Rosie and her daughters

(Continued from page 7)

feeling that a great deal was unfair and fought verbally for my ‘wants.’ It was very clear what was needed of me in a world of work: good jobs, clean air and water, and healthy communities.

To change everything, we need everyone on board. To change everything, we need everyone on board. Sunday, September 21 in New York City. Join us. peoplesclimatemarch.org

PEOPLE’S CLIMATE MARCH
New York City
Sunday, September 21

THIS IS AN INVITATION TO CHANGE EVERYTHING.

In September, world leaders are coming to New York City for a UN summit on the climate crisis. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon is urging government to support an ambitious global agreement to dramatically reduce global warming pollution.

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To change everything, we need everyone on board.

Sunday, September 21 in New York City. Join us. peoplesclimatemarch.org
Lessons from the heartland

Barbara J. Miner

Rights Movement have yet to be achieved. If we recognize that our commitment to public school reform is not only about improving student achievement but about the creation of a more just society, and that the welfare of our school system is inextricably tied to the existence of justice within our society, then we recognize that we cannot talk about school reform without discussing the conditions that have created and nurtured the inequalities within our school system. For Miner, this means talking about race, the labor market, and housing.

In order to illustrate the role of race and racial stigma in shaping Milwaukee’s modern social fabric, Miner takes us back to the beginning, to the Great Migration, at a time when our modern concept of the black-white divide did not yet exist. The idyllic nature with which she describes Milwaukee’s “Glory Days” of the 1950s haunts the rest of the book, as the confrontational politics of the 1960s left many white voters and political conservatives with the belief that Milwaukee’s best move was a return to the comfort and segregation of the 1950s. Milwaukee’s Glory Days, of course, were not founded on racial segregation but rather on a thriving economy, which produced nearly full employment through providing jobs for everyone, black and white, and even those with only a high school diploma. Racial discrimination existed, but Milwaukee’s black population was small which meant the city’s power elite had not yet had to confront the question of racial integration on any large scale.

A abrupt changes

Then came the Great Migration, when blacks flooded into the North’s “rust belt” cities in search of work and an escape from Jim Crow. From 1950 to 1960 the city’s black population nearly tripled from 22,000 to 62,500, causing a drastic and abrupt change in the demographic makeup of many of the city’s neighborhoods. While many Southern blacks did find jobs, they also confronted institutional racism in the form of real estate practices and mortgage and home insurance policies that isolated blacks to a region of the city that was known by the power elite and the media as “The Inner Core,” contrasting Milwaukee’s poor black neighborhoods. “The Inner City did not develop by happenstance,” writes Miner. “It was the result of restrictive covenants prohibiting selling or renting to anyone other than Caucasians, and of a ‘gentleman’s agreement’ among realtors not to sell or rent to blacks or Jews except in the Central City.”

Although the U.S. Supreme Court had outlawed restrictive covenants in 1948,

(Continued from page 4)

“choice” as justice, and relegated the objective of racial equality. It seems appropriate that only one chapter of Miner’s book contains what could by any means be called an optimistic title: “The Buses Roll and Desegregation Begins.” For Miner, the rolling buses symbolize both the momentary momentum of the desegregationists’ moral and political authority and the prediction of the movement’s ultimate unraveling. In Miner’s depiction “forced bussing” was a fear that haunted Milwaukee politicians and white voters’ imaginations before Milwaukee’s desegregation movement even had feet, thus the power structure was committed to its defeat. When Judge Reynolds pinned the blame for school segregation on the school board, he implied that the problem could be solved through a change of policy alone. School board policy, of course, was largely beholden to white voters, many of whom, through decades of racial segregation, remained fearful of calls for integration.

Though voluntary bussing posed as equal opportunity, politicians knew that most whites’ “choice” would keep them where they were—geographically and racially segregated in the Milwaukee suburbs. Thus at a time when the greatest moment the struggle for integration was pursued through a half-hearted bussing program, which did little to lessen segregation on any broad scale and did nothing to confront the issues of housing segregation and economic inequality that lay at the root of disparity within the schools.

Media fosters bias

Miner shrewdly follows the role of media in shaping the debates surrounding Milwaukee’s various attempts at school desegregation. The Division’s mission is to improve the overall health and well being of over 4,000 retirees by providing activities and programs that continue to stimulate their intellect and provide health information to enhance their capacity to function at home and in the world during their retirement years.

