

A LAWCHA Forum**The Politics of Immigration:  
Commentary and Perspective**

by Bob Bussel (bussel@uoregon.edu)

Both historically and currently, immigration has presented workers and the union movement with challenges and opportunities. Overcoming linguistic, cultural, and ethnic differences has long complicated the elusive quest for working-class unity, and native-born workers have consistently felt threatened by the prospect that immigrants would be used by employers to undercut their wages and living standards. Yet immigrants have often been receptive to labor appeals and provided the union movement with fresh sources of leadership and a renewed sense of spirit and purpose.

In a landmark move seven years ago, the AFL-CIO endorsed granting amnesty to undocumented workers residing in the US. Concurrently, many unions, especially in the private sector, have accelerated their efforts to organize immigrant workers regardless of their legal status and have joined with community-based organizations in advocating for comprehensive immigration reform.

The recent failure of Congress to enact such legislation underscored the deep divisions within the country over immigration. Unions, too, have different perspectives on the kind of immigration reform they are willing to support and must also address the skepticism of many union members who have serious doubts about any initiatives that would grant undocumented workers a pathway to citizenship or legal status. Now that a political solution at least for the moment appears out of reach, the Bush administration is pursuing an aggressive policy to enforce current law, and many state and local governments are adopting measures to limit employment, housing, and social services for undocumented immigrants.

It is in this context that we have invited several labor leaders, activists, and scholars to discuss the politics of immigration. They provide valuable context and offer important insights on this critical issue that will shape the course of American politics, culture, and trade unionism for years to come.

We welcome comments on these articles and will attempt to publish a representative sample of reader reaction in the next LAWCHA newsletter.

The forum begins on page 4.

**Letter from the President**

by Alice Kessler-Harris (ak571@columbia.edu)

As we approach the tenth anniversary of LAWCHA's founding in 1998, I am moved to remember that moment at Wayne State University when participants in the North American Conference of Labor Historians agreed that it was time to create a continent-wide organization of historians of the working class and the labor movement. Our impulse to create an organization was nurtured by the infusion of energy we received at each of the NACLH meetings; and our decision to go national was strongly supported by our Wayne State hosts. We could not have reached our present position without them or without institutional support from Carnegie Mellon, William and Mary, the University of Toronto, UC Santa Barbara, Duke, and other universities. For all this support, we are enormously grateful.

We are now ready to let loose. Our early ambitions have largely been realized. In the space of ten short years, we have created a financially sound (if still desperately poor) organization whose members include students, faculty at many kinds of institutions, and activists from the United States, Canada, and Mexico. We have moved to a new home at Duke University's Sanford Institute. We have elected a succession of strong and committed executive boards that have supported the risks necessary to get us off the ground while never letting us forget that we exist to expand our political and intellectual horizons. We've organized meetings in the West, in the South, and in Canada. We produce two annual newsletters a year, and have affiliated with a leading journal, *LABOR*. We've launched a collaborative project with a trade union federation, and this fall, we announce two major prizes for incipient and already published labor historians. And we move this year to our own annual spring meetings, organized at our own meeting sites around our own meeting themes. We hope this move will enable us to speak more effectively to the diverse interests of our members.

As we digest our accomplishments, we can all feel a sense of pride in having done what seemed so chancy only 10 short years ago. We have created an organization of Labor historians. But much of our work is still before us. We work together now to expand our reach into the Americas, broadly defined; to extend our commitment to civic engagement in and outside the union movement; and to provide sustenance and support for scholarship in the history of the working class. If the past is any guide, then the next decade will be even better than the last.

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## Spring LAWCHA Conference a Big Success!

Over 120 LAWCHA members attended this year's national conference, "Working Class Activism in the South and Nation," on May 17-19, 2007, at Duke University. Co-sponsored by the Southern Labor Studies Conference, the gathering examined "contemporary challenges in historical context," blending academic panels with presentations by community activists.

For many attendees, the highlight of the weekend was a special luncheon dedicated to celebrating the extraordinary career of David Montgomery. LAWCHA's founding president, Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, presented Montgomery with our first ever Distinguished Service to Labor and Working-Class History Award. LABOR editor Leon Fink shared excerpts from stories—often humorous and always deeply appreciative—that he collected from dozens of Montgomery's former students. Fink also highlighted Montgomery's vast contributions and asked him a series of questions about the state of the field.

Montgomery responded with an inspiring address that included glimpses of his most recent project on casual workers, immigration, and globalization. As Norman Markowitz of Rutgers posted on H-Labor (5/19/07): "David's statement showed all that was and is good and great about David, that is his eloquence, insights, and humor. As a coming attraction for his later work, I might mention that he mentioned something that blew my and many others minds, that is, pre W.W.I 'illegal' immigrants, crossing a river to find work and a better life by breaking into a province of the Czarist Russian Empire!" (emphasis added). LAWCHA Vice President Mike Honey presided over the session and of-

fered more than the customary bookends when he produced a guitar and led the crowd in a rousing round of labor and folk anthems.

Other conference highlights included a pair of off-site evening programs with Báldezar Velasquez, President of the



*Stuart Eliot's photographs of the Durham Conference, like this one of Francille Rusan Wilson, are scattered throughout this newsletter.*

Farm Labor Organizing Committee, AFL-CIO, and a plenary session on politics led by Chris Chafe, Chief of Staff for UNITE-HERE and special advisor to John Edwards' *Report continues on page 15*

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### From the Secretary's Desk:

The revisions to the LAWCHA constitution have been approved. One hundred and twenty-three ballots were returned by the due date of July 20: one hundred and sixteen approved the revisions, six opposed, and one abstained. The revised constitution has been posted to the LAWCHA website.

The number of Director positions has been reduced from eighteen to fifteen. Thus, the ballots that recently went out for Officer and Board of Director positions now include only FIVE Director positions (based on our three-year rotation). Please remember to return these ballots to **September 28, 2007**. Send them to Robert Korstad, Chair, Elections Committee, Sanford Institute of Public Policy, Duke University, Box 90245, Durham, NC 27708-0245.

Respectfully submitted,

Cecelia Bucki  
LAWCHA Secretary

### Passing the Editorial Baton

by Bob Bussel and Joe McCartin

Beginning with this issue of the newsletter, Bob Bussel, director of the Labor Education and Research Center at the University of Oregon, and Joe McCartin of Georgetown University will take over co-editing the *LAWCHA Newsletter*. As we do, we express our profound gratitude to Dan Letwin and Rick Halpern, who, as the founding co-editors of this newsletter, built it into an important tool of communication, connection, and community-building among the scholars and labor activists of LAWCHA. We hope to continue and expand upon the good work of Dan and Rick, and we look forward to working with the LAWCHA board and members to make this an even more effective publication and outreach vehicle. We are eager to encourage discussion and debate, publicize innovative approaches to the teaching and writing of labor and working-class history, and keep LAWCHA members informed about new developments affecting workers and the union movement throughout the country. Please share with us your ideas about how best to use this newsletter. Our deadline for submissions to the next issue of the newsletter is Feb. 15, 2008. Submissions should be directed to: Bob Bussel at [bussel@uoregon.edu](mailto:bussel@uoregon.edu) or to Joe McCartin at [jam6@georgetown.edu](mailto:jam6@georgetown.edu).

## Telling Labor's Story

by Mike Honey (mhoney@u.washington.edu), LAWCHA vice-president

Prompted by Nelson Lichtenstein at the University of California-Santa Barbara, LAWCHA recently began a liaison with unions aimed at involving more labor historians in telling the story of workers and organized labor to a broader public. We are looking to create a conscious network of labor historians and scholars who can contribute op-eds, give lectures, and in other ways comment on a wide range of issues of concern to workers and the union movement. There is a dearth of historically sensitive commentary and LAWCHA members have a key role to play.

At our prompting, the AFL-CIO embraced this project, and staff members there are thinking through the ways LAWCHA can form a liaison with unions. It first hired Vanessa Waldref, a Georgetown law student, for a short stint, and then in May Joseph Hower, a Georgetown history graduate student, for the role of part-time Labor Scholar Coordinator. The job is to work with unions and LAWCHA members to address important social issues of the day in historical perspective.

As one step in this direction, LAWCHA President Alice Kessler-Harris sent a memo to all LAWCHA members, urging them to write op-ed pieces and to speak out about the Employee Free Choice Act. This amendment to federal labor law allowed employees in a given work place to unionize as soon as a majority of them signed cards asking for union representation. LAWCHA members supported the initiative by

publishing pieces in newspapers and electronic media outlets. The House of Representatives passed the legislation by a wide margin on March 1, but Republican opponents blocked it in the Senate in late June. If a Democratic President is elected in 2008, this law will be a top priority for the new Congress.

Hower brought informational packets on the EFCA to the LAWCHA annual meeting in Durham. He remains in regular contact with a number of union leaders in D.C., and will continue to gather and distribute information and to serve as a liaison. If you are interested in finding out about an issue, want to suggest something that he should be doing, or involve yourself coming through D.C. or in some other way, contact Joe Hower at jeh67@georgetown.edu or by calling him 215-990-8055.

