

## LABOR DAY: THE DIGNITY OF WORK AND THE INDIGNITY OF BEING OUT OF IT



Today we pay tribute to those who labor in the workplace.

However, differing things are happening in our economy making this Labor Day 2012, contradictory in terms, that it brings joy to some and sadness to others. Labor Day is mystifying. If you were to go strictly by the meaning, then we should be laboring on this day, it should be a day of exertion and toil, yet it is a day of rest and relaxation. However, for 14 million officially declared jobless, every day is 'Labor Day.' Given the choice, they would much rather be working. On this Labor Day it would be worth the while to pay tribute to the jobless and consider their struggles and understand what it means to be unemployed.

Unemployed Americans live everyday in pain, trepidation, hope and extreme anxiety. Those who are not in their position will not understand how tough it is, how awkward it is to face the children, the elderly parents. Not many will understand the humiliation that a laid off worker feels, when he is offered a job that pays less than half of what he was getting earlier and that is below what his qualifications merit. Empty days are hard to fill, doubt and suspicion pervade their minds and they are unsure, uncertain about everything. It emotionally drains them. Nothing is more demeaning than meaningless platitudes and offers of monetary help to a man who is struggling to support his family. A worker, who lost his job, when his manufacturing facility moved its plant to China, says he is bitter, frustrated and sick of the lies the politicians tell. In two years since he lost his job, all his attempts to land one have proved futile. Whilst standing in yet another long line of job seekers he lamented, "It's very bad out there. They say the economy is coming around, but I don't see it. If it were, all the people in this room would have jobs." Economists are telling everybody that the recession has ended, but if that were true why is that jobs are still scarce and unemployment rate tells a different tale and layoffs continue. President Obama was gracious enough to admit, that there was a difference between the fancy formulas of the economists and the hardships that the ordinary unemployed American was facing. He said, "If you're still looking for a job, it's still a recession. If you can't pay your bills or your mortgage, it's still a recession. No matter what the economists say, it's not a real recovery until people can feel it in their own lives." Today there are two different America's that the US citizens live in. Those who have jobs live in a secure and protecting America and those who do not have a job live in a fearful, unforgiving, merciless America, where life has become a long struggle for even the most basic necessities. This Labor Day, whether they receive responses to their job applications and resumes, let us fill their lives with a new resolve and purpose; let us motivate them that tomorrow is a new day, that will dawn bright and burning. Let us tell them that, whether they have work or do not have work is not important, but that we value them for who they are, fellow Americans, our brothers and sisters. Who is it that has made America great? Who is it that has added materially, through physical labor to ensure that we have the highest standards of living? Who has contributed the most to the country's power, force and muscle, to its freedom and leadership – it is the American worker. On this Labor Day, when 14 million workers are going through an unprecedented crisis, let us tell them that they are not alone.