Together with Bobbie Rahimovitch (SEIU 371) and Laura Friedman (CWE), Barbara founded the NYC Labor Chorus, which has blossomed into an international, multi-ethnic and multi-generational labor chorus with over 100 members. The chorus has performed in Sweden, Cuba and many states, and was invited to perform with choruses from Japan and Wales, and at the United Nations. Musicians have always been a catalyst and a platform for workers to speak out, and the labor chorus aims to preserve labor’s rich history and help motivate the labor movement of today.

The chorus certainly motivated the crowd at the Lemlich Awards—her performance was warmly received by honorees, audience and dignitaries alike. President of the museum Susan Henshaw Jones led the many requests for an encore.

Created by LaborArts and the Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition in 2011 for the Lemlich ceremony, Henry Fonter, Barbara Bailey and Esther Cohen—members of the centennial commemoration of the Triangle Factory Fire, the Awards were funded by The Puffin Foundation and the Donald and Shelley Rubin Foundation.

Gladys and Perry Rosenberg, founders of the Puffin Foundation, and the Social Activity, spoke at the event, and poet and curator Esther Cohen was the MC.

Nominations for Lemlich Awards are welcome throughout the year. Information about nominating someone, video from the ceremony, portraits of previous nominees, and information about Clara Lemlich and about the Triangle Factory Fire are all to be found at LaborArts.org.
A recycling demo at a museum?  
LaborArts Honors Unsung Heroines at Lemlich Awards Ceremony

By Rachael Bernstein

T he Lemlich Award for Social Activism honors, in the words of the poet Marie Piegry, people who “jump into work head first without dallying in the shadows... who do what has to be done--again and again.” Clara Lemlich’s great grandson and Borough President of Manhattan Gale Brewer joined a crowd of activists at the Social Activism Gallery in the Museum of the City of New York for the Fourth Annual Clara Lemlich Awards on April 9th.

Seven amazing women were honored, women who have been working for the larger good their entire lives, in the tradition of Clara Lemlich, who sparked so many reforms with a picket in 1909.

First, the recycling. Joan Levin lived in the Morniside Gardens housing cooperative off 125th Street in West Harlem and Sarah Martin lives across the street in the Ulysses S. Grant Houses, a large NYC public housing project. Searching for ways to make their neighborhood more of a community, they realized that environmental concerns—and recycling—were what would bring people together. Without dallying in the shadows…

First, the recycling. Joan Levin and Sarah Martin, and headed her office during her race for the Ulysses in the 1970s. As a feminist she was appointed by President Jimmy Carter to the continuing Committee of the National Women’s Conference and participated at all the UN Women’s meetings in Copenhagen, Nairobi, and Beijing.

Wong credits the union with “bringing up”—she met strong women leaders, and learned English, leadership development, and organizing. The union, in return, benefited from Agnes’ activism. Over the years, she helped organize Chinese speaking workers in various industries in the US and in Canada.

Judy Lerner, a peace activist for over five decades, was introduced by Natalia Saavedra, a young activist. Lerner was a founding member of Women Strike for Peace in 1961, mobilizing tens of thousands of women to get rid of nuclear testing in the atmosphere. She led a delegation to the 17th Anti-Atomic and Hydrogen Bomb Conference in Hiroshima, Japan, in 1971, and was very active in the anti-Vietnam war movement. She served on the Board of the Center for Constitutional Rights for over 20 years and currently chairs the International Committee of Peace Action at the United Nations. She also serves as a director on the NGO/DPI Executive Committee of the United Nations. Together with other block associations they led a delegation of 20,000 of her co-workers in the 1982 Chinatown Garment Factory Strike, and later became a shop representative and a Local 23-25 Executive Board member.

Wong credits the union with “bringing her up”—she met strong women leaders, and learned English, leadership development, and organizing. The union, in return, benefited from Agnes’ activism. Over the years, she helped organize Chinese speaking workers in various industries in the US and in Canada.

Marilyn Frankenstein, developer of a theoretically based practice in critical mathematics literacy education, was introduced by Rachel Bernstein.