In a time of both crisis and opportunity, LAWCHA President Kessler-Harris and I see this as one way LAWCHA members can relate to issues affecting workers and unions in labor's historic fight for a better society. Organizing, struggles for economic justice, civil rights and civil liberties, universal health care, curbing the imperialist war machine, opposing racism, sexism, homophobia, and anti-immigrant hysteria -- all are part of telling labor's story. Our job is not only to research and teach, but to further civic engagement among ourselves and our students. We welcome all ideas for LAWCHA to help move this initiative forward.

The Labor and Working-Class History Association  
in cooperation with the University of Illinois Press

Is Proud to Announce the First Annual

### Herbert G. Gutman Prize for Outstanding Dissertation in United States Labor and Working-Class History

Named in honor of pioneering labor historian Herbert G. Gutman, the award comes with a cash prize of \$500 from LAWCHA and a publishing contract with the University of Illinois Press. The prize is contingent upon the author's acceptance of the contract with the University of Illinois Press.

Eligible dissertations must be in English, concerned with U.S. labor and working-class history broadly conceived, and must have been defended between September 1, 2006 and August 31, 2007. Applicants must be members of LAWCHA at the time of the submission. The winner will be announced by March 15, 2008 and will receive the award at the annual LAWCHA conference, held in 2008 in Vancouver, British Columbia, June 6-8.

Send four hard copies of the dissertation, along with a letter of endorsement from the dissertation advisor stating the date of the defense, by November 30, 2007 to LAWCHA, c/o Sanford Institute of Public Policy, Duke University, Box 90239, Durham, NC 27708-0239.

More information is available on LAWCHA's web-site: [www.lawcha.org](http://www.lawcha.org)

## A LAWCHA Forum on the Politics of Immigration

### Cross Border Jim Crow

by Cindy Hahamovitch

In 2002, after spending a week without power in the aftermath of Hurricane Isabel, I had the opportunity to visit farm labor camps in N.C. with Professor Gunther Peck and a group of Duke students. Everywhere we went we saw men (and one woman) living in housing that seemed to have been ravaged by hurricanes, though it hadn't been: eight men living in a narrow trailer with huge holes in the floor and kitchen walls blackened by years of cooking grease; men whose farmer/landlord had shut off their water, forcing them to buy water to wash and drink. Everyone we visited was undocumented.

At our last stop, we visited a family who fed us tamales and talked. Gunther asked the father whether he would like to be a U.S. citizen. He looked puzzled for a moment; then asked what the difference was between citizenship and having a Green Card. I explained that both gave you the right to permanent residence, but only citizens could vote. He shrugged and simply said: "I want an identity."

Some eleven million unauthorized residents of the U.S. presumably share that man's desire for an identity. But is a

Europe's, but ended up more like South Africa's. During the Second World War the federal government imported foreign workers by the tens of thousands from Mexico, the Bahamas, Jamaica and Barbados in response to growers' fears of impending labor scarcity. Unconvinced of its necessity, the New Deal liberals who ran this Emergency Labor Importation Program tried to use it to elevate the condition of domestic farmworkers, whose lives had been little improved by the war boom. As a result, the Importation Program set a minimum wage, maximum hours, minimum housing standards, and guaranteed work for at least three-quarters of the contract period. No American farmworker had seen anything like it and none would because in 1943—urged on by growers' associations—Congress passed Public Law 45, which prohibited the use of tax dollars for the improvement of domestic workers' lives.

When the war ended, the U.S. guestworker programs continued under growers' control. The federal government withdrew from the affairs of recruiting and housing farmworkers in 1947, but allowed employers to import "inadmissible" workers privately in cases of labor need. Mexico alone insisted on U.S. government oversight, but Congress never allocated money for enforcement. The Labor Department

determined need by polling growers' associations, who almost invariably testified to impending shortages. By 1960, the Caribbean "H2" Program and the Mexican Bracero Program, as the separately run programs were then called, were collectively importing roughly half a million temporary workers every year, though there was ample evidence that imported contract workers depressed wages, were used as strike breakers, and were regularly cheated out of wages owed. When guestworkers protested contract violations and ill treatment, growers quickly deported and blacklisted them. The mere threat of deportation became a tool of labor discipline.

In the mid-1960s Congress terminated the Bracero Program and liberalized U.S. immigration policy generally, but the much smaller H2 program continued, though Lyndon

Johnson's Secretary of Labor shrunk its use to two crops—sugarcane and apples and responded to workers' complaints by making growers pay for housing and transportation. After 1986 the H2 Program grew as the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) attempted to wean growers off undocumented immigrants by legalizing those already here (1.2 million people applied) and by imposing sanctions on employers who knowingly hired illegal immigrants. To placate farmers who feared the loss of their seasonal workforce, the Labor Department certified the need for more H2 workers.



*At LAWCHA's 2007 conference in Durham, Ken and Elizabeth Fones-Wolf answer questions during a panel on Religion, Race, and Class in the Mid-Century South.*

guestworker program the solution? There has been a wide spectrum of guestworker programs around the world. In South Africa migrant miners were locked in gold and diamond compounds for months at a time and then deported at the end of their contracts, while many of the 30 million European guestworkers who rebuilt Europe's industrial core after World War II were invited to join unions, offered the same pay and benefits as native born workers, and were allowed to bring their families and eventually settle.

The U.S. guestworker programs started out closer to

The renamed H2-A program grew from about 15,000 workers to 42,000 workers in 2001 but didn't grow as large as anticipated because growers returned quickly to undocumented workers. Interestingly, Congress had added non-agricultural guestworker programs as well: 120,000 H2-B visas for hotels, restaurants, and the crab and poultry industries and 200,000 H2-B visas for Silicon Valley, but these guestworkers enjoyed none of the protections that guestworkers in agriculture had won. They paid their own airfare and housing expenses, were entitled to no more than minimum wage, and got no three-quarter guarantee.

Though the H2 Programs together remain a tiny fraction of the U.S. workforce, the proliferation of sending countries and forms inspired growers to turn to for-profit recruitment companies that charged both employers and workers for their services. The advent of these companies resulted in even more egregious exploitation. Recruiter Global Horizons was recently fined and successfully sued for charging Thai workers as much as \$11,000 for jobs they were told would last three years, though H2-A visas are limited to one year, for example. Since the Thai farmers in question didn't have thousands of dollars, they borrowed some of the money and mortgaged their ancestral lands to pay the rest to Global Horizons, who warned them not to talk to outsiders.

Could a guestworker program be created that would give undocumented immigrants an identity without subjecting them to this kind of exploitation and without subjecting domestic workers to unfair competition? Maybe. Some European programs granted foreign workers everything but the right to vote. But here, where employers have had the right to hire, fire, and deport, guestworkers have remained a caste apart. Should future guestworkers be denied the right of settlement, family reunification, and the ballot box, they will remain a caste apart. South Africa called such a system Apartheid. We called it Jim Crow. Whatever it's called, we must not allow it to grow.

## Needed: A Freedom Agenda

by David Bacon

In Worthington, Iowa, a federal prosecutor gets a grand

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### About the Forum Participants

**Cindy Hahamovitch** (cxhaha@wm.edu) teaches history at the College of William & Mary.

**David Bacon** (dbacon@igc.org) is a writer and photographer, and is associate editor for New America Media.

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jury indictment against Braulio Pereyra-Gabino, union vice-president at the local Swift meatpacking plant. He's accused of not turning his undocumented members in to Homeland Security. In Arizona, Gov. Janet Napolitano signs a draconian immigration enforcement bill, criminalizing work for those without papers and ordering state agents to enforce the prohibition with a vengeance. Since Congress wouldn't pass the recent Senate bill with the same sanctions, she says Arizona has no choice.

The Senate's failure is used as well in Prince William County, Virginia, to justify a local ordinance ordering all public officials to check immigration papers, even teachers, nurses and librarians. They're forbidden to help anyone lacking them. Meanwhile, immigration agents continue detaining and deporting people by the hundreds in workplace and community raids around the country.

Some D.C. supporters of the recent Senate bill are still floundering about what to do in the wake of its failure. Outside the beltway, though, the immediate need is obvious. Organize and fight back.

Outside Washington a movement capable of doing that is growing. You can see it, not just in the million people who marched in Los Angeles twice in one day. Last May Day in tiny Bridgeton, N.J., and Kennett Square, Penn., unions and progressive activists walked alongside immigrant mothers wheeling children in strollers, fighting down the fear that deportation might separate their families.

Everywhere in this country immigrant communities are growing, defying the raids intended to terrorize them—organizing and speaking out. This movement is a powerful response to Congress' inability to pass a pro-immigrant reform bill. It can and will resist and stop the raids, but its potential power is far greater. Like the civil rights movement four decades ago, the political upsurge in immigrant communities makes a profound demand—not simply for visas, but for freedom and equality.

It questions our values.

Will local communities share political power with newcomers? Will workers be able to organize to turn low-paying labor into real jobs? Will children go to school knowing their teachers value their ability to speak two or three languages as a mark of their intelligence, not their inferiority?

Those who fear change are right about one thing. Once we answer these questions, we will not be the same country.

Social change requires a social movement. Rights are only extended in the United States when people demand it. Congress will pass laws guaranteeing rights for immigrants as it did for workers in 1934, or African Americans in 1966—when it has no choice but to recognize that movement's strength.

