

# Roaming and rambling with *Out in the Union*

This dispatch covers the first year book tour of a labor history of queer America. With gratitude to Desma Holcomb who travels with me.

**SUMMER 2014:** FROM THE GET-GO we knew that *Out in the Union: A Labor History of Queer America*, would need steady, vigorous promotion and we wanted readers to learn about it early and directly.

We kicked off with two book parties: a reading/signing at **Word Up! Bookstore in northern Manhattan** in July and a full-house festive launch in September, at **Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives / Tamiment Library NYU** co-sponsored with the NYLHA.

We arrived in **Detroit** mid-October for a community reading at the **LGBT Affirmations Center in Ferndale** and later in the week a special session at the **North American Labor History Conference**. People from the book showed up at both events, excited to hear their stories shared with families, friends and total strangers. Union allies of those narrators spoke out about fairness and justice in everyday work relations.

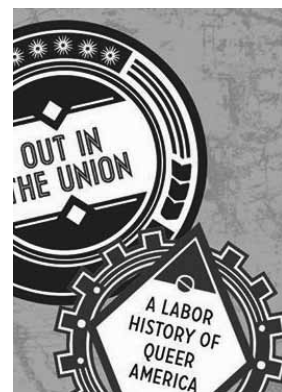
**2015:**

*Out in the Union* went paperback in January so

we had another launch, this time at **Bluestockings Bookstore on the Lower East Side**. The crowd was young and oriented towards social justice, but few understood what unions routinely do to sustain themselves in a climate so

hostile to labor. In the discussion I found myself talking basics: e.g. how right-to-work laws damage union security.

Over spring break we headed to the **University of Merced, California** for a warm-hearted seminar with faculty, staff, LGBT activists, graduate students. The big topic was oral history: techniques and ethics, and what we guide or sit back with when we interview elders-as-narrators. From Merced we traveled to **the Bay Area** to read at the **Laurel Bookstore in downtown Oakland** and finally at **San Francisco's Modern Times**. Here we met Criss Romero, an activist and worker at the San Francisco AIDS Foundation during the mid-1990s. Because I interviewed him by phone I knew a lot about him, and was always impressed with his crystal-clear memory; but we had never met. From Criss I learned how intensely SFAF's board



had fought the union. He remains active in the fight against AIDS, and we stay in touch.

Late in May we made our way to downtown **Baltimore** for a reading at the fabulous **Red Emma's Bookstore** before heading to the **Labor and Working Class History Association conference at Georgetown University**. LAWCHA advocates dialogue between history-loving activists and scholars who care about organizing. People were eager to know more about *Out in the Union* because their students have been asking about labor/LGBT connections from the past; and want to understand union/queer communities of their own times.

Before we left DC we dropped in to **AFL-CIO headquarters**, where **Pride at Work, the federation's LGBT constituency group** had arranged for a book talk in the Phillip Murray room. The portraits and marble fittings were formal, but the warmth of the discussion generated its own excitement.

For Summer 2015 we went back to **Michigan**, this time to

pay our respects to the amazing labor/queer community of **Ann Arbor**, the scene of so much creative and volatile union organizing in the 1970s and later in the 1990s. Activists from both those phases of queer labor history came to our reading at **Common Dreams Bookstore**, which is next door to a low-key gay bar. The July evening was warm, with a long, slow dusk. Bookstore staff set us up on a large patio with paper lanterns and picnic tables. We chatted with a young librarian who would soon start gender transition.

There would be more trips in the months to come, many more new faces and exciting reunions with contributors to the half-century of history that *Out in the Union* has documented.

Since that July evening there has been another year of conferences and book talks and seminars and people to share in the memories and figure out how we will continue together. I am proud to have gotten something started with this book and am deeply grateful for the help and inspiration of generations of activists who have considered their options, shaped their strategies, done their work, survived and remembered.

—Miriam Frank, Summer 2016

## Crossword Answers

### ACROSS

- 2. Society
- 5. Krassner
- 6. Townshend
- 8. Carmichael
- 10. Leary
- 12. Armstrong
- 15. Friedan
- 17. Diggers
- 19. Oakland
- 20. Beach
- 21. Chubby
- 22. Mets
- 23. Lenny
- 24. Stones
- 25. Wolfe
- 26. Russell
- 27. Morgan
- 28. Goldwater

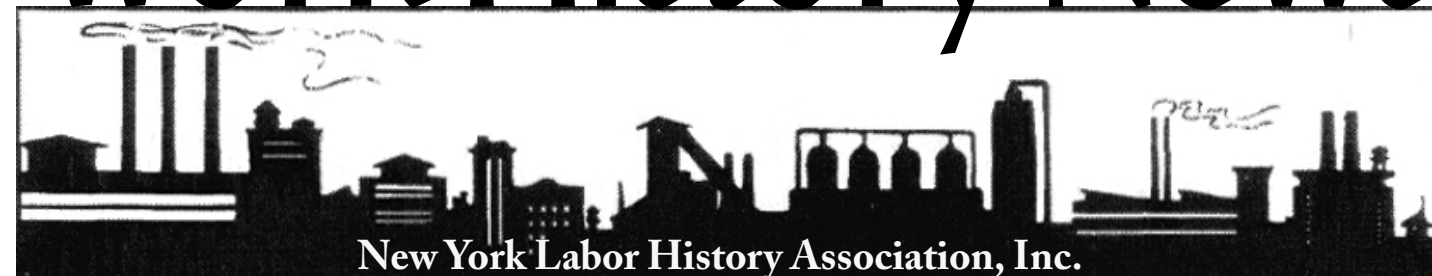
### DOWN

- 1. Bay
- 2. Sirhan

- 30. Hitchcock
- 32. Peace
- 34. Ashbury
- 35. Spartacus
- 37. Gavras
- 38. Algiers
- 3. Doors
- 4. Melville
- 7. Supremes
- 9. Mailer
- 10. Laugh
- 11. Boudin
- 13. Minh
- 14. Generation
- 15. Fonda
- 16. Baldwin

- 18. Ruby
- 21. Cleaver
- 23. Liberation
- 25. Woody
- 28. Godard
- 29. Ramparts
- 31. Truffaut
- 33. Crystal
- 36. Twilight

# Work History News



A Bridge Between Past and Present

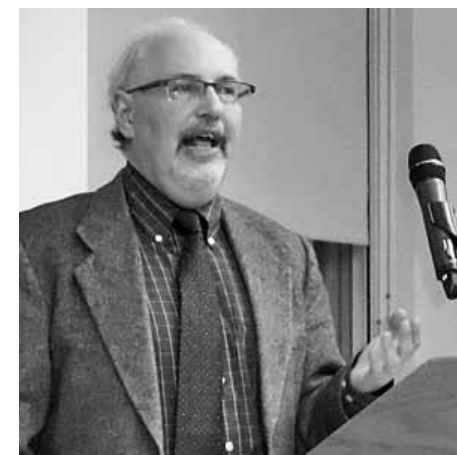
Volume 33 No 2 Summer | Fall 2016

## Conference spotlights unfinished tasks of Civil Rights movement

By Jane LaTour

In 1960, the great American writer James Baldwin wrote the essay: *They Can't Turn Back*, explaining student protests. They aimed to sting consciences, make people think about things they didn't want to think about... "Americans keep wondering what has 'got into' the students. What has 'got into' them is their history in this country," Baldwin wrote. The annual May Labor History Conference, May 6-7, *Can't Turn Back: Unfinished Tasks of the Civil Rights Movement*, brought scholars and activists together to address four related and timely topics: economic inequality, housing, policing, and education.

On Friday evening, May 6, Jerald Podair, author of *Bayard Rustin: American Dreamer*, gave the keynote address entitled, *They Couldn't Wait: A. Philip Randolph, Bayard Rustin and the Struggle for American Equality*. Professor Podair, who teaches history and American Studies at Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin, described the arc of leadership the men provided when others counseled forbearance, to allow time and history to run its course. Randolph and Rustin challenged it, confronted it, and ultimately changed it. In doing so, they presented a coherent program, something. Professor Podair noted that "the left has failed to do." This broad program a "bill of rights" included jobs for all who could hold one, medical care, civil rights that were protected, and peace—within and outside America's borders. He outlined the



Professor Jerald Podair giving keynote address.

distinction between the concepts of equality and equity—the fight for substantive rights as opposed to procedural equality.

Saturday's program began with a panel on housing. Peter Eisenstadt, author of *Rochdale Village: Robert Moses, 6,000 Families, and New York City's Great Experiment in Integrated Housing*, described the opening in 1953, as the largest cooperative in the world, built on the Jamaica race track. A product of the United Housing Foundation, and the post-World War II Jewish labor movement. While the complex was 80 per cent white in a predominantly African American neighborhood, the integration vastly exceeded the mix in any other housing unit. "There were two levels of integration, but it fell apart in the late '60s and early '70s for many reasons," Eisenstadt said.

Roberta Gold, author of *When Tenants Claimed the City: The Struggle for Citizenship*



Wagner Labor Archives Director Timothy Johnson introducing goals of the conference.

*in New York City Housing*, spoke next. Her book is a brilliant history of the movement that fought for integrated housing and led to the largest stock of public housing in the country. Gold described the post-World War II economics of housing, urban renewal, and the absence of any planning to accommodate the low-income tenants pushed out by housing for the middle-class. "The omission of re-housing provisions bedeviled urban renewal, otherwise known as "Negro Removal," from the beginning," Gold said.

Long-time tenant activist Jenny Laurie spoke about the current situation with tenant organizations battling Mayor de Blasio's housing plan. "Now it is going neighborhood by neighborhood in the approval process. It's a complicated story about income, race, and class. As statistics show, "New York City is much more

Continued on page 2

Photo credit: Susan Wilson



# Unfinished tasks

Continued from page 1

segregated today in its housing than it was historically,” Laurie said. “The debate on Mayor de Blasio’s plan is being carried on in terms of income, not race,” she said.

Professor Clarence Taylor led the next panel on policing with a history of police brutality. Referring to Marilyn Johnson’s book, *Street Justice*, he noted that, not only are people missing the history of police brutality, but there is little knowledge of how people took it on in the 1930s, with the growth of black communities and their confrontations with the police. Taylor, the author of several history books and essays, is working on a book about minorities and the police, writing about the Civilian Review Board election of 1966, when Mayor John V. Lindsay proposed an all-civilian police review board and it was voted down in a racially-contentious election.

Professor Johanna Fernandez, author of the forthcoming book, *When the World Was Their Stage: A History of the Young Lords Party, 1968-1974*, began her talk with a litany of people killed by the police, including the “Boy of the Year” in Harlem, Police Officers acquitted of charges for excessive use of force, and murders that took place in front of hundreds of witnesses.

