



Who's on our side?

By Graham Trainor Oregon AFL-CIO President

NWSL players' fight for change is our fight too

Professional athletes are workers too, workers with a platform who have worked their entire lives to achieve their career, and workers who have a unique connection to their communities.

As an activist, it's always refreshing to see athletes use their platform to engage in important, timely social justice discussions. From Colin Kaepernick refusing to stand for the national anthem protesting racial injustice and police brutality to WNBA players wearing Black Lives Matter t-shirts during warm-ups, or the NBA's Milwaukee Bucks refusing to take the court to protest the police shooting of Jacob Blake in Kenosha, Wisconsin. In these and so many other examples, players have used their stature to help elevate and draw attention to important struggles for justice.

Another inspiring example of professional athletes using their platform to enact change is in women's soccer, from the U.S. National Team to the National Women's Soccer League (NWSL), where players have been waging an incredible and effective campaign for equal pay in recent years. The NWSL Players Association—the union representing players of the NWSL—is negotiating its first contract after forming just over four years ago. With its “No More

Side Hustles” campaign, and the headline-grabbing legal strategy of the U.S. Women's National Team, it's hard to think of a more high-profile and timely campaign around pay equity than in the highest levels of women's professional soccer.

However, over the past few weeks another high profile news cycle has yet again showcased a disturbing, harassing, and intimidating workplace culture perpetuated by powerful men that silenced the voices of women coming forward to share their experiences, their truth. This time, and in this moment, the bravery of the players in the NWSL and members of the NWSL Players Association is front and center in the national conversation about toxic and discriminatory cultures that too many working women face each day.

Right here in Oregon, our own NWSL team, the top-ranked Portland Thorns, is at the center of this, with former Thorns coach Paul Riley accused of gross misconduct. Several brave former Thorns players shared stories that helped break the silence and elevate the abuses into national headlines.

After six years of being silenced, ignored, and overlooked, stories of sexual misconduct and abuse are starting to

come into the light, elevating important demands for change within the league.

One thing that remains strikingly clear and concerning is the culture that must exist within the league that allows a powerful man like Paul Riley to not only be outed in the last few weeks as a serial abuser, but for him to have been investigated in 2015 while in Portland, be dismissed from that team, and then to be hired by another team where this coercive behavior, rooted in the power imbalance between coaches and players, would go onto harm even more women.

Unfortunately, this kind of culture within workplaces, where top-level managers are able to abuse their power and influence with little to no repercussion, is further enabled by the inadequacy of most states' laws, Oregon included. While the Oregon labor movement is proud of the work we've done in recent years to reform our state's laws around sexual harassment and discrimination and making workplaces safer for all, there is still much work left to do to truly achieve the kind of justice and accountability working people, especially working women, deserve on the job.

The labor movement has long been and remains the most powerful counterbalance to corporate greed and

unchecked corporate power, and a galvanizing defender of the rights and protections of working people. This includes rooting out the kind of abusive working conditions that too many NWSL players have been subjected to, and it includes holding those in power accountable when these types of abuses are brought into the light.

The Oregon labor movement was proud to stand with the Thorns players at their Oct. 6 game, the first game back after the weekend's pause, to show solidarity, and to help amplify their demands of No More Silence.

And whether it's supporting the NWSL Players Association as they fight for a fair first contract, amplifying the calls for pay equity between women's and men's soccer, or offering unwavering support for the current demands from the players regarding the needed change in the league to root out this toxic, abusive workplace culture, Oregon labor stands ready to do whatever it takes.

We believe the NWSL players who are sharing their stories, and their fight is our fight too. To learn more and get involved, visit www.nwslplayers.com.

The Oregon AFL-CIO is a 138,000-member-strong federation of labor unions.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Nationwide strike at Kellogg's

No contract? No Corn Flakes.

About 1,400 members of four Bakery, Confectionery and Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers (BCTGM) locals went on strike Oct. 5 after months of working mandatory 12-hour shifts seven days a week at Kellogg's plants in Battle Creek, Mich., Omaha, Neb. Lancaster, Pa., and Memphis, Tenn. They're striking for an end to a two-tier wage system that now pays the most recent hires, 30% of the workforce, more than \$11 an hour less than more senior co-workers. They're also rejecting company demands to cut health and retirement benefits for new hires. The workers produce Froot Loops, Frosted Flakes, Rice Krispies, Raisin Bran and Corn Flakes, among others.

The contract talks have been at an impasse for more than a year. Kellogg's is demanding

concessions from workers at a time when it's highly profitable, and is paying its CEO \$11.7 million a year. It even wants to stop printing the union label on cereal boxes.

A week into the strike, the company was attempting to restart operations using replacement workers.

Aggressive labor relations isn't new at Kellogg's, which locked out 226 members of Memphis Local 252G for nine months in 2013-14. A federal judge eventually ordered the firm to reinstate the workers with back pay.

BCTGM President Anthony Shelton says the company has also continually threatened to shift jobs to Mexico.

“Kellogg's response to these loyal, hardworking employees has been to demand these workers give up quality health care, retirement benefits, and holiday and vacation pay,” Shelton said in a press statement.



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