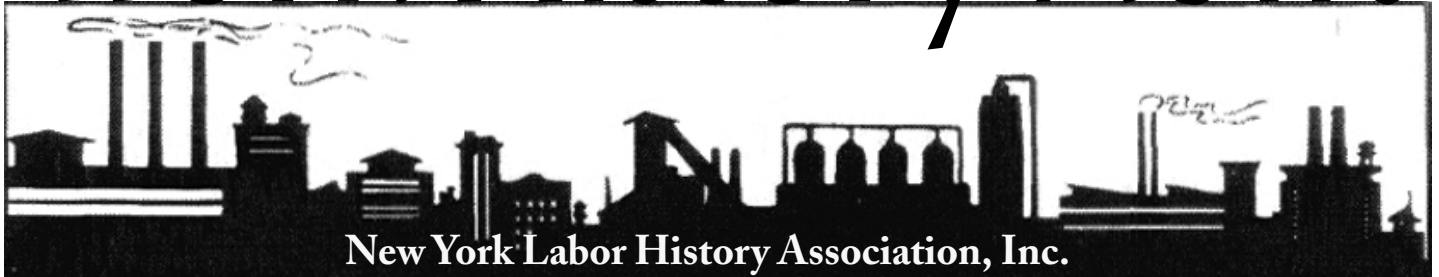


Work History News



New York Labor History Association, Inc.

A Bridge Between Past and Present

Volume 39 No 1 Winter/Spring 2022

2021 John Commerford Labor Education awards

The 35th annual presentation of the John Commerford Labor Education Awards took place on December 2, 2021. For the second year in a row the event had to be virtual, but an enthusiastic audience Zoomed in for the program as Jane McAlevey and Robert Wechsler received their well-deserved accolades.

Michael Koncewicz gave the opening remarks on behalf of NYU's Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, which partnered with the N.Y. Labor History Association to sponsor the event. The life of John Commerford, a labor leader in the 19th Century, was briefly outlined by Irwin Yellowitz, President of the NYLHA. (We had learned with regret earlier in the year that Commerford, who died in 1878, lies in an unmarked grave in Brooklyn's Green-Wood Cemetery.)

Jane McAlevey

The first Commerford Award was presented to Jane McAlevey, and the presenter was Rithika Ramamurthy, President of the Graduate Workers' Union at Brown University. McAlevey is a charismatic organizer, negotiator, author and scholar who was raised in an activist, fourth-generation union household, began in community organizing and environmental justice, and went on to work in the labor movement.

Her book *Raising Expectations (and Raising Hell)* covers her early work with a pioneering Philadelphia hospital organizing campaign, including the defeat of a top union avoidance firm, and the



Jane McAlevey

Robert Wechsler

pressure that led an employer to withdraw bogus legal charges aimed at delaying an NLRB election into oblivion. She went on to help lead a multi-union, multi-year organizing effort of the AFL-CIO (1997-2001) and direct strategic campaigns with the SEIU (2002-2008). She earned her Ph.D from the CUNY Graduate Center in 2015, and since 2019 has been a Senior Policy Fellow at the University of California at Berkeley's Labor Center, focusing on techniques for empowering workers. McAlevey is the "Strikes" correspondent for *The Nation* and has authored *Turning the Tables: Participation and Power in Negotiations* (with Abby Lawlor), *No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age*, and *A Collective Bargain: Unions, Organizing, and the Fight for Democracy*.

McAlevey is a relentless organizer, telling us that "[u]nions need to expand their base if Democrats are to stand any real chance in the future; simultaneously, they need to provide deep political education. The organizing strategies that achieve both winning more and helping workers understand who and what divides and oppresses

them make up what I call whole worker organizing."

Robert Wechsler

The second Commerford Award was presented to Robert Wechsler, and the presenter was Jim Gannon, a long-time colleague of Wechsler at the Transport Workers Union. Bob still remembers the union label on the bread baked by his grandfather, a union baker, and when he grew up Bob built a career based on a commitment to labor education and workers' empowerment. Starting at the Transport Workers Union in 1981, he served as Director of Education and Research from 1990-2010. The study materials and training programs he developed created an educational pipeline enabling many rank-and-file members to advance through local leadership and national union staff positions. Wechsler taught history and collective bargaining at Baruch College, Empire State College, the National Labor College, and Bronx Community College. An award-winning labor journalist, his books and articles cover a broad range of subjects, including Jewish tailors in London's East End, racism in the Philadelphia transit system, bargaining and contracts and more. He was an active Board member of the NYLHA from its earliest days, serving three terms as president, and developing a NYLHA Labor History News Service that distributed articles monthly to about 100 newspapers. Serving on the Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives Advisory Board, Wechsler was instrumental in securing the donation of

