

May Day 2008

The International Longshore and Warehouse Union—the dockworkers—didn't move any cargo at any of the West Coast ports on May 1st, 2008, as a protest against the continuation of the Iraq War and the misallocation of resources resulting in domestic needs not being met. They marched under the motto "No Peace, No Work."⁶

May Day 2010

For May Day 2010, marches were being planned in many cities uniting immigrant and native workers including New York, San Francisco, Boston, Albany, Chicago and Los Angeles—most of whom protested against the racist Arizona Senate Bill 1070 which was one of the most strict anti-illegal immigration measure in recent U.S. history.⁷



Los Angeles MayDay 2010

May Day 2012

Occupy Wall Street called for a Worldwide General Strike for MayDay: May 1st, 2012.⁸

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- 6 Heyman, Jack. "Longshoremen to close ports on West Coast to protest war". *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 9, 2008.
- 7 Immigrant Solidarity Network. "May Day 2010" <http://www.immigrantsolidarity.org/MayDay2010/>
- 8 "Occupy May Day" <http://www.occupymay1st.org/>

A BRIEF HISTORY OF MAYDAY



Mayday is the single day celebrating the tradition of fervent struggle that won us an 8-hour workday. . In a society based on superfluous labor, we are all very replaceable. We can lose our jobs for any reason; landlords can evict us from our homes if it serves their pocket books; immigrant families are broken up by racist policies; or we could be arrested for simply being present at an event.

What Is May Day

May Day, otherwise known as International Workers Day, was the original Labor Day that even today most of the world celebrates. The word 'May' means “the first motion” which signifies *movement* of summer.¹ It is a day for taking action.

While the rest of the world were inspired to move towards making May Day a holiday, President Grover Cleveland was fearful; he thought commemorating it would not only spark more riots but strengthen the threatening movement. Therefore, he encouraged the annual September parade, which in 1894 became the federal holiday known as Labor Day!

May Day 1886

May 4th, 1886—four days after a demonstration resulted in the deaths of two strikers—a crowd met at Haymarket Square in Chicago.

The day was getting late and rainy when only 200 people remained. Then suddenly, roughly one hundred police officers rushed in and demanded the meeting to disperse. As Samuel Fielden was addressing the crowd, he replied: “This is a peaceful assembly.” There was an explosion that resulted in the deaths of 7 police officers and about 60 were wounded. The police responded by opening fire on demonstrators, resulting in the deaths of several demonstrators and police officers, largely from friendly fire.²

Albert Parsons, August Spies, Adolf Fischer and George Engel were hung. Louis Lingg—who later committed suicide—Samuel Fielden and Michael Schwab were sentenced to life in prison, while Oscar Neebe

received 15 years. “No greater travesty of 'justice' was ever staged than the trial of these men known as the Chicago Anarchists [or Haymarket Martyrs]. Perjured evidence, bribed jurymen, and police revenge combined to bring about their doom.”³ The Haymarket Martyrs were executed *not* for committing any of the crimes they were accused, but because they were Anarchists. John P. Atgeld, who later became Governor of Illinois, pardoned the remaining 3 martyrs after conducting research on the judicial proceedings, which ended in the loss of his political career.

May Day 2006

In 2006, May 1 was chosen by mostly Latina/o immigrant groups in the United States as the day for the Great American Boycott, a general strike of illegal immigrant workers and supporters to protest H.R. 4437—a draconian immigration reform legislation. Millions of immigrant families in the U.S. called for immigrants' rights, workers' rights and amnesty for undocumented workers.⁴

May Day 2007

The 2007 MacArthur Park Rallies on MayDay in Los Angeles were two May Day rallies demanding amnesty for illegal immigrants. When protesters began blocking the street, police ordered the crowd to disperse. Some people did but others began throwing plastic bottles and rocks at officers. The LAPD responded brutally with so-called non-lethal weapons. A 13 million dollar settlement was eventually paid to settle the ensuing lawsuits.⁵

¹ Aveni, Anthony. The Book of the Year: A Brief History of Our Seasonal Holidays. Mayday: A Collision of Forces. Page 79.

² Avrich, Paul. *The Haymarket Tragedy.*

³ Berkman, Alexander. What is Communist Anarchism?. Pp 64-65.

⁴ “March smaller, but festive” *Los Angeles Times*, May 2008.
<http://articles.latimes.com/2008/may/02/local/me-mayday2>

⁵ Watanabe, Teresa; Vara-Orta, Francisco. "Small turnout, big questions". *Los Angeles Times*. <http://articles.latimes.com/2007/may/02/local/me-march2>. 2007