If We Had a Living Wage

As part of our never-ending work to highlight every person’s right to the dignity of a Living Wage, the Tompkins County Workers’ Center held the Living Wage Visioning Contest in 2016, co-sponsored by the Tompkins County Office of Human Rights, Sustainable Tompkins, and the Multicultural Resource Center. The Contest sought works of art from workers in our County on the theme: “how might your life and the life of your family change if you made a Living Wage?” The people entering the Contest were able to submit a work of art in ANY format. We got 18 excellent entries, most of which you can view in this booklet. Some entries are electronic – a visual dance and a song – which you can experience in full through the links we provide to Youtube.

We had 11 judges, including myself, who spent many hours sifting through the Contestants’ entries. It was a painful and difficult judgment process for all the judges to try to rank these creations, and we honor them all here. We hope that you enjoy them as much as we do, and that you’ll join our campaign to make a Living Wage the standard for everyone.

— PETE MEYERS, TOMPKINS COUNTY WORKERS’ CENTER COORDINATOR

“It was an incredible honor to be asked to be a judge for this contest, not because I thought it would be easy but because I was being asked to do what we all need to do, be an active witness. We need to open our eyes and see the people who slave away at minimum wage jobs for endless hours and still can’t feed their families, get an advanced education to move ahead, or pay all of their bills.

“Each person who submitted an entry took time from what little time and energy they have to share in complete honesty and vulnerability what their lives are like and how earning a living wage would feel like freedom, enough to secure their sense of dignity. We are entering into what may be even more austere times for our hard working minimum wage citizens and we are going to have to fight even harder in government to protect what safety nets we can and as a community we will need to step up and see that we are all family and we live on the backs of each other.

“We need to figure out each for ourselves how much we really need and how much we can share. I think that a lot of people like to write off the lowest class economically. They choose to be there, or they are lazy. What the TCWC has been able to show with this event is what we all know in our hearts to be true: that all of us are the same, all of us have the same desires; all of us have the same ambitions; all of us have the same hope to be treated as a human with respect. These 18 entries express this so eloquently and I hope that everyones take a moment to read them and then joins together to take part in a community where everyone has a voice and a place.”

— ANNA KELLES, TOMPKINS COUNTY LEGISLATOR, DISTRICT 2

With the exception of 1st Prize Winner Leslie Prunty’s My World is Very Small, which appears in this paper’s center spread, the entries we received appear in alphabetical order, by author.

Media inquiries and requests for additional copies of this publication (or for permission to reprint these works) can be addressed to the Tompkins County Workers Center at (607) 269-0409 or TCWRH@tcworkerscenter.org.

This booklet was produced with support from the Alternatives Fund of Ithaca. Design by Ari Evergreen.
connections have been made, I describe as a "House." After these the last connection, creating what
with another "Big One," this being
lines, "the figure," I would connect
product of the connection of the
be almost anything. To me, the dot
creates water, as well as all of the
is that when done the right way it
and line, mastery over the fungus
of fungi from space. With every dot
initially to a living wage is that with my idea an original
piece of art is created EVERY TIME.
My experience with the dot has
convinced me of extra-terrestrial
life, so far as, I believe that every
time a dot is made in this spirit, these
extra-terrestrials as some sort
of alien beings. With every dot
and line, mastery over the fungus
is created resulting in new fractals
every time. What I would like to do
is recreate society using the dot in
a similar fashion as we use currency
today. The reason my idea is so cool
is that when done the right way it
creates water, as well as all of the
other wonderful things it does, with
a little imagination, all of the "the
other wonderful things it does," can
be almost anything. To me, the dot
is a contract. The ET's have agreed
not to use my idea, even if the fractal is not
manifestation as the motivation to
create their own dots. The revelation I have had from the
dark side describes what the pyramid
looks like, with the original dot, the
individuals tier on the pyramid is
created, then the first dot-to-dot line
creates a chair on that level of the
tier. The next step being, connecting
two lines together, with a straight
line, making a table with the chair.
The third step is the most difficult and
also the second to last step of the
sequence, connecting the newly
created "Figure" with another of the
same likeness, creating a bookshelf
to go with the chair and table. The
last step is the combination of the
product of the third step, the "Big
One" with another like itself, again
with a straight line; which then in
turn creates a staircase going up
to the next level of the pyramid,
connecting you to your Dark Master.
I am entering this contest with this
idea because of what an impact it
has had on my life, and I believe that
this contest may provide me with the
much needed opportunity to get
some exposure to the world.
I am entering this contest with two
partners, the breakdown of the
"Trippsart," structure of influence
and control of resources goes: Trip
60%, Sarah 25% and Corry, 16%. I
realize that the math in that equation
doesn't quite add up, but with
Trippsart miracles happen every day.
Living Wage

