



## A message from **THE PRESIDENT**

### **HAPPY LABOR DAY!**

On September 2, the nation will pause to recognize – in the words of the U. S. Department of Labor – “the many contributions workers have made to America’s strength, prosperity, and well-being.”

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, America’s laborers were honored locally, as occasion saw fit, but it wasn’t until 1894 that Congress declared the first Monday in September a federal holiday – Labor Day. There is grace and dignity in the plying of a craft or trade or profession, and Hostos proudly adds its voice in praise of the nation’s workers. They built this nation and they keep it running.

We also acknowledge the bravery of America’s labor movement in its struggle to create just and hospitable working environments. It took concerted effort on the part of organized labor to establish a 40-hour week, workers comp, standard safety guidelines, child labor laws, and anti-discrimination policies, to name only a few of labor’s hard-won achievements.

We also celebrate the domestic worker, whose contributions mean so much but often go unsung. I’m reminded of “Find Work,” by the Dominican-American poet and translator Rhina P. Espailat. The poem begins with an epigraph drawn from an Emily Dickinson poem, then proceeds on its own:

*I tie my Hat—I crease my Shawl—  
Life's little duties do—precisely  
As the very least  
Were infinite—to me—*

—Emily Dickinson, #443

My mother’s mother, widowed very young  
of her first love, and of that love’s first fruit,  
moved through her father’s farm, her country tongue  
and country heart anaesthetized and mute

with labor. So her kind was taught to do—  
“Find work,” she would reply to every grief—  
and her one dictum, whether false or true,  
toll'd heavy with her passionate belief.  
Widowed again, with children, in her prime,  
she spoke so little it was hard to bear  
so much composure, such a truce with time  
spent in the lifelong practice of despair.  
But I recall her floors, scrubbed white as bone,  
her dishes, and how painfully they shone.

On September 2, we mustn't forget to celebrate the caretakers, in all their manifold forms.

I wish you a most pleasant Labor Day.

Sincerely,

Daisy Cocco De Filippis, Ph.D.  
President

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