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Quick Hits

Be a good neighbor and lend a hand

By Charles Sercombe

Volunteers of Hamtramck, your city is calling you.

The city is seeking folks to be part of its “Every Neighbor” program, which assists senior homeowners and the disabled with their lawn maintenance.

Volunteers are also needed for the city’s ongoing tree planting program, as well as for community cleanups.

As we all know, Hamtramck is in constant need of volunteers to help out with picking up stray trash from the streets, and in the alleys and parks. The amount of litter in this town is mind-boggling, to say the least.

The volunteer program is part of a greater vision for the city, which is:

“To create spaces for all volunteers, including organizations, youth and leaders, to uplift the Hamtramck community.”

Besides being a good neighbor, you can also rack up volunteer services hours, which high school kids need to do in order to graduate, all while building connections with residents, developing new skills, and creating “meaningful change.”

Plus, it makes you feel good to volunteer – even if it’s just here and there.

Or, as volunteer Phillip Kwik asks:

“Do you want to meet folks in Hamtramck doing good work? Are you thinking about volunteering a few hours to help your community?”

You can meet up with fellow volunteers on Thursday, Sept. 10 (from 6-8 p.m.) at a Hamtramck Mutual Aid Meet and Greet, at Florian East, located at 9350 Jos. Campau.

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— HAMTRAMCK’S NEWSPAPER OF RECORD — TOAST of the TOWN

A lazy Saturday afternoon at the museum

By Charles Sercombe

Last Saturday was no ordinary day in Hamtramck.

Or maybe, considering the number of musicians who live here, Saturday could be considered just another ordinary weekend day, after all.

Anyway you look at it, Toast was treated to some homegrown music in front of the Hamtramck Historical Museum – a museum that is filled with so many Hamtramck artifacts and so much ephemera, you just have to keep coming back to visit in order to digest it all.

But back to Saturday: Residents and shoppers were treated to musicians playing homemade stringed instruments provided by master craftsman Michael Copado.

Among those enjoying the sounds was a music-loving pup named Kingsley, and a group of out-of-town shoppers, one of whom just so happened to have a kazoo-like instrument handy.

And we were once again delighted to witness an act of kindness – perhaps a small one, but any such kind act goes a long way with us.

This particular AOK (Act of Kindness) was provided by one bystander, who complemented an elderly woman’s shirt as she walked by.

Her appreciative smile back said it all.

And this, folks, is what makes Hamtramck such a special place to live in or visit.

Get out and explore the city. There is a lot to offer.

When it comes to good food and great times, Hamtramck has plenty to offer. In this column, we’ll talk about what’s happening at our bars, restaurants and at other events throughout the city.



Hamtramck’s Labor Day Festival takes over the northend of Jos. Campau this weekend. The festival runs Saturday through Monday.

Hamtramck’s annual Labor Day Fest rolls out on Campau

By Charles Sercombe

Hamtramck’s annual street party is about to take over Jos. Campau’s northend.

Yes, it’s that time of the year – the time when the Hamtramck Labor Day Festival returns, this Saturday, Sunday and Monday (Sept. 5-7).

For many of us, this local ritual signals the end of summer. At least,

as we know it.

As usual, the festival features live music, carnival rides, great food, local craftsfolk and other vendors, Big Time wrestling, the famed Canoe Race, and a carnival midway with rides and games.

Did we mention beer and drinks? Yes, these too, for those who imbi-

Continued on page 5

Pride flag ban upheld by court

By Charles Sercombe

Pride flags are still not permitted to be displayed on public property in Hamtramck.

Recently, a three-judge panel of the Federal Appeals Court for the Eastern District of Michigan upheld the city’s 2023 ban on such flags. That ban was originally passed by an all-male and all-Muslim city council and mayor.

At the time, the council and mayor insisted they adopted the policy as a way to remain “neutral” on the issue, along with most other cultural issues.

But the legal fight to once again permit pride flags to fly will continue, says Russ Gordon – who, along with Catrina Stackpoole, is fighting the city’s policy.

Gordon said his attorney, Marc Susselman, is seeking a rehearing on the matter.

“We believe that the decision is erroneous in many ways,” Gordon said.

