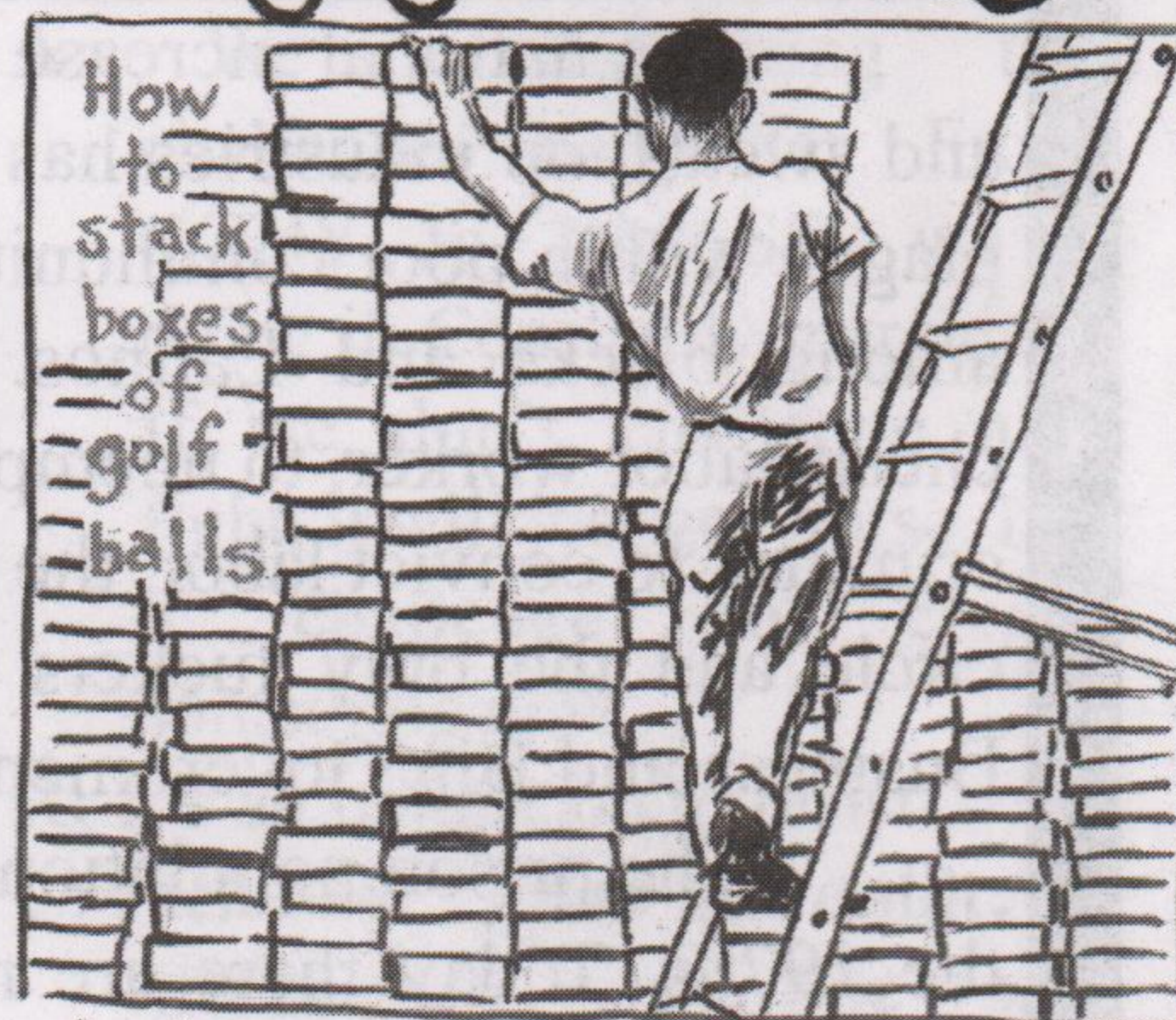
WHOEVER SAID WE HAVE CIVIL RIGHTS?

John Perotti, a prisoner in the Lucasville Correction Center in Lucasville, Ohio was beaten and tortured and sent to an isolation cell. He was placed on lockdown for his organizing efforts against slavery practices. In California, prisoners who refuse to work are sent to disciplinary housing and lose canteen privileges, as well as "good time" credit that slices hard time off their sentences. At the Oak Park Heights Correction Facility in Minnesota, 150 prisoners went on strike in March 1997 to protest their slave wages. Before it even began they lost the litigation battle in court to even attain the right to strike!

Where once America was

"Where once America was the last country to outlaw slavery, it now becomes the country to teach the world to enslave legally"

One job farmed out to prisoners is packing golf balls



African Americans are 10% of the U.S. population 40% of U.S. prison population

Latinos are 10% of the California population, 35% of the CA prison population

There's a myth that if you drive a



nail into a golf ball it will explode

How to swing a club

I am Tiger Woods



The job you want is waiting for you in Prison at 29¢ Per hour

the last country to outlaw slavery, it now becomes the country to teach the world to enslave legally. According to the 13th Amendment slavery is legal: "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as punishment for crime, where of the party shall have been duly

convicted." So says the Constitution of America. Slave Codes are never abolished, only rewritten. Remember we got three strikes, so watch out how you swing on your last pitch 'cuz your ass will be workin' on the plantation for free.

Peace and Revolution.

RICANSTRUCTION: the Punching the Clock Interview

"At some point we're going to stop singing and start swinging."

RICANSTRUCTION is a loud, fast, angry, salsa-influenced whirlwind of hardcore energy that doesn't fit into cookie-cutter labels created by the rock industry. What stands out about the group the most is not frame-shaking rhythms, complex musicianship or blistering energy — although they offer these up by the ton. What is most striking is their commitment to music as part of building a grassroots culture of resistance to the system of exploitation. Rather than adapting to what entertainment corporations want to ram down our throats, they create music that they, and the people they care about, want to hear. Of course, creating this kind of art is damned hard work, and the sweatshop system we live under offers no support for this kind of labor.

