



**9to5**  
**THE**  
**STORY**  
**OF A**  
**MOVEMENT**

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# USING THIS GUIDE



The story of the working women’s movement is as relevant today as it was in the 1970s. The film *9to5: The Story of a Movement* presents an opportunity to bring people together to share their workplace experiences and support each other in creating change—just as those who were in the 9to5 movement did.

Sharing resources about movement organizing, union rights, and litigating sexual harassment could make a difference in the life of someone who wants a voice on the job or is experiencing discrimination. The film is also an opportunity to check in with workers—especially women and non-binary people—to ask how they have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and reflect on contemporary movements for equality, such as #MeToo.

Join us in recognizing the accomplishments of organizers and change-makers who work to create more opportunities for all community members.

- Create spaces where workers can share their own experiences and hear stories from other workers across generations and industries.
- Educate community members about labor rights and equip people with tools to organize for change in their workplaces and elsewhere.
- Connect the 9to5 movement to contemporary worker movements for equal pay, increased benefits, and workplace safety from sexual harassment.
- Celebrate the people and the movements that have created widespread change in the lives of American workers.

# ABOUT INDIE LENS POP-UP



Indie Lens Pop-Up is a neighborhood series that brings people together for film screenings and community-driven conversations. Featuring documentaries seen on PBS's *Independent Lens*, Indie Lens Pop-Up draws local residents, leaders, and organizations together to discuss what matters most, from newsworthy topics and social issues to family and community relationships.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Indie Lens Pop-Up is going virtual. Neighbors can now join from the safety of their homes to watch films together on OVEE, the Indie Lens Pop-Up virtual theater. Make friends, share stories, and join the conversation at an Indie Lens Pop-Up screening online: [bit.ly/ILPOP-Screenings](https://bit.ly/ILPOP-Screenings).

# ABOUT THE FILM



## How to Watch the Film

Virtual Indie Lens Pop-Up Screenings:

**January 2–March 2, 2021**

Independent Lens Broadcast Premiere:

**February 1, 2021**

Stream online at [video.pbs.org](https://www.pbs.org/video):

**February 2–March 2, 2021**

When Dolly Parton sang “9 to 5,” she was doing more than just shining a light on the fate of American working women. Parton was singing the true story of a movement that started with 9to5, a group of Boston secretaries in the early 1970s. Their goals were simple—better pay, more advancement opportunities and an end to sexual harassment—but their unconventional approach attracted the press and shamed their bosses into change. Featuring interviews with 9to5’s founders, as well as actor and activist Jane Fonda, *9to5: The Story of a Movement* is the previously untold story of the fight that inspired a hit and changed the American workplace.

# FROM THE FILMMAKER



**Women have always struggled for respect at work.** I sure did, first as a young waitress in the 1960s, then as a female filmmaker in the 1970s and 80s. We've come a long way, but we still have a long way to go. Before #MeToo, there was a very long period when a lot of women would say, "Well, I'm not a feminist." Even young women who believed everything that feminists believed rejected that word. I think that has changed. The women of 9to5 were like a #MeToo movement and a #TimesUp movement for an earlier generation.

Secretaries were the low-wage workers of their day. Activists today can learn a lot from 9to5 women's unique strategies and tactics. It is important to me to bring this history of the women's movement back to the public and back into history. If you don't know how people made society change in the past, how can you believe in it or know how to do it now?

I wanted this movie to be, in addition to inspiring and entertaining, a kind of primer for organizing, to demystify the idea of organizing. Which is something more and more needed and sought after by working people in today's world ... including tech workers, gig workers, as well as minimum wage fast food workers. People are seeing the need to stand together.

My own working class background, and growing up before sexism was really recognized and named—all this formed me. Once I got over my class shame and dived into the Women's Movement, I found I had things to say. Gradually I learned skills in photography, radio and film. My first film, made with Jim Klein, was *Growing Up Female*, from 1971. Then came *Union Maids*, the energetic story of 3 working-class women—Kate, Sylvia, and Stella—who were part of the creation of the early industrial unions. This was a first for documentaries—recognizing the role of rank and file women in making profound social change. *9to5: The Story of a Movement*, which I made with my long term partner Steven Bognar, is a sister film to *Union Maids*. Looking back at my 50 years of filmmaking, I see that recurring themes of work, class, race, and gender are central to the movies I've been lucky enough to make.

— **Julia Reichert**, Director/Producer, *9to5: The Story of a Movement* (pictured with Steven Bognar, Director/Producer, *9to5: The Story of a Movement*)

