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The LAWCHA conference held in Washington, D.C. in May, “Fighting Inequality: Class, Race, and Power,” carried forward the momentum from our large gatherings in Chicago and New York. Held in partnership with the Working Class Studies Association (WCSA) and in conjunction with film showings by the DC LaborFest, the event blended scholarship, activism, arts, and culture.

Thanks to the extraordinary efforts and commitment of the conference program committee, in particular our host, LAWCHA board member Joseph McCartin, Director of Georgetown’s Kalmanovitz Initiative for Labor and the Working Poor, and longtime WCSA leader Sherry Linkon, who did the lion’s share of conference planning, the program was a huge success.

Among the well over a hundred lively sessions were two rousing plenaries featuring activists, one on “Reinventing the Labor Movement” with representatives from Working America, the AFT, the NC AFL-CIO, and Bargaining for the Common Good, and another on “Testing Inequality” with a leader of the Chicago Teachers Union, a parent activist, and a middle school math teacher and author. Other panels ranged from teaching workshops, digital history project presentations, film discussions, and sessions for labor archivists to all manner of intriguing topical sessions on history and working-class culture and activism. One especially dynamic panel presented the case for “Why Progressive Faculty Should Boycott Teach for America”; the presenters, who included past TfA teachers and teacher-mentors, seemed to leave no one unconvinced. It would be great to keep that and other discussions from the conference going through LABOR and LaborOnline.

As longtime LAWCHA members know, we alternate between holding our own stand-alone conferences in odd years, as at Georgetown, and in even years holding our meetings in conjunction with the Organization of American Historians (OAH) annual meeting. We hope as many members as possible will join us April 7-10, 2016, in Providence, Rhode Island at the OAH. We expect to have a big constituency of graduate students, contingent faculty, and new members for whom networking such an important part of the conference. We final constitute a program committee after the Providence meeting this spring and announce the meeting date.

In ongoing work, the board laid plans at its Georgetown meeting to continue pushing out the resources of our Teachers and Public Sector Workers Initiative to K-12 teachers and other union activists. Plans are in the works to reach out, in particular, to contacts in the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association and among labor educators and to try to have a LAWCHA presence at their conventions. If you haven’t seen the materials yet, please visit the “Teaching Resources” tab of the website—and help us to get them to teachers in your area, so they may, as Jim Barrett nicely put it in the teaching session he organized, “look back to move forward.”

We continue to try to build our membership so that LAWCHA can do more. Board member Talitha LeFlouria heads our membership committee and is working with a group of state organizers to actively recruit on a state-by-state basis. You can help by contacting the national office to get brochures to take to events or conferences or share with colleagues and contacts. We know from the history of organizing that one-on-one recruiting works best, so please help us reach people in your personal networks.

We are also seeking to develop a more of a presence at meetings that could enhance our diversity, such as the Association for Asian American Studies, the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, the Association of African American Museums, the Berkshire Conference in Women’s History, the Immigration and Ethnic History Society, the Labor Research and Action Network, and the Latina/o Studies Conference, LRAN, the National Council on Public History, and the United Association of Labor Educators. Please let us know if you attend any of these meetings and can help.

You may have noticed that we have refashioned and enhanced our already popular website, where so many non-academics find us online. Ryan Poe, our freelance webmaster, has done a superb job of making the website more visually inviting and easily navigable, with input from board members as possible will join us April 7-10, 2016, in Providence, Rhode Island at the OAH. We expect to have a big constituency of graduate students, contingent faculty, and new members for whom networking such an important part of the conference. We final constitute a program committee after the Providence meeting this spring and announce the meeting date.

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Looking Ahead from Washington, D.C.

members Toby Higbie and James Gregory. Our blog LaborOnline, moderated by Rosemary Feurer, has been particularly active this year, with one piece on the history of policing forwarded over 20,000 times in relation to Black Lives Matter conversations. We urge members to write for the blog and comment on and circulate others’ posts to keep the conversations going.

Lastly, I am delighted to report that our membership has surged to nearly 600 this year. Let’s take advantage of this growth to do more to promote labor history and activism and connect with the many constituencies we need to reach.

For more information on LAWCHA’s awards and prizes, please visit LAWCHA.org/wordpress/grants-prizes/

David Montgomery Prize, 2015

The Montgomery Prize was chaired by Julie Greene with committee members Rudy Guevarra and Priscilla Murolo.

