A committed historian and museum director Timothy Naftali has succeeded Michael Nash (1946-2012) as head of the Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives at New York University. Naftali served as director of the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum (2007-2011), taught at the University of Virginia, where he directed the Miller Center of Public Affairs’ Presidential Recordings Program, and is an expert in the history of counterterrorism and the Cold War. Naftali is the author of four books, including *Blind Spot: The Secret History of Americas Counterterrorism*. He served as a consultant to the 9/11 Commission, and has taught at the University of Hawaii and Yale. A native of Montreal, Canada, Naftali earned his undergraduate degree from Yale and graduate degrees from Johns Hopkins and Harvard.

**British documentary captures untold story**

PRIDE (2014), dir. Matthew Warchus

**BRITAIN’S NATIONAL UNION OF MINERS** began its bitter battle with the National Coal Board and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s conservative government in March 1984. This was the longest strike in British history. A year later, miners returned to work without a contract, their communities reduced to semi-starvation. Their industry’s future was dim, yet they marched back to the pits proudly “with their heads held high.”

PRIDE, Matthew Warchus’ excellent feature movie, shows one mining village receiving support from Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners, a ragtag crew of queer activists from London. LGSM collected cash in Soho, then shuttled north to the Dulais Valley to pay bills and distribute food and blankets. In the depth of that terrible winter, they brought miners down to London for “Pits and Perverts,” a successful and joyous gathering, “I was born with a union spoon in my mouth. The labor history association is the place that best represents everything I believe in and have wanted to work for—it’s a remarkable organization,” she said.

As it does every year, the event served as a place to present to accept her award from Professor Kahle of the University of Chicago, who was present to accept her award from Professor Brian Greenberg for her essay: “The Graveyard Shift: Energy Industry Reorganization and Rank and File Rebellion in the UMWA, 1964-1973.” (Abstracts are available on the NYLHA website.)

In her presentation of the Commerford Award to the American Labor Museum, NYLHA Board Member Gail Malmgreen noted that she was appearing in her new role as an advocate for all things New Jersey and remarked on the excellent fit of the two recipients. “Arthur Cheliotes and CWA Local 1180 have been staunch supporters of the American Labor Museum. When it comes to labor solidarity, the Hudson River should be a very artificial barrier.” Malmgreen outlined the many accomplishments of the museum and Executive Director Angelica Santomauro, who accepted the award on behalf of her organization. For those who remain unaware of the range of offerings provided at the museum, Malmgreen encouraged a visit to Haledon and support through membership.

In addition to the history that unfolded at the home which houses the museum, the wealth of offerings is impressive. They include poetry readings, film showings, major exhibits, classes for students and teachers and an annual Labor Day Parade. “Support from the labor community allows the museum to plan these programs and to grow,” she said.

In accepting the award, Santomauro noted that both she and Arthur Cheliotes were raised by veterans of World War II. “I believe that their service taught us how to care for others. When our work is recognized, it makes you feel so humble. You know that there are so many other people who are part of it. Thank you for the recognition of the museum, which is a national labor museum.

(Continued on page 6)
Jackrabbit fled. He darted into the brush, hoping to lose his pursuers. But the hunters were too quick. They closed in on him, their guns raised. Jackrabbit knew he was trapped. He closed his eyes and prepared for the shot. Then, a shot rang out. Jackrabbit fell to the ground, lifeless. The hunters approached him, picking up their prey. They were satisfied, knowing they had secured a good catch. This is the story of Jackrabbit, a fable about the dangers of nature and the consequences of carelessness. The message is clear: always be alert and prepared for any danger. This is a timeless lesson that we should all remember.
NYLHA Membership Survey
(Available on NYLHA Website)

Name: ____________________________
Organizational Affiliation: ____________________________
Approximate length of your membership in the NYLHA? ____________________________

Which of the following events have you attended? (Please check.)

