Content for this zine was drawn from, and inspired by, archival collections held in UCLA Library Special Collections. Created by students working in the Center for Primary Research and Training.

Image from Los Angeles Daily News Negatives, Collection 1387
This is Not the May Day you are looking for...

All we wanted was an eight-hour work day...

...But they wouldn't give it to us!

On Tuesday, May 4, 1886, workers gathered at Haymarket Square in Chicago to fight for an eight-hour work day and protest the killing of laborers by police. As the police tried to shut down the gathering, a bomb was thrown anonymously.

Seven officers and four civilians were killed while others remained injured. The incident resulted in the arrest of eight anarchists, seven of which were sentenced to death. The seven anarchists are often referred to as the Haymarket Martyrs.

An Affair To Remember

Portraits of Haymarket martyrs available on public domain; mitu macmillan/thom crain - snapshot.
International May Day, 1917.
A (very) partial list of labor collections held by UCLA Library Special Collections

Latin American Labor Movements collection of newspapers, 1892-1967 (Collection 1425)

A collection of newspapers published by Latin American labor movement.

Collection of Socialist and Labor Movement Pamphlets and Books, 1886-1962 (Collection 932)

2816 pamphlets and books on twentieth century socialist and labor movements around the world, with particular emphasis on communist, socialist, and collectivist political parties and organizations in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom, and United States of America.


Collection consists of correspondence, ephemera, and photographs relating to the Los Angeles labor movement and activities during the 1940s and 1950s.

California Institute of Technology Management Library Collection of Labor Union Contracts, 1940-1973 (Collection 1581)

Collection consists of collective bargaining agreements negotiated by various union local and companies, mostly in California, collected by Caltech's Industrial Relations Center.

Button from the Steve Louie Asian American Movement Collection (Collection 1805)

Woman and dog supporting the C.I.O. at a strike rally, Santa Monica, 1937, Los Angeles Daily News Negatives (Collection 1387)

Service Employees International Union, United Service Workers West records, ca. 1935-2008 (Collection 1940)

The collection documents the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Los Angeles Justice for Janitors campaign (c. 1986-2000), in which a low-wage workforce of largely Latino immigrants re-organized the Los Angeles commercial cleaning industry and organized janitors in surrounding counties as well.

Herbert Knott Sorrell Scrapbooks about Los Angeles and the Hollywood Strike, 1945-1947 (Collection 791)

Collection consists of scrapbooks, including clippings, photographs, a book, and ephemera concerning the Hollywood Studio Strike, 1946-47, compiled by H.K. Sorrell, labor union representative and president of the Conference of Studio Unions.

Thomas J. Mooney legal documents and papers, 1889-1947 (bulk 1916-1935) (Collection 224)

Collection of materials relating to the prosecution and eventual gubernatorial pardon of Thomas J. Mooney, a labor activist who was convicted of murder in relation to a bombing at the San Francisco Preparedness Day Parade on July 22, 1916.
The First May Day

We can look back through the dim years to 1886 and the great industrial city of Chicago. The eight-hour-day movement is on in full swing. It had been inaugurated by the newly-born "Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions," soon to become the American Federation of Labor. Chicago was the center of the movement, to be started with a giant strike on May 1st.

At the McCormick Harvester Works—big unit now of the International Harvester Trust—police brutally beat and maimed the strikers on Monday, May 3. The next evening a great crowd of workers gathered at Haymarket Square to protest this brutality.

Hysteria broke

In the resultant "red scare" hysteria, the first eight-hour movement was beaten. Eight labor men were railroaded to death or life imprisonment—the Haymarket martyrs. In a farcical trial, they were found guilty of having placed the bomb, without a scintilla of evidence being offered to prove such a contention.

The meeting went off peacefully. As it was drawing to its close, with the workers having left in large numbers, the police advanced suddenly to break up what was left of the meeting. As suddenly an explosion occurred. Sixty policemen were injured and seven were killed. The police, in a frenzy, fired wildly into the crowd, killing a great number of workers.

Through the years May Day grew—in America and elsewhere. The slogans of each demonstration—looking back through the years—reflect the struggles as they developed: for votes for women, for wider independent political expression, for protection of workers' children, for more playgrounds and schools, for peace and security.

By WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

Materials taken from Collection of socialist and labor movement pamphlets and books (Collection 932)
Let us continue to struggle together with white, Black, Mexican/Chicano and other minority workers to attain full unconditional working class heroic men and women—many of whom were sent to prisons and some even murdered in struggle.

POWER to the WORKERS

No one spoke of legality when black slaves were forced here to work the plantations, when Chinese were brought here to work on the railroad, when Japanese, Filipino, and Mexican immigrants were brought here to work in the fields. We don't hear the ruling class talk about how illegal it is for them to go around the world ripping off resources and cheap labor like they tried in Vietnam, and controlling and destroying the economy of these countries. Of course not! It's always the workers fault—the workers are illegal.

Successors to the Chinese and Japanese farm-workers of the past, and forerunners of the Mexican migrant workers of today, the Filipinos harvested mainly poverty and discrimination.

Their answer was to organize the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee, in 1965. And this time, at last, they succeeded. Six years later, AWOC made history when a thousand of its members triggered what was to become the Great Grape Strike of 1965. A week later, Cesar Chavez's National Farm Workers Association joined them; and shortly thereafter the two groups merged to form the United Farm Workers.

What We Want What We Believe

Black Panther Party Program

1. We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community.

2. We want full employment for our people.

3. We want an end to the robbery by the CAPITALIST of our Black Community.

4. We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings.

5. We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of black people.

6. We want a living wage, one that will permit us to live in decent housing.

7. We want an end to the war between black and white people.

8. We want full national power and freedom for the Black Community.

We must work together for a society in which all people work, no longer for their masters, but for their own needs.
Accessing Collections

UCLA Library Special Collections (LSC)

Library Special Collections materials including Performing Arts Special Collections, Center for Oral History Research Program, and University Archives material can be accessed in the Ahmanson-Murphy Reading Room on the A level of the Charles E. Young Research Library, Monday through Saturday from 10am to 5pm. Materials can be requested through our online request system Aeon at https://www.library.ucla.edu/special-collections/plan-visit.

Select digitized text and images can be found online at https://calisphere.org/.

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