

# Work History News



New York Labor History Association, Inc.

A Bridge Between Past and Present

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## 2020 Commerford awards

By Jane LaTour

On December 3, 2020, over 100 people gathered on Zoom for the first-ever virtual celebration of the NYLHA's John Commerford Awards. Shannon O'Neill, the curator of the Tamiment and Wagner Labor collections at New York University served as the M.C. for the event. "We're here to celebrate the labor of these two recipients, Brain Greenberg and Bob Croghan and their unwavering commitment to empowering workers." The labor history association is dedicated to empowering the next generation, she said as she introduced Lehman College sophomore and poet, Aminata Gueye. The young poet then read her poem, written to honor her mother, a hair braider from Senegal. "We know her and we know her story / Beginning her days with whispered prayers and closed eyes..."

### 1830s inspirational figure

NYLHA President Irwin Yellowitz followed, acknowledging the NYU



Bob Croghan with members and Zephyr Teachout, 2014 Labor Day Parade

library staff who hosted the program, including Shannon O'Neill, Liz Verrelli and Mike Koncewitz, and the members of the Commerford Committee, led by NYLHA Board Member Rachel Bernstein. He then provided a brief history of John Commerford, a major labor figure active in

the 1830s' labor movement in New York City. "The fiscal panic of 1837 ended that movement, but, as it always does, it revived. Now, we face a diminished labor movement in our own time, and not because working people don't need unions."

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# 2020 Commerford Awards

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Robert Wechsler then presented the 34th annual John Commerford Education Award to Brian Greenberg. As he described, “Brian has long cared about the labor movement and workers’ history whether as labor historian or trade unionist – and he is both. After college, while working as a public school teacher, he pursued his graduate studies. His dissertation at Princeton led to his first book, a study of the social and cultural impact of industrialization on the working-class community in Albany, NY. His second book, co-authored with Leon Fink, was the highly acclaimed *Upheaval in the Quiet Zone: A History of the Hospital Workers’ Union Local 1199*. Brian spent 30 years teaching at Monmouth University in New Jersey, and continued to write. He also served as the chief negotiator for their faculty union for six contracts, and Brian made sure that these contracts made significant gains in “family issues” – equal pay for equal work for female faculty members and time-off for either partner for the birth or adoption of a child. He has contributed to the work of the NYLHA by chairing the Wertheimer and Bellush Awards for scholarship in the fields of labor and working-class history.”

In accepting his award, Brian Greenberg told a story about a pivotal encounter in his life. While studying at City College, and not particularly focused on any era or topic, he enrolled in a course on The Position of the American Worker – taught by Professor Irwin Yellowitz – and the rest was history. He had found his calling. This introduction to labor history with a social and cultural approach, one that by the 1970s was rewriting labor history, provided him with an enticing field of study. His first book, *Worker and Community*, was one example of a number of community studies being written by the New Labor Historians, inspired by the work of Herbert Gutman. Through his studies with Yellowitz, he was introduced to William

Sylvis, an important labor leader of the 1860s (Think Iron Moulders and the National Labor Union) and this connection had a deep impact on the work about Albany.

His work on the history of Local 1199 focused on the members of the union, “who were overwhelmingly black and Latino and female hospital service workers, who saw themselves as partisans of a movement for social justice in America.” One chapter of his life among many was spent as director for seven years at the Hagley Museum and Library. One eventful episode occurred thanks to an article in a public history journal Greenberg was editing. In it, the daughter of a textile worker who in 1912 had testified before Congress about being scalped in a cotton twisting machine in the Lawrence, Mass. mills. The daughter knew nothing of her mother’s political past. Interviewed by Paul Cowan in 1979, she was given a copy of her mother’s testimony to read. After doing so, she said: “Now I have a past. Now my son has a history he can be proud of.” Greenberg summed up the essence of this experience: “Her comment captures the central goal of labor-related public history, to uncover and make widely available the history of working people.”

Sheila Jack, Grievance Representative for the Organization of Staff Analysts (OSA) presented the next Commerford Award to Robert (Bob) Croghan, longtime chairperson of this public sector union. Jack said: “What can one say about a man who has a vision?” she asked. “You say that he has discernment and the will to create that which will bring about change. What can one say about a man who believes that he can work on behalf of the greater good and cause paradigm shifts? You call him an individual with a sense of purpose and the drive to fulfill his dreams. What can you say about a man that understands advocacy and the need to fight for those who have lost their voice or those who cannot find

their inner strength? You call him wise, compassionate and concerned with the civil and human rights of the citizenry.

## Worthy of the honor

“These attributes are aligned with character development, integrity, and ethical reasoning. The yearning to do good and the discipline of engaging in moral duty and obligation is no easy feat. The capacity to fight for what is right and go against the establishment is a lonely road and requires stamina and fortitude. I am describing a man who fifty-one years ago entered into a personal covenant that would allow him to protect the rights of workers through the formation of the Organization of Staff Analysts, affectionately known as OSA.

“Some 5,000 plus members later, Bob Croghan has prevailed in his commitment to ensuring unity, collective gains, solidarity, and a life of quality for its working-class members. Following this path, one can understand the importance of unions; the meaning of due diligence; and the effectiveness of true leadership. He is worthy of commendation, and it is my honor to present him with the John Commerford Labor Education Award this evening.”

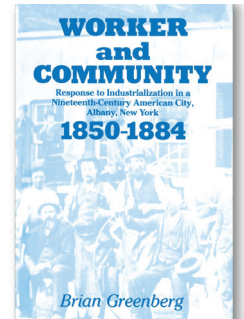
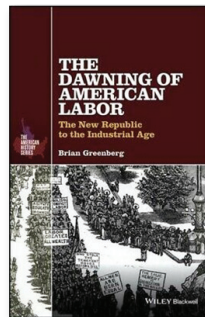
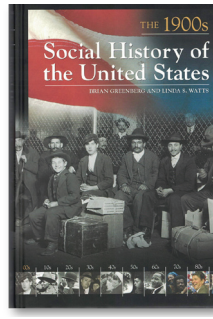
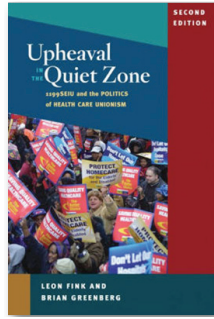
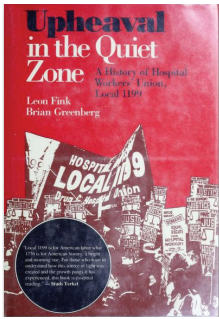
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*Work History News* is published twice per year to keep NYLHA members informed about our organization’s work and labor history events in New York. For more information, visit us at [newyorklaborhistory.org](http://newyorklaborhistory.org).

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# 2020 Commerford Awards



Brian Greenberg's work as a labor historian focused on a social and cultural approach

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In lieu of speaking about his life in labor, Mr. Croghan opted to show a 12-minute video, developed on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the OSA. It celebrates the growth of the union from 38 members in 1985 to nearly 5,000 members. The film described the function of the union

as serving its members, and the role that dedicated civil servants play in the effective running of New York City government. The film received enthusiastic reviews. Congratulations to both of the Commerford Award recipients. Members pronounced the ceremony “lovely;” “beautifully organized;” both the film and the

program “great;” Brian Greenberg sent congratulations on the success of the Zoom ceremony, writing that, “getting the Commerford is one of the peaks of my career.” Committee Chair Rachel Bernstein summed it all up succinctly: “It was like a warm gathering of folks from many different places, all with a commitment to labor education.”

## The Women are Coming to Vote

**THE HUNDRETH ANNIVERSARY** of the first vote cast by a woman in a presidential election after the 19th Amendment was passed is being celebrated locally by the Northern Berkshire Suffrage Centennial Coalition.

That voter was Phoebe Jordan, a farmer who lived in New Ashford, Massachusetts. On November 2, 1920, there were 28 registered voters in New Ashford, and Phoebe Jordan was first in line. New Ashford, for four presidential election cycles – from 1916 to 1932 – was the first town in the country to report its election results.

The Women Are Coming to Vote, a special program coming to you by video produced by Willinet, was broadcasted on Willinet during election week on Channel 1303, and is now available any time on this link <https://vimeo.com/472785171>. Shot on location at the restored New Ashford school house where Phoebe voted, starring the actual ballot box she used, it features historian Dr. Barbara Winslow, founder/director emerita of the Shirley Chisholm Project at Brooklyn College, and Cindy Grosso of the New Ashford Historical Commission giving a brief historical introduction.

This is followed by a reading of a satiric suffrage play published by actress/suffragist Mary Shaw in 1914. Mary Shaw became involved in the suffrage movement in the early 1890s and was best known for her portrayal of Ibsen's Hedda Gabler. Originally titled *The Woman in It or Our Friends the Anti-Suffragists*, the play was adapted and directed by Ruth Giordano and re-named *Utterly Womanly*. The readers are Penny Bucky, Deb Burns, Bette Craig, Nina Keneally and Dawn Rodrigues.

This project is part of a year-long celebration of women gaining the right to vote and is supported by a grant from the Fund for Williamstown of the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation. Its constituents and planners have included the South Williamstown Community Foundation, the Williamstown League of Women Voters, the Williamstown Historical Museum, the New Ashford Historical Commission, Williams College and Images Cinema as well as many interested individuals. Coming next, a video tour of local suffrage sites.

# John Commerford – Labor History Prizes

Each year, the New York Labor History Association awards two prizes for student contributions to the field of labor history, the Wertheimer Prize for best undergraduate submission, and the Bellush Prize for best graduate level submission. The prizes are awarded as part of the annual John Commerford Labor Education Awards Ceremony. Two outstanding recipients were awarded the 2020 prizes.

Brian Greenberg and Robert Wechsler serve on the awards committee, and, as noted by Wechsler, “this year was the first time that both awardees were women scholars. The Wertheimer Prize in Labor History is named in honor of Barbara Mayer Wertheimer, a leading labor educator and scholar.