In 1997 Ricanstruction played the ROCK AGAINST THE CLOCK benefit concert for NATIONAL MOBILIZATION AGAINST SWEATSHOPS (NMASS). Since then, band members have continued to participate in NMASS, coming out to events and joining demonstrations. The following interview with Alano (singer) and Richard (manager, freelance terrorist) of Ricanstruction, was done for PTC by Chace in early 1999.

Chace (C): How did you guys start out?

Alano (A): We've known each other from the 'hood and always played for fun, but some comrades said we should have a name. The idea

behind the name Ricanstruction seemed right because as a people we've been a colonial state for 500 years and now we are in a process of recreating our self image.

C: Who are your inspirations?

A: Coltrane, The Clash, Bad Brains, Ray Baretto, Willie Colon, Che [Guevara], Malcolm, Albizu, Lolita [Lebron], Marcus Garvey, anyone who really touched us in our lives we've tried to make it come out in our art.

Richard (R): Carlos Santana, Jimi Hendrix and the dude on 116th St. talkin' about Jesus, redemption and ascension.

C: Do you only depend on your music for finances?

A: Yes, but we depend on the kindness of strangers and Jah always provides. Rastafari Faith.

C: How many hours do you guys work?

A: Twenty four six because on the 7th day the lord said to rest.

C: What made you choose to be a musician?

A: Fate, Destiny. When music is respected it can be the voice of the voiceless. It's a catalyst to create change which I want to be a part of.

C: How do you see your relationship to the community?

A: A loving relationship between Brothers, Sisters and fathers and occasional cousins. The music is part of the community. It's a mirror. Everything the community, is we are. "Unfortunately," everything we are the community

is.

C: Who's your audience?

A: It literally varies. Punks when we play a squat, Latinos at a garden. In El Salvador, 70-year-old women and 6-year-old kids. Everyone's in the mosh pit. Basically, those with an open mind and ear. Revolutionaries in Vieques and sufferahs in the ghetto.

C: Who would you like to reach with your music and why?

A: The same people we just spoke of. Those impoverished in the slums. We have something we feel they should hear, and they have something that we want to hear. It's not an MTV-manufactured revolution. We're trying to communicate our own society, communities. We won't call our homes the ghettos. They'll be known as local autonomous zones.

"It's not an MTV-manufactured revolution. We're trying to communicate our own society, communities... Culture comes from the people, communities. Not from the sound-byte or a 30 - second commercial. It can't be bought and sold." — Alano

C: What effect do you have on your audience?

A: We want whatever they want. Whether it be inspiration, catharsis, revolt, resurrection, ascension, retribution, forty acres and a mule, a homeland to call their own, a united and liberated Latin America, a united Africa, a

INTERVIEW

united Asia. For the U.S. to get off the people's back. Hands off Cuba. Hands off Puerto Rico and Haiti, and leave Assata alone. Whatever they want, that's what we want. An end to sweatshops, downpression, exploitation.

C: When I say "packaged culture" what comes to mind?

A: A culture we're fighting and living against. I don't think packaged culture is any longer culture. We're creating it. It's free. It can't be dressed up in a suit and die. [Packaged culture] is packaged meat. Culture comes from the people, communities. Not from the sound-byte or a 30-second commercial. It can't be bought and sold.

R: My life is not a style. Resist the selling of rebellion, the coopting of revolution. And true revolutionaries know the difference. Madison Avenue is packaging. They're trying that shit. But we resist — the underground. For every so-called rebellion that's packaged, revolution is constantly changing, 365 degrees, ever-moving, ever-changing, ever-growing, ever-Ricanstruced.

C: How do you see Ricanstruction influencing a cultural revolution?

A: It's a part of it. We're providing the soundtrack. Emma Goldman said, "If I can't dance, I don't want to be a part of it." And to quote the fascist Nazi pig, Nietzsche, "I would only believe in a God who knew how to dance."

C: What message does the music give to the reactionary sell-out Latinos?

A: Makes them scared. Makes them run. Makes them put away all the dangerous utensils. Makes them hide under the blanket. Makes

them wanna move to the suburbs. Makes them want to burn all their free-style records.

C: Let's talk about "Pedro's Grave." What influenced you to write that song?

A: Pedro's Grave. It's twofold. Pedro Campos means revolution to many nationalists. Albizu is the consciousness of Puerto Rico. He's the guy who stands over your shoulder and says, "free yourself." When tyranny is law, revolution is order. My

Packaged culture is packaged meat. Culture comes from the people, communities. Not from the soundbyte.

father

is Pedro, who is also a nationalist. The song's also to my father. Pedro, which means Peter, in Latin means "rock." It's the rock that David used to slay Goliath.

C: Heard you went to El Salvador. Can you explain a little about that?

A: For those who don't know, El Salvador was involved in a twelve-year revolutionary struggle. The FMLN (Frente Farabundo Marti de Liberacion Nacional), that was a revolution against the Salvadoran government. In 1992 they declared a cease fire. The FMLN became a legit political party. In 1997 there was an election and the FMLN won positions. We went down for a May Day celebration. We had concerts from the universities to the barns. Sometimes we even had pigs in the mosh-pit — not cops. We went to highschoools. The police there had M-16s, and that was the first gig we did. But it got better. People were still revolutionary-

minded. Women were very strong during the revolution. We met a lot of comrades and met beautiful people that were strong and very inspired. I guess that's what a revolution does.

C: What kind of influence do you guys see our generation having on the conditions we are challenged with?

A: We're confronting the challenges every day. From CUNY to NMASS, we're doing it. Constantly marching. If we don't challenge and fight, it will just get worse. It's a challenge to create something new.