“Reading the World with Math,” for instance, targets teachers working on interdisciplinary math and social studies curricula, providing ways to use math as a tool to interpret and challenge inequities in our society. Her work with A.B. Powell, Ethno- mathematics: Challenging Eurocentric in Mathematics Education, looks at the relationship between culture and mathematics, and she works with an international group of mathematics educators developing this field. Marilyn has spoken about this work internationally, including in South Africa, Mozambique, Brazil, England, Denmark, Greece, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and many places in the USA.

Jane Kulman was unable to attend the ceremony but Neil Rosenstein of the Puffin Foundation spoke about her long and admirable career. She served the City of New York since 1961 when she worked as Director of Communications for Mayor Robert F. Wagner. In 1968, Senator Robert F. Kennedy appointed Kulman as the Chief Advisor to the

(Continued on page 11)

By Stephen Leberstein

W hy is it so important for New York labor historians to learn something about the life and activism of Morris Schappes? Paul Washington, Mdagar Evers College/CUNY and member Executive Council, Professional Staff Congress, spoke passionately about Schappes life and political activities at the April 9th event at the Tamiment Library to an engaged audience of about 50. Washington had done extensive archival research on Schappes at the Tamiment and the Jewish Historical Society and interviewed people who knew and worked with Schappes.

Paul recounted how he first learned about Schappes from an exhibitor at City College’s Center for Worker Education. He saw that Morris was politically engaged in the most important issues of the day as a trade unionist, an anti-fascist, and an anti-racist. And, he said, advice his father had given him, to reject the crude anti-Semitism of the street in the 1960s. He went on to look further into Morris’ life and work.

Schappes defense in song

To recreate some of the context for Paul’s presentation, Henry Foner sang “The Ballad of Morris Schappes” which he and Norman Franklin wrote for Schappes’ defense committee when he was on trial for perjury in 1941 in connection with the infamous Rapp Coudert investigation into subversion in New York City’s public schools and colleges.

Foner, an American Student Union activist during his days at City College, was a long-time contributor to Jewish Currents, which Schappes edited from its inception as Jewish Life in 1946 until his death in 2004. For Schappes as for many other immigrants and first generation Americans, City College was a vitaly important gateway to a life of possibilities otherwise beyond the reach of poor Ukrainian Jews. Paul’s research explored the role that Schappes travelled to a life as writer, teacher, trade unionist and political activist. His presentation recounted Schappes’ early life, noting that his parents

By Henry Foner


left Ukraine for Brazil, where he spent his first seven years. Discounted by a harsh life in Brazil, the family was on its way back to Ukraine in 1914, stopping in New York just as war broke out. There they stayed. His father, an illiterate wood-turner with anarchist tendencies, earned his living running a small newsstand on the Lower East Side. On family outings on the subway Morris’s mother, Ida, would read the Yiddish press to his father, embarrassing the young boy. But Morris excelled in school and won admission to Townsend Harris Hall, City College’s preparatory high school. That brought him to City College and, later, to a position as “Tutor” there, teaching English. As a student, Morris would claim that he was relatively a-political.

After earning his degree in 1928, Schappes began teaching English. Like others of his generation, he was hired at the lowly rank of tutor to teach an expanding student population, and his politics quickly developed in response to the social conditions of the Depression that he lived and witnessed. He joined the Communist Party, began to organize the faculty at the college into the Instructioanl Staff Association which soon became a part of the NY College Teachers Union, AFT Local 537.

Paul Washington speaks–radical trade unionist and City College teacher

Teachers Union, AFT Local 537 in 1938. He was also active in the wider labor movement, for example by leafleting transit workers on the 6th and 9th Avenue “El” in support of the Transport Workers Union, which he later remembered as “a proletarian aspect of my activity.”

One of the victories that the union won at City College was to persuade the History Department to hire Max Yergan, President of the National Negro Congress, to teach a course in black culture and history. Yergan was the first and only black instructor at City College when he began in 1938. He was let go in 1941 in the Rapp Coudert purge, and then no other blacks taught at the college until Kenneth Clark came to the Sociology Department in the late 1940s.

This record of political engagement in behalf of social justice is the hallmark of Schappes’ life. Paul argued. It was this kind of activism that earned him a place in the NY College Teachers Union an important example of social unionism, putting organized labor in the forefront of the fight for racial and social justice, a stance that can be seen as a model for the unionism of the Professional Staff Congress.

