

## **GEO at UIUC Statement in Response to Richard Trumka's Statement on the Dakota Access Pipeline**

Last Thursday, September 15, 2016 AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka issued a statement: "The AFL-CIO calls on the Obama Administration to allow construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline to continue." (Entire statement can be accessed [here](#).) We, the Graduate Employees' Organization at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign—I.F.T./A.F.T. local 6300 AFL-CIO—are disappointed and appalled that the AFL-CIO's highest leadership would make such a statement. Our sense of justice and solidarity compel us to publicly voice our opposition to Trumka's statement. He does not speak for the entire AFL-CIO. He does not speak for us. We, the GEO-UIUC, stand in solidarity with Sacred Stone camp and the over 200 Indigenous Nations which have united to oppose construction of the DAPL.

Securing jobs with dignity is one front of class struggle. However, the extraction of fossil fuels, from Bakken oil in North Dakota to hydraulic fracturing or "fracking" in upstate New York, is leaving behind vast expanses of dead land and dead water around the globe. It is critical that we step outside our narrow interests and ask: Who will have jobs in a dead planet? In terms of fundamental needs, what is more important than clean water? As the land and water protectors of Sacred Stone camp say, "Water is Life".

We call on the Obama administration, the AFL-CIO leadership, and the entire labor movement to respect Native sovereignty and the right of communities to safeguard their basic necessities against corporate exploitation. Trumka argues that the DAPL must be allowed because it creates jobs. We do not dispute that it creates temporary jobs. However, job creation must be paired with justice, otherwise working-class struggle morphs into working-class complicity in continuing settler colonialism. The United States government, and the businesses which will profit from construction of the DAPL, do not have the right to disrespect Native Sovereignty with the construction of this shameful pipeline. Nor can they guarantee the safety of the pipeline as seen from numerous pipeline leaks and spills around the world causing incalculable damages to millions: Kalamazoo River oil spill (2010), Alberta oil spill (2015), Alabama pipeline leak (2016), to name just a few. The labor movement must stand in solidarity with Native struggle against extraction (and contamination) that disproportionately impacts the disenfranchised and the marginalized. We call on AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka to rescind his appalling statement, and to instead stand in solidarity with the Indigenous-led movement against construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline.