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Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition

Ruth Sergel

Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition

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Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition

Abstract
[Excerpt] The focus of the Coalition is on one of the enduring lessons of the fire, which is no less true today than in 1911—your choice as an individual to be active or passive in civic engagement has a direct impact on our broader community. We demonstrated a model that melded live and virtual organizing to unite diverse communities in a collaborative process. As each partner stepped forward, he or she was celebrated for his or her individual voice and goals. Together we created a commemoration for the 2011 Centennial that honored those lost in the Triangle Factory fire and continued to work towards a world in which conditions like those that led to the Triangle Factory fire will not be tolerated.

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REMEMBER THE TRIANGLE FIRE COALITION

*Ruth Sergel**

Some who stopped by a Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition open meeting in the months leading up to the March 25, 2011 Centennial (the Centennial) of the fire were a bit taken aback. Loud and boisterous, with over eighty people attending, it was nearly impossible to get everyone seated. Stacks of fliers mingled with cookie crumbs and pretzels. Immediately, everyone was invited to speak as we went around the room. Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition members simply introduced themselves while newcomers were invited to talk about what they were planning for the 2011 Centennial and what resources they might need or have to offer. Announcements were punctuated by clapping and cheers. We broke into small working groups, which were both fiercely opinionated and supremely functional. By the end of the meeting, every person had spoken at least once and left with specific tasks to perform. For the Centennial of the infamous fire, we had created the world we want to live in.

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It began with a hunch.

The organizing principles for the Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition (the Coalition) were deceptively simple: to welcome all who wanted to participate and to entrust the decision-making power to the people doing the work. Without institutional support, without major funding, without traditional hierarchical leadership, and without a formal vision of our end goal, we acted on our belief in the experience and abilities of the diverse communities that are passionately connected to the Triangle Factory fire. Over a three-year period, the Coalition grew from a few individuals into a national network of over 250 partners who organized hundreds of educational, activist, and artistic events across the country.

The focus of the Coalition is on one of the enduring lessons of the fire, which is no less true today than in 1911—your choice as an

* Founder, Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition.

individual to be active or passive in civic engagement has a direct impact on our broader community. We demonstrated a model that melded live and virtual organizing to unite diverse communities in a collaborative process. As each partner stepped forward, he or she was celebrated for his or her individual voice and goals. Together we created a commemoration for the 2011 Centennial that honored those lost in the Triangle Factory fire and continued to work towards a world in which conditions like those that led to the Triangle Factory fire will not be tolerated.

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Like many New Yorkers, I grew up with the story of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire. The Triangle Waist Company employed over five hundred people who worked on the eighth, ninth, and tenth floors of the modern factory[1] which still stands just one block east of Washington Square Park.[2] On March 25, 1911, a fire broke out on the eighth floor.[3] Workers ran to the fire escape but it collapsed, dropping them to their deaths.[4] A call to the tenth floor gave enough notice so that almost everyone, including the two bosses, was able to escape.[5] With no advance warning and a critical exit locked, many on the ninth floor were doomed.[6] Fire trucks arrived but the ladders only reached to the sixth floor.[7] Workers on the ninth floor were forced to make a choice between the fire and the window, one hundred feet above the pavement.[8] Witnesses on the street watched in horror as people began to jump out of the building.[9] In all, 146 people, mostly young immi-

1. LEON STEIN, THE TRIANGLE FIRE 12 (ILR Press 2001).

2. The Brown Building, formerly the Asch Building, now houses science labs and classrooms for New York University. It is located at 29 Washington Place, New York City, NY 10003. The exterior of the building bears a plaque honoring the victims of the fire. The building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is a designated New York City landmark. *See* N.Y.C. LANDMARKS PRES. COMM'N, BROWN BUILDING LANDMARK DESIGNATION, LP-2128 (Mar. 25, 2003), *available at* http://home2.nyc.gov/html/lpc/downloads/pdf/reports/brown.pdf; *175 Facts About NYU: Asch Building*, N.Y.U., http://www.nyu.edu/library/bobst/research/arch/175/pages/asch.htm (last visited Oct. 18, 2011); *Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Building*, NAT'L PARK SERVICE, http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/pwwmh/ny30.htm (last modified Mar. 30, 1998).

3. *Id.* at 11–13.

4. *Id.* at 58.

5. *Id.* at 44–47.

6. *Id.* at 54–55.

7. *Id.* at 18.

8. *Id.* at 16.