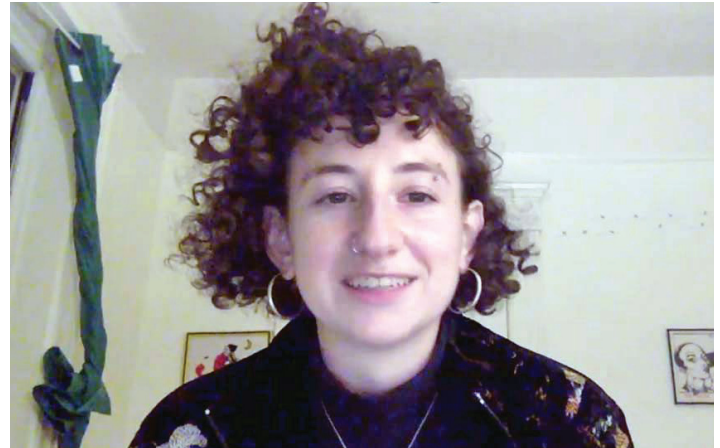
## **Creative organizing – with joy**

The Wertheimer Prize went to Sophie Edlehart for her research paper entitled, “Bad Girls Like Good Contracts: The Fight for Unionization at the Lusty Lady Theater in San Francisco, 1992-1998.” This study of the first and only unionized sex business in the U.S. was her undergraduate thesis in the Department of History at Barnard College, Columbia University. She is a history fellow in Yiddish Studies at the Yiddish Book Center in Amherst, Mass. and she is pursuing her master’s degree in Yiddish Studies at the University of Toronto. An abstract of the paper is on the NYLHA website. [http://newyorklaborhistory.org/web/?page\\_id=79](http://newyorklaborhistory.org/web/?page_id=79)

Congratulations to Sophie Edlehart,” said Wechsler.

Accepting her award, Ms. Edlehart thanked the NYLHA. “This is such an honor,” she said. She also thanked her thesis advisor, who made her work possible, her mother, who acted as her research assistant, and “the amazing women I got to interview. The fact that it remains the only sex business that’s organized shows the way that the combined forces undermine sex workers. It shows how a community approached a struggle – with joy and creativity. It’s a model of good organizing and amazing political militancy. I’m donating my prize money to Soldiers of Pole.” <https://soldiersofpole.com/>

The second prize was awarded by Robert Wechsler. He said: “The Bellush Prize in recognition of scholarship by graduate students is named in honor of Bernard Bellush, an historian of labor and the New Deal. He was a legendary teacher at his alma mater, City College, where he taught for over forty years. The 2020 award goes to Pamela Nogales for her work entitled, “Plebian Radicals in New England and the Fight for the Shorter Working Day.” This is a chapter of her dissertation, “Reform in the Age of Capital: The Transatlantic Roots of the American Reform Tradition, 1828-1876, which was awarded with distinction by the Department of History at NYU. Pamela’s chapter examined the shorter hours movement in the textile

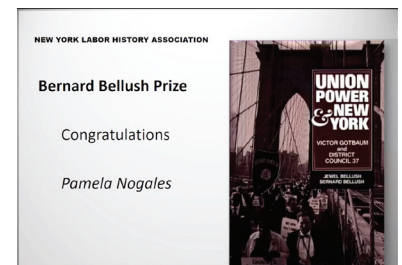


Sophie Edlehart Wertheimer Prize winner

industry in 19th century Massachusetts. She was a Fulbright Fellow and is living in Berlin. Congratulations to Pamela Nogales!”

In correspondence with the young scholar, Ms. Nogales wrote: “I am thrilled and honored to receive the Bellush Prize from the New York Labor History Association. I am a Peruvian immigrant who has lived in New York for over a decade and consider it my home away from home. It thus gives me a lot of encouragement and strength to be recognized by my peers. I consider the history of labor as part of a history of society. Today, a cultural separatist tendency threatens the conception of labor reform as the struggle for greater freedom for all. Labor history can show how the ongoing struggle for emancipation requires the coming together of a diverse labor force acting as one.

My work focuses on the contributions by immigrant laborers who were a key part



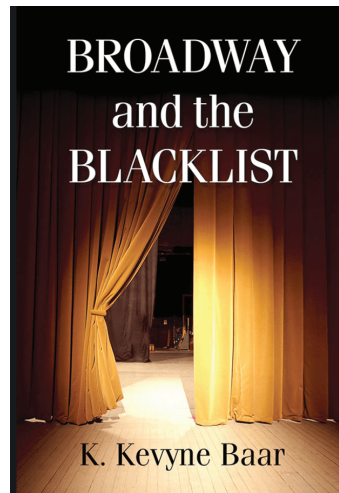
of the labor reform tradition in America. My unpublished work on the New England shorter-hours movement, features immigrant English artisans (part of the Chartist tradition) and radical women who fought together as a conscious and unified force for a free society for all. I argued that New Englanders who learned about the Factory Acts across the Atlantic formed a bond over the common conditions with their English counterparts. In the 19th century, labor associations advanced a self-conception of labor beyond cultural specificity and national boundaries. I believe we have much to learn from these historical examples.” An abstract of Ms. Nogales’s winning chapter is available on the NYLHA website. [http://newyorklaborhistory.org/web/?page\\_id=84](http://newyorklaborhistory.org/web/?page_id=84)

# Broadway and the Blacklist

There are many dramatic renderings of the Hollywood blacklist and the unions targeted in its path. Films such as *The Front* (1976) and *Trumbo* (2015) and books, such as Thomas Doherty's *Show Trial: Hollywood, HUAC, and the Birth of the Blacklist*, ensure that these stories are imprinted in our minds. But there is another, little known story, now brought to our attention by the historian K. Kevyne Baar, in *Broadway and the Blacklist*. On October 27, 2020, the New York Labor History Association co-sponsored a virtual book talk by Baar, along with the Frederic Ewen Center at NYU. Shannon O'Neill, the curator of the collections at NYU's Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives and the Tamiment Library, introduced the multi-talented author, "an activist, actor, archivist, historian and stage manager, who brings a lifetime of professional, personal and academic experience to the writing of this book."

## Accenting social conditions

Baar's history is based on interviews and archival research, with many of the documents in her personal



collection. Access to the collection of Actors Equity, and, at a later stage, that of the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA) allowed for rich documentation. Baar documents the off-Broadway theater companies that contributed to the politically charged environment, including the Theatre Guild, the Group Theatre, and the Federal Theatre Project. These companies produced plays with the accent on social conditions. The Congressional attack on the Federal Theatre was rightly seen as a Congressional attack on a vehicle for a popular New Deal ethos – "an injury to one is an injury to all."

By the early 1950s, when the House Un-American Activities Committee

(HUAC) turned their sights to the world of theatre, Hollywood had already taken its hits, along with the careers of countless actors, screenwriters, and scores of other professionals in the rarified world of Tinseltown. Throughout that infamous chapter of McCarthyism, the unions representing professionals in the industry, including films, television, and radio programming, failed in their obligation to protect and defend their members. They folded in the face of the onslaught directed at them, with fears of failure at the box office and collapse of public support for their products. As epitomized by Screen Actors Guild (SAG) President Ronald Reagan, and leading man Robert Taylor, the Hollywood hearings started off with cooperating witnesses.

Actors Equity took a different path, and defended their members' right to hold unpopular political views, demonstrating a commitment to civil liberties. This fascinating chapter of McCarthyism is a significant contribution to the literature, and the one union "that chose not to tolerate blacklisting of its members, as well as a critically important brand

of theater, one with serious, communal, even controversial content from the 1930s and beyond." As described in a review, "Baar brings her lively writing, deep archival research, family history, her experience as an Equity staffer, and her personal contacts in the theater community, to bear on an important story that has never been told in full." The author described her book as "a labor of love." As Baar recalled, she did her first play at the age of five, and labels herself a "theater nerd."

The Broadway story and the stand against blacklisting, outlined in a union resolution condemning the practice, as well as the commitment to "aid its members in their right to obtain a fair and impartial hearing of any charges that may be brought against them," adopted in 1952, includes the alternatives that were developed by theater denizens to provide opportunities to perform. They "created works for themselves, performed in summer camps, in union halls and Jewish community centers." As the author noted, "history does repeat itself. It helps to pay attention and theater can help magnify it."

# Bernhardt Labor History journalism awards and forum

The 6th annual Debra E. Bernhardt Awards Ceremony and Forum was held as a virtual event on October 12, 2020 and it proved to be an immensely inspiring program. This time, two people shared their reflections on Debra Bernhardt, a feature of each year's program, as a way to allow those who never knew her to appreciate the woman who inspired the award. Jon Bloom noted that he and Debra shared twenty-four years together, and for twenty-two of them she was at Tamiment, directing the work of the labor archives. Last year, their children, Sonia and Alex, went to visit their grandparents in the Upper Peninsula, Michigan, where Debra hailed from, and returned with a sheaf of her letters.



Debra E. Bernhardt

Reading from one, written on the day, October 26, 1999, when Debra and her co-author, Rachel Bernstein, completed the proofing of their book, *Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives*, with the NYU Press, she wrote: "Today was the day we relinquished our baby to production. We drafted and redrafted the introduction and so we could hardly remember who wrote which sentence." In a very Debra way, she wrote: "It makes us want to get started on the next project right away."

## Her legacy and inspiration

Janet Greene spoke about the emotional heft of the event for her, and spoke about her twelve years working with Debra in the archives. In addition to Debra's talents as an archivist, historian, writer and "very capable person," Debra was also *like* a journalist. "She understood the community she was working in. She knew what the conflicts were and she knew how to work through those things." Greene described the gritty details of doing the field work involved in rescuing labor records, and noted

that "this is the legacy and inspiration to everybody going forward."

Shannon O'Neill, curator of archival collections at the NYU labor archives, presented the award to the first recipient, David Unger, for his article: "Which Side Are We On: Can Labor Support #Black Lives Matter and Police Unions?" Unger, a member of the Professional Staff Congress (PSC), is an educator at the School for Labor and Urban Studies at CUNY, and a longtime union organizer. "The central question of David's article, to quote him, is: "Can black lives matter to labor when it represents incarcerate workers? More importantly, can you be an anti-racist organization and support the police." As O'Neill noted, "This struck the judges as a critical and integral question, not just for this current moment where we continue to experience uprisings in response to ongoing police brutality, but as it fortifies its future in this country." Unger's article appeared in the July 2020 issue of the *New Labor Forum* and can be read here: <https://bit.ly/39xtxfC>

Accepting his award, Unger recalled that, as a unionist and an organizer,

"while in the streets night after night six years ago protesting for Black Lives Matter, following murders of Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, and so many memorialized with inadequate hashtags, that I began to focus on the role of the police unions, on justice, and on our movement. It was as a unionist and organizer that, following the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, I needed to add something to the growing discourse and debate, and fight for the soul of our labor movement." He noted that, the most important question is – "will the labor movement be a labor movement for black lives?"

