### A Century of Labor History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) founded in Chicago, Illinois</td>
<td>A Union founded on the principles that all workers belong in “One Big Union;” the preamble to the IWW constitution begins: “The working class and the employing class have nothing in common.” The growth of the IWW was a direct result of its one-on-one organizing tactics.</td>
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<td>1909</td>
<td>“Uprising of the 20,000” and the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire</td>
<td>Thousands of female shirtwaist makers in New York strike for two months against sweatshop conditions. Two years later a factory fire kills nearly 150 workers, mostly young women, leading to the establishment of the New York Factory Investigating Commission to monitor factory conditions.</td>
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<td>1911</td>
<td>Bread and Roses strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts</td>
<td>Immigrant women begin a strike for better working conditions that ended with 23,000 men, women and children on strike and as many as 20,000 on the picket line.</td>
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<td>1912</td>
<td>Ludlow Massacre in Ludlow, Colorado</td>
<td>Wives and children of striking miners are set aflame when National Guardsmen attack their tent city during a strike against the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company; 13 women and children and seven men were killed. The President appointed a commission to investigate the massacre and labor conditions in the mine.</td>
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<td>1914</td>
<td>Joe Hill executed in Sugar House, Utah</td>
<td>This labor organizer was accused of murder and convicted on circumstantial evidence, a case that gained international attention. Supporters claimed that the “Copper Bosses” conspired to have him eliminated. After his execution, Joe Hill became a folk hero and labor martyr – a symbol of the quest for economic and social justice. One of his statements, “Don’t mourn, organize!” has become a labor rallying cry.</td>
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<td>1919</td>
<td>National wave of strikes</td>
<td>One of every five workers walked out in a great strike wave, including national clothing, coal and steel strikes, a general strike in Seattle, and a police strike in Boston.</td>
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<td>1925</td>
<td>A. Philip Randolph helps create the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters</td>
<td>The first union constituted of, and for, workers of color admitted to the American Federation of Labor (AFL).</td>
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<td>1926</td>
<td><strong>Railway Labor Act passed</strong></td>
<td>In the railway industry (later amended to include the airline industry), required employers to bargain collectively and prohibited discrimination against unions and workers who wanted to join a union; the Act also provided dispute resolution procedures.</td>
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<td>1935</td>
<td><strong>National Labor Relations Act (Wagner Act) passed</strong></td>
<td>“Labor’s bill of rights,” it gave most workers the right to organize and join labor unions, bargain collectively through representatives of their choosing, and to strike. It also forbade employers from interfering with workers exercising these rights and from refusing to bargain collectively and “in good faith.”</td>
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<td>1935</td>
<td>Social Security Act (SSA) passed</td>
<td>Provided the first social safety net for retired working people.</td>
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<td>1937</td>
<td>Auto Workers sit-down strike in Flint, Michigan</td>
<td>General Motors agreed to recognize the United Auto Workers as the bargaining agents for autoworkers, and to not discriminate against union members following a year of sit-down strikes</td>
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<td>1938</td>
<td>Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) passed</td>
<td>Created the first minimum wage ($0.25 at the time) and the 40-hour work week (with time and a half for hours worked over 40).</td>
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<td>1945-1946</td>
<td><strong>Post World War II wave of strikes</strong></td>
<td>3.5 million trade unionists in 1945 and 4.6 million in 1946 went on strike for higher wages, the most ever in U.S. labor history; affected industries included coal, auto, steel, electrical, maritime and packing.</td>
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<td>1947</td>
<td>Taft-Harley Act passed</td>
<td>Anti-labor act restricts union activities, makes it easier for employers to break strikes, prohibits secondary boycotts and closed shops, and led to several states passing “right-to-work” laws.</td>
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<td>1955</td>
<td>Merger of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO)</td>
<td>Unification of these two organizations brought together two distinct ideologies of organizing workers – industrial unionism and craft-based unionism – and created the largest labor organization in the country, the AFL-CIO.</td>
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<td>1963</td>
<td>March on Washington for Jobs and Justice</td>
<td>Over 250,000 people marched on the nation’s capital and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his “I have a dream…” speech.</td>
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<td>Civil Rights Act passed</td>
<td>Prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.</td>
