



For Immediate Release

***City of Workers, City of Struggle
Opens at the Museum of the City of New York on May 1***

New Exhibition Examines How Labor Movements Transformed New York



ILGWU President David Dubinsky and Liberal Party leader Alex Rose rally voters for LBJ, RFK, and Hubert Humphrey, Seventh Avenue. Burton Berinsky, 1964. Courtesy Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation & Archives, Cornell University

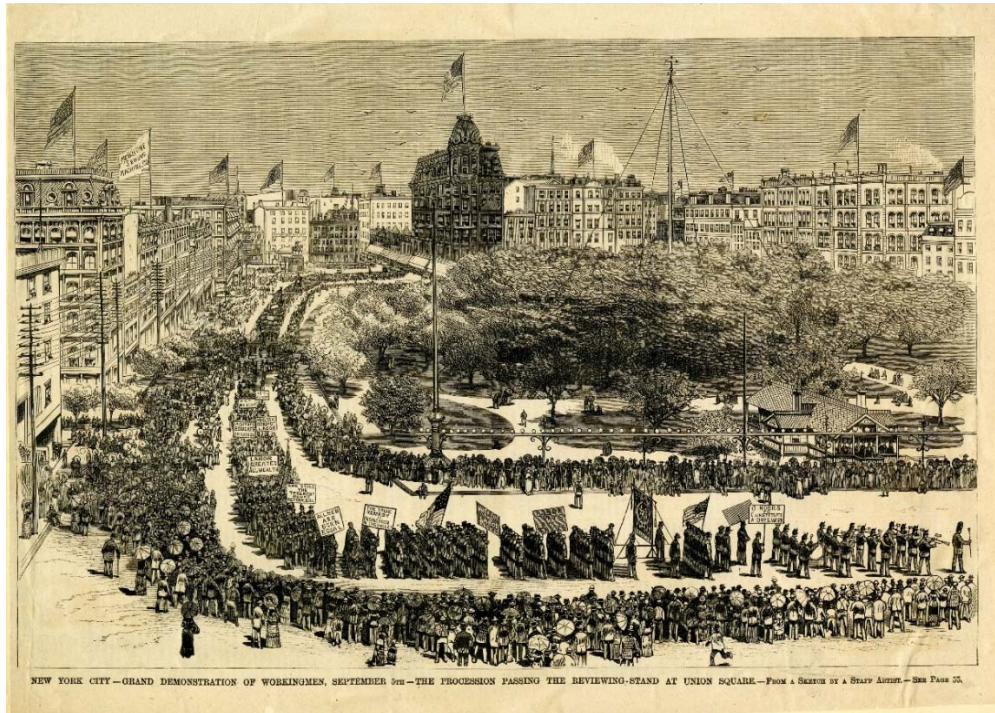
Press Preview

Tuesday, April 30, 2019 10am-12pm

(New York, NY, April 29, 2019) [City of Workers, City of Struggle: How Labor Movements Changed New York](#), opening at the Museum of the City of New York on May 1, will trace how New York became the most unionized large city in the United States. For more than two centuries, New York City has been an incubator and battleground of movements by and for working people and today, 24 percent of New York City workers are unionized, compared to the national average of 11 percent. This exhibition will examine the social, political, and economic

story of the diverse workers and movements in New York through rare documents, artifacts, photographs, archival film footage, and interactive features.

“You cannot understand the history of New York City without understanding the history of labor movements here,” said Whitney Donhauser, Ronay Menschel Director and President of the Museum of the City of New York. “Through this exhibition, visitors will learn how labor movements evolved over two centuries in New York, the current state of affairs for workers, and what the future may hold.”



New York City—Grand Demonstration of Workingmen, Sept 5th—The Procession Passing the Reviewing-stand at Union-Square. Published in Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, September 16, 1882. Wood engraving. Courtesy Private Collection

"Labor movements have been central to the rise of the city that we know today. It's exciting that ***City of Workers, City of Struggle*** explores New York's rich labor history, and also gives voice to contemporary labor activists and working people as they face the opportunities and challenges of a rapidly changing urban economy," said Steven H. Jaffe, curator of the exhibition.

City of Workers, City of Struggle will follow the progression of the labor movement by breaking the history into four segments and then looking toward the future. The exhibition begins with the section "In Union There is Strength," which documents the 19th century when there was a shift from the artisan to wage worker through the development of new patterns of work and employment, as well as new technology. This will be exemplified in the exhibition by an enormous wrench used to build the Brooklyn Bridge. It will also include an illustration of the day in 1882 when New York's Central Labor Union launched the nation's first Labor Day to underscore Labor's efforts to secure better pay, hours, and working conditions.