SHONNTAY BUTLER

What is this thing that they call the living wage, when families can barely maintain?

Mothers become single while fathers keep leaving trails of despair; forcing mothers to lose their mental frame!

Lost sleep over little feet’s...

Lack of memory due to the fact they have to eat.

Seconds become minutes; minutes become hours; hours become days of lost time without sleep!

Losign Public Assistance and the decrease in Food Stamps causes my bills to add up!

With rent, electric and needing more eats; combination of clothing and basic needs I’m staring at defeat!

You expect so much when there is nothing to give... Then wonder why people continue to have kids!

Some say it’s easier to over populate and live off the system, than it is to fill out a simple job application.

How could they make it on their own? The system seems to be forcing people to give up!

“Damed if you do OR be Damned if you don’t!”

How is this helping a single mother on Public Assistance with four kids? So again, I ask what is this thing they call “living wage”!

They say dream of a better future! Mine’s include a better job, better house, and better car!

They say strive until I meet that destination but lack of child supervision continues to cause roadblocks!

I’m tired of flipping the same burgers I flipped yesterday; feeling underpaid and underappreciated! Working every day and still can’t afford to pay my rent! It’s time I consider full time assistance from the government! All four kids will have something to eat but mentally I’ve accepted defeat!

Lost feelings like I’m stuck in a maze; back breaking decisions which ultimately affects children for days! I heard this saying “it takes a village to raise kids” why does it feel like my village is against me? Is this a set-up or test of my humility?

If I Made a Living Wage

ELLIOTT DELINE

If I made a living wage
I think that I could disengage
The guilt I’ve felt for being alive
And doing what I must to survive.

The time wasted, the sickening rage
Uncivil servants in my face
Accusations, threats, and lies
Profits from my teary eyes

My mother’s silence
My father’s shame
The intergenerational pain
“We pulled ourselves up, why can’t you?”
“A college degree should get you through.”

Set aside material needs
What I want is Dignity
But in addition, let me see...

(If I made a living wage…)

I would never have to fill out forms
Prove I’m poor enough for alms
Or be accused I lie and whine
When I try to claim what’s legally mine

I’d keep writing books, and with more promotion
My sales would really pick up motion
I’d create my own self-publishing collective
For trans and queer writers who are also rejected

I would travel to places where I could swim
And build my cats a jungle gym
I’d be able to just relax and chill
And buy the foods that don’t make me ill

Yes, If I made a living wage
I think that money could assuage
The peach of mind I’ve been deprived
And maybe then I’d truly thrive.
The 15 Dollar Dream
CHRIS GEORGARD OUDAKIS

When I go out in public each day
I think myself smart and in my own way – a good decent man.

But for show right now, I don’t have much to put forth. Though
I want that for me and each family friend to somehow

Earn a “Living Wage”.

If I could make that grade as soon as they would I’d feel

Happy and satisfied. Now, I’d be respectful. Outside respected. Oh my! Oh my!

My esteem would wave high and far sure my work attitude – be better directed.

Today, in my mind I’d do extra and for each task complete with the

Thank you – my response would not be neglected.

When break-time comes I’d sit politely socializing – both checking messages

And chit-chatting-with others. First about our job duties

And work orders. Then, on my time happily concerned – I’d phone family

With plans. Or message my children to check about school.