According to City Attorney Odey Meroueh, the federal court “held that the city lawfully reserved its flagpoles for the city’s own speech, and that the resolution complies with the First Amendment.”

Meroueh stressed that the decision “places no limits of any kind on private expression. Residents, businesses, and organizations in Hamtramck remain fully free to display any flag or message

Continued on page 2 Former mayor lashes out at ‘deep state’ in pride flag issue

By Charles Sercombe

Former mayor Amer Ghalib, who now works for President Trump’s administration, didn’t hold back in lashing out at those trying to upend the city’s ban on displaying pride flags on city property.

In a post on his Facebook page, he said:

“I previously said that my political battles with my opponents ended with the end of my term

Continued on page 2



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Pride flag ban upheld by court

Continued from front page

they choose on their own property.”

He added: “The court recognized what the city has said from the beginning. This was never about any one flag or any one community. It was about whether a city may reserve its own flagpoles for its own speech, and the Sixth Circuit has now confirmed in a published opinion that it may.

“Former Mayor (Amer) Ghalib showed steady leadership on this issue from the start, and this decision is a vindication of that leadership and of the council that enacted the policy. We are grateful for the court’s careful consideration of the case.”

Both Gordon and Stackpoole were volunteer appointees of former mayor Karen Majewski, and served on the Hamtramck Human Relations Commission.

Former mayor Amer Ghalib fired both after they flew a pride flag on

a Jos. Campau city-owned flagpole in protest of the ban.

Shortly after the pride flag was raised, police officers removed it.

At the time, Ghalib said the pride flag protest was “expected,” calling it “another unnecessary distraction by the former power structure that doesn’t like to see the city moving forward. Good things are happening for the first time in decades, such as budget surplus and infrastructure repair,” Ghalib said.

“This exposes the former egregious leadership failure, therefore they want to constantly create obstacles on our way.”

Since then, Ghalib has moved on to work for President Trump’s administration, after having whipped up support among Arab and Muslim community members in the metro region for Trump during his 2024 presidential campaign.

In a recent post on his

Facebook page, Ghalib said he is considering a lawsuit against those who fought against the pride flag ban.

“The option of filing a counter-lawsuit seeking damages for the emotional distress and deliberate defamation inflicted upon us, as well as the financial harm caused to the city, should now be seriously considered,” Ghalib said.

(His entire post can be read on the front page and page 2.)

For several years, Gordon spearheaded donation drives to pay for the international flags that used to be flown on the 18 flagpoles lining Jos. Campau. Those 18 flagpoles now all feature only American flags.

The city only allows the American, state, city and POW flags to be displayed on city property.

After the ban, state Attorney General Dana Nessel, who is Jewish and married to a woman,

condemned the city’s flag ban at a protest rally held in front of city hall in Zussman Park.

Nessel, who is being termed out at the end of the year, said the city’s ban was not an act of neutrality.

“Banning the pride flag is meant to send the very opposite message: a message of intolerance, hatred, and bigotry. ... As it’s said, ‘In situations of injustice, neutrality always favors the oppressor, never the oppressed.’ “And, as Martin Luther King Jr. so aptly observed: ‘The hottest place in hell is reserved for those who remain neutral in times of great moral conflict. Anyone who accepts evil, without protesting against it, is one who cooperates with it.’”

Nessel added: “And make no mistake: homophobia, transphobia, are indeed forms of evil just as much as Islamophobia is.”

Former mayor lashes out at ‘deep state’ in pride flag issue

Continued from front page

as mayor, but they went ahead and the federal court upheld the decision in the flag-raising case.

“This week, the other slap came with the confirmation by the Supreme Federal Court of the decision of the lower court to reject the flag-raising of the LGBTQ+ flag, which was a valid, legal, and

constitutional decision.

“This case, in our opinion, started from a problem that did not exist, initiated by the deep state within the policy of employing contentious cases against the new administration in order to thwart it, and we were always in a position of defense and neutrality towards all components of society.

“The chaotic actions of these forces caused media uproar and deliberate distortion of the city and its leadership, but they lost the legal battle, then regained it, then lost again, and perhaps decided to take the case to the country’s supreme court, and they will definitely lose.

