

JUST WORDS

The Stories of Working People In Our Community

Episode 6: Jacquetta Lyles

Welcome to Just Words—The stories of working people in our community.

Jacquetta Lyles is a mother of four who often works at Camden yards as a cleaner.

I enjoy being down Camden yards because I like the people and stuff. But outside of that, just working with the middleman, the agencies, before you finally get your pay, from whatever money they done hired you out for, it got cut down to so much by the time you get it...

Who are these middlemen? Jacquetta is hired each day by a temp agency, one of two temp agencies hired by a facilities management firm that handles staffing at the stadiums. The facilities management company was hired by the state Stadium Authority. That's three private companies each making a profit before Jacquetta get's paid. She has recently become a member of the United Workers Association, which seeks to eliminate the role of the temp agencies by creating a workers cooperative, leading to higher wages for workers.

They came out, asking us about the wages and how we being treated, andd make sure if we have any problems getting in, working... 'cause something gotta give when you get there and be there on time, then people been there since 1:30, hang out downtown all day to make sure they get to work that day. And then by the time I get down there, they'll be like, "We got enough people." And I just spent \$3.50 to get downtown and gotta go right back home, and hope I get back out the next day. That's how I met up with them and started going to meetings and like what I heard. Actually care about the things I am going through, , that you're working, busting your tail and try to work and earn just something, and you find out, you working for nothing basically. So I was interested so I kept coming back.

What for you is a living wage?

Nine. Anything 9. 'Cause I've had jobs and that isn't really much money but that was enough to help me do what I want and still do things for my children.

Do the math. If Jacquetta worked a 40 hour week, making \$9 an hour, she would make \$18, 720 before taxes. It is hard to imagine how she would support four children on that. But it's clear that her involvement in organizing with the UWA has awakened something inside her that is demanding a better life.

Everyone deserves to be able to eat. I've listened to everything with UWA and I really believe in it. And would like to see the day when someone actually hear us, understand what we are working for, and try to like, stand behind us, and give us the support we need so it isn't just the little men trying to fight for something, and so we have some big voices, come big people standing up and say, lets hear 'em out. Back us up, and be there.

Nina Simone, *Baltimore, Sweet Honey in the Rock, We All*

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