

NIGHTINGALE VOCAL ENSEMBLE

EXPLORATORY CHORAL MEDITATION no. 1

**THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF SAINT PAUL
BOSTON, MA**

3 MAY 2023

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1

The First Recorded Strike (1152 BCE)

1. Ancient lives : daily life in Egypt of the pharaohs
 - a. John Romer, 1984
 2. Photo of the Valley of the Kings
 - a. Valley of the Kings, panoramic view from cliffs above KV 09, looking southeast. Visible are entrances to KV 03, KV 07, KV 04, KV 05, KV 06, KV 55, KV 62, KV 18, KV 17, KV 16, KV 10, KV 11, KV 57, and tourists shelter. Photo taken by Francis Dzikowski, March 2000.
-

In the twenty-fifth year of King Ramesses III's reign... a letter to the office of the Vizier:

"I am working on the princes' tombs which... [The King] has commissioned to be made... I do not become negligent at all.

We are impoverished. All the supplies for us that are from the treasury, the granary, and the storehouse have been... exhausted. The stone is not light... we are dying."

On 14 November 1152 BC... they stopped their work and marched out.



2

Excerpt from **The Woman's Labor: An Epistle to Mr Stephen Duck (1739)**

Mary Collier

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/52290/the-womans-labor-an-epistle-to-mr-stephen-duck>

Now night comes on, from whence you have relief,
But that, alas! does not increase our grief.
With heavy hearts we often view the sun,
Fearing he'll set before our work is done;
For, either in the morning or at night,
We piece the summer's day with candlelight.
Though we all day with care our work attend,
Such is our fate, we know not when 'twill end.
When evening's come, you homeward take your way;
We, till our work is done, are forced to stay,
And, after all our toil and labor past,
Sixpence or eightpence pays us off at last;
For all our pains no prospect can we see
Attend us, but old age and poverty.

3

Paterson (1913)

Rose Pastor Stokes

Published in *The Masses*, November, 1913.

<https://www.marxists.org/subject/women/poetry/stokes.htm>

Several thousand Paterson, New Jersey, textile mill workers went on strike for six months in 1913. They were demanding a shorter work day – 8 hours instead of 12 – and an end to the use of child labour. Many women were involved and more than 1800 silk-weavers were arrested during the strike, which, though failing to produce any immediate results, put workers' rights front and centre as a matter for public and political action in the USA.

In her poem, Rose Pastor Stokes (1879-1933) imagines the weavers back at their looms after the failed strike...

Our folded hands again are at the loom.

The air

Is ominous with peace.

But what we weave you see not through the gloom.

'Tis terrible with doom.

Beware!

You dream that we are weaving what you will?

Take care!

Our fingers do not cease:

We've starved—and lost; but we are weavers
still;

And Hunger's in the mill!...

And Hunger moves the Shuttle forth and back.

Take care!

The product grows and grows ...

A shroud it is; a shroud of ghastly black.

We've never let you lack!

Beware!

The Warp and Woof of Misery and Defeat...

Take care!—

See how the Shuttle goes!

Our bruised hearts with bitter hopes now beat:

The Shuttle's sure—and fleet!....

4

We Have Fed You All For a Thousand Years

Poem—By an Unknown Proletarian, published 1925

From Poems for Workers, An Anthology

<https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/pubs/lrlibrary/05-LRL-poem.pdf>

We have fed you all, for a thousand years
And you hail us still unfed,
Though there's never a dollar of all your wealth
But marks the worker's dead.
We have yielded our best to give you rest
And you lie on crimson wool.
Then if blood be the price of all your wealth,
Good God! We have paid it in full.

5

Excerpt from **Chant for May Day (1938)**

Langston Hughes

<https://www.poetrynook.com/poem/chant-may-day>

To be read by a Workman with, for background, the rhythmic waves of rising and re-rising Mass Voices, multiplying like the roar of the sea.

[1 WORKER]

The first of May:

When the flowers break through the earth,

When the sap rises in the trees.

When the birds come back from the South.

[ALL WORKERS]

Be like the flowers,

[10 VOICES]

Bloom in the strength of your unknown power,

[20 VOICES]

Grow out of the passive earth,

[40 VOICES]

Grow strong with Union,

All hands together—

To beautify this hour, this spring,

And all the springs to come

[50 VOICES]

Forever for the workers!

[1 WORKER]

Workers

[10 VOICES]

Be like the sap rising in the trees,

[20 VOICES]

Strengthening each branch,

[40 VOICES]

No part neglected—

[50 VOICES]

Reaching all the world.

[1 WORKER]

All workers.