“We have won the battle against the deep state, including the Attorney General of the state, Dana Nessel, and it is time for her to apologize for her presence in Hamtramck and protesting against the mayor and provoking

society from the highest legal authority in the state.

“The option to file a counterclaim for psychological harm and deliberate distortion that befell us, and the material damage that befell the city, should be studied now.

“I am waiting for an open apology from the Attorney General Dana Nessel and the previous mayor and the deep state that supported them, and their actions were one of the main reasons for what happened to them in the previous elections.

“I previously said that my political battles with my opponents had ended with the conclusion of my term as mayor. However, they went on to appeal the federal court’s decision in the flag-raising case.

“Then came another blow: the federal appeals court upheld the lower court’s ruling, finding that

the City of Hamtramck’s decision to refuse the raising of identity flags was sound, lawful, and constitutional.

“In our view, this case began over an issue that did not exist in the first place. It was initiated by the ‘deep state’ as part of a strategy of weaponizing controversial issues against the new administration at the time in an attempt to undermine it. We were always put in the position of defending ourselves, and we have never started any issue!

“The chaotic actions of those forces generated significant media noise and deliberate attempts to smear the city and its leadership. But they lost the legal battle, appealed the decision, and lost again. They may decide to take the case to the U.S. Supreme Court, and they will undoubtedly lose there as well.”



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Review: Opinion Page

In Our Opinion

This weekend is the city’s time to shine

Once again, Hamtramck will welcome a few thousand visitors this weekend for the annual Labor Day Festival.

This festival has been running almost every year since 1980, and it’s gone through plenty of ups and downs.

There have been good years, bad years and so-so years, but lately we’ve enjoyed a string of successes. We’re not the biggest festival that happens in the state,

but we are definitely the most “Hamtramcky.”

And that means weird, and in all the right ways.

As usual, festival organizers had to jump through some last-minute hoops thanks to the city council, but, also as usual, the festival will still go on. This yearly dance between city officials and festival volunteer organizers has been happening since the inception of the event.

We’ll chalk it up to just being one of those quirks of the city.

Nevertheless, the festival is about the city coming together and enjoying the last moments of summer. It’s also when Hamtramck truly shines.

So, let’s all enjoy the weekend – and reflect on what ties our community together, and defines us.

Here’s to good times.

Other Voices: Guest Editorial

Guest editorial: Why does America celebrate Labor Day?

By C.V. Samuel

Monday, Sept. 7, 2026, is Labor Day in the United States. For many Americans, it is simply a long weekend, a time for family gatherings, picnics, travel, shopping, sports, and one last celebration before summer comes to an end. It is often called “the unofficial end of summer.”

But Labor Day is much more than a day off from work. It is a day to remember and honor the millions of men and women whose labor has helped build, strengthen, and sustain America.

The U.S. Department of Labor describes Labor Day as a celebration of the social and economic achievements of American workers. Its roots go back to the labor movement of the late nineteenth century, when workers and labor leaders began demanding better working conditions, fairer wages, more reasonable working hours, and greater dignity and respect for working people.



C.V. Samuel

There is some historical debate over who first proposed the idea of Labor Day. Peter J. McGuire, a prominent labor leader and co-founder of the American Federation of Labor, has traditionally received much of the credit.

More recent historical research also points to Matthew Maguire, a machinist and labor leader in New York, as an important figure in the holiday’s creation. Whoever deserves the title of “Father of Labor Day,” the larger story is clear: the holiday grew out of the organized efforts of working people seeking recognition and dignity.

The Beginnings of Labor Day

The history of Labor Day is closely connected with the struggles of American workers during the Industrial Revolution. In the 19th century, many workers faced long hours, low wages, unsafe workplaces, and limited protections. The eight-hour workday and other improvements that many workers take for granted today were not always the norm.

day of September a legal federal holiday, and President Grover Cleveland signed it into law. Since then, Americans have observed Labor Day on the first Monday of September.

The early celebrations were not simply recreational events. Parades and public gatherings allowed workers to demonstrate their unity, discuss working conditions, and remind the nation of the important contribution of labor to America’s economic and civic life.

Over the years, the holiday became less associated with labor protests and more with family celebrations and leisure.