Seasons of Change
Labor, Treaty Rights, and Ojibwe Nationhood
by Chantal Norrgard
The University of North Carolina Press

The committee noted that Chantal Norrgard’s Seasons of Change is a fascinating exploration of Ojibwe struggles to exercise tribal sovereignty as it pertains to labor in the Great Lakes region. Using treaty rights as a point of departure and the focal point of her study, Norrgard demonstrates the ways Ojibwe have utilized these treaties to protect their cultural traditions and identity as indigenous peoples in the wake of U.S. colonialism and expansion. Norrgard contributes significantly to the field of U.S. labor and working-class history by moving beyond a Euro-centered approach, and by examining indigenous forms of labor that have often been rendered invisible. These include not only wage labor but also traditional subsistence forms such as hunting, gathering, and fishing. Norrgard challenges readers to rethink how we understand labor history from an indigenous perspective as well as the meanings of, and connections between, tribal sovereignty and labor rights.

HONORABLE MENTION

With Sails Whitening Every Sea
Mariners and the Making of an American Maritime Empire

by Brian Rouleau, Texas A & M University
Cornell University Press

Honorable Mention for the prize went to to Brian Rouleau, With Sails Whitening Every Sea: Mariners and the Making of an American Maritime Empire (Cornell University Press, 2014). This creative study puts ordinary white seamen at the center of U.S. relations with the world during the early republic. Rouleau shows that sailors emerged as key agents in forging the U.S. maritime empire of the nineteenth century, and his book contributes capaciously to U.S. labor and working-class history.
Taft Prize, 2015

Empire of Cotton: A Global History
by Sven Beckert, Harvard Knopf

The unanimous selection of the Taft Prize committee for 2015 was Sven Beckert, Empire of Cotton: A Global History. The committee found the book to be a major work with immense range that will help to define and expand the field of labor history. Empirically rich and exhaustively researched, Beckert successfully places the history of slaves, millworkers, and sharecroppers into the broad terrain of the history of capitalism as it was shaped by the demand for one of its most important and lucrative commodities, cotton. Linking Indian weavers to African slavery to American plantations to European consumers, Beckert masterfully bridges the global transformations of the cotton economy with local history. Taking his story through the twentieth century, Beckert shows the importance of making labor history central to the history of capitalism.

The Taft Prize Committee consisted of Jefferson Cowie, Ileen DeVault, Thavolia Glymph, Seth Rockman, and Dorothy Sue Cobble.

Herbert Gutman Prize, 2015

Jessica Wilkerson

Where Movements Meet: From the War on Poverty to Grassroots Feminism in the Appalachian South
UNC-Chapel Hill, 2014
Advisor: Jacquelyn Dowd Hall

Where Movements Meet” traces the development of a grassroots feminist movement in the mountains of eastern Kentucky that shaped the War on Poverty in Appalachia and subsequently pursued broader social justice causes that focused on the demands of poor, working-class women. The study tells the story of traditions and intergenerational relationships reaching back to the labor union struggles of the 1930s but that was also simultaneously propelled by the novel and insurgent politics of second-wave feminism in the 1960s and 1970s. Wilkerson’s conclusions reveal vital and enduring connections between the movements for civil rights, labor rights, women’s rights, and environmental justice from the 1960s through the 1980s. She also shows that the War on Poverty achieved lasting results, in this case by providing a way for working class wom-
Distinguished Service to Labor and Working-Class History

Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, Julia Cherry Spruill Professor Emerita, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and Former LAWCHA President.

Tom Klug

Recognized for Service

Tom Klug has been LAWCHA’s Treasurer since the beginning of the organization, and it is with regret that the organization accepted his decision to step down. We offer him special thanks for having served so long and so well as Treasurer. Nancy Maclean noted that Tom “handled the legal legwork to have LAWCHA incorporated in Michigan, has served as treasurer since our founding, represented us with Duke University Press, and last year proposed and oversaw the needed revisions to our Constitution. His contributions have been so many and vast that we all owe him a deep debt of gratitude for the current wellbeing LAWCHA.”

From Left to Right: Nancy MacLean, President of LAWCHA; Tom Klug, Treasurer; Cecelia Bucki, National Secretary; Shelton Stromquist, Past LAWCHA President; James Gregory, Vice President.
G eorgetown University’s Kalmanovitz Initiative for Labor and the Working Poor hosted the May 2015 joint conference between LAWCHA and the Working Class Studies Association. More than 500 hundred people, including graduate students, activists, trade unionists and scholars from a range of disciplines participated in a compelling series of plenaries and conference sessions. Feedback from leaders and members of both organizations made clear that the joint conference enhanced both organizations.