# PEOPLE IN THE FILM



**Rosie Aguirre** – District 925 Seattle

**Verna Barksdale** – 9to5 Atlanta

**Laurie Brown** – 9to5 Seattle

**Ellen Cassedy** – 9to5 Boston

**Renia Clay** – 9to5 Atlanta

**Kim Cook** – 9to5 Seattle, District 925 Seattle

**Adair Dammann** – District 925 Seattle

**Jane Fonda** – Actor/Activist

**Inge Goldschmidt** – District 925 Cincinnati

**Jackie Harris** – District 925 Cleveland

**Anne Hill** – 9to5, District 925 Cleveland

**Mary Jung** – 9to5 Cleveland

**Karen Nussbaum** – National Director 9to5, District 925

**Donna Samuels** – District 925 Cincinnati

**Cheryl Schaeffer** – District 925 Cleveland

**Debbie Schneider** – District 925 Cincinnati

**Carolyn Schwier** – District 925 Cincinnati

**Janet Selcer** – 9to5 Boston

**Carol Sims** – District 925 Cleveland

**Helen Williams** – 9to5 Cleveland

**Dr. Lane Windham** – American Labor Historian

# BACKGROUND INFORMATION



## The 9to5 Movement

The story of the 9to5 movement began in 1973 at the height of the women's rights movement. Two women in Boston, Karen Nussbaum and Ellen Cassedy, fed up with sex discrimination in their secretarial jobs, started talking with other women office workers about what needed to change. They collected stories, published newsletters, and attracted other women workers who related to the experiences of workplace harassment, no benefits, low pay, demeaning work, and discrimination. Then they took action, taking on their employers' bad behavior and developing their leadership skills as organizers. They also provided critical support to survivors of workplace sexual harassment, such as a hotline and a book, *The 9to5 Guide to Combating Sexual Harassment*.

At its peak, 9to5 had groups in more than 20 cities including Boston, Atlanta, Seattle, New York, Cleveland, Chicago, Detroit, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, and Hartford, Connecticut. To increase their political power, the 9to5 women decided to unionize, which granted them additional collective bargaining protections under U.S. labor laws. Many of the male-led unions were unwelcoming and some downright hostile to the women's concerns, but eventually they formed an autonomous local union

in the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). Activists from 9to5 chapters around the country went on to hold and win union elections in their workplaces, establishing District 925, SEIU.

Their work for change attracted the attention of Hollywood actors Jane Fonda and Lily Tomlin and country music star Dolly Parton, who starred in the popular 1980 comedy film *9 to 5*. Parton wrote the movie's hit song, which became the anthem of the movement. As mentioned in the documentary, the film's script was heavily influenced by the stories of women in the movement.

The timing of the 9to5 movement met significant obstacles in the larger cultural context. A conservative women's movement led by Phyllis Schlafly rose up in backlash to the feminist movement, although it had little impact on the working women's movement. A more significant obstacle was an anti-union political opposition which reached new levels in the 1980s, undermining existing and newly emerging unions.

While the 9to5 association and District 925, SEIU did not become mass organizations, they made important progress in promoting and protecting the needs of working women. The grassroots changes won by the 9to5 movement not only made immediate differences in the lives of women workers, but also contributed to a cultural change that created more opportunities for generations

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of women workers that followed. Wins by the 9to5 movement highlighted in the film include:

- Pay raises
- Professional development
- Family health benefits
- Paid leave
- Child care
- Fair treatment guarantees
- A voice on the job

## Women and Work

Between 1950 and 2000, nearly 50 million women joined the U.S. workforce,<sup>1</sup> creating one of the largest shifts in the workforce since the abolition of slavery. Jobs held by women identifying as Asian American, Hispanic, or Black increased especially fast as the civil rights movement won protections for equal employment opportunity throughout the country. Before the COVID-19 economic crisis, women made up just over half the number of employees on U.S. payrolls.<sup>2</sup>

Although even today women are over-represented in the low-wage service industry and under-represented in the lucrative science, technology, engineering, and math fields,<sup>3</sup> they have a significantly wider range of opportunities in the workplace than did the women of 9to5. Also, women's pay has increased since the 1970s. It still is not equal, however. Thirty percent of the decrease in the gap between women's and men's pay can be attributed to the decline in the pay of men.<sup>4</sup> On average in 2019, women across all groups made 82 cents to every dollar a man made, and Hispanic women make far less than other women at just 52 cents for every dollar. Based on early data, this wage gap has likely widened during the pandemic.<sup>5</sup>

The COVID-19 economic crisis has been a significant setback for working women. In February 2020, one in two women worked in the service industry, comprising jobs in restaurants, education, health services, and retail. When the pandemic hit that month, most service jobs could not transfer to remote work. The United States lost nearly 60 percent of all service jobs from February through May 2020—making it the first of eight downturns in the past five decades in which women have lost more jobs than men.<sup>6</sup> Hispanic women, young women, and women without college degrees, who were already getting paid low wages, bore the brunt of COVID-19 job losses.

And although women are more educated than ever before, earning more than half of all undergraduate degrees in the United States, they are less likely than men to be hired for leadership positions in academia, on Wall Street, or in

Hollywood. The representation of women in leadership positions at top companies on Wall Street falls between 7 and 25 percent,<sup>7</sup> and only 5 percent of college presidents are women of color, according to the American Association of University Women.

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- <sup>2</sup> [npr.org/2020/01/10/795293539/women-now-outnumber-men-on-u-s-payrolls](https://www.npr.org/2020/01/10/795293539/women-now-outnumber-men-on-u-s-payrolls)
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- <sup>4</sup> [epi.org/publication/what-is-the-gender-pay-gap-and-is-it-real](https://www.epi.org/publication/what-is-the-gender-pay-gap-and-is-it-real)
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- <sup>6</sup> [pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/06/09/hispanic-women-immigrants-young-adults-those-with-less-education-hit-hardest-by-covid-19-job-losses](https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/06/09/hispanic-women-immigrants-young-adults-those-with-less-education-hit-hardest-by-covid-19-job-losses)
- <sup>7</sup> [aauw.org/resources/research/barrier-bias](https://www.aauw.org/resources/research/barrier-bias)

## Early Labor Movements

Women organizers have led change for workers' rights in the United States from the abolition of slavery to the modern movement for transgender rights. Some of the early labor strikes in the United States were organized by women garment workers in Massachusetts, who worked in notoriously unsafe conditions. In the 1830s, the "Lowell mill girls," as they were called, picketed in protest to wage cuts. In the 1840s, before women could vote, they formed the Lowell Female Labor Reform Association to lobby the state to limit the workday to 10 hours. The women did not win significant changes in their working conditions, but they did lay the groundwork for advancements in women's suffrage and the labor movement that followed.<sup>1</sup>

The Colored Washerwomen of Jackson, Mississippi is thought to be the first union formed in the state.<sup>2</sup> The majority of early unions, however, were formed by and for white men in trade crafts, such as electricians or plumbers, which excluded women. The American Federation of Labor, the AFL, supported inclusion of women and workers of color in theory. In practice, however, it approved the formation of white-only charters.