As this I would now be able to afford to do. It’s the 15 dollar dream, inside.

After lunch and after all breaks I’d know the game plan.

My mind would stay positive and my attitude focused – concentrating
To finish my job. As my now respected attitude and sense of detail
Finally, finally is rewarded with pay!
Then if staff finds somethin’
I’ve forgotten to do or my mistake, I’d say – I’d certainly do it your way.

Now shift over I’d be able to stop and breathe. Looking around outside
I’d see a life ahead. Not misty and iffy but real as I’d have money
With which to lie. As I had been ruling things out, I now could buy
Something extra to eat or take the children somewhere to do.
Or save money for what I think I could do again – with someone elite.

So, in the end, with shoulders high and an honest smile on my face
I feel a sense of pride as I’m making a “Living Wage”. A job with pay at a union wage.

One to like and keep. A family lifestyle I’m really thankful for where I can clothe
And feed my three. All from an employer who now respects my work sweat. All day standing
And bending my knees. My wage! My wage! I feel good inside. The 15 dollar dream

a eulogy for momma
J ohn Gunn

everyday I saw momma wake up at 5:45
pa sat for toast at 6
and she’d iron her black & white uniform
in only the way she could

lips pressed-toes curled-
bangs perfectly straight-
she wouldn’t come home until midnight
every.single.day

and I miss[ed] momma
every.single.day

every.single.day

sneeze. Sniffle-a-choo.
Mommas bones became brittle
her smile faded
her eyes depended & she knew.

The minutes passed by faster-
when she could sit up
but slower when blood poured from
her mouth
tubes were in and out of her unmentionables.

And pa sat by her till midnight
every.single.day & then momma was no more.

pa comes out his room-
every morning for toast-
at 5:45 now
and I wonder
what those extra 15 minutes were for
when momma was still here
“Every time I hear the door opening, I feel the person coming into the restaurant and taking a piece of me”. I work at Mehaks Indian Cuisine, located in Ithaca, NY and I make $7.25 an hour—which is about half of what the proposed living wage is for Ithaca. My co-workers, Heidi, said the aforementioned quotation when musing on how she felt during a Friday night shift. At first, I was taken aback that she said such a claim. As a server, it’s engrained into the way you think that you just have to accept the flow of customers that come in on any particular night. You don’t question any of the pain you feel in your body from the long hours and various tasks that you have to do, because it becomes an accepted part of your lifestyle.

But there is a certain danger than comes with this complacency. You become your own worst bully. Your mind goes through the motions of accepting the work conditions and the derogatory treatment by people as part of the work that you’ve chosen to participate in.

When your wage is based off the number of people who walk through the door of a particular restaurant, there becomes the inherent need to sell yourself.

The money I make for a living isn’t based on how much I make per hour.

It’s based on who walks through the door of the restaurant.

It’s based on the whim of a person and their feelings about my service.

It’s based on the inherent assumptions the customer makes about my persona, the type of work I do, and why I do it.

The amount of money I make in order to survive is based on how much of myself I give to the customer, and after working for five plus years in the service industry, this aspect of garnering income is the most soul crushing. From my experience, the part of this work that chips away at your soul is the sense of hopelessness and uncertainty about your income. When you come into work on a particular day, you don’t know how many people will come in to eat that day. You don’t know what their mood will be. The pervasiveness of uncertainty has the potential to, and can, overwhelm the psyche of the worker. You feel defeated before you even come into work for the day.

The uncertainty of whether you will be able to make ends meet, coupled with the loss of hope manifests as defeat. You have to work so many hours just to ensure that you will have a roof over your head and food in the fridge that you don’t feel as if your time belongs to you anymore.

The most common phrase becomes “I’m tired…I don’t have time to…” and essentially, you lose that magic about yourself that makes you who you are.