R: It's an obligation to resist.

C: Pick one: 1) Buy more shit; 2) Close your eyes while your brothers and sisters die; 3) That's life; 4) Dance with the gun; 5) Express yourself and riot. How do you see us leaving this world to the younger companeros?

A: Express yourself and riot. Release what's in you. Create change, something better. We're talking rebellion. Building on humanity and justice. A riot of consciousness. Destroy in order to build. We can talk all day about what's wrong, but the key is to change.

RICANSTRUCTION's album, Liberation Day, is available at record stores everywhere. In 1999 they will be coming out with a single to benefit The Friends and Family of Mumia Abu Jamal. Mumia is an African-American political journalist and death-row inmate who was targeted by the Philadelphia police and did not receive a fair trial. You can contact Ricanstruction at uglyplanet.aol.com.

TAXIDRIVERS

CABBIES GET ORGANIZED

Javaid Tariq of the New York Taxi Workers Alliance Speaks Out

This article is based on a conversation Kiran Purohit and John Antush had with Javaid Tariq, a taxi driver and member of the New York Taxi Workers' Alliance (NYTWA) Organizing Committee. There are 12,000 yellow cabs and 24,000 drivers in NYC — 10,000 on day shifts, 12,000 on night. People from 87 countries are taxi drivers. NYTWA, run by and for drivers, is the only group fighting for the rights of all drivers.

Being a taxi driver is like being in a garment sweatshop. It's a sweatshop on wheels. But it's even worse in a car because every driver has to start his job early in the morning or in the evening and has to pay a lease on the car from their own pocket. There is no guarantee of income when they come on the road. Sometimes it's a good day and they make money. Some times they cannot even make what they paid for the car, or they make nothing. You are an independent contractor, so no driver has any kind of benefits, no health insurance, nothing. I think this is the cheapest labor. At other jobs at least you know that minimum wage is \$5.15. But if we are losing our time, because our car broke down, that car costs us around \$11-\$12 per hour. If we make \$20 an hour, then that means we get \$8 per hour.

Our work is for 12 hours. There are two shifts, day time and night time, 6am to 5pm and 5pm to 5am. Driving is a very dangerous and stressful job, especially in New York. I've been driving only for four years, and in this four years the stress I have, I never had in my whole life. Just two years ago, I was a very very healthy person. I had no stomach problems. But in three years time I got a lot of health problems. I'm sitting here now and I have big back pain and I'm taking tablets when I go home, taking pain killer tablets to sleep. You will not see any cab driver

who looks handsome. Because the job ruins their body. Every driver has a lot of health problems. Urinary tract infections. Because you have to sit for hours in cars, and in the city there are not enough restrooms. The city has not made any kind of relief places for drivers. This is a big problem. When they are driving they are always drinking coffee or water, and at least every two hours, three hours, they need to go to the bathroom. And there is no bathroom in the whole city. Only four or five places. These are gas stations. Then if they couldn't find a place, that creates an irritating problem in their stomach. Also your left hand or right wrist, you have a strain on your hand, you are always getting wrist pain, back pain. There is a lot of pain going on in this industry.

Driving cabs is the worst conditions for my health, for making money, and getting a lot of stress. With any kind of job, even people from Wall Street or an office, when you have a good day you go home and see your family and your mood is very good. When you have a bad day, you go home and you feel drowsy and a lot of stress, and it has an effect on your family life. And I think the cab drivers' family life is the worst life. Because after twelve hours of work when you go home — whether you had a bad day or a good day — you go home, and you start arguing with your wife and you can't pay attention to your kids. I have one day off, but I

have to pay for it out of my pocket. I have to pay for the cab for seven days. But I have to spend some time with my family. I'm losing my health. I'm losing my patience. And I'm not making any money.

There are also fines. If you leave for your car for one minute to go to the bathroom, when you come out you find a ticket on the windshield. If you get one ticket a whole day's pay is gone. They increased fines. Before you might have to pay \$35 to \$150. Nowadays you might get fined \$350 to \$1,000. Once you get a \$1,000 fine, your whole month's pay is gone.

People only do this work because they feel there is no alternative. Because other jobs are like a garment worker, \$2-\$3 an hour, this is all the work they can do. Before I became a taxi driver I was in construction. Non-union jobs for small private companies. I used to do interior renovation of apartments. Nine to ten hours of work for only \$40 a day.

The system is not in the favor of drivers. It is in the favor of the garage owners. During the government elections, garage owners and brokers give a lot of funding to candidates. And so the system is doing favors for the garage owners.

The worst is dealing with the Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC). Without any analysis, consideration, or any investigation, the TLC makes the rules. You have to accept it without knowing why they are changing the

rules.

Last week I was sick with the flu. I couldn't work for 10 days. For 10 days I had to pay my lease for my car anyway, out of my own pocket because I own this car. My name is on the car, and my partners' name is on the car. I drive days and he drives nights. But when I get sick, a third person is not allowed to drive. Unless we find some driver, go to our garage, they have to fill out a contract, then they have to go to the TLC office, put in more money, and it takes two or three days. And nobody is going to work one week or three days. They need permanent jobs.

And we have to go to meter charge places. There are only three meter charge places which are advised by the TLC. You are only allowed to go to those places. So they charge whatever they want. We can't complain. We can't go to some other store and get it done ourselves. They give people meter charges to fix things and they don't explain what is wrong or what they are doing.

The TLC does not give any kind of benefits to drivers. You have to go to TLC for every little thing and you have to wait for hours and hours. Outside on the street, in the winter in the snow, in the sun, in the summer. And how they treat us there! Ninety-nine percent of the drivers are people from different Third World countries, so they just treat them however they want.

Aside from the TLC, there is also a lot of racism by police. The police have two different tones. One for private car drivers, one for yellow cab drivers. They try to humiliate you. Sometimes I get so furious. Sometimes the police stop me for nothing.

