

Labor and Labor Movements Section Business meeting

Friday, 8/17

Minutes by Ellen Reese (Secretary/Treasurer)

I. Statements by Chris Tilly (outgoing chair)

- a. We had a great program this year including the 2012 real utopia sessions and have a great reception planned at the IATSE local in downtown Denver.
- b. There were 15 matches made through the mentoring committee (chaired by Carolina Bank Munoz)
- c. Our section now has both an announcements list-serve and a discussion list-serve. The latter allows for on-going discussions about current events and labor campaigns as well as the circulation of petitions. See e-mail message from Chris Tilly on how to join these list-serves.
- d. China-US mini-conference will happen in conjunction with the ASA meetings next year. Already a delegation of US labor scholars & activists traveled to China to meet with Chinese labor scholars and representatives from worker organizations and there will be a second delegation to China.

II. Election Results (Steve Lopez, in-coming chair)

Chair Elect: Steve McKay, UC Santa Cruz

Incoming Council Member: Belinda Lum, University of San Diego

Student Council Member: Erin Michaels, CUNY Graduate Center

III. Financial report (Ellen Reese, Secretary/Treasurer)

The section currently has \$4,111.75 in its budget.

IV. Membership report (Steve Lopez)

We currently have 381 members as of the end of July. If we reach 400 by 9/30, we can have 3 sessions on the 2013 ASA program. Please help us recruit new members!

V. International Sociological Association Report (Peter Evans)

- a. We had a fantastic program at the 2012 meeting in Argentina, including 3 activist sessions with members of the Argentinian labor movement. Many of the sessions

were bilingual. The upcoming ISA will be in Yokohama and so will likely feature Asian labor issues. The ISA will start organizing sessions in January! Come to Yokohama!

VI. Members' Announcements

- a. Publication of Heidi Gottfried's new book, *Gender, Work & Economy* (Polity Press) was announced.
- b. Full professors should consider paying for membership in the L&LM section for graduate students so they can more easily join it.
- c. There is a faculty position open at U Mass Amherst for a "professor of praxis" that focuses on applied labor research, worker education, etc.

VII. Committee sign-ups (Steve Lopez)

- a. Steve Lopez passed around sign-up sheets for section committees. Please contact him if you were unable to sign-up but want to help out with the section.
- b. The council decided to form a new committee to explore the formation of a new journal or partnering with an existing journal so that the section has an official journal. This would raise the intellectual visibility & gravitas of our section. There are various interdisciplinary labor studies journals and *Work & Occupations*, but no journal for the sociology of labor & labor movements. The committee would develop the mission of the journal, identify potential scholars to serve as the managing editor and members of the editorial board, propose a budget for the journal & identify the resources necessary to produce & distribute the journal, etc.
- c. A newsletter co-editor is needed.

VIII. ASA 2013 Program (Steve Lopez)

- A. The council proposes that the sessions at next year's ASA meeting be domestic focused since the mini-conference is globally oriented. If we get 400 members by 9/30, we can have 3 sessions on the program. The council proposed that one session focus on the precarity of work, another on the labor movement, and that we bring a gender & race focus to whatever panels we do.
- B. Our section proposed a thematic session but it was not approved. We still have opportunities to propose regional spotlight sessions.
- C. Members' suggestions
 1. The attack on the public sector & public employees

2. Applied research with unions
3. Labor-community-immigrant coalitions
4. Overcoming inequality at the workplace
5. Women & minorities in the labor movement
6. Labor & the Occupy movement (and social movements more generally)

VII. Miniconference (Steve McKay)

A. Report by Steve McKay (on behalf of the mini-conference program committee)

In 2013, we will hold a one-day mini-conference that features Chinese labor scholars. The conference will have a global & comparative perspective on labor and the labor movement. Funding for the conference comes from a Ford Foundation grant along with section funds.

The conference will occur in New York City around the time of the 2013 ASA conference. We have reserved space at the Murphy Institute for the mini-conference on Friday & Saturday (during the ASA), but we are still investigating the options on the best day & possible co-sponsors. Our negotiations with the PEWS section didn't go well as they already organized their own mini-conference and just wanted us to join it, which didn't work well for our own program. Co-sponsoring the mini-conference with SSSP is another option we are investigating. We are also seeing if it's a problem to organize the mini-conference as an official ASA section mini-conference on Saturday (the day before our ASA day) since this timing would conflict with the general ASA meeting.

The program is likely to include 4-5 panels (4 panels & a plenary lunch event). We need to keep in mind that the Chinese scholars will require translation time as we plan the sessions.

Ideas for program themes include:

- Comparing China with other countries & Hong Kong (and South-South relations)
- Insurgency & institutions: Are the masses really rising in China?
- Transnational labor solidarity
- Migrant laborers
- Ethnographic research on workers

The program committee needs new members who can help with (1) local logistics; (2) publicity; (3) webmaster, etc. Please sign-up or contact Steve McKay if you are interested in helping out.

