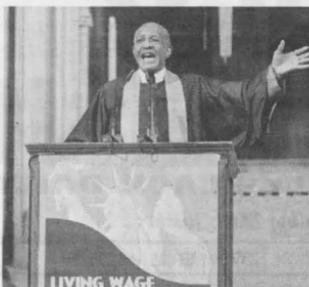


## Thousands gather at the Historic Riverside Church to demand living wage jobs



Rev. Dr. James A. Forbes, Jr. Sr. Minister Emeritus, The Riverside Church, delivers "sending forth" message.



Rev. Dr. Jesse T. Williams, Jr., Senior Pastor, Convent Ave. Baptist Church delivers the sermon.



Ben Jealous, NAACP President and CEO

Thousands of supporters of the Fair Wages for New Yorkers Act gathered at The Riverside Church Monday night to take part in the "Many Voices, One Goal" event aimed at convincing New York City Council to pass the Fair Wages for New Yorkers Act.

NAACP President Ben Jealous keynoted the event saying, "New York City is the nation's greatest city and also has the greatest level of income inequality. If we're going to turn things around in this nation and get to a place where a rising tide lifts all boats, then we've got to stop New Yorkers from drowning and try to get more New Yorkers' heads above water. One concrete way to do that is to pass the living wage bill."

At this historic mass meeting, faith leaders, civil rights leaders, elected officials, labor leaders, and local residents demanded living wage jobs for all New Yorkers, and passage of the living wage bill now before the City Council. This event was the latest in a series of major actions organized by Living Wage NYC, a large, diverse, and growing coalition representing New Yorkers from across the five boroughs.

In his sermon, living wage faith leader Rev. Dr. Jesse T. Williams Jr., Senior Pastor, Convent Avenue Baptist Church, said, "I support the living wage movement and the Fair Wages for New Yorkers Act because they get at the heart of the matter: eradicating poverty in the city of New York and fighting for the 'least of these.'"

Tens of thousands of retail workers would benefit with the passage of the living wage bill. Retail worker, Kimberly Ortiz, a Retail Action Project member told attendees, "Our laws should reflect fairness for all people - And the right to make a living wage at my retail job so I can support my two kids as a single mom from the Bronx is only fair."

Under the bill, large developers and employers that receive substantial public subsidies will pay employees \$10.00 per hour - the same as under New York City's existing living wage law. Employees who are not covered by an employer-provided health plan will receive an additional \$1.50 per hour wage supplement to help them purchase their own health insurance. Both the living wage and



The Riverside Church packed to the rafters.

the health benefits supplement will be adjusted each year to keep pace with the rising cost of living.

"Our struggle is part of a worldwide struggle. From Egypt to Tunisia, from Wisconsin to Occupy Wall Street, working people are rising up to demand economic justice," said Stuart Appelbaum, President of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU). "Our living wage fight offers the opportunity for our elected officials to take a concrete step towards making a decent life possible for all people. This is our task. This is our job. We must pass the Fair Wages for New Yorkers Act."

Rev. Stephen H. Phelps - Interim Senior Minister, The Riverside Church, said, "Economic justice for the poor is not only for the poor. It is in the highest interest of the wealthy, too. Wise and faithful people know that their interests lie not with themselves alone but with their children's children and all children. When this wealthy city stands up in wisdom with a law and a lamp to welcome the weak and the weary—why, a whole nation is watching. This bill will unite our will to mend the fabric of a torn society and renew a future for one nation under God."

Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr., on whose behalf the Fair Wages for New Yorkers Act was introduced in the City Council, added, "I have made it clear that the passage of a living wage law for New York City is a top priority of my administration. Tonight, we move one step

closer to making this law a reality. When developers rely on the taxpayers' wallets to make their projects work, they must guarantee that the jobs created at that project will offer its employees more than just a part-time, minimum wage jobs with no benefits. The 'Fair Wages for New Yorkers' Act will ensure that heavily subsidized developments create meaningful jobs for their future employees, and I am confident that our legislation will continue to pick up support from every corner of the City."

City Council Member G. Oliver Koppell, who is the lead sponsor of the living wage bill said, "I have sponsored this legislation because I believe that when public subsidies are involved, the people that receive those subsidies should not be paying poverty-level wages. They should be required to pay a living wage. And I will do everything I can to see that it becomes the law."

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York has also put its weight behind the fight for economic justice as Monsignor Kevin Sullivan, Executive Director of Catholic Charities, read a statement by Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan in support of living wages.

Also participating in the gathering were City Council Members Robert Jackson, Daniel Garodnick, Letitia James, Daniel Dromm, Melissa Mark-Viverito, Jimmy Van Bramer, Jumaane Williams, Brad Lander, Mathieu Eugene and Margaret Chin.