



# WHERE DO YOU STAND?

Stories from an American Mill

**Study Guide**

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## Introduction

### What this Film Does

- Provides a rare glimpse into what happens when workers try to organize a union in the United States today
- Links important issues of globalization with local struggles for workers' rights
- Documents a local history told by local people



### Topics/Keywords

Globalization  
Labor/Unions  
Local History  
National Labor Relations Board  
Oral History  
Organizing  
Outsourcing  
Southern History  
Textile Industry



### Target Users

Teachers/Professors  
Union Organizers  
Community Organizers & Activists  
Nonprofit Organizations  
Students



### Places This Guide Is Available For Download

[www.newsreel.org](http://www.newsreel.org)  
[www.americanrightsatwork.org](http://www.americanrightsatwork.org)  
[www.wheredoyoustand.info](http://www.wheredoyoustand.info)  
[www.workingfilms.org](http://www.workingfilms.org)

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## Questions For Discussion

### General Discussion

1. What new information or insights did you get from this film?
2. What advantages or disadvantages do you think working people experience when they form a union? Did this film change your opinion about unions?
3. What context does your own experience provide for interpreting the events in the film – things that have happened in your life or community?

### The Right to Organize

1. What factors do you think influenced the Fieldcrest-Cannon workers to either favor or oppose a union?
2. The National Labor Relations Act states that “Employees shall have the right to self-organization, to form, join, or assist labor organizations, to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing, and to engage in other concerted activities for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection.” Were the Fieldcrest-Cannon workers able to exercise their right to form a union?
3. What is important about workers’ right to organize?
4. Is the labor law system as it is set up today working? If not, what changes could be made?

### Workers’ Rights Abuses Facts

- 92% of employers force employees to attend anti-union captive audience meetings
- 78% of employers force workers to attend 1-on-1 anti-union meetings
- 75% of employers hire consultants to help them fight union organizing drives
- 71% of employers threaten to close the worksite down if the union wins
- 75% of employers distribute anti-union leaflets
- 55% of employers use anti-union videos
- 52% of employers threaten to call the INS
- 25% of employers illegally fire pro-union employees during organizing campaigns

Since the 1990s, 20,000 workers each year are illegally fired or discriminated against for attempting to form a union.

(Source: <http://www.americanrightsatworkorg/resources/statistics.cfm>)

### Legislative Facts

The Employee Free Choice Act, introduced in the 108th session of Congress, and soon to be reintroduced in the 109th session, would make sure workers have a fair chance to exercise their democratic right to choose a union. Specifically the bill would:

- Allow workers simply to **sign cards** that show they support the union, and when a majority of the workers sign such cards, require the employer to recognize the union as the workers’ representative. Such a process would reduce the ability of employers to unleash a campaign of fear and terror during the many weeks and months workers have to wait for a government-supervised election.
- **Make getting a first contract a whole lot easier.** Right now, even after workers vote for a union, many employers drag out negotiations for months and sometimes years. The legislation would call for mediation and arbitration so the two sides could reach a first contract quickly.
- **Put in place stiffer penalties** against employers that break the law when workers try to exercise the right to choose a union.

### Questions For Discussion

#### Globalization and Outsourcing

1. Why do you think the company ultimately did not survive?
  - a. Whose fault was it?
  - b. Is there any way to prevent it?
  - c. Is it important to prevent plant closings?
2. Do you think a union victory would have changed the Fieldcrest-Cannon workers' lives if it had come earlier? Would it have had any impact on:
  - a. The company overall?
  - b. On changing ownership?
  - c. On other textile companies organizing?
  - d. On the textile industry's move overseas?
3. What are the economic and psychological costs when an industry abandons a community?
4. Do companies have a responsibility to respond to the negative effects that result when they leave a community? If so, how?



#### Plant Closing Facts

- Only 29% of all production shifts (full and partial plant closings due to outsourcing) have been in union facilities while 71% have been in non-union facilities – the clear majority.
- A higher proportion of union jobs have been lost (39%) because union facilities that are shifting production tend to be larger manufacturing plants, while non-union companies are more likely to be smaller, communication, IT, and finance companies, which are almost entirely non-union.
- Many plant closings are due to technological change, contracting out, bankruptcy, or companies being bought or sold or privatized. Most plant closings have been in the service sector, with relatively low union density, that cannot be moved off shore and so are not counted in these statistics. Thus, the percent of unionized plant closings overall would be even lower than the 29% of production shifts offshore that were found to be union. The overwhelming majority of plant closings continue to be in non-union facilities.

(Source: Kate Bronfenbrenner, Cornell University)

#### WARN Act

The Worker Adjustment and Retraining (WARN) Act requires that any company with more than 100 employees give at least 60 days' notice of a plant closing or layoff if 50 or more employees are affected. This bill was authored by Senator Howard Metzenbaum, (D-Ohio) and became effective on February 4, 1989. Companies that fail to provide 60 days notice can be forced to pay workers up to 60 days back pay, and can be fined up to \$500 a day for each day they fall short of the 60-day notification period, up to a total of \$30,000.