2013:

- February 12: Book Talk: Marjorie Heins
- February 27: Henry Foner Book Party
- April 3: Clara Lemlich Social Activist Awards
- March 18: Museum Talk: “Curating Activism/Museums and Labor History”
- May 14: NYLHA Film Program: Workers Unite Film Festival
- May 18: UFT / NYLHA Labor in the Classroom Conference
- June 5-8: LAWCHA Conference in NYC
- Oct. 10: Fall Program: Farewell to Factory Towns? Film and Filmmaker Discussion
- Sept. 17: “On Equal Terms” Reception Honoring Tradeswomen
- Nov. 1: Closing Reception for “On Equal Terms”
- Dec. 2: Commerford Awards: Eric Foner / Barbara Bowen, Honorees

2014:

- February 1: UFT/ NYLHA Social Studies Conference
- April 2: Clara Lemlich Social Activist Awards
- April 9: Talk: Paul Washington on Morris Schappes
- May 8: Labor History Conference: “Attack on Public Sector Workers”
- May 12 / May 13: NYLHA Film Programs: Workers Unite Film Festival
- Sept. 17: Fall Program: Book Party for Miriam Frank
- Dec. 3: Commerford Awards: American Labor Museum / Arthur Cheliotes

Steel Closets: Scintillating book talk at Bluestockings

By Jane LaTour

Author Anne Balay arrived in New York City from Gary Indiana to speak at Bluestocking Bookstore on September 17, the independent bookseller on the Lower East Side, and brought with her a tremendous blast of fresh air. Balay’s new book, Steel Closets: Voices of Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Steelworkers, published by the University of North Carolina Press, is an exceptionally well-written and deeply felt oral history of steelworkers in Indiana. As she noted, while the lives of gay, lesbian and transgender people living on the east and west coasts have greatly improved, things are still very tough out in the heartland, especially in its working-class precincts.

When the author, a college professor at Indiana University Northwest, moved to Gary from Chicago, she was struck by the huge steel mills and wondered: what was it like to work there—as a LGBTG steelworker? Her research led nowhere and she realized she would have to ask. To pursue her subjects, Balay carried out her forays in local bars wearing a jacket from her prior life as a mechanic. What she found was that people were hiding for a very good reason. As she explained, the backlash that followed the political gains of the civil rights movement of the LGBT community has been getting increasingly more hostile: Balay’s book is based on interviews with 20 men, 20 women, and four transgender witnesses.

Commitment to the job

She spoke about the reasons why—despite gross harassment—people stay: the good pay, where there are few other options for a decent paycheck; the pride in the work—the feeling that an individual is doing meaningful and important work; also a tradition of family legacy—following in fathers’ and grandfathers’ footsteps. Another stark fact: the mills that used to employ hundreds of workers now operate with far fewer employees, and are huge—“incredibly empty, desolate, with plenty of space for conditions that are a perfect environment for gross forms of violence and abuse that goes undetected and unreported.” Balay described the dangerous nature of the work, the exposure to toxic substances, such as benzene and asbestos, and the high rate of cancer among mill workers in Northwest Indiana. “Steelworkers don’t get to enjoy the retirement they’ve earned. One or two years—and then they die.”

The book is excellent for use in the classroom, accessible and compelling, a good, old-fashioned, gripping story—harrowing and ultimately, inspiring. The story continued after publication. Balay’s subjects, seeing their identities unburied, spoke at Bluestockings, took it to their union and demanded that the USWA take action. To their credit, the union did. In August, at their annual convention in Las Vegas, the Steelworkers added gender identity to their Constitution. The resolution passed overwhelmingly and USWA President Leo Gerard was outspoken in his support. Thanks to the courageous action of these steelworkers and the eye-opening stories in the book, union delegates approved adding gender identity to classifications such as race, creed, and age, for protection against harassment. As reported in the Post-Tribune by Jerry Davich, “Members stood, cheered and applauded as Leo Gerard shouted, ‘We are all human beings in this union and, as long as I am president, we will not tolerate any form of discrimination against any human being for any reason.’”

A happy ending: indeed.