9. *Id.* at 14–20.

grant women, were killed.[10] The owners, who had earlier opposed a strike by workers demanding safer working conditions,[11] faced trial for manslaughter but were acquitted.[12] The fire galvanized the progressive movement and became a rallying cry for social and economic justice.[13]

The story of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire is particularly compelling because it carries the seeds of so many iconic struggles. As an adolescent, I was drawn by the tales of the young women who were so close to my age, as revealed in Leon Stein's seminal book *The Triangle Fire*.[14] As I grew older, class, gender, identity, and neighborhood all began to take a broader role in my interest in the tragedy. Like many others, I was drawn to the Triangle fire by one thread but soon found myself in a web of compelling narratives that revealed a stark truth—if we, as a society, do not stand up for justice, a single individual can do everything right and still be forced to jump out of a ninth story window to avoid being burned alive.

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The Coalition grew out of the community-based annual commemoration "Chalk."[15] I had long wanted to create a project about the Triangle fire but only after reading David von Drehle's *Triangle: The Fire that Changed America*[16] did I begin to have an idea of how to do it. In closing, von Drehle listed the victims of the fire.[17] Paging through the names, ages, and addresses sparked a jumble of heartbreaking visions—sisters who had perished, neighbors who might have walked to work together. There are many ways we shape the stories that create our communal memory. For Chalk, I wanted to design an engagement with the history of the Triangle fire that would depend on active community participation.

Chalk was launched on the 2004 anniversary of the fire. Participants fanned out across the city to the former home of each Triangle victim. On the pavement, volunteers inscribed the names and ages of

10. *Id.* at 104–09.
11. *Id.* at 168.
12. *Id.* at 158, 199.
13. *Id.* at 211–12.
14. Stein's book is the original source for all Triangle fire research. At a time when there was little public interest, Leon Stein sought out survivors, determined to record their stories.
15. *Chalk*, STREETPICTURES.ORG, http://www.streetpictures.org/chalk (last visited Sept. 26, 2011).
16. DAVID VON DREHLE, TRIANGLE: THE FIRE THAT CHANGED AMERICA (2003).
17. *See id.* at 269–83.

the victim, that he or she had lived at that specific address, and had died in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire on March 25, 1911. They posted a flier nearby that detailed a short history of the fire and its legacy, and then moved on to the next name on their list.

I started the project by e-mailing a few friends. Almost immediately, I was contacted by people many steps removed who wanted to participate. Each year, the Chalk community has grown and it now includes family members of the victims, current residents of the buildings, and people from the wide range of communities that feel a personal connection to the Triangle Factory fire. While Chalk depends on the Internet to function, the experience itself is purposefully not technology-based. Each year, the names are written and soon wash away. Yet the following year—and each year after—the community will rise to inscribe the names again as we visibly insist on remembering those lost lives.

Participating in Chalk mirrors the process of coming to political consciousness. The focal point of the project is the individual Chalker.[18] The decision to participate imparts a personal responsibility for the Triangle victim whose name is carried. The first time one chalks it is clumsy and a bit embarrassing. To chalk each name is to engage in a visible, public, and transgressive act. Juggling chalk, fliers, and tape is an inherently awkward process, but as the work continues a rhythm develops. Chalk reveals a geography of memory in which one is simultaneously in the present and the past. Crossing the path of other chalk markings, the current community begins to reveal itself. At the same time, one can't help but imagine whether these young neighbors knew each other, or whether their families consoled one another. Conversations are started as passersby stop, linger, and often share their own stories of family ties to the garment industry or current workplace struggles. At the Brown Building, hundreds of people gather at the annual union commemoration. No matter what prompted the individual to participate, he or she is now part of a larger community.

Over the years Chalk has evolved in ways I never could have imagined. Bursting out from the simple instructions, Chalkers have created wildly imaginative immediate memorials with drawings and rituals of their own design. Communities outside New York City have shaped the project to their own needs by chalking the names at vigils across the country. In 2011, the chalked names surrounded the Brown

18. Both men and women Chalk each year, of course! However, because an important part of the Triangle fire concerns the visibility and role of women, I use the feminine pronoun.

Building and included the victims of recent garment factory fires in Bangladesh.[19]

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I launched the Coalition in 2008 with a small group of people who I thought might be interested in building the 2011 Centennial. In a borrowed room and with no set schedule or agenda, we talked about why the fire was important to us and what might be possible. We had to throw away any preconceived notions of what ought to be practical and, instead, uncover within ourselves our dreams for the project. With this preparation we could later turn to the broader community and invite them to do the same.

