

Remarks for Vice President for Human Resources: Employee Recognition Dinner

Perhaps Joe Hill, the well-known labor organizer, hobo, songwriter, and rank-and-file member of the Industrial Workers of the World, said it best: "If the workers took a notion they could stop all speeding trains; Every ship upon the ocean they can tie with mighty chains. Every wheel in the creation, every mine and every mill; Fleets and armies of the nation, will at their command stand still."

It may seem a little corny but this is true. One of the first, and perhaps most obvious things that occurred to me as I sat down to think about workers and what they do is that nothing is or would be possible without them. It occurred to me that it is not so much what people do that is important, but that they do it – again and again, and in the process help all of us to succeed.

When we asked her, Brandeis's own Jaqueline Jones, the award-winning historian whose book "American Work" is one of the most important ever written in its field, said that all of the workers here at our University constitute "an important rainbow" of people, from academics, administrators and executives, to maintenance and office workers, and so on. Recognized around the world for her research and books about labor, one of which was a Pulitzer Prize finalist, she stressed for us how important one group of workers is to another. "Often the people who are the least visible among us are the most necessary in our lives," she said. What this tells us is that even the most successful, the most famous, the most recognized and admired people in the world would never have reached their status had others not worked with and for them. The same is true here at our University.

Thank you all so much for what you do for Brandeis each and every day.