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students – supposedly the winners in the American Dream Sweepstakes – are hungry, and 10 percent to 12 percent don't have a secure place to live.

In the Global South, where there was land grab after the 2008 crash by big corporations looking for safer investments, millions and millions of people were forced off their land as it was sold to transnational farming conglomerates or seed conglomerates. Conditions creating migrancy and homelessness. That was another thing that made people feel like they didn't have anything to lose.

I think we've reached the point where things are bad enough for enough people that we're seeing an uprising. I think it's very similar to the Great Depression, where we began to see support for socialism; we began to see unemployed marches. We've seen a return of hunger strikes as part of this protest movement, and as one activist, Denise Barlage from the Walmart workers movement, said to me, "It's really easy to go on hunger strike when you're already hungry."

All of those things and the kinds of communications that it made possible set the stage for this global uprising.

E.G.: Can you tell me about the scope of this uprising? Is it reaching every corner of our planet?

A.O.: It is. It's broadened. All kinds of low-wage workers have had a one-day strike every year in April, in May, and those strikes have taken place in 40 countries on six continents in hundreds of cities.

It is truly reaching from South Africa – from the Western Cape wine industry to the berry pickers in Baja California, in Mexico, to the garment shops of Dakar, Bangladesh and Phnom Penh, Cambodia, to the Thai berry pickers in Iceland and Lapland.

We are seeing, really, a global uprising of low-wage workers and also of farmers and farmworkers. There's an organization called La Via Campesina, "The Peasants' Way," that is run by an organic farmer from Zimbabwe named Elizabeth Mpfu. She sees what's happening to farmers and farmworkers as part of what's happening to all workers, and they have galvanized days of action by farmworkers. There have been hotel workers' days of actions that have taken place all over the world – from Africa to Albany.

E.G.: Are the conditions faced by low-wage workers here in the U.S. all that different from conditions we're seeing in developing nations?

A.O.: No, they're not. There is one story that I recount in this book of a hotel housekeeper by the name of Santa Brito, who went into labor. She'd been asking for time off while she was pregnant. She wasn't feeling that well, and they wouldn't give it to her. She was afraid to ask for more, even unpaid time off, because she was afraid she would be fired. But when she went into labor, she asked her supervisor if she could leave, and her supervisor said no because her shift wasn't over. Finally, her water broke while she was making a bed. She went to the hospital to give birth to her baby, in her uniform, stopping only to wash the toxic cleansers that she works with off her hands. Two weeks later, she was called by her supervisor and fired for leaving her shift



Fast-food workers from Brooklyn, N.Y., participate in a 2015 rally for worker rights.

PHOTO BY ELIZABETH COOKE

early.

Now when I tell that story, people who read this book often remember it because it's so shocking, and they have said to me, when I'm giving talks or interviews, "Could you tell me that story about the Philippine hotel housekeeper?" And I say, "No. Santa Brito does not work in the Philippines. She works in Providence, Rhode Island."

What's happened is globalization of garment work, of hotel work, farm work, of fast food has driven down wages here in this country and made conditions worse in this country. And the decline of unions has done that as well. So no, they're not that different.

E.G.: What stands out to you as different about today's labor movement, as compared with movements of the past?

A.O.: There are a few differences. One is that, though there has always been global rhetoric, social media has really made it possible for workers to organize very quickly and globally because they can communicate with each other within seconds. And through using social media, they're no longer dependent on professional media to spread the word or to cover their events. They can cover them; they can shape the images coming out of those protests.

In addition, the flash strike is taking the place of long, drawn-out grinding strikes. Workers have been able to do these one-day strikes so they don't lose too many wages and companies don't usually fire people, but they are nevertheless able to get out their discontent with the brands and to have protests all over the country, and the world, that show up huge multinationals like McDonald's and Walmart for the promises they've broken, for the lies they've told and for the illegal things they've done to retaliate against workers for organizing.

The final thing is that the majority of

those involved are women, and particularly, women of color. As important as wages are women's issues in terms of galvanizing the movement. For example, wanting to see an end to sexual violence and gender-based workplace violence and sexual harassment, an end to pregnancy discrimination and wanting to see gender-wage equity, as well.

E.G.: One chapter is titled, "You can't dismantle capitalism without dismantling patriarchy." How is the patriarchy reflected in the world's labor struggles?

A.O.: That quote came from a 27-year-old woman activist named Sister Nice Coronacion in the Philippines, and it was her view, and it's the view of an organization called World March of Women that she was part of, that patriarchy takes advantage of women workers, uses them as a surplus labor force willing to come in at lower wages because they have children to feed. It uses sexual violence and sexual harassment to keep women

compliant, and it also uses children and women's lack of access to reproductive devices, birth control, as a way of creating more workers who are more desperate and who will work under any circumstances. In all of those ways, she sees capitalism and patriarchy as intertwined.

E.G.: You wrote that to many of the labor rights activists you interviewed, "the living-wage campaign is inextricably tied to the struggle against police violence and for immigration reform." Can you explain how these seemingly separate civil rights issues are connected?

A.O.: (Fast-food worker) Bleu Rainer explained really clearly how the fight for living wage is tied to the struggle against police violence when he said, "We are the same people. We are the people who are harassed and beaten by police when we are tired and coming home from our second or

third job, which often brings us into the streets late at night because we have to work so many jobs to survive."

And he pointed out that, for example, after police shot teenager Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo., it was living-wage activists in a local McDonald's who invited protesters in to get a safe space away from police violence. It's very much the same people, and I think the immigration struggle is also tied to it because they are also the same people.

A veteran activist for the hotel workers, María Elena Durazo, said to me, since the early 20th century, the labor movement has been tied to the struggle for immigrant rights because immigrants are used to breaking unions to drive down wages. They have always been used to make extra profits for capitalists, and now more than ever, she feels that it is essential for the labor movement to stand with immigrants, and we're seeing that happen.

E.G.: I was surprised to read that in Denmark, fast-food workers earn the equivalent of \$21 per hour, with paid vacations, benefits and subsidies to attend college. Do you think something like this is achievable in the U.S. in your lifetime?

A.O.: Yeah, I think it would. First of all, the first question that people always ask is, "If we raise wages, aren't prices going to go up?" No, because there is plenty of surplus. Part of what's happened is that corporations are engaging in shareholder buyback, because CEOs' worth and salary is determined only by how much the value of the shares of the company increase.

One thing that I would like to see, that has started to be called for, is limiting how much of the profits of the company can go into shareholder buyback. Maybe instead, you can have a regulation that says a certain percentage has to go to raises; a certain percentage has to go to benefits. In the past 40 years, you have CEOs that make 20, 30, 80 times what their lowest-paid workers make. Now it's like 350 times what their lowest-paid workers make. No one's asking

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