Kids on strike!

The cover photo pulls you in – earnest faces of boys in caps with picket signs bearing their message: “We only ask for justice,” and, “We want to go to School.” Susan Campbell Bartoletti, the author of another award-winning book for children, Growing Up in Coal Country, set out to answer a question: were children the silent victims of harsh working conditions, or did they ever fight back? Kids on Strike is her inspiring answer to that question. Based on years of research, the author of thousands of newboys who went on strike when the World Newspaper lowered their pay. And in “Bobbin Girl,” Arnold McTally tells the story of the 1830 Lowell Mill Strike by thousands of young girls and the conditions they revolted against.

A book to bring the struggle up to date is “Si Se Puede, Yes We Can,” a real life bilingual story of the janitors on strike in Los Angeles. The strike lifted thousands of workers out of poverty. Finally, there is Frances Ruffin’s “Manny Martin Luther King Jr. and the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.”

Summertime labor picture books for the small set

In the June 2015 issue of the Public Employee Press, Librarian Ken Nash, at the District Council 37 Education Fund Library, writes about picture books to start working class children off on the right foot. His recommendations follow:

“Joe Van der Katt and the Great Picket Fence” by Peter Welling is set in the town of Littlerohn in New York’s Catskill Mountains. The fat cats have all the money until the poor cats get organized and demand fair pay and better working conditions.

Next, in “Click, Clack, Moo,” the cows learn to type and demand better working conditions by going on strike. And in “The Last Stop on Market Street,” by Marara de la Peña, poor children wonder why they don’t have the things that children on the other side of town enjoy. Ali Bustamante explores property and labor rights in “Manny and the Mango Tree,” a story about children who water and care for trees but cannot enjoy the fruits of their labor.

Going back in time, Don Brown’s “Kid Blink Beats the World” retells the David vs. Goliath story. The real life story featured in the film “Newsies,” and other working children to strike. It includes a timeline of federal child labor laws, a bibliography, more than one hundred photographs, and copious illustrations from newspapers and journalists. Highly recommended!

A ringing voice for social justice

New York Labor History Association played host to Eugene Victor Debs on May 13th at New York City’s beautiful Lithographers Hall. The occasion was NYLHA’s spring history event. Fifty people attended the screening of the documentary film, Eugene V. Debs and the American Movement with speakers Noel Beasley, President of Workers United, SEIU, and also of the Eugene V. Debs Foundation, and Lisa Phillips, Associate Professor of History at Indiana State University.

Gail Malmgreen, former NYLHA secretary and current board member, set the stage for the evening in celebration of the famed labor leader and five-time candidate for President of the United States, with a tale of her four years of working on the Debs papers at Indiana State University in Terre Haute while being the live-in curator of the Debs home there.

Malgreen said that during those four years, “Debs became my hero. He was a great labor leader and a ringing voice for social justice. He had a great magnetism and universal appeal, literally offering something for just about everyone.”

Organizing across craft lines

“In the early 1980s someone from the history department at Indiana State University came to speak, and I was dispatched to pick him up at the airport. On our way to the campus, he asked me what I was doing in Terre Haute, being from Newark, like him, and I told him about my work with Debs’ papers and he said, ‘Oh, Debs. Yes. He was the one who said pick up the gun.’”

“Will, what Debs actually said in 1906 when he and the Socialist Party were leading the defense of Big Bill Haywood, Charles Moyer and George Pettibone against their frame-up for the murder of Idaho Governor Frank Steunenberg was ‘Should the Capitalists try to hang the men, a million revolutionists would meet them with guns.’ So, as I said, something for everyone.”

Lisa Phillips did research at Wagner Labor Archives/Tamiment Library for her book about District 65, Renegade Union, published by University of Illinois Press in 2013. Now that she’s based in Debs’ home town of Terre Haute at ISU, she is devoting scholarly attention to him. She told us that Debs quit school at age 14 to work in the train yards. He was a charter member of the Terre Haute chapter of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen, but after a few years realized there was more bargaining strength in an industrial union organizing across craft lines and helped to found the American Railways Union (the ARU) in 1891. Drawn into the Pullman Strike of 1894, Debs defied a court injunction against the strike.
Workers Unite! Film Festival

T he 4th annual Workers Unite! Film Festival included 35 shows within the span of three weeks, May 3-27, with over 2,400 attendees. Topics included new global portraits of mine workers, textile workers, steelworkers and job loss, home health workers, all locked in struggle with their employers. From food workers to “girls in the band,” the film festival served up a smorgasbord of films and discussions in venues across the five boroughs. The finale at the Anthology Film Archives was a smashing success. Co-sponsored by the Sierra Club and co-hosted by the AFL-CIO, it featured the world premier of Blood on the Mountain, about economic and environmental injustices that have resulted from industrial control in West Virginia.

