

LABOR CARDS

Text: Bill Morgan
Drawings: Jos Sances

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CHICO MENDES



Labor Card #1

CHICO MENDES

(1944-1988)

Chico Mendes was a "tapper," a worker who lives and harvests rubber trees in the Brazilian rainforest. He became leader of the Tappers' Union in 1980. His union fought for workplace rights and preservation of the rainforest ecology against rich ranching interests. Mendes' work brought worldwide attention to the destruction of the Amazon jungle. The union organized nonviolent actions to resist the takeover of tapper communities and block bulldozers and chainsaw crews. A cattle rancher's son murdered him in 1988. A film about Mendes' life and work, entitled "The Burning Season" was released in 1994.

Labor Card #2

LUCY PARSONS

(1853 -1942)

Part Native American, African-American and Mexican, Lucy left Texas in 1871 and went to Chicago, where she joined the fight for the eight-hour day. After the famous demonstration in Haymarket Square in 1886, her husband was arrested and executed. Lucy became a leader of the movement for collective bargaining, the 40-hour week and equal pay for women. "The strike of the future is to remain in and take possession of the necessary property of production."-what was later called a sit-in. The Chicago Police Department said that Parsons was "more dangerous than a thousand rioters."



LUCY PARSONS

DOLORES HUERTA



Labor Card #3

DOLORES HUERTA

(1930 -)

Huerta was born in New Mexico and raised in Stockton, California. She started as a teacher, but "I realized that I could help farmworkers more by becoming an organizer." She worked on voter registration drives with the Community Services Organization and later helped start the UFW. She worked tirelessly on picket lines and organizing drives, sometimes at the risk of her life. During the Grape Boycott, it was Dolores who negotiated the contracts when the growers gave in to union and public pressure and settled. In 1997, Huerta was named one of the Regents of the University of California.

HARRY BRIDGES



Labor Card #4

HARRY BRIDGES

(1901-1990)

Australian native Harry Bridges arrived in San Francisco in 1923 and worked as a sailor and longshoreman. He and his allies organized the ILWU, and in 1934, mounted a general strike to gain union recognition and improved working conditions. The ILWU became one of the most progressive unions in the country. When union members refused to load cargo on ships bound for Nazi Germany, a newsman asked Bridges if workers should have such a voice in US foreign policy. "You're damned right they should," he replied. The US government tried many times to deport Harry Bridges, but never succeeded.

"BIG BILL" HAYWOOD



Labor Card #5

WILLIAM D. HAYWOOD

(1869-1928)

"If one man gets a dollar he didn't work for, some other man worked for a dollar he didn't get." "Big Bill" Haywood was born in Utah into a poor mining family and went to work when he was nine years old, becoming a leader of the miners' union in 1902. Haywood believed in "One Big Union" of all workers and in direct action, like strikes and work stoppages, to assert worker control of industry. In 1905, he helped start the IWW and was one of the leaders of the 1912 Bread and Roses strike in Lawrence, Mass. Arrested for opposing US entry into World War One, Haywood left the country and died in the Soviet Union.



Labor Card #6

MARY HARRIS JONES

(1837-1930)

Known as "Mother" Jones, Mary came to the US from Ireland. In 1870, all four of her children and her husband died of typhoid fever. For the rest of her life, she travelled around the country speaking on behalf of workers. She worked for the United Mine Workers Union and the IWW. In 1903, to protest the terrible conditions of child labor, she led a parade of children to demonstrate in front of President Theodore Roosevelt's house. Mother Jones was active in the Blair Miners' strike in 1921. One district attorney called her "The Most Dangerous Woman in America."

JAMES R. HOFFA



Labor Card #7

JAMES R. HOFFA

(1913-1975)

"Jimmy" Hoffa was born in Indiana. His father was a miner who died of lung disease when Jimmy was 8. He left school at 15 to work in a grocery store, and organized a work stoppage to protest speedups. In 1935, he joined the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, the truckers' union, which became one of the largest and most powerful unions in the country. As union president, Hoffa negotiated a contract covering most of the truck drivers in the United States. He was a contentious, controversial man, and spent time in prison before he was murdered in 1975. To many Teamsters, Hoffa is still a hero.

