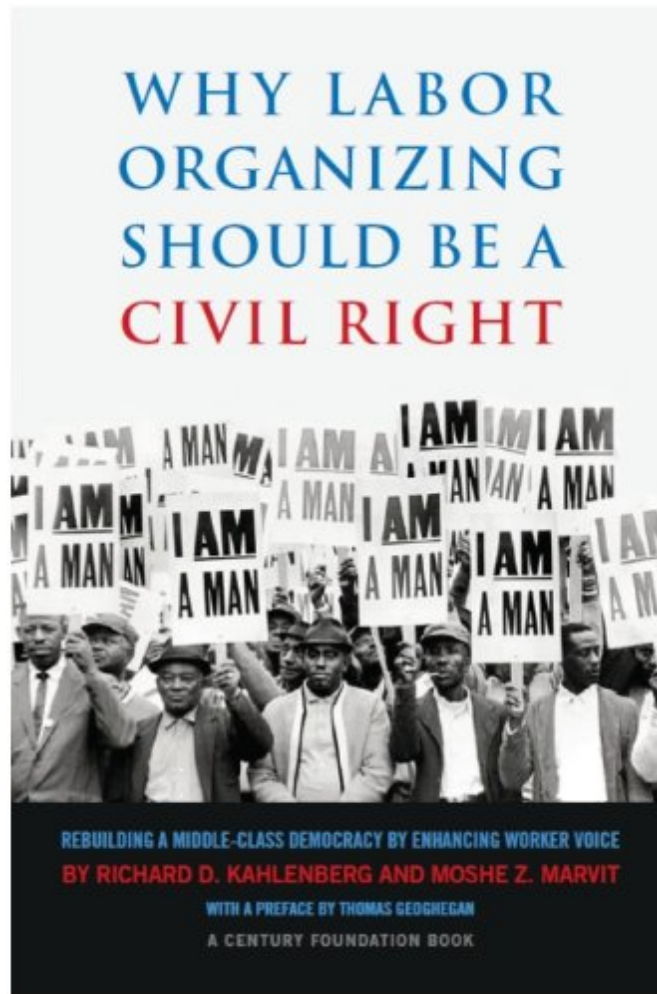


[Online library] Why Labor Organizing Should Be a Civil Right: Rebuilding a Middle-Class Democracy by Enhancing Worker Voice

Why Labor Organizing Should Be a Civil Right: Rebuilding a Middle-Class Democracy by Enhancing Worker Voice

Richard D. Kahlenberg, Moshe Z. Marvit
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Richard D. Kahlenberg, Moshe Z. Marvit : Why Labor Organizing Should Be a Civil Right: Rebuilding a Middle-Class Democracy by Enhancing Worker Voice before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Why Labor Organizing Should Be a Civil Right: Rebuilding a Middle-Class Democracy by Enhancing Worker Voice:

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. One of the best books of the year By craig williams This is truly a very important work. The idea of labor rights being a civil right comes from Tom Geoghegan a labor lawyer , author and significant creative thinker. Businesses are basically "blowing off" union organizing efforts, preferring to pay a minor fine than allow their employees to negotiate a piece of productivity gains. We are in a wage drought because of this. The give and take of sharing productivity gains has led to us dramatically increasing inequality. I came away

from the book appreciating the almost organic nature of how as productivity gradually rises, workers need to negotiate and share in that productivity, something which is important for individual workers and also for the economy. Almost like the seasons of the year we need give and take with regard to hourly compensation negotiations. The authors argue that labor is in a box and unless they can get out of the box and increase union membership it is very unlikely that the country will be able to move a progressive agenda. A must read for progressives and union members.

1 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Two basic problems

By seamlessweb

First, the labor laws have been essentially unchanged since 1947. Yet union membership reached its peak density in the early 1950s when the same weak labor laws applied. More analysis is required to explain this fact. The relationship between weak labor law and decreasing union density is problematic. Second, the assumption that organizing would have more success under a different federal statutory regime is hard to accept. The new federal statute would be policed by the same conservative judges who refuse to apply existing labor law (as weak as it is) in an honest way. Further, the win rates of plaintiffs in federal civil rights cases is abysmal. Sure the remedies are better, but if no one ever wins and cases are routinely dismissed on summary judgment what difference does the theoretical remedial structure make? Would we not simply be exchanging one ineffective legal regime for another?

1 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Encouraging and hopeful

read

By william j. stone

Authors present an alternative approach to protecting the right of collective action. After failed efforts to reform the NLRA and related legislation, the civil rights approach may work. Unfortunately, years of strife between workers and management may be a necessary predicate to actualizing the theory. Book's only weakness is the authors' simplistic approach to drafting protective legislation.

American society has grown dramatically more unequal over the past quarter century. The economic gains of American workers after World War II have slowly been eroded; in part because organized labor has gone from encompassing one-third of the private sector workers to less than one-tenth. One reason for the labor movement's collapse is the existence of weak labor laws that, for example, impose only minimal penalties on employers who illegally fire workers for trying to organize a union. Attempts to reform labor law have fallen short because labor is caught in a political box: To achieve reform, labor needs the political power that comes from expanding union membership; to grow, however, unions need labor law reform.

Why Labor Organizing Should Be a Civil Right lays out the case for a new approach, one that takes the issue beyond the confines of labor law by amending the Civil Rights Act so that it prohibits discrimination against workers trying to organize a union. The authors argue that this strategy would have two significant benefits. First, enhanced penalties under the Civil Rights Act would provide a greater deterrent against the illegal firing of employees who try to organize. Second, as a political matter, identifying the ability to form a union as a civil right frames the issue in a way that Americans can readily understand.

Why Labor Organizing Should be a Civil Right explains the American labor movement's historical importance to social change, it provides data on the failure of current law to deter employer abuses, and it compares U.S. labor protections to those of most other developed nations. It also contains a detailed discussion of what amending the Civil Rights Act to protect labor organizing would mean as well as an outline of the connection between civil rights and labor movements and analysis of the politics of civil rights and labor law reform.

"A significant conceptual and practical framework for protecting the rights of workers to organize and for advancing equal opportunity, economic fairness, and social justice."