

Calendar

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 6 P.M.

Book Talk, NYU Tamiment Library, Bobst Library, 70 Washington Square South, 10th Floor.

Marjorie Heins, *Priests of Our Democracy: The Supreme Court, Academic Freedom, and the Anti-Communist Purge*. Co-sponsored by the New York Labor History Association. For more information contact Zuzanna Kobrzynski at zk3@nyu.edu.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 6-8 P.M.

LaborArts Book Party, NYU Tamiment Library, Bobst Library, 70 Washington Square South, 10th Floor.

Henry Foner, *Songs and Poems (For Better or Verse)*. Co-sponsored by Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives/Tamiment Library, New York Labor History Association and Jewish Currents. For more information contact Rachel Bernstein, 212-998-2637; www.LaborArts.org.

MONDAY, MARCH 18, 6 P.M.

Labor Activism and the Museum, a talk by **Sarah Henry**, curator of the ongoing exhibition, Activist New York, followed by a visit to the exhibit. Museum of the City of New York, 103rd St. and Fifth Avenue. Organized and sponsored by the New York Labor History Association. For more information contact Irwin Yellowitz at iyellowitz@aol.com.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3, 6-8 P.M.

Third Annual Clara Lemlich Awards, honoring unsung heroes, women who have devoted their lives to the greater good, sponsored by LaborArts. Museum of the City of New York's Puffin Gallery of Social Activism, 103rd St. and Fifth Avenue. Co-sponsored by the Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition, the event will be held in a new venue this year. For more information www.laborarts.org/lemlichawards for details.

Stay tuned for information about the May Labor History Conference, sponsored by the New York Labor History Association.

LAWCHA's National Conference to be held in New York City, June 6-8, 2013

AROUND THE THEME of "Rights, Solidarity and Justice," the Labor and Working-Class History Association will hold its national conference and annual meeting in New York City, June 6-8, 2013. More than 80 sessions of academic panels, roundtables, workshops and plenaries will focus on how varied groups of working people have organized historically to challenge their employers, each other, their communities and the state to seek justice and improve their lives. In the present moment, faced with obstacles to organizing that evoke earlier times, workers and their allies are creating organizational forms and strategies in the U.S. and around the world.

Graduate students, labor educators, public school teachers, labor activists, as well as academic historians and social scientists are well represented on the program. Panels explore such wide-ranging historical topics as: precarious and excluded workers, sex work and state regulation, workers' resistance to the carceral state and America's empire, working-class feminist organizing and labor politics and the meanings of citizenship. A significant share of the program addresses contemporary issues facing workers: blue-green alliances and environmental struggles, "guerilla history" and the Wisconsin struggle, Chicago teachers and social movement unionism, contingent faculty as a new majority in universities, and labor history and civic engagement. We'll hear updates on struggles to save sites of labor's public memory at Blair Mountain, West Virginia, Lawrence, Massachusetts, and Ludlow, Colorado. Scholars and activists from a number of other countries—Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Canada, France, and Turkey—will also be part of the program.

Most sessions will be held at the Center for Workers Education, 25 Broadway in lower Manhattan. Program details and information about registration and housing will soon be available at the LAWCHA website—www.lawcha.org. All are welcome to join us for what promises to be a very exciting conference.

Shelton Stromquist, President, LAWCHA.

Work History News

New York Labor History Association, Inc.

A Bridge Between Past and Present

Volume 30 No 1 Spring | Winter 2013

Commerford lights up 42nd Street

By Joe Doyle

The New York Labor History Association celebrated one of its best ever Commerford Award ceremonies on November 30. Jane LaTour lit up the room with a passionate acceptance speech—before a standing-room-only crowd of labor enthusiasts who'd come from as far away as Canada to cheer her on. Peter Yarrow sang his acceptance speech—a medley of labor anthems, teaming up with Harry Belafonte, who'd introduced him, on the final choruses.