“The 1960s opened up this way, with a spate of killings and reactions,” Professor Fernandez said. Kwan-Lamar Blount-Hill, a former Police Officer in Charleston, South Carolina, and currently a graduate student of Criminal Justice, spoke about the dual functionality of policing—ensuring order and peace, and stated that “in our communities, many feel as if they are being terrorized. Some progress is being made, but there are hundreds of stories about police brutality and hundreds that we don’t know about,” Blount-Hill said.

A lunchtime panel facilitated by Professor Premilla Nadasen, author of *Household Workers Unite: The Untold Story of African American Women Who Built a Movement*, her discussion featured three home care workers/organizers, each involved in the fight for economic equality. Exempted from the right to organize unions by the New Deal legislation of 1933 and 1935, these workers



Zakiyah Ansari, Alliance for Quality Education and Bette Craig, NYLHA board member.

have had to find other, creative alternatives for their struggle. Professor Nadasen posed questions to the panelists about the importance of their work in the current economy, especially in light of the headway they are making in organizing; the different models and strategies they employ; and what it means to have a movement which is led by women of color. “Do you see your work as primarily class-based? Or is uplifting the voices and leadership of working-class women of color also an important part of your organizing?” she asked.

Lisa M. Johnson, active in her union’s Fight For Fifteen Campaign, an 1199SEIU member, and mother of six, pointed out the contradiction in paying people who are taking care of their own family, wages that put them one paycheck away from ruin. Linda Oalican, Executive Director of the Damayan Migrant Workers Association, described the exodus of women caretakers from the Philippines, who leave their own families behind in order to survive by taking care of other peoples’ families. “As grassroots organizations, we try to be creative and educate the community,” Ms. Oalican said. Christine Lewis, the Cultural Outreach Coordinator for the Domestic Workers United, described how women of color “take the brunt when the economy is poor, domestic workers included.”

The last panel of the day focused on education and included Professor Podair, author of *The Strike That Changed New*

*York: Blacks, Whites, and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Crisis*, Professor Taylor, author of *Knocking at Our Own Door: Milton A. Galamison and the Struggle to Integrate New York City Schools*, and activist/organizer Zakiyah Ansari, Advocacy Director with the New York State Alliance for Quality Education. The discussion was facilitated by Gene Carroll, Director of The Worker Institute, ILR School, Cornell University, and conference co-sponsor. Ms. Ansari captured the essence of the issues in her opening, as she recited *Harlem* a poem by Langston Hughes.

What happens to a dream deferred? / Does it dry up / like a raisin in the sun? / Or fester like a sore—And then run?

Lack of resources, a lack of racial and socioeconomic diversity in the city’s public schools, which, according to an article in *The New York Times* are “by some measures among the most segregated school districts in the country,” all point to a dream deferred—an unfinished task that must be discussed, debated, and struggled over, by scholars, activists, and members of the labor movement. In addition to The Worker Institute at Cornell, the conference co-sponsors included LaborArts.org and the Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, NYU.

## 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 contact:**

NYLHA  
c/o Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives  
70 Washington Square South, 10th Floor  
New York, NY 10012  
<http://newyorklaborhistory.org>

<b>President</b>	Irwin Yellowitz
<b>Vice-President</b>	George Altomare
<b>Secretary</b>	Abbe Nosoff; Regina Olf
<b>Treasurer</b>	Peter Filardo
<b>Editor</b>	Jane LaTour

**Contributors**  
Alexander Bernhardt Bloom, Rachel Bernstein,  
Molly Charboneau, Melvyn Dubofsky,  
Martha Foley, Miriam Frank, Kelsey Harrison,  
Bill Hohlfeld, Bernadette Hyland Staughton Lynd,  
Ken Nash, Robert Parmet, Susan Wilson

# Separate universes’

Continued from page 7

Ronald Reagan, unlike Carter, proved a master politician. He praised frugal government while generating unprecedented federal deficits. He promised evangelical Christians, conservative Roman Catholics, and Orthodox Jews restoration of “old-time morality” while doing little to alter the politics and practice of abortion but welcoming gays into the administration’s inner sanctums. He tolerated reforms that stabilized social security and insured its future solvency. He also practiced diplomacy with a deft touch. Yet Reagan Republicanism regularly struck the chords of white resentment, further diluted the power of organized labor, and reduced taxes substantially for the rich. His administration proved that public policy as well as the invisible hand of the market widened the gap between those with much and those with little.

Over the next two decades economic inequality surged as the top one percent of the population amassed the lion’s share of economic gain (the top 0.001 percent gained an even larger proportion) while the bottom 80 percent experienced a decline in real income. Inequality widened despite Bill Clinton’s policies that raised tax rates for the wealthiest and expanded employment opportunities. When Republicans returned to power in 2001, they slashed taxes on the wealthy, spent profligately on the military and its wars, and further loosened regulation of the financial sector. By 2008 the dominant political parties inhabited

## Union democracy

Continued from page 6

of many of the industrial changes that were coming about at the time, trying to drive home a new agenda of not working smarter but working a lot harder.”

But 1107 responded by building links with other Ford workers and political activists through the national Ford combine and connecting with workers across Europe and the USA.

In the workplace 1107 was at the forefront of challenging racism in the workplace, not just from individual workers but also racist recruitment practices. They

nearly separate universes, the Republicans creating their own virtual reality, making compromise with Democrats who inhabited a more quotidian world nearly impossible. Then came the economic crash of 2008, the ensuing great recession, and a resurgence of social movements.

The decision by the outgoing Bush administration and the incoming Obama administration to bail out the financial institutions responsible for the economic crisis ignited the Tea Party rebellion, a movement that McAdam and Kloos see as a reinvigoration of white resistance to the gains made by people of color. Tea Party adherents resented the election of the nation’s first African American president and policies (especially the Affordable Care Act) that benefited the “takers” (nonwhites) rather than the “makers.” On the left, the “Occupy Wall Street” movement practiced mass protest in defense of the 99 percent against the one percent. The Tea Party and “Occupy Wall Street” inhabit opposed universes, as do the political parties to which they lean. By 2015-16 congressional Republicans and Democrats shared little in common. The most recent turn of the political axis shows that the Tea Party has displaced the Republican establishment.

What has happened thus far in 2015 and 2016 contradicts the conclusion that McAdam and Kloos draw from their study of the impact of race and inequality on politics in the US. Donald Trump’s rise as the favored choice of Republican

also took an active role in the boycott campaign against South Africa; refusing to handle parts which led to Ford’s pulling out of the country.

Trade union solidarity was a key factor in their politics as Alan Deyna-Jones comments; “The banner of the 1107 was always there on marches and rallies all over Britain, supporting all other workers like the nurses, miners and bus drivers.”

*Notoriously Militant* is an important book for anyone who wants to find out what real trade unionism means. For me a major

primary voters disproves that “the GOP establishment is slowly regaining control of the party....By finally bringing the Tea Party insurgents to heel...the establishment appears to have regained the upper hand” (p. 293). McAdam and Kloos likely miscalculated because they chose unwisely among the historians on whose research they relied. It puzzles me that in their examination of the rise of right-wing extremism in the Republican party they fail to cite Rick Perlstein about the Goldwater movement and the Nixon presidency (instead they draw on the journalist Theodore White for the 1964 election); or Sean Wilentz on the Reagan and Clinton presidencies; or Dan Carter on George Wallace and “the politics of rage,” and so many other historians who have written about the collapse of the New Deal order, the rise of the Southern Democratic-Northern Republican conservative coalition in congress, and the salience of race in party politics. For a better book that covers precisely the same subject, draws on the work of more historians, and interviews with leading conservative activists and Republican congresspeople, I would suggest turning to E. J. Dionne’s *Why the Right Went Wrong* (2016). There readers will find a clearer analysis of the paralysis of democracy in the US, the enfeeblement of the Republican establishment, and why Donald Trump has emerged as the choice of Republican primary voters.

Melvyn Dubofsky

strength of the book is the way in which the story is told through the use of interviews with the grassroots activists and it reminds me of many people I have met throughout my life as a trade union member and shop steward, ordinary people who worked hard for their members and were often victimized for standing up for justice for their members in their workplace. It is one of the few books that are inspiring about the role of trade unions in the workplace and shows how together members can make a real difference to our lives at work and in the wider world.

# Tradition's chains

*Continued from page 12*

superficial fairness deluded Wobs into hoping for a good outcome. The jury took less than an hour to find all one hundred defendants guilty of all counts in the indictment. Ninety-three received lengthy prison terms. Judge Landis ordered that they be imprisoned in Leavenworth, described by Chester as “a maximum-security penitentiary designed for hardened, violent criminals.” Forty-six more defendants were found guilty after another mass conspiracy trial in Sacramento.

Thereafter, Chester writes, the “process of granting a commutation of sentence was manipulated during the administration of Warren Harding to divide and demoralize IWW prisoners.” The ultimate result was “the disastrous split of 1924, leaving the union a shell of what it had been only seven years earlier.” Executive clemency, like that granted to Debs, was the only hope of the Wobblies in prison for release before the end of their long sentences. President Harding rejected any thought of a general amnesty, obliging each prisoner to fill out the form requesting amnesty as an individual. The application form for amnesty contained an implicit admission of guilt. The newly-created ACLU supported this process.

Twenty-four IWW prisoners opted to submit a form requesting amnesty. A substantial majority refused to plead for individual release. More than seventy issued a statement in which they insisted that “all are innocent and all must receive the same consideration.” The government insisted on a case-by-case approach. Fifty-two prisoners responded that they refused to accept the president’s division of the Sacramento prisoners, still alleged to have burned fields,

from the Chicago prisoners. Moreover they considered it a “base act” to “sign individual applications and leave the Attorney General’s office to select which of our number should remain in prison and which should go free.” Initially, the IWW supported those prisoners who refused to seek their freedom individually. Those who had submitted personal requests for presidential clemency were expelled from the union.

In June 1923, the government once again dangled before desperate men the prospect of release, now available for those individual prisoners promising to remain “law-abiding and loyal to the Government.” This time a substantial majority of the remaining prisoners accepted Harding’s offer, and IWW headquarters, in what Chester calls “a sweeping reversal,” gave its approval. Eleven men at Leavenworth declined this latest government inducement. In addition, those who were tried in California did not receive the same offer.