Also, before we started

organizing, the media was putting drivers down. That's why the people of New York didn't know what was right or wrong. Whatever the news said, whatever Giuliani said, or whatever any other person said about the cab drivers, people thought that was the real picture. Like Giuliani said, "They want to drive 70 miles per hour. I won't allow them. That's why they are crying." But there is no possibility in Manhattan that you can drive 60 to 70 miles per hour! And then afterwards, all the shows, the

"Before there was no voice for drivers... After our strike, when we came out and spoke up on the issues, people heard... Now they know what is the real fight"

media, told how many accidents have happened. But they never told how many accidents involved cab drivers. There is no answer. And anyway, you have to know: did the cab driver make a mistake or did the other person make a mistake? But no, if an accident involved a car with a yellow color, the focus is with the taxi driver. The New York Times published an article that actually accidents from '94-'98 had decreased, not increased. But because they have control over the media, they are telling whatever they want.

**TAXI DRIVERS
FIGHT FOR JUSTICE**

Taxi drivers first started

organizing two years ago. Our first demonstration was August 1997. At that time we were part of the Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence (CAA AV). They didn't want us to organize the way we wanted to, so in February 1998 we left CAA AV and started the New York Taxi Workers' Alliance. Between February and May we worked very hard. Day and night, we made phone calls, we went to garages, we went to places where drivers gather. We worked day and night with our committee members, building NYTWA.

We are fighting to get some benefits for drivers. The TLC is making over \$2 million a month from drivers and not spending a single cent on us. At least open some bathrooms in the city so drivers can park their cars and go to the bathroom.

We want an investigation of the TLC. Every second month the TLC changes the rules. Like you have to put this license here in your car or your meter. We're also fighting the system that says only two drivers' names can be registered for one car. If someone gets sick they must be able to ask someone else to drive.

Since our strike in May, 1998 the attitudes of our customers have changed a lot. Before there was no voice for drivers. Nobody was speaking for the drivers. After our strike, when we came out and spoke up on the issues, people heard about the conditions. Now they know now what is the real fight, the real issue.

**You can contact the
New York Taxi Workers
Alliance at 122 W. 27 St., 10th
Floor, New York, NY 10001-
6281 Phone : 212-627-5248
Fax: 212-741-4563**



Working at the Law Firm

by Camilla Chen

I am a legal assistant/paralegal at one of the top law firms in New York. Paralegals are basically lawyer's assistants; we do all the work that they don't have time for or don't want to bother doing. I'm a little paranoid so I'm going to call my place TF, for The Firm. The lawyers at TF work for a lot of the big-name Wall Street companies and rich people that you read about in the paper. TF has a lot of power and influence because we work on important cases that involve billions of dollars. And in this city, whoever has the money and connections can use lawyers to avoid following the law. They can get out of things that normal people have to do, like pay taxes and follow parking regulations. The federal government will step in and bail them out when they screw up their investment gambling because around here, the system will give welfare to the people at the top before they help anyone at the bottom.

So you're thinking that I probably have a cushy job, right? That's what I was hoping when I agreed to start working here. At

my interview, I was told "overtime is a way of life." I was told that the average workweek is 55-60 hours and during closings (when a deal ends) it would be 85-90 hours. Those numbers scared me, but I was thinking, "okay, this is really rare that such a prestigious firm would want

At my interview, I was told "overtime is a way of life"

to hire me, and I've heard being a paralegal is a pretty respectable entry-level position, so I better take this opportunity while it's here." I would close my eyes and try to imagine the life, try to calculate what 90 hours a week meant. If you divide it by 5, that's 18. I was like, "18 hours a day? No one works that much. They gotta be exaggerating just so they weed out the people that can't handle the pressure. No way those numbers are for real." I had this bad feeling in my stomach, but I just pushed it away and figured I would try the job out and deal with those hours when it happened.

I started working at TF. Guess

what? Before I could think too much about what was happening, I got sucked into working those 85-90 hours a week. And it wasn't Monday-Friday. It was Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays. I worked all day and all night on Labor Day. I was at work so much that I was forgetting how to talk to people that

didn't work at TF. All I

could talk about was work. All I could think about was sleep. My

biggest wish was to be able to go home and just chill in my room for a day. I was happy when I finished work at 2 am. I got really excited the few days when I could leave at midnight. But I always had to be back at work 9:30 am the next morning.

One of the lawyers said to me once, "I don't know why you paralegals stay here. They don't pay you enough. For attorneys, they pay us just enough to keep us here." Most paralegals complain about the job all the time. So I started asking people, Why do you stay? Some people said they need the overtime money and without the hours they wouldn't be able to pay their bills. (These are 21 year old kids who just graduated



college, by the way.) Some people think that’s just the way it is; TF has a lot of big important clients who demand insane deadlines, so paralegals have no choice but to work all the time. TF would lose business if they didn’t. Some people take the abuse because they are worried about their future and think they better make a good impression on the lawyers to get good recommendations. All in all, the general attitude is you stay at TF a little while for your resume, then you leave for something better. If you can’t take the heat, then leave early.

Myself, I couldn’t take it. I started refusing to work weekends and avoiding assignments I thought might take me past 5:30. It’s just too demeaning to be like a little servant with a beeper attached to your hip. Anytime your boss needs you, you come running. Half the time you’re doing a project for the 3rd time because the last two times I was given wrong or incomplete directions. People bitch about co-workers behind their back when they dare to go meet their friends

instead of staying late to help photocopy and file. You’re supposed to cancel everything if they want you at work? You start taking your time to do things out of spite.