EMMA TENAYUCA



Labor Card #8

EMMA TENAYUCA

(1916-1999)

Emma Tenayuca was born and raised in San Antonio, Texas. While still in high school, she joined parades for workers' rights and in 1938 helped organize a strike of pecan workers for a living wage. For thirty-seven days, the workers refused to work. Finally, the companies gave in, and the workers' pay was raised. When Ku Klux Klan members threatened to kill Emma and raided a meeting where she was speaking, she had to leave San Antonio. Later, she became a teacher. "I was arrested a number of times, but I never thought in terms of fear. I thought in terms of justice." She was called "La Pasionara of Texas."

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MARVIN MILLER

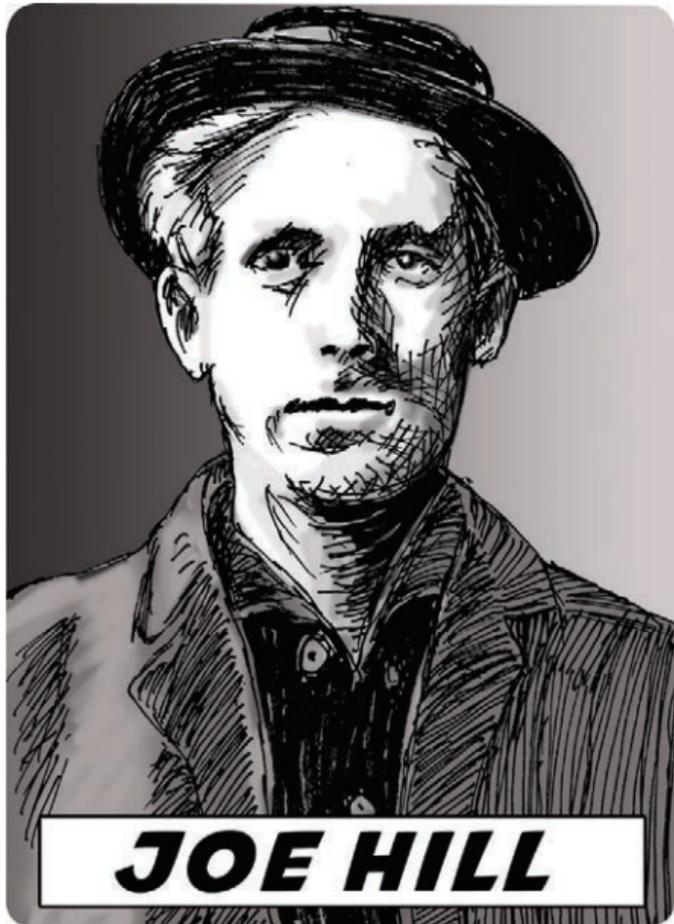


Labor Card #9

MARVIN MILLER

(1916 -1999)

A union for baseball players? Sure! Marvin Miller was born in Brooklyn and went to Dodger games when he was a boy. He studied economics and became a lawyer for the powerful United Steelworkers Union. In 1966, Miller became President of the Major-League Baseball Players' Association. Under his leadership, ballplayers went on strike twice and got collective bargaining rights and their fair share of the money made by baseball teams. Now, players make far more money than before, and their union protects their rights in negotiations with team owners.



Labor Card #10

JOE HILL

(1879 -1915)

The man known as "Joe Hill" was born in Sweden. His given name was Joel Emanuel Hagglund. He came to the US in 1910, and worked at migrant labor jobs all over the country. Joe joined the IWW, and wrote several famous songs and poems about unions and working people. In 1915, he was accused of killing a store owner in Colorado. Most people thought Joe was innocent, and that he had been framed by mine owners, but he was executed anyway. One of the most famous of all labor songs, "I Dreamed I Saw Joe Hill," claims that Joe Hill is still there, "alive as you or me" wherever workers fight for their rights.