Activists connect to audiences

Other programs that attracted full houses included A Day’s Work, documenting the abuses experienced by the ever-growing ranks of temp workers, Poverty Inc., a documentary about global inequality; She’s Angry, She’s Beautiful When She’s Angry, a documentary about global inequality; and co-hosted by the AFL-CIO, it featured the world premier of Blood on the Mountain, about economic and environmental injustices that have resulted from industrial control in West Virginia.血

Other programs that attracted full houses included A Day’s Work, documenting the abuses experienced by the ever-growing ranks of temp workers, Poverty Inc., a documentary about global inequality; She’s Angry, She’s Beautiful When She’s Angry, a documentary about global inequality; and co-hosted by the AFL-CIO, it featured the world premier of Blood on the Mountain, about economic and environmental injustices that have resulted from industrial control in West Virginia.

Blood on the Mountain.

One of the major programs was Workers Unite! Film Festival, which featured films about economic and environmental injustices that have resulted from industrial control in West Virginia.

The importance of Dodgertown

The 4th annual Workers Unite! Film Festival included 35 shows within the span of three weeks, May 3-27, with over 2,400 attendees. Topics included new global portraits of mine workers, textile workers, steelworkers and job loss, home health workers, all locked in struggle with their employers. From food workers to “girls in the band,” the film festival served up a smorgasbord of films and discussions in venues across the five boroughs. The finale at the Anthology Film Archives was a smashing success. Co-sponsored by the Sierra Club and co-hosted by the AFL-CIO, it featured the world premier of Blood on the Mountain, about economic and environmental injustices that have resulted from industrial control in West Virginia.

Other programs that attracted full houses included A Day’s Work, documenting the abuses experienced by the ever-growing ranks of temp workers, Poverty Inc., a documentary about global inequality; She’s Angry, She’s Beautiful When She’s Angry, a documentary about global inequality; and co-hosted by the AFL-CIO, it featured the world premier of Blood on the Mountain, about economic and environmental injustices that have resulted from industrial control in West Virginia.血

Other programs that attracted full houses included A Day’s Work, documenting the abuses experienced by the ever-growing ranks of temp workers, Poverty Inc., a documentary about global inequality; She’s Angry, She’s Beautiful When She’s Angry, a documentary about global inequality; and co-hosted by the AFL-CIO, it featured the world premier of Blood on the Mountain, about economic and environmental injustices that have resulted from industrial control in West Virginia.

Blood on the Mountain.

One of the major programs was Workers Unite! Film Festival, which featured films about economic and environmental injustices that have resulted from industrial control in West Virginia.
Manfred on deck

F

or Robert D. Manfred Jr., Cornell class of 1980, the road to the top of America’s pastime has been a lifetime in the making. He stepped up to the plate, taking the reins as commissioner of Major League Baseball on January 26. It begins a new chapter in a life and career shaped by labor relations. Manfred grew up in the small city of Rome, N.Y., the ‘Copper City,’ once an industrial hotspots that manufactured many of the country’s copper products. During his upbringing in the 1960s and early 1970s, he witnessed the erosion of regional and state manufacturing bases. At home, he was surrounded by a blend of labor and employment relations. His mother was a union member as a schoolteacher. His father was an executive for Revere Copper and Brass – a company that had a difficult relationship with its unionized workers. It is understandable that, from a young age, Manfred became familiar with the complex relationship between labor and executive management, and was able to see both sides of sensitive issues, according to MLB.com.

Transferring into ILR as a junior, he studied a variety of labor and employment topics, while building skills crucial to his future success. He credits his Cornell ILR School education with preparing him for MLB’s management pinnacle. “The single biggest skill I gained at ILR is the ability to negotiate,” Manfred said during a 2013 ILR interview shortly after being promoted to MLB’s chief operating officer.

“arvin Miller – Baseball revolutionary

The story of how one man shaped professional sports’ modern era, Marvin Miller changed major league baseball and the business of sports. Drawing on research and interviews with Miller and others, Marvin Miller, Baseball Revolutionary offers the first biography covering the pivotal labor leader’s entire life and career. Baseball historian Robert F. Burk follows the formative encounters with Depression-era hard times, racial and religious bigotry, and bare-knuckle Washington and labor politics that prepared Miller for his biggest professional challenge – running the moribund Major League Baseball Players Association. Educating and uniting the players as a workforce, Miller embarked on a long campaign to win the concessions that defined his legacy: decent workplace conditions, a pension system, outside mediation of player grievances and salary disputes, a system of profit sharing, and the long-sought dismantling of the reserve clause that opened the door to free agency. Through it all, he stepped up to the plate, taking the reins as commissioner of Major League Baseball on January 26. It begins a new chapter in a life and career shaped by labor relations. Manfred grew up in the small city of Rome, N.Y., the ‘Copper City,’ once an industrial hotspots that manufactured many of the country’s copper products. During his upbringing in the 1960s and early 1970s, he witnessed the erosion of regional and state manufacturing bases. At home, he was surrounded by a blend of labor and employment relations. His mother was a union member as a schoolteacher. His father was an executive for Revere Copper and Brass – a company that had a difficult relationship with its unionized workers. It is understandable that, from a young age, Manfred became familiar with the complex relationship between labor and executive management, and was able to see both sides of sensitive issues, according to MLB.com.