Emcee Keyvne Baar (who used to be a stage manager) opened the proceedings, deftly talking the audience away from tables full of appealing appetizers NYLHA board member Regina Olff had catered for the occasion. NYLHA President Irwin Yellowitz welcomed the crowd, and explained why NYLHA's labor-educator award is named after John Commerford—who founded New York City's labor movement in the 1830s. One of the stars of the night was the room itself, a 33rd-floor penthouse reception hall, boasting a 360-degree view of Manhattan, courtesy of George Gresham and Local 1199 of the Hospital Workers Union/SEIU.

Learning to Labor

Retired Fire Captain Brenda Berkman introduced Jane LaTour as a "smart, tireless, dogged, unrelenting, kind, thoughtful, and loyal friend," who, as a reporter for the *Public Employee Press* has won two Mary Heaton Vorse Labor Journalism Awards



Peter Yarrow (l.) invites legendary civil rights activists Harry Belafonte (r., in cap) to join him in song.

for stories that touch "our emotions, capturing the human side of an issue." Brenda Berkman, by the way, is the "cover girl" of Jane's path-breaking 2008 book, *Sisters in the Brotherhoods: Working Women Organizing for Equality in New York City*.

Commerford Prize-winner Jane LaTour opened her remarks marveling at the serendipity of sharing a prize with Peter Yarrow, since she used to sing Peter, Paul, and Mary songs to her newborn son. She found her social conscience growing up in New England's Tobacco Valley, where most of the backbreaking work of tending tobacco plants fell to migrant laborers, many of them Latinos, "but nobody had anything good to say about them." She

found her calling working a succession of monotonous factory jobs—pushing for a safer work environment. Asking an employer for earplugs to guard her hearing from the deafening noise on the factory floor, he "reassured" her, "You'll get used to it." Inhaling chemicals on a different job, her employer "safeguarded" his workers by having them drink a glass of milk "to provide a protective coating for their lungs." Jane went on to become an organizer for the White Lung Association.

Jane invoked the memory of two important role models for her—her "fairy godmother" Debra Bernhardt, the archivist of Tamiment Library, and muckraking

(Continued on page 4)

Schmatta – Rags to Riches to Rags

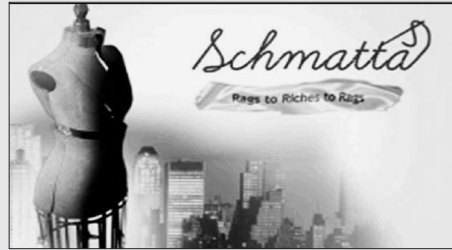
Everyone who attended NYLHA 2012 Labor History Month events walked out (we suspect) thinking of Connie Kopelov's often repeated advice: "watch where your clothes are made!" Schmatta—Rags to Riches to Rags, Mark Levin's HBO documentary about globalization, has that effect.

Two screenings of the film, which focuses piercingly on NYC's "rag trade," were enriched by impassioned speakers and actively participating audiences. Each brought together lively groups of people from all angles of the garment industry in New York – past and present.

The first event, on May 3rd, was held at the Fashion Institute of Technology cafeteria—what better way to engage a group of F.I.T. students (both those stopping by and those staying for the duration). Workers United Local 10 leader Joe Raico joined F.I.T. professor Dan Levinson Wilk and immigrant rights activist May Chen and speakers from a company that produces garments in New York City. Our co-sponsors were the United College Employees of F.I.T.; the Educators Chapter of the Jewish Labor Committee/United Federation of Teachers' Jewish Heritage Committee; the Gotham Center (CUNY), and the Frances Perkins Forum (Adelphi).

Thursday May 17th, 2012 in a real screening room at NYU with hardly an empty seat, the scene was repeated with a slightly different cast of characters. This time filmmaker Levin and Local 10 leader Joe Raico were joined by labor historian Bob Parmet of York College/CUNY. The co-sponsors too included repeaters and new additions: LaborArts.org; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, NYU; Educators Chapter of the Jewish Labor Committee/United Federation of Teachers' Jewish Heritage Committee; Gotham Center (CUNY); and the Frances Perkins Forum (Adelphi). Both events were organized by NYLHA board member Leigh Benin and his event committee.