6

Quote attributed to Bertolt Brecht

Unknown source

“Art is not a mirror held up to reality, but a hammer with which to shape it.”

7A

La beauté est dans la rue

Poster from the May 68 riots in Paris.



7B

Je participe...ils profitent

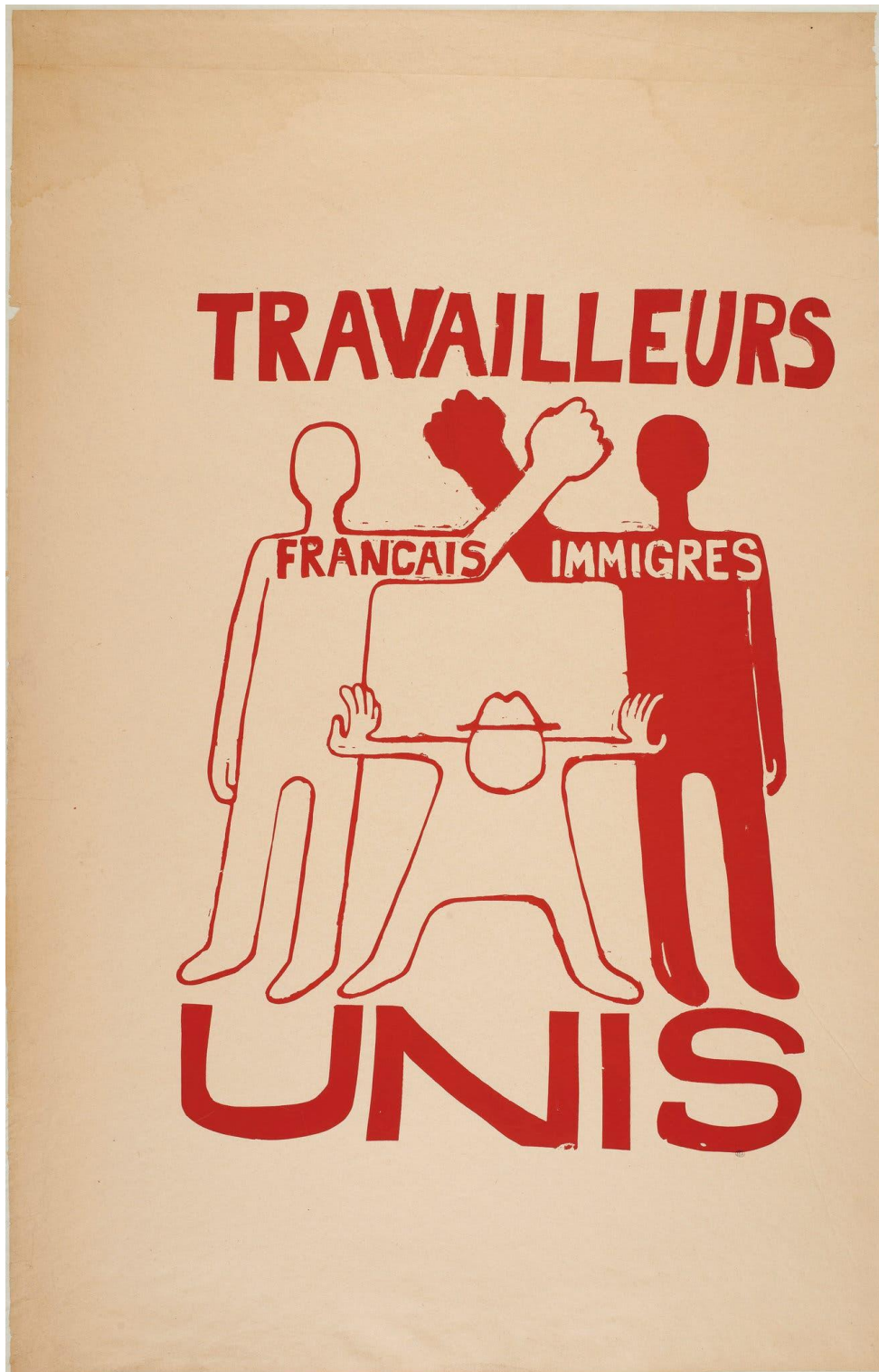
Poster from the May 68 protests in Paris.



7C

Travailleurs unis

Poster from the May 68 protests in Paris.



