



# NEW DAY AT UPS

NEWS FOR UPS WORKERS, BY UPS WORKERS!

## NOTES ON DISCRIMINATION AT UPS

by James Loader (WCHNC)

For many workers, it's easy to attribute the conditions of their workplace to poor management, or the individual character of their managers. For Black workers, we're often taught to separate the discriminatory policies of the government at large from the conditions of our workplaces, and see workplace discrimination as something that can be changed through a change of management or "company culture". The truth, however, is that the roots of workplace discrimination are found outside the workplace, in the national oppression and systematic infringement of basic democratic rights that is characteristic of imperialism. American imperialism strives for domination, not freedom. Every offense against us must be considered in light of this elementary fact.

Take the conditions in the WCHNC (West Charlotte) Hub, a hub where at least a plurality of the workers are Black. Full-time bids are non-existent inside the building. Many inside workers depend on working doubles to supplant their income (essentially keeping them as flex employees who can be counted on to work full time hours if needed but without the progression or hours guarantee of an actual full-timer), and workers at the Charlotte Hub do not receive ten minute breaks during sorts as is standard across the rest of the country. As North Carolina is a Right-to-Work state (meaning that workers are not automatically represented by the bargaining unit) and the turnover rate is high, the contract is rarely enforced, and UPS is able to maintain a higher rate of exploitation in this region of the country.

It is not a coincidence that Charlotte has a population that is 35% Black (according to the U.S. Census Bureau) within a region that has nearly 60% of the Black population (the U.S. South), and, according to the Charlotte Regional Business Alliance's Advanced Manufacturing Industry Profile report, wages are 18% less than around the country. This huge difference in "market forces"—in this case the labor market, which reflects the living standards of the workers—is the direct consequence of the historical legacy of national oppression and systematic discrimination. This suppression of the region as a whole by industry is what allows UPS to swindle workers into believing they're getting a fair deal. \$21/hour is high compared to other entry-level jobs in the region, but it is not enough to keep up with the increasing cost

of living in the city, especially given the aforementioned lack of full-time bids within the hub, and especially considering the plans to close the WCHNC hub altogether.

Inside the hub, despite it having a Black plurality, many Black workers can attest to instances of discrimination we've experienced. Supervisors are often quicker to enact discipline towards the infractions of Black workers, and some workers have been subjected to overtly racist comments by white supervisors or managers. This latter type of discrimination is nothing more than the spontaneous expression of exploitation and oppression managed jointly by UPS and the state.

The majority of discrimination that takes place inside UPS happens beyond the level of individual supervisors. For instance, majority white buildings (like WORMA) have full time inside bids whereas majority non-white buildings like WCHNC have none. There is systematic promotion or non-promotion according to the prejudiced and arbitrary whims of management/the Teamsters. Recall the IBT just paid out millions of dollars for doing this—see "Teamsters union pays \$2.9m to settle racial discrimination lawsuit" from the Guardian for more info on that incident earlier this year. There are different rules for grievances and whatnot across locals. (And unfortunately there has not been any systematic study of these or how they correlate with nationality or ethnicity.) There is the exploitation of non-English speaking employees who have no idea how UPS and the Teamsters are supposed to function or how they can use the limited rights they do have. And so on.

Then there are "market forces" that amount to systematic discrimination, such as the fact that the higher cost of living in urban areas disproportionately affects non-whites. Disparities in education formerly organized explicitly along racial lines are now organized according to property value with the same effect. In 2021 the Census Bureau published the following statistic: "Households With a White, Non-Hispanic Householder Were Ten Times Wealthier Than Those With a Black Householder in 2021." So not even the government denies a tenfold difference in wealth between the average white and Black person. They simply deny that it is a conscious policy enacted by racists—but this distinction does not matter to us in the least.

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What conclusion are the trade unionists to draw from this fact? For decades now the response of the state unions (read: trade unions in name only) has been to form caucuses or special committees with the sole purpose of swindling one or another minority and distributing sops to a handful chosen representatives of that minority. (For instance, the Teamsters' "Women's Committees" mentioned in the 17th edition but also the Teamsters National Black Caucus—incidentally, the chairman of the TNBC worked at the now-liquidated Yellow.) Essentially, a policy of buying off a tiny minority at the expense of the vast majority has been pursued. This is totally backwards. If the Black people are overwhelmingly wage workers and on top of that poorer than the average wage worker, then it logically follows that there will be no advance in the trade union struggle without our active and organized participation; it logically follows that any demands must be formulated with the interests of this strata in mind; and it logically follows that any concession to white chauvinism is a direct attack on the trade union movement. Let those "non-political" trade-unionists who would disagree with these claims explain how trade unions are virtually nonexistent in the South despite the extreme exploitation of the Black laborers.