The exhibition moves on to the period of 1900–1965 with the section “Labor Will Rule,” looking at an era when New York’s unions gained monumental power. By 1950, New York City had about one million union members representing at least a quarter of the entire workforce. However, this power was not equally shared as female, African American, Latino, and Asian American New Yorkers still fought obstacles to their presence in union ranks and leadership.



Picketing ILGWU members outside Macy's department store urge shoppers not to buy Judy Bond blouses. Circa 1965. Courtesy Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation & Archives, Cornell University

“Sea Change,” the third section, focuses on the years between 1965 and 2001. Over the preceding decades, hundreds of thousands of new immigrants had joined African Americans from the South and Puerto Ricans in coming to New York to seek opportunity. The city’s fiscal crisis in 1975, and a growing anti-union mood in local and national politics, led to challenges for the movement to organize labor. These developments coincided with court and federal agency decisions that scaled back legal protections earlier won by organized labor. Together, they began a long weakening of unions’ economic and political power, as many New Yorkers worried about the costs of union contracts to the city and as the number of unionized workers declined nationwide. Between 1960 and 2000, New York City lost more than 650,000 manufacturing and port jobs as businesses automated or moved away in pursuit of lower wages and taxes, and fewer regulations.

By the 1970s, a new militancy fueled the activism of previously marginalized workers: women, African Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Asian Americans were challenging union establishments. As union membership declined in private industry, organizations of government employees and service workers (hospital, maintenance, security, clerical, and others) increasingly became engines of upward mobility for thousands of New Yorkers.

The last section, “New Challenges,” looks at how New York activists after 2001 continued to reshape the future of labor by broadening the agenda to confront issues ranging from racial profiling to sexual violence, LGBTQ equality, environmental safety, and citizenship status. Worker Centers and other new community organizations used foundation grants, legal action, and public pressure to help non-unionized and undocumented workers. In a changing economy, this “Alt Labor” or “New Labor” movement also mobilized people who worked as freelancers or in a succession of jobs.

Although New York remains the most unionized city in the United States today, current realities are challenging. Conflicting visions for the city’s future have sometimes pitted different groups of organized workers against each other. Yet local labor activists have also achieved important recent victories, including paid family leave, guaranteed sick leave, and a \$15 minimum wage.

The exhibition is organized by curator Steven H. Jaffe with the help of a distinguished panel of scholars.

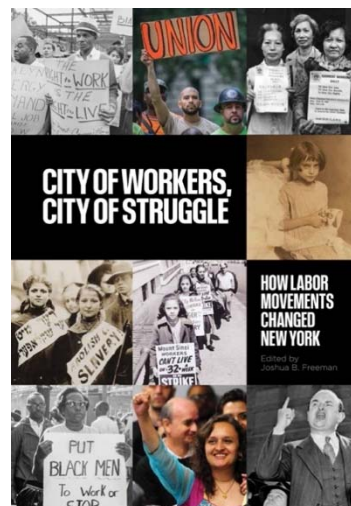
A companion publication takes a deeper dive into some of the topics touched in the exhibition. ***City Workers, City of Struggle*** features essays by leading historians of New York along with vivid depictions of work, daily life, and political struggle. Edited by Joshua B. Freeman, Distinguished Professor of History at Queens College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, it is published by Columbia University Press and is available for \$40 in the Museum shop.

City of Workers, City of Struggle is presented in collaboration with the Kheel Center at the School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell University and the Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives at NYU.

City of Workers, City of Struggle, its associated programs, and its companion publication are made possible through the generous support of The Puffin Foundation, Ltd.

Additional support for the exhibition’s companion publication is provided by Atran Foundation, Inc., and Furthermore: a program of the J. M. Kaplan Fund, and other generous donors.