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The Red Thread



By Keith Danish

The Red Thread, by Jacob A. Zumoff (Rutgers University Press, 2021)

As a Northern New Jerseyan (not a Jerseyite) with an

interest in labor history, I knew about the 1913 Paterson Silk Workers Strike, and the involvement therewith of the “Wobblies”, back when Paterson was “Silk City”. Now, thanks to author Jacob A. Zumoff, I know about the context, the events, and the consequences of another radical-tinged strike in my home territory, the Passaic Textile Strike of 1926, which shut down the Botany and Forstmann woolen mills, and others, in Passaic and nearby towns for a year.

An AF of L textile union, the United Textile Workers, had been uninterested in organizing the Passaic textile workers, especially those in low-skill jobs. Curiously, the UTW’s newspaper was supported by ads placed by the mills, presenting a clear conflict of interest.

When one mill cut workers’ pay by 10%, and the AF of L still would not help them, the workers turned to a group of Communists, especially Albert Weisbord, a City College and Harvard Law grad, who organized a “United Front Committee” to lead the strike. The Communists proved that they could get favorable publicity for the strike (in part from NYC artists and intellectuals, as had been done during the great Silk Strike), maintain solidarity, organize food and other relief for strikers, get them legal defense against the many arrests carried out by police, produce and sell a propaganda pamphlet called “Hell in New Jersey”, and make a silent film called “The Passaic Textile Strike”. Government repression of strikers and their allies was severe, with the right of free speech almost nullified. The AF of L was hostile, calling the strike leaders “Communitic”. Eventually, the Red leaders had to back off, and the workers joined the Federation’s United Textile Workers, which negotiated a settlement of modest gains for the workers, which proved to be illusory.

These young Communists displayed organizational talents of a type which would help build the CIO a decade later. But the downside of a strike led by Communists was that mill owners, government officials and police (and the aforementioned AF of L) could paint the event as a subversive activity and disregard or downplay the authentic grievances of the workers. Sympathy for the strike emanating from Moscow could be portrayed as evidence of a foreign conspiracy to attack American capitalism. The strike was also affected by the shifts in labor strategy by American Communists [as influenced by Moscow], from “boring from within” to “dual [revolutionary] unionism”, which moves are analyzed with skill by author Zumoff.

The Passaic strike history was reflected in several 1934 actions, by San Francisco longshoremen, Minneapolis truckers and Toledo auto parts makers, who were led by radical organizers attempting to forge working-class solidarity as well as improve pay and working conditions. These organizers would then be involved in the great CIO drives of the 30’s.

The “Wobblies” are alive in Northern New Jersey

By Keith Danish

FIVE SCORE AND sixteen years ago, the Industrial Workers of the World union (the “IWW”, or “Wobblies”) was founded at a 1905 convention in Chicago, with the intent of becoming the “One Big Union” for all wage workers, regardless of craft, creed, color, gender or nationality, and the ultimate goal of “abolition of the wage system” and worker control of the means of production, through the General Strike and the establishment of a “Cooperative Commonwealth”. The IWW’s history is set forth definitively in “We Shall Be All”, written by our colleague Melvyn Dubofsky. While it was almost crushed during and after the First World War through the concerted



actions of business, government, and vigilantes, “the IWW planted the idea of industrial unionism deeply in the politics of the US labor movement, paving the way for the industrial union drives of the CIO in the 1930’s.” (*International Socialist Review* #86)

Today’s IWW has a website (iww.org) and social media presences and conducts its organizing drives through branches
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Work History News



Work History News is published twice per year to keep NYLHA members informed about our organization’s work and labor history events. For more information, visit us at newyorklaborhistory.org.

President	Irwin Yellowitz
Vice-President	George Altomare
Secretary	Abbe Nosoff; Regina Olff
Treasurer	Peter Filardo
Editor	Keith Danish

2021 Bernhardt Prize Winner

The 2021 Debra E. Bernhardt Labor Journalism Prize was presented (via Zoom) on October 12, 2021 to Martha Pskowski, for her article “Saving Lives and Going Hungry: NYC Ambulance Workers Demand Higher Pay”. The article had appeared in *The Nation* on April 6, 2021.