In the south of the 1960s, courageous civil rights activists stopped lynching and defied bombings, while registering people to vote and going to jail to overturn unjust Jim Crow laws. They won allies, from unions to students to artists, who helped give the civil rights movement its radical, transformative character. They led our country out of McCarthyism.

Today the movement for immigrant rights and equality confronts choices in strategy and alliances that recall those

of the civil rights era. As SNCC and CORE had to move past the accommodations of Booker T. Washington, the immigrant rights movement has to move past the failed strategy of the last three years.

Washington lobbyists have treated local communities as troops to back up conservative beltway legislation. They've promoted a strategic alliance with corporations, whose main interest was converting the flow of migrants into a regulated source of cheap labor, and with an administration using raids to pressure immigrant communities and bust unions. D.C. strategists tried to appease the right by agreeing to anti-immigrant provisions that robbed their bill of the support of those communities they claimed it was supposed to benefit.

Pointing in a different direction, many community-based coalitions and grassroots groups outside the beltway have made proposals that start from a human and labor rights perspective. They would give the undocumented real residence rights, as the Immigration Reform and Control Act did in 1986. New migrants would be able to live as normal community members, rather than as exploited guest workers. A demilitarized Mexican border would look like the one with Canada. Immigrants would regain due process rights, which after eight years of George Bush, everyone else needs too. Work would be decriminalized, and labor rights enforced for all workers, immigrants included. Families could reunite in the U.S. without waiting years. U.S. policy would stop reinforcing poverty abroad as an inducement for corporate investment, especially in those countries sending migrants here.

The mainstream press amplifies the voices of a small anti-immigrant minority, and a conservative Congress kowtows to them. But most polls show that immigrants and non-immigrants alike believe in basic fairness and equality, and are willing to consider these and similar ideas. The problem is that without a powerful movement they remain just that—ideas.

Building that movement in communities, churches and unions requires a change in alliances as well as program. Its natural allies include African Americans, whose experience of racism and economic desperation is similar to that of immigrants. Unions are already important allies, and most

opposed the Senate bill. Immigrant workers are already more active in union drives than most sections of the workforce.

Displaced and unemployed workers can also be allies of immigrants, instead of competitors in the job market. Today many are manipulated by the anti-immigrant hysteria of right wing talk show hosts like Lou Dobbs, because Washington lobbyists won't antagonize their corporate sponsors by criticizing the free market agenda. Yet hundreds of thousands of unemployed workers are victims of the same free trade agreements that cause migration. NAFTA and CAFTA create poverty in Mexico and Central America to benefit corporate investors. That poverty drives people to migrate north. Opposing the offshoring of jobs goes hand in hand with defending the rights of the migrants free trade produces.

The DC strategy pitted immigrants against unemployed workers through guest worker schemes, raids and criminalizing work. Coalition building brings people together in an anti-corporate alliance based, not in Washington where lobbyists dominate the agenda, but in communities with a different set of interests.

Rights for immigrants at work and in neighborhoods can be paired with the right to jobs and federal employment programs. Since 2004 Houston Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee has proposed this kind of tradeoff—real legal status for 12 million undocumented people together with federal support for job creation and training in Black and Chicano communities with high unemployment. She's rejected guest worker programs as a corporate giveaway, hurting both immigrants, who are denied normal rights, and low-wage workers forced into competition with them. Some unions, like UNITE HERE Local 2 in San Francisco, are building alliances by demanding that employers hire more African Americans, while defending the rights of immigrants already in the workforce.

Similarly, workers in unions, immigrants included, need labor law reform and enforcement. Many May Day marchers demanded not just legal immigration status, but the right to organize to raise their poverty-level wages. Immigrant janitors sitting in the streets of Houston, hotel housekeepers enforcing living wage laws in Emeryville, Calif., and meatpacking workers organizing against company terror tactics at Smithfield Foods in Tarheel, N.C., are as much a part of the immigrant rights movement as those marching for visas.

A coalition that can fight for these demands has its roots in immigrant rights groups, local unions, church congregations and college campuses. The Essential Worker Immigration Coalition, representing Wal-Mart, Marriott and other corporate giants, will not fight for these demands. Nor will the rightwing Manhattan Institute. But many national organizations will. The AFL-CIO and most unions in the Change to Win Federation will support these demands. So will the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, the Mexican American Political Association and the American Friends Service Committee.

National groups can provide resources, but to build a movement on the ground, we might study the experience of the young activists in the south in the 1960s, and the radicals

## Looking for old LAWCHA newsletters?

An archive of past LAWCHA newsletters is now available on-line. Beginning with this issue, we will continue to update the archive each time the newsletter comes out. You can find the archive at:  
[www.lawcha.org/newsletter](http://www.lawcha.org/newsletter)

in the industrial workplaces of the 1930s. Could students be organized to go to Hazelton, Tucson and Prince William County, to provide support for communities challenging raids and local anti-immigrant laws? Could civil disobedience be as important to their tactics as it was to those who sat in at lunch counters or organized illegal unions at the Ford Rouge plant?

Immigrant communities don't need another bad Congressional compromise. They need a freedom agenda. It can be a program like the Freedom Charter of South Africa's anti-apartheid movement—a vision to fight for. It can be a bill in Congress, like Sheila Jackson Lee's, forcing politicians to consider an alternative to guest workers and more raids. And it can be a mobilizer, drawing people to picket lines in front of the ICE detention centers holding their family members.

There people can sing new Spanish or Arabic words to the old anti-slavery anthem: "Let my people go."

## The Race Question and Building Labor Power in the Context of the Immigrant Upsurge

by Steven Pitts

During the Spring of 2006, millions of immigrants marched in streets of large cities and small towns alike affirming their basic dignity and demanding a justice which was not tied to citizenship. Repeated on May 1, 2007, these demonstrations herald the surfacing of a massive social movement which will extend participatory democracy in much the same way as the huge organizing waves of the mid 1930s and 1940s and the modern civil rights movement of the late 1950s and 1960s.

However, if the movement for immigrant rights signals the next great leap forward in empowerment, what still needs to be answered is how to address the incomplete revolution that occurred during the modern civil rights movement. This race question—or more accurately, this Black question—must be answered if social justice movements are to maximize the results from the new opportunities which will arise during the next period.

This issue is particularly vexing for the labor movement as it tries to build its power. Immigrant workers have been at the center of many of the most dynamic campaigns for economic justice over the past twenty years. At the same time, Black workers have been among the strongest supporters of unions since World War II and have shown the greatest propensity and inclination to join unions of any racial/ethnic grouping. The alienation of just a portion of this support can defeat advances in progressive causes. Recently, the conservative movement has assiduously cultivated Black public opinion to gain support for its anti-immigrant position. If they are successful in splitting even a small segment of the Black community from the movement for immigrant rights, the result could be devastating. This note attempts to sketch out an approach to

addressing these concerns.

Two generations have passed since the victories of the modern civil rights movement. Over this period many working class families and communities have suffered declining fortunes. This decline in economic outcomes has hit Black communities particularly severely because it occurs in the midst of significant changes. Some key features of the Jim Crow era were constraints on Blacks in housing and labor markets resulting in "Black" neighborhoods and



*Chris Chafe, John Edwards's labor liaison, spoke to the LAWCHA conference in Durham to explain labor's importance to any Democratic victory and to answer tough questions from the audience.*

"Black" jobs. These constraints formed the basis of a vibrant community with dense social networks that sustained Blacks during the horrors of segregation and shaped the movement which eventually overthrew segregation. With the end of segregation, constraints changed and the last thirty-five years have seen the development of new "Black" spaces. Some Blacks have migrated outward from the central cities creating new Black neighborhoods and providing the opportunities for the transformation of old Black neighborhoods. At the same time, the new constraints, in conjunction with the new global economy, have provided new job opportunities and transformed the old Black jobs. The transformation in Black neighborhoods and Black jobs has resulted in new immigrants penetrating these spaces.

The constellation of these events—the severe economic crisis in the Black community; the transformation of old Black spaces as a result of the victories of the civil rights movement; and the rise of immigrants from the global South—have provided the grist for tensions between Blacks and immigrants. It is my strong belief that these tensions will never be addressed adequately until there is a dynamic

movement to tackle the variety of issues reflecting anti-Black racism in the United States.

The birth of this movement would be assisted by new framing on three fronts. First, there has to be recognition that not all Blacks are native-born and not all immigrants are non-Black. The very positioning of Black “against” immigrants ignores this reality. That positioning renders invisible disparate immigrant experiences of Blacks from Haiti, Central and South America, the English-speaking and Spanish-speaking islands of the Caribbean, and various countries in Africa. Such “invisibility” is similar to the treatment of Blacks during Jim Crow and generates feelings of animosity.

Second, what distinguishes social movements is the different social basis of each movement. The core of the modern civil rights movement was the Black community which coalesced around issues of racial justice. In a similar fashion, the core of the recent immigrant upsurge has been the Latino community. Attempts to “frame” the immigrant rights movement as the “new civil rights movement” denies the historical reality of the Black core of the modern civil rights movement and the contemporary reality of the unique features of the Latino immigrant community whose experiences and demands for justice are valid on their own merit without the need for the imprimatur of the modern civil rights movement. By ignoring these realities, some Blacks feel as if “our” movement is being appropriated by others.

