

Exploited Amazon workers need a union. When will they get one?

Amazon has suppressed all efforts to unionise since its founding, but with widespread employee abuse, only unions can hold the company accountable

5 With a net worth of around \$140bn, Amazon founder and CEO Jeff Bezos is now the richest person in the world. That distinction has come at the expense of Amazon's workers. In order for those workers to begin sharing in the vast wealth their labor has afforded Bezos and other Amazon executives, they need a union.

10 Since Amazon's founding in 1994, the company has successfully suppressed all efforts by its employees to unionize and improve working conditions. A few years ago, maintenance and repair technicians at Amazon filed a petition with the National Labor Relations Board announcing their intention to form what would have been Amazon's first union. Amazon immediately hired a law firm to suppress the organizing effort. [...]

15 While Amazon has been diligently working to shut down any prospect of its workers unionizing, investigative journalists and activists have uncovered widespread abuses of workers. Ambulances were called to British Amazon warehouses 600 times in three years. James Bloodworth, a writer who went undercover at an Amazon warehouse in Staffordshire, England, discovered that workers there routinely urinated in water bottles to avoid being punished for taking breaks from work.

20 Amazon workers are not paid wages that reflect these strenuous working conditions. Moreover, Amazon's tendency to locate its warehouses in rural areas makes it more difficult for workers to leave Amazon to find higher paying work – though Amazon still has one of the highest employee turnover rates in corporate America. Those who do stay on as full-time employees are pushed to their physical limits – making it all the more difficult for workers to find time and energy to organize for collective rights.

By Michael Sainato, adapted from *The Guardian*, July 8th, 2018