

# 2024 ANNUAL REPORT



# A note from our Executive Director



**The first time** fast food workers went on strike to demand \$15 and a union, many called them “crazy.” That was in May of 2013. Since then, fast food workers in Kansas City, Missouri, have acted boldly to stop wage theft and sexual harassment, secure safer working conditions and personal protective equipment,

guarantee a right to counsel in eviction proceedings, inspire thousands of workers to organize and win unions, and raise the minimum wage *three times*.

By passing Proposition A, low-wage workers have finally won \$15 per hour, raised wages for nearly 450,000 Missourians and guaranteed up to seven earned paid sick days per year for over 760,000 workers. The Fight for \$15 proved that regular people can make the impossible possible. Low-wage workers fighting for the dignity and respect we all deserve created the conditions to even make \$15 a part of the conversation, much less a central — and winnable — demand in our movement for truly living wages.

In addition to gathering signatures and getting out the vote for economic justice, workers joined together with reproductive justice advocates and overturned the state's extreme total abortion ban. The first state to ban abortion after the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* was one of seven states to restore the right to choose.

When the Kansas City Royals tried to reach into Jackson County taxpayers pockets for \$2 billion to subsidize a lavish new downtown ballpark and entertainment district, low-wage workers with MWC intervened. The pressure we put on the Royals through our show of force at the Jackson County legislature prompted the team to include us in formal negotiations. Though ultimately, the Royals failed miserably to earn our vote. Shortly after leaving the table, over 100 low-wage workers and allies gathered on the steps of the Jackson County legislature, voiced their opposition to the Royals’ stadium sales tax measure, and encouraged

voters to reject it on Election Day. On April 2, our efforts resulted in Jackson County voters overwhelmingly defeating the sales tax in a 58-42 split.

Amazon STL8 workers delivered a petition with over 850 signatures to management in St. Peters, Missouri, demanding \$25 an hour. That same day, the company announced its biggest raise for workers since the facility opened — \$1.50 per hour — amounting to over **\$11 million in wages** at STL8 alone. Inspired by Amazon workers in St. Peters, workers in Sauget, Illinois, announced the formation of the SMO2 Organizing Committee to fight for better pay and safer work, and had their first march on the boss in SMO2's history. In Kansas City, IRIS microtransit drivers, with support from MWC, launched a new campaign to win the right to form a union, an end to unjust fees, and a stronger public transit system.

If there is one thing we can take away from 2024, it's a recommitment to building a multiracial, working class movement dedicated to fighting racism and winning good jobs for all. Now more than ever, working people need democracy in their communities, their governments, and at their jobs. Together, we can bring people together again, fight the racist systems that seek to divide us, and win a Missouri and America that works for all of us.

In Solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeremy Al-Haj". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jeremy" and the last name "Al-Haj" clearly legible.

Jeremy Al-Haj  
Executive Director



# NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US

Low-wage workers with Stand Up KC proved twice this year that organizing and raising our voices at the ballot box can make the impossible possible — from shutting down a billionaire stadium sales in Jackson County to passing fairer wages and paid sick days for all Missourians.

**On November 5, 2024**, after over a decade of low-wage fast food and other worker organizing in Kansas City and across the country for living wages and a union, Missouri workers made \$15 an hour and earned paid sick days a reality with the passage of Proposition A.

**Longtime Stand Up KC leader Fran Marion said on Election Day:**

**As our state motto goes, ‘Let the welfare of the people be the supreme law.’ And it’s up to each of us to make Missouri stand on that. So we showed up in full force, the strength of our numbers behind us, to give ourselves a raise<sup>1</sup> and the paid sick days that we’ve more than earned.**



More than earned is right. In July 2013, fast food workers across Kansas City walked off the job for the first time to demand \$15 an hour and the right to form a union. This one-day strike kicked off over a decade of organizing by thousands of low-wage workers that involved dozens of fast food strikes, mass rallies, marches, civil disobedience, occupying KCMO City Hall to fast for \$15, and traveling internationally in solidarity with workers worldwide. Efforts among Stand Up KC leaders garnered local and national media attention to the tune of hundreds of news articles.