The Great Depression catalyzed a rebirth in union organizing and labor rights in the American workforce. One of the early laws passed during the New Deal era was the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), which guaranteed unions the right to collective bargaining. Organizing in heavy industry took off, led by the Congress of Industrial Organizations, the CIO. The AFL and the CIO merged in 1955. After World War II, unions took hold across manufacturing industries and greatly advanced the status of their members, whose weekly wages more than tripled between 1945 and 1970 due to bargaining.<sup>3</sup> Chicano and Black labor organizers led high-profile demonstrations during the Civil Rights Movement. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 that came out of the movement was an

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important part of the advancements in civil rights for women and people of color. The United Farm Workers 1965–1970 grape boycott, organized by Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez, demanded safer working conditions and fair pay for Chicano farm workers.<sup>4</sup> The Memphis Sanitation Workers strike in 1968, supported by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and by Coretta Scott King after his assassination, protested the city's inhumane treatment of Black sanitation workers.<sup>5</sup>

Fifteen million workers in the U.S. are union members, combining their efforts in local labor movements across the country.<sup>6</sup> There are also other kinds of worker organizations for fast food workers, restaurant workers, domestic workers and many others. Other organizations campaign across job categories on issues such as minimum wage and paid leave, including several contemporary movements for workers rights that may be active in your community. The Fight for \$15, for example, is a campaign to raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour. Paid sick leave for part-time workers is a demand that has come up repeatedly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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## U.S. Labor Laws

Signed into law in 1935, the NLRA protects a worker's right to form, support, or assist a union and to lawfully strike over working conditions.<sup>1</sup> Employers cannot retaliate against workers for engaging in any of these protected activities. The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) enforces the law and aids unions in accessing their rights.

Workers who want to improve their working conditions begin by talking among themselves and often contact an existing union. If the majority of workers say they want to form a union, they can apply to host an official election with the NLRB. And if the majority of workers vote for the union in the election, the NLRB will certify the union as the workers' representative in collective bargaining, which requires that employers meet with the union to negotiate employee contracts.

Employers can also voluntarily recognize a union without an official election, if their workers request it. However, it is more common that employers oppose unionization at their establishments. Many do not want to give up their advantage in negotiating things like worker compensation or benefits. The term *union-busting* refers to employer actions aimed at diminishing the power of unions

and discouraging people from joining them. Employers are not supposed to intimidate or spy on union efforts, but they are known to do things such as host informational meetings regarding all the reasons employees should oppose the union efforts, which was an example of union-busting mentioned in the film; threaten to close the company; and fire workers who are organizing. Workers that would be represented by a proposed union also have the right to campaign against union efforts.

There are a few categories of workers that have different degrees of union rights. Independent contractors, supervisors, and managers are excluded from labor law protections. Public-sector workers, such as teachers and police officers, are covered by individual state laws, which can vary. Twenty-seven states have passed what are known as "right-to-work" laws. These laws restrict unions from requiring all workers who will be represented by union contracts to help fund their negotiation through dues.<sup>2</sup> See if your state has one: [nctl.org/research/labor-and-employment/right-to-work-laws-and-bills.aspx](https://nctl.org/research/labor-and-employment/right-to-work-laws-and-bills.aspx).

Since the NLRA, more protections for U.S. workers have been signed into law, including these:

- Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, which establishes a minimum wage and child labor standards
- Equal Pay Act of 1963, which updated labor standards to prohibit pay discrimination based on sex
- Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prevents discrimination in the workplace and elsewhere based on race, sex, religion and other classifications
- The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 forbids employment discrimination against anyone at least 40 years of age.
- Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) of 1970, which set and enforces safe working condition standards
- Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, which prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in the workplace and elsewhere
- Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993, which grants temporary leave to family members in certain conditions

## Sources:

- <sup>1</sup> [nlrb.gov/about-nlrb/rights-we-protect/whats-law](https://nlrb.gov/about-nlrb/rights-we-protect/whats-law)
- <sup>2</sup> [nctl.org/research/labor-and-employment/right-to-work-laws-and-bills.aspx](https://nctl.org/research/labor-and-employment/right-to-work-laws-and-bills.aspx)

## Workplace Sexual Harassment and Discrimination

The 9to5 movement helped to raise the issue of sexual harassment—the unwanted behaviors—including unwanted sexual attention, inappropriate comments, groping, and rape—that women were experiencing in the workplace. Workers are protected from sexual harassment by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, which guarantees the right to equal opportunity in employment.<sup>1</sup>