The department supervisor sent us this e-mail several weeks ago to make everyone feel good about dedicating their lives to the job. “Let’s look to 1999 for wonderful things...great work, new laughs, more massive deals and “sleep

overs”...more late nights, new friends...” What???? Those are the wonderful things? I don’t like being told how to enjoy myself, and staying up until 3 a.m. putting documents together is not something I’m thinking to get nostalgic about. But you know, I can’t get mad at my supervisor because she doesn’t make the rules. She’s looking to please whoever her boss is, showing off a happy-to-be-working-all-night group of paralegals.

What is NMASS?

The National Mobilization Against Sweatshops (NMASS) brings together young people, garment workers, workfare workers, office workers, unemployed people, students — everyone in this country who wants more control over their time or who is trapped in lousy economic situations by racism and sexism. Together we are organizing in our communities and building a culture of resistance against the sweatshop system that exploits us.

Control over our time and lives — the right to a 40-hour workweek at a living wage — is the demand that unites us. Businesses are trying to squeeze more and more out of our communities and families. People must be able to say “no” when long hours of work become too much. On the other hand, many of us are getting squeezed economically even though we don’t even have a full-time job — *even those of us who are not employed at all*. Businesses depend on and profit from the skills we acquire in school and from the raising of children, who are consumers and the future workforce. Many artists and people who are active in communities also contribute to society’s wealth without receiving wages for it. Our labor should be recognized and compensated with a living wage, paid for by the businesses and people who live off the wealth working people create. We are not fighting for jobs for all, but for the power to say who should get paid for what, and to set our own terms of labor.

NMASS is a dues-paying membership organization. Write to us for more information and for a membership application. Dues are \$25 a year. Our members are leaders in building a new labor movement where they work and live. As a member you will receive *Punching the Clock* for free and are entitled to discounts on all NMASS events and merchandise.

NMASS P.O. Box 130293 New York, NY 10013-0995. Phone: (718) 633-9757. Fax: (718) 437-6991. Web: www.nmass.org. E-mail: NMASS@yahoo.com.

BY
Scott Carter



DIGNITY ADD RESPECT AS A WAITER

I waited tables at a slammin'-busy Brooklyn Heights restaurant and bar for almost two-and-a-half years. After paying my dues for the first four months with weekend brunches and weekday lunches, I was finally given night shifts. I could make a bill and change almost every night, and shit from the customers was nowhere as bad. At night people are just there to chill. During the weekday mo'fuckers is time-constrained 'cuz they's on they lunch hour, and on the weekend brunch, well it just sucks.

The Unlimited Champagne Brunch. When me and my homegirl worked it, it was just that: We took pride in getting everybody completely fucked up that wanted to get fucked up. The champagne was actually some rot-gut sparkling wine, but I seen mo'fuckers drink bottle after bottle of that shit — hell, I was the one pouring it!!

Once I got started on the night shift — well, the shit's just

different. Friday night became my anchor night. It used to be my Monday morning. I would start at either five, six, or seven, depending on that week's rotation. Mo'fuckers coming in having ended their workweek — I was just starting mine. That, I guess, was one of the things that made the gig different. I was on when most everybody else was off.

Bartenders made twice as much as waiters. The job is what we call the "golden handcuffs" — you make okay money, but you're

Capitalism-Brooklyn Style

always on when everybody else is off. Same shit for waiters. I never wanted to bartend. Bartenders gotta schmooze with the customers. It's a part of the gig. But I ain't no schmoozer. Don't get me wrong. I never dissed my customers — not like a lot of waiters do. I gave every mo'fucker who walked in and sat at my table the same service

and respect I expected when I walked into a restaurant. But I just didn't schmooze. I would get you whatever you wanted, and the kitchen, well the kitchen guys were the best, and I could get most anything I wanted from them. So when some customer wants some special shit that's a pain-in-the-ass to do, chances are I could get it for them, unless of course the kitchen was just too slammed.

I remember the Brooklyn law regulars. They used to like me to wait on them. I always gave them good service, and unlike a lot of other waiters, I didn't mind them too much.

They were a pain in the ass — I mean, they didn't always tip so good, and they expected almost constant attention. It's the nature of their class, I guess. Here we have a bunch of lawyer wannabes who, in order to elevate themselves to their "proper" (almost God-given) status, often would either tacitly or openly belittle the wait

staff. The thing is, a few of them found out that I was getting my Ph.D. in economics. No big deal, and I certainly didn't identify as a Ph.D. student, especially at my gig. When you graduate law school, you get what's called a JD or Juris Doctorate. One Sunday night (dollar mugs of Bass) some of them was saying that they want to be called "Doctor so-and-so" after they graduate 'cuz they's gonna get theyselves a JD degree. Then one of them asks me what I want to be called after I graduate. I tells them "I'll be called Doctor because that's what the fuck I will be." It was kind of nice to rub their faces into their own bullshit. Here was this punk-ass waiter gettin' his Ph.D. in economics, and I still identified with my homeys on the floor more than I did with them. That's gotta be one of the hardest things about the gig—the fact that mo'fuckers look down on you and expect that it is your station in life to wait on them. Bringing dignity to the job of waiting tables is not easy, simply because most mo'fuckers don't even think about treating waiters with respect and dignity. It's always a snap of the fingers and BOOM — your ass is supposed to be at that table asking what the fuck is needed.

Working the gig I got smiled at, flirted with, ignored, got my ass pinched, and got sucker-punched twice. I was the first waiter ever to be hit while on his

shift in the fifteen years of the Saloon. A few months later I was the first waiter to be hit twice. It's tough when you get sucker-punched while on your shift. I mean, the restaurant could possibly be liable if I was to hit back. And the restaurant I loved. I didn't want to do anything that would

"Bringing dignity to the job of waiting tables is not easy, simply because most mo'fuckers don't even think about treating waiters with respect and dignity. It's always a snap of the fingers and BOOM-your ass is supposed to be at that table asking what the fuck is needed."

jeopardize it, and striking an irate and drunken customer could have possibly done that. But when a waiter gets his, as I have found out, it's really no big deal. The customer would be 86'd — maybe the cops would be called. I would be asked if I wanted to press charges. Of course I said no. And then I would go back to my tables to see if they needed anything. Most of them were in sympathy with me. After all, I was the one sucker-punched!!

