

THE NEW ENGLAND
JEWISH LABOR COMMITTEE

21st Annual

LABOR SEDER
PASSOVER HAGGADAH

March 2021



Welcome

Welcome to the New England Jewish Labor Committee's 21st Labor Seder. We hope that our gathering this year once again reminds us that liberation from oppression requires our continued faith, perseverance, and commitment to a just society. If it could happen for the Israelites under slavery to a cruel Pharaoh, it can happen for us today.

This year, for a second year, we miss sharing the bitter herbs and the sweet charoset together. We miss connecting to friends and to strangers. We miss the remarkable gathering of workers, union leaders, Jewish leaders and elected officials that is the unique domain of the Labor Seder.

One thing we will miss this year is singing everyone's favorite song from the seder, *Dayenu*. "Da-da-yenu" we sing. *Dayenu* is a Hebrew word meaning "that would have been sufficient."

In a year when so many have lost jobs, when so many many lives have been lost, when we have adjusted to lockdowns, shut-downs, shut-ins, and burnout, in a year of recognition of a growing inequality in this country, what could we possibly say has been sufficient?

Like the song itself, we stop to acknowledge the vitality of our movement and the spiritual courage and emotional fortitude we have brought to this fraught moment.

Truly, we have a great deal to be grateful for.

At the Jewish Labor Committee, the moment that we decided last March to cancel our annual in-person Labor Seder, we began finding ways to help people who had already lost their jobs. We pressured grocery chains who were not adequately protecting their workers from the virus. We helped raise funds for hotel housekeepers, 90% whose union members lost jobs due to the pandemic. We supported our allies in the Raise Up Coalition.



continued

When we gather for this year's labor Seder, we lift up the workers, the unions, the leaders across our region who struggled and endured and will emerge from this unprecedented economic crisis to make a healthier, more equitable and just workplace.

We are grateful for our honorees, Merrie Najimy and Jerry Rubin, for their visionary and powerful leadership to address the crisis here in Massachusetts. *Dayenu.*

We are grateful for the President of the National Jewish Labor Committee, Stuart Applebaum, for his pivotal role in bringing national attention to the plight of Amazon workers in their struggle to form a union and giving them the full support of unions across the country. *Dayenu.*

We are grateful for President Biden and Vice President Harris for their firm and vocal commitment to labor rights. *Dayenu.*

And we congratulate the Mayor of Boston who is assuming the post of Secretary of Labor. *Dayenu.*

Are we satisfied? Is this enough? No. But we have come a long way from the frightening illness and death and from the dire political circumstances of March 2020. *Dayenu.*

In solidarity,

Rabbi Barbara Penzner, Ashley Adams
Co-chairs of the New England Jewish Labor Committee





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**LABOR
SEDER**

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The mission of the New England Jewish Labor Committee is to engage the Jewish community in support of issues affecting working people, and engage the labor community in issues that affect Jews and the Jewish community. We are the New England Chapter of the Jewish Labor Committee, a non-profit charitable entity with a home office in New York City.

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2021 HONOREES



Jerry Rubin

President and CEO, Jewish Vocational Service

“Jerry Rubin and JVS are changing the lives and improving the livelihoods of thousands of working people.”

— Don Siegel, Board Member of New England Jewish Labor Committee

Jerry Rubin is President and Chief Executive Officer of JVS. He is responsible for the overall direction and management of the organization, and leads its Leadership Team.

Prior to joining JVS, Jerry was Vice President of Building Economic Opportunities at Jobs For the Future, a national workforce development and education policy, research, and consulting organization. Jerry founded and was Executive Director of two non-profit organizations: the Greater Boston Manufacturing Partnership, a training and consulting organization, and the Coalition For a Better Acre, a community development corporation based in Lowell, Massachusetts. Jerry also spent ten years in the administration of Boston Mayor Raymond L. Flynn, leading several housing, economic development and workforce development initiatives.