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Eleanor Holmes Norton is credited with creating the guidelines that defined forms of sexual harassment prohibited under the law. In 1977, she became the first woman to chair the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), which is responsible for enforcing Title VII. Before the EEOC appointment, Norton was a lawyer for the ACLU, and among her many cases, she handled the 1970 lawsuit against the publisher of Newsweek on behalf of a group of women workers. Like many other publications at the time, it allowed only men to be reporters and it assigned women to secretarial roles. And even though the women often did reporting work, they did not get credit for such work. Norton won the case, expanding opportunities for women throughout the journalism profession.<sup>2</sup>

After Norton, Clarence Thomas was appointed chair of the EEOC, and Anita Hill worked as his assistant. In 1991, when Thomas was nominated to the U.S. Supreme Court, the story leaked that he had repeatedly sexually harassed Hill while he supervised her. Hill testified to an all-male Senate committee, which subjected her to humiliating questioning. Many women viewers who knew firsthand the realities of workplace sexual harassment were appalled. Although Thomas was ultimately confirmed, sexual harassment claims doubled at the EEOC following the trial and payouts increased for women workers.<sup>3</sup>

Women have been experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace since well before the term had a legal definition. In the 18th and 19th centuries, enslaved women and free domestic workers in America endured rape and abuse.<sup>4</sup> After the Civil War, Congress passed the 14th Amendment granting formerly enslaved people equal protection under the law. In the 1970s, Ruth Bader Ginsburg also worked for the ACLU, alongside Norton. Ginsburg, who was a lawyer for the ACLU's Women's Rights Project, relied on the 14th Amendment to win several landmark rulings that established the illegality of sex discrimination.<sup>4</sup> When Ginsburg was on the U.S. Supreme Court, where she served from 1993 to her death in 2020, she was also instrumental in the passage of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, which makes it easier for workers to challenge unequal pay. In a dissent over a case involving a woman's right to equal pay, Ginsburg urged Congress to pass a law closing a loophole in the Equal Pay Act, which they did in 2009.

The #MeToo movement over the last decade has revealed that sexual harassment is still a significant issue for workers—and for women and girls everywhere. It started with an organization founded in 2006 by activist and survivor Tarana Burke. The #MeToo hashtag went viral in 2017 when women throughout the United States and worldwide re-posted it in a collective show of solidarity for survivors of sexual assault and harassment. Women came forward to share stories in the press and online, much like the women storytellers in the 9to5 movement. High-profile cases involving some of America's most powerful men—in Hollywood, news, politics, and finance—led to arrests and resignations. Fifteen states have passed new laws designed to strengthen protections

for workers from sexual harassment.<sup>5</sup> However, studies have shown that more must be done to protect the safety of women workers, especially women in service jobs, like waiting tables and cleaning hotels, who report some of the highest levels of harassment of any industry.

## Sources:

- <sup>1</sup> [metoomvmt.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Sexual-Harassment-in-the-workplace\\_FAQ.pdf](https://metoomvmt.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Sexual-Harassment-in-the-workplace_FAQ.pdf)
- <sup>2</sup> [cnn.com/2019/07/12/politics/eleanor-holmes-norton-badass-women-of-washington/index.html](https://cnn.com/2019/07/12/politics/eleanor-holmes-norton-badass-women-of-washington/index.html)
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## Organizing 101

Organizing refers to the process of mobilizing and motivating people to work for social change. Organizers work with people to identify problems, outline a vision for change, and plan actions that will pressure decision makers to change policies and practices. The 9to5 organizers in the film outlined these five key steps to movement building:

- 1. Engage people who are affected by the problem.** People most affected by an issue are highly motivated to change it. For many, working to change a problem is part of an effort to heal a harm that has occurred to them in the past. When people most affected by problems empower themselves and others with tools to create change, it has a transformative effect. The 9to5 women in the film described the feeling of being inspired and energized by standing up for their rights and supporting other women in doing the same. Great organizers are often from the communities affected by the problem, which helps them relate to the stories of those they are organizing. Relationship building is critical to organizing.
- 2. Educate. Educate. Educate.** People become willing to stand up for change when they go through an education process that allows them to see their individual problems as part of a larger collective injustice. All movements have an educational component, such as the Freedom Schools in the Civil Rights Movement. The women of 9to5 used small group sessions, reports, meetings, and forums to educate one another. The film, *9 to 5*, with Jane Fonda and Dolly Parton educated people on a mass scale, because it used satire to make office sexism unacceptable. *9to5: The Story of a Movement* is part of the toolbox that we can use to educate one another about workers' and women's rights.
- 3. Define and simplify issues as a group.** Organizers facilitate discussions to find agreement about what they want changed.

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This is also called a vision or mission statement. It helps people unite around a shared understanding of their purpose. The Working Women's Bill of Rights that the Boston 9to5 women wrote, which included items such as equal benefits and regular salary reviews, is a good example of this. Organizers also identify decision makers that have the power to create change, then they develop demands—such as raising pay, improving promotion opportunities, creating accurate job descriptions, and providing health benefits and sick leave—to present to the decision makers. These types of key messages are also helpful when talking to others about the issues—they enable organizers to discuss the issues clearly and consistently, in a way that people will understand.

- 4. Create a meeting place.** Movements depend on convening people to build relationships and make plans. Organizers regularly plan meetings and events as part of their responsibilities. The 9to5 organizers rented an office space to make it easier to meet. During the COVID-19 pandemic, organizers are using new technology tools to meet online. Often, it can be difficult to get people to commit to attending meetings, especially working women that have many responsibilities, but there are ways to counteract that. Atlanta 9to5 organizer Verna Barksdale, for example, assigned people things to bring to meetings to make it more likely they would show up.
- 5. Engage in actions and campaigns that can be won and claimed publicly.** Decision makers typically do not make changes that upset the status quo without some pressure. Organizers create pressure on decision makers by designing campaigns and planning actions that expose wrongdoing. Some actions in the film included distributing leaflets outside an office building and handing out awards for the worst boss—such visually creative and humorous actions are often effective at getting attention. If the first action doesn't pressure the decision maker to act, organizers need to be ready with more actions that escalate the pressure on decision makers.

