

# Speak Out Now at BART (3/5/18)

## **Old News Finally Makes the News**

A couple weeks ago Channel 2 News interviewed some BART workers about the question of safety for frontline workers. The news segment only began to touch on the reality we face every day. But for once, the truth was told.

Unfortunately attacks on frontline workers are nothing new. What might be news to some folks is that those who are in the best position to tell the truth about what goes on at BART are the workers themselves.

We could learn something from this. We can't depend on the media to speak for us. We need to find ways to get the truth out to the public and stop the blame game that will only build up the closer we get to the next contract.

## **System Service or Elevator Service?**

Major changes are happening in System Service starting with being moved from the Transportation Department to Maintenance and Engineering. In addition to massive scheduling changes, they supposedly want elevators to be checked every 15 minutes as opposed to every 2 hours.

Is this a joke? Did whoever dream this up ever work as a System Service Worker? Or walk through a BART station? Every 15 minutes? In a big station that would be all we could do. In other stations it would mean we'd never get beyond the restrooms and the elevators, even if they weren't a mess!

## **The Killing of Shaleem Tindle**

On January 3<sup>rd</sup>, Shaleem Tindle was killed by a BART cop. The BART officer was in the West Oakland station; when people reported that shots were fired, he ran in the direction of the shots where the two men were wrestling on the ground.

He demanded that the men "show their hands." That's tough to do when you are wrestling on the ground. And he didn't identify himself as a cop.

They continued to wrestle, and as Shaleem was rolled over, the BART cop shot him three times in the back. Shaleem died of the gunshot wounds.

As usual, the case was quickly dealt with and the BART cop returned to work a couple of weeks later. As usual, a young Black man was determined to be at fault and his life was taken.

This is not over, as the family is going to court to seek justice. But Shaleem Tindle is dead and no court ruling or settlement will bring him back or protect other young men in a similar situation.

## **Damned If You Do - Damned If You Don't**

Some riders get frustrated when they see other passengers hopping the gate without buying a ticket. Station Agents are attacked on a regular basis, so calling out fare evaders means we're risking a beating in the booth.

If we don't say anything, customers give us an earful and blame us for a broken system. If we call in a description of the fare evaders to the BART police, other customers complain that we're being demeaning and we get called in for a discussion.

It sure seems like we're damned if we do, and damned if we don't. Maybe BART needs to update the job description for Station Agents accordingly.

## **Time for a House Call**

After earning more than \$5.6 billion in 2017, which helped make CEO Jeff Bezos the richest man in the world, Amazon paid nothing in federal income taxes in 2017. Meanwhile, fare inspectors are patrolling BART stations to catch folks who skipped out on a \$5 ticket.

Maybe we should send a few fare inspectors to Jeff's front door?

## **Attacks On The Unions**

A case known as the "Janus Case" is before the U.S. Supreme Court. This case challenges the right of unions organized in the public sector to collect dues from everyone, regardless of whether they want to belong to the union or not.

In the 28 so-called "right to work" states, workers can choose to pay union dues or not. In states like California, you don't have to join the union, but you have to pay the portion of dues that cannot be used for political campaigns.

Unfortunately most union officials have tried to combat this by saying everyone should pay dues because the union provides a service that guarantees higher wages and benefits. Unions are not a service. They are workers' organizations built to defend ourselves. The strength of our unions depends on the involvement of the workers and our readiness to fight. If we organize ourselves and strengthen our connections and our resolve, this Janus ruling won't be able to hold us back.

**Want more information about the Janus case; the transit mess in New York & New Jersey; the Baltimore schools; Palestine, and more?**  
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