

May Chen

CELEBRATE
**ASIAN
AMERICAN
AND PACIFIC
ISLANDER
HERITAGE
MONTH**



MAY

May Chen is an American labor organizer and advocate for immigrant workers who helped organize the 1982 garment workers' strike, one of the largest Asian American worker actions in history. Twenty thousand primarily Chinese and Hong Kong immigrant women workers marched from Manhattan's Chinatown to Columbus Park, rallying for safer working conditions, better wages and for management to observe the Confucian principles of fairness and respect.

Inspired by the event, in 1984 Chen began working for the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union Immigration Project, which provided legal advocacy for the group's immigrant workers, helping them obtain citizenship and petition sponsorship for relatives.

Before retiring in 2009, Chen was an officer and founding member of the AFL-CIO's Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance; the international vice president for UNITE HERE; and worked with the national executive board of the Coalition of Labor Union Women and the Asian Labor Committee of the New York City Central Labor Council.

A graduate of Radcliffe College and UCLA, Chen's archive, the May Chen Papers, is held in the Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives of the Asian/Pacific/American Institute at New York University.



My core perspectives stem from a deep belief in the promise of democracy and our rights to sit at the table and express our views and needs.

This cannot happen if the people/community are not educated and organized with you. AAPIs should not be invisible, silent or marginalized!

— May Chen, EastWind ezine, Fall 2018



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