Transferring into ILR as a junior, he studied a variety of labor and employment topics, while building skills crucial to his future success. He credits his Cornell ILR School education with preparing him for MLB’s management pinnacle. “The single biggest skill I gained at ILR is the ability to negotiate,” Manfred said during a 2013 ILR interview shortly after being promoted to MLB’s chief operating officer.

“arvin Miller – Baseball revolutionary

The story of how one man shaped professional sports’ modern era, Marvin Miller changed major league baseball and the business of sports. Drawing on research and interviews with Miller and others, Marvin Miller, Baseball Revolutionary offers the first biography covering the pivotal labor leader’s entire life and career. Baseball historian Robert F. Burk follows the formative encounters with Depression-era hard times, racial and religious bigotry, and bare-knuckle Washington and labor politics that prepared Miller for his biggest professional challenge – running the moribund Major League Baseball Players Association. Educating and uniting the players as a workforce, Miller embarked on a long campaign to win the concessions that defined his legacy: decent workplace conditions, a pension system, outside mediation of player grievances and salary disputes, a system of profit sharing, and the long-sought dismantling of the reserve clause that opened the door to free agency. Through it all,
Foot soldiers of democracy

By Jane LaTour

L
isten to the BBC, NPR, pick up The New York Times, or tap into any other news source, and you are instantly immersed in the woes of the world. On March 4th, LaborArts and the New York Labor History Association combined to offer an alternative take on the news through the eyes of political cartoonists, via a film, “Cartoonists – Foot Soldiers of Democracy,” and a speaker – Jeff Danziger. Danziger has earned his place in the long line of illustrious political cartoonists who provide their take on current events via a pen and an ever-present sense of pointed humor.

A democratic medium

The documentary jumps about from country to country among 12 cartoonists, Danziger included, and nationality and disparate sensibilities unite to provide a global perspective. The audience at Brooklyn College’s Center for Worker Education included Professor Joanna Herman’s class on political cartooning and the graphic novel. “My students were very receptive to the message of risk-taking in the artistic life,” Herman said. LaborArts organizer Rachel Bernstein added that these CUNY-CWE students “resonated to the scenes of cartoonists actually drawing and explaining the way they use simple lines to evoke emotion and character.”

“It was an important program,” said Professor Steve Leberstein. “The Tunisian woman cartoonist, Nadia Khiari, summed up the value of political cartoons best when she said, ‘les caricatures dérange le pouvoir’ to challenge power.” Trade unionist and climate change activist Gary Goff thought that the film succeeded in portraying cartoons as a great, democratic medium. A point of view can be conveyed with a simple drawing and a few words. Using irony and humor, a good cartoonist can make political truths accessible to everyone.

Using irony and humor, a good cartoonist can make political truths accessible to everyone.

Bill Henning, noted that he “thoroughly enjoyed hearing from Jeff Danziger, one of the world’s foremost cartoonists, about his processes and the mechanics of boiling some rather complex issues down into clear visuals with limited text. His comments about Charlie Hebdo were especially timely.”

While Henning found the film very well done cinematically, he also thought “it could have focused more laser-like on cartooning rather than delving into other issues. Likewise, it posed some interesting questions in my mind about the relative value systems of cartoonists (e.g. the ‘opposition’ cartoonists in Venezuela, Russia, and Tunisia).”

Questions posed to Danziger ranged from technique to editorial content and the risks from the wrath of editors and the public. He noted that “you only have five seconds of a reader’s attention…fewer words is better…Images jump the language barrier.” As the French cartoonist, Plantu, said in the film: “They know where they should plant the grenade.” Nadia Khiari, the Tunisian cartoonist, who writes under the nom de plume Willis, put it another way: “A pencil can be a wonderful weapon.”

The French film is timely and provides a provocative entrée into important issues that deserve debate. The 2014 documentary, directed by Stephanie Vallotto, is available on DVD and Blu-ray.
"UNION ROLLS declining," a Long Island newspaper recently reported, in bold letters across the top of a page. The accompanying story tells of a statistical decline in union membership in New York State, which was “part of a long-term trend.” In smaller print, across the bottom of the page, the newspaper announced, “New data: Average US weekly wages inch up,” referring to a 1.6 percent increase during the second quarter of 2014. At a glance readers might readily infer that labor unions are not needed when wages can rise without them.

In his latest book, veteran Chicago labor lawyer Thomas Geoghegan contends that a labor movement is indeed necessary, to restore the disappearing middle class as well as raise wages. It is “the only way” to end the public and private debt that threatens national unity, “and stop the growing inequality that in thirty years could bring the whole Republican crashing down.”

How can this be done?

Shake up the Democratic Party. Even possibly split it and create a new labor movement “to give people more rights to organize and a ‘1968-style’ conflict within the Democratic Party, which would be compelled to revise corporate law so that workers could be elected to corporate boards or somehow ‘provide a check on the workplace’ before robots replace all of them.