Anne Balay reading from her new book, Steel Closets, to old friends and newfound supporters at independent bookstore.
Factory owners and the workers

By Kelsey Harrison

“Factory Man” by Beth Macy is a well-written and well-researched book on the Bassett family’s owning of the largest wood furniture company in the world and the subsequent downfall of the entire industry due to low-cost knock-offs being built in Indonesia, China and Vietnam. But the story doesn’t end there as the black sheep of the Bassett family, John Bassett III, goes to war with China over its flooding the market with furniture sold below cost, a major violation of World Trade Organization (W.T.O.) rules. The book is a great chronicle of one industry, centered in Virginia, and a metaphor for the of America in the last 30 years as globalization and the “free market” sent thriving cities all over the south seeking the largest sweatshops in the world, sending dying cities all over the south from near full-employment to ghost towns where the remaining population live off of unemployment or disability checks or low-paying part-time jobs that carry them to unemployment or disability checks or low-paying part-time jobs that carry them to retirement on inadequate Social Security.

Family histories

Though the book focuses on three generations of the Bassett family (history from the top down), the author goes out of her way to interview the factory workers and servants who worked for the Bassets. Ms. Macy covers the very interesting mulatto history of the family through the servants as well as life in the non-union south, where wages are kept low and unions are kept out. Well as life in the non-union south, where wages are kept low and unions are kept out. Well as life in the non-union south, where wages are kept low and unions are kept out. Well as life in the non-union south, where wages are kept low and unions are kept out. Even after winning cases and smaller amounts of money from W.T.O. sanctions. To top off what was a pyrrhic victory, many of the Chinese companies that were fined simply relocated to Vietnam, where there were no penalties or duties imposed on imports to the United States. Another angle Ms. Macy covers well is the fact that the southern companies originally put higher-wage furniture makers in New England and Michigan out of business years ago and the practice of making cheap knockoffs of popular products is a widespread one within the United States as well. Overall, the book is more of an industry study than a labor history but its illumination of the horrors of globalization and the international sweatshop industry is magnificently done. And you will never look at a piece of wooden furniture again without thinking of this detailed portrait of the company towns of the Southern U.S. that went from the lowest unemployment rates in their states to the highest.

O

n the other hand, Rick Bragg’s book, “The Most They Ever Had,” focuses exclusively on workers’ lives in a series of vignettes in the Appalachian textile factories of northwest Alabama. Though a short book at 156 pages, it very convincingly portrays life in the cotton factories: both the life the factory gives and the life it takes away. These were non-union factories where workers didn’t get lunch breaks and ate their lunch right on the machine, ingesting the microscopic cotton fibers that would eventually kill them. Though of course dying slowly towards the end of life was better than losing limbs to the machines and becoming disabled at an early age. Many of the children of the factory workers saw their parents suffering late in life from the job but nevertheless went into the factories to work themselves. For most of the twentieth century the textile owners denied all of the diseases the workers picked up. They wrongly blamed asbestos, pneumonitis and breathing problems on cigarette smoking. Which is probably true, but not for very long.

A true villain

One of the most moving sections documenting the horror of working in these plants focuses on factory owner William Greenleaf, a true capitalist pig right out of central casting who paid the lowest wages in the industry, defied Franklin Roosevelt’s minimum wage in the 1930’s, ran a complete company town with rundown housing and called all regulation “socialism.” His defying of federal minimum wage laws provoked an unsuccessful strike by workers who previously spent their whole life obediently bowing down to authority and exceling a rugged individualism. Luckily for the workers Mr. Greenleaf eventually burnt himself out and spent his golden years going crazy in a dilapidated mansion that he was too cheap to maintain in safe condition. Other sections talk about how the workers were told over and over again that rumors of their factory shutting down were untrue, until an abrupt meeting was called in 2001 and the factory was indeed shut down. Though overall the book is on the thin side, the portraits it paints of life in the textile industry are very moving and vivid. Before you finish reading this book you are guaranteed to reach up to your face and pluck cotton fibers off of it.
19th C. Irish toilers

Continued from page 8

it’s in that business, rubber shoe and boot production, that he makes his mark. He’s hard working and more than willing to learn from others. Before long, Banigan, now the holder of four patents, is running the Woonsocket Rubber Company.