I don't like getting hit — especially when I'm on my shift. I

mean, I can't hit back or nuttin'. Well, I could, but if I did, then I'd be 86'd. It's just the nature of the gig. The guy that hit me the second time — struck me from behind, the piece of shit — actually tried to give me some money as if to apologize. As the bouncer — some piece-of-shit fucking off-duty pig — stands between me and the guy that hit me, he (the guy that hit me) pulls out four dollars from his wallet, hands it over towards me, and says "Here you go, I'm sorry. What's your name?"

"Fuck you's my name!" I shouted back.

I work, and I work for tips, but godammit, I can't be bought. My general manager, who has seen with his own eyes me getting sucker punched, was standing right there.

"Get inside!" he yells to me.

I lost the job a couple of months later. I was fired 'cuz I was considered a "loose canon." The second time I was punched did a lot to convince the owner that I had to go. A run-in with the NYPD in my own hood, during which they found out where I worked also contributed. Capitalism, Brooklyn-style, being what it is, the pigs also knew the owner.

I know that I was fired 'cuz I brought self-respect and dignity to the gig. There just came a point where the liability associated with worker self-respect and dignity outweighed the fact that I was the hardest working waiter there.

What Can I Do???

"All right... something has to be done about this sweatshop system. But what can I do?"

We hope you will come away from *Punching the Clock* with at least one basic idea. Big (or small) government isn't going to do it. The dues-hoarding, ass-kissing trade unions aren't going to do it. The bleeding heart non-profit service agencies and pity-run charities aren't going to do it. The a-moral, blood-sucking, racist and sexist corporations that run this psychotic sweatshop system definitely aren't going to do it.

Who is gonna change the sweatshop system? WE ARE! Regular working people, from all backgrounds and communities taking matters into our own hands. There are thousands of ways YOU can participate in building a new movement for control over our lives and time, beginning with just a few people you know. Don't know how to start? Here are three

fighting campaigns and some cultural activities you get into:

The Sears Campaign:

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This year we won a major victory, forcing a garment manufacturer, Street Beat Sportswear, to pay workers what they were owed for violations of labor laws. But mega-retailer SEARS ROEBUCK AND COMPANY was selling Street Beat goods and denied responsibility for sweatshop conditions in which people toiled for up to 137 hours a week right here in Brooklyn, NY, USA.

Who is gonna change the sweatshop system? WE ARE!

.....

Brutally long work hours? Corporations using subcontracting to escape responsibility for lousy conditions? Garment workers aren't the only ones upset about these problems. Disgruntled people everywhere seizing this opportunity to expose subcontracting and long hours, and to post a public warning for

all bosses, by holding Sears accountable. Sears must not be allowed to move work away when people stand up. SEARS, WE DEMAND YOU KEEP 75% OF YOUR WORK HERE, TO PROVIDE DECENT WORK FOR COMMUNITIES THAT SHOP AT YOUR STORES!

The Campaign for Economic Justice at NYU -

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Fight racism? Police brutality is an easy target. But how can we fight *THE RACISM OF THE SWEATSHOP SYSTEM*, the racism that traps people of color in unemployment, sweatshops, prison labor, workfare and poverty. We can start by holding New York University, one of New York's biggest landowners and employers, responsible for the racist exclusion of workers of color on its construction sites. NYU isn't the only university pretending to represent high morals, when in fact it's just another racist and sexist profit-seeking corporation. The campaign is expanding to expose similar problems at the New School University and Columbia University. What about the schools near you? Help expose the sweatshop system on campuses everywhere.

The Campaign to Bury Slave Labor at New Silver Palace:

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In Chinatown, New York, the New Silver Palace Restaurant is called "Sweatshop Central." Garment and restaurant

ACTION

sweatshop owners use this banquet-hall as a meeting place to organize crackdowns against anyone who stands up for their rights. In 1997 the management of the restaurant used a fake bankruptcy to close and then reopen it. They demanded all former employees pay \$5,000 to get their jobs back and that employees cut all ties to the independent 318 Restaurant Workers' Union. New Silver Palace workers refused to accept these conditions and have been picketing the restaurant for the last 19 months. This ain't about a union contract, though. It's about exposing and defeating the systematic blacklisting, threats, slander, and physical violence that keep people

down. IT'S ABOUT SETTING AN EXAMPLE FOR EVERYONE BY KICKING SOME BOSSES' ASSES! PICKET: Saturdays 5-7, Sundays 11-1 & 5-7, and Mondays 6-8. Please call to say you're coming.

Speakers, educational material, petitions, and videos for these campaigns are available.

ALSO, JOIN THESE EXCITING CULTURAL ACTIVITIES!:

- Write for and distribute **PUNCHING THE CLOCK**. We want YOU to write about your work, life, and community. Are you fighting for change in some way? Interview a friend or co-worker. Art work and fiction also welcome. (Naturally, we reserve the right not to print whatever you send us). Help

build a national network of PTC distributors!

- Bring the **NMASS LIVING THEATRE GROUP** to your town. We have an original play about a garment workers' family in the United States, struggling for control over their time and lives.
- Join the **NMASS VIDEO PROJECT** to expose all aspects of the sweatshop system.
- Work with NMASS to organize a **ROCK AGAINST THE CLOCK** concert or open mic event, to raise consciousness, to raise money, and have FUN!!!

COME UP WITH **YOUR OWN IDEAS!** Everyone can find new ways to expose the problems of overwork, economic racism, and exploitation where they live and work.