My family history informs why making a living wage is so important to me. I watched for years as my father worked 60 hour work weeks to support a family of five all by himself. His salary was well below the proposed living wage for Ithaca and it took a significant physical, mental, and emotional toll on his person. He became a drug addict to cope with his work week and I never really saw him much, except when he came home to give his pay check to my mother. Soon my mother also second-hand succumbed to my father’s drug addiction. His addiction made her a bitter and paranoid woman and she took that out on me and my siblings, often in violent ways. It hurt me so much to see my siblings suffer because of my parent’s personal problems stemming from working such long hours for little pay. I don’t want to see the people I love succumb to addiction and anger because their pay is so little.

Making a living wage would allow me to develop my individualism. It would allow me to reclaim my humanity. Working for so little money since I graduated college killed my spirit and enthusiasm for life. I don’t have time to develop myself intellectually when more than a third of my week is dedicated to working jobs that are unrelated to the professional academic life that I want to pursue.

A living wage would make achieving financial security an easier feat. My primary motivation in being financially secure is not so much for myself, as it is for my siblings. My younger sister is going to college, and I want to be able to co-sign a loan for her if she needs it, in order to do that, one must be on solid financial footing themselves. Additionally, she is a minor and we have had run-ins with family court stemming from cop visits during drug-fueled arguments by my parents. I want to make a living wage so that if the day comes where I have to prove to a judgment that I am financially stable enough to take care of a minor (my sister is 16), I can do so without having to worry that my sister will be placed in the care of strangers who might abuse her.

A living wage would give me peace. I want to enjoy Ithaca without fear of losing the people I love the most due to monetary constraints of the way they react to the stress caused by these financial deficits.

A living wage gives me freedom and I want that more than anything for myself and my fellow Ithacans.
Occitan Sonnet to a Dying Wage

CALEB WILLIAM HAINES

When I consider our names forgotten:
We spent half of our days, working and beat.
When I consider, our time downtrodden:
In factories, fields, and blistering heat.
When I consider, we were not considered:
Our toil, our wear; unjust recompense.
When I consider, I am embittered:
The landlord is knocking, and asking for rent.
When we considered, the time we wasted:
Our parents were freed, not living at work
We considered, it’s time to face it:
We stare at the sun, fingernails full of dirt,
We considered, when living to make it.
Our wages reborn made our families first.

Here Nor There

TRAVIS HOWARD

Here again, as I gather to some semblance of cohesion my sore limbs and with concentrated effort scrape myself spatula-like out of the bed. Good Morning. It almost done I consider with sober lack of expectation what I’ll make of it. The morning or myself? Scramble them both, they’re done for. But I regenerate tomorrow. It’s all as well — another morning dishes itself up like clockwork and hey don’t I get my fair chance to meet it that much reader every day? If I can maintain.

Went to the woods again after work. What a contrast. God, why do I feel like I can’t even function? Here nor there. It’s like I escape with my life and, cradling it preciously, make for isolation only to find it displaced in my confused flight.

Woods again. Thank Beauty. Even if I don’t find myself, I still can see. Some greens never fail. Some clouds still wander with allure, and like poets in lyric retreat, I breathe again.

Sitting with a talcian of Steel Reserve sure, and the mosquitos worse than managers, but breathing.

I used to escape so easily. It was as natural as the unguessed destinations I found. Then there weren’t the responsibilities of course. It was a simple joy and instinct to go to the woods. I’d refresh my senses and appreciate some independence from society’s commercial reality. The woods were an exciting offering, a constant lovely opportunity that amplified civilization’s shortcomings… Now I seek in need, in desperation, and find myself thwarted. I came here too quickly. I shut my eyes and ran for some transcendental relocation, some cure to wind me back together, some key that would settle in filling the space between me and my disassociated workplace.

I know I’m dramatic. I can’t help it, or I won’t. I cling to something fiercely. I treat things like they’re serious. It’s like I take my joys and dreams so seriously. It’s practically grave. I kick hard and hatefully at them threatened. I can’t talk about it. Complaining, that’s not attractive. I know how much I have is huge. Relatively, I thrive! But that doesn’t put me off the vision. Doesn’t put me off imagination. When you’ve imagined what might be… built it in your heart with meticulous care, checked it against reality and felt it sturdy enough to climb toward… how can you stop? How can you unsee, how forget?