Profound of his Irish Catholic heritage, Banigan hires Irish workers and becomes a major philanthropist to the church and Catholic charities. By 1885, he controls one quarter of the rubber footwear market, but a national recession leads him to cut his costs. In chapter 5, the book’s most dramatic section, hundreds of Banigan’s skilled employees, members of the Knights of Labor, strike his Millville, Massachusetts plant when he cuts wages by 18 percent. Banigan refuses to negotiate and later, when the entire workforce walks out, he faces “the nation’s first strike by a union of rubber workers.”

Banigan had enjoyed playing the role of the good father, but with his bottom line threatened, his class identity clearly trumped any sense of Irish solidarity. Now, a member of the overwhelmingly Protestant business elite, Banigan adds his industrial holdings to the U.S. Rubber Company, and in 1893 he becomes the cartel’s president. He dies in 1898, still proudly Irish. As the workers he hired and fought against, now part of a broader working class, one that has become “white,” that’s a different story.

Slavery and three women seeking their freedom

“There was a time in Africa the people could fly. Mauuma told me this one night when I was ten years old.”

By Bette Craig

This is the intriguing beginning of Sue Monk Kidd’s The Invention of Wings, an historical novel about the Grimké sisters, abolitionists and feminists from Charleston, South Carolina, but the words above belong to Hitty “Handful,” the slave who was gifted to Sarah Grimké on her 11th birthday.

Weaving history with imagination

Sue Monk Kidd tells this fascinating story in alternating chapters, in Handful’s words, and Sarah’s words. She sticks fairly close to the facts of Sarah’s life, but Handful is mostly a product of the author’s rich imagination after she learned that Sarah did, indeed, receive a child slave as a birthday present and that they were both seriously punished after Sarah taught her to read.

Sarah Grimké was born in 1792 to a prominent and wealthy Charleston family. Her father was a lawyer and a judge, as well as a plantation owner. Sarah longed for learning and very much wanted to study law like her father and favorite brother did, but that was denied her as a female. There were fourteen children in the family and Sarah was especially close to the youngest child, Angelina, born in 1805.

The novel tracks the sisters’ awakening to the injustice and cruelty of slavery and how they start to see their own bondage as women without rights as akin to slavery.

The story-telling is taut with suspense and danger as Handful’s strong-willed mother, Charlotte, a skilled seamstress who is allowed some freedom to walk about the city and earn some of her own money, becomes involved with Denmark Vesey, a free black man and leader of a foiled slave insurrection. An appliqué quilt that Charlotte has made to tell the story of her life is touched on for Handful and the spine of the book. In black triangles of cloth represent the wings that can fly to freedom.

Sarah Grimké’s journey to Philadelphia to accompany her father for medical treatment in 1819 puts her touch with Quakers and she for a while aspires to be a Quaker minister, but finds that her views are too radical to be accepted by her Quaker group. Her sister, Angelina, follows in her footsteps and they both become important voices, as writers and speakers, in the abolition movement. Their pamphlet, written with Angelina’s husband, Theodore Weld, American Slavery As It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses, sold more copies than any other anti-slavery publication up until Uncle Tom’s Cabin, published more than ten years later.

Those are a few bare facts, but Kidd’s The Invention of Wings is a passionate and moving story that will keep readers turning the pages to find out if Handful will achieve her freedom and if the Grimké sisters will find their wings.

It’s usually interesting to discover what inspires a writer to pursue a certain subject. Kidd, also the author of The Secret Life of Bees, was led to the Grimké sisters by a visit to Judy Chicago’s Dinner Party exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum. She had never encountered the Grimkés before reading about them on the Heritage Panels there listing a long-line of feminist heroines. What made it seem even more like fate was the fact that in 2007, when she started working on the book, she was living in their hometown.


HELP US FIND the unsung heroes who have devoted their lives to the greater good, in the tradition of Clara Lemlich. Nominate for this honor need to be able to attend the ceremony in late March 2015 (thus most will live near NYC), and should have at least six decades of activism behind them. Nominate a woman you admire by contacting us at info@laborarts.org. See photos and short bios of the honorees from 2011-2014 at LaborArts.org/lemlichawards.
ACROSS

3. Cigarmaker, the founding president of the American Federation of Labor.

7. “Grape” labor leader of the 1960’s.

