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One Is A Hundred The Other Side of the Tracks By Perry Redd BC Columnist

Most Americans were unconcerned about the efforts to garner and renew the respect of Walmart workers. Some Americans asked, "What's wrong with Walmart? I like Walmart!" The protests on Black Friday were not designed to end capitalism or crush Walmart, though some in the media attempted to portray it as such.

The protests were not meant to prevent people from shopping on the hottest deal day of the year but to bring attention to the disregard for workers - not only at Walmart stores but around the country. There are people who place profits over people no matter which corporation it may be. To them, the dollar is so sacred as to take precedence over the lives of human beings.

Fox News reported the Walmart talking point that "only 50 workers" participated in the protests - nationwide! There was nothing further from the truth. Workers staged protests at 1000 Walmart stores in 46 states, with support from United Food and Commercial Workers Unions. Walmart unashamedly opposes labor unions and aggressively intimidates its workers from organizing. Support for workers at a DC suburban Walmart also came from a church pastor. Remember, churches during the early 20th Century were the leading social justice organizations in the Black community.

Even the day after Black Friday, Fox was still running that report, but why? The reports kept pre-empting the worker actions or protests with the Black Friday numbers but why? Walmart makes concerted efforts to convince the public nothing is wrong at its stores, but if that were

the case, why are workers protesting? All is not - and hasn't been for years - well at the world's biggest retailer.

While people were battling for their piece of the consumer pie - right in line with the corporatocracy's plan - other people were standing up for the respect of the American worker. The individualist-minded person was thinking solely about his or her own corner of the world, while the Walmart protestor was thinking about *the* world.

Am I surprised? Never. In America, the scourge of capitalism has ruled the mind and conscience of this nation's residents. Big corporations continue to lead us to believe that unions are the problem. One Fox News headline was (paraphrased): *Are unions or the bad economy to blame for the looming fiscal cliff?*

Fighting for the rights of workers is demonized and blamed for the drag on the economy. Of course, since unionized workers make up only 6% of the workforce, that's an absurd proposition, yet that doesn't stop the corporate elite from saying it. The danger in faux news 'lies' (excuse the pun) is that 47.8 percent who believe it; they are the same 47 percent who voted for Mitt Romney (how ironic for one who characterized the same percentage of Americans as perceiving themselves as 'victims' and 'entitled').

The continued effort to bring America to a place of shame for what it has allowed corporations to do to the American workforce is not an overnight task. This awareness didn't dim overnight, and won't re-ignite overnight. It will take generations of degradation, disrespect and pain before America grants the respect due to its backbone - the American worker.

That backbone has been broken by those who agree politically with Conservatives, who have placed profits over people for the last two generations. The value of the American worker has been under attack since then-President Ronald Reagan declared war on collective bargaining and the Taft-Hartley Act in 1981. Air Traffic Controllers through their union, PATCO, exercised their legally-protected right to strike, however, Reagan seized dictatorial power by disregarding the law and firing the workers when they elected to proceed with collective bargaining.

We hear talk about a "struggling economy" and how people are struggling "just to make ends meet." But from reported Black Friday

numbers, Americans spent more than \$11 billion in a single day!
Somebody *had* some money!

Though some might view the “numbers” as a barometer of success, I posit this: Each Walmart protestor, whether employee or supporter, who courageously stands for justice in his or her workplace, stands for 100 who are too intimidated to do the same.

While consumers remain consumed with buying stuff (that’s the American way), despite living on the brink of financial disaster, Walmart workers struggle for respect in the workplace. Just ask an employee who relies on SNAP (food stamps) to make ends meet and hospital emergency rooms for access to medical care. Our country’s economic house of cards cannot survive and when it falls, martyrs and consumer-collateral damage will fall too. Until then, Walmart workers deserve our support, for they are standing for the working class - that is, the majority of us, when many whom are too consumed to notice or care.

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