The story is a devastating one—and familiar in its broad outlines. The film makes the history accessible, giving viewers



Join the New York Labor History Association for two screenings of *Schmatta – Rags to Riches to Rags* HBO documentary on NYC's "rag" trade, past & present

Thursday, May 3rd
6–8:30 p.m. at Fashion Institute of Technology

Screening followed by discussion with **Marc Levin**, Filmmaker

Dan Levinson Wilk, F.I.T. professor
May Chen, Immigrant rights activist

Edgar Romney, Workers United Secretary-Treasurer
Joe Raico, Workers United Local 10 leader

FREE! F.I.T., "A" Bldg. cafeteria, W. 27th Street, just east of 8th Avenue.

new angles on the long decline of the single most vital manufacturing industry in New York City. Using archival footage and interviews with workers and union leaders—and also with small manufacturers, small business owners, sales reps and designers, white collar and blue collar workers—the filmmakers depict skills and niches that even students of the garment industry may not be familiar with.

Hope was to be found, though, in the discussions that followed both screenings. The audience heard about small entrepreneurs who are currently manufacturing clothing in New York City—successfully—competitively—against all odds, and from organizers hard at work on a coalition formed to preserve some of midtown's garment district. Many walked out inspired to lend a hand. Connie would have been pleased.

Co-sponsored by United College Employees of F.I.T., Educators Chapter of the Jewish Labor Committee / United Federation of Teachers' Jewish Heritage Committee; Gotham Center (CUNY), & the Frances Perkins Forum (Adelphi).

Thursday May 17, 2012
6–9 p.m., New York University

Screening followed by discussion with **Robert Parmet**, Filmmaker

Marc Levin, Labor historian (York College/CUNY)

Joe Raico, Workers United Local 10 leader

FREE! NYU's King Juan Carlos Center screening room, 53 Washington Square South.

Co-sponsored by LaborArts.org; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, NYU; Educators Chapter of the Jewish Labor Committee / United Federation of Teachers' Jewish Heritage Committee; Gotham Center (CUNY); and Frances Perkins Forum (Adelphi).

Light refreshments served. Information at info@laborarts.org or 212 998-2637.

Work History News



Work History News is published two times per year to keep NYLHA's members informed of labor history events, activities and tours.

For more information and brochures contact:
Gail Malmgreen, NYLHA
c/o Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives
70 Washington Square South, 10th Floor
New York, NY 10012 212-998-2636
<http://newyorklaborhistory.org>

President Irwin Yellowitz
Vice-President George Altomare
Secretary Abbe Nosoff; Regina Olff
Treasurer Philoine Fried
Editor Jane LaTour

Contributors
Rachel Bernstein, Mary Butler, Joe Doyle,
Betsy & Dave Walters
Robert Wechsler, Irwin Yellowitz

Lilly Ledbetter, Barack Obama and the U.S. Supreme Court



Surrounded by members of Congress, President Barack Obama signs the Lilly Ledbetter Bill with Lilly Ledbetter, at center, behind Obama.

Born and raised in Possum Trot, Alabama, Lilly Ledbetter married young and started a family. Opening her own bank account, getting a credit card, and going to work against her husband's expectations were her first acts of independence, and in 1979 she became one of the first women managers at the nearby Goodyear Tire factory.

Now her name stands for a U.S. Supreme Court decision and the first law President Obama signed during his first term.

Her new book, *Grace and Grit: My Fight for Equal Pay and Fairness at Goodyear and Beyond*, includes a gripping account of the harassment, isolation, acts of vandalism, and other punishing experiences she put up with as she sought to do a job she loved that paid a good wage—conditions that drove other women out of these high-paying jobs and back into the secretarial pool.