And in the months leading up to the election, Workers and community allies delivered over 210,000 signatures to the Secretary of State's office to qualify Proposition A for the November ballot. MWC alone collected over 32,000 signatures, and after the measure was secured on the ballot<sup>2</sup> we leveraged our people power to knock on over 22,000 doors, register 2,550 voters, and hold a mass canvass event to get out the vote for Proposition A and Amendment 3, a ballot measure that also passed on Election Day to end Missouri's extreme and dangerous abortion ban.

### **Crushing a Billionaire Sports Team at the Ballot Box**

Low-wage workers, tenants, and community allies with the Good Jobs and Affordable Housing for All coalition overwhelmingly defeated the billionaire-owned Kansas City Royals' 40-year stadium sales tax measure at the ballot box on April 2 of this year.

While workers won a seat at the table<sup>3</sup> — a condition workers made in December 2022 for any conversations about public financing — and even formed the first worker-led bargaining committee in the history of our organization, the Royals failed to deliver the common-sense Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) Kansas City's working class deserves.

We held a town hall in February announcing that the Royals have until March 19 to come to a deal on a Good Jobs CBA, and when they failed to meet our deadline, we took to the steps of the Jackson County Legislature<sup>4</sup> to launch our "No on Question 1" campaign. Echoing Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s sentiment that "This country has socialism for the rich, rugged individualism for the poor," we made sure every voter knew that the Royals' stadium sales tax was nothing more than a \$1.7 billion corporate handout that leaves workers behind. On April 1, we held a

## Stand Up KC workers weigh in on legislature's decision



\*This is a victory\*: Jackson County holds decision on whether sales tax extension will appear on ballot

rally<sup>5</sup> to tell the Royals “We’re no fools,” when they tried to pass off their version of a CBA as anything more than a sham.

The people heard our call. When all votes were counted, it was a landslide victory: 58% of voters rejected the Royals’ sales tax, which would have burdened taxpayers to shell out \$2 billion for a brand new ballpark and entertainment district without the transformative community benefits — like living wage union jobs and truly affordable housing — that our coalition fought for.

By defeating Question 1 on Election Day, we put the needs of poor and working people above the priorities of billionaires. We also fundamentally shifted the conversation over the last year about the transformative change that’s possible when we organize — Black, white, and Brown — for the respect and dignity we deserve.

# PRIME TIME FOR A REAL RAISE

The STL8 Organizing Committee is organizing and fighting to put an end to Amazon's injury crisis and win higher pay. Here's a snapshot of one year of their campaign.



PUT SOME RESPECT ON



## JANUARY

- » The federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) cites<sup>6</sup> Amazon STL8 five times for failure to report injuries, in response to a complaint filed by 14 Organizing Committee (OC) members in July of 2023.

## MARCH

- » Teen Vogue publishes an op-ed<sup>7</sup> featuring STL8 worker Ash Judd's story about organizing an Amazon warehouse as a young queer person.

## APRIL

- » MWC and Heartland Center for Jobs and Freedom create a guide and host two workshops with Amazon workers on how to get the medical care they need and protect their rights when they get hurt on the job.

## MAY

- » STL8 worker and OC member Wendy Taylor travels to Washington, D.C., to join Senators Ed Markey and Tina Smith in introducing the Warehouse Worker Protection Act, a bill to require employer quota transparency, limit surveillance, and prevent quotas from infringing on workers' rights to organize.



- » STL8 workers Christine Manno and Nadia Shamburger attend a local labor roundtable with U.S. Rep. Cori Bush, urging her to cosponsor the Warehouse Worker Protection Act in the House, which she does soon after in response to their demand.
- » STL8 OC members file an Unfair Labor Practice charge with the National Labor Relations Board amid an injury crisis driven by Amazon's dangerous work rates, which are enforced through its surveillance and monitoring of workers.

## JUNE

- » STL8 workers launch a summer-long petition campaign to demand \$25 an hour in base pay, ending the use of rate to discipline workers, banning computer-generated writeups, and other changes for better working conditions.

## JULY

- » The U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) publishes internal Amazon documents revealing the company knew it had an extremely high Prime and peak period injury rate yet covered it up to the public and regulators.
- » STL8 workers hold an early morning action during shift change, placing 1,066 red flags in front of the facility to honor every worker injured during Prime Day the previous year.