#### NAFTA's Impact on North Carolina

Job loss has led to downward pressure on wages and living standards. A 2001 report shows how 32,000 jobs have been lost in North Carolina, and 766,000 nationwide since NAFTA's passage. To download the entire report, visit <http://www.jwj.org/global/FTAA01/NC.pdf>

### Questions For Discussion

#### Labor and Social History

1. Years ago, workers died in the United States fighting for their rights at work. Workers are still dying in other countries today. What laws/policies that we enjoy today are gains that were made by the labor movement?



2. Is the South different from other regions of the country?
  - a. How have working people in other industries and in other parts of the country experienced strikes, defeats, and life in the “company town”?
  - b. Why does the South have lower union membership?

#### Labor History Facts

- Unions have helped to pass laws ending child labor, establishing the eight-hour day and Overtime pay, making seniority count, protecting workers’ safety and health (OSHA) and helping create Social Security, unemployment insurance and the minimum wage.
- Unions lead the fight today for better lives for working people, such as through expanded family and medical leave (Family Medical Leave Act), improved safety and health protections and fair-trade agreements that lift the standard of living for workers all over the world.
- Union workers earn 27% more than nonunion workers and are more likely to receive health care and pension benefits than those without a union.
- In 2003, median weekly earnings for full-time union wage and salary workers were \$760, compared with \$599 for their nonunion counterparts.

#### Right to Work Law Facts

- “Right to work” has nothing to do with a right to a job or employment. The deceptively named “right to work” laws ban workers—who by a majority vote decided to form a union in their workplace—and employers from negotiating union security clauses. By law, unions must represent all workers—members and nonmembers—in contract negotiations and other workplace issues. A union security clause does not force workers to join a union but simply means they must pay a fair share for the economic benefits they receive because of union representation. “Right to work” laws allow non-member workers to get all the benefits of union membership and pay nothing. The result is weaker unions with inadequate resources to represent members.
- In 2005, a total of 22 states had “right-to-work laws.” All 12 Southern states currently have “right to work” laws. They are: Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, and Oklahoma.
- The average worker in a “right to work” state earns about \$5,333 less a year than workers in other states.

(Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2001)

### Questions For Discussion



#### Race in the Workplace

1. How were the experiences of African-American and white textile workers different and how were they similar?
2. Why are people of color far more likely to organize than white people?
3. How does race affect our workplaces?
4. What happens when working people are divided along color lines?
5. Who benefits and who loses from the racial divisions in the workplace?

#### Right to Work Law Facts, Continued

- In “right to work” states 21% more people are without health insurance compared with those in free-bargaining states.

(Source: State Rankings 2000, A Statistical View of the 50 United States, Morgan Quinto Press)

- The rate of workplace death is 51% higher in “right to work” states.

(Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2001; AFL-CIO, “Death on the Job,” April 2002)

#### Race in the Workplace Facts

- Before the 1960s, African American men were only allowed to hold menial jobs on the outside of the Kannapolis mills such as janitorial work or construction. African American women did not work for the mill at all. In 1964, the year the Civil Rights Act was passed, African Americans started to work production jobs inside Cannon Mills. At this time they made up 18% of the Kannapolis population. However, most southern textile companies integrated by hiring African Americans into the least desirable areas of the mill.
- Title 7 of the Civil Rights Act provided that people cannot be discriminated against in hiring, in promotions or in workplace conditions on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, and would later include gender and disability. Title 7 provided the basis for integrating the workplace throughout the South and ultimately throughout America.
- By 1975, black employment in Cannon Mills exceeded the community level and by the early 1980’s, African Americans made up a quarter of the workforce.

(Source: [Hiring the Black Worker](#) by Timothy J. Minchin; interview with James E. Ferguson)

- African Americans are more likely to be members of unions. About 16% of black workers are in unions, compared with 13% of all workers.
- Even more African Americans say they would join a union if given the chance. In a 1999 survey, 80% of African Americans without a union said they definitely or probably would choose to have a union at their workplace; up from 69% in 1997.

(Source: AFL-CIO Factsheet, “African American Workers Want to Form Unions”)

### Questions For Discussion



#### Gender in the Workplace

1. Many of the union leaders in this workplace were women. Do you think this is common?
2. How were the experiences of female and male textile workers different and how were they similar?

#### Race in the Workplace Facts, Continued

- Unions help raise wages for all working people, especially minorities. Union workers make 27% more than nonunion workers. African American union members make 35% more than their nonunion counterparts. For Latino workers the wage benefit is 51% over nonunion workers, and for Asian workers the union advantage is 11%.

(Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics. Employment and Earnings, U.S. Department of Labor, January 2004)

#### Gender in the Workplace Facts

- The southern textile industry generally employed large numbers of women. In both the 1929 and 1934 General Textile Strikes, women played a central role. During Operation Dixie (1945-55), white women made up 45% of the southern textile workforce.
- During this period, union organizers report that women at Cannon Mills were more resistant to organizing drives because Cannon's paternalism was most effective among women workers who were afraid of losing their housing, who wanted to 'wait to see what the men would do.' In the post-War boom, wages were increasing and Cannon Mills gave women better paid work than any other occupation for women—and in families where both the husband and wife worked, they had a high income. Cannon also sponsored very popular women's clubs in Kannapolis which provided both another outlet for organizationally-minded women and also a sense of prestige because the mill workers were able to socialize with the "uptown" women.

(Source: What Do We Need a Union For? by Timothy J. Minchin)

- Collective bargaining agreements have been instrumental in leveling wage disparities for women workers. Today, union workers earn 27% more in median weekly wages than non-union workers. And women in unions earn 33% more than non-union women.

(Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics. Employment and Earnings, U.S. Department of Labor, January 2004)

- Women are organizing in greater numbers; 55% of all new workers organized are women.

(Source: Kate Bronfenbrenner, "Organizing Women Workers in the Global Economy: Findings from NLRB Certification Election Campaigns—1998–1999," 2001)



**Suggested Classroom and Advocacy Activities****Suggested Classroom Activities**

1. Trace the movement of industry from the North to the South and now overseas. What is the state of manufacturing in the United States today? Why? Which states have been most impacted?
2. Investigate the labor history of your own community. Who are the key employers in your own community? Was there at one time a major employer? When did it close? What did people do? What changes happened to your town?
3. Interview someone in your family, community, church, synagogue, or neighborhood. Ask if s/he recalls the day s/he left home and started to work. . . What do they remember about work/jobs then versus now? About their community then versus now?

**Suggested Advocacy Activities****People are fighting and winning—today!**

- Employee Free Choice Act—urge your members of Congress to sign on as co-sponsors of this bill
- Workers Protection Act—Urge your U.S. Representative to address the outsourcing crisis. Ask your representative to sign on as a co-sponsor to this important legislation that will help stop the needless export of American workplaces
- Support local organizing campaigns
- Stay informed—visit the resources section of this study guide to find out how to connect to organizations like the AFL-CIO, American Rights at Work, Jobs with Justice, UNITE HERE, and others
- Spread the word about *Where Do You Stand?*—organize a screening in your community

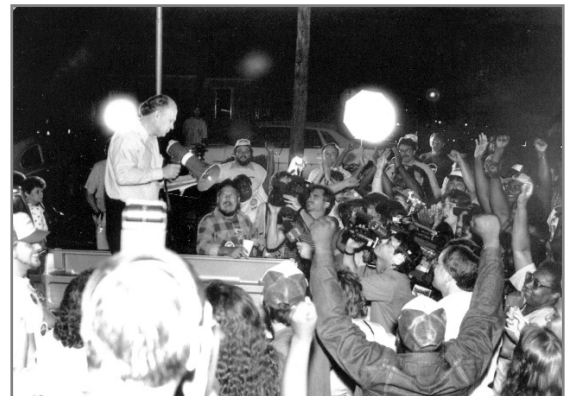
## Using Where Do You Stand? As an Organizing Tool

Could all or part of this film be used to support a fight you know about?

Investigate what workers' struggles exist on your campus or in your community. It is likely that there is one going on.

We have put together a model of how to do a campus/university screening and connect it to a local struggle:

1. Find out what the fight is and who is involved.
2. Contact the lead organizer of the campaign and tell them about the film.
3. Ask the organizer how the film could potentially be helpful to the campaign (Note: Many organizers have not used film before to support their work. It will take some brainstorming and conversation to explore the possibilities).
4. Plan a workshop with a 10-minute cued section or a screening of the whole film--depending on your intended audience and goals.
5. After the screening, workers, students, organizers, etc should be on hand to tell the audience about the local fight and take questions.
6. Have something that you ask the audience to do before they leave. This can vary from signing a petition, to making a phone call, to attending a rally, etc.



## Resources

### Websites

#### **Where Do You Stand? The Documentary**

[www.wheredoyoustand.info](http://www.wheredoyoustand.info)

On this site is a historical timeline of the Kannapolis struggle that places it within the larger history of the battle for labor rights in the U.S.

#### **American Rights at Work**

[www.americanrightsatwork.org](http://www.americanrightsatwork.org)

American Rights at Work is an educational and advocacy organization dedicated to improving the climate in which workers can exercise their rights in the workplace.

