



Low-wage workers leading the way to poverty's end.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Facing Worst Economic Crisis Since Great Depression, Baltimore is on the March to Demand Economic Human Rights for City's Low-Wage Workers

Visuals:

- Marching band at front of the Human Rights Zone March
- Ten-foot tall puppets of low-wage workers demanding justice
- 100 black and yellow flags demanding “End Poverty Now” and “Human Rights Now”
- Maryland state flags and Baltimore City flags
- Hundreds of allies and community supporters, representing dozens of Baltimore community, faith and labor organizations
- Low-wage workers peacefully marching and singing freedom songs with allies, making stops along the route to highlight community, faith and labor responses to the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression

(BALTIMORE) The United Workers and allies will march through downtown Baltimore to the Inner Harbor, starting at Carroll Park at 4:00 PM on April 18, 2009. The Human Rights Zone March will highlight community, faith and labor responses to social and education cutbacks, lower wages and worsening working conditions, making solidarity stops along the march route and stopping at Camden Yards, Maryland Department of Education, Sheraton City Center Hotel, BGE and City Hall. Marchers will hold a short rally at City Hall at 6:00 PM, before peacefully marching from City Hall to the front steps of the Inner Harbor's “worst of the worst” employer to announce the first target and specific demands of the Human Rights Zone campaign at the Inner Harbor.

Marchers will proceed from City Hall to make the announcement on Inner Harbor grounds, with or without a permit. In the past, Baltimore City police have threatened to arrest low-wage workers for entering the Inner Harbor to express complaints against the employers. The United Workers has made two other unsuccessful attempts to hold rallies and other press events at the Inner Harbor. Both attempts were blocked by Baltimore City Police. The United Workers has applied for a permit with Baltimore City Parks and Recreation to hold the rally on the Inner Harbor Promenade, but the permit has yet to be issued.

“We have a right to express our demands on the front steps of the worst employer at the Inner Harbor, and not be pushed out of the way to a far off spot that is out of sight and hidden from the consumers, who also have a right to know how badly workers are being treated,” said Valerie Henry, spokesperson of the United Workers.

“We were already stopped twice for attempting to express our complaints at the Inner Harbor. Once we weren't even allowed to have a pastor hand deliver notices to the three worst employers. So now we're going to peacefully make our demands known by marching to the Inner Harbor with hundreds of our allies and community supporters. We intend to make it all the way to the front steps of the worst employer and to have our demands expressed directly to the worst employer,” said Henry.

Human Rights Zone Campaign and the United Workers

The announced first target will be one of three employers (Cheesecake Factory, M&S Grill or Phillips Seafood) that was put on notice by workers at the March 6, 2009 press conference held across the street from the Inner Harbor development. At the press conference the three worst employers were charged with paying workers poverty wages, stealing worker tips, instances of sexual harassment, providing poor medical care, and limiting educational opportunities. Worker testimonies of poverty conditions, worker harassment and other economic human rights violations by the employers are documented in a survey of 147 workers released at the press conference (available to media by request).

The Human Rights Zone campaign was announced on October 25, 2008 when Camden Yards workers joined with Inner Harbor workers in order to advance the economic human rights of Inner Harbor low-wage workers. The campaign extends and expands the successful Living Wages Campaign at Camden Yards. Workers at Camden Yards secured a living wage after a three-year campaign at the state-owned ballpark that culminated with an announced hunger strike to pressure the stadium authority to pay stadium workers a living wage. When the campaign was launched in 2004, workers were paid an average of \$4.50 an hour.

The United Workers is an economic human rights organization founded by homeless day laborers at an abandoned firehouse-turned-shelter. The organization announced Baltimore's touristy Inner Harbor to be a “Human Rights Zone” on October 25, 2008, with the aim of expanding the economic human rights of health care, education and work with dignity to every low-wage worker at Baltimore's Inner Harbor.

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Media Highlights - The United Workers

BALTIMORE SUN: Living Wages Victory at Camden Yards

Under pressure to raise wages for part-time janitorial workers at Camden Yards, the Maryland Stadium Authority voted yesterday to pay them the state's new \$11.30-an-hour "living wage," starting next spring.

The 5-2 decision came after the men and women who clean the state-owned Orioles and Ravens stadiums on game days postponed a hunger strike this week to give the agency time to come up with a binding living-wage agreement.

The hunger strike, which was to have started Monday, was called off yesterday. Members and leaders of the United Workers Association, a human rights organization founded by homeless day laborers in Baltimore, called the stadium authority's vote a victory after three years of trying to obtain higher wages and better working conditions at the stadiums.

(Hanah Cho, Baltimore Sun)

<http://unitedworkers.org/media/choarticle.pdf>

THE NATION: Continuing Dr. King's Poor People's Movement to End Poverty

The progress made on a living wage for day laborers in a hard-edged, damaged metropolis, which locals lovingly call Charm City, could open a new chapter in grassroots labor organizing not seen since the early days of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Poor People's Campaigns, a model that puts the poor in charge of movements to fight poverty.

"The United Workers Association was founded to try and start a human rights' model of organizing led by low-wage workers themselves," Greg Rosenthal, a UWA organizer, told me. "It's all about leadership development from the ranks of the poor, a movement to end poverty led by the poor."

(David Zirin, The Nation)

<http://unitedworkers.org/media/nation.pdf>

LABOR NOTES: "Textbook Model" for Labor Organizing

"The way United Workers mobilized themselves and the community should serve as a textbook study for labor," said AFSCME spokesman Joe Lawrence.

(Quoted in Labor Notes)

<http://unitedworkers.org/media/labornotes.pdf>