

Work Work Work

By Margot Pepper

Studies have shown that the time workers believe they have to themselves really belongs to an authoritarian presence, particularly on weeknights. For no apparent reason, a subject will up and leave a movie, a party, even a steamy moment of passion. In 97 percent of the cases, the explanation the subject gave was the same: “I have to work tomorrow.”

Further, results of comprehensive survey research show that during the “work week” there’s a dramatic increase in cell phone usage, television-watching, web-surfing, and anti-depressant drug-ingesting, paralleled by an astounding decrease in learning behavior, and a strange affinity for traffic, collars, ties, high heels, panty hose, and pancake make-up, even on stifling hot muggy afternoons. This has led experts to believe that the time a worker can likely claim as his or her own is, in fact, limited to weekends—though with the arrival of the unofficial six-day work week, even this is in doubt.

But supposing one does have a “good job” with weekends, holidays, benefits, and two weeks of vacation, we might conclude that for two days a week, your life belongs to you. 2×52 weeks in a year + 10 days of vacation + the 9 official holidays = 123 days of life per year. Now, if one has gone to college and graduates in 4.65 years, as per government statistics, and works full-time from age 22 until a retirement age of 66, one can count on a total of 123×44 years, or 5,412 days of life during this period.

In other words, the average “40-hour” week worker is alive 14.82739726 years (5,412 days / 365 days in a year) from the time he or she is waiting for life to begin after graduation, up until the time he or she is still waiting for life to begin, not long before

death. Fourteen years, nine months and a little over 28 days. Let’s round this figure to the 15 year mark, because after all, in spite of statistics, people do manage to get some time off using “sick” days. In fact, if you can manage to swing 10 “sick” days a year and two days off for Thanksgiving and Christmas each, you could pull off 16.2739726 years of life. That’s a bonus of almost 1.4 years.

There you have it folks: 15 years of life, 8.25 of which must be subtracted in that 44 year period, if you’re the average 4.5 hour-a-day TV-watcher, according to Nielsen. Six-and-three-quarters years of life, 21 spent in purgatory waiting for this life, and 29 years of indentured servitude to enrich those who’ve hardly worked at all.

So just don’t do it, is all. Join a union, organize a general strike for a 36-hour or less work week, engage in anti-work. Anti-work at something you love, something that will better our collective lives and bring down a system of primarily unnecessary, even harmful work: like real estate speculation, market manipulation, health insurance gouging, writing government propaganda, and designing nasty widgets for the purpose of blowing up cuddly little children. Stop the machine and turn on the dream, that’s the real work to be done in a society such as ours. ■

Mexican-born Margot Pepper’s work has been published by the Utne Reader, Monthly Review, City Lights, the S.F. Bay Guardian, France’s Le Courrier, and Canada’s The Scoop. She is the author of, Through the Wall: A Year in Havana, and a forthcoming book, The Acrobat and Other Stories for Dark Times.

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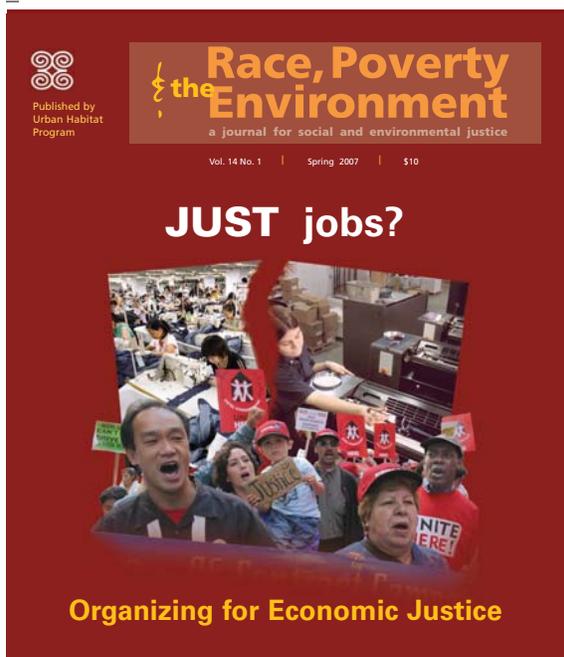
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