It’s just there’s places one can have been, one can go, lives people get, windows into visions, truths and traumas, that knowing, seeing, going to… become an automatic exile. Some people come from them, right off, born into the place that’s not allowed. Some travel between worlds well, translating between, bridging gaps, perhaps inching forward society’s understanding… but most don’t get that ticket… Ahg its a bloody mess, I can’t say anything.

At the coffee shop today waiting by the bathroom I saw a flyer for a local writing contest. Really open guidelines, any medium, only for local workers paid less than so given much. So little. And money on the table. It looked at me with something like the evil-tinted glimmer of gold, or like some pet up for adoption I might’ve always dreamed of, but now can only look at with wearied irony. Am I really going to have to pick you up? Couldn’t be more apt, right on the nose! I simply must. Now I owe it to my yet-excitable and less-rusty self to act.

Can I write thought? I mean, can I write any more than this? This rate record of trudged through mornings, exhausted evenings and the vain complaints against it all I’m too embarrassed to find vent or willing ears for? Chin up pup. Well I’m going to make something like an honest effort, at least. Hold myself to that much.

Actually feeling proud of myself today, I didn’t get stressed out all day. Last night two co-workers were over late, and after some serious cases of the postwork sit-downs, one of them pulled some Marx off the shelf. Wage Labour and Capital. My friend described it as Capital, the sparknotes. We read some chapters passing it around. We got all into labor power, and the kind of commodity, in form of labor capacity the worker trades for pay… It got me thinking a lot, and the point is at work just put this very deliberate ‘meter’ on my ‘labor power’. I was like the fucking Terminator. In slo-mo. $10/hour speed. I droned along at a setting, as careful kept as business owner’s expense accounts. There were some times it didn’t work. I couldn’t hold the pace, there was just too much work. But I didn’t stress. It helped a lot.

End of my shift the nightboss asked me, actual tremors of desperation and appeal performing across their face, if I could come in tomorrow morning. They knew they needed this 12 hours ago, they knew they needed it a week ago. I covered the same shift last week. They do nothing about it if then hold off till the last second to ask like it were a crisis. I caved. You always think about your co-workers.

Slept in for the shift. Hungover as hell and sure I was looking it when I came in elevensomething, not ten. Someone was already there doing what I’d come in for, though I didn’t recognize them. A tempworker. Just call the agency, they send someone today. Someone was already there doing hell and sure I was looking it when I came in elevensomething, not ten. Actually feeling proud of myself today, I didn’t get stressed out all day. Last night two co-workers were over late, and after some serious cases of the postwork sit-downs, one of them pulled some Marx off the shelf. Wage Labour and Capital. My friend described it as Capital, the sparknotes. We read some chapters passing it around. We got all into labor power, and the kind of commodity, in form of labor capacity the worker trades for pay… It got me thinking a lot, and the point is at work just put this very deliberate ‘meter’ on my ‘labor power’. I was like the fucking Terminator. In slo-mo. $10/hour speed. I droned along at a setting, as careful kept as business owner’s expense accounts. There were some times it didn’t work. I couldn’t hold the pace, there was just too much work. But I didn’t stress. It helped a lot.

End of my shift the nightboss asked me, actual tremors of desperation and appeal performing across their face, if I could come in tomorrow morning. They knew they needed this 12 hours ago, they knew they needed it a week ago. I covered the same shift last week. They do nothing about it if then hold off till the last second to ask like it were a crisis. I caved. You always think about your co-workers.
on whatever. $10/hour. So I got disciplined and sent home.