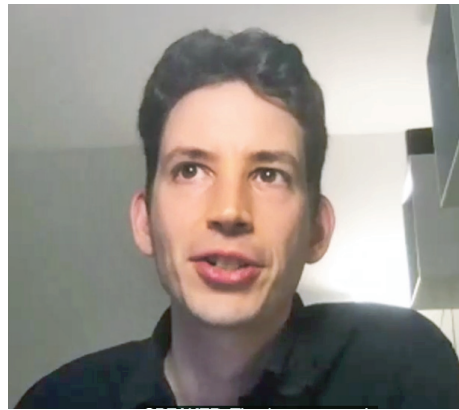
NYLHA President Irwin Yellowitz presented the next award to Josh Eidelson and Christopher Cannon, (for data analysis and graphics design), for their article, "How the American Worker Got Fleeced," which appeared in the July 2020 issue of *Bloomberg Businessweek*. <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2020-the-fleeing-of-the-american-worker/> "Fleeced" Yellowitz outlined the contents of the article, which discusses the major elements in the decline of conditions for the American worker for the last half century. He noted that, "while this is familiar to those who have been supporters to unions, they certainly are not to the audience of Bloomberg Businessweek. That is an important outcome for this article. He brings these points to a new audience. This is a fine example of labor journalism and we are pleased to honor both Josh and his collaborator, Christopher Cannon, who did an exemplary set of graphics that add a great deal to the text."

Accepting his award, Josh Eidelson noted that the stories about Debra made the award much more meaningful. He

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David Unger



Christopher Cannon



Josh Eidelson

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also added that their honorarium is being donated to the Committee to Protect Journalists. “One of the challenges to journalists is how to help readers understand what is happening right now and also, how we got here.” Chris Cannon observed that he had “the good problem of having so much data. It worked out and hopefully, we told the story in a new and engaging way.”

Two participants contributed to the discussion on labor journalism and history: Steve Greenhouse, longtime labor reporter at *The New York Times*, and author of *The Big Squeeze* and most recently, *Beaten Down, Worked Up* and Natasha Buntgen, the cofounder and director of the Cultural Workers Education Center.

### **Cornucopia of stories**

Greenhouse pointed out that, despite complaints about a paucity of labor coverage, the reality is different: “This year, we have seen a renaissance of excellent labor reporting. A big reason for this is the pandemic and the shabby way so many employers have treated their workers. Many reporters have stepped up to do excellent stories on the perilous conditions that so-called essential workers have had to work under since Covid-19. I remember the story by a New Orleans radio reporter who first quoted a Walmart cashier saying she felt more sacrificial than essential. We’ve seen excellent journalism about meat-packing plants that have been insanely dangerous factories for spreading Covid-19 and excellent journalism

about the inexcusable shortages for PPE for hospital workers; about a lack of masks for McDonald’s workers; about workers being threatened by shoppers about wearing masks; about the mortal dangers to bus drivers and the New York City transit workers who died from Covid-19; the dangerous conditions in Amazon warehouses; the many women who had to drop out of the workforce because of the lack of child care during the pandemic; and the dangers of the teachers in the Sun Belt facing orders to return to school where their states are raging hotspots. It’s great to see so many reporters step up and see so many caring labor journalists today.”

Natasha Buntgen described the work of her center, which launched one year ago, just prior to the pandemic. “We are a platform for people to gather, learn and organize to address urgent issues such as living wages, labor rights, industrial policy, and equity in cultural workplaces. We focus on strengthening communities of visual arts and cultural workers through practical skill building, research, resource sharing and in the collaboration of new ideas. We have a core focus on addressing the needs of freelance workers who may not be able to join traditional labor unions, but are looking to unite and build solidarity both within and across sectors and industries.” Buntgen spoke about the challenges and also the opportunities we face in our time. “Tonight, we are prompted to talk about the historical context of labor journalism, and why it is so vitally important today.” She outlined the contributions that the

arts in New York City contribute to the economy. “Without us, the city’s economy would have to be radically re-imagined.”

### **Explaining what’s wrong**

Steve Greenhouse pointed to the article by Josh Eidelson and its appreciation for history. “That knowledge strengthened and enriched his article,” said Greenhouse. “If we as a nation are going to address and hopefully fix many of these problems, we will need this generation of labor journalists to continue covering what is happening to America’s hundred and fifty million workers and how they often have little voice and power. We need journalists to continue to do what Josh and David and Chris have done to explain what is wrong with the American workplace.”

The Bernhardt Labor History Journalism program was sponsored by the NYLHA, and our co-sponsors, including the Tamiment/Wagner Labor Archives at NYU; the New York City Central Labor Council; the Metro New York Labor Communications Council; and LaborArts. Thank you to our co-sponsors and to Shannon O’Neill, Michael Koncewicz, and the staff at NYU. We couldn’t do all that we do without your support and able assistance. The Bernhardt Committee was chaired by Rachel Bernstein (NYLHA; LaborArts) with representatives from each of the sponsoring organizations – Michael Koncewicz (NYU), Kate Whalen (NYCCLC) and Gary Schoichet (MNYLCC).

# “Gateway to the west or the gateway to America’s incendiary past?”

By Mike Matejka

*The Broken Heart of America: St. Louis and the Violent History of the United States*, by Walter Johnson, Basic Books, 2020 ISBN: 978-0-465-064426-7

It’s a long and tortured path from the April 18, 1836 burning alive of free African-American Francis McIntosh in downtown St. Louis to 2014’s police shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson.

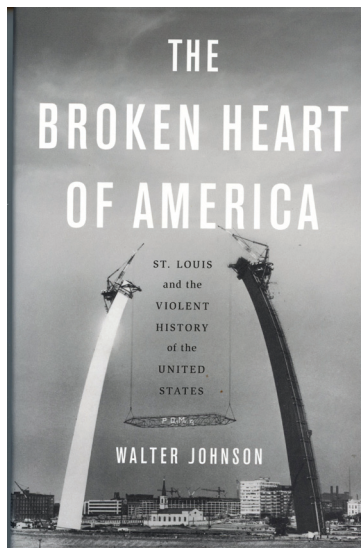
In *The Broken Heart* Harvard’s Walter Johnson claims that St. Louis is the epicenter of American violence – Native American extermination, racism, labor suppression, sexism and radical right wing movements. Perhaps other border cities like Baltimore or Cincinnati, poised between the slave and free states, could compete. St. Louis hosted what they did not: the U.S. Army’s Jefferson Barracks, launching point for the prolonged war against Native peoples.

Although this book is about St. Louis, the river city is inseparable from East St. Louis and Metro East. The 1917 racial pogrom on the eastern shore gains its own grisly and detailed chapter.

This is a book of passion. Under the fabric of “racial capitalism,” Johnson traces the city’s history as “the capital city of the nation’s western empire” from its early French fur trappers, who created a symbiotic relationship with Native peoples, through westward expansion, the Gilded Age and the military-industrial complex. Some may challenge his framing device but his deep and provocative dive into St. Louis history highlights events that were national in scope.

## **Socialism the impetus**

An excellent example is the critical early days of the Civil War. As a slave state with a pro-slavery Democratic Governor, it was the mobilization of German radicals, refugees from the 1848 failed European revolutions, who scored an early Union victory. Because of Jefferson



Barracks, St. Louis had the second largest federal arsenal. With meager federal protection and an antagonistic Governor, it was German immigrants who marched on pro-slavery forces and saved the arsenal. From their European working class experiences, these leaders, Franz Sigel, Nikolas Schüttner and Joseph Weydemeyer, had established and drilled German militias. Their organizing impetus was socialism and class warfare. Weydemeyer is credited as a possible originator of the “dictatorship of the proletariat” theory. These compatriots and correspondents of Marx and Engels went onto prominent Civil War commands.

Johnson does not just dwell on outrage, but also times of racial unity and economic challenge. The 1877 “Great Uprising” of disgruntled workers led to the nation’s first general strike, a St. Louis and East St. Louis interracial walk-out that briefly led to a socialist, workers’ government in St. Louis. He also traces 1930s inter-racial labor activism, noting that the area’s civil rights efforts were focused less on accommodation and more on employment.

Though labor could unite across racial lines, racist fears and using African-Americans as strike-breakers led to the July 2-4, 1917 East St. Louis massacre.

Local unions stirred antagonism toward the Southern refugees. “Race Riot” fails to convey the onslaught by whites against their neighbors. Although the National Guard was mobilized, it seemed more interested in protecting white rioters than the oppressed. Johnson reflects on how East St. Louis shaped the writings and thoughts of W.E.B DuBois and the intrepid journalistic work of Ida B. Wells. Johnson writes: “In the end, violence like that in East St. Louis in 1917, like that of U.S. history, exceeds analysis, even the analysis of a brilliant thinker and prodigiously talented a writer as DuBois. The violence and the loss reside instead in Well’s straightforward recounting of the scene she found in the city.”

## **Systematic racism**

Johnson intensely scrutinizes racial zoning, housing covenants, public housing projects, urban redevelopment schemes and in East St. Louis, the establishment of company towns surrounding the municipality to evade urban property taxes. These shape his concluding chapter on Michael Brown and Ferguson, not just a momentary lapse by a police officer, but a systematic herding, abuse and farming (extracting wealth through police and zoning fines) of African-American populations.

*The Broken Heart of America* strikes a bold premise – that the sordid tale of American violence is reflected, and reflected most particularly, in one American urban center. Johnson roams the western plains, the St. Louis World’s Fair and its human zoo and the consolidation of great fortunes into the American story’s fabric. Some may disagree with his framework; his research is thorough, the indictment compelling and well written. Johnson has assembled these myriad threads into an unsettling but necessary compilation.

