The American labor movement is at a critical juncture. After three decades of declining union density in the private sector and years of all-out political assaults on public sector unions, America's unions now face what can only be described as existential threats. Strategies and tactics that may have worked in a different era are no longer adequate to confront today's challenges. The need for different approaches to the fundamentals of union work in areas such as organizing, collective bargaining and political action is clear. This conference will examine new thinking and new initiatives, viewing them critically in the light of ongoing union imperatives to cultivate member activism and involvement, foster democratic self-governance and build the collective power of working people.

AGENDA

8:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.  Check-in and Continental Breakfast

9:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.  WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS
Leo Casey, executive director, Albert Shanker Institute
Alexandra Lescaze, executive director, Sidney Hillman Foundation
The Honorable Thomas E. Perez, U.S. Secretary of Labor

Keynote:  AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT AT A CROSSROADS
Randi Weingarten, president, American Federation of Teachers and Albert Shanker Institute

9:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.  NEW FORMS OF LABOR ORGANIZING/ORGANIZATION I
Tefere Gebre, executive vice president, AFL-CIO
Harold Meyerson, editor-at-large, American Prospect; columnist, Washington Post; board member, Albert Shanker Institute; judge, Sidney Hillman Foundation
Karen Nussbaum, executive director, Working America
David Rolf, president, Workers Lab, Service Employees International Union, Local 775
Moderator: Alexandra Lescaze, executive director, Sidney Hillman Foundation

10:45 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.  Break

11:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.  NEW FORMS OF LABOR ORGANIZING/ORGANIZATION II
Paul Booth, executive assistant to the president, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
Elizabeth Bunn, Organizing Director, AFL-CIO
Sara Horowitz, founder and executive director, Freelancers Union
Jessica Smith, chief of staff, American Federation of Teachers
Cristina Tzintzún, executive director, Texas Workers Defense Project
Moderator: Phil Kugler, special assistant to the president for organization and field services, American Federation of Teachers
12:15 p.m. – 12:30 p.m. REFLECTIONS ON THE STATE OF AMERICAN LABOR
Steven Greenhouse, labor journalist
Moderator: Mark Levinson, chief economist, Service Employees International Union; board member, Sidney Hillman Foundation

12:30 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. Lunch

1:00 p.m. – 2:15 p.m. BUILDING COMMUNITY-LABOR ALLIANCES
Marcelle Grair, National Organizer, United Students Against Sweatshops
Sarita Gupta, executive director, Jobs with Justice
Gerry Hudson, executive vice president, Service Employees International Union; board member, Sidney Hillman Foundation
Joseph McCartin, director, Kalmanovitz Initiative for Labor and the Working Poor, Georgetown University
Sejal Parikh, fast food workers campaign director, Working Washington
Moderator: Leo Casey, executive director, Albert Shanker Institute

2:15 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. Break

2:30 p.m. – 3:45 p.m. RETHINKING COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND UNION REPRESENTATION
Catherine Fisk, chancellor’s professor of law; co-director, Center in Law, Society and Culture, University of California at Irvine Law School
Prasi Gupta, deputy executive director, National Guestworker Alliance
Mary Cathryn Ricker, executive vice president, American Federation of Teachers; board member, Albert Shanker Institute
Dan Schlademan, director, OUR Walmart, United Food and Commercial Workers International Union
Moderator: Cheryl Teare, director, Union Leadership Institute, American Federation of Teachers

3:45 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Break

4:00 p.m. – 5:15 p.m. WORKERS’ RIGHTS AND COLLECTIVE POWER
Mark Brenner, director, Labor Notes
Richard Kahlenberg, senior fellow, Century Foundation; board member, Albert Shanker Institute
Rich Yeselson, labor strategist
Moderator: Rachel Cohen, The American Prospect

5:15 p.m. – 5:40 p.m. NEXT STEPS
Leo Casey, executive director, Albert Shanker Institute

5:40 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. RECEPTION (555 New Jersey Ave, NW, 9th Floor)

For more information contact Vicki Thomas, vthomas@ashankerinst.org.