

Fighting Times

Organizing on the Front Lines of the Class War

Jon Melrod

Deeply personal, astutely political, *Fighting Times: Organizing on the Front Lines of the Class War* recounts the thirteen-year journey of Jonathan Melrod to harness working-class militancy and jump start a revolution on the shop floor of American Motors. Melrod faces termination, dodges the FBI, outwits collaborators in the UAW, and becomes the central figure in a lawsuit against the labor newsletter *Fighting Times*, as he strives to build a class-conscious workers' movement from the bottom up.

A radical to the core, Melrod was a key part of campus insurrection at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. He left campus for the factory in 1973, hired along with hundreds of youthful job seekers onto the mind-numbing assembly line. *Fighting Times* paints a portrait of these rebellious and alienated young hires, many of whom were Black Vietnam vets.

Containing dozens of archival photographs, *Fighting Times* captures the journey of a militant anti-racist revolutionary who rose to the highest elected ranks of his UAW local without compromising his politics or his dedication to building a class-conscious workers' movement. The book will arm and inspire a new generation of labor organizers with the skills and attitude to challenge the odds and fight the egregious abuses of the exploitative capitalist system.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born into the political and cultural quiescence of the 1950s, **Jon Melrod** grew up in apartheid-like Washington, DC. Active in the student movement that opposed the Vietnam War and a supporter of black liberation, Jon embraced the ideology that the working class held the power to radically transform society. He left the campus for the factory in 1973. For thirteen years, he immersed himself in the day-to-day struggles of Milwaukee's working class, both on the factory floor and in the political arena. Despite FBI surveillance and interference, Jon organized a militant rank-and-file caucus and rose through union ranks to a top leadership position in UAW Local 72. After a mass workforce cutback imposed by AMC's joint venture partner Renault, he left to attend Hastings college of the law in San Francisco in 1985. Graduating cum laude with a JD, he opened a law firm in San Francisco successfully representing hundreds of political refugees.

ACCOLADES

"An eloquent voice from the frontlines of the hard, bitter, exhilarating struggles for freedom and justice that have made the world a better place. And an inspiring guide for carrying the crucial struggle forward."

—Noam Chomsky

"In *Fighting Times*, Jon Melrod shares his personal experiences in historical context about his human rights battles against social injustices. Jon was an early supporter of the Black Panther Party and the struggle for black liberation. As you will read, he became a target of the FBI after landing on the Bureau's radar when he called the Chicago office to coordinate sales of *The Black Panther* community newspaper in Madison, WI. A must-read for all freedom-loving peoples."

—Emory Douglas, social justice artist and minister of culture for the Black Panther Party, 1967–1981

"An inspiring guide for carrying the crucial struggle forward." —NOAM CHOMSKY

FIGHTING TIMES

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the Front Lines
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JON MELROD

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