#### **Economic Policy Institute**

[www.epinet.org](http://www.epinet.org)

The Economic Policy Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank that seeks to broaden the public debate about strategies to achieve a prosperous and fair economy.

#### **AFL-CIO**

[www.afl-cio.org](http://www.afl-cio.org)

The AFL-CIO's mission is to bring social and economic justice to our nation by enabling working people to have a voice on the job, in government, in a changing global economy and in their communities.

#### **United for a Fair Economy**

[www.faireconomy.org](http://www.faireconomy.org)

United for a Fair Economy is a national, independent, nonpartisan, non-profit organization that raises awareness of how concentrated wealth and power undermine the economy, corrupt democracy, deepen the racial divide, and tear communities apart.

#### **Jobs with Justice**

[www.jwj.org](http://www.jwj.org)

Founded in 1987, Jobs with Justice exists to improve working people's standard of living, fight for job security, and protect workers' right to organize. The organization is made up of a network of local coalitions that connect labor, faith-based, community, and student organizations to work together on workplace and community social justice campaigns.

#### **UNITE HERE!**

[www.unitehere.org](http://www.unitehere.org)

UNITE (formerly the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textiles Employees) and HERE (Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union) merged on July 8, 2004 forming UNITE HERE. The union represents more than 440,000 active members and more than 400,000 retirees throughout North America.

#### **United States Student Association (USSA)**

[www.usstudents.org](http://www.usstudents.org)

Founded in 1947, USSA is the country's oldest and largest national student organization, representing millions of students. USSA trains and organizes students to win concrete victories on their campuses—like stopping fee hikes, expanding retention and recruitment programs for underrepresented students and improving campus safety.

## Resources

### Websites, Continued

#### United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS)

[www.studentsagainstsweatshops.org](http://www.studentsagainstsweatshops.org)

USAS is an international student movement of campuses and individual students fighting for sweatshop-free labor conditions and workers' rights.

#### Institute for Southern Studies

[www.southernstudies.org](http://www.southernstudies.org)

Since its founding in 1970 by veterans of the civil rights movement, the Institute for Southern Studies has established a national reputation as an essential resource for grassroots activists, community leaders, scholars, policy makers and others working to bring lasting social and economic change to the region.

#### California Newsreel

[www.newsreel.org](http://www.newsreel.org)

Newsreel is the oldest non-profit film and video production and distribution center in the country, distributing cutting edge social interest documentaries to universities, high schools and public libraries.

### Suggested Reading

"Unfair Advantage: Workers Freedom of Association in the United States under International Human Rights Standards," Human Rights Watch, August 2000. <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/uslabor/>

Brofenbrenner, Kate, "Uneasy Terrain: The Impact of Capital Mobility on Workers, Wages, and Union Organizing," Cornell University, September 2000.

*Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World*, by Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, James Leloudis, Robert Korstad, Mary Murphy, LuAnn Jones, and Christopher B. Daly. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987).

*Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*, by Barbara Ehrenreich. Owl Books, 2001.

*What Do We Need a Union For?: The TWUA in the South, 1945-1955*, by Timothy J. Minchin. University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

*Hiring the Black Worker: The Racial Integration of the Southern Textile Industry, 1960-1980*, by Timothy J. Minchin. University of North Carolina Press, 1999.

### Feature Films/Documentaries

*Uprising of '34*, Produced/Directed by George Stoney and Judith Helfand, 1995

*Norma Rae*, starring Sally Field. Directed by Martin Ritt, 1979

*Roger and Me*, 1989; *The Big One*, 1998. Written, Produced, and Directed by Michael Moore

*At the River I Stand*, Directed by David Appleby, Allison Graham and Steven Ross, 1993

*Bread & Roses*, starring Adrien Brody. Directed by Ken Loach, 2000

*Matewan*, John Sayles, 1987

*The Killing Floor*, Bill Duke, 1984

*Harlan County, USA*, 1977; *American Dream*, 1990. Directed by Barbara Kopple

**Toolkit****Tools to Help You Organize a Film Screening**

- 1. Program description for brochure or workshop  
(FullFrameProgram.doc)**
- 2. Flyer for a campus screening  
(flyer\_Duke.doc)**
- 3. Ad for a campus screening  
(Ad\_Duke.jpg)**
- 4. Email invite  
(emailinvite.doc)**
- 5. Quotes/press about the film that you may reprint in publicity materials  
(quotes-press.doc)**

**Tools to Help You Lead a Discussion**

- 6. Workshop Outline  
(WorkshopOutline.doc)**
- 7. Fact sheets/ Handouts**
  - WhereDoYouStandFactSheet.pdf**
  - EFCAFactSheet**
  - U.S. Labor Law Fails to Protect Collective Bargaining**
  - UnionAdvantage\_Women.pdf**
  - Unionbusting101**
  - Why are Workers' Rights Violations so Rampant**