Remember; every time you come in when you should be off, on a favor or whatever (it’s always a favor, sympathy and solidarity, or payback for the time you needed it— never the money that appeals. It’s funny this amount we concede to, working away our energy day after day to lump together an eventual sum covering the basic support and maintenance of life,... when looked at in the off-hours, held up as an incentive, a single opportunity,...it holds no appeal, and appears rather like a mean joke. We’re willing to do it on the long term, where it adds up to our survival. Looked at in focus, from the workers instinctive bargaining perspective, it’s a pittance. What my time? In exchange for that?

The next eight hours’ installment in a position of constant task and expectation with your only freedom in a position of constant task and contract mind.

Why couldn’t I have felt this at eight this morning? Yes then all I felt was my back, my sore shoulders going through the coffee-making motions, throwing back a pair of generic tylenol.

Okay got my idea for submission. Had a nice diverting brainstorm as I whiled away the work. I should do this more.

I’m going to write a short story that doesn’t quite let on its setting. We start in a coffee shop, following the idle thoughts and motions of a regular. They are most relaxed. They consider the possibilities. They rifle through the friends places projects they may visit. Every option seems utterly possible to this curious unparcelled breezy loafer.

In the casual movement through their day a different sort of world, an alternative future, worked out and layered in details as though it were just so natural, is revealed. Tantalizingly revealed. I want the reader to see, to see it materialized and working, and to want it, want it badly.

That sort of seeing when people witness some form of even modest resistance triumph, or get swept up in a demo that was really lit, or how participants in Paris strikes and communes had to feel when for some brief hour the old customs and constructs quaked and shook weightily into a baffled silence, the ground remained firm, people took gladly to whatever work was needed, and it was seen for a moment just how things might look. What— not hopes— more like dreams and exultations might enter collective hearts to be felt and shared in large.

That’s how I’d like my story to come off. If you could make someone feel that... no see it... I don’t think I’m gonna get that entry in on time. I’ll regenerate tomorrow. I’ll have more chances.

Life with Living Wage

JOHN HUTCHINSON

Everybody wants and likes to work with a livable wage. The livable wage in Tompkins County, New York is $14.34 per hour at this time.

Currently, the livable wage is enjoyed by county workers and does not include everybody who lives in the county. If I was working for this wage, there would be no doubt that I too would be better off than at present because I am single and do not have any children to care for. The income flowing into my coffers would be useful in paying the necessary expenses, which include rent and utilities. There would be money left over for food which I would stockpile for winter, and any other inclement weather conditions.

Also, I would spend more time shopping at Walmart, where I could afford new clothes to replace the worn and tattered older garments which I have worn for quite some time. I would be more altruistic towards others in that I would contribute to charities on occasion. I would make donations to the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, and the SPCA to help out our furry, four-legged friends.

As well as bills and charities which use up a chunk of change, I could devote more time and effort for recreational pursuits. There would be cash for bowling and golf which are my favorite hobbies. The more I practiced, the better I would play.

There would be money to pay for repairs for my car which is fourteen years old and tends to need repairs every few months. As cars cost a lot, paying for insurance, registration, gasoline and license plate fees would be less demanding on my bank accounts and credit cards.

Some money would be put aside in one or more savings accounts in some of the local banking institutions that I do business with. As I continued to work and earn, I would have the satisfaction of increasing these accounts on a weekly and or bi-weekly basis. Some money would possibly be available for investing in precious metals which would one day go up in value, primarily gold and silver coins and bullion. I am of the strong belief that everybody needs to prepare for the future.

Finally, a livable wage would have an even better effect on me besides having a few extra dollars to spend. The livable wage would have the added benefit of instilling in me a greater amount of pride and accomplishment. A job which pays well would aspire to work harder and work well. It would by far give me a better attitude and better work ethic towards the work I do. I would tend to have greater confidence whenever I budget or itemized revenues and expenditures. There is no doubt in my mind that $14.34 an hour, when multiplied by a number of set hours, yields a good sum that I know is coming my way, and thus contributes to my sense of security and well being. If money does not buy happiness, like some people say, it still comes pretty close to that.
I work in a chain pharmacy. It doesn't pay enough for me to live on, so there are a lot of things I can't do... I'm教育培训 my world is very small.