ROSE SCHNEIDERMAN



Labor Card #11

ROSE SCHNEIDERMAN

(1882 -1972)

"The worker must have bread, but she must have roses too!" Rose Schneiderman's family arrived in the US from Poland in 1890. She lived in an orphanage and went to work when she was 13. She helped organize her factory and in 1909 became a leader of the ILGWU's "Uprising of 20,000" a strike demanding safer working conditions. Several factory owners complied, but some did not, leading to the terrible Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire in 1911. Rose campaigned for women's suffrage and became an advisor to Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt during the New Deal.

LARRY DULAY ITLIONG



Labor Card #12

LARRY ITLIONG

(1913-1977)

In the late 1920s, thousands of manongs, single male Filipino workers, came to work in the US, where they faced segregation and discriminatory laws. One of them was 15-year old Larry Itliong. He worked in Alaska (canneries), Washington (lettuce and tomatoes) and the big farms in California, organizing workers wherever he went. He founded the Filipino Farm Workers Union and, in 1965, led a strike of grape pickers. Mexican-American workers joined them and together they formed the United Farm Workers' Union, winning union recognition, decent wages and fair working conditions for many farmworkers.

JOHN L. LEWIS



Labor Card #13

JOHN L. LEWIS

(1880 -1969)

"Let the workers organize! Let the toilers assemble!" In 1905, 16-year-old John Lewis witnessed a mine disaster that killed 236 miners. For the rest of his life he worked to improve miners' working conditions. After leading the first national miners' strike in 1919, he became President of the UMWA. In 1936, he and his allies formed the CIO, organizing factory and other industrial workers. The CIO led drives to unionize big corporations like US Steel and General Motors, but also angered many in the government by going on strike during World War II. Lewis was President of the UMWA until 1960, when he retired.

Labor Card #14

IQBAL MASIH

(1982-1995)

It is estimated that around the world, 200 million children work each day in slave-like conditions. Bosses prefer children because they are easy to bully. One of them was Iqbal Masih, a Pakistani boy who was sold into "bonded labor" when he was four years old. He was chained to a loom. His job was to sew rugs, 14 hours a day, for which he earned about 20 cents. He escaped twice but both times the police returned him to his owner. He finally escaped for good when he was ten years old and became famous in the fight to end child labor, travelling all over the world with his message.



Labor Card #15

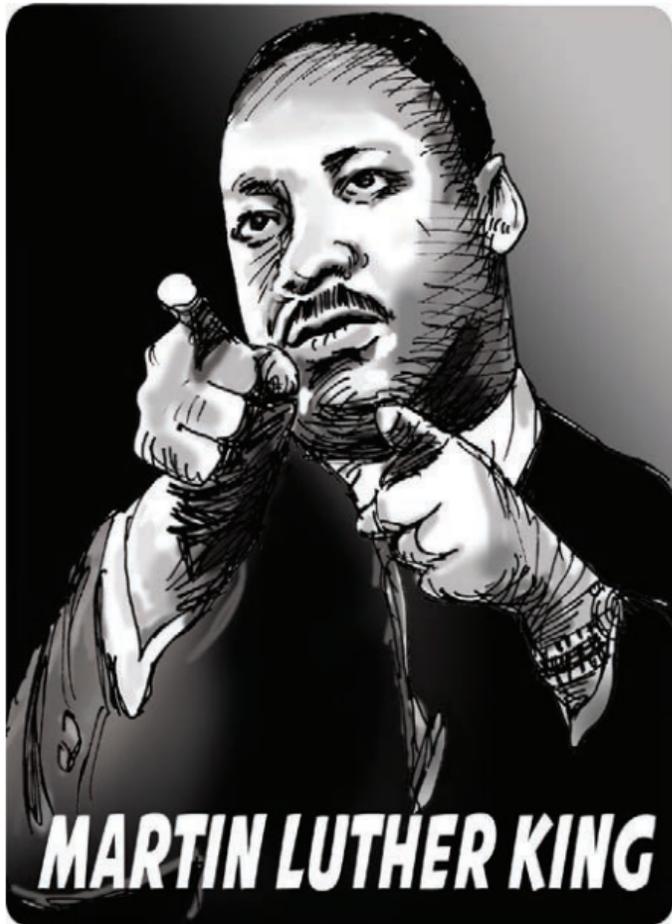
LUISA MORENO

(1907-1992)

