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## Steelworkers massacre recalled at memorial



**still from newsreel footage of Memorial Day Massacre**

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CHICAGO | The 1937 Memorial Day Massacre of union pickets continues to have meaning for today's labor movement.

The United Steelworkers of America, along with steelworkers retiree groups ReUNION and SOAR, organized a tribute to the massacre victims Sunday at Memorial Hall, 11731 S. Avenue O. Hundreds attended the Memorial Day Remembrance.

The union hall is near the spot where 10 people attempting to picket Republic Steel were killed or later died after being struck by gunfire from Chicago police.

The Rev. Zaki Zaki told the crowd during his invocation that the massacred workers are beckoning them to come together in solidarity to make the steelworkers the strongest possible organization.

Molly West, who was at the scene of the massacre, said she was there "doing what had to be done," which was sticking up for workers.

Keynote speaker Lynn Williams, president of SOAR and former president of the USWA, said he is trying to make sure the sacrifices of the massacre victims weren't in vain. He said so much is owed to the generation of workers in the 1930s who fought to unionize.

They created a "new idea of industrial unionization," Williams said.

He described the changes as almost "revolutionary" and said it wasn't until the 1940s and 1950s that steelworkers moved from poverty to a decent standard of living.

Williams said it's time for the workers to move beyond the 1930s vision of unionization because the world has moved on. He said the challenge is determining how to move forward.

The labor challenges in the United States today are frightening, Williams said. He said a recent strike in California was called off when workers caved in to lower wages because Wal-Mart was coming to town.

"We raise our kids to believe in democracy and send them off to work in a situation where the employer is an autocrat," Williams said. "It's time we had a struggle for economic democracy."

ReUNION Director Ike Gittlen said the principle that everyone in this country deserves a piece of wealth no longer exists.

"I'm asking you to pursue the values that those guys did for us out on that grassy lot," Gittlen said of the victims.

The Rev. Jesse Jackson Sr. said exporting American jobs and importing cheap labor and cheap products is a painful and legal reality.

Jackson is advocating street protests to send a message to politicians that labor needs their support. He said the country has been sidetracked with issues such as school prayer, display of the Ten Commandments and gay marriage. Jackson said labor has been shut out by politicians who have appointed anti-labor judges.

"We must fight for workers' right to organize. You're either with it or against it," Jackson said.

Tom Hargrove, president of USWA Local 1010, urged everyone to realize what happened in 1937 could happen again.

Hargrove said he was in Miami during the protest against the Free Trade Area of the Americas in 2003. Officials created what amounted to a "police state" that could have quickly turned into a bloody riot at any time, he said



Molly West, CWA Local 14408/Chicago Typographical Local 16, receiving Recognition Award. Molly participated in the Memorial Day Rally at Republic Steel in 1937.



Plaque in flag pole base in front on USWA Local 1033 Union Hall, 11731 S. Avenue "O", Chicago

## Marchers for Working Men's Rights

1936, Christmas Eve morning, coal stove heat,  
and warmth that stays with you, a feeling growing along side,  
a wanting for wages to live by.  
A family well fed and clothed,  
with shoes that leave shoe prints in the snow,  
not a child's' toes.

Wanting, now becomes a desire  
in the form of a union, to help,  
guide and protect the rights that  
a working man truly deserves.  
What would it be like if one day  
management and workers were able to work together,  
without a worker losing a leg, fingers or his life and  
allowed self respect.

1937, a hot spring summer day,  
blessed with sunshine.  
Men and families gathering, as  
if getting together for a community picnic.  
Storm clouds marching forward,  
blocking the beauty of the sun,  
with red and blue flashes of hate.

A man made eclipse, by men  
that were hired to destroy another  
man's dreams and desires that were  
rightly theirs--The forming of  
a Union, to represent and protect  
the working man's rights.

Men and children fell, some  
got up, others dragged to safety  
or to a hospital, if they were  
not blocked by the storm clouds,  
spitting red and blue flashes  
of hate.  
Others left lying on the ground,  
for their last community picnic,  
martyrs for Working Men's Rights.

Steve Castro USWA  
Local 65 Ironworkers  
Local 1