

RISING TO THE MOMENT

FIGHTING BACK, FIGHTING FORWARD

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2017

Marriott Marquis • Washington, D.C.

6:30PM

Reception

7:15PM

Songrise

WELCOME

Cecilia Estolano

NELP Board of Directors

RISING TO THE MOMENT

Christine Owens

NELP Executive Director

AWARDS PRESENTATION

MINNEAPOLIS \$15 MINIMUM WAGE CAMPAIGN

Presented by Laura Huizar, Staff Attorney, and
Tsedeye Gebreselassie, Senior Staff Attorney

WORKERS DEFENSE PROJECT

Presented by Raj Nayak,
NELP Deputy Director

TERESA TRITCH

2017 Beth Shulman Fellow

Presented by Catherine Ruckelshaus,
NELP General Co-Counsel

CLOSING REMARKS

Christine Owens

NELP Executive Director

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Richard Trumka

President, AFL-CIO

Lee Saunders

President, AFSCME

Vanita Gupta

President and CEO,
The Leadership Conference
on Civil and Human Rights

Mary Kay Henry

President, SEIU

Marielena Hincapié

Executive Director, National
Immigration Law Center

MESSAGE FROM SEN. PATTY MURRAY

Thank you all for being here and supporting NELP. I am so proud to stand by your side in the fight for fairness and economic security for all our workers. When President Trump nominated anti-worker corporate CEO Andrew Puzder as Secretary of Labor, NELP helped mobilize millions of people to push back and make it clear that workers deserved much better. NELP has continued to hold the Trump Administration accountable each and every time it tries to take workers backward—and has also helped lay out a clear vision for the progress our country should be making when it comes to



workers' rights, safety, and financial security, by leading the fight to raise the federal minimum wage and update the overtime rules, just to give a few examples. These and other steps will mean more money in families' bank accounts and will help us build a fairer economy and a stronger middle class for all families. Thank you to everyone at NELP for all you do.

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CHRISTINE L. OWENS
Executive Director

Friends,

Roughly a year ago, we gathered together as a community just one week after the 2016 presidential election. At a moment of great unease and uncertainty, an evening of warm camaraderie allowed us to celebrate amazing allies and partners who had advanced workers' rights after years, sometimes decades, of fighting—and reminded us of the special bond, and power, our movement has.

Now, we know how real and dangerous the threats to economic and social justice are. Our adversaries have become stronger, our battles hold more weight, and each day brings new challenges affecting millions of working people and families across the country.

Yet, even at a time when despair could be the default, we are far from hopeless—and we need look no farther than this room of friends and supporters for encouragement. Throughout the year, we have fought alongside you, in legislative chambers, in the courts, and in the streets—gaining both strength and inspiration along the way.

Tonight we honor an organization, a campaign and a journalist who have resisted the call to turn back the clock on workers' rights—and whose contributions have elevated workers and their interests in these extraordinarily challenging times.

- **Workers Defense Project | Proyecto Defensa Laboral**, which resolutely defended and advocated for immigrant workers, and represented workers in securing disaster relief after Hurricane Harvey;
- **Minneapolis \$15 Minimum Wage Campaign**, which tirelessly fought for years to make Minneapolis the first Midwestern city to enact a \$15 minimum wage; and
- **Teresa Tritch, former member of the *New York Times* editorial board, and NELP's 2017 Beth Shulman Fellow**, whose eloquent journalism illuminated workers' struggles for millions of readers and pointed to solutions for those too often left out and left behind.

Together, we will continue the fight—through organizing, advocacy, and fierce determination—to build from our yesterdays to create a better, stronger, and fairer tomorrow for all of America's workers. We thank you for your abiding support, encouragement, and partnership. Like you, NELP will not rest until work provides dignity, opportunity, and economic security to all workers.

Thank you for rising to the moment with us.

In solidarity and gratitude,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christine L. Owens".

Christine L. Owens
Executive Director



JOSE P. GARZA
Executive Director

WORKERS DEFENSE PROJECT

Low-wage workers face incredible challenges under the Trump administration and the 115th Congress, from rollbacks of crucial health and safety and overtime protections, to efforts to pass legislation that leaves contract workers out to dry. Meanwhile, the president's anti-immigrant policies and inflammatory rhetoric embolden those who would harm America's immigrant workers, who already are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse on the job.