The audience responded warmly to Paul’s presentation. In particular, the complex role of Communists in the labor movement led to a spirited discussion. It also led some members of the audience to discuss what they saw as parallels with their own political experience.

The presentation and the ballad made the history of the New York labor movement in the 1930s and ’40s come alive in 2014.

*“Letters- we get letters, we get stacks and stacks of letters”*

Send your letter to the editor—e-mail it to: januaris@gmail.com or mail it to: Jane LaTour, NYLHA c/o Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, 70 Washington Square South 10th floor, New York, NY 10012.
Lessons from the heartland

By Kimberly Schiller

“Individual people could hold a letter up, but it wouldn’t spell anything…”

This was one of the strong opening lines from the “Overpass Light Brigade” short film that started the Workers Unite! Films from the Frontlines evening sponsored by the New York Labor History Association’s Working Group.

Throughout the evening, the message of community and power in numbers resonated with the audience. Bright lights with powerful phrases like, “TEACHERS = HEROES” and “SOLIDARITY FOREVER” lit the screen. Barely a word was spoken at the start, but the silent message was more than heard.

The evening began with the short film documenting the story behind Wisconsin’s Holders of Light. The film uses time lapse photography and interviews with founding members and other activists to tell the story behind the OLb (“Overpass Light Brigade”) and describe their purpose. The OLb founders’ purpose is to take a stand that people could see. “They may agree. They may not, but it got the message out and it was clear that throughout their short film, that message was understood.”

TWU on the frontlines

With this message in mind, a series of short films, titled “TWU: Organizing Across the Country,” was shown beginning with thousands of Transport Workers Union members (TWU) rallying behind Allegeant Air employees.

“Just seeing one is an injury to all” shouted one of the strikers with cheers and it difficult due to a media blackout, a mayor that “refuses to negotiate” and a city that puts their jobs “out to bid” for non-union replacement drivers.

One driver questioned, “Why should you have job protection? The question should be why shouldn’t everyone have job protection?” while another stated, “When it comes to my job, you’re taking my livelihood away and it’s time to do more.”

Throughout the evening, applause and gasps echoed from the audience. All of the films were thoughtfully and galvanized the viewers.

Films stimulate dialogue

At the end of the program, there was a short Q&A with the “Under the Bus” filmmakers, Robert and Haas. One audience member inquired whether the filmmakers contacted the city or the bus companies during the filming. Roberts and Haas said that they had, but “the city had hung up on them twice and the companies did not want to get involved.” Another asked, “What was it like when the strike was over?” The filmmakers recounted that there was “a lot of debate and it was not an easy decision.” The [drivers] were skeptical of politics and politicians after all that they have experienced.

Overall, it was an inspirational evening. Union members working together on the frontlines inspired the audience and created a feeling of unity. It was evident that the opening lines of the OLb were valid, “Individual people could hold a letter up, but it wouldn’t spell anything…” instead, “the most powerful thing is community.”

Workers Unite! Film Festival

Image from Overpass Light Brigade.

appalause from the TWU members in the film and from the Workers Unite! audience. This short film was followed by a series of films that focused on community-building programs sponsored and organized by TWU members. At one event, the TWU members organized a food drive that helped 4,000 families. TWU members coordinated the donations and made sure that every family took much-needed meals home with them. One TWU member remarked, “It’s about giving back, not just fighting for money or a contract,” while another poignantly noted, “It’s part of who I am and it’s what my union is.”

Feelings of community and solidarity led to “Under the Bus,” by filmmakers Keef Roberts and Peter Haas, which chronicled the New York City school bus drivers’ strike. The film followed Anthony, a 24-year veteran Staten Island school bus driver on the verge of retirement, and his colleagues who go out on strike in response to a contract dispute with the City of New York. In the film, drivers are out in the harsh cold trying to make their voices heard, but find...
The strike that changed New York