What Labor Day means today

Today, the American workforce is very different from what it was in 1882. Workers are employed in factories, farms, hospitals, schools, offices, restaurants, stores, the transportation sector, technology companies, small businesses, on construction sites, and in countless other occupations.

Some work with their hands; others work with computers, machines, ideas, or using specialized skills. Doctors, nurses, teachers, truck drivers, farmers, construction workers, mechanics, police officers, firefighters, restaurant workers, cleaners, caregivers, office employees, small business

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Odds & Ends

Night Bazaar ... As if this weekend isn’t busy enough with the Hamtramck Labor Day Festival, this Saturday also features the return of the monthly Hamtramck Night Bazaars.

Happening at Pope Park, at Jos. Campau and Belmont, the events feature a dozen or more local craft vendors, along with live music. This Saturday’s featured performer is Arct1c.

Take a short break from the festival – or drop by first – and check it out.

The Bazaar goes from 6 to 10 p.m.

City council ... The topsy-turvy world of Hamtramck’s city council continues to spin our collective heads around.

This council has kept itself busy with censuring each other and then reversing those decisions, and the latest target of the council was Councilmember Mohammad Hassan.

At a recent council meeting, the council removed Hassan from his double duty as Mayor Pro Tem and replaced him with Councilmember Abu Musa, who several months ago was also removed from that position.

On top of that, there is supposedly an investigation by the Michigan State Police into Councilmember Yousuf Saed, regarding an allegation of him selling his city-issued laptop for \$1,000.

Given the track record of previous so-called investigations, it’s a good bet nothing will come of it.

In the meantime, a bill

has already been submitted for Mayor Adam Alharbi’s own legal fight to prevent 37 ballots from being counted from last November’s city election.

Alharbi recently convinced a bare majority of three councilmembers to accept his private legal bill to prevent the ballots from being counted.

Why the fuss over those particular ballots being counted? There is a lot at stake for Alharbi, as those ballots could very well swing last November’s mayoral election to his opponent, former city councilmember Muhith Mahmood.

In other words, if Mahmood turns out to be the winner, Alharbi is out of a job as mayor.

No matter what, this means that you, Hamtramck taxpayers, will be footing the mayor’s estimated \$200,000 attorney bill.

Considering the number of lawsuits our city council has racked up, Hamtramck is on track to go broke from all the various legal payouts and fees.

In the meantime, the council OK’d another honorific street. Good thing they focus on the important matters, eh?

State voter rolls ... There has been a lot of talk lately about which voters are truly qualified to vote, as well as about the security of our voter rolls.

The Michigan Secretary of State office recently blasted out an email assuring folks that Michigan’s voter rolls are up to date, and have been checked.

“A report released today by the state Office of Auditor General (OAG) shows that Michigan’s voter rolls are more accurate than ever before, thanks to comprehensive reforms and improvements made by the Michigan Department of State (MDOS) under Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson,” said the press release.

The press release continued, saying:

“Michigan is one of the nation’s leaders in ensuring secure elections while protecting access to the ballot box for eligible voters. Thanks to recent upgrades implemented by the Department of State, Michigan uses the information that customers already provide during routine state agency transactions, and then efficiently identifies and removes ineligible applicants from any voter registration process before it starts.

“This vital tool is designed to automatically filter out noncitizens from any registration opportunity, helping to ensure Michigan’s voter rolls remain up to date and accurate.”

Festival time ... We just checked the weather forecast for this weekend, and it looks like good news for those attending the Hamtramck Labor Day Festival.

The weather predictors are saying it will be partly cloudy, with temperatures topping out at around 79-80 degrees.

That will be quite a relief from the heat wave we went through back on this past Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

Quick Hits

Cont. from front page

Kwik adds:

“Hamtramck Mutual Aid volunteers are the folks behind the Every Neighbor project, which has been mowing lawns and clearing weeds for seniors and the homebound every summer for the past four years, to help them avoid code violations while they stay in their homes.

“The slogan of Hamtramck Mutual Aid is to share ‘resources, skills, and ideas among residents in Hamtramck, to aid in the liberation of everyone.’

“In other words, you help me, I help you, and we both benefit and lead better, more fulfilling lives.”

Kwik, a former city councilmember here in Hamtramck, had still more to say:

“In addition to Every Neighbor, HMA members put together a winter Snow Emergency Team to help clear the sidewalks, and keep Hamtramck safe and walkable when the weather turns cold.