It's in this environment that Workers Defense Project (WDP) has played a leadership role in defending Texas workers from both national and state-level attacks. Since its founding in 2002, WDP has boldly fought for low-wage workers, educating thousands of people on their employment rights, providing leadership training and English-language classes to immigrant workers, and helping to win significant local and statewide policy reforms, including stronger health and safety standards, protections against wage theft, and improved enforcement.

Under the leadership of Executive Director Jose Garza, WDP has played a particularly vital role this year in protecting the rights of immigrant workers in Texas, joining with workers and other advocacy groups in the fight against Texas Senate Bill 4, and educating immigrant workers about their rights on the job.

Amidst these political attacks, Texans were also hit with one of the worst hurricanes the state has ever seen. In the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, WDP set to work protecting Houston's largely immigrant construction workers, who are tasked with cleaning up the damage, from wage theft and other abuse on the job. Organizers hit the ground running, traversing hundreds of miles throughout the city to speak face-to-face with day laborers, so that WDP could learn how best to advocate for them.



Workers Defense Project
Proyecto Defensa Laboral

NELP commends Mr. Garza and Workers Defense Project for their steadfast advocacy and support for low-wage and immigrant workers during these trying times.

MINNEAPOLIS \$15 MINIMUM WAGE CAMPAIGN

In June 2017, Minneapolis became the first city in the Midwest to adopt a \$15 minimum wage—a landmark victory for both the city and the broader “Fight for \$15” movement.

The Minneapolis City Council’s unanimous approval of \$15 is testament to the strength of the grassroots movement behind the victory, led by a coalition of organizations empowering workers in the Twin Cities. For years, this movement has been a constant presence both in city council meetings and on the streets.

In September 2014, Minneapolis fast food workers walked out on strike, demanding \$15 and a union. Over the next three years, a strong coalition of workers and community organizations engaged the broader Twin Cities community and its leaders in a conversation about the needs of low-wage workers, many of whom are women and people of color. The coalition conducted multiple strikes and marches fighting for a fair wage, won two of the nation’s strongest “Earned Sick and Safe Time” policies in Minneapolis and St. Paul, and ultimately made the Twin Cities national leaders in the fight for higher wages and a better life for workers.



CENTRO DE TRABAJADORES UNIDOS EN LUCHA (Photo: Fibonacci Blue)

NELP applauds the Minneapolis \$15 Minimum Wage Campaign, including Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en Lucha (CTUL), \$15 Now, and the visionary workers who have fought for greater rights and opportunities for low-wage workers. The impact of this victory stretches well beyond Minnesota, giving new strength and momentum to the Fight for \$15 movement nationwide.



BETH SHULMAN

(1950–2010)

Beth Shulman left a legacy of warmth, wit and wisdom that continues to inspire and guide NELP's work. Through her many contributions as a writer and workers' rights advocate, Beth elevated the causes and values she cherished: that all work has dignity and that all of America's workers should be able to achieve economic opportunity and security through their labor.

Over a career that spanned more than 30 years, Beth exposed and fought the barriers that prevent workers from achieving the American Dream. In her 2003 book, *The Betrayal of Work: How Low Wage Jobs Fail 30 Million Americans*, she revealed a troubling cycle of workplace exploitation and outlined strategies to ensure that work supports families and strengthens communities. *Good Jobs America: Making Work Better for Everyone*, the book she was co-authoring with Professor Paul Osterman at the time of her death, was the next installment—the blueprint for converting low wage jobs into good jobs.

Beth's own life's work hewed to a course designed to realize her vision of work and its rewards more broadly. Beginning her career as a civil and employment rights lawyer, Beth ultimately became one of the first women named Vice President of a major international union, the United Food and Commercial Workers Union. Later, she divided her time between writing and lecturing, serving on boards of numerous economic justice organizations and advising major campaigns. In these roles, Beth helped secure victories in minimum wage ballot initiatives across the country and put the issue of paid leave on the map with efforts at the state and federal level.

As an author of national renown, Beth advocated for policy and labor law reforms, such as the Employee Free Choice Act and a modernized unemployment insurance system, which would shore up work as the vehicle for delivering economic security to all America's workers.

NELP created the Beth Shulman Fellowship to recognize those who, like Beth, are committed to ending inequality and racism and building worker power. And she would have agreed wholeheartedly with our selection of Teresa Tritch as NELP's 2017 Beth Shulman Fellow.



TERESA TRITCH

“During her years on The New York Times editorial board, Teresa Tritch’s writings elevated the everyday struggles of working people and educated the public and policymakers alike about why strong labor standards for all of America’s workers are essential building blocks of family economic security.”