## AUGUST

- » Amazon STL8 worker Ash Judd shares his story along with other MWC leaders during a panel discussion at the Missouri AFL-CIO convention about multiracial worker organizing across the state.



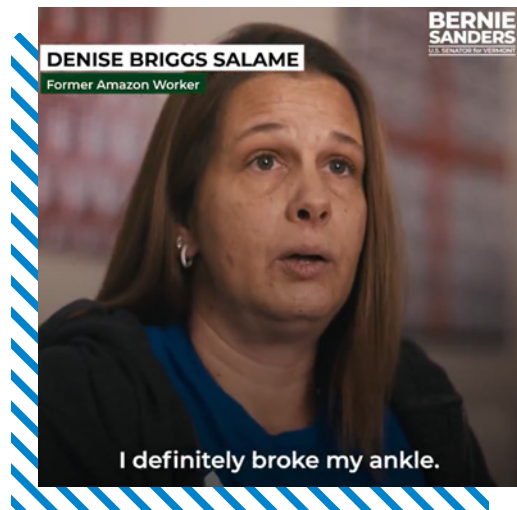
## SEPTEMBER

- » Amazon announces its biggest raise<sup>8</sup> since STL8 opened, right after workers march on the boss an 850-plus signature petition<sup>9</sup> for \$25 an hour<sup>10</sup> and rally<sup>11</sup> with St. Louis-area Amazon workers<sup>12</sup> and community allies outside of the St. Peters warehouse.
- » Inspired by the movement in St. Peters, workers at the SMO2 Amazon facility in Sauget, Illinois, form their own Organizing Committee and march on the boss with the same demands and also win a \$1.50 raise for about 600 workers.



## DECEMBER

- » Over a dozen STL8 workers are featured in a bombshell report released by the Senate HELP Committee, which exposes how Amazon's leadership knowingly risked its workers' safety by rejecting recommendations that could have prevented thousands of injuries.
- » Sen. HELP Committee Chair Bernie Sanders publishes a video featuring footage of STL8 workers and OC members Paul Irving and Denise Briggs Salame discussing Amazon's injury crisis and personal story of getting injured on the job, respectively.





Some people can go back to work after their injuries and some of them, like me, will never be able to work again because of this company's mistreatment. Seeing the HELP Committee confirm and lift up the stories of me and my coworkers — and the proof of our job-related injuries — gives me hope that we are one step closer to Amazon taking responsibility for our safety. These findings getting published is the result of our organizing at STL8.

*-Christine Manno, STL8 Organizing Committee member*



# DRIVERS UNION NOW

This year, microtransit drivers in Kansas City, with the solidarity of hundreds of low-wage workers, elected officials, and community allies, went public with their campaign to win safe, clean, reliable transit, and good paying union jobs for transit workers.



**On October 10**, drivers for corporate taxi fleet giant zTrip’s IRIS program rallied outside of the company’s Kansas City headquarters with over 150 low-wage workers, elected officials, faith and labor leaders, and community members, to launch their campaign<sup>13</sup> to end their misclassification and win the right to form a union without retaliation. Together, workers and community allies drowned out company CEO Bill George’s failed attempt<sup>14</sup> to disrupt drivers’ campaign launch.

Drivers, with the support of MWC, formed a driver-led organizing committee and began meeting with local lawmakers to share their stories about the reality of working for zTrip. Drivers argued that despite IRIS being touted as a solution to Kansas City’s weak transit infrastructure, it has proven to be the opposite, raising serious concerns about the privatization of one of our most essential public services. The taxpayer-funded program is a race to the bottom for transit workers, replacing a functional and free bus system driven by stable, family-sustaining union jobs, with low-wage work characterized by an exploitative fee scheme in which Black and Brown workers

disproportionately bear the burden — not to mention questionable reliability for KC riders.

zTrip maintains control over the platform and operations while shifting the risk and costs to drivers. The corporation pocketed at least \$2.5 million in exploitative fees from IRIS drivers between March 2023 and July 2024, based on one estimate.