Third, the Black community faces a two-dimensional job crisis: a crisis of unemployment and a crisis of low-wage work. A realistic explanation of the crisis needs to be developed which centers the source of the problem on historical and contemporary institutional racism. This explanation must

emphasize the agency of employers—as the central players in the determination of who gets hired—without the response to this employer agency being punitive measures against immigrant workers.

However, more important to the birth of this new movement than issue reframing are concrete organizing needs. Unions need to develop strategies that directly deal with the low-wage job crisis in the Black community by empowering Black workers in the workplace. While there may not be many large Black job niches where explicit “Black” unionizing drives take place, finding creative mechanisms to preserve public sector jobs and transform the burgeoning human services sector (child care, home care, health care) would go far in addressing the job crisis in the Black community. In addition, unions can be in the forefront of developing labor-community action projects that address the needs of Black workers who are not in traditional union targets. Finally, the realities of the unemployment crisis must be addressed. Traditional responses focus on individual skill development. Unions can be instrumental in expanding these approaches to include strategies which link individuals with organizations—union apprenticeship programs; community-based job training programs—which seek to build the power of workers in the labor market that they are trained to enter.

## Hear the Workers, Fire the Bosses

by Tom Leedham

Francisco Javier Gutierrez is a Teamster who has worked in a large, national corporation’s distribution center just south of Portland, Oregon, for 20 years. Now age 50, Francisco emigrated from Guadalajara, Mexico, and became a U.S. citizen in 1985. He came to the U.S. because he always heard it was better, work was readily available and he was curious. In Mexico, it seems, everyone has a relative in the U.S.

Francisco’s father came to the U.S. frequently from the late 1940’s until 1969 to work the fields as part of the Bracero program. The Bracero program was seasonal but Francisco’s father was poor all the time, so he reentered the country illegally again and again. In those days, the I.N.S. was very active. He was deported more than ten times.

Through many decades one thing that hasn’t changed is the reason why workers risk life and limb, leave their communities and families behind, and cross the border. As long as U.S. employers are allowed to offer work that is better or more available than in a worker’s home country, workers will take the commensurate risk and sacrifice to get it.

While any serious discussion of immigration should include detailed analysis of trade policy, suffice it to say schemes like NAFTA have only exacerbated the economic crisis for workers on either side of the U.S./Mexican border. It should come as no surprise that corporations will do whatever they can get away with to increase profits. Creating and exploiting a vast pool of cheap labor has been made easier by globalization and

## Thank You!

LAWCHA gratefully acknowledges the following contributors who lectured for LAWCHA in the past year:

Alice Kessler-Harris  
Bob Korstad  
Nancy MacLean

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so-called free trade.

The distribution center where Francisco works has found a way to exploit that pool of immigrant labor, too. The corporation began subcontracting segments of work traditionally done by their own employees to agencies that hired undocumented immigrants almost exclusively.

The corporation profits because agency employee pay is roughly half the pay of union member employees and they receive no benefits. Their lack of legal status gives the employer tremendous power over the workers. Yet the work and pay is far better than that available in their home countries. Fear of losing their job makes them quite controllable. While everyone knows the workers are here illegally, the corporation feels insulated because, under the law, the subcontractor is the actual employer. Besides, in the unlikely event of government action, penalties are so minor it's merely a small cost of doing business.

The Teamsters where Francisco works understand what's happening. Although their union has been able to win arbitrations and contract struggles to protect, and in one significant case win back work they have historically performed, other unions and employers have not been so fortunate. New work almost automatically goes to the low wage illegal subcontractor. Francisco and his co-workers feel the pressure on their wages, benefits and working conditions. They sense that these subcontracted workers will do whatever the boss says. Concerted activity for mutual aid and protection is not an option they consider.

The strength of the union at the distribution center was built over time. Francisco has been on strike twice. The first strike lasted three weeks and the second three months; both were successful. Francisco is a strong believer in the union, but it hasn't always been that way. In Mexico, he knew about unions but his experience was that they were just part of the company, not an entity that would actually advocate for the workers. In the U.S. he saw and experienced that when workers stood together they had the power to improve their lives.

He talks to the immigrants about this whenever he can, as he is one of very few union members at the distribution center who speaks Spanish, but he doesn't think they listen to him. Francisco generally believes that the subcontractor's employees don't trust him and think he just wants them gone like other union members do. The employers use this animosity to great advantage, favoring the subcontractor in any dispute involving workers and limiting contact or communication between the groups of workers.

There are two main barriers to organizing immigrant workers. The first and primary barrier is legal status itself, which allows the employer to use a powerful motivator, fear. If a worker is in the U.S. illegally, the employer is in a strong position. They can use the threat, whether real or not, of deportation. Employers have a wide range of threats they can use to stop union activity because, in most cases, even though they may violate labor law, the immigrant is not likely to seek assistance from a federal agency like the NLRB. The better the job may be, in the experience of the immigrants, the less likely they are to take the risk of organizing. The

second barrier is the knowledge and experience of the worker about unions. Their experiences in other countries often influence their views of U.S. unions. Dealing with language issues, developing leaders and educating through actions can overcome this barrier if time and resources are available. Only a change in the law will affect the first barrier, legal status itself.

When Francisco and his union brothers and sisters talk about immigration, they talk in terms of working-class economics. Yes, they're concerned about the 13 million undocumented workers here now; they see them every day and understand the economic danger they represent. But they're also concerned about the next 13 million and the effect they will have on the U.S. middle class. They hear proposals like fences, fines and touchback for amnesty and they realize the authors of these plans have little in common with them. If the decision makers really wanted to stop illegal immigration, they would simply institute stiff, certain, escalating penalties including jail time for CEO's and fines based on gross income to business owners who hire, or benefit from the hiring of undocumented workers. If the decision makers were really concerned about immigrants and current U.S. workers, they would take responsibility for destructive trade agreements and decades of lax enforcement that have led to millions of workers and their families living in the shadows of our country. Yet, what workers see from those decision makers are plans that protect the greedy who are profiting from the crisis. They see guest worker programs that insure more cheap labor with no rights.

The policy debate talks about, but also around, workers. Workers themselves are not being heard; perhaps our leaders are afraid of what they'll hear or they know what they'll hear.

Francisco has fears as well. Francisco fears for his children and grandchildren. He fears that, for them, his new country will look more like the one he left, a country with two classes of people, the rich and the poor.

## Labor and the Undocumented: Where Do We Go From Here?

by Zaragosa Vargas

NAFTA and other trade agreements have wrought economic havoc in Mexico. Those workers who have been uprooted have no choice but to come north in search of jobs. Between 2000-2006 almost a half million Mexicans a year crossed the border. These immigrant workers are essential in a transnational labor market that binds Mexico and the United States.

Many Latino workers are immigrants and substantial proportions are undocumented. Presently Latino workers account for over 13 percent of the total U.S. work force and their labor participation is growing at five times the national average. With a reputation for being hard workers, Latinos fulfill a critical role in many low-paid labor sectors. A two-

tiered labor system exists from a perpetual underclass of Latino immigrant workers who are denied full rights in the workplace. Unscrupulous employers readily hire workers from this compliant pool of cheaper labor as long as it is available.

A massive guest worker program, or permanently barring the twelve million undocumented workers from the rights of citizenship, would prolong the current two-tiered labor market. It also complicates efforts by American workers to advance their interests, for any increase in the labor supply tends to reduce the bargaining power of all workers.

During the late 1990s the United States experienced an unprecedented economic boom that led to a rethinking of the relationship between immigration and economic growth. This led to the idea of reinstating a government-managed guest worker program such as the Bracero Program widely used from 1942 to 1964. An economic recession, however, stopped support for such a program, as did the 9/11 attacks.

Organized labor numbered among the leading anti-immigrant forces. This changed in 1999 when the AFL-CIO's executive council reversed its longtime policy on immigration, concluding that only by steering tens of thousands of low-wage service workers onto membership rolls could it reverse the decline in union membership. It called for a blanket amnesty for undocumented workers. A federation of progressive unions called Change to Win are now in the forefront of this new movement.

On May 1, 2006, International Workers' Day, millions of

mostly Latino immigrant workers staged a one-day economic boycott and work stoppage to call for the legalization of all undocumented immigrants with civil, labor, and human rights protections, including U.S. permanent residency and citizenship.<sup>1</sup> The immigrants' call for "A Day Without an Immigrant"—a boycott in cities nationwide was designed to halt federal legislation aimed at the criminalization and ultimate deportation of all who have entered the country illegally.

The marches and demonstrations in 2006 reflected a decade's work in the Latino community by labor unions that have immigrant worker members, advocates of immigration reform, among others. The protests showed that a mass mobilization can happen in a modern industrial society and that unity can make a difference.

The United States witnessed a large-scale immigrant rights social movement in 2006 but also the mobilization by the extreme right who declared open season on immigrants. Racial and ethnic violence, abuse of authority by local law enforcement, and anti-Mexican and anti-immigrant outbreaks are all part of this extremism.