Jerry holds a B.A. in Government from Clark University and an M.A. in City Planning from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He is the author of numerous book chapters, articles, and monographs on housing, economic development and workforce development issues. Jerry is a board member of the Economic Empowerment Trust Fund of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the Hyde Square Task Force, and MIRA. Jerry is also a member of the 2019 Class of Barr Fellows.



2021 HONOREES

Merrie Najimy

President, Massachusetts Teachers Association



“Merrie Najimy is both an inspiring leader of staff and members of the MTA, as well as an extremely powerful champion of progressives everywhere.”

— Ashley Adams, Co-Chair of the New England Jewish Labor Committee

Merrie Najimy, president of the 117,000-member Massachusetts Teachers Association, is an ardent advocate for public education whose principles are grounded in her nearly three decades as a classroom teacher.

Najimy was elected to a second term as MTA president in May of 2020. She is on leave from the Concord Public Schools, where she has been an elementary school teacher for more than two decades. She served as president of the Concord Teachers Association for 11 years and as a member of the MTA Board of Directors for six years before becoming MTA president.

Najimy is a longtime union activist. As CTA president, she brought open bargaining — a transparent approach to winning contract campaigns that is based on a broad vision for education and encourages member participation at every step — to her local. She then introduced the concept to other locals through meetings involving members from throughout the state.

Najimy strongly advocates for full funding of public schools, colleges and universities. She believes that public education is foundational to democracy. The impact of reduced funding comes in many different forms and affects educators and students at every level, she says. It can be seen in a general lack of resources for students, the reduction or elimination of vital services, limited or unequal pay for



continued

educators, unsettled contracts, staff cuts, work intensification and increased health insurance costs. In her role as president, Najimy has led the union in the effort to win the schools and colleges our communities deserve.

A graduate of Berkshire Community College and Framingham State University, Najimy has a deep appreciation for accessible public higher education. She points to the contrast between her college years, when her father's teaching salary allowed her to graduate debt-free from the state university system, to circumstances today that often leave students deeply in debt upon graduation.

Najimy says her own childhood sensitized her to racial and social injustice. Growing up as an Arab-American student in Pittsfield, she felt alienated by the *Dick and Jane Reader*. "I did not see my family and my culture represented," she says. "I became a teacher to bring a wider world view to all students."

Najimy leads the resistance against austerity budgets, an agenda driven by standardized tests, and a prescriptive curriculum that robs students of meaningful learning. She fights for fully funding public schools and public higher education, autonomy and respect for educators, and building even stronger unions in the aftermath of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision against working people in the *Janus v. AFSCME* case.

Working in coalition with others will help build union power, Najimy believes. "When we join with our natural allies — labor, parents, students and progressive social justice organizations — we will advance all of our struggles," she says.



PASSOVER SEDER

Here is a basic introduction to the Passover Seder. Whether we are sitting around tables or looking at one another over Zoom, the power of ritual brings us together, uniting us in a common commitment to liberation for all peoples.

Kadesh

We pour the wine to celebrate after even during a long battle with a worldwide pandemic: like the Israelites who marched out of Egypt, we see there is a path forward — an end is near. Our collective struggles have made our bond stronger, and ready for better times.

Ur'chatz

Has there ever been a time that hand washing has been so front and center? During this pandemic, our washing of hands reminds us that we must keep one another safe. We honor those who care for the sick, and mark Passover as a time of renewal.

Karpas

Karpas is a fresh vegetable that symbolizes the arrival of springtime and new life. During COVID, grocery workers put their lives on the line to bring the world those vegetables and all the other groceries we all need. We dip vegetables into salty water to remind us of the tears Israelites shed when they were slaves in Egypt. But even as our frontline workers have struggled, even as we shed those tears, we remember that there is new life and spring is right around the corner.

