

What is a wage slave?

<https://www.whywork.org/about/faq/wageslave.html>

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So what exactly IS a wage slave, anyway? It's doubtful that you'd be exploring this web site if you didn't have *some* idea at least, but for the sake of ease, we'll clarify further.

Here are some brief and incomplete definitions from CLAWS members:
"Wage slavery is the state where you are unable to perceive choices and create courses of action different from the grind of the job."
"Wage slave: A wage earner whose livelihood is completely dependent on the wages earned."

The point here, of course, is that we don't have a single agreed-upon definition of wage slavery. Many of us prefer to focus on wage slavery as a state of mind, while others prefer to focus on the external aspects of wage slavery such as the wage economy. But overall, we seem to sense something rotten at the core of what we've been taught about "making a living", and that's the place to begin our questioning.

Have you ever noticed how many of us seem to live "lives of quiet desperation", as Henry David Thoreau puts it? We feel trapped by forces beyond our control, trapped in a mindless job, for the sake of money, status or recognition. We complain that we never seem to have the time for what's really important to us, because our jobs take so much energy and focus that we hardly have anything left over. We plod along day to day; sometimes we even dread getting out of bed in the morning.

We see the futility of the standard, socially approved path in America. It goes something like this: Go to school, get good grades, so you can get a "good" job, make lots of money, get a mortgage and a car and a spouse, keep up with the Joneses, and be "successful". We know it's not the path for us; we want to define success for ourselves. But we don't know how to forge a new path for ourselves, because, well, what would we do for money if we quit? How would we support ourselves? Sometimes there's a glazed look in our eyes; it's as if some part of us has died. We are just doing time, working hard and hoping for the next promotion, waiting for the day when we can throw off our shackles, quit our dull jobs, and finally live life. Everything gets put on hold until we have more time, or more money. Meanwhile, life is passing us by.

Perhaps you are one of these people. If so, CLAWS was created for your benefit. We have news for you: ***You do not have to live your life that way.*** CLAWS is here to inspire you to greater fulfillment, and to help you figure out how to get out of the endless cycle of living paycheck to paycheck and feeling chained to a job you don't care about.

We have other news, too: It won't necessarily be the easiest thing you've ever done. You have a choice, but you may have to re-examine your way of thinking very thoroughly. The pull of the socially accepted way of doing things is amazingly strong, and trips up the best of us despite our good intentions. It takes a certain kind of independent thinker to be "job-free". We use that term rather than "unemployed", in an effort to convey to people that we're proud, not ashamed, of not having regular jobs. We also make an important distinction between jobs and work. All of us do some kind of work, though not necessarily for monetary compensation.

Another thing you'll need if you decide to rethink your beliefs about jobs and money is the willingness to challenge conventional wisdom. It will take perseverance, and a commitment to throw out the limiting beliefs you may have unwittingly adopted. This is not the path for everyone. If your priority is comfort or social approval, or if you're the sort of person who doesn't rock the boat, CLAWS probably won't meet your needs.

If you embark on this path, it's important to know what it will ask of you. It may require you to disassemble, dissect, and tear apart your old beliefs, let go of some mighty persistent and tempting illusions, and build a new foundation for your thinking, sometimes from scratch. Are you prepared to do this? If so, you're in the right place.

Even if you have seen through the false sense of "security" a normal job offers you, and already questioned that approach to life, you may not really believe you can do it. You may still have questions about how to bridge the gap from the old way of life to a new one that you envision. That's where we can help, dear reader. CLAWS would like to see you devote yourself to the life you've dreamed of, the life your heart desires. We don't want to see you waste your precious days any longer. Life is short, and the time to pursue your dreams is NOW.

In the words of Norman Cousins: ***"Death is not the greatest loss in life. The greatest loss is what dies inside us while we live."***

"The debt and work cycle is an ingenious tool of subjugation. Make people think they need all these things, then they must have a job, and they give up control of their lives. It's as simple as that. We live in one of the most free countries in the world, but we fix it so we are not free at all." - Larry Roth

"Capitalism only supports certain kinds of groups, the nuclear family for example, or 'the people I know at my job', because such groups are already self-alienated & hooked into the Work/Consume/Die structure." - Hakim Bey

"Supposing we suddenly imagine a world in which nearly everybody is doing what they want. Then we don't need to be paid in order to work and the whole issue of how money circulates, how we get things done, suddenly alters." - Robert Theobald

"When survival or mere subsistence is at stake, a society can focus only on the overwhelming needs of the moment, and questions of meaningful work and leisure are considered purely academic. But we believe that the world has enough wealth to move all of humanity above survival and subsistence." - Alfonso Montuori & Isabella Conti, *From Power to Partnership: Creating the Future of Love, Work, and Community*