



**Press Release**

**For Immediate Release**

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**Contact:**

Rabbi Michael Feinberg  
Executive Director  
Greater New York Labor-Religion Coalition  
125 Maiden Lane - 5th Floor  
New York, NY 10038  
[Labrelig@aol.com](mailto:Labrelig@aol.com)  
Phone: (212) 406- 2156 extension 4637  
Fax: (212) 349-4844  
Cellular Number: 917-392-1096

**Greater New York Labor-Religion Coalition – Labor Day 2014: Celebration and Reflection**



### ***Labor Day 2014: Celebration and Reflection***

As faith and labor leaders committed to the support of working men and women, we think it is fitting that we use the occasion of Labor Day 2014 to celebrate the American worker. We celebrate the resilience, creativity, commitment, and dedication of the working men and women who each day sustain the American economy, maintain the public infrastructure without which our economy cannot function, and provide for our collective safety and security. We give thanks to all the men and women who each day quietly and effectively contribute to our economic and social well-being.

We are, however, aware of continuing challenges faced by American workers:

- The national minimum wage remains too low to provide an income sufficient to meet basic needs. Our national leaders must recognize what certain municipalities and states have already recognized that a higher minimum wage is necessary for individuals and families to meet their basic needs. In addition, a higher minimum wage will help the overall economy as individuals and families will have more income to spend.
- Workers continue to need subsidized child-care that is dependable, safe and fosters the overall development of their children. We need to do more to insure that all workers have access to the health care that they need and our society has to insure that all workers have access to housing that is affordable across different income levels.
- We call particular attention to the challenges faced by persons of color whose unemployment rate remains too high and who continue to face obstacles in the workplace that they ought not to face. Similarly, we acknowledge the disparities in treatment accorded women and call upon our nation to address the continued problem of gender inequity in pay.
- We must recognize that it was organized labor that achieved many of the basic worker protections that we now take for granted and so we must help workers exercise their right to organize and bargain collectively. We need to restore the balance between management and labor so that workers have a greater voice in the workplace and have the opportunity to secure gains in wages commensurate with the productivity that they have achieved. In the public sector, we must see organized labor as an ally and not an enemy in sustaining a public work force that can meet the complex needs of modern municipalities.

It is with great pride that we see how workers in the fast-food sector are overcoming incredible odds to find a common voice in seeking higher wages, fairer work schedules, and real opportunities for advancement. In New York City, we have also seen the

remarkable achievement of workers in the car-wash industry fighting back against a long history of abuse and exploitation. Workers understand that they have common interests and that together they can secure their most basic rights to fair wages, dependable hours, and a safe workplace. All they ask is for us as a society to support them in their efforts and this is why faith and labor leaders join hands in solidarity with them.

The labor and faith communities are united in our common commitment to the protection and respect of human dignity, greater equity in society, and the realization of that justice without which there cannot be true and lasting peace. Let us all celebrate American workers this Labor Day and let us unite with them as they fight to secure their legitimate economic and social rights.