"California has become prosperous with the toil and sweat of Mexican immigration." Moreno came to New York from Guatemala in 1928, and worked as a seamstress in Harlem. She was radicalized during a 1930 demonstration where she saw police beating protesters. Luisa worked with Latina and African-American cigar rollers in Florida and pecan workers in Texas. She settled in California to organize cannery workers, and became a leading voice opposing the beating of young Mexicans by servicemen during the so-called "Zoot Suit Riots." She was deported to Mexico in 1950 at the height of the "Red Scare."

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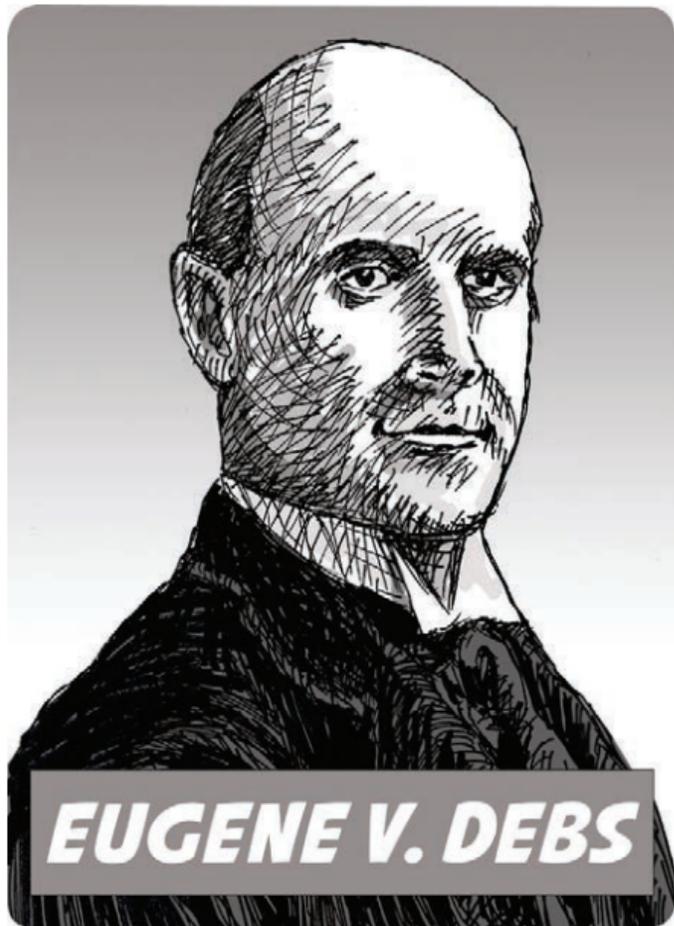
Labor Card #16

MARTIN LUTHER KING

(1929-1968)

"Our needs are labor's needs: decent wages, fair working conditions, livable housing, old-age security," the great civil rights leader declared. King realized that civil rights are meaningless without economic rights. Many of his closest aides were veterans of the labor movement. Their tactics, like boycotts and sit-ins, had also been used in labor campaigns. In April of 1968 he went to Memphis, Tennessee, to support striking sanitation workers in their struggle for union recognition. In his last speech, he said, "Support your brother. Maybe he's on strike and maybe you're not, but we go up together, or we go down together."

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Labor Card #17

EUGENE V. DEBS

(1855-1926)

"While there is a soul in jail, I am not free."
Eugene Debs was jailed in 1919 for opposing the draft of young men to fight in World War I. While in jail, he ran for President and received almost a million votes! He was born in Indiana and left school at 14 to work on the railroad, later becoming a fireman. Debs was the President of the American Railroad Union in 1894 when the ARU won a strike against the Great Northern Railroad, and mounted an unsuccessful, bloody campaign against the Pullman Company. Debs, along with several others, was one of the founders of the IWW. He was released from prison in 1921.