When I go to work something begins to close in on me, starts to suffocate me. It's the humiliation of having a job that is utterly thankless.

People have come to expect so little! "Be happy you have a job. They're amonished.

I want more from my job. I need more. But this job is like so many others.

It's an idea dreamed up a long time ago. A deliberate make up at the top while the people below work to rich and go. An old done in way. A system built on a foundation that is a pack of lies.

The owners often say, "You, our employee owners, mean so much to us. We care about you." We don't have to care about you. We benefit. Never cut wage. We can fire you at any time. But fired sick staff. Never says sorry. They're warm wake up!

Their actions tell the truth. Their actions say, "You are insignificant. We can replace you instantly. You are on your own."

I don't get sick pay. I make ten dollars an hour. I'm stuck in poverty. I am stressed out either from dealing with the public and the mean unpleasant individuals that treat me like a lowly servant, or from the boredom, despair, helplessness, anger, anxiety, depression, hopelessness I feel. I am in dire need of self improvement, or the absurdly monotonous nature of my daily tasks.

All of the thinking and feeling have been removed from my mind, slowly dying.

I have problems. It's hard for me to improve myself. I feel like I'm trapped in a nightmare. If I had just one job that paid well, I could deal with everything a lot better.

I have nothing to show for all my years there.
I dream every day about what life would be like if I made a living wage.

I know things wouldn't be perfect, but my world would be a lot bigger, so much better...

It would be such a relief... I could feel better about myself, hold my head a little higher.

I could buy more food, better food, different food...

I could fix my car.

I wouldn't have to worry about everything so much.

I could face emergencies with more confidence.

I wouldn't have to ask my family for help.

We could buy art supplies!

We could buy things for others.

We could visit my family more often.

I could buy some new clothes.

I could treat ourselves.

We could go to the movies more often.

I could take my kids on vacation.

We could take real vacations.

I wouldn't have bills to worry about.

We could have a house someday. I dream a lot about that. A place that is really our own. It wouldn't have to be big. We'd have some land, a really huge garden.

But there are just dreams, big dreams, empty dreams, and daydreams. Don't get you anywhere. Sometimes it hurts too much to think about what could be.

I think about what we would plant there, all of the sunny hours spent either tending it or relaxing in it with my husband. Happiness might be less of a stranger. I'm not hoping for a lot. Just basic things I think EVERYONE should have.
How my life would change with a living wage...

Living Residence:
I would save up and be able to move back into a rural location with more freedom!

Help my family:
I could help put my mom and grandmother however they would need!

Fat Fit

Dream Car:
I'm lucky to have my Civic, but I've always wanted a Nissan 370Z!!!!!!!!!

Friend for my friend:
With a new place to live I could get another cat for my cat to play with!

Health/Motivation:
I'd feel better about myself and rebuild my body and become more positive!
Princess Eloise and the Magical Living Wage

Princess Eloise and the Magical Living Wage

April Kreuger and Iain Michael
Princess Eloise’s daddy was a chef and her mama worked at a mental health non-profit. Both of their work was demanding, mentally and physically. As hard as they worked though, they did not get paid enough to support their growing family.

But then one day a miracle happened. A new law was passed in the kingdom, all workers would now be paid a living wage.

What did this magical miracle mean for Princess Eloise and her family? With a living wage, they could afford to buy all the things they needed, and many of the things they so desperately wanted.

Princess Eloise’s parents could now pay rent and go to the grocery store instead of having to choose between the two. They could pay their bills on time and not have to worry about their bank account.
They bought all the things their family would need—a new crib and mattress, a bassinet, a bed frame and box spring for themselves, and a couch. They started saving for the future and set up an emergency fund, a college fund for Princess Eloise, and even a retirement fund for themselves.

Day to day life became much easier too, as the princes’ parents were no longer constantly worrying about money. They could afford to relax and talk about other things. They went on date nights and eagerly prepared for their little girl’s birth.