The first plenary, pictured above, offered a range of views about what ails the labor movement, and what strategies can reinvigorate it. Moderated by LAWCHA President Nancy Maclean, the session included Karen Nussbaum, co-founder and director of Working America, and former director of the Women’s Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor, and the founder of 9 to 5 and District 925, who argued for a more vigorous political targeting on the part of the labor movement supporters, to win over working class voters. James Thindwa, community engagement coordinator of the American Federation of Teachers Great Lakes Region and previous executive director of Chicago Jobs with Justice suggested a community-based strategy was one of the keys to fighting the attack on public education and defending teachers against austerity campaigns.

MaryBe McMillan, Secretary-Treasurer of the North Carolina AFL-CIO, made the case that the long deferred, and, in her estimation, far-too-neglected effort to fully organize the south was a key remedy to labor’s political and social power in the entire nation. She felt the Moral Mondays Movement in the South might be a model for the rest of the nation as well. Stephen Lerner, a fellow at Georgetown’s Kalmanovitz Institute and formerly SEIU’s Justice for Janitor’s Campaign challenged the solutions offered by the other panelists and suggested that historians and activists had to think both of where labor had gone wrong in its history, ask hard questions and target power structures rather than focus on organizing only new groups of workers.

Talitha LeFlouria. The conference session, “Black Women, Work, and Resistance in the Age of (Un) Freedom,” was an outstanding addition to this year’s program. Leading scholars in the field of working-class labor history provided audience members with a rich, and nuanced understanding of how black women’s working lives were ordered in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Deep and Upper South.

The first panelist, Talitha LeFlouria, drew on re-
Recap of the 2015 LAWCHA Conference

search from her recently published book, *Chained in Silence: Black Women and Convict Labor in the New South*, to illuminate how incarcerated black women workers were exploited by southern industrialists, who utilized their labor (along with that of men) to fortify new industries in the post-Civil War South. Although much of her presentation was devoted to highlighting the sheer brutality these women fared within Georgia’s convict lease and chain gang systems, LeFlouria also made a point to illustrate how female inmates struggled to resist physical and sexual exploitation. Moving from Georgia to Virginia, panelist LaShawn Harris’ paper, “The Commonwealth of Virginia vs. Virginia Christian,” showed the supple nature of violence and brutality, as it operated in the lives of southern working-class black women and girls. Harris’ study was effective in disclosing how black women, and girls in particular, experienced state violence and capital punishment (by way of execution), finding protection oftentimes elusive and out of reach.

In a similar vein, Sharita Jacobs Thompson’s essay, “Black Women and the Bureau’s Transportation Program in the Nation’s Capital,” introduced us to the vulnerability and fragility of black women’s lives in Washington, D.C., during the earliest moments of freedom. She revealed that, in many ways, unemployment and underemployment, as well as a host of other social, political, and economic problems, spoiled the joy of freedom for freedwomen in the nation’s capital.

While most of the panelist’s focus was geared toward the social, political, and economic struggles southern working-class black women (and girls) faced, Evan Bennett’s final presentation on landowning black female farmers illuminated the fact that agency and socioeconomic empowerment was not an impossibility; that some black women did find ways to traverse the rough terrain of Jim Crow, in order to make their own way.

**Ken Fones-Wolf.** Those of us able to attend the joint meeting of LAWCHA and the WCSA at Georgetown University in May enjoyed a spectacular event that should be repeated in the future. I attended a number of terrific sessions, but for me the highlight was the panel on UCA-PAWA (United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America). Chaired by Max Krochmal, the panel included four historians who have worked on perhaps the most varied and interesting of the Left-led unions of the CIO era.

Dan Sidorick discussed the union in the Campbell’s Soup cannery in Camden, New Jersey; Jarod Roll focused on the strategies of building a union that could include both cotton farmers and cotton-gin workers; Bob Korstad reprised his award-winning work on tobacco workers; and Erik Gellman wrapped up the session with comments about the problems of more scholarship on UCA-PAWA given the dearth of union archives as well as the collaborative efforts of historians to rectify the situation. Unfortunately, Keona Ervin, whose work on women of color in the St. Louis area nut-shelling industry adds yet another dimension of the union’s reach, was unable to attend, but what was on display was a sampling of the range and dynamism of UCA-PAWA’s social justice unionism.

Questions and comments from the audience, especially those of Mike Honey, testified to the excitement generated by the session and the promise of shining a bright light on a union that provided hope and inspiration to many of the most disadvantaged workers during the Depression and World War II. The demise of the union (after
1945 known as the Food, Tobacco, Agricultural and Allied Workers Union of America) was one of the great losses of the Cold War within the labor movement.