Geoghegan’s call is for a movement that is democratic as well as productive. Among his heroes are Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., John Dewey, and John Maynard Keynes. In discussing them, he proposes what might serve as model for a society “responsible for both equity and equality. For example, ordinary people should be taught skills to enhance their position in the workplace. Such could be accomplished by following the German model of management that includes a “massive amount of job training that the companies themselves provide,” and worker membership on company boards of directors.”

With reference to Keynes’s General Theory of Employment, he argues that a large-trading public works with decision-making responsibilities is a key to staying out of public, private, and external (trade) debt.

As a lawyer who had represented the Chicago Teachers Union before it went on strike in September 1982, Geoghegan remains a staunch supporter of public school teachers. According to him, he is appalled at the current attacks on teacher tenure. In addition, he opposes the closing of allegedly “failing” public schools, which he claims has a disruptive effect on minority neighborhoods. Geoghegan argues that a local union’s right to organize and negotiate a contract is a fundamental right.

The UAW then organized a new local that allegedly had support in excess of that figure, and met with regularity with the workers organized in a new local. The UAW won a new contract and negotiated a new collective bargaining agreement.

The phone rang. It was Saul Alinsky.

Two things made me want to accept. First, I needed a job. I had been blacklisted by academia. At five institutions of higher education in the Chicago area (Chicago State College, Northern Illinois University, Roosevelt University, the University of Illinois Circle Campus, Loyola University) the chairman of the history department offered me a full-time, tenure-track job, and I accepted, only to have the contract overridden by the trustees or Board of Governors. The Lynds were surviving on the “sweat of my Fists” and a regular paycheck was inviting. Secondly, I was curious. The central tension past, I was luxuriating in the hot water of the bath.

The next step was to bring these informal leaders together and to stress to those gathered that all structural arrangements (who would be chairperson, for example) would be preliminary and tentative. This gave the organizer an opportunity to observe who seemed to take a natural leadership role, and who followed through on what he said he would do. These were important insights.

Three of us were assigned to organize an Alinsky-type community organization in Lake County, Indiana, which includes the city of Gary and is dominated by U.S. Steel. We did so, baptizing our creation the Alinsky Organization. There was no impressive founding convention, in which the leadership selected a new local. Instead, we just got to work and did some very valuable things.

Alinsky tradition falls short as model

The Chicago Catholic New Times, February 2015 (following the publication of Only One Thing Can Save Us: VW) VW announced a new rule by which it would meet the demands of its employees.

I t was an evening late in August, 1968. I was in the bathtub. Believing that the critical issue at the national Democratic Party convention would be whether Free Amendment activity could be carried on outside the building where the delegates were meeting, I had organized a march from the lakefront to the convention site in southwest Chicago. Several of the demonstrators, including myself, had been arrested. All tension past, I was luxuriating in the hot water of the bath.

I was in the bathtub. Believing that the critical issue at the national Democratic Party convention would be whether Free Amendment activity could be carried on outside the building where the delegates were meeting, I had organized a march from the lakefront to the convention site in southwest Chicago. Several of the demonstrators, including myself, had been arrested. All tension past, I was luxuriating in the hot water of the bath.

The phone rang. It was Saul Alinsky.

Two things made me want to accept. First, I needed a job. I had been blacklisted by academia. At five institutions of higher education in the Chicago area (Chicago State College, Northern Illinois University, Roosevelt University, the University of Illinois Circle Campus, Loyola University) the chairman of the history department offered me a full-time, tenure-track job, and I accepted, only to have the contract overridden by the trustees or Board of Governors. The Lynds were surviving on the “sweat of my Fists” and a regular paycheck was inviting. Secondly, I was curious. The central tension past, I was luxuriating in the hot water of the bath.

The next step was to bring these informal leaders together and to stress to those gathered that all structural arrangements (who would be chairperson, for example) would be preliminary and tentative. This gave the organizer an opportunity to observe who seemed to take a natural leadership role, and who followed through on what he said he would do. These were important insights.

Three of us were assigned to organize an Alinsky-type community organization in Lake County, Indiana, which includes the city of Gary and is dominated by U.S. Steel. We did so, baptizing our creation the Calumet Community Congress. There was an impressive founding convention, in which the picket line captain at the 1937 Memorial Day Massacre (George Patterson) and a district director of the Steelworkers who would run for national union president later in the 1970s (Ed Sadlowski) played prominent roles. Most of the founding event, however, the organization fell apart. One of my colleagues was persuaded by a Catholic dignitary on the East Coast to use the convention as a personal jumping-off platform and leave town. His replacement as lead organizer was my second colleague.

I had developed the issue of the minimal taxes paid by United States Steel on its Gary, Indiana steel mill property. I had talked with Ralph Nader and he had publicly supported that concern. The Gary newspaper had run an issue with a headline about the tax controversy all the way across the front page.

Colleague No. 2 decided not to pursue the tax issue. Instead he guided the new organization to take on a local pornographic bookstore. Within a matter of months the Congress slowly sank from sight, never to reappear.

At the same time that I lost out on how to build an organization for those who “cared about democracy and social and economic justice” (p. xvi), I was asked by Colleague No. 2 to withdraw from all activity on behalf of the new community organization because I was too radical.