In December 1923 the remaining IWW prisoners at Leavenworth including twenty-two who had been convicted in Sacramento were released unconditionally. The damage had been done. Those who had held out the longest launched a campaign within the IWW to expel those who had supported a form of conditional release. There were accusations against anyone who had allegedly proved himself “a scab and a rat.” When a convention convened in 1924 both sides claimed the headquarters office and went to court. An organization consisting of the few hundred members who had supported the consistent rejection of all government offers “faded into oblivion by 1931.”

# A manifesto

*Continued from page 9*

Unions in the 1930s joined protests against unemployment and evictions and supported civil rights and, of course, other unions' struggles. Now, Aronowitz says, unions need to

build bridges with community groups, which are also manifestations of working-class politics. Today some unions, such as DC 37 and its parent union, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal

Employees, are moving in this direction, building coalitions with allies in faith-based organizations and the growing community labor alliances that speak for low-wage workers and immigrant rights and

supporting the protests against police violence in Ferguson, Missouri, the Southern Moral Monday protests and most recently the People’s Climate March.

## Conclusion

It is not the intent of Brother Chester’s book, or of this review, to trash the IWW. This review has dealt with only about half of the material in the book, for example passing by the story of Wobbly organizing in copper, both at Butte, Montana and Bisbee, Arizona. Moreover, any one who lived through the disintegration of SDS, SNCC and the Black Panthers is familiar with tragedies like those described here. The heroism of members of all three groups who were martyrs, such as Frank Little, Fred Hampton, and the Mississippi Three (Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner), remains. The vision of a qualitatively different society, as the Zapatistas say “un otro mundo,” remains also.

What it seems to me we must soberly consider is what practices we can adopt to forestall disintegration when different members of a group make different choices. Hardened secular radicals though we may be, we can learn something from King Lear’s words to his daughter Cordelia: “When you ask me blessing, I’ll kneel down and ask of you forgiveness.”

**Staughton Lynd** is an American conscientious objector, Quaker, peace activist and civil rights activist, tax resister, historian, professor, author and lawyer. His book *Doing History from the Bottom Up: On E.P. Thompson, Howard Zinn, and Rebuilding the Labor Movement from Below* was published by Haymarket in December 2014 and a new edition of his *Solidarity Unionism: Rebuilding the Labor Movement* with an introduction by radical labor scholar and activist Immanuel Ness, was published by PM Press in Spring 2015. He can be reached at [salynd@aol.com](mailto:salynd@aol.com).

# Extraordinary lives

*The people I love the best jump into work head first...*

The first line, of Marge Piercy’s poem “To Be of Use,” encapsulates the purpose of the “I’ve Got Something to Say” Lemlich Awards for social activism—to honor unsung heroines who’ve devoted their lives to the better good.

*By Rachel Bernstein*

On Monday May 9 the Museum of the City of New York hosted another standing-room-only crowd for the sixth annual Lemlich Awards, sponsored by LaborArts, the Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition, and the Puffin Gallery for Social Activism at the museum.

May 9th marked the birthday of Debra E. Bernhardt, longtime head of the Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives at NYU and a founder of LaborArts who died in 2001; she was remembered with a quote on the cover of the program for the event: “I want to be able to look my children in the eye some day and say I tried to stop that” said Bernhardt at a demonstration against military expenditures in the early 1980s capturing the sentiment of Lemlich honorees over the years.

A proclamation from Mayor de Blasio, a jazz poem from *UpSurge*, stirring songs from the New York City Labor Chorus, and inspiring remarks from Clara Lemlich’s great grandson all combined to lift spirits and bring delight to the ceremony honoring five remarkable women. They were feted for following in the footsteps of lifelong activist Clara Lemlich, who stood up to a stage full of older male leaders to inspire her fellow garment workers to strike in 1909—and was still organizing seven decades later when she was in a nursing home.

**Teresa Chan** was born in China, educated in Hong Kong, immigrated to America in 1968, and worked as an accountant and administrator for decades. Her skill, though, is to consistently gather information from those around her, social workers, immigration lawyers and everyone else—and then to share that vital information with neighbors and the children and their families who passed



Teresa Chan



Etta Dixon

by her desk. Toddlers at the Garment Industry Day Care Center would come back years later to have Chan help them prepare for prom, to get her advice, or to work as interns in the Center as teens; their parents would call for advice as well. With her husband she also volunteers at every election, registering, translating and assisting in the voting process. Chan’s long commitment to her community is reflected back in every smiling face she greets in her daily walks throughout Chinatown.

Brooklyn born **Etta Dixon** began dancing in her mother’s womb and never



Bea Klier.

stopped. In an age before television, she and her friends entertained themselves devising swing dance moves. As a young woman she started going to Harlem’s Savoy Ballroom (the only integrated ballroom in New York) eventually becoming a competitive dancer—a passion revived when Lincoln Center’s Midsummer Night Swing program began in 1988. Dixon’s quiet first career with DC 37 helped launch her in retirement to a second career in dancing and in health and wellness outreach. She inspires and advises neighbors and clients of all ages about diet, exercise, relationships, and dealing with stress, and offers outreach programs through Brookdale Hospital and the Mount Ararat Center in Brooklyn. Earning a brown belt in Karate and a Bachelor of Arts both at the age of 75, and becoming the first in her neighborhood to install solar panels, Etta hasn’t slowed down. Now 82, she performed a very graceful and astonishingly athletic dance at the Lemlich Awards with her dance partner, Bernard Dove.

Born in 1916 (!), **Bea Klier’s** fascination with the Earth and the cosmos led her to earn a degree in geology from Hunter College in 1937. She worked as civilian meteorologist for the US Air Force during World War II, high school earth science teacher, researcher of climatology with NASA, and director of education at the Academy of Sciences. With her husband, her activism started with helping neighbors in the 1930s who had been evicted, and continued to agitate for the unemployment insurance and social security programs that became the New Deal. At the Academy of Sciences she devised innovative programs

*Continued on page 9*



# A miner's life – the children's story

Susan Campbell Bartoletti, *Growing Up in Coal Country*, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1996.

Reviewed by Alexander Bernhardt Bloom

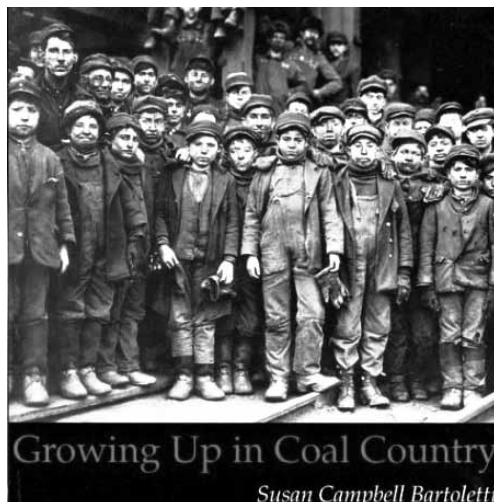
Rarely have school children been moved by admonishments as such: “In the olden days, kids your age didn’t get to learn and play. They had to work! Be grateful!”

Better then to deliver this message, and a good deal of historical knowledge to boot, by presenting these same youngsters the stories told in *Growing Up in Coal Country*, Susan Campbell Bartoletti’s engaging, informative, and often touching study of the life of children in 19th century American mining towns.

The book is based on oral histories collected by the author, many from members of her family, and extensive archival research. Bartoletti’s book seeks to tell the story from the ground level. It reads more like the explanations a family member might give leafing through an old photo album, though one very well organized and curated, than it does an academic study.

## Annotated photo album

The idea for the book was conceived, Bartoletti explains in the introduction, in response to stories recounted around the dining room table in her family home, told in passing at first, they became a deliberate pursuit. She was fascinated and wanted to hear more. The result certainly does that, and aimed at middle-grade readers, the depictions and discussion of this important chapter of American social and labor history are delivered as something of an



inheritance, with a human touch and intimate feel.

Arranged in short, readable chapters each dedicated to a different section of the mine’s operation, the early chapters explain the division of work in the mines with a close eye to the child’s place in it. Successive chapters explain the progression of workers’ duties in the mine which aging children might follow, and finally brings the focus outside of the mineshaft for some description of life and recreation in the American mining town.

With powerful and well situated photographs, which serve effectively as visual aides of the daily work and lives of the children who worked in the mines they are described, and wonderfully animated with slang and expressions of the era past. The early chapters make a quick expert of the reader in the industry shop-talk and the particulars of the backstage. They invite the reader to imagine his or herself placed in the shoes of the characters described in the stories. Original quotes gathered from extensive interviews and oral history give

the descriptions of miners’ lives an intimate quality, a recollection from those who lived it.

Bartoletti for the most part remains apolitical in these early chapters, and uncritical in the descriptions she gives of harsh conditions, the brutality of the

work, and bleak realities of life in the “patch towns.” She leaves it to the voices of the miners and members of this community who lived it. But on the whole these are more resolute and declarative than opinionated. “It’s the only work I ever did,” Bartoletti quotes former mineworker William Jones matter-of-factly, “I was born with a shovel in my hand, and I will die, I guess, with one in my hand.” (p.55)

## Struggle for survival

The author’s tone in the later chapters does shift however, from this arms length telling to one of greater resolve. Bartoletti’s indignance emerges in the grander consideration of significant happenings accidents, strikes, harsh company reprisals and the ongoing degradation of working and living conditions that colored the lives of miners. Her descriptions become far more editorialized with a bent toward the angry critiques of mine owners she makes reference to, and the injustice of the tragedies and tragic realities these owners precipitated and were frequently responsible for. What was, in

the book’s opening chapters, a rough and tough life, dirty but dignified, in its later pages becomes a portrait of injustice and the struggle for survival in spite of the devastation it doled out. Arriving at the book’s final chapter, “Strike!,” this response, on the part of the miners to the conditions of life described, seems prudent.

Missing is a historical introduction, to the basics of coal as a product and the place of this industry in America during this era. *What is coal? How’d it get buried? What was it used for once it was pulled from the mines? Why all the fuss, it’s just black rock!? When and where was all of this happening? Why? What was happening elsewhere in the US at this time? Why are these stories important to me, now?* Reference is made to many of the particulars in the answers to these questions but never is a clear foundation set (leaving the reader incompletely equipped) before the book drops you into the mines. Bartoletti takes a determinedly close view of the world of coal mining, a good choice for a historical volume extended to the young reader. The ground level explanation of the day to day work delivers a sense of intimacy and immediacy the reader—you’re right there! But also is left quite a bit of room for confusion.

Context is important for the middle grade reader, whose world-view is rapidly expanding. The personal stories would be only more accessible for the 11-13 year old student of history given some introduction and a bit of guidance on the way into them.