The recent immigration reform proposal was doomed from the start. The Bush administration used the issue of national security to undermine efforts to protect immigrant workers from labor abuse, exploitation, and other indignities. Efforts to sustain political mobilization on behalf of undocumented immigrants are imperative because of the failure of comprehensive immigration reform.<sup>2</sup>

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## Founding of the Southern Labor Studies Association

by Jacob Remes (jacob.remes@duke.edu)

While there will be no federal action on pressing immigration reform at least through the rest of Bush's term, conservative lawmakers in more than half the states are readying legislation to crack down on illegal immigration and enable local officers to enforce immigration laws.

America continues to grow rapidly against a backdrop of dwindling pensions, health insurance, and jobs by companies looking for cheap labor abroad and at home. While militarily blockading its southern border, the United States continues to promote regional economic agreements like CAFTA for investments while criminalizing the emergence of a regional labor market.

In a global economy, the fate of both native-born workers and immigrant workers are linked. Organized labor must continue to convince broad sectors of the U.S. working class that its future lies in unity with immigrant workers. The only way to stop the downward pressure on wages and working conditions is to guarantee the rights of all workers to organize and fight for livable wages and better working conditions. Unions therefore must appeal to their U.S.-born rank-and-file unionists to join forces with the immigrants.

Latino immigrants must also fulfill their potential for political participation. Although unions have joined the major political parties and nonpartisan groups in targeting Latinos, the rapid increase in the size of the Latino population has not produced a corresponding growth in its political clout with regard to pushing Congress to act on immigration reform.

Latino workers are playing a key role in helping America grow and prosper in the 21st century. The spending power of the Latino population is growing rapidly, at \$800 billion annually, and is forecast to pass \$1 trillion by 2008. Latinos increase their expenditures by around 7 percent a year, exceeding the 4.4 percent for the United States as a whole.

Yet Latino immigrants continue to be scapegoated for causing poverty, increasing health and educational needs, and placing stress on local communities. This is because the hysteria of nativism is driving the immigration debate. Following the immigrant rights marches in the spring of 2007, there was a spike in violent attacks on immigrants fueled by the anti-immigrant climate.

Neither nativism nor the creation of a wall between the United States and Mexico will put the question of illegal immigration to rest so long as would-be immigrants brave the deserts of the American Southwest to join the American Dream.<sup>3</sup>

Many unions are adapting to meet the challenges of a shifting labor force—fighting for immigrants instead of against them. More and more unions must see the undocumented as a potential source for new members and staunch allies in the protracted struggle for worker rights and dignity.

1 "Immigrants take to Streets in Show of Strength" *New York Times* May 2, 2006, p. A.1.

2 The Tomas Rivera Policy Institute, *New Dimensions of Latino Participation* (Claremont, California: The Tomas Rivera Policy Institute, October 2006), p. 2; Roberto Suro, "Latino Power?: It Will Take Time for the Population Boom to Translate," *Washington Post* June 26, 2005; B01.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

For many years, a Southern Labor Studies Conference has been organized biennially on an ad hoc basis, with no consistent organizational support or institutional memory. At the last such conference—which doubled as this year's LAWCHA conference—a group spearheaded by Heather Thompson and Cindy Hahamovitch came together to found the Southern Labor Studies Association. So far, we are a group of working-class and labor historians in or of the South, but we hope to expand to include scholars in other disciplines, activists, labor educators, and organizers.

We seek to encourage the study of work and the working class in the American South, and by scholars working in the South. To do this, we will work to build and strengthen the community of labor scholars in the South; to foster communication among them; provide forums for sharing their work; recognize contributions to the study of work and the working class; encourage the preservation of Southern working class sites and sources; and foster the teaching of working class history in and about the South.

SLSA is proudly affiliated with LAWCHA. Membership will be through a small add-on to LAWCHA dues, so all our members will also be national members.

SLSA will have three events at the Southern Historical Annual meeting on Friday, November 2nd, in Richmond. We will meet in order to continue planning from 8-9:30am (room TBA). A more fun event will be our inaugural reception that evening from 5:30-7:30 in the Commonwealth Room. Finally, at a time and fee to be announced, Greg Kimball will lead a labor history walking tour of Richmond's canal area, including the Tredegar Iron Works, Tobacco Row, and Docks (space will be limited).

We have lots of ideas for our nascent group, and we'd love to have yours, too! For more information, email SLSA President Heather Thompson at [hathomps@uncc.edu](mailto:hathomps@uncc.edu). Those who want to be involved in bringing this new organization to life can join an email list by going to: <https://lists.duke.edu/sympa/subscribe/slsa-plan>.

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## New Midwest Program Subcommittee Meets at NALHC

LAWCHA will soon launch a Midwest program subcommittee. If you are now a Midwesterner, please join us in Detroit for dinner after the LAWCHA reception on Thursday. We might use the time to share our ideas about labor and working class history and organize them into some good panels for upcoming conferences. As chair of the Midwest subcommittee, Lisa Phillips at Indiana State University will be gathering suggestions for future LAWCHA-sponsored panels in the Midwest and elsewhere. Please feel free to e-mail her at [lphillips7@isugw.indstate.edu](mailto:lphillips7@isugw.indstate.edu) or phone at 812-237-3706 with ideas for panels, any questions you might have, and/or to let her know if you will be able to join us for discussion in Detroit. We hope to see you at the NALHC.

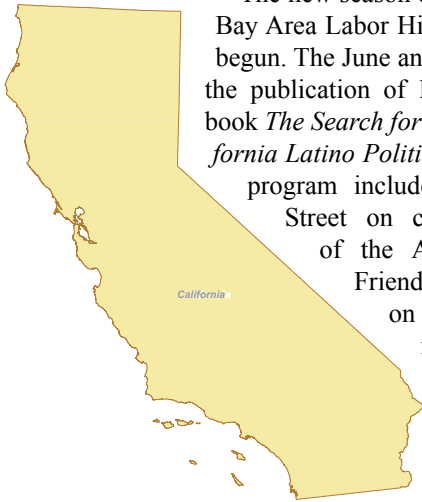
## Reports from the Grassroots

The following reports from LAWCHA activists detail our members' activities in different parts of the country. We encourage submissions from all members. Send them to Joe McCartin ([jam6@georgetown.edu](mailto:jam6@georgetown.edu)) or Bob Bussel ([bussel@uoregon.edu](mailto:bussel@uoregon.edu)).

### Bay Area

Don Watson ([dwlabor@earthlink.net](mailto:dwlabor@earthlink.net))

The 14<sup>th</sup> annual Labor Fest covered the month of July with numerous events commemorating the San Francisco General Strike of 1934. Featured were not only the popular labor history boat tour but also many tours by bus and foot to various sacred San Francisco Bay Area labor history sites.



The new season of the San Francisco Bay Area Labor History Workshop has begun. The June annual dinner honored the publication of Ken Burt's awaited book *The Search for a Civic Voice: California Latino Politics*. The Fall-Winter program includes Natalie Marine-Street on changing objectives of the American Seamen's Friend Society, John Elrick on working-class community resistance to redevelopment, Lauren Coodley on introducing labor into the master narrative of Cali-

ornia, and Connor Casey on the San Francisco faculty strike of 1968-69. Other topics in the Spring will include workers health and safety, the 1970 Salinas Valley vegetable strike, minority contractors in the construction industry and new S.F. City College student labor history projects.

This year's SWLSA/UALE conference on November 16-17 at City College will include labor history topics. For more information, contact Don Watson, [dwlabor@earthlink.net](mailto:dwlabor@earthlink.net).

Bill Issel ([bi@sfsu.edu](mailto:bi@sfsu.edu)) has placed the program for the 2007-2008 Bay Area Labor History Workshop on line. You can find it at: <http://bss.sfsu.edu/issel/labor%20history%20workshop.htm>

Harvey Schwartz's fine obituaries for the labor journalist and historian David Selvin and arbitrator Sam Kagel can also be found there.

### Chicago

Nancy MacLean ([nkm050@northwestern.edu](mailto:nkm050@northwestern.edu))

Chicago LAWCHA members helped organize a Faculty Support Committee for the Hotel Workers Rising campaign of UNITE HERE. Faculty from a half-dozen campuses joined marches and leafleting efforts, participated in delegations with clergy to Global Hyatt management, ran an extremely successful phone bank that reached 350 Hyatt clients, and helped recruit student interns. Our efforts backed the determination of the more than 7,000 hotel workers in the Chicago area who voted 9 to 1 to authorize strikes if needed. The final contracts brought surprisingly big victories, including card check for all

future properties of the 25 hotels, wage increases up to \$13.20 per hour for non-tipped workers, continuation of affordable, quality health care, more humane work loads for housekeepers, and new protections for the rights of immigrant workers and African American workers. The union is eager to get more faculty support from across North America for the ongoing multi-year Hotel Workers Rising campaign. If you're interested in helping out, contact Nancy MacLean at [nkm050@northwestern.edu](mailto:nkm050@northwestern.edu). (More campaign information is at <http://www.hotelworkersrising.org>).

Several Chicago LAWCHA members also serve on the Steering Committee of the Chicago Center for Working-Class Studies.