“They lead cleanups before and after events like the Paczki Day Run and

the Labor Day Festival. And they deliver meals to residents in need, in the area.

“Sounds like a group you would like to be part of, right? Come down to Florian East on Sept. 10 for a beverage. You just might leave with a few new friends, a volunteer opportunity, and a sense of empowerment to improve our little town.”

If you can’t make it to the meeting, you can contact the city at (313) 800-5233, extension 818; email ced@hamtramckcity.gov; or go online to www.hamtramckcity.gov.

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**2026 Labor Day Festival Traffic
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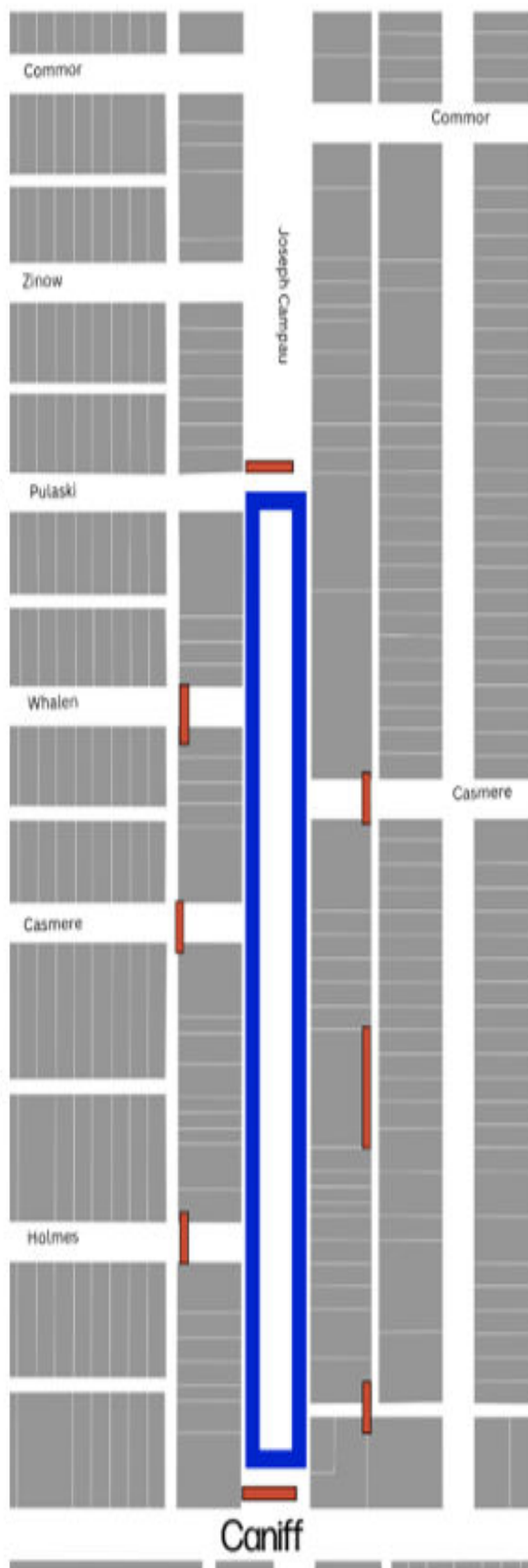
ATTENTION HAMTRAMCK RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES:

The 2026 Hamtramck Labor Day Festival will take place in Hamtramck **Saturday, September 5, 2026 - Monday, September 7, 2026**. The event area is between Pulaski and Caniff on Joseph Campau Ave. In addition, southbound Joseph Campau traffic will be blocked at Carpenter to maintain the safety of the event perimeter.

If you live, work, or commute within or adjacent to the festival area (outlined in blue, with road closures marked in red) you will not be able to move your car in or out of this zone between approximately **7:00 pm on Friday, September 4, 2026, and 7:00 am on Tuesday, September 8, 2026**, due to festival setup and cleanup, and for the safety of attendees during the event.

If you need to leave this area, plan to move your car out of the zone BEFORE 7:00 pm on Friday, September 4, 2026.

