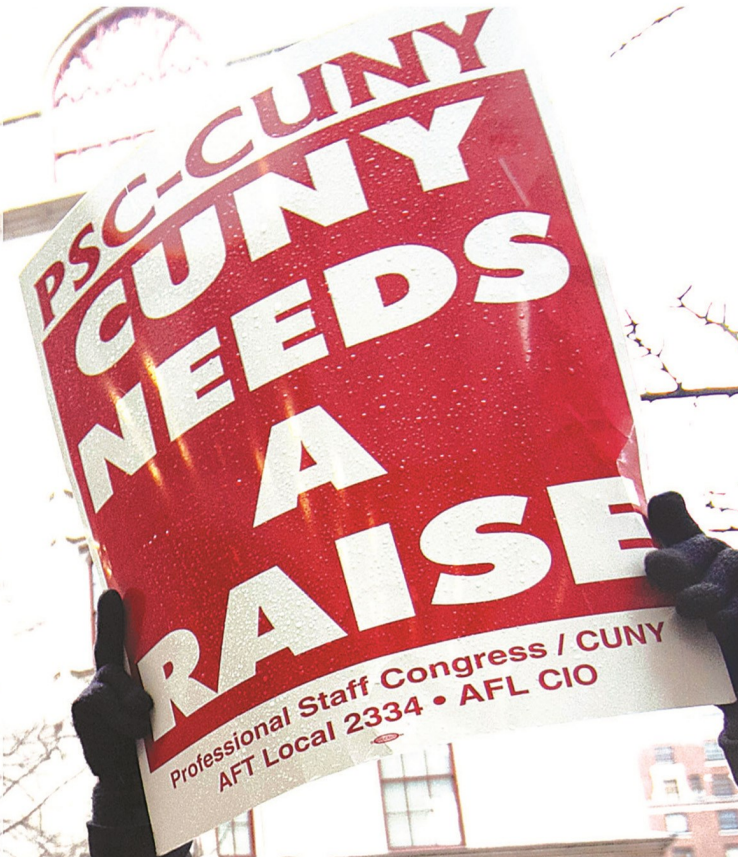


MAY DAY MARCH & RALLY TO END INCOME INEQUALITY

FRI., MAY 1

**PSC Marchers Meet Up
5 PM @ 62ND St. & Park Ave.**

**MARCH FOR
A FAIR PSC-CUNY CONTRACT
REAL JOBS, REAL WAGES &
REAL RIGHTS FOR ALL WORKERS**



PSC/CUNY

NYSUT

AFT LOCAL #2334

AFL-CIO

PROFESSIONAL STAFF CONGRESS | CUNY'S FACULTY & STAFF UNION | PSC-CUNY.ORG

History of May Day

May Day, the international workers' holiday, began in the U.S.A. Its roots go back to Chicago, in 1886.

After the Civil War, the nation's factories and mines were growing fast. They employed hundreds of thousands of new immigrants – German, Irish, Mexican, Chinese, and eastern Europeans – and tens of thousands of African Americans who had just won their freedom. Workers toiled 12, 14, and even 16 hours a day, for miserable wages and in dangerous conditions. During frighteningly long depressions, thousands of working-class families couldn't find work and often starved.

But business owners and the mainstream press blamed this widespread poverty on individual failure – and on the growing number of immigrant and black workers, who they claimed didn't share traditional "American values." Unions had to fight this tide of prejudice, racism and mindless worship of "free markets" as they organized workers.

The emerging labor movement united around a demand to shorten the working day to eight hours. One national labor organization called for a nationwide general strike on May 1st, 1886, if Congress did not act to establish an eight-hour day.

1886 was a year of strikes and militant labor action across the country. People called it "the Great Upheaval" – and Chicago was a center of protest. The city was home to a powerful anarchist movement that included Texas-born Albert Parsons, Lucy Parsons (who historians think had both African American and Mexican ancestors) and August Spies (a German immigrant). With thousands of other workers, they prepared to strike for the eight-hour day.

When May 1st dawned, 60,000 Chicago workers went out on strike. Two days later, with the strike gaining momentum, the Chicago police shot two strikers and wounded dozens more at the giant McCormick Reaper Works.

The anarchists organized a demonstration to protest the shootings, on May 4th in Chicago's Haymarket Square. As that rally neared its end, 200 police entered the square and demanded that the remaining protesters disperse. From the darkness someone (whose identity has never been determined) threw a dynamite bomb, killing one policeman and wounding 70 others.

In the chaos and hysteria that followed, the authorities smashed Chicago's labor movement. The Chicago police arrested anarchist leaders Albert Parsons

and August Spies and six others and charged them with murder – even though there was no real evidence against them. They were convicted anyway, and four of them, including Parsons, were hanged in Nov. 1887.

After 1886, workers and labor radicals around the world began celebrating May 1st as a day of international workingclass solidarity to demand the eight-hour day. In 1890, huge May Day demonstrations in the U.S., across Europe, and in Australia and Cuba demanded eight hours. The international labor movement denounced the frame-up of "the Haymarket martyrs" and demanded that those still in prison be freed. (They were pardoned by a pro-labor governor in 1893.)

American business leaders and the mainstream press wanted to distance the U.S. from May Day, because of its radical roots. With business support, in 1894 President Cleveland officially declared the first Monday in September as Labor Day.

Around the world, workers continued to celebrate May Day as International Workers Day. In the United States, especially after the Russian Revolution, this made-in-U.S.A. holiday was denounced as "un-American." Regular celebrations of May Day continued anyway, notably in New York's Union Square. But after the 1930s, the left in the labor movement came under sharper attack, and U.S. May Day celebrations grew smaller and smaller.

Today May Day is coming back to the country where it began. Millions of immigrant workers from Latin America, Asia and Africa have come to the United States, bringing their own experience in union struggles. They have always known that May Day is the workers' day.

As more immigrants join the U.S. working class and organize for their rights, immigration laws have increasingly been used to fire union members and break up union drives. In response, the labor movement started speaking out in support of immigrants' rights. In 1999 the AFL-CIO called for repealing the anti-immigrant law that makes work a crime. Instead, it called for legal status for the undocumented, reuniting immigrant families, and protecting organizing rights for everyone.

On May 1st, 2006, millions of immigrant workers poured into the streets in the Great American Boycott, walking off the job and marching against anti-immigrant legislation then being considered by Congress. Many unions supported this May Day protest, and others in the years that followed.

Today May Day belongs to us all. We march to demand equal labor rights and jobs for all. We march to carry forward the May Day tradition that began in 1886, and renew it for our new century.