*Continued on page 14*

# Gender, identity and solidarity

Multiple authors, *You Better Work: Queer/Trans\*/Feminist Workers’ Stories*, Twin Cities IWW, Issue 1: August 2014.

Bernadette Hyland, *Northern ReSisters: Conversations with Radical Women*, Mary Quaile Club, 2015.

Reviewed by Molly Charboneau

In the age of social media and online campaigns, these two brief but powerful publications—addressing gender, identity and creativity in the building of workplace and community solidarity—remind us that printed pieces are still valuable organizing tools.

*You Better Work: Queer/Trans\*/Feminist Workers’ Stories* is a zine written by U.S.-based Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) organizers. This short work was inspired by *Lines of Work* (Black Cat Press 2014), a larger collection of stories about workplace resistance, some of them reprinted in the zine.

The zine’s focus is the writers’ lived experiences with gender and sexualized oppression at work and how they “found ways to fight back against patriarchy, homo/trans\* phobia, and many other forms of oppression in their organizing,” says editor FW Colt Thundercat—vital information for today’s organizers.

In “Bathrooms,” Gayge Operaista describes not being allowed, while a university employee, to use the bathroom at work and having to walk up the road to use a library’s facilities because “when you’re genderqueer (or any sort of trans\*, or visibly gender non-conforming in any way) random



people’s comfort matters a hell of a lot more than your ability to carry out the basic functions of life.” This timely essay gives a human dimension to New York City’s recent order guaranteeing people access to facilities consistent with their gender identity at city-operated buildings.

Other essays are by authors who creatively fought sexual harassment and oppressive and hateful language and behavior at work; overcame the effects of domestic violence through the power of solidarity; and transitioned from intersex male to intersex female while active in community and workplace organizing.

In *Northern ReSisters: Conversations with Radical Women*, author Bernadette Hyland combines new interviews and past articles about “women who have taken part in some of the most important campaigns, including the women’s movement, trade unionism, the peace movement, Ireland, Palestine, and campaigns against racism and fascism.”

Hyland’s focus is Northern England and its women organizers, but her message is universal: “to remind people that the working class has an honourable history of political activism.”



Mixed in with articles on well known women, such as Irish activist and former MP Bernadette Devlin McAliskey, are compelling portraits

of lesser-known feminists, unionists, socialists and peace and social justice activists of all ages. Here we meet Betty Tebbs, still in the struggle at age 96; Pia Feig, a Jewish activist involved in the Palestine Solidarity Committee; Claire Mooney, a feminist and musician; Mandy Vere, a radical bookseller, and so many more.

Color photographs of these Northern women and their campaigns enliven each biographical sketch, and many of the articles include contact information so readers can join their struggles.

Though both works offer valuable lessons, they would have benefited from including the voices of people of color. “Without these voices, this project is far, far weaker,” writes editor Thundercat of the zine’s unintended omission. Hopefully this shortcoming will be remedied in future editions to strengthen these illuminating publications.

From the Editor:

This issue of the *Work History News* will be my last as editor. For the past four years, it has been my great pleasure to put this newsletter together. Now I am leaving this behind in order to work full time on the books I hope to write.

The good news is that we have a very talented person taking over, NYLHA board member and oral historian Leyla Vural. Thank you to all of the correspondents who contributed to the newsletter, to the New York Labor History Association for all of its support, and to Leyla, for taking on this mission, which is close to my heart.

—Jane LaTour

# Crossword puzzle clues

## ACROSS

- In 1964 President Lyndon Johnson promised a “Great \_\_\_\_\_.”
- Paul \_\_\_\_\_ founded “The Realist” and the Yippies.
- Pete \_\_\_\_\_ was a founding member of The Who.
- Stokely \_\_\_\_\_ was a leader of the Black Power Movement who married musician Miriam Makeba.
- Timothy \_\_\_\_\_, the LSD advocate.
- Neil \_\_\_\_\_ was the first man to walk on the moon in 1969.
- Betty \_\_\_\_\_ was one of the founders of the National Organization for Women in 1966.
- The \_\_\_\_\_ were San Francisco’s most famous group of hippies, giving out free food in Golden Gate Park.
- The Black Panthers were founded in \_\_\_\_\_, California in 1966.
- The \_\_\_\_\_ Boys wished they all could be “California Girls.”
- \_\_\_\_\_ Checker danced “The Twist.”
- The Amazin’ \_\_\_\_\_ won the World Series in 1969.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Bruce, who died in 1966, was one of the most innovative comedians in American history.
- The Rolling \_\_\_\_\_ hits of the 1960’s included “Lady Jane,” “Paint it Black” and “(I Can’t Get No) Satisfaction.”
- Tom \_\_\_\_\_ wrote “The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test” in 1968.
- Bertrand \_\_\_\_\_ led the International War Crimes Tribunal on the Vietnam War.
- Robin \_\_\_\_\_ was a founding member of N.Y. Radical Women and author of the bestseller “Sisterhood is Powerful.”
- Barry \_\_\_\_\_ was the Republican Nominee for President in 1964.
- Many people couldn’t take a shower in 1960 without thinking of Movie Director Alfred \_\_\_\_\_.

- Women Strike for \_\_\_\_\_ organized against nuclear weapons and the Vietnam War.
- Haight-\_\_\_\_\_ was the place to be in San Francisco in the 1960’s.
- This slave revolt movie, written by Dalton Trumbo, broke the Hollywood Blacklist in 1960.
- Costa-\_\_\_\_\_ directed “Z”, “State of Siege” and “Missing.”
- “The Battle of \_\_\_\_\_” was a 1966 movie on the fight against French imperialism in North Africa.

## DOWN

- The failed \_\_\_\_\_ of Pigs invasion of Cuba.
- This double-named person assassinated Senator Robert Kennedy in 1968.
- The \_\_\_\_\_ of the 1960’s and 1970’s featured the poetry of Jim Morrison.
- Sam \_\_\_\_\_ took part in anti-Vietnam War bombings in N.Y.C. and was finally killed in the Attica Uprising.
- Diana Ross and the \_\_\_\_\_.
- Norman \_\_\_\_\_ wrote “The Armies of the Night” about the 1967 March on the Pentagon.
- \_\_\_\_\_ -In was one of the funniest and most popular T.V. shows of the 1960’s.
- Kathy \_\_\_\_\_ was a member of the Weather Underground.
- Ho Chi \_\_\_\_\_ led the defeat of the U.S. in Vietnam.
- “My \_\_\_\_\_” was one of The Who’s most famous songs and an anthem for the era.
- Movie stars Henry or Jane \_\_\_\_\_.
- James \_\_\_\_\_ wrote “Go Tell It On The Mountain” and “The Fire Next Time.”
- Jack \_\_\_\_\_ killed Kennedy assassin Lee Harvey Oswald.

- Eldridge \_\_\_\_\_ led the Black Panthers and later ran for the U.S. Senate as a Republican.
- The Gay \_\_\_\_\_ Front was formed in 1969 shortly after the Stonewall Rebellion.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Allen was a rising comedian in the 1960s.
- Jean-Luc \_\_\_\_\_ directed the movie “Breathless.”
- \_\_\_\_\_ Magazine was one of the leading left-wing magazines of the 1960s and 1970s.
- Francois \_\_\_\_\_ directed “Jules and Jim” in 1963.
- Coca \_\_\_\_\_ worked for the East Village Other and hosted an anarchist public television show for over 20 years.
- The \_\_\_\_\_ Zone was created by Rod Serling.

Answers on page 20

## A miner’s life

Continued from page 4

On the whole, Bartoletti’s historical volume paints a terrific human view of the lives of children and miners in America’s 19th century coal mining towns. It was a life of hardship, grittiness, and grind, but one too that inspired pride and professionalism and a rich sense of community among those who lived it.

“My daddy was a miner, and I’m a miner’s son,” reads the line from the classic song. It is a line mournful and tinged with sorrow, but also filled with pride, and ownership, and steadfastness. Such was the life of a miner as described in Bartoletti’s book, and from the angle of the child as chronicler, she paints a very tender and human depiction.

## ‘Nearly separate universes’

Doug McAdam and Karina Kloss, *Deeply Divided: Racial Politics and Social Movements in Postwar America*. NY: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Reviewed by Mel Dubofsky, Distinguished Professor Emeritus Binghamton University, SUNY

This book represents one of many recent attempts to explain the rise of extreme economic inequality and fractured politics in the contemporary United States. McAdam and Kloss, both sociologists at Stanford University, focus on how and why political compromise and bipartisanship collapsed. They stress the relationship between social movements and political action, hypothesizing that mass social movements precipitate political change. Hence the movements propelled by dispossessed workers and agrarians during the Great Depression produced the New Deal “revolution” and a revitalized Democratic party. The civil rights movement of the 1960s created the “Great Society” that transformed the composition and character of the Democratic party. And that movement in turn led to a more Southern-based Republican party and exacerbated political conflict (p. 68).

### Days of compromise

Their hypotheses draw on the published studies of sociologists, political scientists, journalists, and a random selection of historians. Little in the book will strike those knowledgeable about recent US political history as revelatory. They use electoral



maps of critical elections plus graphs and tables of income and wealth variation to draw simple correlations. (Oxford University Press did the authors a disservice in making the graphic materials opaque.) Still the story told in the graphics appears comprehensible. The 1950s represented a moment of relative economic equality and political moderation exemplified by Dwight Eisenhower’s version of modern Republicanism that incorporated the major reforms of the New Deal but promised to administer them with greater fiscal responsibility. Although Democrats controlled the House during Eisenhower’s eight years in office and the Senate after 1954, Republicans collaborated with Democrats to enact legislation. Republicans and northern Democrats united to pass civil rights reforms despite resistance from Southern Democrats. Some Southern Democrats, nearly all northern Democrats, and a bloc of moderate Republicans coalesced to enhance social security, raise the minimum wage, and enact other modest reforms. A coalition of Southern Democrats and more conservative Republicans resisted major changes in social and economic policy. Absent social movements,

political moderation and compromise ruled the day.

For McAdam and Kloos political moderation ended in the 1960s. The Dixiecrat rebellion in 1948 and the inroads made by the Republican party in the south during the 1952 and 1956 presidential elections foreshadowed the future. As the civil rights movement intensified in the early 1960s, white resistance peaked in the south and spread north. Social movements refashioned political parties and political dynamics. The Democrats with support from a number of Republican colleagues enacted advanced civil rights legislation. Southern ties to the Democratic party frayed while conservative Republicans rejected moderation. The 1964 election revealed the future. Movement conservatives seized control of the Republican convention and nominated Barry Goldwater conservatism. Goldwater lost in a landslide but carried the states of the deep South. Four years later Richard Nixon proved masterful at playing to Southern white resentment while wooing more moderate Republicans to win a narrow victory. If the electoral and popular votes garnered by

George Wallace were added to those amassed by Nixon, white resentment triumphed totally. In the 1972 presidential election Nixon Republicans played the politics of white resentment like virtuosos sweeping the South, the north, and the west in a landslide that left the Democratic candidate, George McGovern, with the electoral votes of only Massachusetts and the District of Columbia.