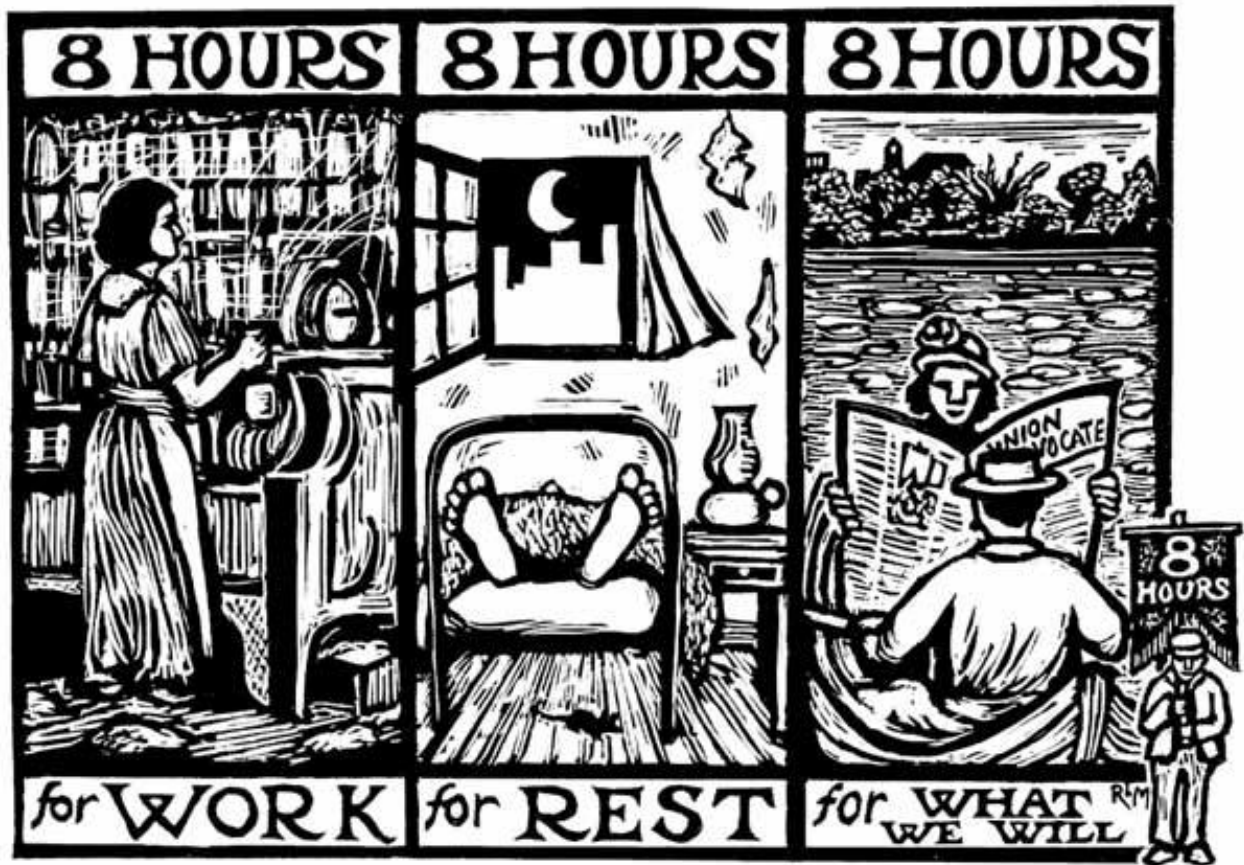
8

Eight Hours (Screenprint)

Ricardo Levins Morales, 1997

"Eight hours for work, for rest, and for what we will. Wouldn't it be nice? This early twentieth century slogan summarizes one of the great labor battles of the time: the demand for more leisure time. This silkscreen poster was created as part of the 100th anniversary of the St. Paul Union Advocate newspaper."