After an anonymous note informed her that male managers were paid 40 percent more than she was, Ledbetter went to court against the company that discriminated against her because she was female.

Ledbetter won, but the conservative majority of the U.S. Supreme Court reversed her hard-earned legal victory. Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg read her stinging dissent aloud from the bench, charging the 5-4 majority with ignoring real-world discrimination, encouraging Lilly to fight on, and challenging Congress to remedy the injustice done to all working women by the 2007 ruling.

Trace union woes

(Continued from page 6)
concluded. "Put your brain and your body to work."

Mr. Rhomberg gave a cogent history of the 1995 Detroit newspaper strike, which affected the city's two major papers and lasted for three years, leading to major court battles and ending with a slow trickle of workers back to the papers, although some were never allowed to regain their jobs.

One of the lead attorneys for the newspapers in the strike, Robert J. Battista,

Only two years later, Ledbetter stood beside President Obama as he signed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act into law. Her powerful, eloquent book speaks to conditions still rampant for women working in blue collar, nontraditional jobs.

—Jane LaTour, reprinted from the Public Employee Press, June 2011. Book reviews in honor of February, Black History Month, and March, Women's History Month.

was later appointed head of the National Labor Relations Board by President George W. Bush, underlining how different the landscape has become for labor in recent years, Mr. Rhomberg said.

"The right to strike is badly protected in the U.S. and we need to get it back," he said. The nature of negotiations is so skewed at this point that "one side, the unions, come to the table looking to make a deal. The other side comes looking to take the table."

Trace union woes to decline of strikes as an effective weapon

By David Sims,

The Chief-Leader, November 2, 2012

The problem facing unions is not losses in representation around the country, but the loss of strike power, which has been in decline since the Professional Air Traffic Controllers strike of 1981, a group of labor experts said at an October 25 panel discussion.

PATCO Outcome's Chilling Effect

Organized by the New York Labor History Association and co-sponsored by The Worker Institute, at the Cornell ILR, the speakers at the event were Georgetown Professor Joseph McCartin, who wrote the book "Collision Course" about the PATCO strike; well-known labor activist Ray Rogers and Fordham Professor Chris Rhomberg, who wrote "The Broken Table" about the Detroit newspaper strike.

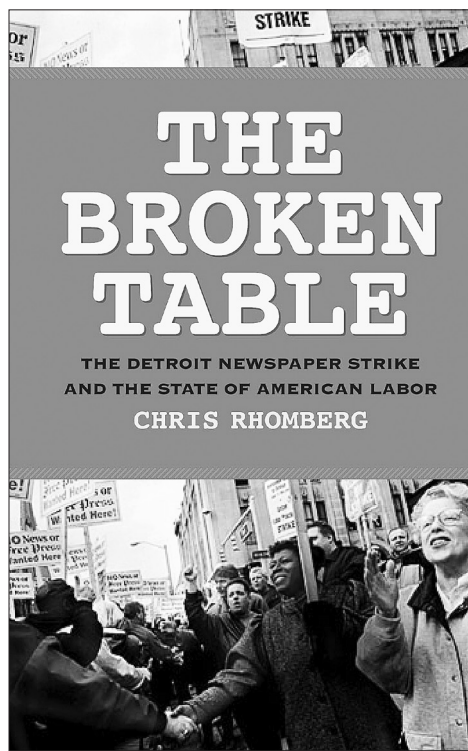
Mr. McCartin said that while the decline in labor membership (about 7 percent of private-sector workers are unionized) should not be ignored, statistics on the decline of significant strikes were even more surprising.

"In the 1960s and 70s, we averaged about 280 major work stoppages a year," he said, a "major" stoppage being a union of more than 1,000 members striking for at least one day.

"Since 1981 or so, what we've seen is a dramatic plunge...in 2009, there were five major work stoppages," he continued. "Workers haven't felt that they can effectively wage strikes...it's perpetuated a cycle where labor has to focus on political action."