Cardinal sins

Because I was so intimately involved, and in my approach the subject with a strong personal bias, I prefer to let the editors of the book and the organizers quoted in it express their own critique of the Alinsky organizing tradition. I have no reason to believe that the shortcomings described have been corrected.

To begin with, we might consider Cesar Chavez. Chavez was the one human being whom I can recall Alinsky speaking of with love. It is likely, the editors write, “that by the mid-1970’s more people knew his name than Alinsky’s.” Yet, according to this account, within the farmworkers’ organization that Chavez created and led, “[t]echnical purges eliminated from the staff many talented and dedicated organizers, while others quietly resigned in protest. The boycott became...
By Steve Leberstein

**A voice for justice**

Continued from page 1

strike and served six months in prison. His prison reading set him on a path to Socialism and he ran for president for the first time in 1900 as a candidate of the precursor of the Socialist Party of America. And, he kept running — the last time in 1920 from the federal prison in Atlanta (where he was serving time for opposing the American entry into World War I). He polled just short of a million votes.

Neal Bradly, who started out in the Midwest in the Textile Workers Union before being part of what is now Workers United, SEIU, introduced the documentary film about Debs, made in 1977 by Margaret Lazarus and Renner Wunderlich of Cambridge Documentary Films. He tied Debs into the current global movement for a living wage, making the point that activists need to work inside and outside the current labor movement and be creative in seeking alliances. He pointed out that the Occupy Wall Street movement had made its deposits at Amalgamated Bank; labor’s bank, near Zuccotti Park, and that many labor union members were active supporters of it.

Thanks to the Workers Unite Film Festival and the Eugene V. Debs Foundation for co-sponsoring the program. As Eugene Victor Debs said, “Years ago I recognized my kinship with all living things, and I made up my mind that I was not one bit better than the meanest creature in the world. People have a lot of the same experiences — a tiny backwater town and Manhattan.” Maron described the difference between his current home in New England and Manhattan. “Perhaps there’s a bit more alienation here. People know each other in my town. Everyone you meet in Manhattan will be different.” Balcerak spoke about the levels of social stratification represented in his book.

Each of the authors read from their books, and then a lively dialogue took place between the audience and the writers. Questions focused on sources of inspiration, the process of writing, and finding your voice. Hohlfeld said his “voice” was a mix of the working-class voice he knew from my own life. These are the wittiest people I’ve ever met, with the quickest retorts, and the deepest belly laughs. We’re all talking about the same thing: the ranks of working people.”
Telling history – reading fiction

I loved Ettinger’s sense of history as an elastic force.

Vera comes to her erotic life in her teens, simply, with pleasure and discretion, and eventual loss. Trouble arises only after she marries Peter Steiner and becomes the mother of two sons. She takes a lover, a girlfriend from her single days, and her husband finds out.

Ettinger connects this disaster to early twentieth century sociological theories about queer lives. Her depiction of Peter Steiner’s longevity around is masterful. At first she finds compassion for his position, as he lectures Vera about the impossible permanence of her “inversion.” Later, his restrictions on her visits tighten. The boys grow older and Steiner moves the family to Detroit.

Vera follows – at a distance. Her wartime Detroit is an attic room on the Jewish west-side.

Ettinger has bolstered the throb of class struggles, the old ashes of shame. She acknowledges, always and with tenderness, the moves ever made by the ruling classes and other capitalist bodies and souls by the mining companies and other capitalist interests of the state. But he does understand that public opinion has been aroused. I am in favor of using the ballot, and in all my career I have never advocated violence. What I want to do is give the nation a more highly developed conscience. Not like in West Virginia, where they spent $500,000 on the militia to break strikes, and closed down a number of schools. Many of the children who were robbed of their education will never again be back in school.

West Virginia is on trial before the military court. The boardwalk will be a great spot to blast child labor. Yes, Mr. Reporter, President Roosevelt, that great lion hunter and philanthropist, was afraid to talk with me. He is too busy chasing wild elephants to care for the children of America. Print that in your newspaper.

By Cy A. Adler

MARY HARRIS JONES, called “Mother” by the coal miners she lived with, organized and fought for, was born in Ireland in 1837. Her family immigrated to Canada where she attended public school. She moved to the United States and taught school for a time in Michigan, but didn’t like bossing little children around for low pay.

She moved south and married George Jones, an iron worker and labor leader, in Memphis, Tenn. The couple had four children.

In 1867, her husband and children were wiped out by the yellow fever epidemic. She moved to Chicago and opened a dress-making shop. But her home and all her possessions were burned out in the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. Then, nearing 50, she got involved with the Knights of Labor. It turned out she had an extraordinary talent for organizing and raising hell. She felt it was right on her side.

In May 1886, she participated in the first demonstration for the eight-hour workday and saw firsthand the terror of the Haymarket Affair on May 4, 1886. In 1890, she became a paid organizer for the newly-organized United Mine Workers.