The Triangle Factory fire elicits a deeply personal response from many people. But what is unique is the broad diversity of personal connections to the fire. For descendants of the victims, it is family; for others, it is ties to the garment industry or the labor movement. Still others identify because they are women, or Jewish, or Italian-American. Fire and safety professionals, including many who were involved on September 11th, often find that the Triangle Factory fire resonates with current concerns. We did not tell people what to do. Nor did we judge what they had to offer. We did not offer a final vision or goal. Instead, by setting up a collaborative process, we acted on our belief in the expertise of all who would come to participate.

How we choose to commemorate the fire demonstrates much about who we are as a society today. One reason the legacy of the fire resonates is because it occurred at a time when the rights of workers and responsibilities of citizenship were hotly contested issues. The fire did not occur in a hidden tenement sweatshop. The Triangle Waist Company was a relatively modern factory and, for the most part, its facilities and operations were consistent with contemporary law.[20] But the actions of the factory's owners, coupled with widespread societal indifference to the plight of the factory's workers contributed to con-

19. The names of the Bangladeshi victims were chalked by Kalpona Akter, an activist for the rights of garment workers in Bangladesh. Ms. Akter came to the United States for the one hundred year anniversary of the Triangle fire courtesy of the International Labor Rights Forum and SweatFree Communities. For more information on attention to global sweatshops at the 2011 Centennial see Rosemary Feitelberg, *Debating the 'Global Sweatshop,'* SWEATFREE.ORG (Mar. 24, 2011), http://www.sweatfree.org/news_wwd-3-24-2011.

20. Almost everything I know about the Triangle fire is from three key texts. In addition to STEIN, *supra* note 1, and VON DREHLE, *supra* note 16, a must-read is RICHARD A. GREENWALD, THE TRIANGLE FIRE, THE PROTOCOLS OF PEACE, AND INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY IN PROGRESSIVE ERA NEW YORK (2005).

ditions that made a tragedy like the Triangle Factory fire seemingly inevitable.[21]

Less than two years earlier a group of fiercely brave women had confronted the city demanding better working conditions and organizing rights. In 1909, these young immigrant women instigated wildcat strikes against individual garment factories.[22] Many forces were aligned against the success of their organizing efforts. The strikers were confronted not only with a loss of income, but also a lack of representation in organized labor, public humiliation, and physical violence—often with the cooperation of the police.[23] The workers at the Triangle Waist Company who voted to join a union were fired.[24] In November 1909, union leaders held a packed meeting at Cooper Union's Great Hall.[25] The leaders spoke eloquently, but declined to call for a general strike. As the meeting wound down with no commitment to action, young Clara Lemlich, one of the organizers of the strikes, strode forward and was lifted to the stage by the audience. Upending her role as a passive subject of the speeches to taking the podium herself, Lemlich called for an immediate general strike.[26] With this audacious act, the Uprising of 20,000 was launched. Thousands of young women took to the streets, where they were beaten and imprisoned for seeking decent pay and working conditions.[27] Public support of the strikers began to grow as women from all classes joined in support of the strike and newspapers began to report more sympathetically on the plight of the young workers.[28] However, Max Blanck and Isaac Harris, owners of the Triangle Waist Company, established an owner's association to organize opposition to the strikers' efforts.[29] As the strike dragged on, public support began to wane. By February 1910, the strikers were forced to settle with the factory owners. The settlement produced a number of improvements such as advances in hours and pay, but without broad public support the strikers were unable to push for more significant concessions.[30]

21. For a discussion of the Uprising of 20,000, see VON DREHLE, *supra* note 16, at 56–86.

22. *See id.* (discussing the Uprising of 20,000).

23. *Id.* at 70–71.

24. *Id.* at 49.

25. *Id.* at 55.

26. *Id.* at 55–58.

27. *Id.* at 58–60.

28. *Id.* at 66–68.

29. *Id.* at 62.

30. *Id.* at 86.

