

“The good we secure for ourselves is precarious and uncertain until it is secured for all of us and incorporated into our common life.”

- Jane Addams

Dear Executive Director Lisa,

We are excited to notify you that a supermajority of eligible employees at the National Public Housing Museum (NPHM) have joined together to pursue collective action in the form of a union. After reviewing our options over the last year, including the Association of Federal, State, and Municipal Employees (AFSME) and the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), we have decided to form our union, National Public Housing Workers United, with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW), Local Lodge 126. Like most unions, IAMAW represents a variety of workplaces, including cultural institutions such as the Milwaukee Art Museum and the Baltimore County Public Library. We feel confident that IAMAW understands the unique needs of our institution.

We are writing to inform you that we are submitting our signed authorization cards to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to conduct a union election, and that we are requesting voluntary recognition of our union. Voluntary recognition can be given at any point before the election. Though we have the votes to easily win a union election, we would rather expedite the process towards recognition and not distract from the important work that we are all doing at the National Public Housing Museum.

Before outlining our core reasons for forming a union, we would like to emphasize that the decision to unionize is not a personal attack on you, the Executive Director, nor an attack on the Board of Directors, other senior staff, or the institution of NPHM. Rather, we have worked towards unionizing on nights and weekends for over a year because we want NPHM to be the best that it can be and to live up to its visions of equity, radical care, and social justice. As a staff, we have talked for several months about the “scaling up” process that must happen before the grand opening of the Museum. As non-senior staff members, we see the establishment of a nationally-affiliated union that will ensure rigorous, ongoing, and transparent workers’ rights as an essential part of the institution-building process. We act in the conviction that forming a union will bring us into closer alignment with our values as individuals and as an organization.

With this unionization process, we hope to achieve a few simple goals that we believe will make the National Public Housing Museum a stronger organization and a leader among forward-thinking cultural institutions.

One of our most important goals is to achieve a stable and sustainable working environment where talented staff want to be. We believe that by having a clear contract where workplace protections and benefits are guaranteed, we become a desirable institution for new talent and a

place where workers want to invest their time and energy throughout their career. When workers feel supported and protected, they have the space to focus on the real work.

What we will be seeking in our contract to ensure sustainability of this organization and workforce are the key tenets of accountability, communication, and transparency. We believe that in order to have the thriving, justice-based workplace that we all want, we need specific mechanisms and written agreements in place that will guarantee greater transparency, communication, and accountability for all.

At the core of our efforts to unionize are our fundamental values of equity, collective action, and justice—values that the Museum shares. As a Site of Conscience, NPHM has committed to learning from the past to ensure a more just future. We share this commitment. One of the things that we have learned from the past is that when workers come together and support each other, everyone in society benefits.

We have each chosen to work at NPHM in large part because we share the values of this institution—values of solidarity, radical care, community power, and the galvanizing potential of arts and culture. We believe that in order to uphold and enact these values, we all need to be accountable to each other: to push each other, to support each other, and to invest in each other. Unionization is one such investment in our institution, in our community and in ourselves. Furthermore, as part of an institution that is committed to employing public housing residents, we see a union as a crucial safeguard and advocacy structure for all of our future colleagues who have already been taken advantage of and failed by other civic organizations.

We have chosen to form a union at this crucial moment in NPHM’s history, as we look into the future and decide who we want to be as an institution. It is through investing in each other that we can create a more equitable and just institution.

Just as we are deeply excited by this inclusive future for the Museum and its workers, we are equally excited to be represented by IAMAW. As we’ve collaborated with IAMAW, we’ve been impressed and inspired by their commitment to transparency and democratic processes as demonstrated by their fiscal transparency, inclusionary and accessible voting systems, and encouraged member participation at all levels.

In addition, the IAMAW shows their investment in their members by providing free leadership and college classes at the William W. Winpisinger Education and Technology Center. This benefit is unique among unions in the United States. The Union provides a plethora of additional benefits, including free college courses for others in our family, emergency natural disaster relief funds, and mental health services, among others. With all of these available opportunities, we will have the resources for further professional development, enhancing our work at the Museum and our lives in a broader sense.

We are eager to come to the bargaining table and work collectively with you to build a stronger, more equitable, more sustainable, and more united NPHM.

“I believe that all organizing is science fiction - that we are shaping the future we long for and have not yet experienced.”

- adrienne maree brown

Feb 15 2023

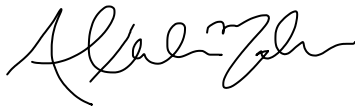
Sincerely and respectfully,
National Public Housing Museum
Workers United

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Jaeschke'.

Mark Jaeschke
Programs and Events Coordinator,
5th year NPHM staff member

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Liú Méi-Zhì Chen'.

Liú Méi-Zhì Chen
Oral History Archive and Corps Manager,
2nd year NPHM staff member

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Orfirer Maher'.

Alex Orfirer Maher
Curatorial Associate,
1st year NPHM staff member

With additional support from,



Lauren Meranda
Experiential Designer,
6th year NPHM contractor



Seth Engel
Sound Engineer,
3rd year contractor



Noor Alzamami
Educational Coordinator & Mentor, Beauty
Turner Academy of Oral History,
1st year contractor
Curriculum Working Group, Oral History
Archive & Corps Advisory Committee



Andy Hendricks
Graphic Designer,
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Creative Engagement Working Group, Oral
History Archive & Corps Advisory Committee