Between 1968 and 1972 social movements reconstructed the Democratic party. The Democrats reformed their process for selecting convention delegates and strengthened the influence of primary elections. The party required that delegates reflect the organization’s demographic constituencies, opening its convention to nonwhites, women, and youths; it ruled that primaries bind delegates to the candidates preferred by voters. Had Watergate not intervened the Republicans might have established durable political dominance by appealing to white identity while practicing “modern Republicanism”. Instead the Democratic candidate in 1976, James Earl Carter, a native Georgian and a born-again Baptist, attracted Southern white voters, yet maintained the support of African Americans, organized labor, women, and youths. Carter proved a more virtuous and humble president than Nixon but a far less adept politician. His administration implemented policies that frayed the Democratic coalition and foreshadowed those instituted by Reagan.

Continued on page 19

# Disintegration of 'tradition's chains'

Eric Chester, *The Wobblies in their Heyday: The Rise and Destruction of the Industrial Workers of the World during the World War I Era*, Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2014.

Reviewed by Staughton Lynd

The Wobblies are back. Many young radicals find the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) the most congenial available platform on which to stand in trying to change the world. This effort has been handicapped by the lack of a hard-headed history of the IWW in its initial incarnation, from 1905 to just after World War I. The existing literature, for example Franklin Rosemont's splendid book on Joe Hill, is strong on movement culture and atmosphere. It is weak on why the organization went to pieces in the early 1920s.

Eric Chester's new book fills this gap. It is indispensable reading for Wobblies and labor historians. One way to summarize what is between these covers is to say that Chester spells out three tragic mistakes made by the old IWW that the reinvented organization must do its best to avoid.

## Macho posturing

Labor organizing flourished during World War I because of the government's need for a variety of raw materials. Among these were food, timber, and copper. Wobbly organizers made dramatic headway in all three industries. At its peak in August 1917 the IWW had a membership of more than 150,000. Nine months later, Chester writes, "the union was in total disarray, forced to devote most of its time and resources to raising funds for attorneys and bail bonds." This sad state of affairs was, of course, partly the result of a calculated decision by the federal government to destroy the IWW. But only partly.

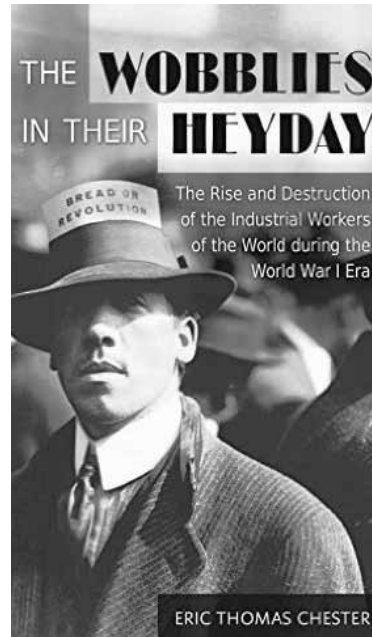
According to Chester another cause of the government's successful suppression of the Wobblies was that during and after the Wheatlands strike in California hop fields in 1913 some Wobblies threatened to "burn California's agricultural fields if two leaders of the strike were not released from jail."

For years, Wobbly leaders had insisted that sabotage could force employers to make concessions, Chester writes. But what Chester terms "nebulous calls for arson" and "macho bravado" only stiffened the determination of California authorities not to modify jail sentences for Wobbly leaders Ford and Suhr. Chester finds that there is no credible evidence that any

fields were, in fact, burned. But after the United States entered World War I in April 1917, this extravagant rhetoric calling for the destruction of crops apparently helped to convince President Wilson to initiate a systematic and coordinated campaign to suppress the Wobblies.

## Efforts to avoid repression by discontinuing discussion of the war and the draft

International solidarity and militant opposition to war and the draft were central tenets of the IWW. Wobblies who had enrolled in the British Army were expelled from the union. At the union's tenth general convention in November 1915, the delegates adopted a resolution calling for a "General Strike in all industries" should the United States enter the war. What actually happened was that General Secretary-Treasurer Bill Haywood and a majority of IWW leaders agreed that the union should desist from any discussion of the war or the draft, in the vain hope that this policy would persuade the federal government to refrain from targeting the union for repression. At the same time, the great majority of rank-and-file members, with support of a few leaders such as Frank Little, insisted that the IWW should be at the forefront of the opposition to the war.



Self-evidently, what Chester terms the IWW's "diffidence" was the very opposite of Eugene Debs' defiant opposition to the war. When Wobbly activists "flooded IWW offices with requests for help and pleas for a collective response to the draft," the usual response was that what to do was up to each individual member. Haywood, Chester writes, "consistently sought to steer the union away from any involvement in the draft resistance movement." Debs notwithstanding, however, the national leadership of the Socialist Party like the

national leadership of the IWW "scrambled to avoid any confrontation with federal authorities." Radical activists from both organizations formed ad hoc alliances cutting across organizational boundaries.

The IWW General Executive Board, meeting from June 29 to July 6, 1917, was unable to arrive at a decision about the war and conscription, and a committee including both Haywood and Little, tasked to draft a statement, likewise failed to do so. In the end, Chester says, "the IWW sought to position itself as a purely economic organization concerned solely with short-run gains in wages and working conditions."

## Disunity among IWW prisoners fostered by the Government

The reluctance of the Wobbly leadership to advocate resistance to the war and conscription carried over to a legalistic response when the government indicted IWW leaders. Haywood urged all those named in the indictment to surrender voluntarily and to waive any objection to being extradited to Chicago. In the mass trial that followed, the defendants were represented by a very good trial lawyer who was also an enthusiastic supporter of the war and passed up the opportunity to make a closing statement to the jury. Judge Landis'

*Continued on page 18*

# Extraordinary lives



Naomi Replansky and Eva Kollisch.

*Continued from page 3*

to engage students of all backgrounds in science research; she even initiated a contest (still in place) for art works that explicate complicated scientific concepts. Klier has traveled broadly: "I want to see things with my own eyes. I have that problem. I don't accept what is written. Cause I know it is easy to lie or mask the truth with fancy words." She has traveled to Costa Rica and Guatemala to do research and see sweatshops for herself. After returning she led an effort to force all businesses in the city to discontinue using those places to manufacture their goods.

## Naomi Replansky and Eva Kollisch

both began their literary activism in a factory. Born in the Bronx in 1918, Replansky toiled in factories, starting on an assembly line during World War II in the heyday of Rosie the Riveter, and eventually graduated to operating a lathe. Years later, she trained herself to become a pioneering computer programmer for not-for-profit organizations, starting with the earliest punch cards used by the first giant computers. This variegated background helped Replansky develop into an eloquent poet of the working class. She published her first poems in 1936. For some decades,

Replansky and Kollisch have shared their lives on the Upper West Side. Eva Kollisch, an American Jewish author and a professor emerita at Sarah Lawrence College, was born in Vienna in 1925. She was rescued from the Nazis on a 1939 Kindertransport to the United Kingdom, eventually arriving in America in 1940. Like Replansky, Kollisch started out working in factories during World War II, though she eventually became a specialist in German and comparative literature. An activist for over six decades, in anti-war, feminist and human rights causes, most recently Kollisch is a member of One by One, a small intergenerational group that practices dialogue with the enemy.

The Lemlich Awards were organized by Rachel Bernstein, Esther Cohen, Evelyn Jones Rich, May Chen, Sherry Kane and Rose Imperato; co-sponsored by the New York Labor History Association and Jewish Currents; and generously funded by the Puffin Foundation and the Shelley and Donald Rubin Foundation.

Video interviews and longer bios of these remarkable women (and the complete Piercy poem) are available on LaborArts.org; video and photographs from the May 9 ceremony can be found there and also on the LaborArts Facebook page.

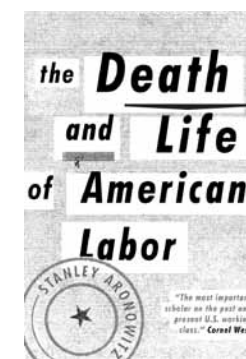
# A manifesto to revive the labor movement

Stanley Aronowitz, *Death and Life of American Labor: Toward a New Workers' Movement*, Verso, 2015.

Reviewed by Ken Nash

With U.S. union membership at its lowest level since the 1920s, scholar and labor activist Stanley Aronowitz has issued a manifesto for reawakening the sleeping giant as a broader, more radical movement.

His new book analyzes the decline of much of the labor movement in recent



decades and says the current discontent over chronic underemployment, poverty and stagnant wages can be the source of new vitality. Labor's last big gains, he argues, were in the heyday of public sector organizing in the 1960s, with considerable inspiration from the Civil Rights Movement. He highlights the strategies that built the movements of the 1930s and 1960s but were abandoned in later years.

Aronowitz is adamant that only continual militant protests can produce

a movement capable of social change. Workers in the 1930s did not just organize but conducted civil disobedience in the form of waves of workplace sit-downs and even general strikes. He cites two recent militant upsurges that challenged the decline of workers' conditions—the Occupy Movement and the protests in Madison, Wisconsin, against right-wing Republican moves to wipe out public sector collective bargaining. In his analysis, the Madison Central Labor Council erred by focusing on electoral politics in the unsuccessful effort to oust Governor Scott Walker and defusing the on-the-ground protests.

*Continued on page 18*



# Union democracy from the shop floor up

Sheila Cohen, *Notoriously Militant The Story of a Union Branch*, Merlin Press, 2014.

Reviewed by Bernadette Hyland

Why would anyone join a trade union? Why would anyone want to be a trade union activist? It seems that every day we hear of trade union representatives being sacked for nothing more than representing their members.

In this very important book Sheila Cohen answers these questions. It is a history of one of the most anti-trade union companies, Ford and the way in which trade unions, with all their imperfections, made a real difference to working class people's lives, not just at work but also in giving them hope for a better future.

Central to the book is the David and Goliath struggle between the global empire of Ford's and ordinary working class people: it reads like a modern day story about slavery and the attempts by people to escape the misery and servitude, not on a plantation but in a car plant.

