Working Class History. History From Below Network, 2020. Podcast and Project

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The *Working Class History* (*WCH*) podcast (https://workingclasshistory.com/podcast/) is rooted firmly in the greater overall Working Class History project (https://workingclasshistory.com/), which is dedicated solely to the presentation of mass culture and popular history, employing a Marxist critique of modern labor history, which focuses on radical resistance to capital force. In its execution of this mission, the project succeeds without qualification.

The *WCH* podcast follows a standard format of presentation for its episodes, which has remained consistent from its very first show. In each podcast episode, a host or panel of hosts provides context to an interview or series of interviews centered on a specific instance of industrial, union, or worker history. This format of individual interview works excellently for the broader project's stated purpose of educating the public about the history of the international working class, using the framework of oral history and memory to complement a Marxist historical critique. The listener is presented with individual accounts of workers, union leaders, and historians from their own perspective, offering the view of a collective history, which the project's myriad social media platforms discuss inclusively as "our history." This signified in-group ascription with the international panel of interviewees remains present throughout the podcasts. The sum total of these efforts is

an ongoing podcast series that excels in its professional, academic manner and uses methodology well established in oral history to present histories of resistance among the international working class.

Over the course of several weeks, I listened to a representative sample of *WCH*'s backlog of episodes based on the project's stated catalog of interests. I selected episodes 1-11 as a representative sample of their earliest work; episode 14 for their most high profile interview with Noam Chomsky; episodes 13, 16, and 27-30 for their approach to women and LGBTQ movements in labor history; episodes 23 and 24 for their self-stated tackling of criminality in labor resistance; and episodes 43-49 for a representative sample of their most recent work. While I have highlighted episodes 13, 16, and 27-30 as specifically dealing with women's and LGBTQ histories, *WCH* maintains a healthy and consistent understanding of gender, queer, and minority issues throughout its work, such as in the episode on the Spanish Civil War, which concludes with a discussion on the location of queer figures. Furthermore, I observed the broader Working Class History project's social media channels and projects, such as their newly published book *Working Class History: Everyday Acts of Resistance & Rebellion* (2020), and the ways these projects engaged with the podcast series. Including the episodes mentioned above, which rep-

resent roughly half of the total runtime, *WCH*'s podcast series totals roughly forty hours of material.

The abovementioned body of work is presented professionally and respectfully but is not devoid of the necessary emotion that categorizes the histories being presented. As the hosts discuss frequently, labor and union organization and resistance is a personal subject for those who engage in it. While in the United States this takes a specific left-wing, pro-labor union stance rooted in Marxist critique, the international and intentional nature of this analysis, coupled with the nature of podcasts as intimate, opt-in media, makes this exploration a fulfillment of *WCH*'s stated objectives. Furthermore, the breadth of access that the project coordinators have to international labor leaders and academics alike maintains the professional nature of the podcast and allows the project to function as a legitimate academic exploration of historical topics, rather than simply a commercialized retelling of these labor histories. *WCH*'s specific use of primary oral history interviews excellently fulfills a core promise of digital media to democratize and popularize knowledge. Thus these interviews, oral histories, and academic interrogations form an excellent core of well-researched material that substantively adds to the body of knowledge on labor history.

In the field of historical podcasts, there are two general camps where one presents history as a form of infotainment, while the other presents history as an academic study. *WCH* sits firmly in the latter camp, as its hosts go to great lengths to emphasize historical accuracy. While the hosts do engage in some playful banter with interviewees, this comes across as rapport building and humanizing rather than distracting. Relative to other social, cultural, and labor history podcasts, the broader Working Class History project boasts one of the most impressive audiences, with over three hundred thousand followers subscribed to their Facebook page alone. This reach is compounded by a multitude of other social media platforms and projects that effectively use the respective strengths of these platforms to elucidate less well-known, or often entirely independently researched, working-class histories. These platforms further enhance the overall presentation of the podcast as a historical project, such as by highlighting relevant images discussed during recent episodes on Instagram, as well as allowing the broader Working Class History project team to expand their scope beyond what their laboriously produced podcast catalog covers. Finally, the *WCH* podcast exists as a wholly listener-supported project, which maintains the air of academic presentation and distinguishes this work, while also staying true to the project's goal of presenting an internalized view of "our" history for its audience without the concern of commercial interests.

The *WCH* podcast is one of the best, most rigorous historical podcasts available to the public today. Perhaps my sole criticism, and a small one at that, is a tendency that the hosts have developed in later episodes to reference previous related content that they had published without expanding on that point. One specific instance occurs in episode 16 where the host refers to previous discussion of women in the Industrial Workers of the World. This critique is a minor one however, as any listener interested in labor, union, or Marxist histories should absolutely listen to the entire catalog of this podcast. Overall, the *WCH* podcast series represents, in conjunction with the Working Class History social media presence, an excellent collection of engaged, academic, and publicly accessible work that necessarily advances the project's overarching core mission to elucidate working-class histories. In that vein, the *WCH* podcast should absolutely be treated as a piece of alternatively delivered academic content.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at
https://networks.h-net.org/h-podcast

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