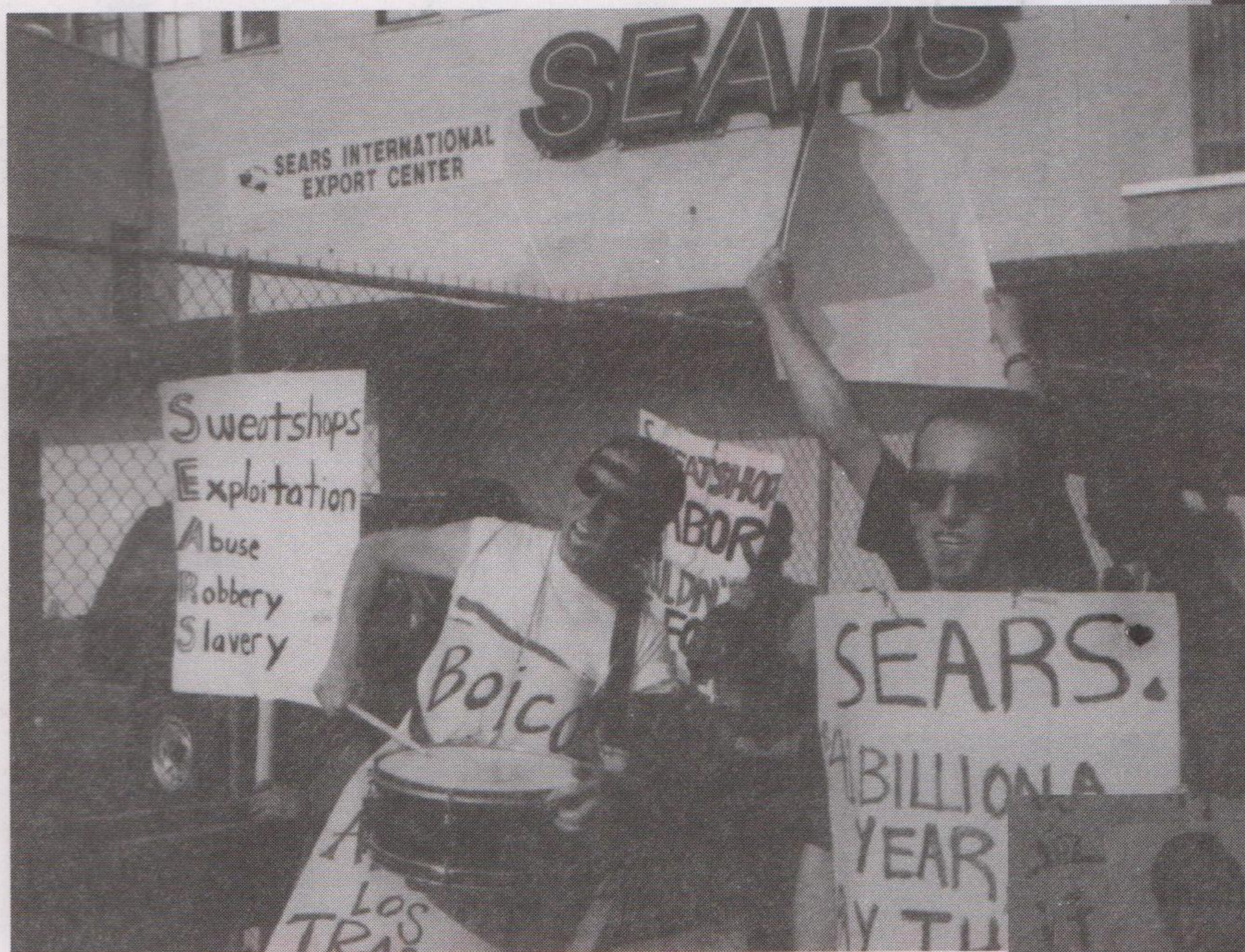


The Fight Against Sweatshops

Images from your own backyard



Workers take on New Silver Palace



Protestors demand the end to Sears selling of Streetbeat Sportswear