The decline was triggered with the PATCO strike, which saw the national Air Traffic Controllers union walk out in a dispute that was mostly over better working conditions. Declaring that their actions violated Federal law, President Ronald Reagan fired the more-than 11,000 workers who did not return to their posts and replaced them, banning them from federal service for life and breaking the union.

Mr. McCartin noted that other such major losses for labor had happened at earlier periods in U.S. history—the 1894 Pullman



strike, the steel strike of 1919—but had not permanently damaged unions' appetite for such action. But the PATCO strike was different, he argued.

Union Broken, Reagan Cheered

"The union was broken in real time in the cable-news era," he said. "The permanent replacements used, and 'the boss,' in this case Reagan, received overwhelming public approval...the nature of that loss was profound."

Nonetheless, unions should work to dispel some of the myths of the strike and regain their courage for direct action to prevent the thinking of anti-labor politicians like Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker, he said.

One myth is that the strike was largely about wages. The real issues were the lack of bargaining rights, long hours, and outdated equipment, Mr. McCartin said. Also, the Reagan Administration was more receptive in negotiations than the Carter Administration had been. "They encouraged PATCO to believe they could get even more from them by being militant," he said.

Elected officials like Mr. Walker are "far more radical than Reagan ever was," he continued. While Mr. Walker attempted to strip the bargaining rights of public employees through legislation, "Reagan never once challenged the right of the workers to bargain collectively, only their right to break the law by striking.

"He recognized a new Air Traffic Controllers union [the National Air Traffic Controllers Association] which survives to this day," he said.

'Changed Climate' for Both Sides

Yet the wounds of PATCO linger on, and have "changed the climate of what employers are prepared to do," he continued. Mr. McCartin wants unions to "spend less time talking about union density and more time talking about collective action," and says he was buoyed by the successful Chicago Teachers Union strike and labor actions being taken by some Wal-Mart employees around the nation.

Mr. Rogers, who helps unions target the corporate ownership or shareholders of their employers to put political pressures on the companies during strikes, said that unions had to stop following the tradition of picket lines and demonstrations if they wanted to win in the future.

"Lockouts are going to continue unless workers and unions understand that they have a great deal of power," he said. He noted that the 10-month 1985 Hormel strike, in which the United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local P-9 walked out without the approval of its union, mostly failed because of the UFCW's lack of support.

Companies often seek to divide and conquer within a union to end a long strike, so careful planning ahead and storing of food and resources can be vital, Mr. Rogers said.

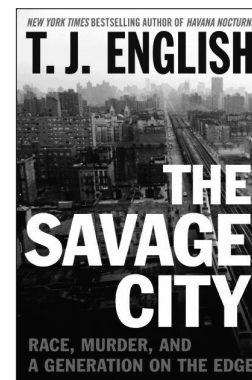
Power Goes Beyond Picket Sign

"Workers have a lot more power than walking around with a picket sign," he

(Continued on page 7)

Race battles of the 1960s in a savage city—New York

AUTHOR T.J. ENGLISH has written about the Irish mob, Asian gangs and the notorious Westies. His latest book, *The Savage City: Race, Murder, and a Generation on the Edge*, brings his special expertise to the civil war that raged between many members of the New York Police



Department and residents of the city's ghettos in the 1960s and '70s.

The author weaves together the strands of three stories—the front-page murder of the high society Wylie-Hoffert "career girls" on the Upper East Side; the teenage George Whitmore, beaten in a Brooklyn precinct until he falsely confessed to the crime; and Bill Phillips, a

dirty cop infamous for his testimony before the Knapp Commission. English paints a gripping, detailed account of the culture of graft and institutional racism that pervaded the NYPD and the criminal justice system in those days.

In the widening wake of the Great Migration, rural blacks escaping the segregated South and Puerto Ricans displaced from the island's sugar cane, tobacco, and coffee fields entered the city in growing numbers, searching for work. Minorities in the city's impoverished neighborhoods became victims of constant acts of racist hostility from too many members of a police force sworn to protect and defend all. Fueled by the Civil Rights

and Black Power movements, resistance grew, and English describes the ensuing clash.

