

The Gig Organizer #1

News for gig workers



Written by gig workers

Introducing *The Gig Organizer*

We are excited to announce the launch of The Gig Organizer, a newsletter written by and for gig workers in the service industry, and its Forum, the Gig Workers' Forum (U.S.). The following is our statement of purpose and plans for the future:

Affiliates of the New Labor Organizing Committee (NLOC) are responsible for constructing independent, class-conscious, and class-combative trade-union machinery as the basis for rank-and-file democracy, economic action, and political power. Trade unions and shop committees seek to unite the majority of workers in a workplace, enterprise, or area, at the point of production, and within a single trade or industry, around the struggles for better working and living conditions. The NLOC differentiates itself from the establishment unions by organizing workers in the long-term struggle for political power amidst short-term struggles for immediate and minimum demands. Gig Worker Committees, *The Gig Organizer*, and the Gig Workers' Forum (U.S.) seek to do just that for app-based ride-share and delivery drivers, as well as for app-based and other informal or "self-employed" domestic workers. This could include workers for TaskRabbit, neighborhood baby-sitters, self-employed house maids, or even migrant workers "illegally" contracted for landscaping or construction on some Yankee's property.

Gig workers reside in the outskirts of everything sacred and formal about capitalist exploitation. We have been forced out of regular employment and into professional isolation, coerced into performing the most menial of tasks for an absolute minimum of wages, and lacking basic employee or even citizenship rights. As a result, we constantly straddle the lines between underemployment, poverty, and pauperism, all while facing the constant threats of vehicular manslaughter, domestic, employer, and customer abuse, and for many of us, deportation and Fascist incarceration. Gig employers have been able to legally justify and our second-class treatment as wage-slaves by misclassifying us as "independent contractors" or refusing to provide any form of classification at all, and have access to the militarized forces of the capitalist State to enforce this persecution. In other words, our rights are entirely up to the bureaucratic decisions of our employer and the State. Gig workers will only gain liberation once we can decide for ourselves the rights we get and the rights we deserve, compared to other workers.

Despite the newness of app-based gig work, an ultra-precarious, super-exploited sector of the service industry has existed since the origins of industrial capitalism. But with gig-service platforms, corporations have been able to monopolize and expand this sector to the point that gig workers are now omnipresent throughout commercial society. This gives Gig Worker Committees the unique ability to operate at the point of production without its members needing to be on the job or in physical proximity with each other. Our day-to-day physical isolation can be utilized to coordinate a massive spread of forces

across an entire geographic area. Corporations employ our vast labor to manufacture profits, but we can leverage our labor to cease production and win demands. To build the professional rapport among gig workers necessary for unionization and labor action, organizers must use all available social and technological means to unify our scattered forces independently of corporations and the capitalist State.

The Gig Organizer serves as a voice for the voiceless, written by and for gig workers who are among the most oppressed and impoverished laborers in the world, to illuminate the path forward in our movement towards liberation by exposing the demands that need to be won and the strategies needed to win them. Attached to *The Gig Organizer* is the Gig Workers' Forum (U.S.), a collective digital communications tool widely available to the gig worker masses that can be utilized both on- and off-the-job. Through these organizations, gig workers can organize, mobilize, and develop their class-conscious labor movement. Gig workers do not have to live in poverty. We do not have to lack basic rights of citizenship and employment. We can raise ourselves above the depths of the ruling class, if only we dare to struggle and dare to win.

This statement has been condensed. Read the full article at gigworkerus.org

Recent Gig Worker Legislation in IL, CA, and MA

A new bill was recently submitted to the Illinois legislature that would allow ride-share drivers employed by "Transport Network Companies (TNCs)" like Uber and Lyft to unionize under the Illinois Labor Relations Board (ILRB), despite ride-share drivers, like all app-based gig workers, still being federally misclassified as "independent contractors." This bill is the product of a deal between the Illinois Drivers Alliance (IDA), a ride-share "coalition" headed by SEIU Local 1 and IAM Local 701, affiliates of the AFL-CIO, and ride-share corporations Uber and Lyft to drop IDA's lobbying of the Chicago City Council for better working conditions in exchange for Uber and Lyft supporting the unionization bill. This bill would require gig workers to "gain" the right of unionization by joining union that is certified by the ILRB and responsible for "collective bargaining" with TNCs through the medium of the ILRB. Ride-share drivers would still be federally misclassified, meaning an ILRB-certified union wouldn't be protected from federal persecution, other gig workers would be left with no legal recourse for unionization, and no gig worker or gig worker organization would have the right to strike, which is the fundamental and primary weapon of trade-unionism. In other words, even if the bill is passed, gig workers in Illinois would still lack basic employment, if not citizenship, rights. This bill does nothing to materially advance the conditions of hundreds of thousands of app-based workers, or the hundreds of thousands of undocumented and gig domestic workers...