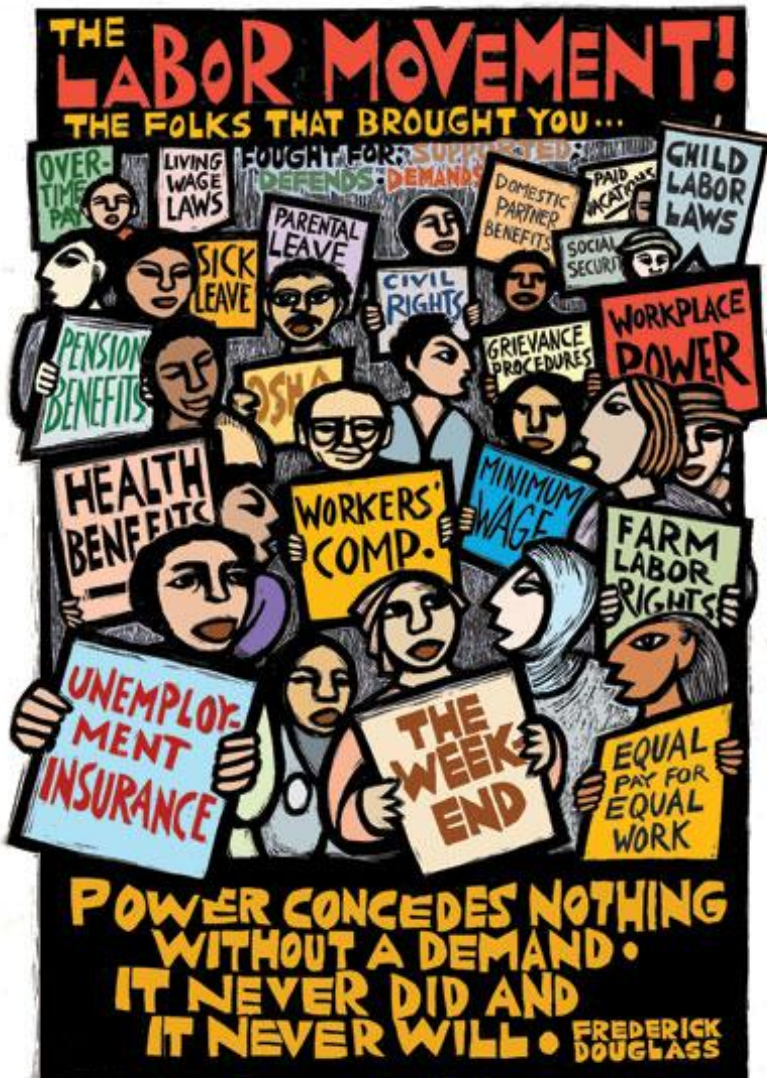
<https://www.rlmartstudio.com/product/eight-hours/>



9

Labor Movement (2006)

Poster by Ricardo Levins Morales



<https://www.rlmartstudio.com/product/labor-movement/>

10

“I Swallowed a Moon Made of Iron” (2013)

Xu Lizhi (1990-2014)

Published 19 December, 2013

Xu Lizhi (1990 – 30 September 2014) was a Chinese poet and factory worker. Xu worked for Foxconn, an electronics contract manufacturer, and attracted media attention after his suicide, after which his friends published his collection of poems. He was 24 years old.

<https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/news/2561-the-poetry-of-a-foxconn-worker-xu-lizhi-1990-2014>
<https://libromance.com/2016/05/01/may-day-poetry/>

I swallowed a moon made of iron
They refer to it as a nail
I swallowed this industrial sewage, these unemployment documents
Youth stooped at machines die before their time
I swallowed the hustle and the destitution
Swallowed pedestrian bridges, life covered in rust
I can't swallow any more
All that I've swallowed is now gushing out of my throat
Unfurling on the land of my ancestors
Into a disgraceful poem.

11

The Red Sweater (2014)

Joseph O. Legaspi

Poet Joseph Legaspi was born and raised in the Philippines; his family immigrated to Los Angeles when he was 12.

<https://www.splitthisrock.org/poetry-database/poem/the-red-sweater>

slides down into my body, soft
lamb's wool, what everybody
in school is wearing, and for me
to have it my mother worked twenty
hours at the fast-food joint.
The sweater fits like a lover,
sleeves snug, thin on the waist.
As I run my fingers through the knit,
I see my mother over the hot oil in the fryers
dipping a strainer full of stringed potatoes.
In a twenty hour period my mother waits
on hundreds of customers: she pushes
each order under ninety seconds, slaps
the refried beans she mashed during prep time,
the lull before rush hours, onto steamed tortillas,
the room's pressing heat melting her make-up.
Every clean strand of weave becomes a question.
How many burritos can one make in a continuous day?
How many pounds of onions, lettuce and tomatoes
pass through the slicer? How do her wrists
sustain the scraping, lifting and flipping
of meat patties? And twenty

hours are merely links
in the chain of days startlingly similar,
that begin in the blue morning with my mother
putting on her polyester uniform, which,
even when it's newly-washed, smells
of mashed beans and cooked ground beef.

12

Excerpt from **Of Saturdays Made Holy**

President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins

1 May 2020

President Michael D. Higgins published a new poem for May Day, or International Workers' Day. The poem is dedicated to Mary McPartlan, folk singer and trade union activist.

<https://president.ie/en/diary/details/president-publishes-may-day-poem/news-releases>

The night is long and I awake

Recall the making of the march,

On those Saturdays made holy,

The beat of feet behind banners,

That bore the glory of the words,

The call for a life made equal,

Banners held steady for the speech,

Gold threaded, fringed, eyeleted

With care, for the carrying,

To defeat the opposing breeze,

Borne by arms made strong,

From work of mind, of heart and hand.