Organizing does not always result in demands being met. Sometimes campaigns lose. Organizers work to set group expectations so that people are prepared for losses and will stay motivated even after a setback. During campaigns, movement leaders regularly reassess their actions to see if they are working or if they need a new strategy. Celebrating small victories is also critical to group morale. If people aren't seeing changes, are overworked, or are facing too many losses, they may feel the urge to quit. Good organizers practice and promote a group culture of self-care, which refers to the nurturing of physical and mental health while organizing for social change. They recognize that their work is an important continuation of movements that came before and will continue long into the future.

## Building Inclusive Movements

Successful movements attract and include a wide variety of people. The bigger and more inclusive a movement, the more people it attracts. Organizers continually work to get new people involved and help develop new group leaders. The 9to5 women determined their members' strengths and matched them to jobs that needed to be done in the group. Usually, the more included, involved, and impactful people feel, the more eager they are to help the group meet its goals.

Many 20th-century social movements in the United States were criticized for excluding specific groups from their organizing work. For example, most early unions excluded women workers. The 9to5 movement was notable for bringing women together both as workers and as women, and appealed to women across class and racial lines. The term intersectionality, coined in 1989 by legal scholar Kimberlee Crenshaw, has come to include a type of organizing that focuses on the points where discrimination intersects and overlaps in people's lives.<sup>1</sup> Intersectional movements today, such as the Women's March, #MeToo, and Black Lives Matter, all led by women of color, prioritize the concerns of people affected by multiple forms of discrimination to create change for multiple social groups.

In contemporary culture, the exclusion of people from certain social groups is often not explicit or obvious. Instead, it occurs when leaders fail to build relationships in underrepresented communities and/or create an unwelcoming atmosphere for people to join the movement. For example, if women workers regularly hear sexist comments at union meetings, even if they are not intended, they may not want to continue showing up to participate. To attract a diverse membership, strong movements ensure leadership teams are inclusive so that all members know that they have the equal opportunity to make decisions.

Building an inclusive movement—or workplace or organizational culture, for that matter—does not just happen, it requires commitment. The 9to5 organizers paired people of different backgrounds together to help build relationships across social groups—such as younger women and older women, white women and women of color, and so on. Organizations can also create policies, such as a code of conduct or community agreement, so there are clear expectations of how members should conduct themselves in the movement. Many plan seminars on, for example, bias training to help leaders examine personal beliefs that may result in discrimination. Others create accountability systems to repair harms if they occur.<sup>2</sup>

### Sources:

- <sup>1</sup> [unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/6/explainer-intersectional-feminism-what-it-means-and-why-it-matters](https://unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/6/explainer-intersectional-feminism-what-it-means-and-why-it-matters)
- <sup>2</sup> [hbr.org/2020/05/diversity-and-inclusion-efforts-that-really-work](https://hbr.org/2020/05/diversity-and-inclusion-efforts-that-really-work)

# DISCUSSING THE FILM



## Framing the Conversation

Screening events for *9to5: The Story of a Movement* will be taking place online during the COVID-19 pandemic at a time when working women face significant challenges. Workers may be facing unemployment, low wages, decreased benefits, increased family demands, health care concerns, and/or the loss of loved ones. Your events are an opportunity for working people—especially working women and non-binary people—to connect, share their experiences, and support each other through a difficult time. When considering your speakers and your target audiences, work to bring together workers from several different industries, generations, and backgrounds. Hearing a variety of perspectives will better help your audience members find stories that resonate with their unique experiences and gain a wider understanding of what workers face today.

Join us in recognizing the accomplishments of organizers and change-makers who work to create more opportunities for all community members.

- Create spaces where workers can share their own experiences and hear stories from other workers across generations and industries.
- Educate community members about labor rights and equip people with tools to organize for change in their workplaces and elsewhere.
- Connect the 9to5 movement to contemporary worker movements for equal pay, increased benefits, and workplace safety from sexual harassment.
- Celebrate the people and the movements that have created widespread change in the lives of American workers.

# DISCUSSING THE FILM

These questions can be used in online chats with audiences or posed to speakers in a panel discussion following the film. If you are using them in a panel discussion, it is a good idea to review the questions with speakers in advance so they are prepared to answer.