**Bob Bussell.** The Friday plenary on the fight for education justice was an especially informative and inspiring session. Each presenter—math teacher and author Jose Luis Vilson, Chicago Teachers Union staff director Jackson Potter, and professor and activist Kathy Newman—offered powerful insights on matters such as testing, education funding, parental and community activism, and the politics of education reform. The presentations provoked animated discussion from the audience, whose thoughtful comments and questions led to lively exchanges with the panelists. The conversation continued well after the session’s official conclusion, attesting to LAWCHA members’ keen interest in shaping education policy.

“James Green’s astonishing book deftly depicts a multinational and interracial group of hard bitten men, rallied by an Irish-born grandmother, who waged a war for democracy that lasted forty years... As this masterful history demonstrates, the South was often a hotbed of unionism,...”

—Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, Yale University

Now in paper back, the book that inspired the American Experience PBS program *The Mine Wars*

“This is an outstanding book which, undoubtedly, will stand for a long time to come as the best single volume on the subject.”

—Ronald L. Lewis, professor emeritus of history, West Virginia University

“The most comprehensive and comprehensible history of the West Virginia Coal War I’ve ever read. Jim Green has made sense of a half century of violent confrontation.”

—John Sayles, writer and director of *Matewan*

“Available from Grove Atlantic Books, and on Kindle and Audible
Work of Teachers and Public Sector Workers Initiative Continues

LAWCHA’s teachers and public sector workers committee has posted an initial list of resource and curriculum materials related to the history of teachers unions. These are designed to help teachers and other public sector workers understand the challenges they face with historical perspective. There is an annotated list of secondary sources and some primary sources, as well as some powerpoints, graphs, and charts. In addition, we have a blog on teaching that regularly posts suggestions for using materials in the classroom. Please help circulate it to your networks.

Nikki Mandell is now chair of this committee. Its members are: Rosemary Feurer, Northern Illinois University (previous chair); Toby Highie – University of California–Los Angeles; Jason Kozlowski – West Virginia University & co-chair the UALE K-14 Labor Education Working Group; Leisl Orenic – Dominican University; Adam Mertz – University of Illinois-Chicago, Randi Storch – SUNY-Cortland.

In the next year, the group will build on the existing resources and continue outreach to others interested, including the major teacher unions. Our major initiative will be to build teacher-friendly guides directly connected to K-16 history curricula, in order to facilitate use of labor history materials in the classroom. We are initially directing our attention to creating a template that will facilitate our composition of guides for teachers. These will be simple and clear so that they can help us easily transfer documents or other items to the classroom, even within the confines of current instructional regimes. We invite any of our colleagues who have suggestions for resource materials or ideas for developing resources that can be used by teachers and by public sector workers and unions as educational materials. We also plan to develop materials that can develop into a more full-fledged teaching blog. Please contact Nikki Mandell at mandelln@uww.edu with any ideas or suggestions.

- Help us by circulating it to your networks and regions -

LAWCHA.org/Teachers

Help build LAWCHA’s New System of Recruitment, Retention, and State Coordinating

Board Member Talitha L. LeFlouria (along with LAWCHA President Nancy MacLean, and Vice President James Gregory) has worked to create a new system of state coordinators for LAWCHA, in order to create “opportunities to strengthen labor history networks locally and at the national level.” A number of state coordinators under her coordination have been reaching out to lapsed members and sending invitations to potential members to join LAWCHA, circulating LAWCHA brochures at major history conferences, cosponsoring panels, and networking with other organizations.

LeFlouria asks “members of LAWCHA to stand with us in this initiative and to help us continue to develop mutually supportive relationships with existing regional, state, and local labor-studies and labor-history societies in the United States and other countries. We implore you to develop equally important relationships with unions and community organizations and to promote labor and working-class history within the history and social studies curricula in public schools as well as at community colleges, four-year colleges, universities, and unions. And, we encourage you to help us widen our reach by marketing LAWCHA’s comprehensive approach to the study of labor and working-class history to nonacademics who care about labor and working-class struggles.”

We hear from a variety of people from academics, “to union members, staffers retirees, and folks affiliated with other nonprofits” are finding our website. The task is to connect and network with this wide ranging group of people, not only at our conferences, but to develop relationships with those interested in our organization.

Contact Professor LeFlouria at tleflour@fau.edu
Graduate Student Travel Awards

One of our most important missions of LAWCHA is to encourage the next generation of labor scholar-activists. Bringing graduate students to a LAWCHA conference to share their work, get feedback from senior scholars, meet their peers, and socialize informally outside panels can lead to a lasting commitment to the organization.

