

# THAT'S SO MAM

*Official newsletter of the IAMMAM Union*



## an update from the organizing team

Although 2021 may not have begun with the break from chaos that we dreamed about, stability is beginning to crystalize. This is not happening by chance, but as the result of action taken by activists and ordinary people alike — anyone who is unwilling to sit idly by. For our part, the IAM MAM Organizing Team is kicking off the new year with a renewed passion and hope for the future of the Milwaukee Art Museum, and our community at large.

While organizing a union campaign during all the calamity of 2020, we learned that uncertainty is best overcome by communication and collective action. When we communicate and act together, we create real bonds that help orient us within an uncertain world. It's easy to feel powerless when we're each alone, waiting for updates on a situation that's out of our control.

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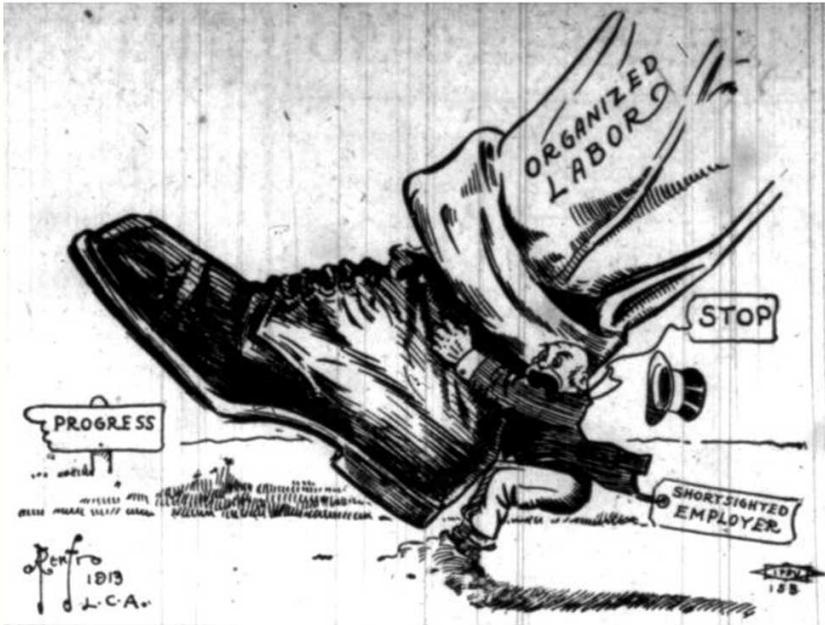
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## a funny thing happens on the way to solidarity

Anyone who's had any experience with grassroots organizing would probably attest to the fact that this work sometimes opens up a whole can of social anxieties. In the workplace, we're used to a crisp division between "professional" and "personal". It can feel uncomfortable to reach out to a coworker and ask, "do you have everything you need?" — especially if your work-relationships have always been highly professional. Usually it's considered impolite to discuss things like salaries or politics with relatives, let alone colleagues. It can also seem quite overwhelming to try to get involved with a group of people already doing organizing work. We empathize with all of this because we've experienced it ourselves.

Our advice to you is: start small. We only ask that you contribute what you can. Solidarity is like a mental muscle that's gone atrophied. If you try to run a solidarity-marathon right out of the gate, chances are, you will seriously tire yourself out — even more likely, it'll all seem too overwhelming to bother with. Things like marathons require practice, so start small. Over time, it gets easier. It only takes a quick check-in — a hello — to let your coworker know that someone is thinking of them. And that's the most crucial aspect to developing solidarity: we have to show each other that we care, that we're thinking about each other. None of us would be willing to make our voices heard if we didn't already know that there was someone willing to listen.



But when we talk to one another, we form bonds of understanding: we share our perspectives, ideas, and power. We support each other, lift each other up. It creates a collective power that's capable of standing up for what's right, to advocate for positive change. With a clear picture of what's happening around us and an understanding of how it affects each of us, we can better protect the most vulnerable among us. To form something stronger than the sum of its parts.