—Lynn Rhinehart, General Counsel, AFL-CIO

The fight for economic opportunity and workplace rights has no more valuable allies than writers who bring to life the everyday struggles of working people and make the case for changes needed to create good jobs for all of America’s workers. On this score, workers and their advocates have had an unequalled champion in Teresa Tritch, who recently left her position as a member of *The New York Times* editorial board.

Starting in 2004, Tritch used her platform at the nation’s flagship newspaper to shine a spotlight on economic inequality and bring a stronger focus on workers’ interests to the paper’s editorial pages. Through the opinion pieces she penned and under her own byline on her *NYT* opinion blog, *Taking Note*, Tritch gave voice to the millions of working people our economy and politics leave behind.

An early proponent of a \$15 minimum wage and workers’ organizing rights, Tritch has been an invaluable ally to the Fight for \$15 movement, writing editorials on the impact of underpaid work and the need for significant policy reform to end working poverty. Earlier, she followed and wrote about the case of Evelyn Coke, a home care worker who challenged the Labor Department rule denying minimum wage and overtime protections to these low-wage workers. Tritch’s commentary on behalf of this excluded workforce helped lay the foundation for the Labor Department’s 2014 rule, extending basic federal pay protections to these women whose work makes work possible for the rest of us.

In these and other areas, Tritch used her platform actively and persistently to advance the dialogue on economic wrongs and the crucial changes needed to rebalance the economy. Like Beth Shulman—in whose memory NELP bestows this award and whose book, *The Betrayal of Work*, similarly chronicles the struggles of working people cheated of the basic right to dignity, opportunity, and security through their labor—Tritch has used her gifts as a writer and a journalist to give voice to those without a voice and to make the case that all work has value and all working people should be valued.

Teresa Tritch’s compassion, commitment, and tireless advocacy embody all that Beth Shulman worked for and fought for throughout her life and career. Tonight, we express our gratitude to Tritch for her years of boldly and beautifully lifting the voices of America’s working people. NELP is honored to recognize her as our 2017 Beth Shulman Fellow.

For 48 years, NELP has sought to ensure that all who work in our nation or aspire to do so will achieve and sustain economic security, opportunity, and prosperity through their labor.

RISING TO THE MOMENT

FIGHTING BACK, FIGHTING FORWARD

JUST ENFORCEMENT

NELP is testing new models of public-private wage standards enforcement to strengthen economic security and improve economic outcomes for low-wage workers.

HOMECARE

NELP is fighting back against threats to homecare workers arising from attacks on Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act, while developing tools for state partners to successfully implement previously won homecare worker protections.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

NELP is elevating the challenges workers face in numerous industries, exposing the realities and nuances of worker exploitation and telling the story of how workers are fighting back.

RESPONSIBLE SUB-CONTRACTING

NELP is developing research, policies, and tools to ensure companies contract out responsibly and stop low-road outsourcing.

MINIMUM WAGE/LIVING WAGE

NELP is fighting for wages that families can live on. Since the launch of Fight for \$15 in 2012, 19 million workers have won \$62 billion in raises, building momentum for a higher federal wage floor.

HEALTH & SAFETY

NELP is fighting back against proposed rollbacks of federal worker safety protections, and fighting forward to advance state-level reforms and rebuild strong workers compensation programs for injured workers.



ADVOCACY

NELP is tirelessly fighting federal rollbacks of hard-won labor, health and safety, and employee benefits protections for workers and families, while pushing to advance policies that build a better economy for all.

FAIR CHANCE EMPLOYMENT

NELP continues to build momentum to expand opportunities to work for people with past convictions. Thirty percent of the U.S. population now lives in a jurisdiction with a fair chance law.

UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE

NELP developed and distributed essential resources for those affected by the devastating natural disasters in 2017, reaching hundreds of thousands of workers in Texas, Florida, Georgia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

IMMIGRANT RIGHTS

With increased scrutiny of and attacks on immigrants, NELP developed and distributed an employer guide to educate business and workers alike about what to do when ICE comes knocking. The guide was translated into Spanish, Thai, Chinese, and Korean.

RESEARCH

NELP produced groundbreaking research and noteworthy publications on unionization in the home care workforce; the harmful effects of big banks' aggressive sales quotas on both customers and employees; the service sector's opportunity to produce good jobs; workers' rights in the the gig economy; and more.

WORKERS CENTERS

NELP is strengthening workers center capacity through technical assistance, education, and sharing knowledge and best practices in order to build worker power.

More information on each of these campaigns can be found on www.nelp.org.



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