



Figure 1.4. Jacquie Ursula Caldwell and Judy Quinlan, “The Women of the World Are Serving Notice!” (1974). Image courtesy of Silvia Federici.

Women’s liberation is a matter of survival. We need food, decent medical care, good schools, and community-run day care. For this, we need revolution.



Four years ago today, our comrades Diana Oughton, Ted Gold, and Terry Robbins died fighting for these same struggles. They are a constant inspiration.

### 1.C.5.

Coretta Scott King

## From Statement to House Subcommittee on Equal Opportunity and Full Employment (1975)

Coretta Scott King was a committed activist, and in the 1970s, she was especially active in the drive for full employment. She gave the statement reproduced here to Congress to advocate for a full employment policy, the Humphrey-Hawkins bill. Corporate and business interests fought hard to limit this policy and to suppress support for it. Although the bill was signed into law in 1978, it has not secured sufficient support to guarantee funding or enforcement. King’s statement expresses the original visions behind the full employment goal.

There is no question in my mind that among all the pressing issues and challenges America faces, none is more important to the elimination of human suffering and to the advancement of the nonviolent ideal than the issue of providing jobs for all Americans. . . . Jobs for all the jobless in America would, more than any other social program, move America toward fulfilling its promise of providing justice and a decent life for all its citizens.

It is this belief that led me to accept the task of cochairperson of the newly organized Committee for Full Employment, along with Mr. Murray Finley, president of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers. The statement of purpose of that organization is, I believe, a very clear and cogent statement of the issue we confront. . . . It says:

We believe the opportunity to work is a fundamental right without which human dignity and equality are diminished or withheld from millions.

The problem which influences all other problems is persisting and increasing unemployment. It stifles hopes for millions, especially the young; it generates insecurity for the unemployed; it is an economic deadweight that results in the loss of billions of dollars in our gross national product.

Full employment is in the interest of employers, because they must depend for their customers on those who are employed; it is in the interest of the employed, because their job security depends on full employment economy; it is in the interest of the nation as a whole, because it is necessary for economic stability, political morality, and social tranquility.

For nearly three decades, the Employment Act of 1946 has promised but never mandated a policy of full employment. . . . The past three decades have also seen the rise of a sophisticated “numbers game” whereby “full employment” is defined as an ever-increasing percentage of unemployment. For us and for the nation, involuntary unemployment at any rate is morally unacceptable. For us full employment means no involuntary unemployment.

Yet another postwar phenomenon is the belief that full employment cannot be achieved without substantial rates of inflation, . . . [but] genuine full employment may help to fight inflation through the increased production of goods and services. . . .

. . . I have no hesitation about asserting that this profoundly pessimistic notion—that full employment is impossible—need not and, in fact, must not be accepted. For if, as the saying goes, war is too important to leave to the generals, then it is equally true that social and economic justice in America is far too important to be left to the economists. There are some things which are self-evident truths, facts which are as much the property of all Americans as the ringing words of the Declaration of Independence.

One is that America is a country rich with resources, wide with land, and heavy with the tools and instruments that build cities and manufacture goods. The goods we produce and the standard of living of most of our citizens make

us the envy of the world. It is therefore unacceptable for us to tolerate any argument against full employment that says we simply cannot afford it. If certain European countries, some of which would be no more than states if transferred to America, can employ virtually all their citizens, then so can we.

A second truth is that, for all our wealth, there remains a vast array of tasks that need to be done. It is one of the enduring shames of contemporary history that America, with the highest per capita income in the world, lags behind many countries on health and welfare indices such as infant mortality.

The jobless men in our cities are idle resources which could easily be put to work on needed, valuable projects, enhancing the quality of all our lives through jobs providing better health care, environmental improvement, and the development of new and better systems of transit and housing for urban America. No economic argument, no matter how subtle and complex, can change the reality that there are still vitally needed jobs to be done and idle men and women to do them.

This brings me to the third and final fact which we are all well aware of: that the great wealth and resources of this country are allocated in a profoundly unequal manner. From time to time in the national press, one will encounter some sarcastic mention of the fact that, amid the desperate poverty of India, the Brahma bull is considered sacred, and children will starve while these animals roam the streets unmolested. As often as not, a religious tradition such as this is presented as a foolish waste of resources and offered as a great contrast to our own supposedly enlightened ideas.

But America has its own sacred cows, and our attitude is indeed far less rational than the ethical principles of the Hindu religion. If the people of India forgo their nourishment for the sake of a living creature, what can be said of a country that forgoes the needs of its children and the care of its elderly for gleaming rows of nuclear bombs and other weapons of destruction far in excess of any rational need?

To be frank, I can no longer remember the latest estimate of how many times over our nuclear arsenal can annihilate every living Russian or the relative "superiority" that gives us. But I cannot forget that cutting our military budget by less than 10 percent, it is estimated, would provide the funds for a million new jobs for the jobless. And not only are there stark contrasts between affluence and poverty in America, but our tax system, which purports to be equitable, has allowed millionaires to pay no taxes, while the average American contributes a substantial part of his earnings.

One need only ride through the streets of any city in America to see that, as my husband once noted, we have created miracles of production, but we have achieved only a modicum of justice. . . .

There is simply no question that full employment, a job for every American who needs one, is a real and possible goal if we would choose to make it a national priority.

And there are real and pressing reasons why we should put full employment at the top of our national agenda. It is not only, as I have said, that full employ-

ment would be the single most effective cure for the whole host of urban problems that exist but that full employment would certainly create progress in the political and social life of the entire nation. It would bring together in harmony the interests of groups who now face each other across a gulf of mutual distrust and hostility. It would be a program that could win the support of the white construction worker, currently out of work because of the housing slump, and the ghetto youth, who has never had a job. No longer could a Richard Nixon or others of his like pit black workers against whites in order to avoid meeting the needs of either.

The entire cynical politics of racism—the exploitation of white fear of unemployment and black anger at exclusion—would be profoundly weakened, and the serious danger of renewed polarization would be sharply diminished. This, along with the inevitable improvement in the condition of America’s ghettos, would usher in a new era in the history of race relations in the USA.

The struggle for full employment is therefore not only vital in its own right but can be the issue that will reunite the powerful forces of dignity and decency, forces which can insure real and meaningful progress in the years ahead.

## **1.C.6.**

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Auto Workers United to Fight in '76

### **“Letter from Rich Off Our Backs July 4 Coalition” (1976)**

This letter was written for publication in a radical labor newspaper, *Auto Workers United to Fight in '76*, that worked to mobilize at General Motors plants in Detroit. It promoted radical resistance to the US bicentennial, which received official celebration in July 1976 but also sparked major counter-bicentennial protests in Philadelphia and San Francisco. Members of the coalition behind this letter included Vietnam Veterans against the War, the Unemployed Workers Organizing Committee, the Revolutionary Communist Party, the Revolutionary Student Brigade, NY-NJ United Workers Organization, and the May 1 Workers Organization.

To Auto Workers United to Fight in '76:

From punching in to punching out, every day we’re at war with the bosses.

One week we’re driven to work faster, the next we’re thrown out the door. Forced overtime in the same plants where hundreds, even thousands are laid off. They hold the axe over our heads. Work harder for less, or else. Then who knows where the next check will come from, and how far it will stretch.

For as long as there has been an owning class, we have busted our backs, and they stole it all for their own interests. Two hundred years and things are getting worse.