The winner

The Bernhardt Prize is an award of \$1000 given annually for an article that furthers the understanding of the history of working people. It honors the vision of the late Debra E. Bernhardt, a labor historian whose efforts to document the hidden histories of working people included service as the head of the Tamiment Library/ Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives at New York University, and co-authorship (with Rachel Bernstein) of “Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives”, a book of photographs and oral histories of working New Yorkers. The Bernhardt Prize is sponsored by the New York Labor History Association and NYU’s Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, with co-sponsorship by LaborArts, Metro New York Labor Communications Council, and the NYC Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO.



Martha Pskowski

Martha Pskowski, author of the prize-winning article, is the “Environmental Watchdog Reporter” for the El Paso (Texas) Times. In her article, she explored the history, low wages and poor working conditions of a crucial workforce in New York City, the EMTs and paramedics who ride the city’s ambulances. The stress level on these workers has been high during COVID crisis peaks, and they were working without a contract since their collective bargaining agreement expired in 2018. Ms. Pskowski informed us that in August of 2021, four months after her article appeared, a new, retroactive contract

between the city and EMT Locals 2507 and 3621 was negotiated, with wage increases and other benefits for the workers. The agreement was ratified in October.

Following the award presentation, a lively conversation was held with Nastaran Mohit, organizing director of the NewsGuild of New York, and Edward Ongweso Jr., who covers labor and technology for “Motherboard”, the technology section of the online news source “VICE News”. The speakers discussed the upswing in organizing of media workers, especially digital journalists, e.g., at “Gawker”, although the NewsGuild has also made inroads among journalists at the *L.A. Times* newsroom, an historically anti-union environment.

Labor and “new media”

We expect to see more and more coverage of what has been labelled “labor’s renaissance”, but those who grew up in the era when “legacy media” was dominant (print newspapers, and three TV networks) should accustom themselves to getting labor news from “new media” such as blogs, podcasts, webzines and the independent voices based on sites like Substack and Patreon.

A Labor Acrostic

1						
2						
3						
4						
5						

Horizontal Clues

1. The Rebel Girl
2. Often on pins and needles
3. Director of Nat’l. Domestic Workers Alliance
4. Quit as a union VP due to sexism, returned to seamstress work
5. NYLHA stalwart, with labor history in her DNA

Diagonal Clue (light-grey boxes)

“A well-paid slave is, nonetheless, a slave”

Answers on page 5

Looking back at the life and times of – *James McNamara*

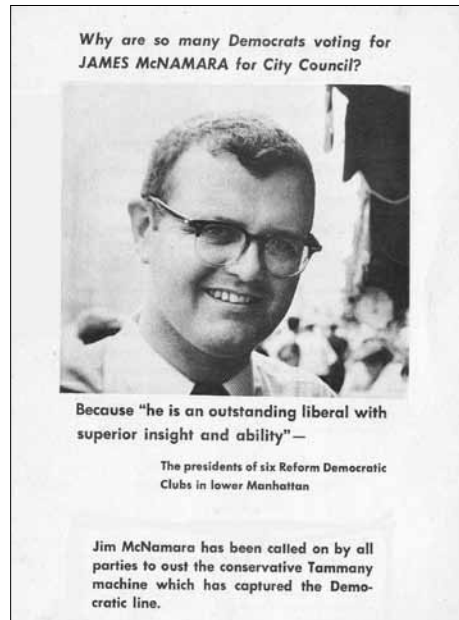
By Jane LaTour, Editor Emerita of
Work History News

On Oct. 21, 2021, a celebration of the life of James McNamara took place via Zoom. Sponsors, including the New York Labor History Association, LaborArts, the Robert F. Wagner Labor Collections/Tamiment Library at New York University, the Association for Union Democracy (AUD), and CUNY's Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism, came together to honor the commitments and legacy of the late Mr. McNamara. Shannon O'Neill, curator for the Tamiment Library, hosted the event. She noted that he had a willingness to put himself on the line and he did – for labor. Both O'Neill and Rachel Bernstein spoke about the enduring nature of an archival collection and the fact that McNamara's papers are housed at NYU's labor archives ensures that his work will have an enduring presence.