Yachatz

When we break bread together, we create bonds of friendship, respect and caring. At this point in the Seder, we break the middle matzah and hide part of it away to share later.

continued

Maggid

During Maggid we tell the story of the Israelites who marched out of Egypt. The Exodus story is, in essence, a tale of immigrant workers who are oppressed by a large, powerful government that no one believes can be overcome — not Pharaoh, not the Israelites, not even Moses. We honor teachers, whose job is to inspire the next generation to learn and grow and believe in their own power. Teachers pass on our history, fight to teach a curriculum that reflects students of color, their cultures and their histories — and fights against xenophobia in all of its forms. And, do it in a place that is safe for all students and teachers.

Rachatza

Spiritually we cleanse ourselves to prepare for the the reciting of the blessing for our food.

Motzi/Matzah

In Hebrew, matzah is the “bread of poverty.” It also means “bread of oppression.” In Judaism, there is no distinction between poverty and oppression. When people live in poverty, that is oppression.

Maror

Maror is the bitter herbs. We eat the bitter herb so that we, too, ingest the bitterness that causes us physical discomfort, so that we share in the pain that so many feel on the inside. We cannot insulate ourselves from the distress that others are suffering.

Korech

During Korech we eat the Hillel sandwich. The charoset is symbolic of the mortar used by the Israelite slaves when they laid bricks for Pharaoh’s monuments. We never forget the sacrifice of those that came before us — that worked far too many hours, for little pay, in dangerous conditions.



continued

Shulchan Orech

As we set the table and get ready to feast we honor the restaurant workers and domestic workers who set the tables, do the work in our homes, have died during the pandemic, but are not recognized by those in power. Many were forced to work in unsafe environments to provide for their families.

Tzafun

At this point in the Seder, we reveal the hidden half of the middle matzah, and share it with all assembled. Our work reveals that which is hidden: lifting up the voices of those who have not been heard, and bringing to light those who have become invisible. We celebrate successes and renew our commitment to push for what is just — racial equality, immigration reform, affordable child care, rent and housing relief, and a living wage for all.

Barech

Once we have eaten and are satisfied, we pause and open the door for Elijah, the Prophet. We say, “all who are hungry, come and eat.” We fight to end poverty and ensure that everyone has enough to get by.

Hallel

Hallel is a time to sing songs of praise. When we join together in solidarity, it is a moment of true joy and we sing out.

Nirtzah

Just as we were freed from Egyptian rule we hold hope that 2021 will bring much needed freedom to our society. Because individually — we fail. It is only a united force that will overcome the dark days of COVID. And may together we rejoin in community in person.



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who helped make this Labor Seder possible.**

A special thanks to our Gold Sponsors:

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and to our Silver Sponsors:

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Happy Passover



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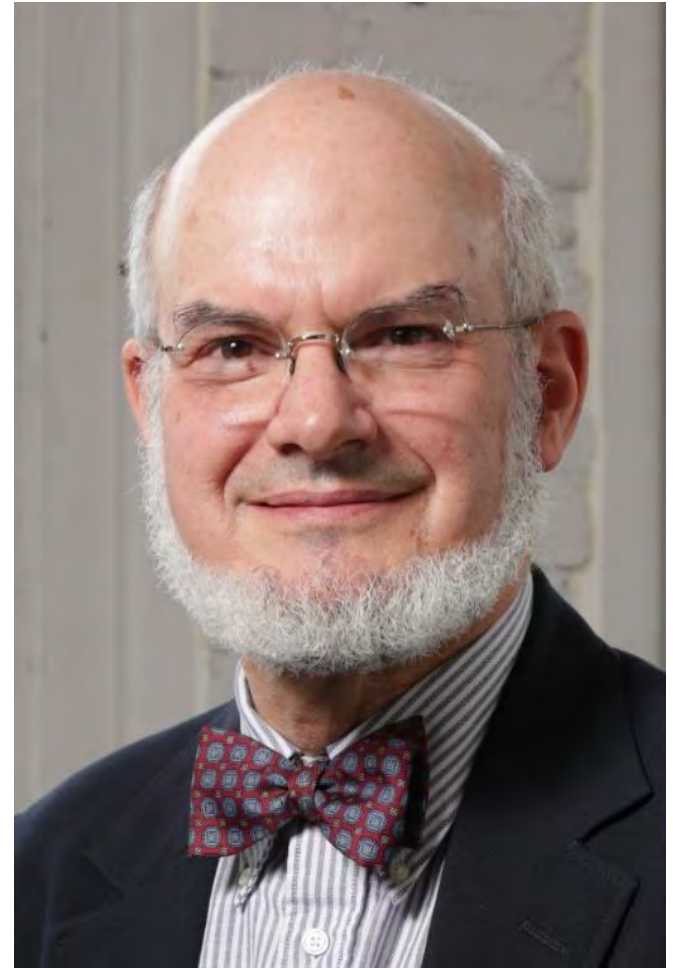
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Thank you for all you do.