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Labor Card #18

EMMA GOLDMAN

(1869-1949)

During a political argument with her father, seventeen-year Emma Goldman emptied a pitcher of water on his head and left home. For the rest of her life she travelled all over the US and Europe working and speaking tirelessly for workers' rights, for women's liberation, and for a society free of poverty and injustice. In her magazine Mother Earth, she called for reproductive rights and an end to the draft. When she was arrested for opposing World War I, she asked, "If we don't have democracy here, how can we fight for it in Europe?" She was banished from the US and lived the rest of her life in Russia and Europe.



Labor Card #19

ELIZABETH GURLEY FLYNN

(1890-1964)

By the time she was 17, Flynn had been expelled from high school for giving speeches about socialism and was already an organizer for the IWW. In the next few years, she participated in labor campaigns with garment workers, miners, and textile workers. In Seattle, she once chained herself to a lamppost to delay her arrest. During her long career, she spoke out for the 8-hour day, safe working conditions, union recognition, birth control, and women's suffrage. She died while on a trip to the Soviet Union. Joe Hill's song "The Rebel Girl" is dedicated to Gurley Flynn: "It's great to fight for freedom/With the Rebel Girl."

CÉSAR CHAVEZ



Labor Card #20

CÉSAR CHAVEZ

(1927-1993)

"We are not tools or rented slaves. We are men and women." Chavez' family moved from Arizona to California, working wherever they could. As a child, César attended 30 different schools! Later, he drove all around California, talking to farmworkers about forming a union. In 1962, he and Dolores Huerta founded the AFWOC, which later became the UFW. When Filipino workers went on strike in the grape fields in 1965, the union joined them, and developed the idea of a boycott on grapes. Big companies agreed to union recognition and wage increases for workers. The UFW also called for a ban on dangerous pesticides.

Labor Card #21

ASA PHILIP RANDOLF

(1889-1979)

Floridian A. Philip Randolph was a newspaper editor and fighter for workplace rights. He helped organize elevator operators and shipyard workers into unions. In the 1920s, Randolph formed the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the first mostly black union in the United States. In 1935, they achieved union recognition from the powerful Pullman Company and in 1937, signed a contract which gained them a pay increase, a shorter work week, and overtime pay. He and other civil rights leaders threatened a March on Washington in 1941, which forced President Roosevelt to end to segregation in Federal jobs.

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ASA PHILIP RANDOLF

Labor Card #22

WALTER P. REUTHER

(1907-1970)

Reuther, a native of Wheeling, West Virginia, became famous in the 1930s as one of the leaders of the newly formed United Autoworkers' Union. One by one, the UAW won union recognition from the great auto companies. In 1937, outside the Ford plant, Reuther was beaten by company goons, which dramatized the union cause. The UAW pioneered a whole group of benefits for its workers: medical insurance, pension benefits, paid vacations, sick leave, and maternity leave. Reuther was also one of the leaders of the CIO, which organized industrial and "unskilled" workers. He died in a 1970 plane crash.



WALTER P. REUTHER

Labor Card #23

HELEN KELLER

(1880-1968)

"The majority of mankind is ground down by industrial oppression in order that the small remnant may live in ease." Though blind and deaf, Keller learned to talk with the help of her teacher Anne Sullivan. She went on to become a world-famous speaker and writer for peace, women's suffrage, the right to birth control, and strong unions for workers. She realized that many medical conditions are caused or made worse by poverty. Keller helped start the American Civil Liberties Union, and, in 1912, joined the IWW and wrote many articles in the IWW paper. "The Miracle Worker" is about her early life.

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MAY CHEN



Labor Card #24

MAY CHEN

(1948-)

A saying goes, "When fire singes the skin of women workers, they rise up like tigers." Chen was born and raised in Boston, attended college in New York and California, and began working in New York's Chinatown to improve the wages and working conditions of garment workers, most of whom worked in sweatshops. In 1982, Chen and other ILGWU leaders organized a massive "Demonstration of 20,000" mostly Asian women workers and other community members to demand holidays and improved benefits for their work. The contractors gave in.