## Historic struggles

Ford has a long history, founded by Henry Ford in 1903 in the USA, and was the pioneer of the modern motor car industry. The term "Fordism" summed up the nature of its method of production and "Taylorism" which as Cohen says; "was as dedicated as Ford to squeezing maximum labour out of the industrial workforce." Fordism meant huge factories and a conveyor belt system which suited the design and production of cars and led to massive profits for the company.

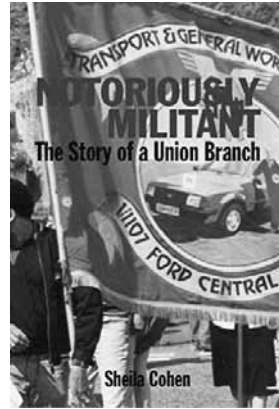
Assembly line work was monotonous and, although

workers were paid well, they were subject to a selective process based on Ford's own bizarre views of morality whilst Ford employed spies within the workplace to ensure that workers did not talk about union organization.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s it was the Communist Party and dedicated groups of activists who organized the workers at Ford. Faced with the depression, workers became more militant and in 1932 took part in a "March on Hunger" mobilizing thousands of workers who faced the full force of the state; "The police used tear gas and water cannons to disperse the demonstrators, who nevertheless broke through and began to throw bricks at the plant."

Ford came to Britain in 1911 to a plant at Trafford Park in Manchester... but faced serious unrest from the workers and several strikes. Their local manager Baron Perry commented; "Manchester.. the hot bed of trade unionism." Eventually in 1931 the Manchester plant closed and the workers were transferred to Dagenham. The Ford Dagenham plant became a key part of the global empire where new methods of production and work organization were tried out.

Central to this book is the story of ordinary people who organized themselves in the workplace and did not wait for the trade unions officials to do it for them. A crucial



role was played by branch TGWU 1/1107 which was the largest union branch in one of the key industries in Britain. As Cohen comments; "This place is all the more deserved given the historic struggles carried out by 1107 against the anti-union and anti-

worker culture of the company which gave its name to a whole industrial system-Fordism." What is fascinating in this book is the militancy of the workers in resisting Ford's attempts to undermine them—for example—in 1944 when stewards from the TGWU and AEU occupied the manager's office and forced the TUC and Ford to reopen their talks on organizing. As Cohen shows the grassroots shop stewards were not just fighting Ford but the reactionary forces within their own trade unions. And as a former shop steward I can testify that very often activists spend as much time fighting their full-time trade union officers as the management.

The Irish in this country have played a major role in trade unions and the labour movement and Ford was not an exception. Cohen shows this Irish militancy in 1944 when two shop stewards, Sweetman and Lynch, are sacked. "They received great support not only from Sweetman's fellow-Irishmen in the foundry, who had become 'pillars of the union at Ford's.'"

Cohen also shows how the increasing numbers of women being recruited at Ford during the Second World War to do

men's jobs refused to accept the poor working conditions: as one of the convenors commented; "During the war it was through the women, quite honestly, that we gained a lot of the advances-rest periods, washing facilities, all that sort of thing-because they wouldn't put up with what the men used to put up with."

But it was in the early 1980s that new activists in 1107 reformed the branch "based on principles of workplace union democracy" and determined opposition to Ford's collaborationist "Employee involvement policies."

The new leadership of 1107 came in as Thatcher came to power. Over the last year there have been many commemorations of the Miners Strike 84-65 but there has been a lack of a wider analysis of the real reasons why the miners and other trade unionists were defeated. As Cohen shows it was the anti-trade union laws that really kicked the stuffing out of shopfloor militancy plus the lack of leadership from the trade unions.

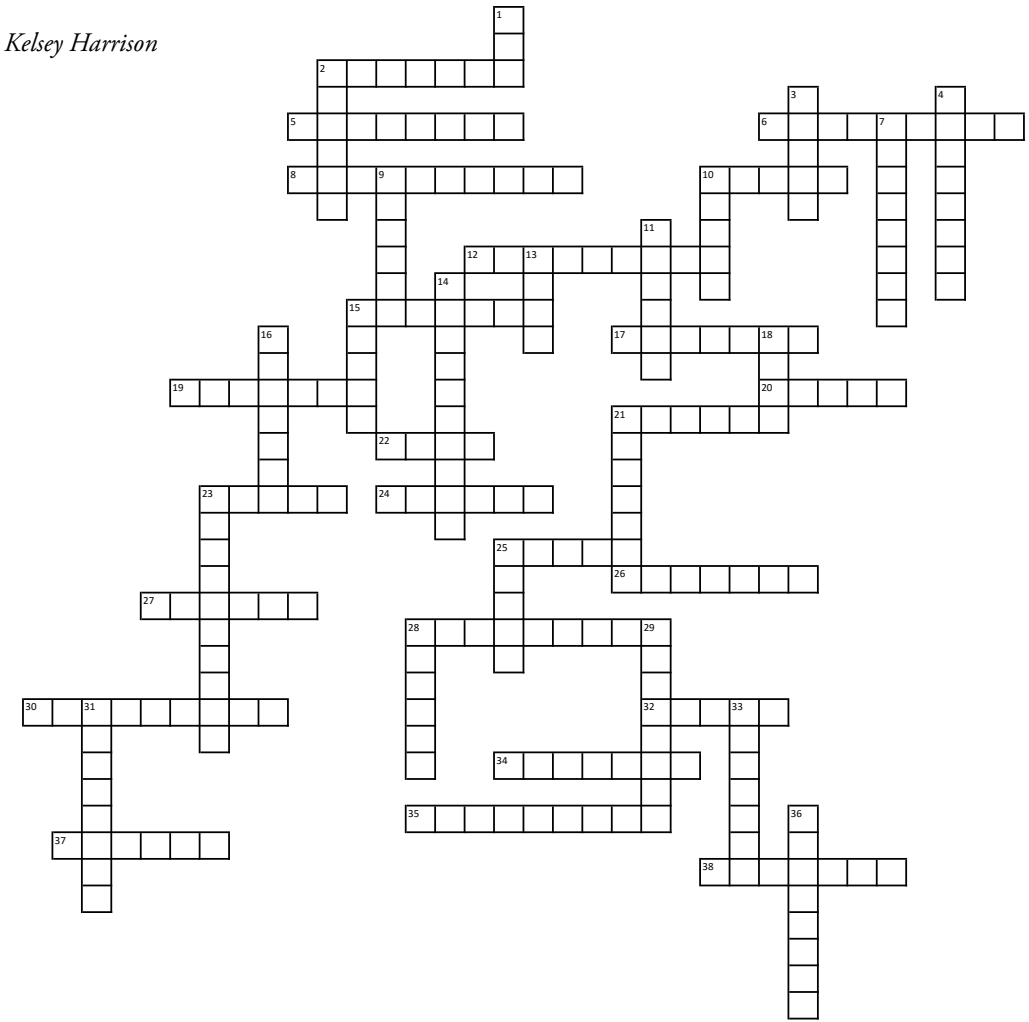
She says; "Thatcherite anti-union laws limiting solidarity and undermining workplace trade union democracy were to have a devastating impact on even strongly-organised workplaces like Ford's Dagenham plant."

The new leadership of 1107 were not just fighting Thatcher but major changes taking place in the car industry including getting the workers to take on more tasks as well as contracting out jobs and imposing more flexible work practices. TGWU official Steve Turner summed it up; "Ford was at the forefront

*Continued on page 19*

# The 1960's Crossword Puzzle

By Kelsey Harrison



# A Depression Era story told by those who lived it

Harvey Schwartz *Building The Golden Gate Bridge – A Workers' Oral History*, University of Washington Press, 2015.

Reviewed by Bill Hohlfeld

"An Army cannot exist of officers alone, however talented; and a great bridge – while it owes so much to its designers and construction supervisors – owes an equal, if not superior, debt of gratitude to the workers who built it." – Kevin Starr.

THUS READS the epilogue to Mr. Schwartz's fascinating story of the building of the Golden Gate Bridge as recounted by those



who climbed the towers, spun the cables and riveted the steel.

Throughout its pages, this oral history tells two discrete tales. It tells the story of the erection of an iconic American

bridge, but it also pays tribute to an American generation that was capable of dreaming big, working hard, and seeing things through to the finish. It is often this second story that is the more compelling of the two. For while technical journals and as building drawings can be found on file and can easily enough explain the bridge's design and its subsequent implementation, the recorded interviews in *Building The Golden Gate Bridge* preserves for posterity the ethos of a working class America, that subscribed to the belief that all things were possible in the country they called home.

Their willingness to do whatever it takes to succeed is found not just in the actual erection of the bridge, but in their attitude toward any obstacle they may encounter. Whether it is the willingness of engineer, Fred Divita, (who put himself through night school to get a degree) to work scraping paint, or the self determination of cable spinner, John Urban, to conquer his own fear of heights and complete his ironworker apprenticeship, this book paints a vivid portrait of those who

*Continued on page 16*

# Class warfare in Appalachia

James Green, *The Devil Is Here in These Hills: West Virginia's Coal Miners and Their Battle for Freedom*, New York: Grove Press, 2015.

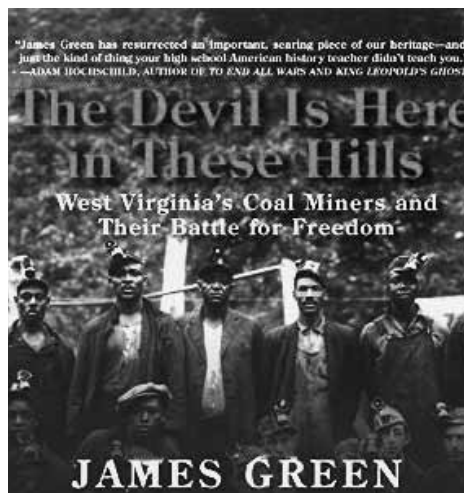
Reviewed by Robert D. Parmet,  
York College, CUNY

The sound often heard in the hills of West Virginia in the early twentieth century was that of gunshots. Armed coal miners, most of whom resided in company towns, and whose freedoms were few, were in revolt. They opposed mine operators who were protected by private detectives, law enforcement officers, local officials, and even Federal troops. Mine labor violence was not unique to this state. For example, witness Colorado, the site of the Ludlow Massacre of 1914. In West Virginia two wars occurred between 1912 and 1922, leaving mine workers without rights until an agreement between the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) and the operators' association in 1934 that included the eight-hour day and forty-hour week.