Then one stormy night in mid-October, Princess Eloise made her debut. She was born into a healthy, happy home where all of her needs were taken care of.

Because of their living wage, Princess Eloise’s parents were able to afford ballet lessons, drum lessons, camping trips, and all the books she could devour.
Princess Eloise’s college fund grew right along with her. And without having to worry about money, she was free to learn and grow to her full potential. She studied hard and was able to choose any college in the land. Eventually she earned her PhD and made enough money to take care of her own family.

The living wage saved their family and all the families in the kingdom.

Princess Eloise’s bright future was made possible by the living wage her parents began earning when she was just a baby. The living wage set their family up for success and ensured their lives could be lived to the fullest. They were no longer fearful of their own survival and could instead dedicate their lives to serving others.
Burnt hands carrying calloused fingers
I take pride in my work.
Smells of meat and sweat stain my clothes
I deserve every cent of that paycheck.

My co-workers threaten to strike for living wage, I cannot afford too.
In a sea of high school students, I am trying to pay my rent.
In a sea of debt, bills, and taxes, I am trying to stay afloat.

You see my dad was poor and his dad was poor
And I'm poor but have a degree, but my child will likely be poor like me.

The American Dream of socioeconomic mobility
Is now a modern day caste system where we celebrate the few
who achieve.

But I’m lucky; please remember I am lucky.
I make nine an hour when some make seven twenty five.
I know there is a tremendous privilege in having loose change.

I’m not asking for handouts.
The brand on my shirt is worth 62 billions dollars.
I am worth the hours I work.

I live check to check to check; I want to afford to save.
My car breaking down or any unexpected accident,
Shouldn’t be a death sentence disguised as eviction papers.

500 extra pennies an hour, 800 extra nickels a day, is the difference between
buying garbage tags at Wegmans or living another week in waste.

You ask how my life would be different?
How could it possibly be the same?

Working till 2 in the morn, flipping burgers, making fries, creating art for you
to devour
I take pride in my work.
But it’d be nice to call in sick and still be able to purchase milk.
It’d be nice to have breathing room in this constant state of suffocating.

There is no place in this country where $7.25 puts a roof on your head.
$14.34 doesn’t solve every injustice, but it will change my life.
Thank You

SPIRAL CRACKS (REMANU STEELE, BRIEL DRISCOLL, AND ROSETTE EPSTEIN)

When Living Wage is Part of the Dream

HEATHER TOWNSEND

What would it be like to see three meals a day? If only I could have a job with living wage pay.

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What would it mean to see their auntie not struggling? Even with the two jobs I’m exhaustingly juggling?

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Heard a quote when I was a little girl: “One day the rich will have nothing left to eat but the poor.” Who knew that reality was right at my front door?

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They say money can’t buy happiness That cheerful smile can’t stop the repo man from handling his business.

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What would it be like to be paid for the work I put out Instead of a check that subliminally says “figure it out” The employment system is a problem without a doubt.

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I’ve always been told to work hard on my dreams They want me to wear a suit, they don’t approve of my jeans.

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A minimum wage and job based on commission can leave you powerless, hungry, and winshing.

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To end my relationship with bill collectors, debt, and repo men, Living wage can provide financial stability I won’t have to pretend.

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The day I can be given living wage pay, these children who are innocently affected can benefit, I can truly say.

Reflections On Labor and the Divine

LILITH XSERAPH

The world is lit by the grandeur of man Fed by the grace of her hand Backs bent, in communion with the soil.

Whose endless love, Whose thankless toil; With the last sun searing summer skies Spilled out on borrowed land Flames out with silent cries

“When then now will we reap our own?” What generation after generation has sown For all this we will not be spent: The magnates, The parasites can have our rent;

We will not be docile, Nor repent

For the sins of our masters.

For the kingdom of heaven is of the broken, For the kingdom of heaven is of the wretched, For the kingdom of heaven will pay us a living wage;

Sisters, brothers,

Even the skies can hear your rage.

Watch it at youtube.com/watch?v=a4mWvVcdlKE