

**Press Release**  
**A Community Conversation on the New Faces of Organized Labor**

The Glastonbury MLK Community Initiative invites you to a Community Conversation on December 7 at the Riverfront Community Center at 300 Welles Street, Glastonbury on **The New Faces of Organized Labor: The Shift to Service and Tech Workers**. This free event will begin with a reception at 6:30 and a panel discussion will follow at 7:00.

There's a new labor movement afoot across the U.S. that looks different from the largely blue-collar efforts of the past and is being driven by younger, often highly-educated workers who aren't afraid to form their own unions, with or without national organizations. These include office professionals, healthcare workers and teachers. Recent unionizing efforts at local Apple, Amazon and Starbucks outlets and warehouses are characteristic of this trend.

The panel discussion will focus on the history of unionizing in Connecticut, Dr. King's support for the labor movement and current trends in worker organizing. Panelists include:

- Tom Meiklejohn, a labor attorney in Hartford, who will speak about Dr. King's support for the labor movement and the ways in which unions supported the Civil Rights movement. Tom has extensive experience representing and advising unions with respect to administrative proceedings, arbitrations, contract negotiations and administration, and court litigation. Over the past 20 years, his clients have successfully organized more than ten thousand workers into the labor movement. He has litigated cases involving age, race, national origin, sex discrimination, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, whistleblower protection, First Amendment rights and other civil rights issues, and employment contract issues.
- Michael Cass, Officer in Charge of the Hartford Office of the National Labor Relations Board who will speak on the process and steps for union petitions, types of disputes with some examples and also some of the history of unions in Connecticut. Mike has a long history in working in labor relations, initially for the National Federation of Federal Employees. He joined the NLRB in Hartford in 1983 and became Officer in Charge in 2014. The National Labor Relations Board administers and enforces the National Labor Relations Act. It investigates and remedies unfair labor practices and conducts secret ballot elections to determine whether employees desire union representation.
- Herman Whitter, Director of Affiliate Services & Member Training at the Connecticut Education Association (CEA), which advocates for legislation at the state and federal levels, represents the rights of teachers, and works with state policymakers to continue to elevate the teaching profession and promote public education. Before the CEA, Herman served as Managing Director for the Maryland Education Association and coordinated the statewide collective bargaining program. He served as staff attorney with the Ohio State Legal Services Association and local staff union president and also worked for the Ohio Civil Service Employees Association on matters including dispute resolution, collective bargaining, and grievance arbitration. Herman trained union stewards at Ohio University and taught labor arbitration to students at the Capital University Law School.

- Pedro Zayas, senior communications advisor for the New England Health Care Employees Union, SEIU 1199NE, will speak on efforts to fight for racial justice in labor contracts to achieve economic justice for Black, Latina, APII, Native American, and white working-class communities. Pedro supports workers building unions in health care settings, where women make up the majority of the workforce. Often called “my favorite union” by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., District 1199 has a long activist tradition representing some 29,000 health care providers in Connecticut and Rhode Island. SEIU 1199NE members recently won union contracts for nursing home workers, mental health direct care providers, cooks, case managers, therapists, doctors, maintenance staff, home care workers, and hospital staff, while continuing to advocate for a robust network of state and community-based health care services for all.

Bishop John Selders will moderate the program. Bishop Selders is an ordained minister serving in the United Church of Christ, the Organizing Pastor of Amistad United Church of Christ in Hartford, Assistant Dean of Students and Coordinator of Community Standards at Trinity College and one of the leaders of Moral Monday CT, a grassroots statewide organization committed to a wide range of social justice issues. For 15 years, he served as Executive Director of Zezzo House (an 18-unit housing project) in Hartford. He has taught at the Yale Divinity School, the Andover Newton Theological School, The Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education and the Seattle University School of Theology and Ministry and was the Dean of the Urban Ministry Track for The Anglican Divinity School.

The goal of the GMLKCI Community Conversations program is to engage residents of Glastonbury and surrounding towns in conversations about social justice issues and to inspire service and action. Our facilitator will provide both a starting point and a resource for what we hope will be an inspiring, lively, informative, and thought-provoking conversation.

The Glastonbury MLK Community Initiative’s mission is to increase knowledge about, and understanding of, the philosophy of Dr. Martin Luther King, and to provide leadership and active engagement to build an inclusive community. We believe that bringing people together to discuss openly and honestly important issues relating to social justice will help build a more inclusive and tolerant community.

This is a free event open to all. For additional information, please contact David O’Connor at 860-810-2368 or visit [www.glastonburymlkci.org](http://www.glastonburymlkci.org). Please bring a non-perishable food item to donate to the Glastonbury Food Bank.