Among other activities, this year the CCWCS won grant support to go interactive with its highly successful Chicago Labor Trail map project (over 10,000 paper copies are already in use). Now labor activists and scholars can add sites and stories to the ever-growing record of Chicago area labor struggle at <http://www.labortrail.org>. For more information on the labor trail, contact Project Director Leon Fink at [leonfink@uic.edu](mailto:leonfink@uic.edu). The CCWCS also sponsors an annual spring panel called "Getting Paid to Cause Trouble: Careers in Social Justice Organizing," at which young labor and community organizers describe what they do and why as they offer students pathways into activist careers. Filling the vacuum left by college placement offices, the event has guided young people into internships and jobs in organizing, while also building relationships among area unions and community organizations (and lifting the spirits of the aging academics in the audience). For more information on how it works, contact Liesl Orenic: [lorenice@dom.edu](mailto:lorenice@dom.edu).

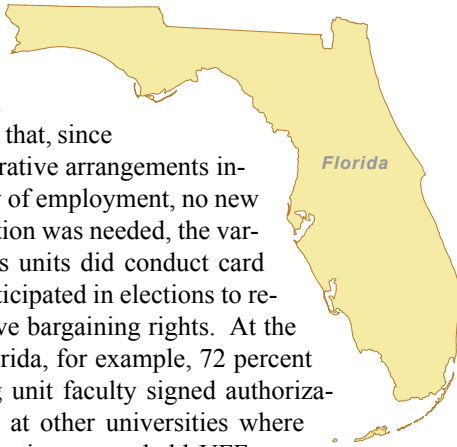


### Florida

Bob Zieger ([zieger@ufl.edu](mailto:zieger@ufl.edu))

The University of Florida chapter of the United Faculty of Florida (AFT, NEA, AFL-CIO) is continuing difficult contract talks with the University of Florida administration. It is expected that the contract will be in place for a vote later in the fall. UFF has had bargaining rights, initially as part of the state university system's collective bargaining regime, since 1976. Four years ago the legislature, at the behest of then-governor Jeb Bush, restructured the state's universities, devolving governance (and thus union recognition and collective bargaining)

to each unit. Although state courts eventually validated UFF's contention that, since the new administrative arrangements involved continuity of employment, no new faculty authorization was needed, the various UFF campus units did conduct card drives and/or participated in elections to re-establish collective bargaining rights. At the University of Florida, for example, 72 percent of the bargaining unit faculty signed authorization cards, while at other universities where representation elections were held UFF captured over 90 percent of the vote.



One other positive result of the card drive here was to rekindle interest in the union and rebuild the membership (being a so-called RTW state, of course, there is no union security). Once the court ruled (about two years ago) that the current contract remained in force until a new one could be negotiated and that UFF representation here did not have to be re-certified, bargaining began. It has been a tough slog with an administration notable for its passive/aggressive approach to faculty rights but the bargaining team reports that there has been progress and that we should be able to expect a vote before the end of the semester. I might add that UFF and especially its president, Tom Auxter, have been vocal and effective opponents of efforts on the part of members of the legislature to curtail academic freedom by requiring what they misleadingly call "balance" in the presentation of controversial material in state university classroom settings.

Another positive result of recent changes has been the merger of NEA and AFT in Florida and hence the opportunity for our chapter to join the North Central Florida Central Labor Council. I have the great privilege of serving as a UFF delegate and am currently a member of the NCFCLC executive board. The Council annually holds two popular events that are important to the local progressive community: its Labor Day breakfast and a Holiday Spaghetti Dinner in December. These events draw folks from a wide range of the activist community here, including those involved with gay and lesbian rights, environmentalism, racial issues, good government, and Democratic Party politics. Although the NCFCLC is one of the smaller CLC's, it has often seemed to me that we do something here locally that the larger labor movement often talks about doing but only inconsistently accomplishes, namely serving as a focal point for the diverse liberal and progressive elements in the community.

Central Florida Community College in Ocala is hosting the Smithsonian exhibit "The Way We Worked: Photographs

from the National Archives," Sept. 13 to Oct. 27, 2007. On September 14, Bob Zieger of the University of Florida presented a lecture entitled "All the Livelong Day: Work in American History" in connection with the exhibit's opening. Photos from the exhibit can be viewed at <http://www.archives.gov/press-kits/way-we-worked>

### Seattle

James N. Gregory ([gregoryj@u.washington.edu](mailto:gregoryj@u.washington.edu))

The Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project has made a bit of history itself this past year. The online project is a unique public history website, providing the most complete set of resources about civil rights struggles for any city outside the South. Intended for use in classrooms as well as by scholars, the project shows how academic labor historians can produce history that makes a difference. Taught in dozens of schools and colleges by teachers who are looking for ways to introduce the local dimensions of segregation and civil rights history, the project has also been the subject of considerable press and public attention.



We even helped change state law. One of our highlights is a database of racial restrictive covenants and deed restrictions that served for several generations as an important instrument of residential segregation. Although no longer enforceable,

### Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project Units

- Seattle Black Panther Party History and Memory
- Filipino Cannery Unionism Across Three Generations 1930s to 1980s
- Seattle's Asian American Movement 1969-1973
- Chicano/a Movement of Washington State History
- Tyree Scott and the United Construction Workers Association
- United Farm Workers of Washington State History
- Seattle General Strike of 1919
- Communism in Washington State History and Memory
- Labor Press Project

restrictive covenants today remain part of the legal property descriptions in many neighborhoods in the city and in its suburbs. With more than 400 racial covenants documented, our database (created by a team of student researchers) is the most extensive collection in the country. The database in turn has

caused quite a stir, first attracting press attention, then the attention of the state legislature, which passed a law making it easier for homeowners' associations to remove the segregationist language from association contracts.

The project is a potential model also in the way that it brings together students, faculty, and community groups. Much of the research has been done by University of Washington students, both undergraduates and graduates. Nearly 100 have contributed to the project so far, either through organized classes or independent studies sponsored by faculty members in History, Labor Studies, and American Ethnic Studies. Community groups have contributed documents, photographs, and helped facilitate interviews. And because so much work has been done by volunteers, the costs have been modest. Funding has come from University sources and local grants.

Some of the project's resources are organized as special units, each featuring articles, photographs, documents, digitized newspaper collections, and video oral histories (see box).

For information about the Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project please visit the main website: <http://www.civilrights.washington.edu> or contact James N. Gregory, Director, or Trevor Griffey, Project Coordinator, at [civilr@u.washington.edu](mailto:civilr@u.washington.edu).

### Twin Cities

Peter Rachleff ([rachleff@macalester.edu](mailto:rachleff@macalester.edu))

Twin Cities labor historians have been busy on a number of fronts:



We have served as consultants on the design, content, and forthcoming curriculum associated with the painting of a 7'x72' Labor History mural by two local artists, Tacoumba Aiken and Keith Christensen. This mural and its curriculum are the first projects of a Labor Legacy Foundation (see: [stpaulunions.org/LaborLegacyMuralProject.htm](http://stpaulunions.org/LaborLegacyMuralProject.htm)), established by the St. Paul Area Trades and Labor Assembly. The mural will be mounted in the main meeting room at the St. Paul Labor Center and it

will be scanned and accessible over the Internet. □ Its curriculum, being designed by a team lead by members of St. Paul Federation of Teachers Local 28, will use the mural as a teaching tool for students in grades 4-12.

We organized a number of sessions for the 2007 convention of the Organization of American Historians, including a walking tour of the sites associated with the 1934 Minneapolis truckers' strikes, a panel of non-academics on "Preserving and Presenting Local Labor History," a panel on "The Life and Legacy of Meridel LeSueur," and a panel on "Minnesota La-

bor Radicalism," chaired by University of Minnesota Professor-Emeritus Hy Berman and featuring Bill Millikan (author of *A Union Against Unions: The Minneapolis Citizens Alliance*), Elizabeth Faue, and OAH President-Emeritus David Montgomery.

We participated in the planning of the ninth annual "Untold Stories" labor history series, sponsored by the Friends of the St. Paul Public Library, which ran in April and May. High points included the annual David Noble Lecture at the Minnesota Historical Society, honoring the long-time (51 years and still at it!) University of Minnesota historian and American Studies scholar, delivered by University of Wisconsin professor Nan Enstad on the topic, "The Jim Crow Cigarette: Tracing Cultures of Transnational Capitalism Before the Era of Globalization"; a reading from *By the Ore Docks: A Working People's History of Duluth* by author Richard Hudelson; a presentation of oral history interviews and poetry by Ford workers/UAW members who face the closing of their plant; an analytical discussion of the issues raised by the imminent closing of the plant and the prospects for a local campaign to maintain the facility and its power-generating dam as a "green" manufacturing plant; a bus tour exploring "De-industrializing St. Paul," led by railroad union officer and former LAWCHA board member Davie Riehle; and a presentation on "Children of NAFTA," by California-based journalist David Bacon, with a response by Javier Morillo, president of SEIU Local 26, the Twin Cities "Justice for Janitors" local.

We participated in the planning and unfolding of the June 2007 Working Class Studies Association's international conference, held at Macalester College. Peter Rachleff, a Professor of History at Macalester and current member of the LAWCHA board, is president of the WCSA. More than 250 scholars, cultural workers and activists came from as far away as Nigeria and South Africa and as close as the Twin Cities to discuss the conference theme, "Working Class Culture and Counter-Culture." At the WCSA business meeting, Association members discussed how to collaborate more closely with LAWCHA.