Thirteen months later, the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire sent 146 young workers to their deaths. In the aftermath, New Yorkers were confronted with an uncomfortable question: if the public had been more supportive of the strikers, could the disaster have been averted? While a small group of politicians buried the unidentified victims in a distant Brooklyn cemetery,[31] hundreds of thousands took to the streets of Manhattan in a silent march to honor the dead.[32] At a memorial at the Metropolitan Opera House, Rose Schneiderman famously confronted the public:

> I would be a traitor to these poor burned bodies if I came here to talk good fellowship. We have tried you good people of the public and we have found you wanting. . . .
>
> . . . .
>
> This is not the first time girls have been burned alive in the city. Every week I must learn of the untimely death of one of my sister workers. Every year thousands of us are maimed. The life of men and women is so cheap and property is so sacred. There are so many of us for one job it matters little if 146 of us are burned to death. We have tried you citizens; we are trying you now, and you have a couple of dollars for the sorrowing mothers, brothers and sisters by way of a charity gift. But every time the workers come out in the only way they know to protest against conditions which are unbearable the strong hand of the law is allowed to press down heavily upon us. I can't talk fellowship to you who are gathered here. Too much blood has been spilled. I know from my experience it is up to the working people to save themselves. The only way they can save themselves is by a strong working-class movement.[33]

Why does the narrative of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire continue to resonate so strongly? I would venture that we find the story compelling at least in part because it confronts us with the cost of complicity. In the wake of the fire, many individuals revisited their own responses to the strike and took concrete steps to more actively engage in civil society. Frances Perkins, a witness to the fire, went on

31. STEIN, *supra* note 1, at 149–50.

32. VON DREHLE, *supra* note 16, at 193.

33. Rose Schneiderman, Organizer for the Int'l Ladies Garment Workers Union, Address to Memorial at the Metropolitan Opera House: We Have Found You Wanting (Apr. 2, 1911) (transcript *available at* http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/trianglefire/primary/testimonials/ootss_RoseSchneiderman.html?sto_sec=mourning). The Kheel Center at the School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell University is the repository for the records of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) and Leon Stein's papers. Their website is a treasure trove for research on the Triangle fire. REMEMBERING THE TRIANGLE FACTORY FIRE, http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/trianglefire/ (last visited Oct. 19, 2011).

to become the first female Secretary of Labor. Fifty years later she recalled the reaction to the fire:

> I can't begin to tell you how disturbed the people were everywhere. It was as though we had all done something wrong. It shouldn't have been. We were sorry. Mea culpa! Mea culpa! We didn't want it that way. We hadn't intended to have 147 girls and boys killed in a factory.[34]

Frances Perkins joined a pantheon of determined individuals who enacted bold reforms to labor laws, many of which protect us to this day. Looking back, it is convenient to say that the owners bore sole responsibility for the Triangle Factory fire—and in fact Blanck and Harris were particularly vehement in opposing reforms that might have prevented the tragedy. But it is important to keep in mind that their actions occurred in a context in which the broader community also declined to stand with the strikers who had sought their support.

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In the months leading up to the Centennial, we found ourselves in similarly tumultuous times. We were a country at war, a city still grappling with September 11th. Unemployment and underemployment were rampant, and we were experiencing the broadest economic divide since the Gilded Age. All of these factors figured deeply as I began to contemplate what the Coalition might be.

It was clear that we had to consider how to create a commemoration that could respond to the multiplicity of narratives that surrounded the fire. A different kind of leadership was required. Our role was not to direct but to create a platform that supported people in doing what they knew best. We hashed out a simple focus—to build a network of support for the Centennial and the establishment of a permanent memorial. As our mission coalesced, we began to construct calls for participation that included immediate positive reinforcement for those who stepped up to the challenge.

Our public launch was held on March 25, 2009, the ninety-eighth anniversary of the fire, at Judson Memorial Church. We invited organizations from the community to fill the luminous space with books, films, visual art, and historical exhibitions. Live music was punctuated by a few brief speeches encouraging people to be bold in their planning for the Centennial. Later that year, the Coalition created 146

34. Frances Perkins, Lecture at Cornell University, School of Industrial and Labor Relations (Sept. 30, 1964) (transcript *available at* www.ilr.cornell.edu/trianglefire/primary/lectures/FrancesPerkinsLecture.html?location=Investigation,+Trial,+and+Reform).

shirtwaists which volunteers carried high on bamboo poles in the Labor Day Parade with Workers United.[35] Each person carrying a shirtwaist wore a sash with the hand drawn name of one of the victims. Along the route we handed out invitations to join us in organizing for the Centennial. Each card bore the name and age of one of the Triangle victims.[36]

At the same time we were building our own infrastructure. We began to schedule open meetings on a regular basis. We expanded our website, launched a Facebook page and Twitter.[37] Although we retained a very loose structure, we were extremely precise and careful with our finances.[38] Despite our many grant applications, funding was scarce. It was often difficult for funders to understand—and perhaps for us to explain—that we were not building a specific event or permanent organization. We were building a network.