A slide show prepared by CUNY Emeritus Sociology Professor William Kornblum featured many of the highlights of McNamara's long life, beginning with his debut as a labor organizer at Yankee Stadium in 1951, when he brought together the hotdog and peanut vendors and his zealous representation resulted in him losing his job. Born into the working-class as the son of a TWU member, Jim's career centered around attempts to correct some of the labor movement's major flaws. His expertise addressed both racial discrimination in the building trades' unions and the endemic corruption that flourished in the construction industry.

A trusted source

Professor Kornblum's slide show, with slides accompanied by Charles Mingus's song, "Pork Pie Hat" (jazz being one of McNamara's passions), was "a way to put a face on the man." The two men served together for over 30 years on the board of the Association



for Union Democracy. Oftentimes, in the words of the muckraking journalist Jack Newfield, McNamara served as "an inconvenient impediment" to the hopes and dreams of those he worked for, including Mayor Ed Koch.

AUD Executive Director Kurt Richwerger spoke about the work that Jim did reporting on various reform attempts in the unions, among other stories. "He had a unique and engaging style," said Richwerger. "He was humorous and didn't waste words. He lobbed zingers at union officials and law enforcement for failing to do their jobs." Reading excerpts from some of McNamara's stories, he noted that, "there was no one else like him. He was entertaining and a true believer. What he truly cared about was if the rank and file was being done a disservice."

CUNY journalism professor Tom Robbins read a tribute from former New York Times reporter, Selwyn Raab, who called McNamara, "the most selfless, honest person, fighting for the blue-collar workers and opponent of organized crime." McNamara played a role in many of Raab's stories. "He was my behind-the-scenes helper," he said. "He was a key witness at hearings and trials; he

took it all in stride; he went on to be the top consultant in the (state's) Organized Crime Task Force. It's long overdue to praise his services," said Raab.

Tom Robbins called himself "just another member of those deeply indebted for his tips and insider information. There were a lot of his recipients," Robbins recalled, including Jack Newfield. "You could spot a McNamara clip a mile away. The most marvelous thing was the way he tried to protect his heroes. Jim always kept his hand in," said Robbins.

A role model

Family members took part in the celebration. Nancy McNamara Hall, Jim's daughter, spoke about his impact. "He touched so many while he was fighting for them. He was a role model and an inspiration. He lived his life fighting for all people to be treated with dignity," she said.

Several NYLHA board members weighed in with remembrances, including Miriam Frank, Bill Henning, and Jon Bloom. As Bloom observed, "While he offered hard-hitting criticism of union corruption, he was fervently pro-union. That was the attachment that made him so passionate about rooting out corruption, and it was something I treasured." As Shannon O'Neill offered, "Holding our organizations accountable is almost always an act of love."

Former AUD Executive Director Susan Jennik spoke about McNamara's role in the organization, and noted that, "it was a privilege and an honor to work with him." After watching the program on-line, pioneering tradeswoman Irene Soloway recalled "how supported she felt by McNamara in the efforts to integrate women into the construction trades and their mutual participation in the movement for democracy in the carpenters' union." As Rachel Bernstein observed, "the program was intimate and revealing. Just the right length, and it captured his spirit."

In Memoriam

WITH SADNESS, we note the passing in December 2021 of three members of the NYLHA family:

LARRY CARY (age 69): A co-founder of the NYLHA and a recipient of its Commerford Award, Larry was a trade unionist, an organizer, an educator and a lawyer on the side of unions and workers. As a teenaged stock boy, he was organizing workers at A&S in Brooklyn, and became a full-time organizer for United Storeworkers. He taught in a high school, at Hofstra University, and, after becoming a lawyer, he taught labor law for 24 years at Cornell University. His many clients at the “Vladeck” law firm and then at his own firm “Cary Kane” included TWU Local 100, NYCOSH, a joint board of the ACTWU, and many union pension and welfare plans. He was instrumental in developing the Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, and even proposed the award

we know as the John Commerford Labor Education Award and got then-Governor Mario Cuomo to proclaim May “Labor History Month”.

MARVIN GOODMAN (age 94): A board member of both the NYLHA and the New York Association of Retired Americans, Marvin was a teacher and an administrator in the New York City schools, spending most of his career at P.S. 189 in Washington Heights. He was a selfless and tireless leader in many civic and community groups, serving on Community Board 8 for many years on its parks, libraries, land use and aging committees. He was an early leader in the NYC Council of Supervisors and Administrators, president of its Bronx retiree chapter, and delegate to the Central Labor Council. Additionally, he was president of the Association of Assistant Principals, and assisted

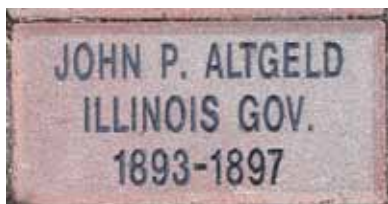
in planning and carrying out many activities at the NYLHA.