*Mike Matejka, Normal, Illinois, Vice-President, Illinois Labor History Society.*



# PROFILE: Josh Barnett, Housing activist plus

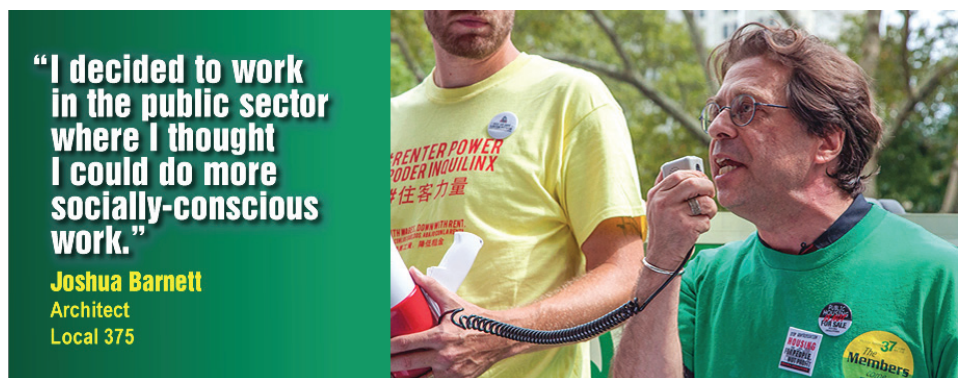
**JOSHUA BARNETT** is one of the newer board members of the NYLHA. He's also a good example of that old saying: "If you want something done, ask a busy person." Josh is an affordable housing activist and works as an architect for the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), where he designs renovations to public housing and oversees construction. He started out at NYCHA in 1999. Since then, he has held several positions in his union, the Civil Service Technical Guild Local 375. He's been a delegate since 2001, served one term as chair of the union's civil service committee, and is in his third term as president of the NYCHA Chapter of Local 375.

Josh enjoys being part of the fight to preserve public housing, despite the frustrations of watching HUD funding (upon which public housing depends) dry up, and the inability of making an impact on housing design. The days described in Roberta Gold's excellent book, *When Tenants Claimed the City: The Struggle for Citizenship in New York City Housing*, are long gone. One of Josh's related projects is an attempt to form a coalition at NYCHA to encourage cooperation between the unions and involving the residents in the work. "An uphill battle," in his words, but Josh is experienced in battles.

## Busted in Boston

Before his life in New York City, he worked in Boston (17 years) and was "booted out" for trying to organize the architects at the Boston Housing Authority into a union. His activism included community battles. Josh recalls taking part in many anti-Klan rallies. He spent the summer of 1975 organizing against the racist anti-busing movement. In 1992, he was "busted" when David Duke tried to speak in Boston.

His interest in politics and love for art combined in a series of collages he designed, with titles such as: "Behind Every Great Fortune There is a Crime"



**"I decided to work in the public sector where I thought I could do more socially-conscious work."**

**Joshua Barnett**  
Architect  
Local 375

and "Harlem, 1964. 56 Years. Still Going On. Enough is Enough," a work on police brutality. His artwork was displayed in an exhibit of city workers' art at the Salmagundi Gallery in 2007.

Labor history is another passion. One contribution is a time line of labor history events which has been printed in the Local 375 Handbook for Delegates. The text begins like this: "Whatever makes life bearable for working people was fought for by working people..." It continues with this intriguing observation: "Think about it. Where would you be a hundred years ago, living in the U.S.?" About labor history he points out that, "It's not taught in the schools, and it's not mentioned in the press."

Josh made a conscious decision to work in the public sector, "where

I thought I could do more socially-conscious work." He is a third-generation union member, a Red Diaper baby; his grandfather, a Rumanian immigrant, was in the Fur and Leather Workers Union; and he grew up in a household of radical ideas and history. Josh has been married for 26 years, and his daughter is studying art history at Temple University in Philadelphia. Since joining the NYLHA board, he has written book reviews, and taken part in organizing many events. He is one of the bright lights whose voluntary labor contributes to illuminating the work of the New York Labor History Association in its mission to preserve labor history and connect it to the present. For more information about his struggles for affordable housing, see <https://www.dc37.net/about/weneverquit/member/barnett>.

# Hard Ball and Little Heroes Press –books for activist children

By Marcia Newfield

*“If we can show children how a caterpillar transforms into a butterfly, can’t we show them how they can transform the world into a more just and a peaceful community?”*

–Ann Berlak

Jake and his lawyer were afraid that the arbitration judge was going to rule in favor of the company, not for the union. At that moment, the union lawyer opened the door and waved to several children to come into the hearing room...they were from the shelter and wanted to speak for Jake. Another group of supporters was waiting in the lobby with signs”.

## Provocative questions

A newspaper article? A community board newsletter? Neither...it is a pivotal moment in a bilingual picture book for children, *Good Guy Jake*, by Mark Torres, published by Tim Sheard, founder and editor of Hard Ball Press Young Activist series. Jake, a kindhearted sanitation worker who picks up broken toys that he sees on his route and fixes for shelter children, is fired for collecting items from the trash, a violation of city code. His union is defending him. Provocative questions are posed at the end of the book, such as: is it appropriate to break the law, even for a good cause? Do you think children in school should have a union? What problem would you take to your union representative? Colorful illustrations by

Yana Murashko and flowing translations by Madelin Arroyo make it seamlessly realistic. That was the intention of the author who serves as general counsel to a NYC Teamster union local.

Like Torres, all the authors of the Hard Ball and Little Heroes list are working from their experience in the field. Their books are their distillations of the best of what is and what could be. Ann Berlak, a social justice teacher used her conversations with children about the hardships of our times as the inspiration for *Joelito’s Big Decision*, whose third grade hero leads his family to give up their Friday night dinners at fast food MacMann’s to support his friends’ parents who work there and are demonstrating to raise the minimum wage. A similar situation occurs in *Jimmy’s Carwash Adventure* where an even younger (and wealthier) child is motivated by the kindness of a carwash worker to sneak his little red pedal car out of his two-car garage to join his soccer friend and his carwash worker dad in their protest. Victor Narro, the author, is a labor educator and expert on immigrant rights and low wage workers. The illustrations by Yana Murashko depict a multiracial crowd of supporters.

## Debating substance

Trends in books for children are as cyclical and various as those in fashion, with interpretations and theories to match. In the 50s it

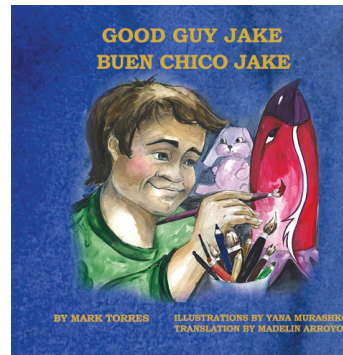


Illustration from *Joelito’s Big Decision*

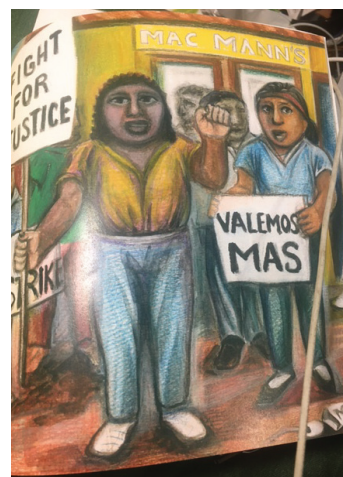
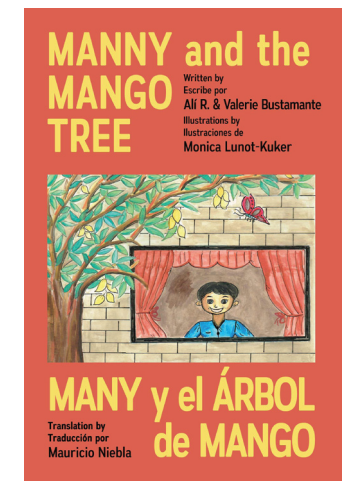
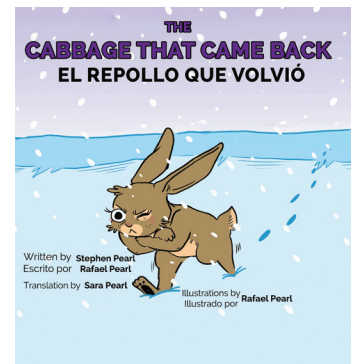


Illustration from *Margalito’s Forest*

was debated whether children should be exposed to harsh realities, death, and war. The Brothers Grimm tales are ghastly enough but rationalized as giving youngsters permission



and practice in exorcising their fantasies. Dr. Seuss and Maurice Sendak explained the world with humor. The December 14th, 2020 *New Yorker*, features an article by Joan Acocella about a beloved Italian fantasist, Gianni Rodari, who won the Hans Christian Anderson Award and is renowned for inserting a  
*continued on next page*

# Hard Ball and Little Heroes Press

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surrealist twist to his tales.

It's not unusual that children are intuitively empathic and aware of poverty, protests, and injustice. It's just that most publishers don't want to dwell on it.

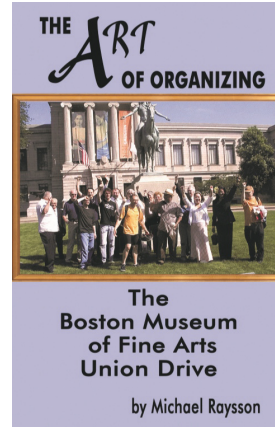
## The wisdom of sharing

Hard Ball founder and editor, Tim Sheard, went in the direction of nurturing the labor consciousness of children when he initiated the Little Hero series in 2014 with *Manny and the Mango Tree* (Ali R. & Valerie Bustamante; illustrated by Monica Lunot-Kuker; translator Mauricio Niebla). Manny and his friend Maria organize the children in their apartment building to persuade the super to reverse his prohibition and let them eat mangoes from a tree they have nourished all year. In this case the parents are aware that the children's campaign may cause trouble since some families in the building are undocumented. *In Hats Off For Gabbie* (Marivir Montebon, author; Yana Podriez, illustrator; Mauricio Niebla, translator), the heroine defies the convention of

banning girls from playing on a baseball team.