LAWCHA members also participated in the Solidarity Committee that congealed around SEIU Local 26 in December 2006-January 2007, and in support work on behalf of immigrant workers and families victimized by ICE raids in Worthington, Willmar, and Austin, Minnesota. As I write this report, LAWCHA members are helping to establish a Solidarity Committee in support of three AFSCME locals at the University of Minnesota who are bargaining together and taking a strike vote in late August.

For more information about Twin Cities activities, please visit: [www.workdayminnesota.org](http://www.workdayminnesota.org) and [www.minneapolisunions.org/cluc\\_labor\\_review](http://www.minneapolisunions.org/cluc_labor_review).

### Wisconsin

Andrew Kersten ([kerstena@uwgb.edu](mailto:kerstena@uwgb.edu))

On April 26, 2007, the Wisconsin Labor History Society hosted its 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference. Over 80 scholars, students, and unionists attended the day-long event. The organizing

topic was “the labor movement and U.S. wars.” The morning panel covered several topics: David Nack of the Wisconsin School for Workers discussed the First World War and the U.S. military incursion into Russia in 1917;



Susanna Rasmussen described how her grandmother and unionist, Darina Rasmussen, was harassed by the FBI during the 1950s; and Frank Emspak, whose father Julius was a founding member of the United Electrical Workers, highlighted the deleterious impact

that Cold War political attacks had on organized labor generally and specifically on the United Electrical Workers at GE’s Schenectady plant. The afternoon was devoted to more recent history. New York University professor Greg Grandin discussed President Ronald Reagan’s policies in Latin America during the 1980s and argued that the Reagan administration’s experiences profoundly shaped those of the current Bush administration. From the doctrine of pre-emptive war to the encouragement of corporate investment in the “third world,” many neo-conservatives cut their eyeteeth in Latin America. The final panel was devoted to discussions of the historic role of the United States in destabilizing other governments and of President George W. Bush’s war in Iraq. Notably, Wisconsin State AFL-CIO President David Newby presented a short video of his speech on the floor of the 2005 National AFL-CIO Convention, which called for a withdrawal of American forces in Iraq.

President Newby’s activism in opposition to the Iraq War illustrates one example of the many ways in which the state AFL-CIO has been pushing for political change. During the recent Congressional elections, the state Federation along with local unions staffed an effective get-out-the-vote campaign. More recently the state union leaders have worked to support immigrant worker rights in the face of well-funded campaigns to make their lives more difficult and precarious; to fight to increase the minimum wage and employment benefits; and to increase the number of unionists in the state. Additionally, the state AFL-CIO has been monitoring carefully the increasing unemployment in Wisconsin.

## Spring Conference Fetes Montgomery

*Continued from page 2*

dential campaign. Duke’s Center for Documentary Studies also sponsored a series of workshops and a memorable Southern-style reception on their beautiful front porch. A concluding session reflected on the role of the scholar activist and what we as LAWCHA members can contribute to the labor movement.

It was truly an innovative and inspiring conference for all who attended. LAWCHA officers hope to replicate its success at future annual conferences, each hosted by a different regional organization. Save the dates now: on June 6-8, 2008, LAWCHA will co-sponsor another dynamic event in Vancouver, British Columbia, in collaboration with the Pacific Northwest Labour History Association. (See the Call for Papers on page 16.) In Spring 2009 look for us in downtown Chicago as Dominican and Roosevelt universities host our annual meeting. Don’t miss out next time. As Markowitz writes, “The experience was great because it was very different than



*At its 2007 annual convention, LAWCHA was proud to present its first Distinguished Service to Labor and Working-Class History Award to David Montgomery. After a presentation by founding president Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, conference attendees heard first a tribute by Leon Fink and were then treated to a lively address by Montgomery himself.*

academic conferences... My day at the conference was what people on the left who write about the Working Class often say about the Working Class; that it is open, passionate, warm and egalitarian.”

## Call for Papers, Workshops and Presentations:

# Pacific Northwest Labour History Association

## *Indigenous, Immigrant, Migrant Labour & Globalization*

The Pacific Northwest Labour History Association's 40<sup>th</sup> annual conference, presented in collaboration with the Labor & Working Class History Association and the Simon Fraser University Centre for Labour Studies

*Simon Fraser University Harbour Centre, Vancouver, BC, June 6–8, 2008*

Waves of immigrants came—and still come—to North America. They met new challenges and made their own mark on the labour and political landscapes. Some moved on while others settled in the Pacific Northwest. Indigenous communities had to respond to this immigration and the new colonies, while the global import and export of goods and people through our ports provided ongoing opportunities for solidarity.

This conference seeks to connect these histories with contemporary globalization, and considers how the labour movement can strengthen for the future.

We invite proposals for academic research, panels, individual presentations, interactive workshops, drama, music, art, memorabilia displays and other forms of presentation. Interactive sessions are preferred and the reading of papers is discouraged. We welcome submissions that address:

- Indigenous peoples' response to immigration
- Exclusion, segregation, racism, and liberation struggles – the labour movement's record
- They come by sea – the significance of ports and maritime labour
- No streets of gold – the true immigrant experience
- Following the work – pulling up stakes in search of a better life
- Deportations – the risk of labour activism and political agitation
- Myth and superstition – cultural folklore on the job
- Union organizing campaigns – advancements and losses
- Multi-culturalism or melting-pot? "Colour blindness" or reparations
- Immigrant and refugee policies and their impact
- Immigrant and indigenous women in their communities, workplaces and labour movements
- Remittances – from those sent away to those sending money "back home"
- Other topics that further understanding of workers' heritage and social change

**Proposal deadline is January 14, 2008.** Please send a short summary and list of all presenters to Ms. Joey Hartman, PNLHA BC Vice President, preferably by email to [pnlha@shaw.ca](mailto:pnlha@shaw.ca), or by mail to #2402 – 6888 Station Hill Drive, Burnaby, BC, Canada, V3N 4X5.

All graduate students on the program will be automatically entered into competition for a travel grant to attend.

Hotel rooms in unionized establishments will be available at a discount for the Vancouver conference on a first come, first served basis, June 6, 7 and 8, 2008. Reserve early.

For further information contact Joey Hartman at 604-456-7043. For updates, check our website: [www.pnlha.org](http://www.pnlha.org).



## Slings and Arrows: Labor Education and Labor Studies Programs Under Fire

by Bob Bussel (bussel@uoregon.edu)

Since their inception during the early and mid-twentieth century, university-based labor education and labor studies programs have existed precariously within the academy. As institutions that serve a largely union and working-class constituency, labor education programs have periodically been accused of political partisanship and a lack of objectivity. Often, these criticisms have been accompanied by questions about labor studies' legitimacy as an academic discipline. More recently, declining state funding has led to staffing and program cutbacks in some instances and growing pressure to become more self-supporting. An especially troubling development has been an increase in political attacks, with conservative forces seeking to blunt what they perceive as labor education's support for initiatives that seek to enhance union effectiveness in bargaining, organizing, and political action.

Several labor education programs have been seriously threatened in recent months. Perhaps the most notable example has occurred in California where several years ago, programs at UCLA and UC Berkeley successfully resisted an effort led by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to eliminate their funding. Now a group of conservative legislators is again seeking to defund these programs. The ideological rationale behind these attacks was outlined in a recent web posting by the Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) that described the California programs as vehicles "to train union activists and create pro-union propaganda." ABC has been especially angered by UC research on project labor agreements that it regarded as favoring unions and unionized contractors at the expense of their nonunion counterparts. More broadly, it appears as if the UC programs are being singled out for providing vital educational and technical support for the union movement and have become convenient targets for those forces resentful of growing union influence in California.

Just as this article was going to press, a budget agreement was reached in California that retained full funding for the

UC labor education programs! One can only hope that this latest failed effort to undercut labor education in California will discourage similar action in the future.

The Institute of Labor Studies at the University of Missouri-Kansas City was also designated for elimination last spring as part of a university cost-cutting move. A public campaign opposing this action helped win the program a reprieve. However, its budget was reduced by 30 percent, and according to its director, the Institute faces continuing pressure to generate additional revenue. Indiana University's Division of Labor Studies has weathered serious budget cuts following political gains by conservatives and undergone an administrative reorganization. Nonetheless, the program reports that by mobilizing allies at both the state and national level, it has been able to sustain its commitment to providing workers' education in spite of these developments.

In addition to these pressures on individual programs, the Landmark Legal Foundation, a conservative advocacy group, has sent public records requests to over a half-dozen labor centers seeking information on their programming, finances, and relations with unions. These requests are yet another manifestation of what appears to be an orchestrated effort to question the legitimacy of university-based labor education programs and undermine their effectiveness.

Ultimately, thwarting efforts to undercut labor education's presence on the nation's campuses will be won by activating allies at the state level, with the union movement playing a pivotal role. However, it is important for university decision makers to know that labor education and labor studies are supported by other constituencies, and this is where the voices of LAWCHA members will be invaluable.

In order for us to monitor the status of labor education, we encourage you to let us know about any new threats or attacks similar to those we have described. We promise to keep you informed and enlist your solidarity when these essential programs are being challenged.

