

# I punched my boss in the face



A delivery driver's account of, well, punching his boss in the face after being threatened with a pay cut. Which strangely enough got his boss to reverse the cut!

“You just punch the clock / Too scared to punch your boss!” - Dead Kennedys

I punched my boss in the face. He told me he was going to lower my pay. I invited him to suck my dick and walked out. He followed me into the street and got in my face demanding to know why I was leaving. I told him that he was far too much of an asshole to be tolerated for any less than I was already being paid. Short of anything else to say, he offered to fight me. So, to quote Muhammed Ali, “We got it on, because we did not get along.”

We threw down right on the Bushwick sidewalk as dudes cheered us on in Spanish. I found out afterward that he didn't expect me to actually fight him; he was just talking shit. But I got right in there and roughed him up pretty good. I grabbed him by the hair with one hand and blasted him over and over in the mouth with the other. A big chunk of his hair came out in my hand. But he toughed it out and only called a truce after his left eye swelled shut.

By then I'd had enough and I accepted. I told him “Nice working with you!” and tried to walk away. But he called me back. He had experienced a mysterious change of heart and he would let me stay on for the original pay rate. I had collectively bargained like a true Boston asshole.

I should have been suspicious of this guy to begin with when he spent half my interview trashing all his other employees for being lazy and incompetent. But I've come to expect that everywhere I work. Bosses and their workers have opposing interests, the bosses know it well, and workers need a serious case of Stockholm Syndrome not to recognise it. Anyway, I've worked for plenty of major dicks over the years and none of them paid as well as this guy, so he had that going for him. Most of all, being unemployed sucks. So we shook on it, and I was welcomed aboard.

On my first day a co-worker gave it to me straight. The owners make delivery schedules that are impossible to meet and blame the workers when things don't go smoothly, hurling paranoid accusations around when the real culprit is everyday NYC traffic. The workers put

up with it because the pay was good, but they hated the bosses, and it was mutual. I got a taste of this right away. The dispatcher accused me of not knowing how to drive a truck and of conspiring with the other drivers to lie about how long the deliveries took. And it only got worse after that. Before long I was being told that I had lied about my experience and my pay would have to go down. The rest is history.

At first the feeling was euphoric. After years of taking shit from a bunch of losers because they were my bosses, I thought I had no other choice. This time I felt like I had finally stood up for myself in a meaningful way. But even before my knuckles healed up I began to think otherwise.

The late 20th Century saw one defeat after another for organised labour in the United States. Ronald Reagan's firing of the striking air-traffic controllers in 1981 was only the most public example of a vigorous anti-union backlash that continues to the present day. The result has been a devaluing of labour in many skilled trades, the loss of benefits and full-time positions throughout many sectors, and a diminished standard of living for the American working class. And it's tough to reverse this trend, as anti-union legislation makes it difficult to organise, and the unions we already have are constantly under attack.

Most workers are now profoundly alone. They're deprived of job security, isolated from their co-workers, and stretched so thin by juggling multiple jobs and taking care of loved ones that there's no time for anything else, even if they decide that organising is worth the risk of being fired. A friend of mine got a job at Wal-Mart, and the first thing they told him in orientation was that unions were necessary 100 years ago, but nowadays the manager's door is open to grievances, and that's how they should get things settled.

Isn't that exactly what I did?

So no matter how amazing it felt when I punched my boss in the face, I just embodied the profound impotence of the 21st Century worker. Instead of cooperating with my co-workers to form a union capable of fighting for our common interests, getting higher pay, slowing down work, and going on strike if we don't get what we want, I stood as one.

The fact that I got what I wanted is irrelevant; This won't work 99.99 percent of times it's tried, never mind the million reasons why workers would be unable or unwilling to blast their boss like they were Mark Wahlberg on the Red Line. I'm not a Christian; I don't renounce violence for moral or tactical reasons; and I don't have an ethical objection to what I did. But punching your boss is no alternative to fighting back for real, and that can only be done together.

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