The messages are admittedly didactic, starting with the book most suitable for the youngest children, *The Cabbage that Came Back* (Stephen and Rafael Pearl; illustrator Rafael Pearl; translator Sara Pearl) that retells a Chinese folk tale that preaches the wisdom of sharing versus hoarding. Brilliant illustrations add to the allure and pleasure these books provide. Daniel Camacho brings a rich Mexican muralist style to *Joelito's Decision*; In *Margarito's Forest*, illustrator Allison Havens worked with the children of the SaqJa village in central Guatemala to reproduce Mayan textiles and plants that enhance the true story that author Andy Carter relates of the reclamation of this mountain area by elders who followed traditional ways. This story of the Mayan cosmivision even has excerpts in the native K'iche language.

There are currently ten titles aimed at children four to twelve with three more planned for 2021. Each



book is bilingual (Spanish/English). When we know that forty percent of public school students in New York City are from Spanish-speaking backgrounds, it makes pedagogic sense to break the monolingual tendencies in the U.S. If you want future generations to have a chance to internalize the values of grassroots power and justice, spread the word about Hard Ball and Little Heroes; they are available in paperback, hardback and ebooks <https://hardballpress.com/index.html>.

Hard Ball Press hasn't forgotten adults. In addition to Sheard's own Lenny Moss Mysteries, nine novels based on his twenty years as a critical care nurse, that

feature union hospital steward custodian Lenny Moss, Hard Ball publishes fiction and nonfiction of interest to workers. One of its 2020 titles is *The Art of Organizing: The Boston Museum of Fine Arts Union Drive* by Michael Raysson, a man who spent sixteen years as an organizer of guards at the Boston Fine Arts Museum; now retired, Raysson remembers and recounts every campaign, person, and struggle, including one where the union needed to break away from its national union's betrayal. It is a memoir that can function as a guidebook for seasoned as well as new organizers.

Hard Ball Press is a treasure trove for labor activists; I consider Sheard a visionary. He is also co-chair of the National Writers Union NYC chapter, where he holds workshops and readings for writers. During the pandemic, in addition to publishing memoirs of front line workers, he has taken up guitar and composed songs to honor and comfort workers.

## Crossword Answers

- |                 |                |               |                   |
|-----------------|----------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 27. De Niro.    | 7. Moynihan.   | 40. James.    | 19. Virginia.     |
| 30. Loomis.     | 8. Stephanie.  | 43. Reich.    | 20. Moody.        |
| 33. Ehrenreich. | 9. Robert.     | 44. Coltrane. | 22. Thomas.       |
| 35. Strike.     | 10. Silkwood.  | 45. Janet.    | 25. Kitchen.      |
| 36. Walter.     | 15. Relations. | 46. Change.   | 26. Garmant.      |
| 38. Morgan.     | 17. Snyder.    | <b>Down</b>   | 28. Lewis.        |
| 39. Schumer.    | 18. Tax.       | 1. Wiesel.    | 29. Battle.       |
| 41. Floyd.      | 21. Hunts.     | 3. Nick.      | 31. Prize.        |
| 42. Kneec.      | 23. Harris.    | 4. Lives.     | 32. Qanon.        |
|                 | 24. Central.   | 6. Sandino.   | 34. Creek.        |
|                 | 26. Garland.   |               | 37. Radium.       |
|                 |                |               | 11. Texas.        |
|                 |                |               | 9. Rudy.          |
|                 |                |               | 7. Massachusetts. |
|                 |                |               | 5. Ginsburg.      |
|                 |                |               | 2. Minnesota.     |
|                 |                |               | 12. Windows.      |
|                 |                |               | 13. Fletcher.     |
|                 |                |               | 14. Abrams.       |
|                 |                |               | 16. Two.          |

# Throws right, thinks left: *The unorthodox life of major league pitcher Sam Nahem*

By Keith Danish

**W**ho was “Subway Sam” Nahem? He was born in Brooklyn, in 1915, to Sephardic Jewish immigrants from Syria and his first language was Arabic, he became a Communist at Brooklyn College, was signed by the Brooklyn Dodgers and during his career pitched for the Dodgers, Cardinals and Phillies, as well as in the minors and semi-pro ball. During the Second World War, he organized, managed and played in military baseball leagues, and insisted on integration of his teams.

One of his players was Leon Day, a star pitcher with the Newark Eagles of the Negro Leagues. Sam’s pitching helped his team win the “GI World Series” in the European Theater of Operations. After the war and the end of his sporting career, he practiced law (having studied at St. John’s between baseball seasons) and ran for the New York Assembly on the American Labor Party ticket, worked as a salesman and a longshoreman, then moved to the Bay Area in California, working for 25 years at Chevron and acting as a rank-and-file leader in the left-wing Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union.

## Politics in the ballpark

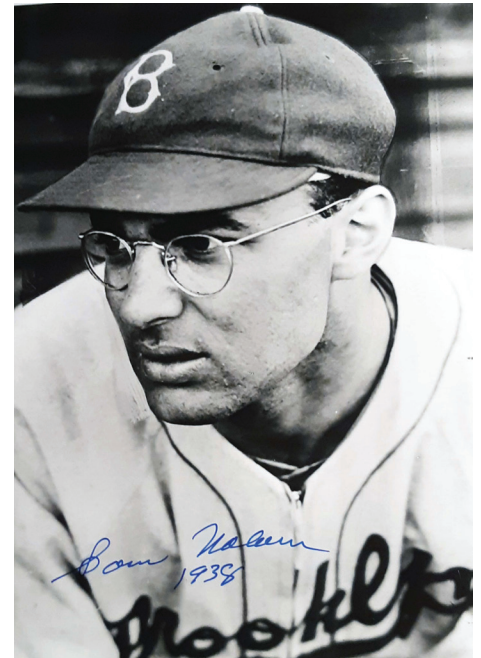
Of course, the FBI kept a file on Sam, although he left the Communist Party in the mid-50’s. After moving to Berkeley, Sam participated in anti-war and civil rights demonstrations, and helped to lead a strike against Chevron in 1969. He died in 2004, at age 88.

As a New York-type intellectual, and with the exception of Moe (“The Catcher Was a Spy”) Berg, Sam stood out from his comrades on the diamond like a deer on the “A” train. A fellow minor-leaguer who had never seen a New Yorker before dubbed him “Subway Sam”. A 1940 report from spring training published in the *Cincinnati Enquirer* featured this “Brooklyn lad” who was a “budding intellectual” because he wore spectacles and was fond of Russian writers. Sam vouchsafed that “[on] those days when my pitching has been horrible I lose myself in the Russian classics.”

Today, with their guaranteed contracts and mostly non-working class backgrounds (at least with regard to U.S.-born players), Major League ballplayers are considered to be far more conservative than pro basketballers or footballers.

One exception is Washington’s relief pitcher Sean Doolittle (who does throw left-handed), a member of the Democratic Socialists of America. Sean was awarded an honorary membership in UNITE-HERE for supporting better working conditions for food-service personnel at ballparks. He also spotlighted the closing of a unionized “New Era” plant in New York State that made the official Major League baseball cap, and the transfer of such work to a non-union plant in Florida. Sean is a consciousness-raiser, and as a member of “one of the country’s most prominent labor unions” (his words) he tries to improve the lot of less-privileged workers.

In contrast, there was the Phillies’ and Pirates’ star hurler Jim Bunning, who advocated for a strong players’ union in the 1960’s and was instrumental in recruiting Marvin Miller to lead the union and bring about revolutionary changes in the Owner-Player relationship. But during his post-baseball career as a Congressman and then a Senator, Bunning was an arch conservative who consistently voted against organized labor and its concerns. Unfortunately, union solidarity among major leaguers has generally been inward-looking; for example, minor league players have been left out in the cold.



Sam Nahem

On the ownership side of the business, a typical expression of baseball’s reactionary management was Branch Rickey’s warning that opponents of the Reserve Clause (the contractual provision that kept players in bondage) had “avowed Communist tendencies.” The club owners’ default position was to fear and oppose change, including night baseball, radio and television broadcasting, and, of course, integration, so a man like Bill Veeck stood out as the all-time maverick among team owners, and the exception who proved the rule. His attempt to buy the Phillies in 1942 and stock the team with Negro Leaguers (with some financial support from the CIO) was thwarted by the National League, but in 1947 as Cleveland Indians’ owner he signed Larry Doby and broke the color barrier in the American League. The next year, Veeck brought Negro Leagues’ star pitcher Satchel Paige to the Indians as a 42 year old rookie. Veeck was way ahead of his time in warning fellow owners, “You’d better give them [the players] free agency or the courts will give it to them for you.”

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He also proposed that TV revenues be shared equally by the clubs, a Socialistic notion that would later be adopted by the National Football League. Bill even admitted to voting for Norman Thomas in each of his presidential campaigns.

Sam Nahem was a proletarian pitcher; he threw right but lived “left”.

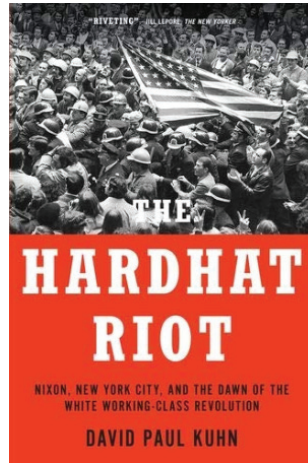
At a time when “CP” activists were picketing outside ballparks for an end to the color barrier, Sam was quietly speaking to teammates about the need to give black players a chance, all the while knowing that his own status as a marginal player would be threatened by an influx of new talent. Sam maintained a sense of humor and a realistic view of

his own career. In old age he recalled that people compared him with Sandy Koufax by saying “you were no Koufax”, so he would respond by thanking them just for putting him and Sandy in the same sentence!

Keith Danish is Book Review Editor of the NYLHA and still sits shiva for Tom Seaver.

## The New York Labor History Review of Books

IN 2020, the New York Labor History Book Reviews featured 23 selections. Our list included novels, memoirs, three books that examined the roots of white, working-class men’s migration from the Democrats to the Republicans; the Red Caps at Grand Central Terminal, off to London and the stories of the five working-class women killed by Jack the Ripper; the history of police unions in New York City; Seattle and the general strike of 1919; murder in the City’s garment industry; gentrification and the real estate industry; class and race and radicalism in the South; a prose poem about the legendary labor organizer, Clara Lemlich; the labor plays



of Manny Fried – and more. We offered something for almost everyone’s interests.