Mary Harris Jones invaded New York City several times. On Oct. 18, 1902, she spoke to the legislature of New York. Over 80 years old. She smuggled a letter to U.S. Senator John W. Kern, who read it in Congress.

When released from jail, she came to New York City. She filled Carnegie Hall with her admirers.

Mary: I am told that if I return to West Virginia, I will again be arrested by Governor Hatfield. He doesn’t understand the forces underlying the great economic conflict in West Virginia, and he is owned by and soul by the mining companies and other capitalist interests of the state. But he does understand that public opinion has been aroused. I am in favor of using the ballot, and in all my career I have never advocated violence. What I want to do is give the nation a more highly developed conscience.
The Debra E. Bernhardt
Labor Journalism Prize

Call for entries – 2015

THE NEW YORK LABOR HISTORY ASSOCIATION is pleased to announce this Call for Entries for the First Annual Debra E. Bernhardt Labor Journalism Prize. The deadline for entries is TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2015.

THE BERNHARDT PRIZE IS AN AWARD OF $500 given to an article or series of articles that furthers the understanding of the history of working people. The work should be published – in print or online – in a union or workers’ center publication or by an independent journalist.

By sponsoring this award we hope to inspire more great writing for a general audience about the history of work, workers, and their organizations. The award is co-sponsored by LaborArts, Metro New York Labor Communications Council, the NYC Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO, and the Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives at NYU’s Tamiment Library.

The winner will be announced at the Tamiment Library on OCTOBER 15, 2015, during a forum about the history of labor journalism.

We are guided by the vision of the late DEBRA E. BERNHARDT, who worked in so many different realms to share the hidden histories of working people. As head of the Wagner Labor Archives she reached out to an astonishing number of people and organizations, to document undocumented stories and unrecognized contributions, and to make links between past and present.

GUIDELINES

The prize will be given to insightful work that contributes to the understanding of labor history; shows creativity; demonstrates excellence in writing; and adheres to the highest journalistic standards of accuracy.

The work may be an article or a series of articles, published in a labor or workers’ center publication or by an independent journalist – in print or online – between January 2014 and August 30, 2015.

Entries should include a cover sheet with name of the author and the place and date of publication. Five copies of each article (with cover sheet) should be submitted, to:

New York Labor History Association, Tamiment Library, 10th Floor
Robert Library NYU
70 Washington Square South
New York NY 10012

Questions? Contact info@LaborArts.org or 212-966-4014 Ext. 1703
The 1967 Law banned public employees from going on strike in New York City.

33. dollars a day was the minimum wage established by John Henry in 1914.

34. The Detective Agency was an infamous strike-breaking company of the late 19th century.

35. was the head of District 65 and a Civil Rights Leader.

36. Davis, Jr. was a 2-term Communist Councilman in NYC who later went to jail under the Smith Act prosecutions.

37. Upton wrote The Jungle and ran for governor of California in 1934 on a radical working-class platform.

38. Davis, Jr. was an actor, speaker, factory worker, and founder of the publication Mother Earth.

39. was the head of the I.L.G.W.U. from 1932 to 1966.

40. , author of Stud Lonesome.

41. union activist and long-time Socialist Party candidate for N.Y.C. Mayor and Congress.

42. , union-busting Prime Minister of Australia from 1932 to 1945.

43. The name of this company lives on in infamy for beating the Brookwood Labor College miners in 1912.

44. was the president of the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company in 1914.

45. O'Hare was the director of the T.W. Rocky Mountain Fuel to become the director of the United Mine Workers Health and Welfare Fund, where she developed a string of hospitals in Appalachia and pioneered the concept of pre-paid medical care.

Review by Don Mitchell

What would you do if you inherited a coal company? What, especially, would you do if it was one of the villains in the Ludlow Massacre? Josephine Roche knew, when she became president of the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company, immediately invited the United Mine Workers to return to the Colorado coal fields to organize miners. Thus began a lifelong fight for reinstatement, her reforming zeal survives to this day.

Crossword Answers

1. Before becoming a leader of the I.W.W., “Big” Bill Haywood was a leader of the Western Federation of Miners.

2. A.J. was the head of the Brookwood Labor College in the 1920’s and early 1930’s.

3. was NY’s Socialist Party Congressman from the Lower East Side for 6 years.

4. The 1934 Healt Hill strike was led by the U.F.T.

5. was a 2-term Communist Councilman in NYC who later went to jail under the Smith Act prosecutions.

6. , radical Mexican painter who lost the battle of Rockefeller Center.

7. The original name of the Chicago-area cemetery where the Haymarket Martyrs are buried.


9. , union activist and long-time Socialist Party candidate for N.Y.C. Mayor and Congress.

10. was a social-realist playwright of the 1930’s.

11. is a British reformer’s story.

12. Cleveland was known for her anti-war activism during World War I.

13. was a teacher who became a leader of the I.L.W.U.

14. , radical folksinger who wrote This Land Is Your Land.

15. This 1970’s song sung by Johnny Paycheck says it all: Take This Job and Shove It.

16. Arizona was the place from which over 1,100 I.W.W. members were deported to New Mexico during a copper mining strike in 1917.

