

What "One Union, One Family, One Fight" Means To Me

"One Union, One Family, One Fight". It's the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades' pledge. It is a phrase I interpret to mean that together we are in our issues and our drive to resolve them. It means that if there is an attack on one part of us, it's an attack on all of us. Together we are, and together we fight. It's a simple phrase that expresses its message clearly. Ever since I've come to know about IUPAT and unions in general, my perspective on what exactly unions are has shifted greatly. Before I knew, I thought that unions were just groups that members of certain jobs got to join as a bonus to working, almost as if it was a little community. While this is a partial truth, unions are so much more than just worker communities. Now that I am wiser and more well informed, I know just how special and important unions are for workers. They're worker communities, yes. But those communities band together to advocate for change in the workplace, be it better pay, more reasonable hours, safer working conditions, or better equipment. These unions group up to make changes in their workplace. Seeing this kind of action, you quickly can see the solidarity and community that goes into unions. Unions wouldn't be a thing if workers couldn't band together, it's that comradery and community that holds them all together, that want for something better. Though those are some of the big things unions have, commitment cannot be forgotten. While there was still a pandemic ongoing, workers chose to work through it despite the inherent risk of doing so. In the interest of the workers, a strike was held in 2022, when the virus responsible for the pandemic was still going around. In the cases of working and striking through a pandemic, not only does that take that solidarity and community, but also commitment. Commitment to one's work and want for their fellow worker to have a fairer worklife. Despite company aggression towards unions, it is not something they can just get

rid of without expecting resistance. Where there's a want for a better way, there will always be people there advocating for it.

Unions have always been a target of company and government aggression unfortunately. The ability to keep on striking despite knowing the possibilities is brave. Unions, relative to history, are young. Being thought about alongside the advent of the Industrial Revolution, some workers began to band together in hopes of better working conditions. This was not liked by companies, as it made them have to spend more protecting their workers instead of keeping it for the company and owner. It wasn't uncommon for unions to get sued, and unfortunately it wasn't out of the question that lethal shots were fired upon strikers. In 1912, an officer fired into a crowd of strikers. In 1927, officers fired into a crowd of strikers and killed 6, injuring a further 20. In 1917, state militia fired upon tents of striking miners. At least 19 strikers were killed during this massacre. While there aren't as many cases of this, the attitude from companies and the government towards unions has not improved. Despite all this death though, without those who struck and died striking, things may look different in workplaces. Striking has achieved great things, higher pay, safer working conditions and safety organizations like the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and the removal of children working in factories. Striking can take courage and bravery, but when it works it can lead to amazing results and the betterment of conditions or pay. This is why the phrase "One Union, One Family, One Fight" means so much. It acknowledges that strikes are a fight all must fight together to work, a fight for the family, for your union. If a company or government attacks you, you strike and fight for what is right. Workers shouldn't have to risk their lives every day in unsafe conditions, workers shouldn't have to work for minimal pay, and workers should be able to spend time with their family. UIPAT, and all unions, use solidarity and community to fight for not only their union, but for everyone.

Because, where one union's strike starts to fade, another strike may spring up to boost the flame and pressure that we must put on companies to expect the changes we want to see in our workplaces. A common goal, and an understanding that we all fight for the same thing is what you need to make change.