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Bio

BIO

As a postdoctoral research affiliate, I bring both blue-collar and white-collar perspectives to my role as a scholar of infrastructure. For seven years, I was a concrete laborer on large infrastructure projects with the Laborers' International Union of North America. Those years taught me social and environmental dimensions from the ground up. My fellow laborers wanted to work safely. However, though skilled, we often did not have the information to succeed without unnecessary hardship, for example, on a large highway project we could have worked on another task while a broken piece of equipment was repaired, however, neither the crew nor our supervisors had access to a task schedule to see that (there was a schedule, it was just permission that was missing). As a result, our supervisors forced us to continue work loading miles of heavy concrete barriers with a damaged loader. Our choices were to work, quit, or be fired; we were not the operator of the loader, we were the ground crew [2023 Edit: we should have called our Union]. Eventually, a two-ton barrier dropped and hit something that flipped it over where it came to rest just inches above my chest. My fellow workers celebrated my life. One cried in memory of a recent work fatality. We were told to get back to work. The futility of the situation has left a lasting impression.

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