17. Over 1,100 police officers went on strike for the right to form a union in this city in 1919.

18. , the Commute of 1871 has inspired millions of workers around the globe.

19. Lewis led this teacher’s strike against Mayor Rahm Emanuel in Chicago in 2012.

20. Walter was the President of the U.A.W. from 1946 until his death in 1970.

21. was the union-busting governor of Wisconsin.

22. The name of this company lives on in infamy for beating the Brookwood Labor College miners in 1912.

23. was the publisher of Mother Earth.

24. David was the head of the I.L.G.W.U. from 1932 to 1966.

25. Peter was one of the greatest folk singers in American history, might object to seeing his name inside Little Boxes in a crossword puzzle.

26. , a 2-term Communist Councilman in NYC who later went to jail under the Smith Act prosecutions.

27. was the head of the I.L.G.W.U. from 1932 to 1966.


29. Johnny Paycheck says it all: Take This Job and Shove It.

30. Bisbee, Arizona was the site of one of the major disputes in the history of labor relations.

31. the single tax and mayoral election controversy.

32. Robert F. (then known as Robert J.) during the 1960’s.

33. was the long-time head of the Socialist Labor Party.

34. Michael went Bowling in Cleveland and looking for many movies.

35. Billy _____ went to jail in the early 1930’s.

36. was the founder of the I.L.W.U.

37. Harry _____ was a prominent labor organizer.

38. was the head of District 65 and a Civil Rights Leader.

39. was the first Secretary of Labor under President Wilson.

40. , the head of the I.L.G.W.U. from 1932 to 1966.

41. Norman _____ was the 50th President of the AFL-CIO.

42. Thatcher became President of the AFL-CIO in 1924 to 1926.

43. was a 2-term Communist Councilman in NYC who later went to jail under the Smith Act prosecutions.

44. was the social-realist playwright of the 1930’s.

45. O’Hare was the director of the T.W. Rocky Mountain Fuel to become the director of the United Mine Workers Health and Welfare Fund, where she developed a string of hospitals in Appalachia and pioneered the concept of pre-paid medical care.

In Relentless Reformer, Muncy provides a thorough-going portrait of an astounding woman whose role in labor and women’s history has receded from memory. Along the way, she explains progressivism’s evolution into Cold War liberalism. She does not paper over the errors and arrogance of progressivism, nor does she shy away from describing Roche’s acceptance of secret loans from the union as “shady.” Nonetheless, her account is upbeat and colorful, peppered with vivid detail of the many issues Roche addressed in the course of her energetic 90 years. These stories, along with 79 pages of notes, offer a treasure trove of labor and progressive movement resources.

Relentless Reformer: Josephine Roche and Progressivism in Twentieth-Century America

Progressive Service, the party’s educational wing, she interviewed principals on both sides of the developing conflict over the coal fields. The horrors of the Ludlow Massacre confirmed her initial sympathy for the strikers. Some 13 years later, Roche inherited her father’s stock in the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company, and within a month she had acquired enough additional shares to take control of the company, immediately ousting its anti-labor management. The rest of her life would be devoted to trying, in her words, “to right the wrongs of Ludlow.”

Public health pioneer Despite this commitment, Roche made an impressive mark on the general welfare of society, too, running for governor of Colorado and accepting appointment as Henry Morgenthau’s Assistant Secretary in the Treasury. In this capacity, she was an active member of the Economic Security Council, which hammered out the details of the Social Security Act at Frances Perkins’ and Mary Robinson’s kitchen table. Like Perkins, she was disappointed that her health-insurance bill could not be built into the act, but she was to have two major roles for her frustration. As Morgenthau’s assistant, she oversaw a massive expansion of the U.S. Public Health Service. Then, after World War II, she relinquished her shares in the Rocky Mountain Fuel to become the director of the United Mine Workers Health and Welfare Fund, where she developed a string of hospitals in Appalachia and pioneered the concept of pre-paid medical care.

To right the wrongs: biography recovers reformer’s story

W
Seven amazing women

By Rachel Bernstein

Claire Lemlich’s daughter, granddaughter and great grandson joined the rousing NYC Labor Chorus, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer and a museum full of energized admirers for the Fifth Annual Clara Lemlich Awards on May 4, 2015. The Awards honor unsung activists, women who have been working for the larger good all their lives, in the tradition of those who sparked so many reforms in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire. In the lives, in the tradition of those women who have been working on African issues and on the Foreign Relations Committee for Senator John F. Kennedy and the translation of our history.”

WIN ARMSTRONG, introduced by Evelyn Jones Rich as someone who “really knows her stuff,” is an economist, a scholar of Africa, an advocate for African self-rule and a strong presence in the tenants’ rights movement in NYC. She worked for Senator John F. Kennedy and the Foreign Relations Committee on African issues and on the creation of the Peace Corps, worked in the mining industry on labor and environmental issues in Africa (long before the environmental movement), and played innovative roles in the Intercouncil for Business Opportunity, the International Society of Ecological Economics and the Environmental Science Committee of the New York Academy of Sciences, among others.