# ORGANIZE, ORGANIZE, ORGANIZE.

# get connected.

come join your fellow union members at the twice monthly planning meetings!

join the Organizing Team on the Telegram messaging app

reach out to a team member or Anne Wiberg for more information

# THE BARGAINING PROCESS HAS BEGUN!



Bargaining surveys have been sent out and returned. The Bargaining Committee (BC) and Advisory Committee (AC) have been hard at work, organizing and prioritizing the issues that matter to you most. The first meeting between MAM Management and the Bargaining Committee is set for February 4th.

The Bargaining Committee is made up of four sharp and capable workers from the Curatorial Department: Lydelle Abbott Janes, Stephanie Hansen, Paul Mitchell, and Ariel Pate. They will be negotiating directly with MAM management.

The AC has been the representative voice of all the other departments. They have been advising the BC on the interests and concerns of the rest of the museum staff. The AC members are: Liala Amin, Pam Baranowski, Warren Enström, and Ryan Jann.

In conjunction with IAM Business Reps., the BC has been drafting the language of our first contract. In the process, they have closely studied the contracts of recently unionized art museums, like the New Museum, the Minneapolis Institute of Art, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. They combined the insights of those workers with the data we gathered from our bargaining surveys. We are happy to report that the BC has finished preparing nearly all of our proposals for negotiations.





## becoming a member of the IAM

The Bargaining Committee’s ability to negotiate a fair contract in the coming weeks and months depends on our collective strength and solidarity. Please support the bargaining process and its effectiveness by joining the IAM. We can build a strong foundation for enforcing the contract once it is in place. Note: no dues will be collected until a contract is approved by the majority of IAM MAM members. The Organizing Committee and Bargaining Committee will be reaching out to you in the coming weeks to begin the sign-up process.

## strike sanction vote

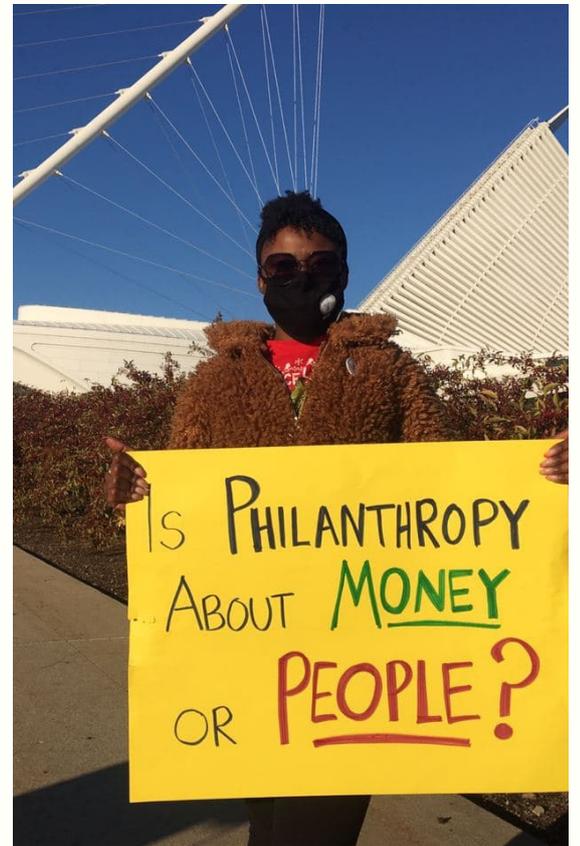
While this might have a scary name, this process is intended to be an expression of solidarity. It is not a vote to strike; it is a statement that the workers of the Milwaukee Art Museum would be willing to strike if MAM Management is unwilling to negotiate with us in good faith. It is a show of support from the membership as negotiations come to a conclusion. It is like a form of insurance that we give to ourselves through the power of our solidarity.

## info request

The BC has formally requested that MAM Management send us a range of information: a list of job titles, salaries/wages, hours worked per week, length of employment at the Museum, etc. We are, unfortunately, still waiting to receive the bulk of that information, despite the fact that opening negotiations are just days away.