**This event is organized by dedicated volunteers, not the City of Hamtramck.*



Hamtramck's annual Labor Day Fest rolls out on Campau

Continued from front page

be.

And, also as usual, the festival is free to attend.

Organizers had this to say about the festival:

“The Hamtramck Labor Day Festival is FREE. No admission. No ticket. No corporate festival price tag.

“Just three days in the middle of Hamtramck, put together by volunteers who somehow manage to turn a few city blocks into one hell of a weekend.

“Two stages of live music, including Saves the Day, Esham, Shadow Show, The Polish Muslims. and a whole lot more. ...”

"All of this, organized by a group of people who volunteer their time because we believe Hamtramck deserves a festival that's for the community, and accessible to everyone.

“Three days of music, food, rides, tradition, community, and just the right amount of Hamtramck chaos – forty-plus years of Community, Culture & Chaos.”

The chaos part is mostly what happens during the “canoe” races on Monday at noon. Although the wheeled canoes are on pavement, there is a whole lot of water, thanks to folks who come armed with water balloons and water guns – and we’re talking big-capacity guns, the kind that give you a thorough soaking.

So be warned, you're going to get wet watching the madness of the canoe races.

That's OK, though, because you'll dry off soon enough, and it's all very friendly. Yet, we've seen everyone from little kids to grown adults get a certain killer look in their eyes as they grinningly target their prey.

Monday will feature the city's homegrown parade at about 1 p.m. So come on out: there is plenty of food, beer and fun to enjoy.

Yep – Hamtramck can still throw a heck of a party.



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Guest editorial: Why does America celebrate Labor Day? Continued from page 3

ness entrepreneurs, and many others all contribute to the life of the nation.

The roads we drive on, the homes we live in, the food we eat, the hospitals that care for us, the schools that educate our children, and the businesses that provide us with our goods and services all depend on the work of millions of people.

Labor Day, therefore, is not only about unions or organized labor. It is about recognizing the dignity of honest work, and appreciating the people who make our communities and our economy function.

An immigrant's perspective

I did not know much about Labor Day when I was living in India. I first became familiar with this American holiday after I came to the United States in November of 1971.

Coming to America as an immigrant gave me a new appreciation for the meaning of work. Like many immigrants, I learned that work was not simply a way to earn a living. It was also a way to build a new life, support a family, become part of a community, and contribute to the country we had chosen as our new home.

For many immigrants from India and other parts of Asia, working on holidays is sometimes part of the reality of building a life in America.

Some employees may receive additional holiday pay or overtime, depending on their employer, contract, or union agreement. However, federal law does not require employers to pay double wages simply because an employee works on Labor Day. What matters more is remembering why the holiday exists in the first place.

A holiday worth remembering

As we enjoy the Labor Day weekend with our families and friends, it is easy to think only about the extra day off, the family barbecue, the parade, the sporting event, or the end-of-summer sale.

But, behind our comfortable lives, there are ge-

nerations of workers who spent long hours building factories, laying roads, harvesting crops, caring for the sick, teaching children, constructing homes, transporting goods, and providing the countless services on which society depends.

Labor Day invites us to pause and remember them.

It also reminds us that progress does not happen automatically. Many of the protections and opportunities workers enjoy today developed through years of effort, sacrifice, organization, negotiation, and, at times, difficult struggle.

The history of American labor is therefore also part of the history of America's continuing search for fairness and opportunity.

A grateful reflection

Labor Day is ultimately a celebration of people: the people who get up early, work long hours, take responsibility, serve others, raise families, pay their bills, and quietly contribute to the strength of their communities.

As an immigrant who came to America many years ago, I have come to see work as more than employment. Work can be a pathway to dignity, independence, responsibility, and hope. It can give a person the opportunity to build a better future for the next generation.

So, on Labor Day 2026, let us enjoy the holiday, but let us also remember its deeper meaning.

Let us honor the workers of yesterday who fought for better conditions, appreciate the workers of today who keep America moving, and encourage a future in which every person who works hard is treated with dignity and fairness.

Labor Day is not merely a day to celebrate the end of summer. It is a day to remember the value of work, the dignity of the worker, and the millions of ordinary people whose extraordinary efforts have helped build America.

Let us celebrate them, not only on Labor Day, but throughout the year.

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