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Thank you to NEJLC for hosting the 21st Annual Seder. We stand united with you and our friends in labor in the fight for equality and justice for all!

Congratulations and best wishes to

Merrie Najimy

President of the Massachusetts Teachers Association

&

Jerry Rubin

President and CEO of Jewish Vocational Service



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Congratulations to honorees: Merrie Najimy, the president of Massachusetts Teachers Association, and Jerry Rubin, president and CEO of Jewish Vocational Service. *Mazel tov!*



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The JVS Board of Directors
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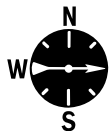


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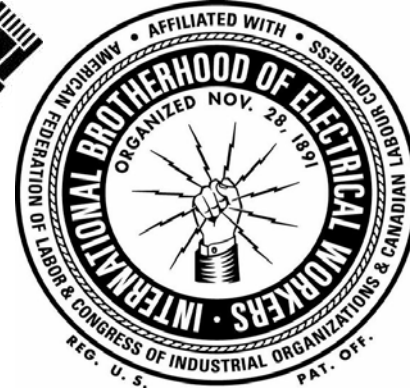


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Best wishes for a Happy Passover

to the

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“Next year, may we all be free.”

**The BTU salutes
Merry Najimy and Jerry Rubin
and their work for
justice and liberation.**





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Yasher Koach, Jerry!

You are an amazing leader who has helped thousands secure good jobs that help support and sustain so many families.

Jane Matlaw

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Ari Fertig**

For your wise and
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**We applaud the
Jewish Labor Committee
for its work supporting
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Rabbi Mike Rothbaum
for his leadership in
pursuing social justice.**

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Congratulations to
Merrie and Jerry!!!

We're all standing proudly together
for workers' rights and dignity.

Michael Felsen and Tolle Graham

Congratulations
to the 2021
Labor Seder Honorees

Merrie Najimy &
Jerry Rubin

Happy Passover!

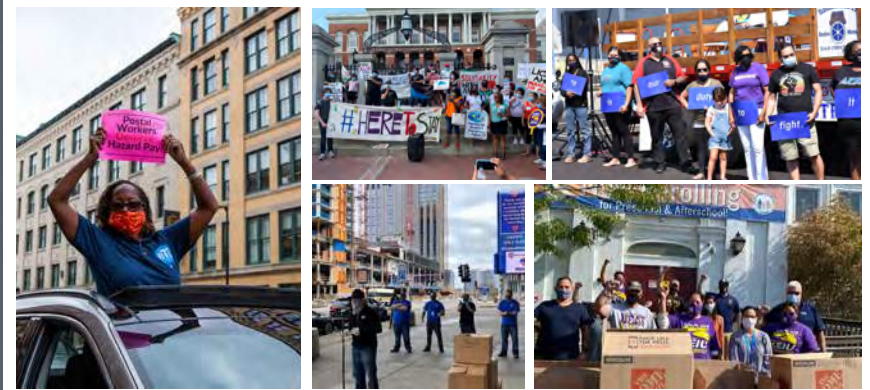


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Happy Passover!