Made Possible in part by The New Network Fund, supported by  JL Greene



Exhibition Committee

Governor David A. Paterson, Co-Chair

Patricia Smith, Co-Chair, Senior Counsel, National Employment Law Project Law Project; former New York State Commissioner of Labor

Vincent Alvarez, President, New York City Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO

Esta R. Bigler, Director, Labor and Employment Law Program, Cornell University ILR School

Marco Carrión, Commissioner, Mayor's Office of Community Affairs

Janella T. Hinds, UFT Vice President, Academic High schools, United Federation of Teachers

Ed Ott, Active in the Labor Movement for more than 50 years

Roberta Reardon, Commissioner, New York State Department of Labor

Lorelei Salas, Commissioner, New York City Department of Consumer and Worker Protection

Maritza Silva-Farrell, Executive Director, ALIGN: The Alliance for a Greater New York

Lara Skinner, Executive Director, The Worker Institute, Cornell University ILR School

Kathryn Wylde, President and CEO, Partnership for New York City

Scholarly Advisory Committee

Joshua B. Freeman, chair, Rachel Bernstein, Michelle Chen, Margaret Chin, Richard Greenwald,

Louis Hyman, Alice Kessler-Harris, Richard Lieberman, Stephen McFarland, Premilla Nadasen,

Kimberly Phillips-Fein, Christopher Rhomberg, Aldo Lauria Santiago, Robert W. Snyder, Michael

Spear and Clarence Taylor.

Public Programs

Uncovering the Lost Lives of Workers: The Archaeology of Labor

May 8, 6:30pm – 8:00pm

\$15 Admission | \$10 Members

The New York City we know today was profoundly shaped by workers. Not only did workers build and maintain the physical city, but their struggles over pay, power, and inclusion have made and remade the city many times over. Join archaeologists Dr. Meta Janowitz, Dr. Jean Howson, and Alanna Warner-Smith as they share their latest findings about New York City's working and living conditions. Moderated by Sharon Wilkins, Deputy Borough Historian of Manhattan.

Meet the Curators: Steven H. Jaffe

May 14, 4:00pm – 5:00pm

\$40 Admission | \$35 Members

Join Curator Steven H. Jaffe as he guides you through ***City of Workers, City of Struggle: How Labor Movements Changed New York***. Did you know that some of the nation's foremost labor leaders have been New Yorkers? Ask questions, give feedback, and learn something new with your fellow New Yorkers (or New Yorkers at heart) during this truly behind-the-scenes experience.

New Labor in New York and the Fight for Workers' Rights

May 22, 7:00pm – 8:30pm

\$20 Admission | \$10 Members

Join three of New York's most dynamic new labor activists, Bhairavi Desai of the New York Taxi Workers Alliance, Allison Julien of the National Domestic Workers Alliance, and Michelle Miller of Coworker.org, for a conversation about recent gains (and setbacks) in their movements to protect the workers who make this city run. Moderated by Ed Ott, former Executive Director of the New York City Central Labor Council.

Moonlight & Movies Series

\$15 General Admission

9 to 5

June 20, 8:00pm – 10:30pm

This classic 1980 feminist satire *9 to 5* still remains all too relevant in today's *#MeToo* America. Prior to the screening, Jessica Bennett will share her perspective as the first-ever gender editor for *The New York Times*, working to expand the newsroom's coverage of social issues and culture through the lens of gender.

En el Séptimo Día

July 16, 8:00pm – 10:15pm

En el Séptimo Día follows José, an undocumented bike delivery worker, over the course of seven days. Prior the screening, director Jim McKay and Make the Road New York's Mel Gonzalez sit down for a conversation about the contemporary immigration and labor issues that inspired the film.

Modern Times

August 21, 7:30pm – 9:30pm

Charlie Chaplin's timeless 1936 masterpiece, *Modern Times*, was the last outing for his iconic Little Tramp character, who stars as an inept factory worker caught up in the cogs and sprockets of modern industrialization. As one of the last great films of the silent era, *Modern Times* represents Chaplin's rejection of the forward march of modernization.

On the Waterfront

September 10, 7:00pm – 9:30pm

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Jennifer Egan introduces this outdoor screening of Elia Kazan's 1954 classic *On the Waterfront*. Egan's latest novel, historical noir thriller *Manhattan Beach*, navigates the crime-ridden underworld of New York City's shipyards in the 1940s.

Labor Day week union member discount

The Museum is offering a 50% discount on admission for union members who show any union card from Sunday, September 1st through Saturday, September 7th in honor of Labor Day week.

#CityofWorkers

About the Museum of the City of New York

The Museum of the City of New York fosters understanding of the distinctive nature of urban life in the world's most influential metropolis. It engages visitors by celebrating, documenting, and interpreting the city's past, present, and future. To connect with the Museum on social media, follow us on Instagram and Twitter at @MuseumofCityNY and visit our Facebook page at Facebook.com/MuseumofCityNY. For more information please visit www.mcny.org.

Press Contacts:

Mary Flanagan | 917-492-3480 | mflanagan@mcny.org

Sarah Jackson | 917-492-3483 | sjackson@mcny.org