12. Term used to describe the workers who dig tunnels and excavation projects (plural).

16. Garment worker’s union founded in N.Y.C. in 1900 (inits.).


22. 4 workers wrongly executed in Chicago in 1887 for an explosion in this square.

24. Established this rival organization in the 1960’s caused professional football salaries to skyrocket (inits.).

27. Women’s Trade Union ______ founded in Boston in 1903.

28. Teamster President missing to this day.

30. ______ Lineman, sung by Glen Campbell

31. Dolores ______ co-founder of the UFW

32. “Give us bread, but give us ______ too (1912 Lawrence, Mass. Strike).

33. Frances ______, noted journalist and activist who co-organized the Paterson Pageant of 1913.

34. John ______, noted labor organizer and journalist who founded the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America.

35. President of the U.S. who signed the Occupational Safety and Health Act of the 1970’s.

36. ______ the Riveter, an icon of WWII.

38. ______ La Follette, Sr., progressive senator from Wisconsin

39. Abraham ______, founder of the Jewish Daily Forward, whose headquarters was always available for striking workers.

42. Ethel ______ N.Y.C. labor union activist was executed as a Soviet spy in 1935.

43. State where the Akron miners’ strike in 1970 happened and should therefore serve as a model for American labor. To demonstrate his point, editor Ness presents essays by various scholars on activity and organizations in several nations, including Italy, China, India, South Africa, Colombia, Sweden, Australia, and the United States.

44. “Which Side Are You On?” Describes this 1930’s miner’s strike in ______ County, Kentucky.

21. Term used to describe a strike-breaking, picketline-crossing sonuvabitch&%#!.

22. Founded of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America.

23. Actor Jackie ______ sometimes wore his father’s TWU button on his 1950’s black and white sitcom.


25. Famous singer-songwriter of the 1970’s who wrote a classic song about a taxi driver.

26. Well-known labor leader founded in Michigan in the 1930’s (inits.).

28. President of the U.S. who created the Federal Labor Department in 1913.

31. City where the American Labor Museum is located in New Jersey.

35. President of the U.S. who signed the Occupational Safety and Health Act of the 1970’s.

37. ______, noted political scientist Immanuel Ness cites “the ongoing deterioration in workplace conditions and the systematic erosion of workers’ power.”

38. _______ Lineman, sung by Glen Campbell

40. _______ the road back to open shop conditions.” Seen from an academic perspective, in New Forms of Worker Organization political scientist Immanuel Ness cites “the ongoing deterioration in workplace conditions and the systematic erosion of workers’ power.” That American workers are in deep trouble is not disputed. What is being asked is what can be done about it. Early and Ness offer differing solutions. Early’s book is his second collection of essays that originally appeared in Monthly Review Press. Embedded with Organized Labor was the first. This volume offers broad insight into the prevailing labor scene while providing a strong sense of the historical scene. His idea is to start at ground level, in the form of “actual worker organizing, and strike activity that defies recent labor-relations trends,” demonstrating “that another way is possible.” His “agents of change” are the “brave individuals who are joining the new retail, warehouse, and food service worker networks.” Furthermore, he has not forgotten “the tens of thousands of shop stewards who still form the backbone of the labor movement.”

Answers on page 11

Thinking globally about labor in decline

By Robert D. Parment

As Early is a labor insider, with decades of service to the Communications Workers of America, his criticism of the labor movement has special authority. He does not ignore or minimize the corruption that plagued such organizations as the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) and United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), or interminable conflict between the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (UNITE HERE). On the other hand, he celebrates those who demonstrated for equal rights in the workplace and “a clear path to citizenship” for undocumented aliens in Oakland, California in 2013. Early notes that they yearned “for a new form of unionism that was more militant, democratic, and member-driven” than the kind that had led to disaster. Such people would bring about the revitalization of the labor movement.