Chag Sameach! חג שמח

The Field Services Organization, representing employees of the Massachusetts Teachers Association, proudly supports the Jewish Labor Committee and all who fight for justice on the job every day.

Justice, Justice You Shall Pursue

צדק צדק תלדף

"The labor movement was the principal force that transformed misery and despair into hope and progress."

— Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Philip Katz, President

Roberta James, Vice President



FIELD SERVICES ORGANIZATION



Chag Pesach Sameach

Congratulations Merrie Najimy & Jerry Rubin, and thank you New England Jewish Labor Committee for hosting the 21st Annual Labor Seder.

Paid for and authorized by the Committee to Elect Tommy Vitolo

**Mazel Tov to this year's
outstanding honorees —
Merrie and Jerry**

*Looking forward to sharing matzah
in-person next year!*

jalsa

JEWISH ALLIANCE FOR
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MAZEL TOV

to Jerry Rubin & Merrie Najimy!



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In Tribute To

The New England Jewish Labor Committee
and its esteemed honorees

**Merrie Najimy
&**

Jerry Rubin

for their efforts in pursuit of economic justice

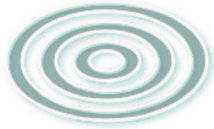
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Melissa Rudman, Executive Director
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*37th Annual
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Sept 6, 2021*

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**Congratulations to
all of the honorees
and
Happy Passover to the
New England
Jewish Labor Committee!**

Arnie Fertig
JOBHUNTERCOACH
fertig@jobhuntercoach.com

**Thank you
Rabbi Barbara Penzner
for being such
a great leader of the
Jewish Labor Committee,
and of our congregation:
Temple Hillel B'Nai Torah.**

Ashley Adams

**We honor the
Jewish Labor Committee
for its relentless commitment
to economic justice.**



Barbara and Steve Grossman

With great respect and admiration

Rabbi Elaine S. Zecher
Cantor Alicia Stillman
Rabbi Suzie Jacobson
Rabbi Jen Gubitz
Rabbi Dan Slipakoff
Rabbi Ronne Friedman
Rabbi Bernard H. Mehlman
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Temple Hillel
B'nai Torah

stands proudly
with workers and
the New England JLC.

Thank you to the Co-Chairs,
HBT past President Ashley Adams
and our rabbi Barbara Penzner.

*Best wishes
for a
Happy Passover*

Christine Barber
State Representative
Somerville and Medford

CONGRATULATIONS
TO THE
NEJLC 2021 HONOREES!
**Merrie Najimy
and Jerry Rubin**



TRAM T. NGUYEN
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
18TH ESSEX DISTRICT

**Congratulations
Jerry & Merrie!**

The Mazur/Feldstein household supports the New England Jewish Labor Committee in their ongoing advocacy for worker justice.

— *Amy, Mike, Gabe & Jesse*

**Congratulations to the
New England Jewish
Labor Committee's
2021 Honorees:
MERRIE NAJIMY &
JERRY RUBIN**



Thanks to JLC for their
important work
and
Congratulations to Jerry
Rubin on this honor —
you and JVS have done so
much for Tikkun Olam!

Karin & Jerry Blum

The Passover Haggadah's central message is:

בְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר חַיָּב אָדָם לִרְאוֹת אֶת עַצְמוֹ כְּאִלּוּ הוּא יֹצֵא מִמִּצְרַיִם

In every generation, each of us should feel personally redeemed from Egypt.

“Therefore, we should work, speak out, strive, and fight for the redemption of all the peoples of the world, as it is written: ‘You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt.’ (Exodus 21:9).”

from A Night of Questions: A Passover Haggadah

After this devastating year, we recognize that each of us is responsible for the liberation of all people, whether from a deadly virus or from tyranny, corruption, and lies.

This Passover, we appreciate all those workers who strive very day to take us out of Egypt. We are especially grateful to **Merrie Najimy** and **Jerry Rubin** for leading the way.

Rabbi Barbara Penzner and Brian Rosman