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<td>1968</td>
<td>AFSCME sanitation workers strike in Memphis, Tennessee</td>
<td>An illegal strike by predominantly African-American men to gain recognition of their union; the strike brought together the Labor and Civil Rights movements with a common goal; Dr. King was assassinated while supporting the striking workers.</td>
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<td>1970</td>
<td>Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) passed</td>
<td>Established a federal government agency tasked with regulating and monitoring health and safety issues in the workplace.</td>
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<td>1975</td>
<td>AFSCME-represented state employees in Pennsylvania strike</td>
<td>In the first legal, large-scale strike by public employees, some 46,000 workers walked off the job in a fight for fair wages.</td>
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<td>1981</td>
<td>AFSCME members in San Jose, California strike for pay equity</td>
<td>Successful nine-day action was the first time workers had struck to demand pay equity; success was largely attributed to the local’s extensive internal education campaign.</td>
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<td>1981</td>
<td>Unsuccessful strike by members of PATCO (Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization)</td>
<td>Most of the nation’s air traffic controllers were fired by President Reagan who then decertified their union in response to an illegal strike; this was the onset of an era of attacks on public employees and union-busting by corporations.</td>
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<td>1990</td>
<td>Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) passed</td>
<td>Prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in employment, public services, public and private transportation, and public accommodations.</td>
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<td>1993</td>
<td>Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) passed</td>
<td>Provides minimal job protections for workers to take parental leave or to care for family members; despite this progress, the U.S. remains behind most of the industrialized world in these areas.</td>
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<td>1993</td>
<td>North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) passed</td>
<td>It allowed the exportation of American jobs on a previously unimagined scale; consequences included depression of wages in the U.S., increased unemployment, and further erosion of the middle class.</td>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>Protest of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Seattle, Washington</td>
<td>Thousands of trade unionists joined an estimated 50,000 to 100,000 activists in the streets of Seattle to protest WTO rules that, in today’s global economy, favor corporate rights over workers’ rights, health and safety, as well as social and environmental concerns.</td>
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<td>2003</td>
<td>Immigrant Workers Freedom Rides</td>
<td>More than 125,000 union and community supporters joined the nearly 1,000 immigrant workers who had crossed the country in an unprecedented effort to put immigration issues squarely on the national political agenda for 2004 and mobilize national support for changes in immigration policies.</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>Split in the AFL-CIO</td>
<td>Seven major national unions, representing six million workers, disaffiliate from the AFL-CIO and, in September, form a new coalition called &quot;Change to Win&quot;, devoted to organizing.</td>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>AFSCME’s 21st Century Initiative</td>
<td>Delegates attending the International Convention of this union approved key components of a sweeping, top-to-bottom strategic overhaul of this union by passing an ambitious reform agenda. Under the plan, this union committed to winning representation rights for 70,000 new workers per year.</td>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>Workers Rights Consortium</td>
<td>A non-profit organization created by students, labor rights experts, and workers from across the globe with participation from college and university administrators. The purpose of this organization is to enforce manufacturing codes of conduct adopted by colleges, universities, high schools, and school districts; these codes are designed to ensure that factories producing clothing and other goods bearing school logos respect the basic rights of workers, such as the freedom of association and overtime pay.</td>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>United Students Against Sweatshops</td>
<td>Ten years ago, students started organizing to confront sweatshop abuses in factories around the world where the clothes on their campuses were made. At the time, major clothing brands insisted that they had no responsibility for the working conditions at the factories and that the very locations of the factories were trade secrets. With the support of unions, NGOs, and other allies, this organization was formed and the fight against campus-sponsored abusive working conditions was firmly entrenched on college campuses across the country.</td>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>Labor plays leading role in historic Presidential and Congressional Election</td>
<td>Both labor federations vigorously members and voters to help elect the first African American to U. S. Presidency. They also helped Democrats regain control of the U. S. congress.</td>
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BOOKS