James Green describes this ordeal amazingly well. His writing is solid, with information that fascinates and sometimes shocks. The book's opening pages brilliantly set the stage for the industrial conflict it would later describe. Dating back to the eighteenth century, Americans, including Thomas Jefferson, had a love affair with coal that in the next century resulted in "battalions" of men, constituting a "demographic explosion," eager to mine it. Coming mainly from the North, they rushed into Appalachia and created a world of frontier towns populated primarily by coal miners and their families residing in company-owned houses amidst foul air and polluted streams.

## Violent suppression

Their life was hard and often filled with conflict. In 1920, the town of Matewan, in what would be known as "Bloody" Mingo County, police chief Sid Hatfield and his deputies shot seven agents of the Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency who had evicted



striking workers from houses owned by the Stone Mountain Coal Company. The next year, Hatfield himself was murdered. Among the violent personalities, Sheriff Don Chafin of Logan County also deserves mention. Following his orders, biplane pilots dropped gas and pipe bombs on marching miners near Cripple Creek.

Perhaps the most memorable person in this book is Mary Harris Jones, "the notorious Mother Jones." Born in Ireland, she fled the "Great Hunger" for Canada, but she then moved to Tennessee where she lost her husband and four children to disease before beginning a career as a labor agitator. She honed union organizing skills in Illinois and Pennsylvania before UMWA President John Mitchell dispatched her to West Virginia, where, as Green writes, "she looked like a grandmother," and addressed miners "like a drill sergeant."

Frank Keeney was ultimately less appreciated than Mother Jones, but he had a long career in the forefront of the West Virginia miners' struggle for rights. Militant and often immersed in violence, he led the state's miners until, among other things, he crossed an emerging leader named John L. Lewis, whose leadership involved accommodation with management. Though Keeney eventually died in obscurity, his union activities are recognized.

In addition, there were the African Americans and other ethnic minorities. Green notes that "during the early 1900s, employers hired far more African Americans

and European immigrants than white Americans, hoping these new laborers would be more compliant and productive than the gnarly mountaineers." However, as these groups had work habits that did not conform to management's expectations, they often disappointed their employers. Most troublesome, though, were the workers who dared say, "Boys, we ought to get together and have a union down here." Immigrant women made war on scabs by insulting and assaulting them "with mops, brooms, and iron skillet." To prevent the importation of scabs by rail, women tore up tracks.

As Green also points out, residential, educational and social segregation prevailed in the coal industry, but within the UMWA, which was "highly varied in racial and ethnic composition," "union affairs were integrated." "Probably," he contends, within the UMWA of West Virginia there was a significant black presence and contribution to the "cause of black-white unionism." However, "when strikebreakers were black men or immigrants, strikers weighted their epithets with racial and ethnic slurs."

## Long struggle for safety

Like the miners, this book is gritty and unadorned. Green introduces organized labor's traditional heroes, but other than Mother Jones, and possibly Eugene V. Debs, none occupies center stage, not even UMWA presidents John Mitchell ("Johnny d'Mitch") and John L. Lewis. Green does not glamorize either leader, and in his epilogue notes Lewis's eventual concession to coal industry mechanization, which displaced miners and left them with inadequate health and welfare benefits.

James Green's account reaches into the 1970s, but in the four decades since then West Virginia's coal mining country has not yet become a safe workplace. Two mine explosions, in 2006 and 2010, took the lives of twenty-five miners. Nevertheless, *The Devil Is Here In These Hills* is a valuable reminder that the battle to prevent such tragedies and improve working conditions in Appalachia began a long time ago.

# American radical

*Continued from page 5*  
complained to city authorities as did local shopkeepers, who feared the Wobblies were driving away business. The city invoked an ordinance preventing the disturbance of the peace and quiet of any street.

The Wobblies went to jail in large numbers; when one person was arrested, another took his place. Soon the jails were full and getting fuller. Flynn spent one night in jail with prostitutes and wrote about it. This caused a great commotion. She went on trial for inciting to riot but was acquitted. Where is Hollywood? This is such a fabulous story!

## Challenges and triumphs

Flynn returned to New York to have her baby, then went off to recuperate at Caritas Island as the guest of Rose Pastor Stokes. Once she had recovered, her mother and sister took charge of the baby and she was on the road again. She would not have been able to resume her career without the help of her mother and sister at home bringing up Buster and making Flynn's distinctive and beautiful clothes.

The next five years were full of challenges and triumphs as the IWW lead striking Lawrence Massachusetts textile workers to victory. There she became acquainted with a number of Italian Activists, among them Ettore and Giovanetti, and the infamous Carlo Tresca.

After the Feds charged the IWW strike leaders with sedition, it was only Flynn's

adroit maneuvering that kept her out of jail and working for the defense of her colleagues. Through Carlo Tresca she came in contact with the Sacco-Vanzetti Defense Committee. "They were suspicious of outsiders, but they accepted Flynn because of her work as a strike leader in Lawrence and her connections to Italian radicals." Based on her experience with the Workers Defense Union (WDU) she was able to get international support for Sacco and Vanzetti. But all the support in the world did not help them. Flynn became a founder of the ACLU, which was an outgrowth of her work with the Workers Defense Union. She was heartbroken after the executions of Sacco and Vanzetti.

Vapnek doesn't mince words over the ending of what Flynn called her First Life and the beginning of her Second Life ten years later. A series of personal and professional disappointments caused the worn out Flynn to collapse on the West Coast and spend the next 10 years there convalescing. Finally, her family had enough and convinced her to come back to New York.

Back on the East Coast, she soon had a regular column in the *Daily Worker* and became a high ranking Party member. Her battles for civil rights got lost in the government's efforts to persecute her and members of the Party. Reading about Flynn's expulsion from the ACLU by Walter Baldwin on the eve of her son's death from lung cancer is high drama indeed. Where is

the opera score? It is waiting to be written!

But it is only one more episode in this dramatic life that has more cliffhangers than a Yankees vs Red Sox game. Flynn had a triumphant trip to Europe for a women's conference only to have her passport confiscated upon her return. This is but a prelude to several legal battles and a prison sentence served at Alderson Prison, now famous for another inmate, Martha Stewart. Flynn started writing her autobiography, but was not allowed to see the finished copy until her prison time was over. She got out of prison just in time for her sister to die, and to win her case to get her passport returned. While she was in prison she accumulated Social Security payments enough to finance a trip back to the Soviet Union, where she collapsed and died. Part of her ashes are in the Kremlin wall and the rest are in Waldheim Cemetery in Chicago. She was given a state funeral by the U.S.S.R. and had an obituary on the front page of *The New York Times*.

This is how Vapnek summarizes Flynn's life: Flynn believed in change, but she could not make it happen on her own. Thus, she spent most of her life working within organizations whose principles she shared, but whose direction she sometimes doubted.

Read this for yourself and see what you can make out of the life of one of the first home-grown American radicals.

# Tim Sheard's Lenny Moss Mystery...

Timothy Sheard, *Someone Has To Die*, Hard Ball Press 2015.

Reviewed by Kelsey Harrison

*Someone Has to Die* is the 7th in the Lenny Moss mystery series and it is a real page-turner. It's as good as any bestselling thriller but differs in that its plot takes place amid a union fighting for its healthcare workers pension and healthcare benefit funds after a large corporation has taken over the hospital the novel is set in.



And in the middle of this fight a nurse named Anna Louisa is fired for allegedly letting a patient die due to her negligence. Without a job, and unable to work in the nursing field again, Ms. Louisa is worried she will also lose custody of her daughter to her ex-husband.

It's up to Lenny Moss of the housekeeping unit (and the Union Steward) at the hospital to exonerate her. The story is told from the point of view

of the workers as union activists who are forever being harassed, monitored both on camera and in person by constantly snooping security guards and have to use every trick in the book to get the truth out and fight for their rights. The nurses wear GPS units that monitor their conversations and locations while the doctors are being ordered to follow a computer diagnosis protocol rather than to use their own common sense to diagnose patients. This is a very exciting story and anyone who has ever stayed in a hospital will immediately recognize all of the chaos and problems that occur there.



# NYLHA celebrates St. Patrick's Day with Bussel book party

By Jane LaTour

Bob Bussel began his talk at NYU's Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, on March 17, with a tip of the hat to the audience. A small but spirited group who came out to hear the historian, in town all the way from the University of Oregon, talk about his new book, *Fighting For Total Person Unionism: Harold Gibbons, Ernest Calloway, and Working-Class Citizenship*. "My book is dedicated to people who fight the good fight, and I include all of you in this, in solidarity with Saint Patrick's Day," he said.

In his talk, Professor Bussel concentrated on the alternative vision of trade unionism constructed by the two main characters in his book—their respective histories and influences that led them to providing the model, how they constructed it, some of its successes, roadblocks, its eventual demise, and some

lessons for the labor movement in our current fight for survival. He took up his story, of Teamsters Local 688, located in St. Louis, Missouri, in the early 1950s, shortly after the merger of the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations.

As Robert Parmet wrote in his review (*Work History News*, Vol. 33, No. 1, Winter/Spring 2016), *Fighting for Total Person Unionism*... brilliantly follows Calloway and Gibbons as they combined to transform workers into activists who would bring about political change that would benefit them as well as their city. The idea was to integrate the unionists' workplace and civic lives." These "fully functioning citizens," through their unions, acted as "community stewards," leading campaigns to fight for social justice through pragmatic, broadly popular measures.

Racism and poverty were endemic within these urban

neighborhoods. So, in addition to building "a wall of security" for members, with health care and other traditional trade union goals, the Local led drives for community empowerment, thus drawing them out of themselves and their island of security into broader fights. Gibbons and Calloway saw this as "the community bargaining table, and they treated St. Louis as an employer." Street lighting, paving, the sewer system and prevention of flooding, better public oversight of transportation, better bus service, an enforceable rat control ordinance—these were some of the issues on the table—and turned out, they were winnable.

Using a set of photos to illustrate his talk, Bussel placed Local 688 and its leadership within the context of the International Teamsters, from Dave Beck's term of office, through that of Jimmy (James R.)

Hoffa, and Frank Fitzsimmons. Even as corruption riddled the huge union, Harold Gibbons offered his services to the union in Washington, DC. Eventually, a rupture led to his being ejected. The complexities and power relations are explored in the book. Bussel's talk concluded with what trade unions might take away from the instructive example of a local that attacked race discrimination head-on, and used its members' connection to their communities to fight for change in power relations. The story of "total person unionism is very rich—potentially," Bussel said. A lively question and answer session took place at the conclusion of his talk. The Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives co-sponsored the event and Director Timothy V. Johnson recorded the program. The book is available in a paperback version, from the University of Illinois Press.

interdependence and self. There is the poignant recollection an anonymous man who while hospitalized, but still ambulatory, holds a basin beneath another bedridden worker's chin so he can preserve a bit of dignity while he retches. There is also the more tragic story of "Slim Lambert" who after falling 220 ft. from a scaffold and sustaining multiple injuries, including a broken neck, tried desperately, but unsuccessfully to save the life of fellow worker, Fred Dummatzen.