### **Lecture for LAWCHA!**

**Next time you receive an honorarium,  
why not donate it to LAWCHA?**

The Labor and Working-Class History Association needs your continued financial support to continue our many and growing programs. By sending us your next honorarium check (or any other contribution, large or small) you'll be supporting our essay, dissertation, and book prizes; you'll be working to make sure that graduate students continue to receive travel grants to attend our conferences; and you'll be help us expand our reach to organize new members. And it's tax-deductible.

Send your next honorarium to LAWCHA treasurer Tom Klug, Marygrove College, 8425 W. McNichols, Detroit, MI 48221.

## LAWCHA Program Committee Report

by Colleen O'Neill (colleen.oneill@usu.edu)

As co-chairs of the Program Committee, we are asking LAWCHA members to include LAWCHA as a co-sponsor of sessions you are proposing for academic meetings or public talks you are planning to deliver. Our goal is to promote the study of labor and working-class history, and to further build LAWCHA's visibility across disciplines and regions. Please contact either Dorothy Fujita-Rony (dfr@uci.edu) or Colleen O'Neill (colleen.oneill@usu.edu) about the possibility of LAWCHA's co-sponsorship for future panels or programs.

Please support your fellow LAWCHA members by attending their sessions at upcoming meetings. The following is a short list of sessions that have been accepted as of August 2007:

### **North American Labor History Conference**

McGregor Conference Center, Wayne State University, Detroit Michigan: October 18-20, 2007.

For more information, see: <http://www.clas.wayne.edu/unit-inner.asp?WebPageID=271> or contact Prof. Janine Lanza at: [jmlanza@wayne.edu](mailto:jmlanza@wayne.edu)

At this year's North American Labor History Conference at Wayne State University, LAWCHA is co-sponsoring several sessions and a reception. On Thursday, LAWCHA paper prize winner Fernando Carbajal presents a paper on a panel on the Working Class and the War on Poverty, and Michael Honey and Laurie Beth Green present New Perspectives on the Freedom Struggle, based on their new books, followed by a LAWCHA co-sponsored reception and book signing.

Other LAWCHA members present throughout the conference, including Alex Morrow, Eileen Boris, Steve Meyer, Lisa Phillips, Peter Rachleff, Alex Lichtenstein, Nancy Gabin, Rosemary Feurer (her film on Mother Jones!), and others. Staughton Lynd appears on Saturday.

LAWCHA sponsored sessions at the NALHC include:

### **New Perspectives on the Freedom Struggle: Black Working-Class Activism, Martin Luther King, and the Memphis Strike** (Thursday, October 18).

Chair: Carolyn Davis, Walter Reuther Archives, and Coalition of Black Trade Unionists

*Battling the Plantation Mentality: Memphis and the Black Freedom Movement* (University of North Carolina Press, 2007) Laurie Beth Green, University of Texas, Austin

*Going Down Jericho Road: The Memphis Strike, Martin Luther King's Last Campaign* (W.W. Norton, 2007) Michael Honey, University of Washington, Tacoma.

### **Union Beauty Contests, Consumption, Class, and Ethnicity** (Friday, October 19)

Chair and Comment: Christina Simmons, University of Windsor

*Spectacles of Modernity: Debating Salesgirls' Bodily*

*Appearances, 1890 to 1940*, Donica Belisle, Centre for Women's and Gender Studies at the University of British Columbia

*'Queen of the Picket Line': Beauty Contests and the Trade Union Movement in Post World War II Canada*, Joan Sangster, Trent University

*The Survival of the Fittest: The State, the Promotion of Healthy Lifestyle and Social Reproduction in Canada*, Sandra Ignagni, York University

### **Taking them to Court: Rethinking Sex Discrimination in the Long 1970s** (Friday, October 19)

Chair and Comment: Nancy Gabin, Purdue University

*The Way the World Was: The Telephone Company, the EEOC, and the Struggle for Equal Rights*, Jane LaTour, District Council 37, AFSCME

*Where Have All the Working Women Gone?: Gender and Class in EEOC v. Sears, 1973-1986*, Emily Zuckerman, Rutgers University

*Gendering Deindustrialization: Kyriazi v. Western Electric and the Kearny, NJ Works*, Jennifer J. Armiger, University of Delaware

*The Teacher Who Swallowed a Watermelon: Pregnant Teachers, School Boards and the Courts, 1964-1985*, Ruth L. Fairbanks, University of Illinois

### **The Politics of Workers' Bodies** (Saturday, October 20)

Chair: Lisa Phillips, Indiana State University

*Re-Working That Body: The Accident Crisis and Cultural Constructions of the Industrial Worker, 1877-1914*, Michael Rosenow, University of Illinois

*'Hygeia herself is ever the companion of true liberty': Contextualizing Antebellum Workingmen's Campaign for the Right of Person*, Pat Reeve, Suffolk University

*'Saving Something Invaluable for Our Country': Railroaders' Bodies, Citizenship, and the Politics of Accident Liability, 1870-1910*, John Williams-Searle, College of Saint Rose

Comment: Eileen Boris, University of California, Santa Barbara

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**Remember: All LAWCHA memberships run from January 1 to January 1. Don't forget to renew your membership! Reply to the mailing you will soon receive, or use the form on page 10.**

**Social Science History Association Conference**

Palmer House Hilton, Chicago, IL, November 15-18, 2007.  
For more information, see: <http://www.ssha.org>

**Book Session: Colleen O'Neill's *Working the Navajo Way***

(Friday, November 16)  
Elizabeth Jameson, Chair  
Gerald Ronning, Discussant  
Larry Nesper, Discussant  
Jessica Cattelino, Discussant  
Colleen O'Neill, Author

**American Historical Association Conference**

Marriott Wardman Park Hotel / Omni Shoreham Hotel, Washington, D.C.: January 3-6, 2008  
For more details, see: <http://www.historians.org/annual/2008/index.cfm>

**Challenging Narratives: Asian Americans in Public Culture (Session #20).**

Chair: Daniel Katz, Empire State College

*The U.S. West, Narratives, and Asian Americans*, Dorothy Fujita-Rony, University of California at Irvine

*Public Culture and Asian Americans: The Smithsonian Institution*, Franklin Odo, Asian Pacific American Program, Smithsonian Institution

*Resistance, Culture, and American Dreams: Teaching the 1946 Hawai'i Sugar Strike*, Thomas Fujita-Rony, California State University at Fullerton

**Organization of American Historians Meeting**

Hilton New York in New York City, March 28-31, 2008.  
For more details, see: <http://www.oah.org/2008/>

**Women's Diasporic Working-Class Radicalism in Early-Twentieth Century New York City, March 28 (Session #918)**

Chair: Franca Iacovetta, University of Toronto

*Agua y Carbon: African-Cuban Women Diasporic Politics in the U.S. 1933-1952*, Nancy Mirabal, San Francisco State University

*Italian Women's Diasporic Radicalisms and Working-Class Politics in Early Twentieth Century New York City*, Jennifer Guglielmo, Smith College

Commentator: Jose Moya, Barnard College

At only 30, student memberships are a great gift to celebrate any milestone in a graduate student's career. Give one today! Go to [www.lawcha.org](http://www.lawcha.org) or see page 10.

**Asians and Latinos: Converging Communities, Identities and Histories (Session #975)**

Chair and Comment: Moon-Ho Jung, University of Washington

*Fusion Cuisine: the Cultural Formation of Chino Latinos in NYC*, Lok Siu, New York University

*Intra-Colonial Mobility and Individual Choice: The failure of Puerto Rican and the success of Filipino flow in and out of Hawai'i*, JoAnna Poblete-Cross, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

*Magkasama Kami (We Were/ Are Together): Convergences of Filipino and Mexican History, 1521-Present*, Evelyn Rodriguez, University of San Francisco

*Interethnic Alliances: Filipino and Mexican Labor Organizing in California Agriculture, 1920s - 1960s*, Rudy Guevarra, Jr. University of California, Santa Barbara

**Organizing Domestic Workers: History in Action**

Chair: Eileen Boris, University of California, Santa Barbara

*Toward a History of Domestic Worker Organizing* Premilla Nadasen, Queens College

*Strategies for Organizing: The Workplace Project* Nadia Marin-Molina, Workplace Project/Centro de Derechos Laborales

*Domestic Workers Organizing in the Global City* Speaker TBA, Domestic Workers United

**Fourteenth Berkshire Conference on the History of Women**

Minneapolis, Minnesota, June 12-15, 2008  
For more details, see: <http://www.berksconference.org>

**Native American Women Workers in the Twentieth Century: A Comparative Conversation**

Chair: Margaret Jacobs, University of Nebraska, Lincoln

*Seeking Recognition as Workers: Native American Women's Labor within National, Reservation and Family Economies*, Carol Williams, University of Lethbridge

*The Gendering of Work Relief in Indian Country: American Indian Women in the New Deal Era*, Colleen O'Neill, Utah State University

*Gender, Bridging and Discourses of Self-Help: Community Health Representatives in Western Canada*, Mary Jane McCallum, University of Manitoba

Commentator: Marsha Weisiger, New Mexico State University

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