Immanuel Ness expresses another kind of optimism. His faith in labor’s rebirth is likewise with the workers themselves, but at the expense of traditional union organization. As stated in a forward by labor activist and historian Stoughton Lynd, the time has come for “alternative unionism.” The “existing mainstream unionism” in the United States, according to Lynd, imposes few obligations on the employer, who collects dues for unionism and has “a management prerogative” of making decisions that could include “shutting down a particular plant or workplace.” On the other hand, union members are deprived of the right to challenge such unilateral employer decisions made during the course of a collective bargaining agreement. In other words, a “vertical arrangement” exists in which the activity of ordinary union members is limited. What this book attempts to demonstrate, is that a “horizontal” system that “relies not on paid union staff but on the workers themselves” has already energized worker organizations and should therefore serve as a model for American labor. To demonstrate his point, editor Ness presents essays by various scholars on activity and organizations in several nations, including Italy, China, India, South Africa, Colombia, Sweden, Australia, and the United States.

The evidence presented of the vitality of worker movements is indeed impressive. For example, Piotr Bitužkov and Irina Olimpieva reveal protests by Russian railway, automobile and oil workers, as well as coal miners. Arup Kumar Sen profiles the oppression and protest of Maruti Suzuki autoworkers in India. Shawn Harteing writes about “the extreme exploitation of Black workers” in South Africa’s mining industry, and notes that both unionized and non unionized workers have united to oppose it. In September 2010 Minnesota witnessed “the first public action of the largest unionization effort in the history of the sprawling U.S. fast food industry.” As Erik Forman writes, the radical Industrial Workers of the World, hardly visible for many years, was anything but dead, and its Jimmy John’s Workers Union (JJWU) was able to organize fast food workers in sandwich shops in Minnesota. The struggle for union recognition by management had not ended, but, as recent events demonstrate, from the fast food workers in the United States have passed the point where they will tolerate abominable conditions. Whether studying the American labor scene, as Early does, or the international one, as Ness’s essays do, the ultimate message of the two books is similar: worker protest and organization lives on. More the pragmatist than Ness, Early is not ready to give up on American labor or traditional organizations. He writes that “workers of all kinds have Continued on page 9
What makes people disagree and why

By Betty Craig

I f we’re lucky, we’ve had the experience of meeting people with diametrically opposed views of the world and its politics. Sometimes, they’re members of our own family. We say to ourselves, “How can they possibly think that?”

Sometimes we can’t talk about politics or religion at those large family gatherings that take place on Thanksgiving and other special times.

At last, here’s a book that takes on the issue with an attempt to broaden our understanding of world views opposite our own. Jonathan Haidt, who is a professor of psychology at the University of Virginia and a visiting professor of business ethics at New York University’s Stern School of Business, is the author of The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion.

The Righteous Mind

Continued from page 1

landmark, and has been a museum for over three decades.”

The award to Arthur Cheliotes was presented by Gregory Mantsios, director of the Joseph S. Murphy Institute, CUNY. “Cheliotes has served as president of Local of the Joseph S. Murphy Institute, CUNY. He spoke about his other contributions. Thank you for all that as Vice-Chairman of the New York City Murphy Institute’s Advisory Board, and since 1979, as the Chair of the Commission on Century Work.”

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Out in the Union: A Labor History of Queer America, by Miriam Frank, tells an important, often neglected story of the intersection between union folks and gay folks as it evolves through time. In the early 21st century, this seems like a surprising overlap, but Frank demonstrates, through densely researched political and labor history and through direct personal narrative, how these two threads have been braided, and need to remain so as we continue to fight for social justice.

Frank explains the history and the structure of the labor movement in the USA by putting compelling stories of local change within regional, national, and temporal frames. For example, Frank observes that locals “are the basic organizing units of the labor movement” (104) but, though they govern their own affairs, by the political and social climate, and by the parent unions, by the political and governmental and its laws. She concludes that “when protests were at peak potency, they were brilliant models of mutual defense” from which “Coalition partners got the picture: Coors was just the beginning because the ideological right was not just selling beer” (82).

Throughout moments like this one convey nostalgia for earlier days of radical protest. Frank also tells stories that illustrate the limits of each of these structures. For example, she captures the challenge of the lesbian car-shop owner who dreams of the滋味可口的热甜品，但她遇到的不仅仅是一个女性的机械师，她也是一位具有挑战性的女性，她将这个环境保持得十分井井有条。Frank's important book will continue to shape policy, organizing, and scholarship for years to come. It is now available in paperback.