## THE JULY 10 INCIDENT: HOW UPS IMPLEMENTS THE NOTF

by Frank Loder (WORMA)

The 18th edition of New Day explained UPS' plans for automation and consolidation, including layoffs as well as speedups for the remaining workers, which UPS calls the "Network of the Future" initiative. A dispute between a New Dayer and a sort manager in WORMA on July 10 both illustrates how UPS actually intends to implement these plans on a basic level as well as the role of the Teamsters in helping them by systematically failing to defend existing concessions (such as seniority rights) and actively covering up UPS' plans. It also bears mentioning certain financial facts which have come to light through UPS' quarterly earnings report, facts which completely expose the fraud of the "historic victory" of 2023.

The July 10 incident was a dispute between a full-timer and two sort managers in WORMA who wanted to steal union work but did not want to load. The operation had already had multiple belts break down over the last few hours, and everything was way behind plan. The two sort managers wanted to work in the secondary sort, and a full-timer told them to go load if they wanted to do union work and send a loader (specifically a part timer with a lot of seniority) up to sort if they needed more sorters. Obviously they did not agree at all with this suggestion, and in the course of a heated argument, the full-timer's Weingarten rights were ignored by both managers who committed multiple contract violations. Basically, they screwed a part timer out of their seniority rights, a full-timer disputed it, and the argument was only resolved when the full-timer decided to "bump" the part-timer out of the load and into the secondary sort.

This incident is significant and worth printing because it's a perfect representation of the logistics industry right now. Management, at the direct behest of corporate, systematically understaffed and under-equipped the operation. Then, when they physically cannot run due to lack of functioning equipment and lack of staffing, they liquidate the rights of the existing workers. (In this case, the seniority rights of a part timer as well as robbing the UPSers generally of hours lost to supes working.) The union just is not a factor at all, with the union representatives essentially hiding from the hourly. The only resistance is the spontaneous self-sacrifice of a full-timer (who agrees with our line and with publishing this) who was willing to give up his seniority rights to make a point to management. Individualistic actions like this have their time and place, but it's important to reiterate that the only long term solution is building up our trade union organization to the point of being able to exert control over productivity. Spontaneous actions like this are necessary—even unavoidable if we don't want to sink to the level of the Teamsters—but they have zero significance if they are not tied to the larger objectives of exposing management's daily attacks on us and the Teamsters unwillingness to fight them, building up trade union unity across job classifications, and enhancing the class consciousness of the organized UPSers.

This incident is also significant in light of new data published by UPS. There are no "accidents" at UPS, and in fact UPS named the WORMA hub as all-around #1 in the country earlier this year. Management liquidates seniority rights and other basic concessions in order to maximize profits and minimize their wage bill. UPS has already closed 35 sorts, including five buildings, in the first half of 2024, simultaneous with a 25% increase in SurePost daily volume (aka work that is passed off to USPS for delivery) and 2.3% increase in daily ground volume. (Air volume declined 7.8%—source is "UPS domestic revenue slips as customers trade down to economy service" from Freightwaves.) At the same time, total compensation and benefits declined if inflation is accounted for. Compensation and benefits for the first half of 2023 totaled 22.66 billion, while compensation and benefits for the first half of 2024 totaled 23.142 billion. This is an increase of 2.1%, as against an inflation rate of 2.97%. (UPS data taken from "2Q 2024 Historical Financial Info" available at <https://investors.ups.com/quarterly-earnings-and-financials>.) Thus, while the press whines about UPS' stock price declining due to "soaring labor costs", in reality, productivity is up (projected 12% increase by 2026), volume is up, spending on compensation and benefits is marginally up but actually lower if inflation is accounted for, and headcount is down as sorts and buildings are closed. The Teamsters claims to a "historic victory" and "\$30 billion in new money" are thus exposed as completely fraudulent in light of all of these facts as well as the ludicrous claims from the media that the UPS workers are somehow bleeding the company dry. In reality, UPS is one of the most dangerous firms in the country to work at, ranking third in reported severe injuries behind only USPS and Amazon. (See "The USPS is an extremely dangerous place to work" via The Outline for a readable list of the OSHA data.) We have only more of the same to look forward to if we do not organize against the Network of the Future initiative, which is an attack on UPSers across the board.

New Day is a newsletter produced by UPS workers to rally our coworkers against UPS corporate and their agents in the Teamsters. New Day Committees are for gathering information and disseminating the basic outlook of the revolutionary UPS workers to the rank and file in the operation, as well as a base that our coworkers can use as a launchpad for campaigns around more immediate issues. Our long-term goal is the creation of a revolutionary industrial logistics union.

