Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire

This coming March 25th marks the 104th year since the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, changing the course of safety standards, as well as better working conditions. “American Experience” provides a strong, captivating, understanding about the fire. PBS puts you inside of the minds of the workers, over a hundred years later. We can understand the feelings of the workers by putting ourselves in their shoes as the narrator, Michael Murphy, who provides a vividly sharp recount of events. The owners were violent, often sending men to beat up their employees if out of line. They went so far, and in the owner's defense it was a common practice back in the day, and locked the workers out of the exits to prevent them from taking unauthorized breaks. On the fateful day, an unextinguished match or cigarette started the blaze on the eighth floor. Due to the doors being locked 146 workers perished and 71 were injured in the fire. Understandably, such a large loss of life would cause outrage, but there was more than that. The owners hired mostly immigrant and or females for their workforce, exploiting them for their desire to provide for their family. They often worked 14-hour shifts, were paid little and were financially penalized for mistakes. In todays’ dollars, they were paid less than $5 per hour. This could be attributed to greed from the owners, and the financial instability of the company as PBS points out. The outcry from the public was powerful. As crisis invigorates change, as seen by the biggest work stoppage in the city’s’ history, we can see the far stretching positives that came out of the unfortunate fire. Today we live in a safer world, one that would undoubtedly not be as safe if it were not because of the fire and the uprising that happened after the fire.