**Our labor has made zTrip the largest taxi fleet operator in the country. The least they can do is guarantee us the pay and benefits that can give us peace of mind. But instead, the more we all work, the more money we are giving back to zTrip — at the expense of our well-being. That’s why we’re coming together around the central demand of forming a union without retaliation. We all deserve to feel good about what we do and be treated with respect.**

**-Stand Up KC leader and IRIS driver Darian Hall**





# MAKING AMAZON PAY

*Missouri Workers Center leader and STL8 Organizing Committee member Ash Judd takes us behind the scenes of organizing a march on the boss at Amazon.*



**I started at Amazon STL8 in 2021. It wasn't long before I started experiencing issues at work.**

I used to hike up to 10 miles a day, and nanny a small child, which involved lots of crouching and bending. I had never had any aches or pains until working full-time at Amazon.

My shoulders and arms would be sore after hours of palletizing, a repetitive process of grabbing a package (sometimes 50 pounds!) coming down a chute, scanning it, placing it in a cart,



and pressing a button that tells the company it got to the right cart. On especially long days I would feel it in my neck, lower back, legs and feet with all the picking up and twisting. I developed hip and joint pain from being on concrete all day.

After a year, I switched to part-time because trying to meet my rate at the company was speeding up my aging.

Turns out I wasn't the only one. In 2022, my coworker Stacey asked if I wanted to join an action to confront management with a petition demanding safer work and better pay.

Growing up, my parents had said that unions are full of lazy people who could just get another job if they didn't like the one they had.

But joining that action, and the STL8 Organizing Committee, taught me that

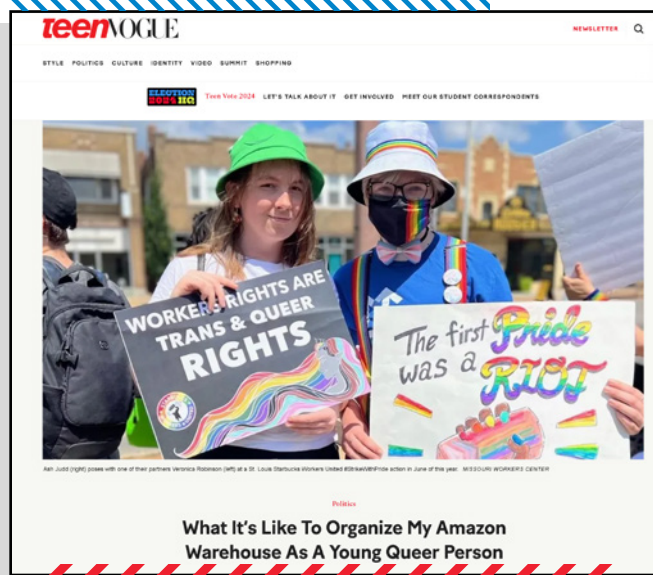


forming a union is one of the most effective ways for workers to tackle discrimination, poverty, and income inequality.

I saw tangible results through organizing with my coworkers, most recently after our September march on the boss.

During the summer, me and my coworkers started gathering signatures for a petition demanding \$25 an hour and safety improvements like ending automatic writeups and the use of rate to discipline us. I distributed close to 200 flyers. Sometimes I would tell a coworker who has been around for longer, "I know you've seen people being wheeled out of Amazon, going to AmCare, struggling with bills." Some of them would join the OC after signing our petition.

In September, the day arrived for me and my coworkers to deliver our petition with over 850 signatures to management. I got to the warehouse and grabbed a sign with words at the top reading: "I'm fighting for \$25 at Amazon because..." I added: "We made Amazon BILLIONS. Amazon can at least give us \$25 NOW!"



*Teen Vogue's op-ed featuring Ash's story about organizing an Amazon warehouse as a young queer person.*

I joined my coworkers at a picnic bench outside the facility. Soon after, about 30 of us made our way inside. I noticed how many more workers were with us at this march compared to the last one.

We scanned our way through the turnstiles and re-convened at the clock-in area of the lobby. Unlike in past actions, management was waiting for us this time in one of the main offices.

