Labor History Timeline

From the first factories to your apprenticeship

1800s

Dangerous factories, no rules

Workers - including children - labor 12-16 hours a day with no weekends, overtime, or safety laws. They begin to organize.

1886

The eight-hour-day movement

A national push for a limited workday leads to the Haymarket affair - remembered worldwide every May Day.

1886

American Federation of Labor

Early unions unite into the AFL, building a national voice for working people.

1935

The Wagner Act

The National Labor Relations Act makes it legal for workers to organize and bargain collectively.

1938

Fair Labor Standards Act

Creates the minimum wage and the 40-hour week and outlaws the worst child labor.

1963

March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom

Its full name says it all - it was about JOBS. Organized by labor leader A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin (not Dr. King), and powered by unions like the UAW, it demanded fair wages and economic justice. King's "I Have a Dream" speech was delivered here - but labor built the march.

1968

Memphis & "I AM A MAN"

Black sanitation workers strike for dignity and safety. Dr. King stands with them and gives his final speech.

Today

Your turn: apprenticeship

A union apprenticeship offers a debt-free path to the middle class. The movement's future is the next generation - you.