Her advocacy for tenants’ rights, particularly with the Park West Village Tenants’ Association stretches over three decades. Armstrong believes we are “the inheritors, interpreters, and creators of our history.”

JULIE AZUMA came to New York City from Chicago to work in the apparel industry. Introduced by Susan Otsuna as someone at the heart of multiple communities, Azuma describes being politicized by the movement to provide redress for Japanese interned during WWII, and soon being involved in organizations advocating for Asian Americans.

When her daughter was diagnosed with autism she began to focus on resources to help autistic children, and began what became a substantial business — Different Roads to Learning. Lisa Dietlin’s book Transformational Philanthropy highlights Azuma’s advocacy work in the autism community and on behalf of Asian Americans.

SYLVIA GUTIERREZ GRANT moved to New York City from Mexico as a youth; by the late 1970s she worked in the business office at Flushing Hospital — soon she was serving as a delegate for the hospital workers’ union SEIU/1199. One of her early successful campaigns was at Our Lady of Mercy Hospital in the Bronx, where she brought 500 workers into the union. Her extraordinary organizing abilities led to more responsibilities within the union, including becoming vice president for new organizing in 1989. Under Grant’s leadership, 1199 organized tens of thousands of new members, including hospital workers, nursing home workers and home health care workers. Minerva Solis introduced her as “Our ‘it, se puede bermanse,’ sister Sylvia Gutierrez Grant!”

LILLIAN LIEFLANDER was born on the Lower East Side in 1919, and Toby Emmer described a bit of her life long activism. A graduate of Washington Irving High School and Vassar College, she went to work for the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers (UE) in 1940, and from there she served in the Women’s Army Corps (WAC). She was a founding member of the Lower East Side Mobilization for Peace Action, working against the war in Vietnam and also addressing issues such as fair and affordable housing and community control of the schools. She was in the fight to end the United States’ occupation of Vieques, Puerto Rico, camping out on the beach at Vieques and later being arrested in front of the United Nations. Never showing her commitment to protesting for peace and justice, in her early eighties she also embarked on an acting career, becoming a member of the Screen Actors Guild.

L. ANN ROCKER is an environmentalist and the founder and president of the North River Community Environmental Review Board. Introducing her, Robert Jackson used a string of acronyms, including the NYC DEP, US EPA, NYS FD and others, all groups she brought to the table in an effort to moderate the effects on Harlem neighborhoods of the North River Water Pollution Control Plant. Rocker continues her three decades of advocating for cleaner air and water in the area, for better parks and recreation and expanded opportunities for youth, particularly at the park atop the facility.

She continues as well to be deeply involved in expanding recycling borough-wide, and in the efforts to contain hydraulic fracturing (fracking) in New York State and beyond.

GLORIA SUKENICK (90) was introduced with verse by Lena Habib (10) and Marlena Vega (9), of the Central Park East elementary school. The girls had been studying the Triangle Fire, and were fascinated when Gloria told them her story about the fire at the Happy Land Social Club, one of her memorable moments as an activist. They were astounded to discover that the fire took place on March 25th — the same exact day as the Triangle Shirt Waist fire 79 years earlier. They told about Gloria being infiltrated to learn that the building owner of the Happy Land Social Club was in violation of fire codes and intentionally locked doors that trapped and killed 89 people.

“She and fellow activists created an effigy of the club owner and hung it publicly in order to draw attention to his terrible greed.” Sukanick was an active voice in the women’s movement, working with Redstockings and NY Radical Feminists and organizing early consciousness-raising groups for NOW, and an energetic advocate for tenants with the Chelsea Coalition on Housing.

MIMI STERN-WOLFE was the only honoree to be introduced with a song, by her daughter, singer/songwriter Laura Wolfe. Stern-Wolf is founder and artistic director of Downtown Music Productions, presenting socially relevant music in community concerts. Somehow she has combined a life of serious devotion to classical music — she has given piano recitals at Carnegie Recital Hall and Alice Tully Hall — with a life committed to activism. Her concerts served to protest the Vietnam War, to support the Civil Rights movement, and to celebrate Martin Luther King Jr., Langston Hughes, Harriet Tubman and others.

Her annual Benson AIDS Concert presents music of composers lost to HIV/AIDS, and her series “Composers of the Holocaust” is devoted to music of composers lost to the world in the camps of Europe.

MC Esther Cohen told the crowd this is always her favorite night of the year. Her poem explains why:

“We look for hope though we sometimes forget what hope looks like and every year at the Clara Lemlich awards every year when we honor women who continue to fight for what is so very important to change women who won’t give up who call us at 11 o’clock on Sunday night even though they’re 97 and should probably be in bed, women who want to leave this earth knowing they did all they could and I meant all they could.”

2015 Lemlich honorees L. Ann Rocker and Winifred Armstrong, flanked by members of the NYC Labor Chorus (left is 2014 Lemlich honoree Barbara Bailey) who provided music to inspire the crowd.