AH QUON MCEL RATH



Labor Card #25

AH QUON MCEL RATH

(1916-2008)

"AQ's" parents arrived in the Hawaiian Islands during the early 1900s to work on the sugar plantations. She was born on the island of Oahu. As a young girl, she worked on the pineapple plantations. She joined the ILWU in a bid to organize all the workers in the islands. In 1946, (for 79 days) and again in 1949, (for 157 days) workers in Hawaii went on strike and won wage increases and collective bargaining rights from sugar and shipping companies. "We did this by assuring that all ethnicities-Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, and native Hawaiian were included and represented in the ILWU leadership."

BAYARD RUSTIN



Labor Card #26

BAYARD RUSTIN

(1912-1987)

In 1963, and again in 1968, Americans by the hundreds of thousands held a March on Washington to demand social and economic justice, an end to racist laws, poverty and wage slavery. Instrumental in organizing both marches was Pennsylvanian Bayard Rustin. As a college student, he led a fight for better cafeteria food; a pacifist, he refused to fight in World War II. He was a close associate of both civil rights and labor leaders, and pioneered the use of non-violent resistance and "Freedom Rides" to end segregation. Rustin was gay, and worked for gay rights and marriage equality for everyone.

MATILDA ROBBINS RABINOWITZ



Labor Card #27

MATILDA ROBBINS (RABINOWITZ)

(1887-1963)

Born Taube Gitel Rabiinova in Litin, Ukraine, Matilda Robbins immigrated to the U.S. in 1900. She joined the Socialist Party, radicalized by her experience as a garment industry worker from the age of 13. In 1912 the IWW sent her to textile mills in Little Falls, NY to lead her first strike. The following year she was briefly jailed in Detroit as a Wobbly organizer of the first auto industry strike. A single mother by choice, she found employment as a social worker in Los Angeles, where she remained. Deeply committed to personal autonomy, economic justice, and social equality, she died in Oakland on her birthday, January 9.

ERNESTO GALARZA



Labor Card #28

ERNESTO GALARZA

(1905-1984)

Teacher, Author, Civil Rights and Labor leader, Ernesto Galarza moved from Mexico to California when he was 8. He graduated from Stanford University with a Master's Degree in 1929 and later worked in Washington, D.C. on Latin American issues. In 1947, his National Farmworkers' Labor Union struck the giant DiGiorgio Corporation in Arvin, California, and in the 1950s, mounted several more farmworker strikes. He worked for the end of the "Bracero" program that allowed growers to import and exploit low-wage workers from Mexico. His autobiography, "Barrio Boy" is a classic of Mexican-American literature.

HARRY KAMOKU



Labor Card #29

HARRY KAMOKU

(1905-1957)

"Harry talk union, sleep union, drink union," someone said about the Hilo-born Kamoku. After twelve years as a sailor, he returned to Hawaii, and in 1935, organized the HLA (Hilo Longshoreman's Association.) They wanted shorter hours, increased wages, and equal pay with white workers. In 1938, police opened fire on Kamoku and other unarmed workers during the famous "Hilo Massacre." He and other ILWU organizers were able to get Hawaiian longshoremen, plantation and factory workers to support one another, culminating in the successful Sugar strike in 1946 and the Longshore strike of 1949.

HERBERT SORRELL



Labor Card #30

HERBERT SORRELL

(1897-1971)

Sorrell was raised in Oakland, California, and went to work when he was 12 years old. He held many factory jobs and was a boxer. In 1925, he settled in Hollywood, working as a scene painter. He became a tough and resourceful labor leader and in 1941 led a successful strike of Disney workers, who wanted better working conditions, a shorter work week, and a fair share of the money their work was making for Disney. As head of the Conference of Studio Unions, he led strikes in 1945 and 1947 in a struggle against company-backed unions. He was prosecuted during the "Red Scare" but was cleared of all charges, later finding work as a house painter.

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