- 1 How did it feel to hear the women interviewed in *9to5* talk about their working conditions? Did any of the stories surprise you? Why or why not?
- 2 Ellen Cassedy described *9to5* workers as an “untapped group of women whose voice was not being heard in the women’s movement, in the labor movement, and in the business world.” What do you think she meant by that?
- 3 What does being an organizer mean to you? Why are you drawn to organizing?
- 4 What were some of the *9to5* workers’ demands of their employers? Have you ever made similar demands of your employer?
- 5 The *9to5* organizers used surveys and newsletters to collect feedback from workers and shape their demands. What tools do you use in your organization? How do you determine common goals and a shared vision that reflect the needs of your members?
- 6 “We built an organization that we wanted to be in,” said organizer Karen Nussbaum in the film. How was *9to5* different from other organizations? How can organizations become more inclusive for women and all people?
- 7 What strategies did *9to5* use to make sure the organization was inclusive for women of color? How does your organization create a welcoming space for a diverse membership?
- 8 “The premise was not only to fight for employment rights, but to help women develop themselves and develop their leadership,” said Verna Barksdale, a *9to5* organizer in Atlanta. What examples of professional development did you see in the film? How did the new skills benefit the workers? What types of professional development do you want in your workplace?
- 9 The *9to5* organizers inspired the film *9 to 5* and the title song. What role do you think popular culture played in achieving change in the office workplace? Why do you think the film and song were effective?
- 10 “The movement has an anthem,” said Jane Fonda about Dolly Parton’s song “9 to 5.” What other movement anthems can you think of? How do you use music in your organizing work?
- 11 Organizers in *9to5* called their demonstrations “actions.” What examples of actions did you see in the film? What is the purpose of an action? What actions has your group taken?
- 12 How has organizing changed during the COVID-19 pandemic? What tools are organizers using to sustain and grow movements when they cannot meet in person?
- 13 What are some tactics that employers use to oppose unions? What should organizers be prepared to face?
- 14 What do you do when you lose? How do you personally stay committed? How do you create resilient organizations?
- 15 What are some negotiating tips you recommend for the workplace? What advice do you have for someone asking their employer for a raise, for example?
- 16 Why do you think the *9to5* movement was successful? How do you define success when you are organizing for change?
- 17 Which laws protect workers from sexual harassment in the workplace? What advice would you give to someone experiencing harassment in the workplace?
- 18 What can organizations do to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace? What have you seen that has been effective?
- 19 What are the fundamental protections laid out in the National Labor Relations Act? What do people need to know about their labor rights?
- 20 How have labor laws changed since the 1970s? What state and local labor laws are in place where you live?
- 21 Which present-day worker movements inspire you? Which organizations are you following?
- 22 Which unions exist locally? Which groups do they serve?
- 23 Who are the women that have inspired you? What about them inspires you?
- 24 How has the COVID-19 crisis affected your workplace? What do workers need in order to support themselves and their families through the pandemic?
- 25 What advice do you have for beginning organizers? Where should someone start if they want to create change?

# POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Partnerships are the key to a great event. Look for partner organizations that serve your target audience for the event. They can help you promote the event to their members and find knowledgeable speakers for a post-screening discussion. Here are some suggestions.

- **Women's groups** can provide help and advice. 9to5 is a national organization with chapters in California, Colorado, Georgia, and Wisconsin: [9to5.org/chapters](https://9to5.org/chapters). You can also look through 9to5's partner list for a local organization: [9to5.org/chapter/national-network](https://9to5.org/chapter/national-network). The American Association of University Women (AAUW) is another good place to look for a local branch: [aauw.org/branch\\_locator/index.php](https://aauw.org/branch_locator/index.php). Find more potential speakers or partners here: Junior League ([ajli.org](https://ajli.org)), League of Women Voters ([lww.org](https://lww.org)), National Council Negro Women ([ncnw.org](https://ncnw.org)), National Council of Jewish Women ([ncjw.org](https://ncjw.org)), National Organization for Women ([now.org/chapter](https://now.org/chapter)), and YWCA ([ywca.org](https://ywca.org)).
- **Union representatives** can educate your audience about the basics of labor organizing. The labor movement has local unions that represent teachers, electricians, service workers, and more. The SEIU is the union that the 9to5 organizers worked with in the film. To find a local SEIU chapter in your state, see here: [seiu.org/members#local-select](https://seiu.org/members#local-select). For other local unions, check here: [aflcio.org/about-us/our-unions-and-allies/state-federations-and-central-labor-councils](https://aflcio.org/about-us/our-unions-and-allies/state-federations-and-central-labor-councils). The United Farmworkers Union, which organizes farm labor, was also mentioned in the film: [ufw.org/about-us/ufw-offices](https://ufw.org/about-us/ufw-offices).
- **State and regional labor officials** can talk about the current labor trends in your state or decisions that affect worker rights. For example, a regional representative from the National Labor Relations Board can educate audience members about their rights and filing charges against employers: [nrlb.gov/about-nrlb/what-we-do/investigate-charges](https://nrlb.gov/about-nrlb/what-we-do/investigate-charges). Or find your state's labor board here: [dol.gov/agencies/whd/state/contacts](https://dol.gov/agencies/whd/state/contacts).
- **Legal advocates and workers activists** addressing sexual harassment in the workplace and other worker movements, such as local Fight for \$15 organizers, can help educate your audience about dealing with harassment. Lawyers that represent women in sexual harassment cases can help inform your audience about their rights in the workplace and about any recourse they have if those rights are violated. Also, activists participating in the #MeToo movement can share their experiences being part of the collective action that exposed workplace sexual harassment. Find a lawyer in the National Women's Law Center's Legal Network for Gender Equity here: [nwlc.org/about/nwlc-legal-network](https://nwlc.org/about/nwlc-legal-network). Lastly, you can find workers advocates and labor activists from Coalition of Labor Union Women ([cluw.org](https://cluw.org)), the Fight for \$15 ([fightfor15.org](https://fightfor15.org)), the National Domestic Workers Alliance ([domesticworkers.org](https://domesticworkers.org)), and the National Employment Law Project ([nelp.org/experts](https://nelp.org/experts)).
- **Historians or professors** who specialize in women and gender studies or labor history may be able to share information about local history, such as women workers' strikes in the region. You can find historians, labor educators, and working-class activists through the National Women's Studies Association ([nwsa.org](https://nwsa.org)), United Association for Labor Education ([uale.org](https://uale.org)), and The Labor and Working-Class History Association ([lawcha.org](https://lawcha.org)).

# ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY IDEAS



You can host an activity to engage your audience in addition to or in place of a panel discussion. Engagement activities can be adapted for online events using live streaming or pre-recorded video. Use the opportunity to get creative with social media and invite people to interact and share content online with the hashtag #9to5PBS.

- Host an **organizing workshop** to educate your audience members about some basic skills for organizing people in their community around a cause. The Midwest Academy, where the first 9to5 organizers were trained, offers consulting: [midwestacademy.com/onsite-consulting](http://midwestacademy.com/onsite-consulting). You could have a facilitator streaming live, walking people through activities they can do on their own. For example, a Problem Tree activity gets people thinking about the root causes of a problem and the structures that enable it to continue:
    - First, ask your audience members to think of a problem they would like to address in their community.
    - Next, have them sketch a picture of a tree on a piece of paper and fill in each part of the tree as follows:
      - The leaves of the tree represent the symptoms of the problem—or the visible, tangible issues you see around you, for example, sexual harassment in the workplace.
      - The trunk of the tree represents the structures, policies, and practices that enable the problem to continue, for example, workplace policies that allow sexual harassment to go unpunished.
      - And finally, the roots represent the underlying historical and social causes of the problem, for example, sexism.
- After people have worked on their tree, explain that an effective organizing campaign will aim to change the structure (the trunk) of the problem, whereas focusing on the leaves would likely result in band-aid solutions and focusing on the roots may not result in any timely change. To conclude the activity, have people take a picture of their sketch and post it online with the hashtag #9to5PBS. As a follow-up step, participants can create a “power map” related to the problem they’ve identified: [trainings.350.org/?resource=power-mapping-activity](http://trainings.350.org/?resource=power-mapping-activity).
- Provide **leadership development**, such as how to negotiate a raise or improve public speaking skills. You could partner with

# ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY IDEAS

- established trainers to lead a mini seminar, by streaming live or via prerecorded video. For example, the AAUW provides courses in salary negotiation: [aauw.org/resources/programs/salary](https://www.aauw.org/resources/programs/salary), and organizations like the Toastmasters coach people in public speaking: [toastmasters.org/find-a-club](https://www.toastmasters.org/find-a-club). You could also expand on the public speaking advice shared by the 9to5 organizers in the film:
- Talk loudly. Open your mouth.
  - Keep your feet on the ground.
  - Use eye contact.
  - Control your hands.
  - Don't run away when you're done.
- You can play a round of **know-your-rights trivia** to help your audience members familiarize themselves with labor organizing rights.
    - Which law established a worker's right to join a union? National Labor Relations Act, Fair Labor Standards Act, Occupational Safety and Health Act
    - Which one of these groups can organize a union? Supervisors, workers, contractors
    - Workers can hand out union literature on work premises during work hours. True or false
    - Which of the following is not a lawful reason for a union to strike? Wage increase, unfair labor practice, objections over an employer doing business with another company
    - The process of a union negotiating a contract on behalf of workers is called collective bargaining. True or false
  - Host an **awards ceremony** at your event. The film showed organizers giving awards to the worst bosses, but you can give this a positive spin by recognizing union organizers or labor-friendly businesses at your event. You could create a simple Google Form ([google.com/forms](https://www.google.com/forms)) to take nominations from the community in advance of your event as a way to generate interest and promote attendance. For virtual events, you could also video record a ceremonial awarding of prizes to local businesses and create a short video feature for your event. Awards could include "Best Boss," "Best Place to Work," and "Best Union."
  - Be a **professional mentoring** matchmaker. For example, you can invite several professional women or union leaders to volunteer as mentors at your event. Have them introduce themselves and their expertise and invite audience members to apply for a formal mentorship with them. Make sure to talk to your volunteer mentors in advance to determine the parameters of the mentorship, such as the amount of time the mentor would be able to commit to the mentorship. At a virtual event, you could also do mentoring breakout sessions if the tools allow—for example, Zoom allows online breakout sessions ([zoom.us](https://zoom.us)).
  - Publish a **newsletter or zine** based on your event. You can ask audience members to contribute stories before or after the event and arrange for a designer or artist to assemble the submissions into a newsletter-style publication, like the 9to5 organizers did in the film. A zine is a do-it-yourself magazine that features illustration and art alongside text. You can choose to distribute it online or as a printed piece. During the event, make sure to gather your audience members' email, mailing, or social media address to send them a copy of the publication when it is complete. For inspiration, sign up for the 9to5 e-newsletter: [9to5.org/getinvolved/email-signup](https://9to5.org/getinvolved/email-signup). And here's a helpful guide on how to create a zine: [vice.com/en\\_us/article/d3jxyj/how-to-make-a-zine-vgtl](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/d3jxyj/how-to-make-a-zine-vgtl).
  - Conduct a **community survey** about working conditions in your area. Reach out to a local university, publication, or professional polling service to collect information on the status of area workers. You can also get your audience involved and ask them to circulate the survey throughout their networks. It could include questions about how the pandemic has affected their work; also, you could borrow from the 9to5 surveys, which included questions about wages, promotions, job training, health benefits, sex discrimination, pension, overtime, sick leave, union, vacation, racial discrimination, coffee breaks, maternity leave, daycare, and job description.