They came from the Bay Area and the Ozarks and Montana. Their parents were Italian or

Norwegian or Irish. They'd had previous jobs as fishermen or cooks or cowboys. Some had managed to get an education and others had not. Today, nearly eighty years later, those workers are gone, but the beautiful bridge that they built still stands tall—a monument to who they were. And thanks to the diligent and painstaking work of Harvey Schwartz, curator of the Oral History Collection of the ILWU Library, their personal stories remain with us, inspire us, and remind us that after all the rhetoric, grand visions become a reality when very ordinary people work hard to accomplish the extraordinary.

# Homegrown American radical

Lara Vapnek, *Elizabeth Gurley Flynn: Modern American Revolutionary*, Westview Press, 2015

Reviewed by Martha A. Foley

It was with great pleasure that I read Professor Lara Vapnek's biography, *Elizabeth Gurley Flynn: Modern American Revolutionary*. The work was commissioned as part of a series, "Lives of American Women," written specifically for undergraduates. These books do much to remind us of the lives of a number of very significant American women who might otherwise be forgotten. Biographies in the series include, among others, those of Dolly Madison, Dr. Lillian Gilbreth, Mary Pickford, Shirley Jackson and Angela Davis. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn belongs in this distinguished group.

While Flynn is all but forgotten now, it was not always so. From the time she began her professional life, in 1910, until her death in 1964, she was frequently in the newspapers here and abroad. Her success as a public speaker and organizer were legendary. She was constantly being written about and photographed.

Vapnek's account of Flynn's life is even handed and just. While several academic studies have been published in recent years, this one is the most successful at capturing Flynn's essence. Vapnek went back to Flynn's own papers deposited in the Tamiment Library at NYU. There she listened to oral histories, looked at scrapbooks, clippings and Flynn's own writings. I hear Flynn's voice



photo credit: NYU/Tamiment

Elizabeth Gurley Flynn

loud and clear in this biography. Her voice was similar to Ethel Merman's in old recordings. The footnotes, index, and annotated bibliography are accompanied by an excellent glossary and suggested study questions.

The life of Flynn is so remarkable that no fictionalization or theorizing is required. Flynn herself acknowledged that her immersion in radical politics began at home. Both her parents were outspoken Irish nationalists. Upon her arrival in this country at the age of sixteen, Annie Gurley supported her brothers and sister with her skills as a tailor in Manchester, New Hampshire. Tom Flynn, born in Maine of Irish descent, lost an eye working in the quarries, and had briefly attended Dartmouth College. These two articulate and activist individuals, and their participation in political events in New York City, fueled their eldest daughter's desires to

make a difference and help to make the world a better place for all. Flynn was a woman before her time. Her views, once thought to be extreme leftist, would seem liberal today, merely a century after her career began. She firmly believed that government had a vital role to play in providing for the welfare of the people, and that women should be free to control their own bodies.

Vapnek's account of Flynn's career trajectory does not focus on the fact that she was one of the very few female organizers in the IWW; instead, it focuses on Flynn's unique ability to reach her audience and gain their sympathy. Vapnek's account of the heady years leading up to WWI are very compelling reading. The names of Flynn's associates comprise a "Who's Who" of radical and labor history, from Emma Goldman to Joe Hill, Big Bill Haywood, Eugene Dennis, Carlo Tresca, Sacco and Vanzetti, among others.

As an IWW "jawsmith" (as

Wobblies called their speakers), Flynn charmed audiences with her wit and impressed them with her logic. She hammered away at the flaws of capitalism and she described the potential of socialism to transform American Society.

Flynn plunged into organizing striking workers in 1907 in Bridgeport, Connecticut, and continued nonstop through both the East and West coasts. She then went to represent her local of the IWW at a convention in Chicago. There she became acquainted with national leaders of the IWW, Vincent St. John and Big Bill Haywood. The radical direction of the organization did not deter the 17-year-old one bit. She visited factories and tried to learn all she could about the workers' lives. Soon she was on the Mesabi Range speaking to miners and their families. She met and married a miner almost twice her age. The marriage was not successful. Flynn had two pregnancies and produced one child, a son, Fred, who was called Buster. During her second pregnancy she was responsible for organizing protests for a Free Speech Fight.

*The Wobblies needed to be able to speak freely on the streets in order to pursue their goal of "direct action" an organizing technique built around public protest... In Missoula, Jones, Flynn and other agitators drew crowds of lumberjacks and minors by criticizing the practices of local labor contractors, who collected fees from transient workers without providing them with steady jobs. The contractors*

*Continued on page 13*



# NYLHA goes to the movies

By Alexander Bernhardt Bloom

In 1968, in the aftermath of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. and a great deal of social turmoil which rocked the United States, James Baldwin exiled himself to France, settling in France in St. Paul de Vence and adopting the life of an expatriate, one not unfamiliar. Baldwin had already spent many years of his life living, writing and travelling abroad. Twenty years later is where filmmakers Dick Fontaine and Pat Hartley pick up Baldwin's story, opening with the self-exiled writer's decision to return to the States to retrace his steps as an activist and agitator in the South during the most explosive and transformational years of the Civil Rights movement. The story they tell in this film is one of historical reckoning, of promises unfulfilled and struggles ongoing.

These themes connected the film directly to the others featured in the the Workers Unite Film Festival, a program among events in its annual festival this year, and in a broader way to the focus of the NYLHA conference, titled: *Can't Turn Back: Unfinished Tasks of the Civil Rights Movement*.

## Making sense of history

*Heard it Through the Grapevine* follows Baldwin as he embarks south, following him as he solemnly tours significant sites from his days as a civil rights activist, many immediately recognizable if not for the monuments erected in his absence. Spliced with powerful original footage, much of it familiar, from campaigns in Birmingham and Selma, marches, sit-ins, community meetings

and protests, the film draws stark contrast between the then and now. Panning shots of scenes past and present on the site of some of the great battlegrounds in the fight for social justice in America are accompanied by a dramatic and often resonant narration in the voice of Baldwin, whose musings recall and appraise. As important are the encounters between Baldwin and the people he meets during his travels.

In each of the cities he visits we see Baldwin in conversation with extraordinary individuals: artists, musicians, advocates, and educators. These friends and comrades are a pleasure to watch in verbal volley with their visitor, their musings poetic and profound, but with a purpose too as they help Baldwin to make sense of the history and the course it took.

Baldwin's travels and discussions are continually begging the questions: Did we win? Was justice achieved? Have we finished? The answer appears, at least at a surface level, a resounding no. Poverty, social division, bleak settings, and emptiness of opportunity present a choice between resignation and renewed activist engagement.

But comes a hopeful chapter as the film takes a late turn. We meet a series of young activists engaged in new and persistent struggles and it seems a passing of the torch. The spirit of young people appears to hold the answer for Baldwin and too the filmmakers. The film holds children in a tender light, depicted for the great hope and promise they represent. In one of the most touching and poignant scenes, an activist

and classroom educator shares stories of protest and the crimes of injustice with a group of small school children, and their faces show innocence but also a terrific resourcefulness, power, and potential.

*Heard it Through the Grapevine* is ultimately a discussion, on the shortcomings of the movements and activism of the 60's, of the heavy lifting to be done, the resiliency demanded, and the awesome spirit of those who stood and will stand to do the work that lies ahead. It offers an argument on the importance of recounting and reflecting upon the events of the past, using them to frame and inspire the work toward the future.

The selections following picked up this narrative neatly, beginning with a series of short films. These included a short set of news segments on the presidential campaigns and the candidates talking points on economic disparity and labor politics.

Next came *Scenario 6*, in which a dramatic sequence depicts a mundane and tenderly youthful episode: boys in a boutique designer clothing shop fitting themselves and fawning before a mirror but with nightmarish sound effects and daunting news clips in audio background, and flashing light visual filters which make it resemble the scene of a crime. A narrator reads a quietly penetrating poetic monologue in the background, recounting a cruel and frightful interaction with the police.

In *Freedom*, a music video for the song by Taina Asili, a group of young activists are depicted engaged in protest, and nods are offered to important current issues: police violence, prison and corrections reform, Occupy and economic policy, and Black Lives Matter activism. It is a forceful and spirited song, and one hungry and hopeful.

The short films selected for the middle section of the program provided a segue of sorts, each an iteration of the struggles ongoing for justice, equality, and freedom, and bringing the discussion to the here and now of America today.



The night's screenings ended with *Profiled*, a 2015 documentary film directed by Kathleen Foster on race, policing, and the pressing fronts in the fight for social justice in America today.

The film recounts episodes of police violence in New York City, including Kimani Gray, Ramarley Graham, and Eric Garner, who lost their lives at the hands of uniformed police, and prominently features the family members of the victims of police violence, many of whom have become

committed activists and strong voices in the Black Lives Matter movement. The film offers a steady and unflinching account of these episodes, and considers the stunning number of stories similar to be drawn from our recent history.

The audience is brought into intimate contact with the victims and survivors of police violence, then effectively whisked to a broader vantage for a discussion of the historical context and the larger implications of social inequality in America. Police

violence perpetrated on people of color is an epidemic in today's America, argue the filmmakers and subjects featured, and *Profiled* offers insight and up close portraits of protest movements, communities organized, and artistic responses to these recurring episodes.

Packed into a fastpaced and gripping 53 minutes, Foster's film covers a lot of ground. We have up close portraits of people whose lives have been touched by police violence,

Fly-on-the-wall views into community meetings and demonstrations, interviews with historians and experts, and finally, some efforts at sense-making with a look at race theory and contextualizing race and racial politics historically. The film ultimately brings it all back to the issues of economic inequality, this as a significant measure of racial disparity in America, and here connects us meaningfully to the organizing themes of the NYLHA conference.

But as much as it is an assessment and reflection on the state of racial and economic justice in America and the path that brought us to it, the film is a call to action. As in the Baldwin film, young people are thrust forward in a hopeful answer to the trying questions of our time, and importantly, educators, school children, and community activists.

Let the films tell it, we've a lot of work ahead in the struggles for social and economic justice in America. Armed with our knowledge of the past and heads bent in our work toward the future they tell us, however, we'll have the strength and resolve to finish the tasks.