One of our selection’s, David Paul Kuhn’s *Hardhat Riot: Nixon, New York City, and the Dawn of the White Working-Class Revolution*, was

chosen as one of *The New York Times* 100 Notable Books of 2020. As Kuhn described his goal, “Outside of merely telling the story, I was trying to challenge the academic consensus among scholars concerned with modern labor and sixties/seventies history (especially culture war history). The NYLHA review by Michael Koncewicz aids in that endeavor.”

As *The New York Times* “Notable” notice describes the book: “Kuhn highlights one day, May 8, 1970, when blue-collar workers went on a rampage against anti-war protesters, noting that the country’s politics have never been the same.” James Carville calls it, “perhaps the best book

ever on how the Democrats lost the white working class” – a “great and must read.” The historian Jill Lepore simply calls it: “Riveting.”

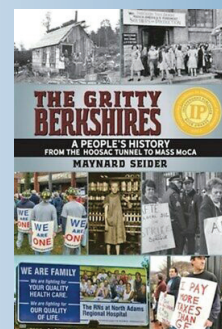
*Hardhat Riot* is not the author’s only book. In 2007, *The Neglected Voter: White Men and the Democratic Dilemma* was published. In this related project, “the author reminds the political left that modern victories (1986; 2006) do not always equal sustainable success.” To read a recent New York Public Library Q and A with the author, visit <http://on.nypl.org/3j3RDS0>. To check out the NYLHA book reviews, visit: [newyorklaborhistory.org](http://newyorklaborhistory.org)

–Jane LaTour and Keith Danish

## The Gritty Berkshires – “Peoples’ history at its best”

THAT’S THE LABOR historian Jeremy Brecher’s summation of Maynard Seider’s book, *The Gritty Berkshires*, a lively and inviting history that stretches from the Hoosac Tunnel to Mass MoCA – the Museum of Modern Art located in North Adams, Massachusetts. Maynard Seider grew up in a union household where he learned about the dignity of work and the need to protect the rights of labor. The book was awarded the 2020 Gold Medal for the Best Regional Non-Fiction Book, Northeast Region, by the Independent Publisher Book Awards.

The link <http://www.thegrittyberkshires.com> provides access to a lengthier description of the contents, lectures and an interview with the author.



# A Woman's Work – The FIGHT for decent treatment of NFL cheerleaders

By Molly Martin

I admit I was prejudiced. I was one of those feminists who thought cheerleaders were the antithesis of feminism, sucking up to powerful men and athletes, embodying or seeking to embody the male ideal of woman.

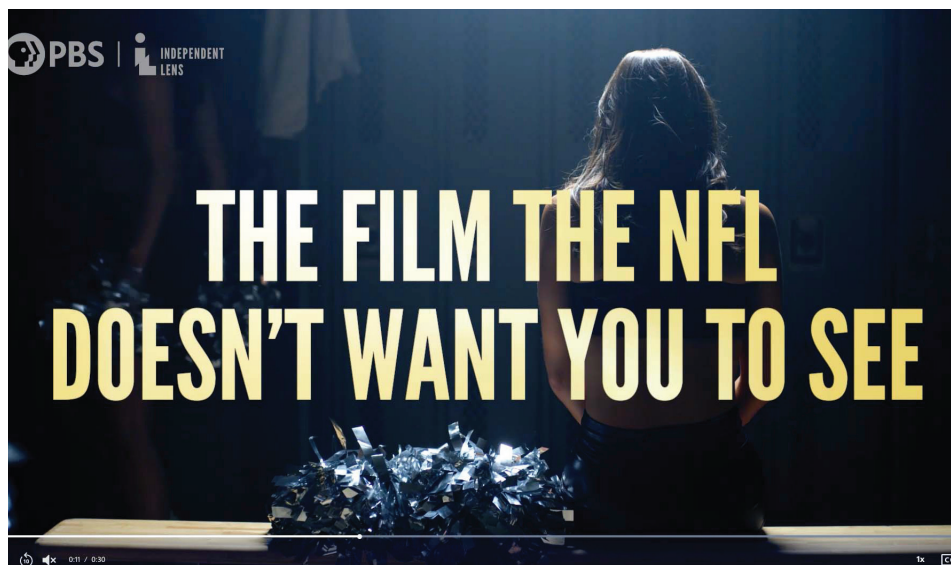
But then I saw the PBS film *A Woman's Work*, about the struggle of the NFL cheerleaders for better wages and working conditions. Now I think some cheerleaders are feminist heroes.

The film documents their years-long campaign against wage theft by their employer, the National Football League. The NFL and its 32 franchises are worth \$80 billion and yet, rather than do the right thing and pay their workers a decent wage, they round up their corporate lawyers and fight to keep women down. The industry, run by rich conservative old men, still views itself as untouchable. Now the cheerleaders are on the front line in the feminist struggle against male chauvinism, male privilege and toxic masculinity.

## A “woman’s job”

I’m a retired electrician who has fought for the last half-century to insure women’s entry to the skilled trades. The construction industry is the other side of the gendered employment coin. We were kept out of lucrative union construction jobs because of our gender. The bosses said we were not strong enough to do the work and they’re still saying it, even though we’ve been doing the work for decades. Of course just because the job is physically difficult does not mean a worker makes better pay. Quite the contrary. Plenty of women (and men) work at hard jobs for low pay. Union construction workers make good money because of union contracts.

Women wanted to work in construction for many reasons: We wanted to build something valuable, to learn a craft and take pride in it. Many of us chafed at being required to



wear dresses, pantyhose and makeup to work. But the big reason was money. Men working in “men’s” jobs make way more money than women working in “women’s” jobs.

Watching this film I felt an immediate sisterhood with the cheerleaders. Their plight brought up questions for me: What do they, working in a “woman’s job” have in common with us women who work in the construction trades? The film asks “What is women’s work? What is men’s work?” Cheerleading was once the domain of men, that is until team owners realized sexy women shaking their booties could make money for them.

I didn’t know how bad it has been for cheerleaders. Maybe no one did. They were traditionally paid less than minimum wage and not paid for much of the work they did. Some teams paid them nothing at all. They were required to practice – wage free – for nine months before the season. And they were fined when late to practice. They were constantly scrutinized for body fat and rated on the size of body parts.

The film introduces us to three women from different NFL teams who chose to fight the NFL’s sexism. Lacy’s story is compelling. The product of a poor family in small town Alabama, she had always

wanted to be a dancer and she began winning dance contests early on. The first to file a lawsuit, in 2014, she worked for the Oakland Raiders. A cheerleader in high school and college, Lacy was used to being paid for her work. “Louisiana Tech compensated us well,” she says. So it was a shock to find out the Raiders and the NFL didn’t value the cheerleaders even enough to pay minimum wage. The women didn’t get paid till the end of the year, and then not at all for the nine months of required practice sessions. Hair, nails, tan and required travel were out-of-pocket expenses. Waiting for her first paycheck to come, Lacy says she didn’t know all this.

## Attorneys: essential advocates

Lacy retained the San Francisco law firm Levy Vinick Burrell Hyams, known for taking on major employment discrimination cases. I was pleased that the film includes interviews with the lawyers, all women. The firm’s symbol is Rosie the Riveter and their motto is “Who would Rosie hire?” Prominent in the office, besides numerous images of Rosie, is a picture of attorney Leslie Levy with Mary Dunlap, a civil rights hero in the San Francisco Bay Area. A well-known feminist and gay activist who died in 2003 at 54, Mary was a founder of Equal

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# A Woman's Work

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Rights Advocates, a law firm that we tradeswomen have worked with since the 1970s. Without our dedicated lawyers we could never have succeeded in integrating the construction trades. As with the cheerleaders, class action lawsuits were the basis of our ongoing struggle.

Also profiled is Maria who, along with five other cheerleaders, filed suit against the Buffalo Bills, a team that expected its cheerleading squad, the Buffalo Jills, to work for free. In response the NFL used tactics that employers typically use to fight unions. The Buffalo Bills team simply abolished its cheer squad. Then they blamed the women who filed the suit, using the divide and conquer tactic and bullying the others to opt out of the suit, which has still not been resolved.

Bailey Davis is the third cheerleader profiled in the film. She filed an EEOC complaint against the New Orleans Saints. Davis was one of the Saintsations, the Saints' cheerleading squad. That is, until she posted a photo of herself in a one-piece lace bodysuit on her private Instagram account. The Saints fired the 22-year-old in 2018 for violating a code of conduct that prohibits cheerleaders from appearing nude, semi-nude or in lingerie. It wasn't the only strict rule that Davis and her former colleagues had to follow – cheerleaders for the Saints can't have players follow them on social media, must have private social media accounts and are required to leave parties or restaurants if players are there. The company says the rules are in place to prevent cheerleaders from being preyed on by players.

"The players have the freedom to post whatever they want to on social media," Davis told the press. "They can promote themselves, but we can't post anything on our social media about being a Saintsation. We can't have it in our profile picture, we can't use our last name for media, we can't promote ourselves, but the players don't have the same restrictions."

The women who filed suit against the NFL were attacked mercilessly. "I just kept telling myself I'm doing the right thing," says Lacy.

## Dimensions of sexism

At the same time as it keeps a tight reign on the cheerleaders' behavior, the NFL protects players charged with domestic violence. There's a connection here. "Wage theft, sexual harassment and domestic violence are all about power," say the lawyers.

Scenes later in the film show these women at home taking care of kids and husbands with a not-so-subtle message that all women's work is undervalued. Here these women work for free and there is no time off.

Another issue, the sexual harassment and pimping of cheerleaders is only hinted at in the film, which focuses on labor issues like wages and working conditions. In 2018 Washington Redskins cheerleaders complained of being pimped out to male donors. "I don't think they viewed us as people," said one.

Football reeks of toxic masculinity. And having a posse of sexy females ready to do your bidding and totally under your control is just part of the deal. Women are seen by these men as sexual objects. Decades ago the Dallas Cowboys led the way in selling sex on the sidelines while paying the cheerleaders next to nothing. "It was a business," said

members of the squad. "And we were the merchandise."