...

In other times, an old planet weary finds
new life,

Renewal, from the music of the heart.

And now a new song emerges,

From behind banners gold threaded, again
made sacred,

On Saturdays made holy, with words
emancipatory,

As voices rise in unison,

And sing of love,

And a new day,

For all humanity.

U.N. Statement (2023)

Council of Europe

Commissioner for Human Rights

24 March 2023

https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/view/-/asset_publisher/ugj3i6qSEkhZ/content/id/206875371?_com_liferay_asset_publisher_web_portlet_AssetPublisherPortlet_INSTANCE_ugj3i6qSEkhZ_languageId=en_GB#p_com_liferay_asset_publisher_web_portlet_AssetPublisherPortlet_INSTANCE_ugj3i6qSEkhZ

In the context of the social movement against the pension reform in France, the freedoms of expression and assembly are being exercised under worrying conditions.

It is the responsibility of the authorities to allow the full enjoyment of these freedoms, by protecting peaceful demonstrators and journalists covering these demonstrations from police violence.

Sporadic violence from certain protesters cannot justify the excessive use of force by state agents. Such acts are not sufficient to deprive peaceful demonstrators of the right to assembly.

[Force] should only be used as a last resort and in strict compliance with the requirements of necessity and proportionality.

The first obligation of all states is to protect persons under their jurisdiction and their human rights.

II

Trois beaux oiseaux du Paradis

(Three lovely birds from Paradise)

à PAUL PAINLEVÉ

MAURICE RAVEL

Moderato. ♩ = 76

SOPRANO SOLO

p

Trois beaux oi - seaux du Pa-ra-dis, (Mon a - mi z-il est
Three love - ly birds from Pa-radise, (My be - lov'd is to

SOPRANOS

CONTRALTOS

pp
Ah!

TÉNORS

BASSES

S. Solo

à la guer-re) Trois beaux oi - seaux du Pa-ra-dis Ont pas - sé par i -
the fighting gone) Three love - ly birds from Pa-ra-dise, Have flown a - long this

pp
Ah!

pp
Ah!

pp
Ah!

pp
Ah!

1

S. Solo

mp *p*

- ci. — Le pre-mier é-tait plus — bleu que ciel, (Mon a-mi z-il est à la
 way. — The first was blu — er than Heaven's blue, (My be-lov'd is to the figh-

p *pp* *pp* *pp*

S. Solo

mp *p* *mf*

guer-re) Le se-cond é-tait cou-leur de neige, Le — troi-si-è-me rou-ge ver-
 ting-gone) The se-cond white as the fal-len snow, The third was wrapt in bright red —

p *mf* *mf* *mf* *mf*

S. Solo

pp

-meil. glow. "Beaux oi - se lets du Pa-ra-dis, (Mon a - mi z-il est
-Ye love - ly birds from Paradise, (My be - lov'd is to

fpp

f

fpp

f

2

S. Solo

à la guerre) Beaux oi - se lets du Paradis, qu'appor - tez par i - ci?"
the fighting gone) Ye love - ly birds from Paradise, What bring ye then this way?"

T. Solo

mp

"J'ap -
I

pp

p

p

pp

C. Solo

T. Solo

p

"Et —
•And

- porte un regard couleur d'a-zur. (Ton a - mi z-ilest à la guer-re)
bring to thee a glance of a-zur. (Thy be-lov'd is to the fight-ing gone).

pp

pp

pp

C.
Solo

moi, sur beau front couleur de neige, Un baiser dois mettre, encor plus pur ?
I on fai rest snow white brow, A fond kiss must leave, — yet purer still.

pp

3

S. solo

pp

«Oï - seau ver - meil du Pa-ra-dis, (Mon a - mi z-il est à la guerre)
 •Thou bright - red bird from Pa-radise, (My be - lov'd is to the fighting gone)

pp

pp

pp

S. Solo

Oï - seau ver - meil du Pa-ra-dis, que por - tez-vous ain - si?
 Thou bright - red bird from Pa-radise, What brin - gest thou to me?

4 Poco più lento

B. Solo *mp*

«Un jo - li cœur tout cramoisi, (Ton a - mi z-il est à la guer-re)...
 •A faith - ful heart all crimson red (Thy be - lov'd is to the fighting gone)»...

p Ah!

S. Solo *p* *très doux* *Rit.*

«Ah! je sens mon cœur qui froidit... Empor - tez - le aus - si.»
 •Ah! I feel my heart growing cold... Take it al - so with thee.»

fpp bouche fermée

fpp bouche fermée

f