We introduced ourselves and shared why our demands are important. I was delighted to hear people chiming in from outside the room because it was overflowing. One coworker recorded us. How could we trust that



management wouldn't try to spin our orderly and polite behavior as chaotic and disruptive?

I asked management if they'd commit to honoring our demands. Then me and my coworkers walked out of STL8 to the sight of dozens of Amazon workers from other facilities, labor and faith leaders, and community members cheering us on. It was really cool to see workers from other Amazon warehouses show up in solidarity. It told me

that the positive change we are creating at STL8 is inspiring other workers in the area to build and grow with us. Seeing the community there too felt important because it meant we're not alone, despite what management and corporate media want us to believe.

What made the day all the more memorable was the \$1.50 raise that Amazon announced right after our action — the biggest pay bump since our facility opened! Of course they wouldn't give us credit, but we know how hard we worked for those signatures and it was gratifying to see our bold action improving things for all of us.

When I first marched on the boss, I was a bundle of nerves and anxiety because I hadn't joined a protest before, and I didn't know much about unions.

Fast forward to this September, when I was assigned the role of "captain" with Paul, one of the OC's founding members. I went from being someone who tagged along at an action, to being a person my coworkers could look to if they had questions and wanted support. I have a lot of friends on the OC now, and it's good to know that we're

stronger together and management can't keep us apart — try as they might.

I recently had to switch back to full-time, since I live on my own now and can't rely on the savings I had when I was at my parents' place. It's tough to juggle paying for rent, utilities, and transportation. Amazon at least covers my testosterone, but I'm still trying to save enough funds to get top surgery so I can be more comfortable in my own skin.

When I first got to Amazon, I had the benefit of not knowing how exhausting and physically painful working there full-time is. Being back on that schedule has been tough, but it's also a reminder of why I stay in this fight with other workers — because we all deserve to be able to make ends meet in jobs that treat us with dignity and let us enjoy our lives to the fullest.





Making the Welfare of Missouri Workers the Supreme Law

## A SECOND CHANCE FOR ALL WORKERS

**Worker power** moved the state House of Representatives to pass “Clean Slate” legislation to automatically expunge the records of over half a million Missourians with an arrest or conviction on their record.

Low-wage workers from Kansas City and St. Louis held a lobby day in Jefferson City in March to speak with their elected officials about the importance of making a clean slate for all workers the law of the land. Marieta Ortiz, a Kansas City restaurant worker who had fought for years to try and get her record expunged, shared her story<sup>15</sup> with lawmakers that day, and later in March during testimony in committee hearings.

“My felony in 2008 has denied me better housing and jobs. Being a felon feels like, when you check that box, no matter if you did your time, you still feel like you are being punished. Getting my felony expunged would allow me to find better paying jobs and stable housing. It would make my life a lot easier. It would also show the new generation, like my eight-year-old son, that yes, mommy did the crime, but she dealt with her mistake and there is a pathway to start a new life.”



Making the Welfare of Missouri Workers the Supreme Law

## COMMUNITIES OVER CORPORATIONS

**We advanced** our campaign to win back local control from greedy corporations and restore the freedom of local lawmakers to act in the best interest of Missouri workers, families, and communities. In July, we held a press briefing featuring low-wage workers, local elected officials, and an eviction defense attorney, to discuss how corporate-driven state preemption bans attack our democracy, tie the hands of local lawmakers, and contribute to poverty wages, rising rents, and unhealthy communities.

In June, we hosted a summit in Columbia to explain to elected leaders from Kansas City,

St. Louis, Jackson County, Clayton, and Boone County how we can collaborate to strengthen the health and well-being of workers and their families in communities across Missouri.

We will continue to build a statewide coalition table of organizations committed to putting people over profits and fighting corporations' attempts to undermine our democracy.



**TELLING THE STORY OF  
BUILDING STRENGTH IN NUMBERS**

# WITH IRIS DRIVERS

*zTrip IRIS driver and Organizing Committee member Bakar Mohamed discusses his journey to becoming a media spokesperson.*

***How does it feel seeing the growth of your organizing committee from the time you started?***

It gives me hope. The world we live in right now, there's not much hope, but with this it's something we can do locally. We can work with our fellow workers to better our lives, our families, our communities. It's something I look forward to every time we have an OC meeting or hold an event.

