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LOVE THE WORK,

HATE THE JOB

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*Why America's Best Workers Are  
More Unhappy Than Ever*

David Kusnet

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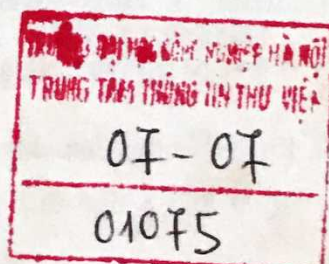
WHY AMERICA'S BEST WORKERS  
ARE MORE UNHAPPY THAN EVER

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## *Introduction*

# THE BATTLE OF SEATTLE

**W**hen all hell broke loose in downtown Seattle, Verlene Jones's first thought was, "I've got to save those children."

It was shortly after two in the afternoon on November 30, 1999, the first day of the World Trade Organization (WTO) meeting. Representatives from 135 countries were gathered to write the rules for the global economy. Tens of thousands of labor union members and environmental activists were holding teach-ins and marches to protest the global economy's excesses, from child labor to ruined rainforests. Meanwhile, thousands of thrill seekers and advocates of exotic causes of all kinds, from anarchy to abolishing modern technology, were getting ready to run wild in the streets.

Just a few minutes earlier, Jones had heard the windows shattering on the Bank of America building. Then, the alarms blared. Soon, a group of rock-throwing rioters pushed a Dumpster into the middle of the street and set it on fire with matches. As if in response, the police sirens started to wail.<sup>1</sup>

## STOPPING THE DISASTER MOVIE

Standing at the corner of Fourth Avenue and Pike Street in the heart of Seattle's downtown business district, Jones saw two menacing-looking armies—the police and the rioters—advancing on each other.



Running through the downtown area were groups of young people wearing all-black outfits with handkerchiefs or hoods covering their faces. They smashed windows and trashed businesses that were blamed for the excesses of globalization: multinational corporations such as the Bank of America and retail outlets like Nike and the Gap that sold products made by children overseas. They called themselves the "Black Bloc Anarchists," but Jones knew that underneath their costumes, most were white kids from middle-class families.

Marching west on Pike Street and north on Fourth Avenue, another army was advancing, also wearing black uniforms. Hundreds of Seattle police trooped toward the mayhem, wearing new equipment they'd gotten in anticipation of disturbances—black "hard gear," from ballistic helmets that covered their faces to shin guards like those worn by baseball catchers. Jones had been on enough protest marches to know that if the cops had all that riot gear, they would also be carrying pepper spray and tear gas canisters.

Across the street, and soon to be caught between the rioters and the riot police, were two women with three children who couldn't have been much older than seven or eight. The women were carrying signs that said, "Tell WTO, No Child Labor." But they didn't seem to realize that their own children were in danger. Instead, they watched with fascination as the anarchists ran wild and the police ran toward them. To get a better view, two of the children were standing on top of a small garbage can. "These women were looking around like it was a scene in a movie," Jones recalled years later. "They didn't realize it was a disaster movie, and they were about to become part of it."

The moment she saw the mothers and the children, Jones flashed on the worst thing that could happen. She had worried that "the police wouldn't stop and see young children there. They would just shoot tear gas at them." So she ran across the street and shouted at the women, "You've got to get those kids away from the corner now." As the mothers and the children ran away, Jones felt better than she would for the rest of the day.



Jones was wearing an orange cap that identified her as a marshal for the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations), which coordinated protests against the WTO by labor union members, environmentalists, students, and other activists from the Seattle area and all across the country. She could already see the first group of union people who were marching to rally at the Seattle Center, a fair-ground and park within the city. Their route would take them through the intersection where she was stationed, and her assignment was to make sure they turned south on Fourth Avenue. No one had figured that the corner would be a battleground between kids who thought they were Che Guevera and cops who were dressed like Darth Vader.

Soon there was "a mass bedlam of people running and not knowing where they were running to," as she described the scene years later. Union members, environmentalists, and others who had planned to protest peacefully arrived at Jones's corner unsure of where they should go. "People told stories of how it feels to be tear-gassed," she said. "They had a burning sensation in the back of their throats and in their eyes."

She told them to go ahead if they still wanted to go to the rally, but they should understand that they might be tear-gassed or caught between the rioters and the riot police. As she later remembered, members of industrial unions who had lost jobs to low-wage competition overseas, including the Teamsters, the Steelworkers, and the United Auto Workers, "were very passionate and committed to go that route," no matter what. If they wanted to go back to somewhere safer, she suggested ways that they could avoid the mayhem, and she and other union activists walked with them for a city block or two to make sure they had safe passage through the police lines.

All the while, she was thinking about one person in particular, her eighteen-year-old daughter, Kristin, who was in her first year in college. Suspecting that there might be disturbances, Jones had advised her to "go to the labor march to be safe." But Kristin