Why Chicago teachers should support the April 1 walkout

written by Lois Weiner | March 31, 2016

A new *Jacobin* piece by Micah Uetricht and Sarah Chambers is a must-read to understand what's at stake in the April 1 walkout of Chicago teachers. (My own thoughts about the political implications of the strike are in a piece in press.) But for now I want to explain to teachers who may be considering crossing the union's picket lines tomorrow why that would be a very big mistake for them personally. Frankly, I've been surprised by feedback from a self-identified progressive active in opt-out struggles that the CTU's "hard line" about expelling srike breakers is "garbage." The Chicago media have been encouraging "revolt" by teachers by promoting letters from individual teachers about why they find the strike unnecessary or even immoral.

Here's advice from a teacher educator who has also been on strike as a teacher. The way your colleagues will see your teaching when they are respecting the majority vote to strike is that you are collecting your wages (and avoiding fines or legal penalties) while they are forfeiting wages and risking penalties for the common good. Most of your colleagues, on whom you must rely for help and companionship, will regard your crossing the picket line a betrayal of trust, a refusal to join in a needed struggle to defend educational ideals that the school (system) does not support.

Regardless of your reasoning, your colleagues will NEVER forget. Even if you change schools, your reputation as a strikebreaker will follow you. Forever. Even if you become an administrator, the people you supervise (and perhaps your peers) will recall this act. Don't cross the line.