Out at Tamiment

By Rachel Bernstein

Miriam Frank’s newly published book Out in the Union: A Labor History of Queer America was enthusiastically introduced by Timothy Nafalfi, head of Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, who mentioned a new Archives initiative to document the history of queer activists. Proving the point, Frank’s presentation was able to include moving audio from key activists she interviewed for the book—from oral history recordings recently digitized and made available to researchers.

Frank, a Master Teacher of Humanities at New York University and NYLHA board member, tells the story of American workers from the mid-1960s through 2013, chronicling the convolutions of evolving labor politics with queer activism and identity formation, showing how unions began affirming the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender workers in the 1970s and 1980s.

The start

An enthusiastic audience of nearly 100 filled the Tamiment reading room in Bobst Library on September 17, 2014, as Frank recounted the long path of the project. Interviews done in the late 1980s for a handbook for activists Frank created with her wife Desma Holcomb in 1990 – Pride at Work: Organizing for Lesbian and Gay Rights in Unions – could be considered the start.

This proved a popular handbook, useful for organizers, and often copied. It was also a place where activists and others looked for a history of queer labor—hinging to light the need for more recognition on the subject.

Miriam stepped up—she went on for over a decade to interview more than one hundred queer and labor activists and allies in cities across the U.S.

She gathered stories about taint and file unions challenging entrenched leaders, about radicals and activists working for women’s rights and immigrant rights and many other community causes. The narrative that Frank developed from these and many other sources has accomplished something neither a growing body of literature on queer labor history nor a robust tradition of labor history had provided— in her words—“a labor history of queer America... about the survival of unions and the survival of queer communities.” There has been much more because it is a common and understood, and bringing it to light is a large accomplishment of the book.

Thinking globally

Continued form page 5 organized, with varying degrees of success... to wage a more effective fight.” Ness favors breaking the “organizational models” he would use in the US “from the U.S. around 1847”.

When Joseph was eight, Young continued on page 10

forms of antiracist and anticapitalist forms of syndicalist, council communist, and autonomist worker representation. Writing the world, he says, that workers are increasingly able “to advance their own economic, political, and social interests without external intermediaries.” Whether workers’ militancy utilizing conventional or innovative organizational forms can ultimately blunt the impact of forces seemingly beyond their control is a question yet unanswered.

Technology change, globalization, and conservative politics and government policies have already taken a toll from which recovery is already difficult. Early and Ness tell us that workers have not given up on themselves. However, they do need help.

9th C. Irish toilers in New England

By Maynard Seider

In Irish Titan, Irish Tiders, Scott Molloy has not only given us a biography of Joseph Banigan, a remarkable Irish titan, who presided over a Gilded Age rubber monopoly, but he has also provided us with a valuable labor history of Rhode Island workers. In an accomplished integration of “history from above” and “history from below”, Molloy weaves a tale that begins with the Irish potato famine in the 1840s, continues with the struggles of Irish Catholic immigrants in working class cities, and ends with the ascendency of one of those immigrants to the top echelon of American business at the end of the 19th century. He begins the journey in 1847, when Joseph was eight. Young Joseph went to elementary school for one year but left at the age of nine for work, as did numerous other children. He learns the jewelry trade, and as a journeymen, he builds a machine that merged gold with coral and shells, a forebearer of numerous innovations he would integrate in the rubber business. And Continued on page 10

Winter/Spring 2015 New York Labor History Association

photo credit: Jon Bloom; Bottom: Not Your Grandfather’s Union: Melinda Hernandez (l), BEW Local 3 (ret); New America Session (r), Carpenters’ Local 926 at book party photo credit: Jane LaTour

Out in the Union: A Labor History of Queer America, by Miriam Frank, tells the important, often neglected story of the intersection between union folks and gay folks as it evolves through time. In the early 21st century, this seems like a surprising overlap, but Frank demonstrates, through densely researched political and labor history and through direct personal narrative, how these two threads have been braided, and need to remain so as we continue to fight for social justice.