One honorable piece of this sordid history took place in the District Council 37 headquarters building, at 125 Barclay Street, which was then home to the World-Telegram newspaper. Selwyn Raab dug into the Brooklyn teen's convictions and

with lawyers for Whitmore developed the evidence that exonerated him a decade later. His coerced confession helped convince the U.S. Supreme Court to adopt the Miranda rule that requires police to inform suspects being questioned of their rights. The author dedicates the book to Whitmore.

—Jane LaTour, reprinted from the Public Employee Press, July–August 2011.

Marvin Miller, 1917-2012

The legendary Marvin Miller died on November 27, 2012, at his home in Manhattan.

Miller spoke at a memorable NYLHA event organized by Gail Malmgreen, his archivist at the Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, and NYLHA Secretary/board member. *The New York Times* celebrated his life as "an economist and labor leader who became one of the most important figures in baseball history by building the major league players union into a force that revolutionized the game and ultimately transformed all of professional sports." Writing in the *Daily News* after the memorial service for Miller on January 21 at NYU's Tishman Auditorium, Bill Madden wrote that, "one thing everyone came away with was that major league players achieved all those monumental gains—free agency, salary arbitration, licensing money etc.—by staying united and making the necessary sacrifices that come with the territory of any hard-fought labor negotiation."

In celebration of Miller's 90th birthday, back in 2007, NYLHA's Henry Foner penned the following limerick,



Marvin Miller with Joe Torre.

reprinted from the *Work History News*, Vol. 27, No.2:

A labor attorney named Miller
Pulled a veritable killer-diller—
Baseball's owners were gutted
When he had them Curt-Flooded
Now in Fame's Hall, he merits a pillar.

As Madden wrote, "The [Baseball] Hall of Fame is greatly diminished by the exclusion of Miller, who, if there were ever a Mount Rushmore of baseball, would have to have a place on it, along with Babe Ruth and Jackie Robinson as one of the iconic and most instrumental figures in baseball history."

Commerford

(Continued from page 1)

journalist Robert Fitch, whom she quoted. “Only organized labor has the power to straighten backs...” in the teeth of the on-going assault by America’s plutocrats.

“Lest such a mission seem like Mission Impossible,” Jane saluted Michael Bilello, standing modestly in the back of the hall, who was a rank-and-file carpenter 20 years ago, when he collaborated with Jane on the newsletter, *Hard Hat News*. He took part in an historic election in his union, the first in 100 years, and after years of diligent organizing, was recently elected as Executive Secretary-Treasurer to lead the District Council of Carpenters and Joiners.

Jane closed her remarks with an affectionate tribute to Russell Smith. (Jane married Russell, December 1st, the day after the Commerford Awards). Russell Smith organized thousands of members for the Transport Workers Union—First Transit, New York Waterway, and school bus drivers.

Harry Belafonte stole the hearts, as well, of attendees of this year’s Commerford Awards. Actor-singing sensation Belafonte started his remarks recalling his spur-of-the-moment decision to retire from performing, in 2003, standing on stage in Hamburg, Germany, before an audience of 20-25,000 people—and his decision to dedicate the rest of his life to the labor movement. George Gresham of Hospital Workers’ Local 1199 asked him to be president of their cultural wing, Bread and Roses Cultural Project. He’d done a great deal of pro-bono work for Local 1199 at the start of his career in the 1950s and ‘60s, so he said yes and has come back to his labor roots.

Belafonte had warm words in his introduction to Peter Yarrow, recalling some harrowing rallies in the 1960s which he invited Peter, Paul, and Mary to join him at—despite death threats from the Ku Klux Klan—in Selma, Alabama, and in Mississippi. He also invited Peter, Paul, and Mary to the paradigm-changing March on Washington in 1963.