In the construction trades, after decades of fighting for equal treatment, our efforts are paying off. It took years to get our unions on board, but now they are partnering with women to improve working conditions. Because of our advances, when the #MeToo movement erupted I was shocked – not that sexual harassment existed in Hollywood and elsewhere, but that it was so widespread and institutionalized. The world of construction is changing, if slowly, and we are ahead of some industries.

The world of cheerleading is changing too. It's now seen as a competitive sport that incorporates gymnastics with athletic dance. Millions of people watch and participate in worldwide competitions. The NFL needs to get with the program.

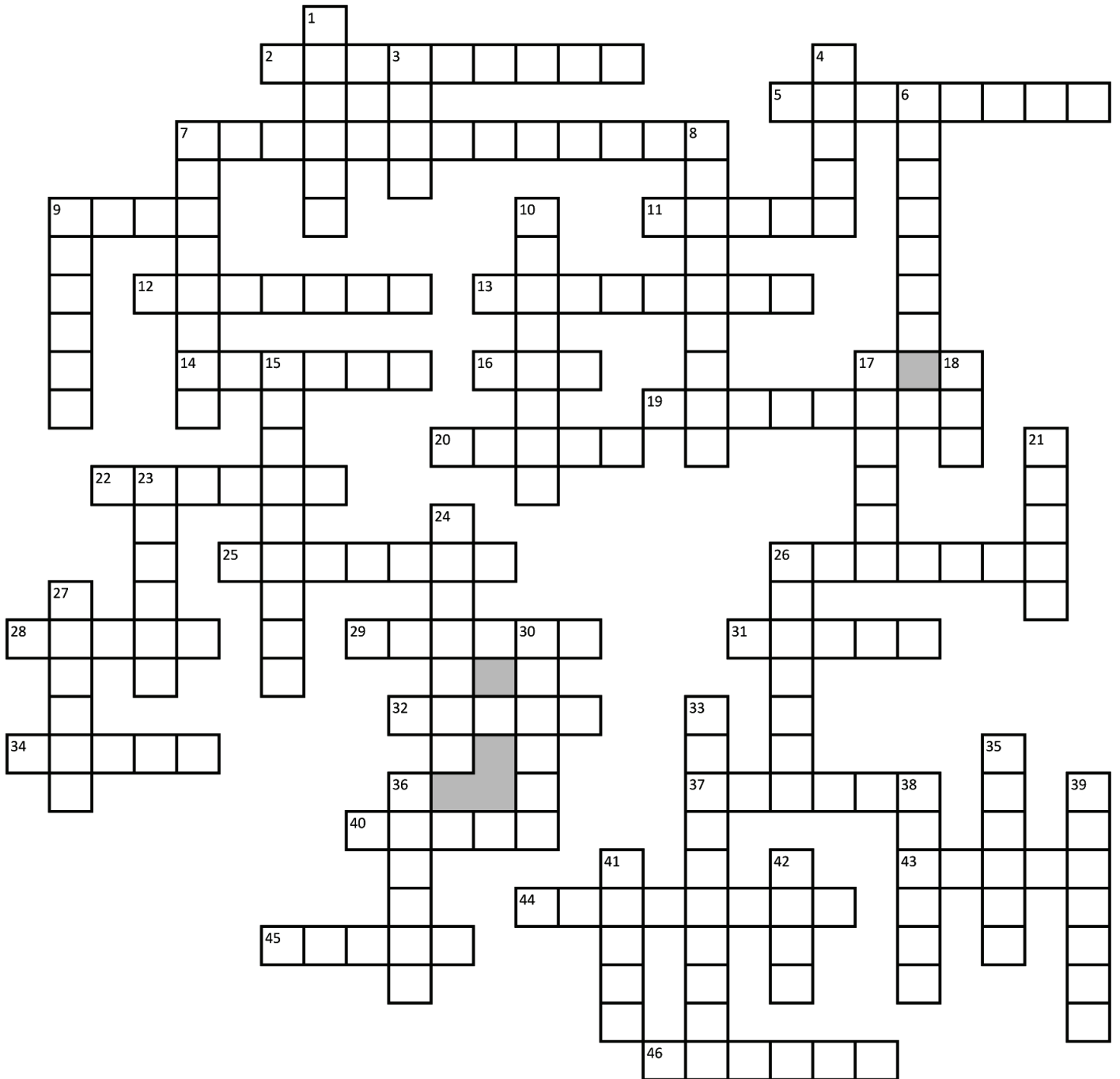
Lacy won her lawsuit, after four years of fighting, but many more lawsuits are in process. Ten teams have been sued so far. The NFL has met its match in cheerleaders. Lacy, who had not considered herself a feminist, now says, "I realize feminism is everything I'm fighting for – equal rights, equal pay, equal treatment."

*Molly Martin is a retired electrician and electrical inspector. She edited Tradeswomen Magazine 1981-1999 along with a collective of tradeswomen, and the book Hard-Hatted Women: Life on the Job, Seal Press.*



# Progressive Crossword Puzzle

by Kelsy Harrison





## Across

2. In May 2020 a White Police Officer killed an African-American Man (see 40 down) in Minneapolis, \_\_\_\_\_, setting off world-wide protests against racism and police brutality.

5. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader \_\_\_\_\_ died in September 2020 at the age of 87.

7. In 2019 the U.S. Mint released a northeastern state quarter depicting a woman working on a loom in Lowell, \_\_\_\_\_.

9. \_\_\_\_\_ Giuliani did such a "good job" as President Trump's lawyer that the New York State Bar Association is investigating his possible disbarment.

11. In 2021 The Rose Bowl was moved from California to \_\_\_\_\_ because the latter state allowed a large crowd to attend the game and spread Covid to the population.

12. The 1879 Tenement Law in New York City mandated \_\_\_\_\_ in every habitable room to increase air flow and prevent any future health pandemics – whoops!

13. Ben \_\_\_\_\_ was a famous African-American Industrial Workers of the World organizer from Philadelphia who worked as a longshoreman.

14. Stacey \_\_\_\_\_ spent years signing up voters in Georgia, which led to the Democrats winning a majority vote in the U.S. Senate in 2021.

16. The first labor day parade in the United States was held in New York City in Eighteen Eighty-\_\_\_\_\_.

19. The state of \_\_\_\_\_ has produced the most United States Presidents.

20. Anne \_\_\_\_\_ wrote "Coming of Age in Mississippi" in the 1960s about growing up poor and becoming a Civil Rights Activist.

22. Norman \_\_\_\_\_ ran for President of the United States six times on the Socialist Party line after previously working for Morris Hillquit's New York City Mayoral Campaign in the 1920s.

25. \_\_\_\_\_ Table: Women of Color Press formed in 1980 by, among others, Audre Lorde and Barbara Smith.

26. The \_\_\_\_\_ District in midtown Manhattan has lost 95% of its jobs since the 1950s but still manufactured tens of thousands of protective gowns for healthcare workers during the Covid Crisis.

28. Civil Rights Activist John \_\_\_\_\_ titled his autobiography "Walking With the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement." He died in 2020 at the age of 80 after serving as a Congressman for 33 years.

29. The \_\_\_\_\_ of Blair Mountain in 1921 in West Virginia saw 10,000 strikers confront 3,000 lawmen and scabs in one of the largest armed uprisings in American history.

31. "Eyes on the \_\_\_\_\_" was an award-winning 14-part PBS series chronicling the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.

32. \_\_\_\_\_ was one of the conspiracy groups behind the January 6, 2021 riot at the U.S. Capitol.

34. The 1894 Cripple \_\_\_\_\_, Colorado five-month strike resulted in a victory for the Western Federation of Miners.

37. "The \_\_\_\_\_ Girls: The Dark Story of America's Shining Women" by Kate Moore chronicles the horrors of women working in factories and becoming contaminated while painting the dials of watches.

40. Congressman \_\_\_\_\_ Clyburn's endorsement of President Biden in the South Carolina Democratic Primary is credited with earning him the win that started him on the path to the Democratic Party nomination.

43. Former Clinton Administration Labor Secretary Robert \_\_\_\_\_ wrote the book "The System: Who Rigged It, How To Fix It."

44. John \_\_\_\_\_ was one of the most famous jazz saxophonists and composers of the twentieth century.

45. Bay Ridge-born \_\_\_\_\_ Yellen was appointed by President Biden as the first female Secretary of the Treasury.

46. Color of \_\_\_\_\_ is the nation's largest online racial justice organization.

## Down

1. American Federation of Teachers members have included Senator Hubert Humphrey, Albert Einstein and holocaust survivor Elie \_\_\_\_\_.

3. \_\_\_\_\_ Nolte starred in the movie "Under Fire" about the overthrow of the Somoza Regime in Nicaragua.

4. Black \_\_\_\_\_ Matter is one of the most effective political groups of the twenty-first century.

6. Cesar Augusto \_\_\_\_\_ led a guerilla movement against the Nicaraguan Government and the U.S. occupation of Nicaragua in the 1920s and 1930s.

7. In 2021 the \_\_\_\_\_ Train Hall finally opened across the street from Penn Station after first being proposed almost thirty years ago by the former United States Senator it was named for.

8. \_\_\_\_\_ Grisham has the distinction of serving ten months as the White House Press Secretary under Donald Trump without holding a single press conference (though she was regularly on Fox News).

9. \_\_\_\_\_ E. Lee's statue in the U.S. Capitol was taken down in 2020 in conjunction with other Confederate statues around the country.

10. \_\_\_\_\_ was a movie starring Meryl Streep and Cher about the corrupt nuclear power industry.

15. One of President Biden's first actions as President was firing the anti-union General Counsel, Peter Robb, of the National Labor \_\_\_\_\_ Board.

*continued on next page*

*continued from previous page*

17. Former Governor Rick \_\_\_ was arrested in 2021, along with eight other former Michigan state officials, for poisoning the water system of Flint.

18. In 2017 then President Trump signed a \_\_\_ bill that by 2027 would give the richest 1% of the population 83% of the benefits.

21. In 2021 Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez skipped the Biden inauguration to walk the picket line with Teamster strikers in the Bronx at the \_\_\_ Point Market.

23. Then-Senator Kamala \_\_\_ had a 100% voting record from the AFL-CIO.

24. "The \_\_\_\_\_ Park Five" was the name of a 2012 documentary by Ken Burns on the wrongful arrest and conviction of five African-American teenagers for the rape and attempted murder of jogger Trisha Meili.