# RESOURCES

Browse more sites related to the film *9to5: The Story of a Movement*. You can also select links to include in digital promotions and in chats during your virtual event.

## Media

- [pbs.org/9to5](https://www.pbs.org/9to5) – Film page for the PBS *Independent Lens* broadcast premiere
- [facebook.com/9to5doc](https://www.facebook.com/9to5doc) – Facebook page for the documentary
- [newday.com/film/union-maids](https://www.newday.com/film/union-maids) – Film page for *Union Maids*, a documentary by Jim Klein and Julia Reichert about women organizing in the 1930s
- [pbs.org/independentlens/films/dolores-huerta](https://www.pbs.org/independentlens/films/dolores-huerta) – *Independent Lens* documentary *Dolores*, about farmworker union organizer Dolores Huerta
- [archive.org/details/withbabiesandbannersstoryofthewomensemergencybrigade](https://www.archive.org/details/withbabiesandbannersstoryofthewomensemergencybrigade) – *With Babies and Banners: Story of the Women's Emergency Brigade*, a documentary about members of the United Auto Workers participate in a sit-down strike inside the General Motors plants in Flint, Michigan
- [clarityfilms.org/rosie.html](https://www.clarityfilms.org/rosie.html) – Film page for *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter*, a documentary about women working in factories during WWII and resultant loss of jobs after the war
- [pbslearningmedia.org/collection/the-fight-for-labor-rights](https://www.pbslearningmedia.org/collection/the-fight-for-labor-rights) – Fight for Labor Rights high school curriculum collection on PBS LearningMedia
- [loc.gov/exhibits/civil-rights-act/multimedia/eleanor-holmes-norton.html](https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/civil-rights-act/multimedia/eleanor-holmes-norton.html) – Video interview with Eleanor Holmes Norton, chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, answering questions on Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- [zinnedproject.org/materials/?cond\[0\]=themes\\_str:Labor](https://www.zinnedproject.org/materials/?cond[0]=themes_str:Labor) – Interactive curricula in labor history by the Zinn Education Project
- [zinnedproject.org/materials/films-with-a-conscience](https://www.zinnedproject.org/materials/films-with-a-conscience) – features films the Zinn Project recommend for teaching

## Worker Support and Hotlines

- [metoomvmt.org/explore-healing/hotlines-chats](https://www.metoomvmt.org/explore-healing/hotlines-chats) – Hotlines for survivors of sexual assault and harassment with 24-hour support
- [metoomvmt.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Sexual-Harassment-in-the-workplace\\_FAQ.pdf](https://www.metoomvmt.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Sexual-Harassment-in-the-workplace_FAQ.pdf) – Frequently asked questions about sexual harassment in the workplace from the #MeToo movement
- [nwlc.org/times-up-legal-defense-fund](https://www.nwlc.org/times-up-legal-defense-fund) – Times Up Legal Defense Fund from the National Women's Law Center, which helps connect those who have experienced sexual harassment or discrimination to legal assistance
- [nelp.org/campaigns](https://www.nelp.org/campaigns) – Learn about the resources and benefits available to workers, including those who are unemployed and frontline workers impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic
- [eeoc.gov/filing-charge-discrimination](https://www.eeoc.gov/filing-charge-discrimination) – Information about filing a Charge of Discrimination with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
- [nlrb.gov/about-nlrb/what-we-do/investigate-charges](https://www.nlrb.gov/about-nlrb/what-we-do/investigate-charges) – Information about filing a charge with the National Labor Relations Board
- [aflcio.org/reports/your-rights-work](https://www.aflcio.org/reports/your-rights-work) – Worker rights from the AFL-CIO
- [aflcio.org/reports/sus-derechos-en-el-trabajo](https://www.aflcio.org/reports/sus-derechos-en-el-trabajo) – Worker rights in Spanish, from the AFL-CIO
- [aflcio.org/what-unions-do](https://www.aflcio.org/what-unions-do) – Information about unions and how they help workers
- [aflcio.org/formaunion](https://www.aflcio.org/formaunion) – Details on how to form a union and contact a union organizer
- [aflcio.org/about-us/our-unions-and-allies/state-federations-and-central-labor-councils](https://www.aflcio.org/about-us/our-unions-and-allies/state-federations-and-central-labor-councils) – Contact information for local labor unions
- [familyvaluesatwork.org/resources-and-toolkit](https://www.familyvaluesatwork.org/resources-and-toolkit) – Guides and resources on paid sick leave, paid family leave, and more
- [fightfor15.org/covid19](https://www.fightfor15.org/covid19) – State specific resources for workers affected by the COVID-19 pandemic
- [nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources](https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources) – Resources on economic justice and more
- [osha.gov](https://www.osha.gov) – Website for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration

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ITVS is a San Francisco-based nonprofit organization that has, for over 25 years, funded and partnered with a diverse range of documentary filmmakers to produce and distribute untold stories. ITVS incubates and co-produces these award-winning films and then airs them for free on PBS via our weekly series, *Independent Lens*, as well as other series through our digital platform, OVEE. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. For more information, visit [itvs.org](http://itvs.org).

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*Independent Lens* is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS Monday nights at 10:00 PM. The acclaimed series, with Lois Vossen as executive producer, features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by ITVS, the series is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding from PBS, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. For more visit [pbs.org/independentlens](http://pbs.org/independentlens).

Join the conversation:  
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