Histories


*At The River I Stand: Memphis, the 1968 Strike, and Martin Luther King* (1985), Joan Turner Beifuss


*Going Down Jericho Road: The Memphis Strike, Martin Luther King’s Last Campaign* (2007), by Michael Honey

*Hard Work: Remaking the American Labor Movement* (2004), by Rick Fantasia


*Labor in the USA: A History* (1984), by Ronald Filipelli

*Labor’s Untold Story* (1955), by Richard Boyer and Herbert Morais

*A People’s History of the United States: 1492-Present (Revised)* (1995), by Howard Zinn

*Power to the Public Worker* (1974), by Richard Billings and John Greenya

*A Social History of the Laboring Classes from Colonial Times to the Present* (1999), by Jacqueline Jones

*Strike!* revised (1997), by Jeremy Brecher

*Three Strikes: The Fighting Spirit of Labor’s Last Century* (2001), by Howard Zinn, Dana Frank and Robin Kelley


A Century of Labor History
Triangle: The Fire That Changed America (2004), by David Von Drehle


Wobblies: The Story of the IWW and Syndicalism in the United States, revised (1999), by Patrick Renshaw
Biographies

*A. Philip Randolph: A Biographical Portrait* (reprint, 1987), By Jervis Anderson


*The Fight In The Fields: Cesar Chavez and the Farmworkers Movement* (1998), by Susan Ferris, Ricardo Sandoval and Diana Hembree

*Harry Bridges: The Rise and Fall of Radical Labor in the United States* (1972), by Charles Larrowe

*Iron In Her Soul: Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and the American Left* (1995), by Helen Camp

*Jerry Wurf: Labor's Last Angry Man* (1982), by Joseph Goulden

*Joe Hill* (reprint, 1984), by Gibbs Smith


*Mother Jones: The Most Dangerous Woman In America* (2002), by Elliot Gorn


*Samuel Gompers and Organized Labor In America* (reprint, 1993), by Harold Livesay

MOVIES

**American Dream** (1991, 98 minutes): Academy Award winning documentary focusing on the 1984 Hormel Plant strike in Austin, MN; directed by Barbara Kopple

**At The River I Stand** (1994, 58 minutes): Documentary of the 1968 AFSCME sanitation workers’ strike in Memphis, TN, and the intersection of the civil rights and labor movements

**The Big One** (1998, 90 minutes): In search of an answer to the question: “When corporations are reaping record profits, why are workers being laid off?”; directed by Michael Moore

**Bound For Glory** (1976, 147 minutes): Bio-pic of Woody Guthrie, winner of Academy Awards for musical score and cinematography; David Carradine

A Century of Labor History
Bread And Roses (2000, 110 minutes): Drama, loosely based on a 1990 janitor’s strike in Century City, CA, the film tells the story of union efforts to organize office-cleaners in Los Angeles; Adrien Brody, Pilar Padilla

The Grapes Of Wrath (1939, 129 minutes): Excellent film version of John Steinbeck’s novel of the Great Depression, about Oklahoma migrants driven from their fields and ending up as agricultural workers in California; Henry Fonda, John Carradine

Harlan County, USA (1977, 103 minutes): Academy Award winning documentary of a bitter 1974 strike of coal miners in Harlan County, Kentucky; directed by Barbara Kopple, this film has been hailed as a landmark in the history of American documentaries

Harlan County War (2000, 104 minutes): Drama, based on the events depicted in Harlan County, USA; Holly Hunter

How Green Was My Valley (1941, 118 minutes): Drama, winner of five Academy Awards, classic film about a Welsh mining town; Walter Pidgeon, Maureen O’Hara

The Inheritance (1964, 55 minutes): Documentary providing an overview of U.S. labor history, emphasizing the dedication to social justice

Matewan (1987, 130 minutes): Drama, fact-based story of diverse miners in 1920’s West Virginia battling a powerful coal company and its hired army of gun thugs; directed by John Sayles

The Molly Maguires (1970, 123 minutes): Drama, based on the story of a secret society of militant Irish-American coal miners in Pennsylvania in the 1870s who used violent tactics to fight the oppression of coal company owners; Sean Connery, Richard Harris

Norma Rae (1979, 113 minutes): Drama, portrayal of a union organizing drive in a Southern textile mill, based on the true story of union activist Crystal Lee Sutton; Sally Field (who won the Academy Award for best actress)

Roger and Me (1989, 87 minutes): Devastatingly funny documentary of the closing of the General Motors plant in Flint, MI in the mid-1980s, and the impact on the city of losing 30,000 jobs; directed by Michael Moore

Salt of the Earth (1953, 94 minutes): Based on a strike of predominantly Mexican American zinc miners in New Mexico in 1950; most of the roles are played by the strikers and their family members; written and produced by filmmakers who were blacklisted at the time, the film is now included in the Library of Congress’s National Film Registry
Silkwood (1983, 128 minutes): Dramatization of the life of Karen Silkwood, a union activist in a plutonium processing plant who blew the whistle on unsafe practices at the company and who died under suspicious circumstances; Meryl Streep, Cher

10,000 Black Men Named George (2002, 112 minutes): Docudrama of the life of A. Philip Randolph and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; Andre Braugher

This Is What Democracy Looks Like (2000, 70 minutes): Documentary about the 1999 WTO protests in Seattle; narration by Susan Sarandon and Tim Robbins