26. The \_\_\_\_\_ Fund was created in the 1920s and donated to causes such as the Sacco-Vanzetti Defense Committee, Brookwood Labor College and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

27. Robert \_\_\_\_\_ starred in the movie "Guilty By Suspicion" about the Hollywood Blacklist.

30. Erik \_\_\_\_\_ wrote the 2018 book "A History of America in Ten Strikes."

33. Barbara \_\_\_\_\_ wrote the books "Nickel and Dimed," "This Land is Their Land: Reports From a Divided Nation," and "Living With a Wild God."

35. The first General \_\_\_\_\_ in United States history occurred in 1835 by the General Trades' Union of the City and County of Philadelphia. 20,000 workers ultimately walked off the job and won the ten-hour day.

36. Blacklisted screenwriter \_\_\_\_\_ Bernstein died in 2021 at the age of 101. He wrote the screenplays for "The Front," "Fail Safe," and "The Molly Maguires."

38. In 2020 J.P. \_\_\_\_\_ Chase & Company paid a record \$920 million fine for manipulating the precious metals futures market as well as treasury securities for over eight years.

39. Comedian Amy \_\_\_\_\_ is the cousin of the new Senate Majority Leader.

41. George \_\_\_\_\_ was killed by a White Policeman in Minneapolis in 2020.

42. Quarterback Colin Kaepernick took a \_\_\_\_\_ in 2016 to protest police brutality against the African-American community and was promptly permanently blacklisted from the National Football League the following year.

Answers on page 11

## SAVE THE DATE!!!

THURSDAY, MARCH 18, 2021 | 6:30 P.M. (CST)

Collaboration of Labor History  
Organizations presents . . .

A VIRTUAL FORUM



### U.S. and Canadian Labor

*Looking to history to build a stronger future for workers, Unions in both nations share similarities and differences, and each can learn from the other.*

#### SARA NELSON

president of the Association of Flight Attendants - CWA, AFL-CIO and an outspoken exponent of strengthening the American labor movement.



#### ALVIN FINKEL

Professor Emeritus, History, Athabasca University. Prominent Canadian historian and author; President Alberta Labour History Institute.



**Moderator: LARRY SPIVAK**, president, Illinois Labor History Society

Discussion to follow

**FREE — Please pre-register at <http://bit.ly/3psja16>**

**The Collaboration of Labor History Organizations (CLHO)** is a network of more the 15 organizations and groups in the United States and Canada that formed in 2019 to network to better preserve and promote history of workers and their unions. For more information contact Ken Germanson at [kagermanson@wisconsinlaborhistory.org](mailto:kagermanson@wisconsinlaborhistory.org)

# Monumental women unveils Women's Rights Pioneers Monument

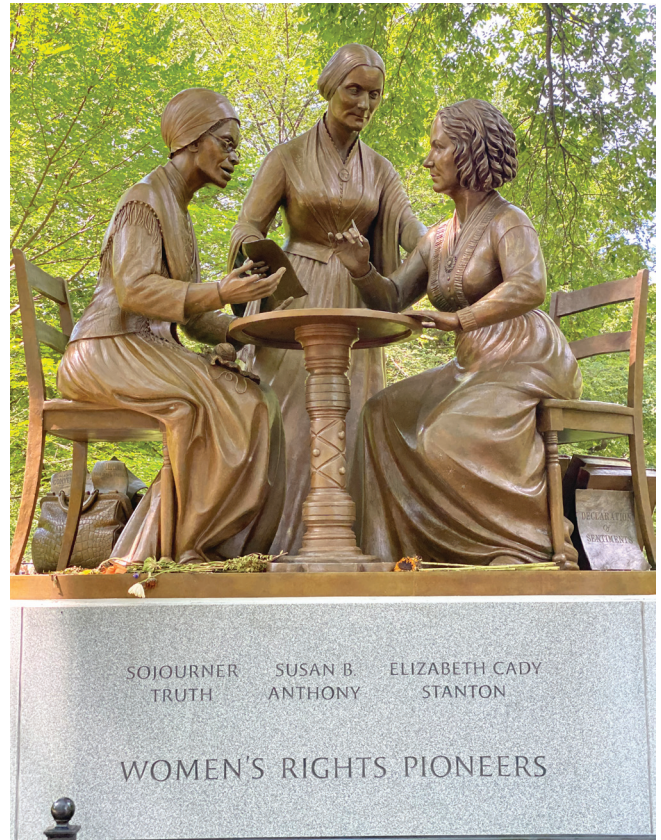
By Silver Krieger, LaborPress, Inc.

**O**n Wednesday, August 26th, Monumental Women, an all-volunteer, not-for-profit organization created in 2014, unveiled a statue seven years in the making, a monument of women's rights pioneers Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. The organization was created with the initial goal of breaking the "bronze ceiling" and creating the first statue of real women in Central Park's 167-year history. There are only five historical women who have statues dedicated to them in New York City: Joan of Arc, Eleanor Roosevelt, Gertrude Stein, Harriet Tubman, and Golda Meir.

The statue was unveiled via livestream from its new home in Central Park, with a masked and socially distant crowd in attendance. The speakers featured a host of public officials including Hillary Clinton, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, and Senator Kirsten Gillibrand. The date was set to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th amendment, which stated that: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States on account of sex."

Meredith Bergmann, the sculptor, said the statue was "a labor of love," and spoke of the defining characteristics of each of its subjects. "Sojourner Truth loved speaking the truth. Her voice was her weapon and art – Susan B. Anthony loved to organize and strategize and win – Elizabeth Cady Stanton loved to write," she said. "These women loved freedom and led a revolution."

Pam Elam, President of the Board of Monumental Women, said, "We're here to move history forward. Not even a pandemic can stop us." She also noted that "the 42 million people who visit Central Park each year will see real women for the first time in its 167-year history."



A theme that surfaced numerous times from the speakers was the importance of women exercising their right to vote. "Nothing is more important to honor the women in this statue than to vote," said Clinton, to resounding applause and a standing ovation.

Elam said, "Especially this November, we will vote like our democracy depends on it, because it does."

## Labor History App

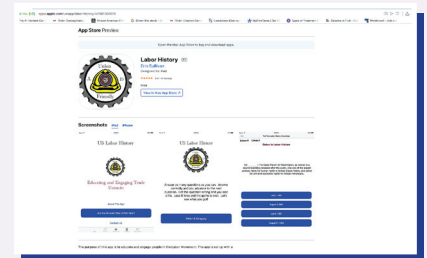
**THE APP** that makes learning about labor history fun and engaging. Makes an excellent travel and commuter companion. If we don't know where we came from then we are doomed to go back there.

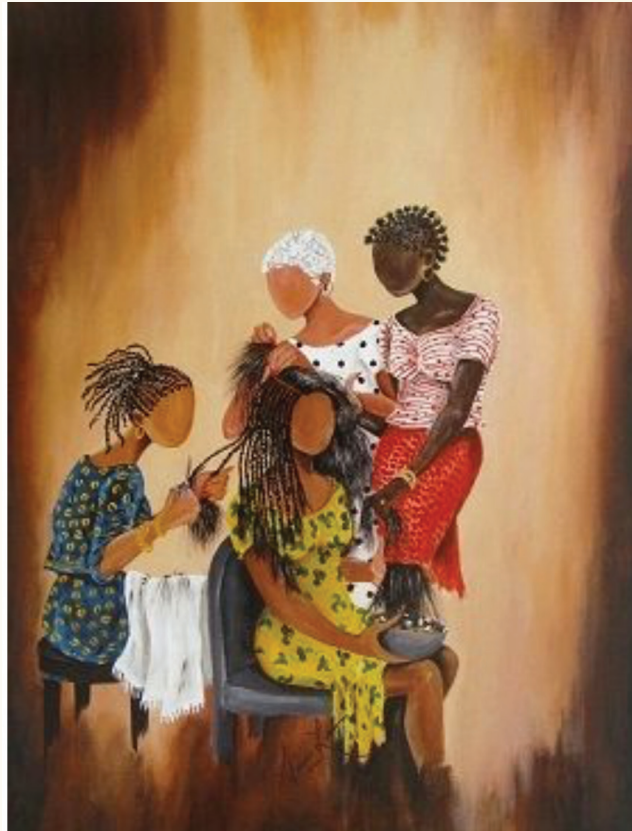
This app has a time line of all the important events that happened in labor history. Click on the time line and you can read all about all the important events that happened in the US Labor Movement. Once you finished reading about the history of the Labor Movement move onto a section that is all about the women and men of the Labor Movement. There are also two sections on Union Facts and Labor Terminology.

Once you have done your homework you can move onto the test. "Are you smarter than a first year apprentice?" Test your skills and graduate at the top of your class.

You will have everything you need to know about how America was built and the history of the US Labor Movement.

Click here to check out app: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/labor-history/id1001330678>





# **The Stories We Tell Across the Atlantic**

Aminata A. Gueye

We know her, and we know her story  
Beginning her days with whispered prayers and closed eyes  
In the middle, she braids with shoulders hunched and a screaming neck  
And ends her day with strained wrists  
Stirring rice in a pot for the family dinner

In the braiding shop, she sits among a mountain of packets and braiding hair and conditioner  
The broken heater at the corner taunts her of the stifling heat of Senegal she misses so much

We know her and we know her story  
The one she tells us when we complain about America  
The one she tells herself when she misses family or an ancient village  
she left behind for a better life

A story of a man who begged and prayed for his papers

An undocumented man  
Everyday for years and years

But one day while at work  
His home caught fire  
And when he made it home  
There was nothing left but gray smoke

So, his neighborhood raised for him  
And he finally did get those papers to bury his family back home  
But she would say, "Would you want papers under those conditions? Let me just wait"

She tells this story as her feet burn from the eight hours of standing  
And when her spine feels twisted and mangled  
Smoothing afro after afro into tiny twists She tells this story when her fingers remain stiff  
Telling her they cannot go on

She tells this story when her immigration lawyer tells her to  
"Please be patient"  
And when her sisters call her across the Atlantic pleading,  
"When will you come home?"

She tells this story to me here and there  
But mostly, she tells it to her self  
So she can wake up tomorrow, ready to work once again

Aminata A. Gueye is a sophomore at Lehman College, CUNY