***How has this process changed you?***

Organizing has shaped me for the better. It has made me a lot more optimistic for the future, that we could take the future into our own hands and change it, instead of waiting for legislators to change it locally by passing laws. I was in the organization years ago when I was a fast food worker. Coming back to it I can feel the energy from some faces I'm familiar with. It's something I look forward to. Being in this fight has shown me the power of me and my fellow workers coming together, that we can make a difference instead of not doing anything about it and letting ourselves sit on the sidelines.



***Why does telling your story matter in the fight for living wages and a union at zTrip?***

It gives a voice to other workers out there in similar positions who are not being paid enough and suffering in silence. It's something to look up to. 'If Bakar can speak up, I can also speak up.' It gives them the courage to stand up and speak up by seeing my other fellow workers stand up and speak up. Together we are stronger than individually.





***How do you feel as you reflect on your journey from earlier this year, before you'd done much media or public speaking, to now, after having done a lot of it?***

It feels very empowering to use my voice to make a difference and push for change — to make my community in Kansas City and the state and country a better place for workers to live.

***How has the preparation you've done this year helped you tell your story?***

It definitely has helped in terms of making sure I have my thoughts on paper. I'm not a public speaker and haven't done much beyond speech class but it definitely helped me convey my message in a clear way so other people can understand it. Practice makes perfect.



***What is something you have learned in prep that has stuck with you?***

When I'm giving my speech, make eye contact, and pause if I'm emphasizing something specific. Sometimes I get a little nervous, so breathe, take a minute to collect your thoughts and speak in a way that's very clear and understood by the people you want to hear your message.

***What has been your favorite media or public speaking opportunity this year?***

The October 10 rally and public launch of our campaign for a union. Speaking with my fellow drivers, allies, community leaders. Having them hear my story for the first time. I'm sure a lot of them could relate to the issues I am going through as well. I really enjoyed that and it was eye-opening — the passion. A lot of people were there and the CEO himself came to berate us and try to derail our launch. That just showed that my voice, the drivers' voices, all of our voices matter and that moment gave us momentum and gave new drivers a push to support us and by doing so support themselves.





# In the Press

- 1 [‘We used an important tool in our toolbox’: Workers react to approval of Missouri Proposition A](#)  
KSHB 41 Kansas City
  - 2 [3 states could vote to mandate paid sick days](#) ABC News
  - 3 [Local workers celebrate Royals’ commitment to negotiating community benefits agreement](#) KCTV 5
  - 4 [Low-wage worker coalition announces opposition to Royals stadium sales tax](#)  
KCTV 5
  - 5 [Stand Up KC, other orgs, hold rally against stadium sales tax](#)  
Fox 4 Kansas City
  - 6 [OSHA cites St. Peters Amazon warehouse as federal lawmakers push for tighter regulations](#)  
St. Louis Post-Dispatch
  - 7 [What It’s Like To Organize My Amazon Warehouse As A Young Queer Person](#)  
Teen Vogue
  - 8 [Backlash over Amazon’s return to office comes as workers demand higher wage](#)  
ars Technica
  - 9 [‘When We Fight, We Win’: Amazon Boosts Pay as Workers Launch Bid for \\$25 an Hour](#) Common Dreams
  - 10 [St. Louis area Amazon workers say its prime time for better pay](#)  
St. Louis Post-Dispatch
  - 11 [St. Louis-area Amazon workers demand higher pay](#) St. Louis Business Journal
  - 12 [Amazon increases hourly pay by \\$1.50, adds free Prime membership for thousands of workers](#) Retail Dive
  - 13 [Facing huge fees and strict rules, Kansas City transit drivers launch union bid](#)  
The Kansas City Star
  - 14 [Kansas City transit drivers want to unionize over pay and safety. Their CEO called it a ‘charade’](#) KCUR 89.3
  - 15 [She wrote a bad check 15 years ago. It’s been hard to work, rent in Missouri ever since](#) The Kansas City Star
- [If the KC Royals copy this city’s example, count me in on a new downtown-area stadium](#) The Kansas City Star

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