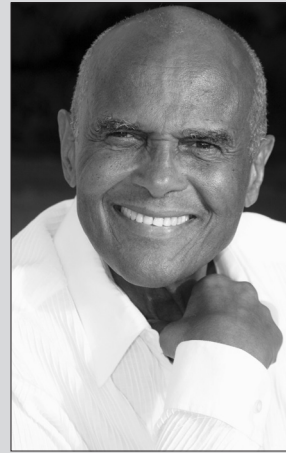
George Altomare, a founding member of the United Federation of Teachers, added his own affectionate words to Belafonte’s introduction—as well as a memorable

Sing Your Song— HBO Documentary on Harry Belafonte

IN 1956, HARRY BELAFONTE became the first recording artist to sell more than a million LPs with his album, “Calypso,” and in the process broke color barriers as he rose to success in an era of segregation. He won Grammy, Tony and Emmy Awards but was also blacklisted during the McCarthy era, spied on by the C.I.A. and the F.B.I., and threatened by the Ku Klux Klan, state troopers and Las Vegas Mafia bosses. This documentary from Susanne Rostock distills more than 700 hours of interviews, excerpts from F.B.I files and archival film to chronicle the life and times of Mr. Belafonte, now 85, from his birth in Harlem and his childhood in Jamaica to his work with the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., his activism against apartheid in South Africa and his actions to counter gang violence and the incarceration of youth.

HBO2 aired the 2012 documentary on January 23, 2013. Look for it on DVD.

Reprinted from The New York Times, January 23, 2013.



phrase, “Music is the language of God.”

Altomare recalled that Peter Yarrow brought Paul and Mary to mass mobilizations against the Vietnam War, rallies in support of Cesar Chavez’s United Farm Workers, anti-apartheid rallies, and much, much more.

Peter Yarrow sang most of his acceptance speech. A delighted audience heard a medley of “We’ve Got to Roll the Union On,” “Talking Union Blues,” “Which Side Are You On,” and “Union Maid.” Interspersed between songs, Yarrow spoke of his work for the past ten years with his anti-bullying campaign, Operation Respect. (To date, he estimates he’s sung and spoken to 20,000 teachers and an estimated 10 million students.) Yarrow spoke of the inspiration he takes from the Occupy Wall Street activists. His daughter has enlisted his help in their most recent action, Occupy Sandy—delivering emergency aid to the hard-hit

impoverished community of Coney Island.

Yarrow recalled an unforgettable moment during Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I have a dream” speech when Mary Travers grabbed his hand and told him, “Peter, we’re watching history being made.”

The audience had a similar feeling November 30. As Peter Yarrow walked his guitar over to Harry Belafonte so Belafonte could join in singing “We Shall Not Be Moved,” with the entire audience joining in, I watched Marvin Rich, organizer of the Freedom Riders, embrace his wife Evie, swaying to the happy sound.

A final word of praise goes to Rachel Bernstein, Steve Leberstein, Bette Craig, and Bob Parmet, who took on the follow-up work with NYLHA’s labor supporters, to make the 26th Annual Commerford a financial success—as well as an event that all present will remember with pleasure.

Awards for best history papers—2012

By Robert Wechsler

This year, the New York Labor History Association awarded prizes for the best history papers by undergraduate and graduate students at the 26th annual John Commerford Labor Education Award Reception on November 30, 2012.

William S. Cossen won the Bernard Bellush Prize for outstanding scholarship by a graduate student for his essay, “The Rise and Decline of a Catholic Labor School: Hartford’s Diocesan Labor Institute and the Education of the American Worker.” The prize committee was very impressed with Cossen’s sophisticated handling of the Catholic Labor Movement in Hartford and related gender issues, a much neglected area of investigation among labor historians. Cossen is a student at Pennsylvania State University and a fellow at the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center at the University of Connecticut.

Ryan Driskell Tate won the Barbara Wertheimer Prize for the best research paper written by an undergraduate student for his honor’s thesis, “A House Divided: Women’s Activism in the Minnesota Labor Movement,

1900-1935.” Tate’s understanding of the theory and use of historiography added great depth to a paper that provides a deeper understanding of the problematic efforts to build cross-class alliances among women activists during the first decades of the twentieth century. Tate wrote his thesis at Hamline University.