## mutual aid

All employees are eligible to request financial assistance. We still have \$1,400 in our Mutual Aid Fund, so please apply. We are dispersing \$150 micro-grants on a first come, first serve basis – though, fist bumps of solidarity would probably be accepted too ;-)



There’s a practical purpose to the strike sanction vote as well. It clears the way to receive strike benefits from the IAM, should the need arise.

A simple majority vote of actively working MAM members is needed for the strike sanction to take effect. We need 30% of actively working IAM members to cast a ballot, and of those voting, we need at least 2/3 to vote YES.

The vote will be held electronically. We need as many people to participate as possible, so keep on the lookout!

**ORGANIZE, ORGANIZE, ORGANIZE.**

# HISTORY OF THE MOVEMENT



January 30th was the 56th anniversary of Winston Churchill's funeral. A memorable scene occurred as his funeral barge floated down the river Thames. The cranes of the London docks dipped as Churchill's body passed, in what was reportedly a spontaneous gesture of respect. However, many years later, John Lynch, a dockman working during Churchill's funeral in 1965, described his first-person account in Jeremy Paxman's BBC1 documentary, *Churchill: The Nation's Farewell*. He said, "When [the crane operators] were asked to do it, the atmosphere was 'no.' But then they were paid to do it, because we didn't work Saturday afternoon. They wouldn't have been there. [...] There was a lot, a lot of arguments and rouse about it, and the attitude seemed to be: if you respected the man you would have done it for nothing, if you didn't respect him you wouldn't have done it at all. The atmosphere was that Churchill wasn't a working class person, he wasn't a working man's representative at all, absolutely."

Churchill was notorious for his anti-labor policies and hatred of socialism. As he was serving as Home Secretary, he sent troops into Wales to crush the Miners' Strike of 1910-1911. The miners and their families had been attempting to fight back against a powerful cartel of mine owners who had been colluding to keep wages low, severely impoverishing the community. At least one citizen died (although there are no certain records of the casualties, as workers did not seek medical treatment for fear of retaliation or prosecution; some eye-witness accounts report that there were shots fired by the troops and many casualties) over 500 people were injured.

During the general strike of 1926, Churchill was serving as Chancellor of the Exchequer. The strike extended to the newspaper industry, and many of the country's papers were only able to publish in an abbreviated form. The British government took it upon itself to publish a newspaper during the nine day strike, called the *British Gazette*, and Churchill served as one of its most enthusiastic editors. In the paper, he again advocated for the use of force against workers, using rhetoric like, "Either the country will break the strike, or the strike will break the country."

The general strike was precipitated when the owners of the coal mines announced that they would reduce the wages of over 1.2 million miners, whose working conditions had been steadily declining as industrialization marched on.

As we learn from so many figures of Western history, classism often goes hand in hand with racism. Churchill was well known for his imperialist politics and his virulent racism. In 1899 he wrote to his cousin, "The improvement of the British breed is my aim in life." In an interview in 1902 he said, "The Aryan stock is bound to triumph." And in 1935 he penned an article for *Strand Magazine* called "The Truth About Hitler." In it he wrote, "Corporal Hitler was fighting his long, wearing battle for the German heart. The story of that struggle cannot be read without admiration for the courage, the single-mindedness, and the personal force which enabled him to challenge, defy, overcome, or conciliate all the authorities or resistances which barred his path. He, and the ever-increasing legions who worked with him, certainly showed at this time, in their patriotic ardour and love of country, that there was nothing they would not do or dare, no sacrifice of life, limb or liberty that they would not make themselves or inflict upon their opponents."

The list of regrettable actions, statements, and policies goes on. He was especially contemptuous of Arab peoples. He advocated against black and indigenous sovereignty in Africa, Australia, the Americas, the Caribbean and India. According to him, imperial rule was for the good of so-called "primitive" or "subject races."

We must know our history if we are not to commit the same errors. The voice of the voiceless must be heard.