By Jane LaTour

The program on May 13 at the 3rd Annual Workers Unite! Film Festival sponsored by the New York Labor History Association was chock full of films and speakers to inspire. The evening was billed around the theme, "Equal Pay for Equal Work," and opened with Rosie the Riveters: Playwright! Film Director and the NYLHA board member Bette Craig was elated about the combination of films and speakers: "To be seeing Connie Field's wonderful documentary for the second time and finding it even better than I remembered. And then there was the pleasure of seeing it at the Cinema Village with a New York City Rosie and current tradeswomen working in a man's world. The Overpass Light Brigade was a moving opening for the program, and Pulitzer Portrait of a Street Vendor, about the Vamos Unidos movement put us in touch with a struggle going on now. Then, adding to that, the story of Lily Ledbetter in the not so powerful film Never Get a Dime, and Brenda Berlinan, in person, with Taking the Heat. It was a magical evening and spot on as to what we should be bringing to an even wider audience as the New York Labor History Association."

Women lead the way

Corporate Campaign's founder and director, Ray Rogers, was equally enthusiastic. "The Workers Unite! Film Festival spotlight on women in the workplace showed what great role models women represent for everyone. The examples of respect and equality in the workplace. The examples of the trials and tribulations women have overcome in their workplace struggles, and victories against gender discrimination, can set the tone for more success stories in the future until equality for all becomes a reality," he said.

NYLHA President and historian Irwin Yellowitz noted that he was seeing Rosie the Riveter for the first time. "What stood out for me, first and foremost, was that it was accurate history. In addition, it was excellent as a film. The women who described their experiences were wonderful, and that their comments on personal experiences represented the larger reality of the millions of women who worked in war industries during World War II. The audience laughed many times at the propaganda films that were widely shown during the war. The humor came from the gap between the attitudes of that time, and current experience. We have come a long way since Rosie the Riveter in support of a woman's right to employment and a full set of life choices. Rosie was not the spark for women's rights. Work for women was purely a wartime measure. The women's rights movement—the Second Wave—would have to wait for the 1960s. The women interviewed for this film were ahead of the curve, but they all lived to see substantial progress—even if not for themselves."

Third Annual Workers Unite! Film Festival focuses on inequality

THE 3RD ANNUAL Workers Unite! Film Festival, May 9-May 19, grew by over 50 percent from last year's extravaganza, with just over 1,900 admissions. The festival increased its support from labor union and affiliated local worker and community groups, as well as labor-friendly support businesses. The 2014 festival celebrated global labor solidarity and focused on the stories of workers and their unions from across the United States and around the world. Andrew Tilson, founder and executive director of the festival, noted, that, "this year, the Workers Unite! Film Festival expanded to 10 days at four different locations."

"We partnered with over three dozen unions and worker centers in New York City to bring films to our audiences from Bangladesh, China, Turkey, Greece, to South Africa, Columbia, and Spain, and then back home to the Bronx, Staten Island and even New Jersey! These films focused on the daily lives of workers from around the world and their on-going fight to organize and build their organizations. These workers see unions and collective action as their best defense against the attack by the global 1 percent to crush workers' rights around the world. "The films show that they are fighting back against this global march toward income inequality and winning when they organize and unite to fight."

Visit the website www.workersunitefilmfestival.org for a range of films and programs—poetry, music, plays and speakers—from this year's festival: www.workersunitefilmfestival.org.
 hủy các công việc và cơ sở lao động tại New York. Ảnh: Jonathan Fickies

Humphrey Award to folk singer Peter Yarrow at the luncheon. Altomare's remarks focused on Yarrow's long-term contributions to the struggle for civil rights. Visit the NYLHA website to read his full remarks.

Attack on public workers

(Continued from page 1)

if it wasn’t for organized labor winning those rights decades ago.

Panel moderator Gene Carroll, co-director of the New York State AFL-CIO/Cornell Union Leadership Institute, brought up the example of the 1919 Boston Police Strike.

Tired of unjust treatment that included wages stagnant for 60 years and seven-day, 98 hour work weeks, the officers went on strike on Sept. 9. Though they never returned to work, replaced instead by scabs, those replacement workers received the higher pay, time off and better work conditions that the strikers demanded.