Each prize winner received \$250 from the NYLHA. An abstract of each paper will appear on the Association’s website, at: www.newyorklaborhistory.org.

This is the first year the Bellush Prize was awarded. The prize honors the contributions to labor history made by Bernie Bellush, as a scholar and as an activist. Bernie was elected as the first Chairman of the Faculty Senate at City College, CUNY. He was a stirring force in the classroom, and his dynamism and concern for students left a lasting impression on those he taught. Bernie also served for many years with distinction as president of the NYLHA.

The Barbara Mayer Wertheimer Prize is named for the former organizer for the Amalgamated Clothing Workers and

their national education director from 1947-1958. A faculty member of Cornell University’s School of Industrial and Labor Relations and director of its Working Women’s Institute, Barbara was recognized for her groundbreaking *We Were There: The Story of Working Women in America*, published in 1977. She was a founding member of the New York Labor History Association. We will always be in her debt for her contributions to the history of women workers in America and in New York City.

Serving on the prize committee are Brian Greenberg, Jules Plangere Chair in American Social History at Monmouth University, and Robert Wechsler, former Education and Research Director of the Transport Workers Union of America, and currently Executive Director of Lehman College’s School of Continuing and Professional Studies, CUNY.

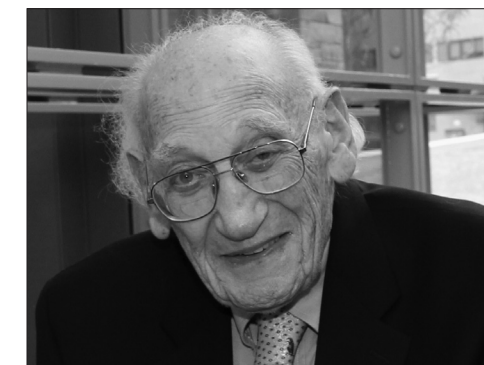
Entries for the 2013 prizes should be sent to Brian Greenberg, Department of History and Anthropology, Monmouth University, West Long Branch, New Jersey 07764.

Celebration of an outstanding Life: Bernard Bellush

By Irwin Yellowitz

Professor Bernard Bellush died on December 30, 2011, at the age of 94. He was president of the New York Labor History Association in the mid-1990s. I had known Bernie for over 50 years as a colleague, friend and mentor. It was my great privilege to speak at his memorial celebration on May 19, 2012. Joe Doyle, Philoine Fried, Arieh Lebowitz and Gail Malmgreen of the Executive Board of the NYLHA also attended the memorial.

The NYLHA has decided to honor Bernard Bellush by establishing a prize in his name to be given annually to a graduate student for the best essay on a topic in labor or work history. The award is made at the John Commerford Labor Awards Reception. The first winner was William S. Cossen of Pennsylvania State University for his essay



Bernard Bellush

entitled “The Rise and Decline of a Catholic Labor School: Hartford’s Diocesan Labor Institute and the Education of the American Worker.”

At the memorial, a variety of speakers commented on Bernie’s long and fruitful life. There was no doubt of his abilities as a scholar, including *Union Power in New*

York: Victor Gotbaum and District Council 37, written together with his wife, professor Jewel Bellush. There was no doubt of his activism, including his important role over several decades in Americans for Democratic Action. There was no doubt of his dynamic teaching as witnessed by a generation of students. And there was no doubt of his ability to lead, be it as the first Chairman of the City College Faculty Senate, or as president of the New York Labor History Association. Through his actions, Bernie Bellush made clear the importance of believing deeply in good causes, of fighting for these with vigor and skill, of being able to compromise when necessary, and of always seeking a solution to a problem even if it were not visible at the moment. It was my good fortune to have gained so much from knowing this wonderful man.