

# University of Minnesota's Graduate Labor Union:

January/February 2023 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?*

This is our semester!

We are part of the wave of graduate labor organizing across the country.

After talking to countless grad workers at the University of Minnesota, we have found that we are overworked and underpaid. Our stipends have decreased in actual purchasing power over the last seven years, while university administrators receive hefty annual raises and million dollar compensation packages. We have no dependable structures to ameliorate abusive workplace environments. We don't enjoy transportation benefits or complete vision or dental insurance. High dependent health insurance costs add an undue burden on those who need that resource. Many of us pay student fees despite generating much of the university's research and educational value. The U unfairly burdens international students, offering insufficient protections while charging an additional fee for the ISSS office. And WE have the power to change that.

**In a month, we will be going public with our Union campaign and starting our card campaign.** During this process, we will be asking our colleagues to sign a union card. These

cards get sent to the Bureau of Mediation Services (BMS) and that is when we file for a Union election.  
If you are not involved and want in, [please join us](#) - even an hour of your time helps!

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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.**

- On January 11th, workers and students at Northwestern - a fellow Big 10 school - have [voted to unionize](#) with UE
- *Science for the People* has released a special issue [“Organize the Lab: Theory and Practice”](#)

### THIS Edition's TESTIMONIAL Solvejg Wastvedt, Biostatistics

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

One of the biggest issues I have noticed is a difference in the levels of respect and value afforded to graduate workers compared to what I have experienced in other professional jobs. This includes pay that fails to meet a living wage but also general attitudes toward the work that we do. I have found that compared to previous jobs, this situation makes it harder to stay motivated and complete my work to the high standards I would like to meet.



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

Unionizing would mean recognition for the value we provide to the university. We would be able to have a voice in our labor conditions and work together for improvements, including fair and equitable wages across departments.

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

I support unionizing because it's the only way to gain collective power as graduate workers. Unionizing is how we fight together for fair and equitable pay and working conditions. It's how we make graduate school a place that's truly open to everyone, not just those privileged to have outside support.

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

### January's UNION VOCAB

**Dropping Cards** - The stage of the unionization process where an organizer asks employees in the bargaining unit to sign cards to indicate their support for a unionization vote. *Remember - even if you are NOT a current member of the Bargaining Unit, 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 previous newsletters from [December](#) and [November](#)

## Labor History SPOTLIGHT



Featured here ([courtesy of the Library of Congress](#)) is Mary Harris Jones - famously known as **Mother Jones**. A victim of the Irish Famine and the Chicago Fire, as well as a yellow fever epidemic that led to the loss of her husband and all their children, Mother Jones became an activist and labor organizer, particularly associated with coal miners and children. Mother Jones became involved in the Chicago labor scene in the late 19th century, led the 1903 [March of the Mill Children](#), and was a

co-founder of International Workers of the World in 1905. The IWW occupies a complex and significant place in [labor history](#) and it continues today. In addition to its various work, the IWW compiled a songbook; [HathiTrust has the 1910 version of the IWW Song Book \(Little Red Songbook\)](#)

## December's (PODCAST) RECOMMENDATIONS

- Anastasia recommends [this episode](#) of the *You're Wrong About* podcast focused on the Newsboys' Strike of 1988.
- Recommended by Adem S., here's [a brief overview](#) of Union Busting/Anti-Union Propaganda - we'll soon be turning our attention to countering similar efforts and content after we go public.

## There is Power in a Union

Joe Hill, 1913 (in IW/W Song Book from 1913)

Would you have freedom from wage slavery, Then join in the grand Industrial band; Would you from  
mis'ry and hunger be free, Then come! Do your share, like a man.

*There is pow'r, there is pow'r In a band of workingmen, When they stand hand in hand, That's a pow'r,  
that's a pow'r That must rule in every land. One Industrial Union Grand.*

Would you have mansions of gold in the sky, And live in a shack, way in the back? Would you have  
wings up in heaven to fly, And starve here with rags on your back?

*There is pow'r, there is pow'r In a band of workingmen, When they stand hand in hand, That's a pow'r,  
that's a pow'r That must rule in every land. One Industrial Union Grand.*

If you've had "nuff" of "the blood of the lamb" Then join in the grand Industrial band; If, for a change,  
you would have eggs and ham, Then come, do your share, like a man.

*There is pow'r, there is pow'r In a band of workingmen, When they stand hand in hand, That's a pow'r,  
that's a pow'r That must rule in every land. One Industrial Union Grand.*

If you like sluggers to beat off your head, Then don't organize, all unions despise, if you want nothing  
before you are dead, Shake hands with your boss and look wise.

*There is pow'r, there is pow'r In a band of workingmen, When they stand hand in hand, That's a pow'r,  
that's a pow'r That must rule in every land. One Industrial Union Grand.*

Come, all ye workers, from every land, Come, join in the grand Industrial band, Then we our share of  
this earth shall demand. Come on! Do your share, like a man.

*There is pow'r, there is pow'r In a band of workingmen, When they stand hand in hand, That's a pow'r,  
that's a pow'r That must rule in every land. One Industrial Union Grand.*



Mother Jones at the start of the March of the Mill Children. Pierce & Jones, 1903, Library of Congress.