

# University of Minnesota's Graduate Labor Union:

December 2022 Newsletter

*The University works because WE do!*



*\*Please do not circulate this newsletter beyond GRADUATE STUDENT SUPPORTERS\**

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The GLU is a group of graduate students across UMN schools and campuses organizing to form a union of graduate workers. While our Union campaign is not yet outwardly public, we have worked on public campaigns as the Grad Labor Coalition, a network of various UMN graduate student groups who are advocating for improved graduate student conditions. Learn more about the GLC/GLU at our [website](#) or fill out this [form](#) to request more information.

## THIS Edition's **UPDATE**

*What is the Graduate Labor Union doing today?*

In the beginning of November we had an All Hands Meeting to bring organizers together for campaign updates and work on outreach together. Through the conversations we had during and after the meeting, we've brought on many new supporters and organizers! Thank you to all who were able to make it, and we look forward to keeping the momentum up through the end of the semester and into the spring.

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**We are growing and gaining support in the “Bargaining Unit”** — the group of graduate workers who will be represented by our union when it forms. We're hoping we are nearing the final stretch! When the union election comes, every vote counts, and every person engaged in outreach makes a big difference...reach out to us to learn more about various opportunities. In the meantime, feel free to forward this newsletter to other graduate workers and help spread the word.

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Feedback? Content Ideas? Questions? Fill out this [form](#) or contact us at [graduatelaborunion@gmail.com](mailto:graduatelaborunion@gmail.com)

THIS Edition's  
**BIGGER PICTURE**

**We are not alone in this search for better graduate working conditions.**

- Solidarity with the [UC graduate students and workers](#), postdoctoral scholars, and other workers who are on strike. UAW has set up a [Support and Hardship Fund](#) to support UC Academic Workers on Strike.
- In other labor-related news, the state of Illinois is adding an amendment that will “dedicate a ‘fundamental right’ for workers to unionize and the ability to collectively bargain.” Read more about this in the [Chicago Tribune](#).
- Railroad workers are in negotiations, and Congress may be called up in the negotiation process to force a settlement workers did not accept. Follow along!
- Railroad workers are in negotiations; this is a complex and significant story that continues to develop.

THIS Edition's **TESTIMONIAL**  
Emily K., Political Science

**What are the biggest issues you face as a graduate worker at UMN? How do these issues affect your life?**

The University expects a lot of unpaid service from grad students that takes a lot of time. I would estimate that in the past four years, I have given the University about 500 hours of service, time that could have gone towards my research. I do these jobs because I want to make grad student lives better and I have benefitted from hardworking grad students before me (shout out to all the COGS folks putting on donut hours!), but it seems like programs and the U on the whole are built off of free labor from faculty, staff, and yes, us grad students who are paid, on average, \$19k a year.



**How would unionizing help solve these problems?**

A union would protect grad students from this unpaid labor and make service roles something that are meant for marginal tasks, not fundamental jobs, so that when service is needed, it's for small chunks of time and fun extras for grad students. A union would help make these improvements a reality by instituting formal contracts. This way, departments and the University cannot as easily pressure graduate workers into slicing time out of our already absurdly busy schedules to do jobs that should already be done by others on the clock and on the University's dime.

**Why do you support the UMN Graduate Labor Union?**

For my own personal life, I would have so much more time to do what I need to do: research. More broadly, though, I understand what it's like to be in an unsupportive and actively harmful position as a graduate student/worker. While I feel relatively fortunate in

my current program, I know many graduate students (and past Emily!) cannot say the same. I want to make the lives of my fellow graduate students better. A union will help graduate workers in vulnerable positions, such as those with hostile advisors, PIs, and department leadership.

[SHARE YOUR STORY HERE](#) or email [graduatelaborunion@gmail.com](mailto:graduatelaborunion@gmail.com)

## December's UNION VOCAB

**Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA)** - a contract that is negotiated by a democratically elected bargaining team (plus our union's legal team for backup) and the University's legal team and ratified by a majority vote of union members. *Remember - even if you are NOT a current member of the BU, your support in organizing and spreading GLU's work is valuable!*

## STAYING CONNECTED

We continue to work to gather support through smaller events as the semester comes to a close. In addition to **introductory orientations and trainings**, there are **area meetings**, and **area social events!**

To learn more, contact your [department/college organizing representative](#), or reach out to us at [graduatelaborunion@gmail.com](mailto:graduatelaborunion@gmail.com) or via this [form](#)

ICYMI - Check out [November's newsletter](#)

## Labor History SPOTLIGHT

[The Minneapolis Truckers' Strike/Minneapolis Teamsters Strike of 1934](#) was a critical event in both local and national labor history. The workers' strike ushered in the existence of the Local 574 and opened the door for union support in Minneapolis, as well as generating broader national support for unions in the 1930s. In addition to educational materials on the strike and its impacts, the [Minnesota Digital Library](#) houses the entire collection of the General Drivers Local 574 daily newspaper, [The Organizer](#).



## December's (PODCAST) RECOMMENDATIONS

To go along with the Labor History Spotlight, David recommends [1934: Mill City Revolt](#). Additionally, Adam suggests [The Uncertain Hour](#) - "This podcast does a great breakdown about the historical and politically contentious definitions of "work" and "employment", which are not the same thing! Super important if you find yourself being cut out from legal protections for the work you do."

### **"Bread and Roses"**

Poem by James Oppenheimer, 1922 -  
Associated with Lawrence Strike of 1912  
Song by Judy Collins, 1976

As we come marching, marching, in the beauty of the day,  
A million darkened kitchens, a thousand mill-lofts gray  
Are touched with all the radiance that a sudden sun discloses,  
For the people hear us singing, "Bread and Roses, Bread and Roses."

As we come marching, marching, we battle, too, for men—  
For they are women's children and we mother them again.  
Our days shall not be sweated from birth until life closes—  
Hearts starve as well as bodies: Give us Bread, but give us Roses.

As we come marching, marching, unnumbered women dead  
Go crying through our singing their ancient song of Bread;  
Small art and love and beauty their trudging spirits knew—  
Yes, it is Bread we fight for—but we fight for Roses, too.

As we come marching, marching, we bring the Greater Days—  
The rising of the women means the rising of the race.  
No more the drudge and idler—ten that toil where one reposes—  
But a sharing of life's glories: Bread and Roses, Bread and Roses.



Crowd of strikers menacing strike-breakers, Lawrence. 1912. Courtesy of Library of Congress, Bain Collection.