As we reached the ninety-nine year anniversary of the fire, momentum began to build. Attendance at our regular monthly meetings shot up. The moment was ripe to launch the second part of the Coalition's mission—a permanent public Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire memorial. In keeping with the spirit of the Coalition, it was important to find a model to develop the project in collaboration with the community that would support not just a physical memorial, but that would also shape the traditions that will become a part of the next commemoration.

The Coalition invited representatives from the many stakeholder communities and those with relevant areas of expertise to serve on the artist selection committee. We encouraged dialogue through our website and held open meetings in New York and San Francisco. With the guidance of a Public Art Administrator, we asked not what people envisioned in a physical memorial, but what they wanted the memorial to do. The community stepped up for a deeply engaged discussion. Today, after the Centennial, the Coalition is moving forward with

35. Workers United is a descendent of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU).

36. *Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition*, FLICKR, http://www.flickr.com/groups/trianglefirecoalition/ (last visited Sept. 26, 2011).

37. *Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition*, FACEBOOK, http://www.facebook.com/trianglefirecoalition (last visited Sept. 27, 2011); *Triangle Coalition (@trianglefire)*, TWITTER, http://www.twitter.com/trianglefire (last visited Sept. 27, 2011).

38. City Lore, a registered 501(c)(3), is our fiscal sponsor.

plans for the establishment of a permanent Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire memorial.[39]

Until this point, the Coalition had made decisions by general consensus. But with our open meetings suddenly much larger, and with the memorial looming, we looked for a way to structure our growing organization that would honor our process thus far. We created an executive committee made up of people who had been integral in building the organization. We established some very basic rules and over time this group of educators, artists, and activists grew into a tightly knit team.[40]

With an internal structure in place we looked to expand our public engagement. One basis of the Coalition's cross-generational success was the layering of live and virtual communities. Open monthly meetings were one avenue to participation, but signing up as a Participating Organization was another. Filling in a short online form, each new partner stepped into an immediate, responsive feedback loop. The new organization was added to the roster on our website and linked in our next e-Blast.[41] On Facebook and Twitter we shouted out their plans for the Centennial. A welcome e-mail to the new partner pointed them to the public acclaim. This boisterous welcome celebrated their contribution and tied them into the greater whole we were building together.

Participating Organizations could post their events to our online calendar. The calendar entry form required information about wheelchair accessibility and interpreter services to encourage a truly inclusive commemoration.[42] Again, the maxim that less control equals more impact, proved true. There was no conceivable way to coordinate dates for events across the country. But with the online calendar, groups could see for themselves which dates might be ideal for their project and were empowered to self-organize. We sought to create an environment in which support, tools, and feedback could readily be found. Often, what was needed most to move from dream to action

39. To join the effort to build the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire Memorial please visit REMEMBER THE TRIANGLE FIRE COALITION, www.rememberthetrianglefire.org/memorial (last visited Sept. 26, 2011).

40. The team includes: Suzanne Pred Bass, Rose Imperato, Sherry Kane, Annie Lanzillotto, Ruth Sergel, Joel Sosinsky, Sheryl Woodruff and later, Mary Anne Trasciatti and Dan Levinson Wilk. Additional support from LuLu LoLo and Andi Sosin.

41. *Participating Organizations*, REMEMBER THE TRIANGLE FIRE COALITION, http://rememberthetrianglefire.org/about-2/participating-organizations/ (last visited Sept. 27, 2011).

42. *Submit Your Event*, REMEMBER THE TRIANGLE FIRE COALITION, http://rememberthetrianglefire.org/join-us/calendar/submit-your-event/ (last visited Sept. 27, 2011).

was actually very modest—an encouraging word, suggestions for a concrete next step or an introduction to another partner with a needed resource. As the calendar grew it became both a central resource and a bold demonstration of the audacity of our growing community.