In the last year, LAWCHA has formally committed to awarding more travel grants so that the coming generation and attend conferences, especially in the midst of so many cut-backs at institutions. We are asking all faculty members to consider giving to our graduate student travel award fund. In addition to direct contributions or signing over honoraria from one talk a year to build up this fund, we have a new win-win option for you: why not advertise your book, film, or coming event in the issue of our newsletter? All proceeds from advertising in our newsletter go to supporting graduate student travel awards. It’s a great way to reach those you want to inform and help graduate students interested in labor and working-class history.

To place an ad, please email our executive assistant, Hannah Ontiveros, at lawcha@duke.edu, with the ad copy.

Eileen Boris (left, University of California-Santa Barbara) has chaired the Program Committee for the past few years, overseeing not only the placement of sessions at numerous conferences, but overseeing the work of Travel Grant awards to graduate students. LAWCHA president Nancy Maclean gave a gift at the LAWCHA conference as a token of thanks as Boris steps down.
West Virginia Mine Wars Museum Opened. LAWCHA member Lou Martin is one of the board members of the West Virginia Mine Wars Museum in Matewan Museum. The museum is located at 336 Mate Street in Matewan, in a building that still bears the scars of bullet holes from the Matewan Massacre shootout that set off the events that led to the Miners March and Battle of Mountain. The museum focuses on mining families efforts to organize to gain rights. It hosted its grand opening on May 15. Visit wvminewars.com for more information. The effort to save Blair Mountain from mountaintop removal continues, and this museum is part of an effort from activists involved in the 2011 March on Blair Mountain to commemorate and save the site.

James Green’s The Devil is Here in these Hills will be the basis for a new PBS documentary. WGBH, the PBS station in Boston, has acquired the rights to James Green’s new book on the struggle for unionization by miners in West Virginia. This documentary is to be broadcast in the American Experience series in 2016. The documentary is produced, directed and written by Randal MacDowell and his associates at The Film Posse, also based in Boston. Visit thefilmposse.org for more information.

Mother Jones Museum organizing and fund-raising. The Mother Jones Heritage Project, www.motherjonesmuseum.org is a major force for the Mother Jones Museum, and a future heritage trail. The museum is the result of an Illinois state grant and contract that will ensure that the museum endures permanently. The interpretation has been granted to labor historians, headed by Rosemary Feurer. While the museum opened with a limited exhibit from Cork, Ireland, on the life of Mother Jones; the museum is still fundraising for the exhibits. You can donate on-line. The site is about an hour from St. Louis, a mile off Interstate 55, near where Jones is buried at Union Miners Cemetery. The museum plans to interpret not only Mother Jones but a variety of issues and controversies in the building of the labor movement in the United States.

East Side Freedom Library seeks to build a working class knowledge community in St. Paul. LAWCHA member Peter Rachleff helped to establish a community-based library and story-telling center in 2014. Using an historical library, and existing collections of donated materials ranging from music to books, the East Side Freedom Library is based on a community of activists dedicated to story-telling, workshops and other opportunities. See eastsidefreedomlibrary.org for more information and to donate.

Max Hayes/Labor Education and Arts Project continues work. LAWCHA members Andrew Bonthius and Thomas Sodders were involved in The Labor Education and Arts Project which sponsored a commemoration of Max Hayes, in honor of the opening of the Max Hayes High School in Cleveland. Max Hayes was a 20th century champion of labor, democracy and socialism. He founded and edited the Cleveland Citizen. Featured speakers include LAWCHA member Michael Pierce.

LAWCHA member Bill Barry is engaged in a number of public history endeavors, including films around Baltimore, book talks about the 1877 Railroad Strike in Baltimore, and the Sparrows Point Steelworkers project, at sparrowspointsteelworkers.com.
Labor History Bibliography, 2014

Compiled by Rosemary Feurer, Northern Illinois University

This list is categorized at laborhistorylinks.org/booklist.html. If we have neglected to list a book, please let us know. Thanks to the Taft History Prize Committee for contributing to this list.

2014


Arnold, Andrew B. *Fueling the Gilded Age: Railroads, Miners, and Disorder in Pennsylvania Coal Country*. NYU Press, 2014.


2014 Labor History Bibliography


Gourevitch, Dr. Alex. From Slavery to the Cooperative Commonwealth: Labor and Republican Liberty in the Nineteenth Century. Cambridge University Press, 2014.


2014 Labor History Bibliography


2013 Addendum