MICHAEL HIRSCH (age 76): An activist from his school days, Michael was involved in numerous protest movements and organizations, including the early Students for a Democratic Society, the antiwar movement of the 1960s and ‘70s, the International Socialists, Ed Sadlowski’s campaign for leadership of the United Steelworkers of America, the Democratic Socialists of America, the Left Labor Project, and New Jewish Agenda. He was a staff writer for the United Federation of Teachers, a freelance writer for the *The Independent*, a contributor to *The Village Voice*, *Democratic Left*, *Labor Notes*, and *New Labor Forum*, and a cultural moderator for *Portside*. He was a longtime editorial board member of *New Politics* and *Radical America*.

We are grateful to these comrades-in-arms for the selfless, socially conscious, activist lives they lived and the examples they have set for us all.

Building labor history, brick by brick

Recent additions to the “Silk Walk” at the American Labor Museum/Botto House in Haledon, New Jersey include memorial bricks for Illinois Governor John Peter Altgeld and labor leader Max Pine.



JOHN PETER ALTGELD granted a pardon in 1893 to the imprisoned “Haymarket Bombing” defendants (the ones who had not been sent to the gallows) seven years after the bombing, after personally reviewing the trial records

and concluding that the trial had been grossly unfair and the jury prejudiced. Altgeld took this action knowing it would destroy his political career, which it did. His memorial brick adjoins one for Albert Parsons, the anarchist and labor activist who was one of the Haymarket Martyrs, and another for Albert’s widow Lucy, a lifelong radical “agitator” in her own right.



MAX PINE, as a vigorous young organizer in the needle trades, became known as the “Knee Pants Liberator”

and “a new East Side Moses”. He became Secretary and the effective leader of the United Hebrew Trades, a federation that promoted the growth of New York unions. Prominent in relief work in devastated European Jewish communities during and after World War 1, he served on the Joint Distribution Committee. As a Labor Zionist, he chaired the National Labor Committee of the Organized Jewish Workers in Palestine and was an early backer of Histadrut, the Israel general labor foundation. Pine was also one of the founders of the “Jewish Daily Forward”.

The bricks were sponsored by a board member of the NYLHA and by a descendant of Max Pine.

Answers to A Labor Acrostic:

Horizontal: (1) Flynn; (2) ILGWU; (3) Poo; (4) Pesotta; (5) Fried; Diagonal: Flood

Labor and sports

By Keith Danish

It was two years ago when Marvin Miller finally received enough votes from the “Modern Baseball Era Committee” of the Baseball Hall of Fame to be inducted therein (posthumously), overcoming years of hostility and obstruction by the baseball establishment. However, Miller’s formal induction ceremony could not be held until last summer, due to the COVID-19 crisis. Finally, on September 8, 2021, Miller joined the baseball immortals in Cooperstown, at the same time as Yankee great Derek Jeter and other players who benefited so much from Miller’s stewardship of the Major League Baseball Players Association. As noted on his plaque, he was a “game-changing labor leader” whose “efforts led to vast improvements for players in compensation and conditions both on and off the field”.

Our fellow NYLHA board member Paul Cole attended the induction ceremony and reported that the award to Miller was cheered by the attendees, although there was some booing of Donald Fehr (who headed the Players Association after Marvin retired), whose long encomium to Miller delayed the main event, the induction of Derek Jeter.

On deck, Curt Flood?

Will Curt Flood follow Marvin Miller into the Hall of Fame? A dynamic hitter and outfielder for the St. Louis Cardinals, this proud African American refused to accept a trade to Philadelphia after the 1969 season, giving up a salary boost to \$100,000, because of his belief that he was entitled to freely market his services to all teams. He told the Commissioner of Baseball that “a well-paid slave is, nonetheless, a slave”. Flood brought an antitrust lawsuit against Major League Baseball, knowing that his chances were not good, and in 1972 the U.S. Supreme Court upheld its antiquated (1922) precedent that baseball was not engaged



in “interstate commerce” and cannot be sued under the antitrust law until Congress acts to change the law. Flood’s career was over, but his act of consciousness-raising accelerated the movement for “free agency”, which came to fruition in 1975. Flood died in 1997, at age 59, so his entry into the Hall of Fame, if achieved, will be posthumous. Professor Peter Dreier has written that “Flood deserves a plaque in Cooperstown for the combination of his on-field performance and his personal sacrifice so future players might have it better than he did. His absence diminishes the Hall of Fame.”