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Throughout moments like this one convey nostalgia for earlier days of radical protest. Frank also tells stories that illustrate the limits of each of these structures. For example, she captures the challenge of the lesbian car-shop owner who dreams of the滋味可口的热甜品，但她遇到的不仅仅是一个女性的机械师，她也是一位具有挑战性的女性，她将这个环境保持得十分井井有条。Frank's important book will continue to shape policy, organizing, and scholarship for years to come. It is now available in paperback.

Out at Tamiment

By Rachel Bernstein

Miriam Frank’s newly published book Out in the Union: A Labor History of Queer America was enthusiastically introduced by Timothy Nafalfi, head of Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, who mentioned a new Archives initiative to document the history of queer activists. Proving the point, Frank’s presentation was able to include moving audio from key activists she interviewed for the book—from oral history recordings recently digitized and made available to researchers.

Frank, a Master Teacher of Humanities at New York University and NYLHA board member, tells the story of American workers from the mid-1960s through 2013, chronicling the convolutions of evolving labor politics with queer activism and identity formation, showing how unions began affirming the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender workers in the 1970s and 1980s.

The start

An enthusiastic audience of nearly 100 filled the Tamiment reading room in Bobst Library on September 17, 2014, as Frank recounted the long path of the project. Interviews done in the late 1980s for a handbook for activists Frank created with her wife Desma Holcomb in 1990 – Pride at Work: Organizing for Lesbian and Gay Rights in Unions – could be considered the start.

This proved a popular handbook, useful for organizers, and often copied. It was also a place where activists and others looked for a history of queer labor—hinging to light the need for more recognition on the subject.

Miriam stepped up—she went on for over a decade to interview more than one hundred queer and labor activists and allies in cities across the U.S.

She gathered stories about taint and file unions challenging entrenched leaders, about radicals and activists working for women’s rights and immigrant rights and many other community causes. The narrative that Frank developed from these and many other sources has accomplished something neither a growing body of literature on queer labor history nor a robust tradition of labor history had provided— in her words—“a labor history of queer America... about the survival of unions and the survival of queer communities.” There has been much more because it is a common and understood, and bringing it to light is a large accomplishment of the book.

Thinking globally

Continued form page 5 organized, with varying degrees of success... to wage a more effective fight.” Ness favors breaking the “organizational models” he would use in the US “from the U.S. around 1847”.

When Joseph was eight, Young Joseph went to elementary school for one year but left at the age of nine for work, as did numerous other children. He learns the jewelry trade, and as a journeymen, he builds a machine that merged gold with coral and shells, a forebearer of numerous innovations he would integrate in the rubber business. And Continued on page 10

forms of antiracist and anticapitalist forms of syndicalist, council communist, and autonomist worker representation. Writing the world, he says, that workers are increasingly able “to advance their own economic, political, and social interests without external intermediaries.” Whether workers’ militancy utilizing conventional or innovative organizational forms can ultimately blunt the impact of forces seemingly beyond their control is a question yet unanswered.

Technology change, globalization, and conservative politics and government policies have already taken a toll from which recovery is already difficult. Early and Ness tell us that workers have not given up on themselves. However, they do need help.

9th C. Irish toilers in New England

By Maynard Seider

In Irish Titan, Irish Tiders, Scott Molloy has not only given us a biography of Joseph Banigan, a remarkable Irish titan, who presided over a Gilded Age rubber monopoly, but he has also provided us with a valuable labor history of Rhode Island workers. In an accomplished integration of “history from above” and “history from below”, Molloy weaves a tale that begins with the Irish potato famine in the 1840s, continues with the struggles of Irish Catholic immigrants in working class cities, and ends with the ascendency of one of those immigrants to the top echelon of American business at the end of the 19th century. He begins the journey in 1847, when Joseph was eight. Young Joseph went to elementary school for one year but left at the age of nine for work, as did numerous other children. He learns the jewelry trade, and as a journeymen, he builds a machine that merged gold with coral and shells, a forebearer of numerous innovations he would integrate in the rubber business. And Continued on page 10

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