Email us at gigorganizer@proton.me

This bill is identical to similar ones passed in California and Massachusetts, also in collaboration with SEIU, Uber and Lyft, and the Democratic Party. Last October, California Gig Workers Union (CGWU), affiliate of SEIU Locals 521, 721, and 1021, struck a deal with Uber and Lyft to give ride-share drivers the “right to unionize” in exchange for workers staying misclassified and Uber and Lyft getting to reduce their state-insurance premiums from \$1 million to \$300,000 per year. In Massachusetts, App Drivers Union, affiliated with SEIU Local 32BJ and supported by IAM, passed a similar “unionization” bill for ride-share drivers with Uber and Lyft in exchange for dropping its push for re-classification. These bills contain three major concessions to the ride-share corporations that functionally liquidate the trade union struggle in the AFL-CIO dominated movement:

1.) Ride-share unions are given the legal right to represent, bargain, and collect dues only after their certification by state labor boards, rather than these rights being automatically granted on the federal level, despite the fact that these ride-share organizations were operating and collecting dues prior to this legislation.

2.) Ride-share drivers, along with gig workers in general, are not given other basic employee rights included in W-2 classification, such as the right to a minimum wage, overtime, worker’s compensation, unemployment insurance, full-time benefits, and are still not given the federal right to unionization. Also excluded from this legislation is the right to strike, the main weapon of trade-unionism, and the only think capable of ensuring workers’ leverage and control over the process of production. Ride-share unions can only be certified on this restricted basis if they agree to forego striking altogether.

3.) While criminalizing gig worker strikes, this legislation legalizes company unions, which are employer-controlled organizations for the racketeering of dues and the recruitment of scabs and strike-breakers. Company-unions are federally illegal for corporations to establish if their employees are rightfully classified as W-2. Uber already has its own company-union, the “Independent” Drivers Guild, that it started with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM/IAMAW), an AFL-CIO affiliate and also partly behind the ADU and IDA. This “union” is not even certified, is recognized by state and federal law as a company-union, and yet it is somehow allowed to affiliate with an NLRB-certified like IAM when CGWU, ADU, and IDA can’t even be federally certified and are forced to operate through SEIU and IAM. This glaring contradiction proves the essence of state-unions and company-unions are one and the same, to financially and politically serve employers, corporations, and the ruling class by running the trade union movement into the ground and racketeering workers’ dues.

Re-classification is the most all-encompassing, yet simplistic demand that gig workers can fight for. W-2 vs. 1099 classification are literal slave-brands that determine how many rights and protections different sectors of the working class get. It is the difference between first-class and second-class citizenship, and yet corporations and the capitalist State, at both federal and provincial levels, have equal authority to determine this classification. And so why don’t ADU, IDA, and CGWU go all the way and make it a requirement their members are classified as W-2 in order to be contracted out to a gig corporation?

Because that would threaten the authority and profit of the employers and ruling class, and thus the legitimacy and salaries of the state-union bureaucracy and Democratic Party machinery. Because that would require democratically organizing the rank-and-file to exercise their own collective authority over the employment of their labor, instead of just garnishing workers’ wages in exchange for the illusion of democracy.

Gig workers deserve so much more, we need so much more just to survive, stay fed, stay housed, and reproduce our families, and we can gain what we demand if we do what the state-unions, corporations, and U.S. government won’t: subordinate the interests of profit to the interests of labor. The strike murders profit, just as profit murders labor, so that the threat and consequences of a strike should ensure the demands of a union are met. This requires an absolute disregard for and independence from the economic and political interests of the ruling class, not bowing to the U.S. legal system as the “highest authority” of capitalism, imperialism, and fascism.

Statement on the Gig Worker Strikes in India

The Gig Organizer would like to extend its revolutionary greetings to the over 40,000 gig workers who recently struck with the Indian Federation of App-Based Transport Workers. Indian gig workers employed to massive corporations like Ola, Uber, Swiggy, Zomato, Zepto, and Blinkit face a similar level of poverty to U.S. gig workers that is exacerbated by national oppression, semi-feudalism, and colonization at the hands of U.S., Chinese, and European imperialism. One of the main demands of the strikers was to ban the “ten minute delivery” policies that force unrealistic expectations and competition onto drivers for below-subsistence wages. These policies have resulted in the deaths of multiple gig workers. Workers also fought for a minimum wage of ₹40,000 (around \$500) per month, but have yet to see any increases.

The Indian State has asked corporations to curb their policies, but is not threatening any legal action to force them to comply. Indian gig workers must ensure their independence from the Hindutva Fascist State, which is currently eroding all Indian labor protections, and establish organized leverage over their employers and the State. Establishment unions in India, just like in the U.S., have utterly failed at defending the working class against Fascism, and prefer instead to be absorbed into the Fascist regime as state-unions like through BMS, which is the labor front of the RSS – the paramilitary group behind the Fascist BJP and Modi government. Similarly, the AFL-CIO represents ICE, CPB, and police, the terrorists who brutalize, kidnap, and deport our co-workers and neighbors.



The Gig Organizer is a newsletter written for and by gig workers in the service industry and operating at the point of production. Gig Worker Committees are geographic-based organizations of rank-and-file contributors, distributors, and representatives united in the class struggle for short-term and long-term economic and political demands. The Gig Workers’ Forum (U.S.) is a publicly-available communications tool for the sharing of advice, grievances, demands, and the coordination of mass meetings. Our long term goal is the formation of a revolutionary gig workers’ trade union and a service workers’ industrial union.