On May 29, 2022, it will be a century since the U.S. Supreme Court issued its aforementioned decision. In May, which is Labor History Month, the NY Labor History Association will present a program on current issues affecting baseball’s labor relations, so please watch for further news about our program. As we go to press, the players have been locked out by the owners, and there are ongoing negotiations for a new Collective Bargaining Agreement, but The New York Times reports that a “[g]ulf between M.L.B. and Its Players Threatens Start of Spring Training.” Perhaps one can place a legal bet on the viability of the 2022 regular season.

Labor law news

Kudos to Dave Prouty, who started a five-year term at the National Labor Relations Board last August, following his appointment by President Biden. Dave was a panelist at our 2018 program on baseball’s labor relations, back when he was a Counsel to the Major League Baseball Players Association. His labor law

career has included postings as General Counsel for UNITE-HERE and for SEIU’s Local 32BJ.

Speaking of the NLRB, its General Counsel issued an important opinion memo last September, holding that college athletes should be classified as “employees” under the National Labor Relations Act. This act may have long-term significance in the ongoing struggle to compensate or even unionize the participants in big-time, big-money college sports. Use of the misleading term “student-athlete” by colleges and athletic associations may also be on the way out, as the NLRB General Counsel is taking the position that it is a separate violation of the NLRA. In a recent antitrust case before the U.S. Supreme Court, Justice Kavanaugh opined that “the NCAA’s business model would be flatly illegal in almost any other industry in America”, so we may see a bi-partisan consensus emerging over the rights of college “employee-athletes” (a more honest label than “student-athletes”).

The **Players Associations**, i.e., unions, representing the top-level professional athletes in baseball, football, basketball and hockey have endorsed the “Protecting the Right to Organize Act”, aka The PRO Act. This bill includes many features to facilitate union organizing and collective bargaining, including, in part: redefinition of many “independent contractors” to make them “employees”; undermining of state “right-to-work” laws; monetary penalties for employers who fire union organizers; limits on “captive audience” meetings held by employers to warn employees against unionizing; and re-defining “joint employers” to make franchisors more responsible for conduct of franchisees. While the U.S. House of Representatives passed The PRO Act in March 2021, it is unlikely to be approved by the Senate until the Democrats achieve a filibuster-proof majority (or end the filibuster).

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2021 John Commerford awards

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hundreds of boxes of TWU records and in the creation of a TWU oral history collection at the Archives, inspiring other unions to do the same. Robert Wechsler told us that education must be a core value of a union, and that its history must inspire current and future members.

As part of each Commerford program, two additional labor history awards are presented, i.e.: Bernard Bellush Prize, for the best graduate level submission: this year the recipient was Benjamin Schmack, University of Kansas for his paper, "Defending the Southland: The Ku Klux Klan's War on Communism in the 1930s", focusing on the Klan's reactions to organizing drives in the South by the Communist Party USA.

Barbara Mayer Wertheimer Prize, for the best undergraduate submission: this year the recipient was Michelle Lokken, The Honors College University

of Wisconsin Oshkosh for her honors thesis, "Catherine Conroy: Bridging the Gap Between the Labor Movement and the Women's Movement 1942-1989". Conroy, a founding member of both the National Organization for Women and the Coalition of Labor Union Women, helped to organize the Communications Workers of America.

Philoine Fried award

A new annual Prize was also announced at the 2021 Commerford event, namely, the Philoine Fried Award, given to a rank-and-file unionist (not a union officer or staff member) who makes a significant contribution to the union's mission. In other words, an unsung hero! The eponymous "Phil" Fried, who died in 2019 at the age of 102, was a beloved founding member, Treasurer and vital supporter of the NYLHA. The daughter of labor giants Sidney Hillman and Bessie Abramowitz, she gave us a lifetime of service and so it is

fitting and proper for the aforementioned award to bear her name. The first Fried Award was introduced by NYLHA's Miriam Frank and presented to Dennis O'Neil, a retired postal worker who, from 2013 to 2016, led a spirited "Stop Staples" campaign of sidewalk picketing outside Staples' stores, thwarting efforts to establish "mini-post offices" inside 1600 of the company's stores nationwide.