Learning from the past is an essential part of labor’s function, according to Hubert Humphrey. “Today, in our age of ‘free agents, contractors, day laborers, consultants, and the self-employed,’ or, in the words of a cover story in Bloomberg Businessweek: ‘making the era of

 BOOK SHELF

Enough Blame to Go Around

The Labor Pains of New York City’s Public Employee Unions

Richard Steier

Excelsior Editions/SUNY Press, 2014

Just as negotiations season heats up in the city and we await further Supreme Court rulings regarding the collective bargaining rights of public servants, Enough Blame to Go Around is released, providing a storehouse of smart, incisive and witty columns about our municipal (and some state) labor unions. Even regular readers of the civil service weekly, The Chief-Leader, will find this book a Bible—essential for a comprehensive understanding of labor relations in New York City. Editor Richard Steier’s "Razzle Dazzle" columns reflect the in-depth, independent journalism that is a hallmark of the paper under his leadership. As veteran labor reporter Tom Robbins wrote: "New York City’s labor unions have been luckier than they deserved to have had reporter and editor Richard Steier around to spotlight their occasional triumphs and their much more frequent failures. Steier, a masterful New York columnist who loved the men and women of labor but never suffered the fools who sometimes ran their unions, Steier’s columns are filled with news, insight, and always compassion for those who ride (and drive) the early trains and buses to work."

UFT Social Studies conference

T

he 54th annual Greater Metropolitan New York Social Studies Conference was held at the UFT headquarters on February 1 and the NYLHA made some important contributions. As board member Joe Doyle reported, “Alan Singer, a virtuoso (recently retired) high school teacher— who has taught future social studies teachers for many years at Hofstra College—gave a superb presentation on Common Core requirements, “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly.” At the moment, Common Core requirements are currently giving teachers headaches across the United States. No one quite knows what is expected of them—other than that high school graduates should be given enough college level readings/assignments that they are equipped for college. Singer reproduced an article from The New York Times (Jan. 25, 2014) written by Steve Rattner, a Wall Street/ real estate executive and business advisor to President Barack Obama, “The Myth of Industrial Rebound.” It’s the sort of article Singer thinks is important for high school students to read in order to understand their job prospects. But it’s not a research or primary source article—which Singer demonstrates that high school students can understand—but teachers need to give them a lot of help.

Making language accessible

The article starts with the sentence: “With metronomic regularity, gauzy accounts exist of the return of manufacturing jobs to the United States…”. Singer broke the article down so that students could make sense of it. He provided a glossary of dozens of vocabulary words students would need to understand the business content of the article (e.g. high-wage country) and another dozen vocabulary words (e.g. dispariting) which students will need in many different academic disciplines. David Reddy spoke about the difficulties students have in leading, on “The Triangle Fire, Workplace Safety and Globalization.” Schiller worked in leading, on "The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire and its impact on workplace safety today and its connection to tragedies such as the horrifying conditions at garment sweatshops in Bangladesh."

Dr. Benin began the session with an audio visual description of his personal connection to the fire, which drew in the audience. He discussed his grandmother’s devastation over his cousin’s tragic death in the Triangle fire and how that propelled his own interest in labor history. He then discussed photographs of the tragedy and captured each before showing teachers where to find lesson plans and other supplemental materials on the HBO and Kheel Center websites. Kimberly Schiller then presented a Google site that she had prepared which is stocked with various lessons and activities educators can put to use in the classroom. All of this material was developed from the Triangle fire and correlates with the Common Core Learning Standards to allow for a smooth implementation in any educator’s classroom. They are also differentiated to allow for students of varying abilities and learning styles to shine and learn more about labor history. A discussion followed and the educators in attendance asked thoughtful questions regarding parent and community response to the curriculum, how to introduce these topics in elementary classes, and the connection between students and victims of the past and present. The presentation was a great balance between the personal and the practical.”

As Doyle noted, NYLHA Vice President George Altomare, the director of professional committees and one of the founders of the UFT, “puts a lot of reader learning into organizing this conference every year.” During this year’s conference, “On the Wings of Workers: A Celebration of the Global History of Labor,” Altomare presented the Hubert Humphrey Award to folk singer Peter Yarrow at the luncheon. Altomare’s remarks focused on Yarrow’s long-term contributions to the struggle for civil rights. Visit the NYLHA website to read his full remarks.

Labor Rising: The Past and Future of Working People in America

Edited by Daniel Katz & Richard A. Greenwald

The New Press, 2012

This is a useful and exciting collection of essays. A score of contributors put their deep scholarship within these pages—it belongs on your bookshelf! Read and get inspired!