As the Centennial neared, we began to receive e-mails and Facebook posts with materials that had never before been in the public realm. We recognized that there was a brief window to collect and preserve these items. In response, we created the Triangle Fire Open Archive,[43] an entirely community-created online resource of donated photographs, documents, and videos that relate to the Triangle Factory fire and its legacy.[44] To facilitate contributions we offered technical support in digitizing at open meetings and other live events. Our broad network provided a fertile ground for discovery with over 200 contributions. Materials include stories and memorabilia from the families of workers of the Triangle Waist Company, documents from Our Lady of Pompeii, which lost eighteen members in the fire, and even a newly recorded and translated version of Di Fayer Korbunes, a long-forgotten Yiddish ballad written in 1911 in response to the fire. Contemporary contributions include oral histories from women who participated in the 1982 Chinatown garment workers strike, school projects and documentation of centennial events from across the country. Ultimately the collection will be donated to the Kheel Center at the ILR School of Cornell University, the preeminent repository for artifacts and records of the ILGWU and the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire.[45]

In order to ensure that people everywhere could participate in the Centennial we created "Bells."[46] Everyone was invited to ring a bell on March 25th at 4:45 PM, the moment the first alarm for the fire sounded. The response was immediate and overwhelming. People announced their participation through e-mail and comments on our website. We immediately posted a pin on our online map with the name of the local organizer and any dedication they chose to include. St. John the Divine and Riverside Church rang their bells. A police officer in Queens roared his cruiser siren; a doorbell was rung in Ohio. A fire department in South Carolina; children in Prairie Village, Kansas; and

43. The Open Archive was created with our partners at BUSCADA, http://buscada.com/project/triangle-fire-open-archive/.

44. *Triangle Fire Open Archive*, REMEMBER THE TRIANGLE FIRE COALITION, http://rememberthetrianglefire.org/open-archive/ (last visited Sept. 26, 2011).

45. REMEMBERING THE TRIANGLE FACTORY FIRE, http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/trianglefire/ (last visited Oct. 19, 2011).

46. *Bells*, REMEMBER THE TRIANGLE FIRE COALITION, http://rememberthetrianglefire.org/centennial/bells/ (last visited Sept. 27, 2011).

even people as far away as Brazil, signed up to "get on the map" and participate.

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By the time of the Centennial, the Coalition had become a bold community of over 250 partners nationwide. Each partner had made a public pledge to do his or her part. By working together we had built something larger than any one individual could produce. A print version of our calendar made tangible the enormous breadth of the commemoration; page after page testified to the passion the Centennial had unleashed.[47] As the Centennial began to unfold there was a palpable excitement. In addition to the many other emotions, there was an overriding sense of exaltation at what we had collectively created.

The centerpiece of the commemorative activities was the Workers United commemoration at the Brown Building. For the first time the event was ASL (American Sign Language) interpreted and the entire ceremony was streamed live. The procession of the 146 shirtwaists gave visible form to the lives lost. Suzanne Pred Bass, great niece of Katie Weiner who survived the fire and Rosie Weiner[48] who did not, challenged the crowd to "Let this Triangle Fire Centennial be a call to all of us to rededicate our energies, raise our voices, and become more active in the pursuit of justice for all working people."[49]

Showing up is the first bold move. As individuals, we both crave and fear visibility; knowing and speaking one's mind, and taking public risks are not skills that can be taken for granted. Like any muscle, civic participation has to be exercised and nurtured to develop fully. The Coalition created an environment that purposefully brought individuals together through a process of public engagement. We demanded a leap of faith from those who collaborated with us. It is no small task to ask people to work in such a public and collaborative manner. Not everyone was able to make that effort. But most did and the rewards were immediately apparent. Together we demolished the invisible bonds that inhibit us from clearly speaking our mind and worked towards creating a society where a tragedy like the Triangle Factory fire would be impossible.

47. *Calendar of Events*, REMEMBER THE TRIANGLE FIRE COALITION, http://rememberthetrianglefire.org/category/events/2011-03 (last visited Sept. 27, 2011).

48. For a list of the victims of the fire, see *The Names Map*, REMEMBER THE TRIANGLE FIRE COALITION, http://rememberthetrianglefire.org/the-names/ (last visited Oct. 31, 2011).

49. *Workers United Centennial Commemoration Video*, REMEMBER THE TRIANGLE FIRE COALITION, http://rememberthetrianglefire.org/centennial/ (last visited Oct. 31, 2011).

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What will you do to stand up for justice today?

In 1911, 146 young workers were treated as if their lives were of so little value they could disappear from the face of the earth and no one would notice. One hundred years later, the Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition created a platform that encourages risk and rewards collaboration. We engage in a process of organizing that grew organically along with the community that it revealed. Together, people across the country stand to fulfill Frances Perkins' words "They did not die in vain and we will never forget them."[50]

Looking forward to seeing you in the streets.

50. *Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire*, N.Y. DEP'T OF LABOR, http://www.labor.ny.gov/about/history.shtm (last visited Sept. 30, 2011).