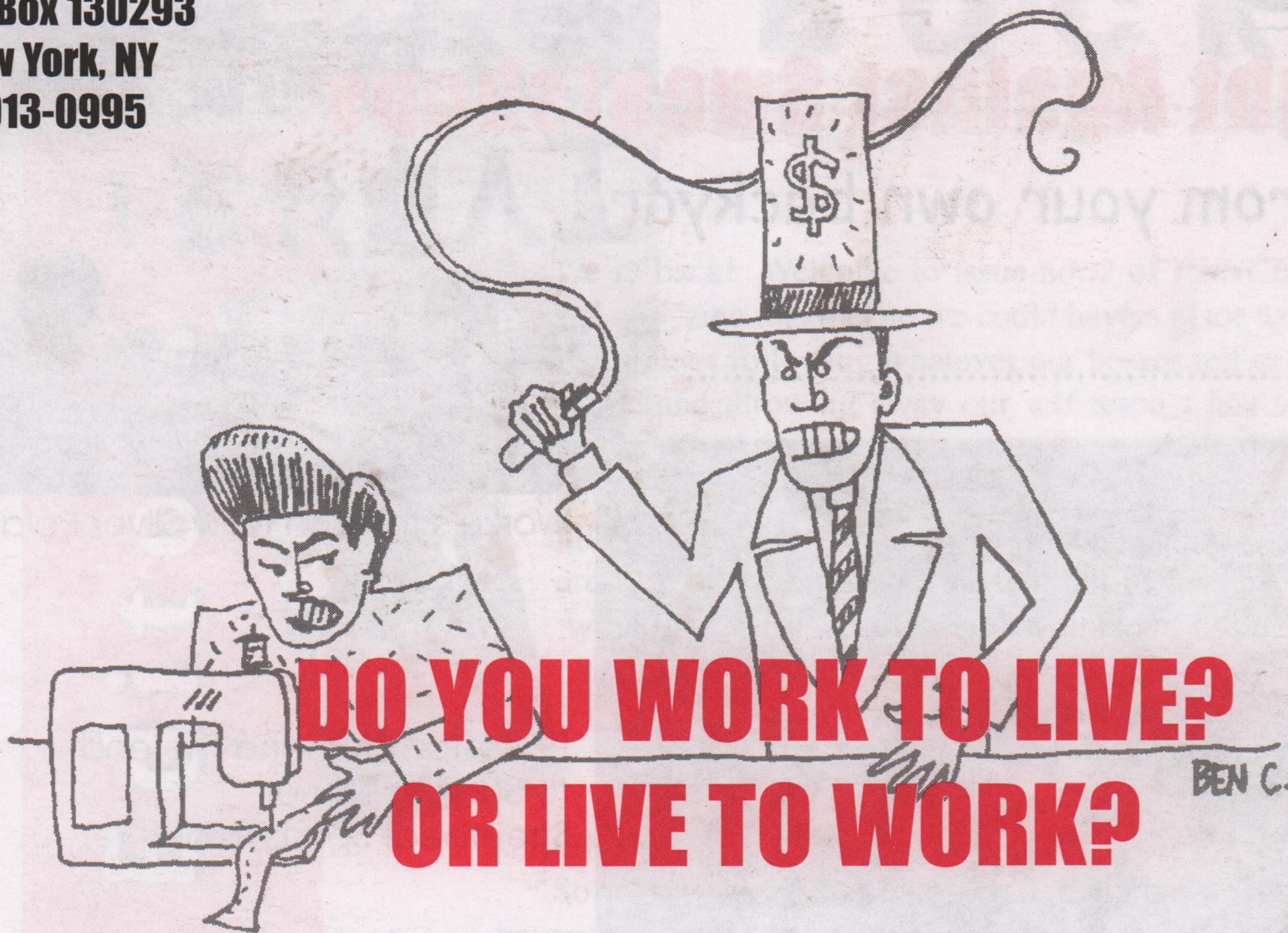


Community rally in front of New Silver Palace

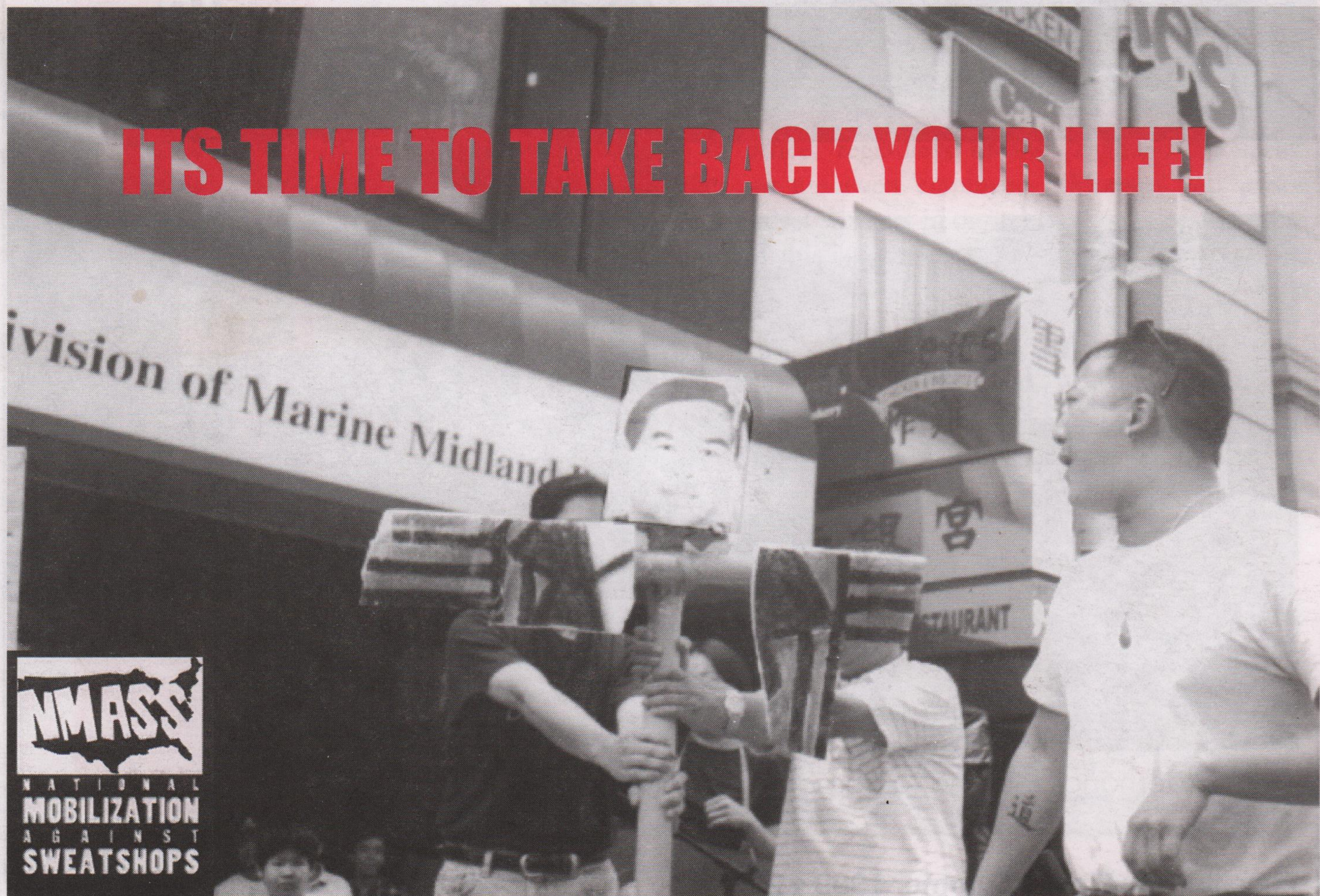
NMASS demands the end to corporate support of slave labor

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