The evening's program was also bookended with inspiring songs by Yancyabril, and closed out with an inspirational message from Rachel Bernstein, chair of the Commerford Awards planning committee, who urged all attendees to be activists, whether by advocating labor reforms, writing letters, protesting, whatever one can do! Thanks to all who worked so hard to plan this event and raise the funds which permit the NYLHA to carry on its own "Labor Education" work throughout the year at no cost to the general public.

Labor and sports

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We'll wrap up this issue's Sports Section with the closing lines of a poem about Curt Flood:

He fought with the front office, he wanted to be paid a hundred thousand dollars.

He was traded to the Phillies, but he didn't want to go

Thirty years old, how many more years did he have?

And so he took his stand: "I do not feel that I am a piece of property to be bought and sold irrespective of my wishes."

He wanted to talk to other teams, see what they thought he was worth.

When the case went to court, not a single active player attended – none would testify on his behalf. A couple of old-timers, Jackie Robinson and Hank Greenberg, Hall

of Famers who had suffered themselves, but who were by then beyond retribution, had to get in the witness box for him.

It didn't help; he'd hit a wall he couldn't Bounce off of, couldn't reach over.

[From *The Walls Curt Flood Ran Into*, by Con Chapman, used with his permission]

The "Wobblies"

(continued from page 2)

such as the Northern New Jersey Branch based in Paterson, NJ. Your correspondent sat in on their monthly meeting for December, held at the Botto House in Haledon, NJ, an historically-resonant site considering that IWW speakers such as Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Carlo Tresca and Big Bill Haywood addressed the striking Paterson silk workers from the Botto House balcony during the great Silk Strike of 1913.

The seven young "Wobblies" at the meeting took care of organizational business including the nomination of officers, while noting that they function as a direct democracy, with no unilateral powers in the hands of officers, but instead that all policy decisions are made by the members. Various workplace organizing committees and training programs for organizers were discussed, including organization of fast-food workers, health-care testers, printers,

incarcerated workers, and sex workers. The IWW has always sought to organize workers who were and are overlooked by traditional labor unions.

If a "pandemic-era union renaissance" is underway (Axios, 2/3/21), will the IWW's century-old but still radical organizational models be attractive to today's workers, especially those who reject traditional ways of working and living? We shall watch, with interest, the progress of the Wobblies of Northern New Jersey.

NEW YORK LABOR HISTORY ASSOCIATION
Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives
70 Washington Square South, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10012



Upcoming Events

We hope you will join us at the following events.

January 27, 2022 – 7:30 pm ET, via Zoom: **“Teaching Our Kids About Labor History: Challenges, Opportunities and Strategies”**, presented by the U.S. – Canada Labor History Network. To register, press “Control” and click on this link: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/labor-history-network-forum-teaching-our-kids-about-labor-history-tickets-237583477577>

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

February 7, 2022 – 6 pm ET, a virtual film showing of **“The Power to Heal: Medicare and the Civil Rights Revolution”**, followed by a discussion with the filmmaker, Dr. Barbara Berney, a scholar in public health, environmental justice, and the U.S. health care system. Register at newyorklaborhistory.org.

February 16, 2022 – 6 pm ET, via Zoom: **“Organizing the Black Medical Community”**, panel discussion with Dr. Donald Moore, President of Provident Clinical Society, the Brooklyn affiliate of the NMA and a Board

Member of Physicians for a National Health Program-Metro (PNHP) [moderator], Dr. Doris Browne, 118th President of the National Medical Association (NMA), Dr. Julius Johnson, president and founder of Greater NYC Black Nurses Association, and Lystra Sawney, VP of a new organizing department of 1199SEIU focused on home healthcare workers. Register at newyorklaborhistory.org.

WOMEN’S HISTORY MONTH

March 23, 2022 – 6 pm ET, via Zoom: **“Kate Mullany and America’s First All-Female Union” (the Troy Collar Laundry Workers Union)**, presented by Paul F. Cole, Executive Director of the American Labor Studies Center. Register at newyorklaborhistory.org.

LABOR HISTORY MONTH

May of 2022 – a program via Zoom about labor and civil rights issues, past and present, relating to the business of baseball. Check newyorklaborhistory.org for details in due course.