

Long before the Haymarket Massacre, the worldwide workers' movement, and the very existence of a worldwide working class, May Day was a celebration of what we hold in common. Before modern capitalism, vast stretches of the world were held by communities, not individuals. Everyday people with no conception of wage labor shared expansive tracts of land for farming, grazing, hunting, fishing, and coming together to celebrate their communal bonds. May Day originated as a celebration of the fertility of the harvest season, which would provide the food necessary to subsist for the entire year, and of the commonly held land and communal social ties that made survival, merriment, and love possible.

From the fifteenth century continuing through the present day, the development of capitalism has violently enclosed the commons, placed the planet's resources in private hands, and compelled most people to live in isolation from their neighbors, working for wages in jobs unrelated to their daily lives. This was and is a brutal process involving the theft of land, the massacre and torture of untold millions, and the institutionalization of racism, sexism, and homophobia on a worldwide scale, as capitalism has divided and hierarchized the worldwide working class it has created. This process of enclosure continues to the present day, and will never end so long as there is a free breath of air for the worldwide working class to take.

The communal resources we have lost are not simply land, food, and potable water. We have also forfeited our common knowledges of the body, and our abilities to care for each other regardless of income status. With the establishment of capitalist medicine, women especially were forced out

positions of power, knowledge, and authority in matters of health. The power of women over their own reproductive lives, never mind communities' control of their own social reproduction, has never been fully recaptured, despite many important battles.

Indeed, the relationship of our society to health and to the body itself has increasingly become one fitting the capitalist mode of production -- compartmentalization, alienation, and commodification have taken the place of holism, communitarianism, and care based on need. Today, all the "progressive" politicians can talk about is making alienated health care more "affordable", while still leaving room for the insurance and pharmaceutical industries to make a fortune, and not addressing the social causes of our society's deadliest ailments: overwork, undernourishment, pollution, stress, and self-medication.

This May Day the ghosts of our lost past continue to haunt us. As hospitals servicing the poorest New Yorkers close their doors, care workers find their labor ever devalued, women's reproductive rights are threatened all over the US, and low income people of the world are shut out of basic health services, we must remember the past, and recall that this does not have to be the fate of humanity. Another way of caring for each other is possible. We cannot return to the past, nor should we desire to, but we can fight for a future inspired by humanity's greatest achievement: the commons.

May Day is not a day for politicians to give speeches about reforms and compromises. It is not about searching for a kinder gentler capitalism, or a more diverse ruling class. In a world without commons it is a day of loss. And this loss calls not for mourning, but for action. It is only through struggling together as a class that this loss can be redeemed, towards a future of the commons reborn.

VITAL SIGNS



We also publish a print workplace newsletter, *Vital Signs*, combining reports by healthcare workers, community surveys conducted by the collective, and our own analysis of news and trends in social reproduction.

ISSUE I explores unit closures and consolidations at St. Luke's Hospital, charts the rise of the exploited home health aid (HHA) as a companion to devaluing nursing labor, and revisits the 1970 occupation of Lincoln Hospital by the Black Panthers and the Young Lords through an interview with Cleo Silvers, a key participant.



VITAL SIGNS
ISSUE I

ISSUE II examines the controversy surrounding the closure of Interfaith Hospital in Bed Stuy, takes a hard look at the "Affordable Health Care Act" as it impacts workers and low income patients, and chronicles recent radical struggles around accessible health care in Greece.



VITAL SIGNS
ISSUE II

If you want to get involved drop us a line:

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or else come find us
in the streets!



MAYDAY



2014

FLORENCE JOHNSTON COLLECTIVE

A REPRODUCTIVE WORKERS' GROUP

We define reproductive work as the labor, waged or not, which enables people to replenish their bodies to live another day. In our society this crucial aspect of human life is valued very little. As the economic crisis puts the burden on working class people to do more with less, and politicians urge calm, we think its time to struggle.

Florence Johnston Collective (also known as Flo-Jo) is an unfunded and unaffiliated collective composed of healthcare workers, educators, transportation workers, students, and the unemployed. Our backgrounds are diverse, but we are united by a commitment to independent workplace and community organizing that tears down the walls between the struggles we all wage each day. We host regular public events and frequently update our blog with news and analysis.



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