B. Members' feedback

- a. The day before ASA is best and in a separate space is best.
- b. The PEWS mini-conference is "power & justice in the world system" and seems very relevant to our section mini-conference. We should reconsider the decision to not work with them.
- c. The Global Labor mini-conference last year was very successful, partly due to multi-section sponsorship. Possible co-sponsors for this mini-conference could include other ASA sections, such as the global & transnational section, the social movement section, political sociology, race, class & gender, Asia & Asian Americans, etc.
- d. There is some sort of NYC activist-focused event that SSSP organizers are working on and we should look into connecting with this as well as the SSSP meeting more generally.
- e. We should use the internet beforehand to get to know each other before the conference happens. This will be an intimate conference of like-minded scholars.
- f. Chinese scholars could be on cross-national panels vs. one panel focusing on China. Steve McKay welcomes input on this issue.
- g. The PEWS special topical conference in April is another possible model to follow. Local folks provided housing and funds were spent to help people with travel. However, the Ford Foundation grant only authorizes funding for a conference held in conjunction with the 2013 ASA conference in NYC.

VIII. Award Winners

2012 Distinguished Scholarly Monograph Award (Presented by Steve McKay, chair of this award committee)

Rhacel Parrenas for *Illicit Flirtations: Labor, Migration, and Sex Trafficking in Tokyo*. Stanford University Press, 2011.

Parrenas' fascinating ethnography is a riveting, insightful and compelling account of an important new segment of women workers in the global economy: migrant female "entertainers" bound for work in the global sex industry. Based on participant observation in various Tokyo

nightclubs and in-depth interviews with the Filipina migrant hostesses who work in them, Parrenas provides a searing examination of the moral worlds of sexualized labor. She challenges the prevailing assumption that all migrant hostesses in Japan are trafficked and engaged in prostitution, and instead, shows that they are caught up in complicated forms of "indentured mobility." She carefully examines how a variety of factors, from migrant debt bondage to the organization of work both inside and outside clubs, create relations of exploitation and coercion between migrant hostesses, labor brokers, club owners, and clients. She also shows how Filipina migrant hostesses rework notions of femininity and masculinity to enhance their income and earnings, as well as control the dynamics of sexualized labor. Parrenas' remarkable ethnography and theorizing then allow her to weigh in on key global policy issues – what constitutes "trafficking" and who gets to define it. Parrenas' willingness to make bold arguments is sure to garner ire and rebuke, but it also deepens our understanding of the contradictions and complexities of sex work, a field that is absolutely central to the new face of work in the 21st century.

Distinguished Scholarly Monograph Award Honorable Mention:

Erin Hatton, for her book, *The Temp Economy: From Kelly Girls to Permatemps in Postwar America*. Temple University Press, 2011.

This book makes a critical intervention in the study of flexible work and temporary employment. By systematically analyzing how the temp industry actively promoted the idea of "temp workers" against existing cultural understandings of work and employer-employee relations, Hatton challenges the conventional wisdom that the rise of temp work was both inevitable and natural. Tracing the development of the industry since the 1950s, Hatton shows how temp firms such as Kelly Girl utilized gendered meanings about the difference between men's and women's work to convince other firms, as well as women workers themselves, of the "value" of temp workers. Once established, temp firms then sought to "erase" these gendered meanings by promoting temp work a solution to stagnating economic profits and striking workers. The view that workers were a "liability" as opposed to an "asset" for firms profoundly shifted cultural understandings about what work and workers were, laying the basis for the phenomenal growth of the practice of hiring temp workers. This growth, however, was a contested one, and Hatton ends the book by highlighting cases of workers, community organizations and labor unions trying to "box in" the use of temp workers as an employment norm. The book is written in clear and accessible prose, and will no doubt become standard reading among scholars and students in the sociology of work and labor.

Distinguished Scholarly Monograph Award Honorable Mention:

Tamara Kay for *NAFTA and the Politics of Labor Transnationalism*. Cambridge University Press, 2011.

The book provides a fresh and provocative argument about globalization and labor movements. Kay provides a definitive account of the effects of NAFTA on labor transnationalism. Her careful research shows how NAFTA actually aided labor transnationalism rather than weaken it.

Kay draws on intense field research in Mexico, USA and Canada to support her argument and provide convincing explanations for the variation in union strategies as well as pushing forward theories of labor as a global social movement. The book also lays out the real possibilities of transnational labor solidarity in a global economy.

Distinguished Scholarly Article Award (presented by Chris Rhomberg, chair of this award committee)

Heather Thompson, "Rethinking Working-Class Struggle through the Lens of the Carceral State: Toward a Labor History of Inmates and Guards," *Labor: Working Class Studies of the Americas* 8(3): 15-45, Fall 2011.

Thompson's article tells the story of prison labor in the United States in the 20th century and places it in a broader context of working class struggle, bringing a new and unique perspective to studies of labor and working class history. The article traces the changing patterns of institutional regulation of prison labor and its renewed commodification in recent decades. More importantly, it offers a close examination of the self-organization of the prison work force, the collective action of both prisoners and prison guards, respectively, and their struggles against exploitation. The author draws on a wide range of historical documents including newspaper stories, government hearings, legislation and court decisions, union archives, and other published and unpublished sources, and offers a rich, dramatic account filled with compelling detail. Altogether, the article provides an original, stunningly eye-opening look at an understudied working class population, and it makes a persuasive case for the importance of this "hidden" history for our understanding of American labor and labor movements.

Graduate Student Paper Award (presented by Steve Lopez, on behalf of the award committee, chaired by Ian Robinson)

Shinji Kojima, "Why Do Temp Workers Work as Hard as They Do?"

Kojima's paper applies Michael Burawoy's classic question "why do workers work as hard as they do?" not to the full-time, "core" workers that Burawoy examined, but to contingent workers in Japan's auto parts industry. Kojima's response to this question is novel, theoretically sophisticated, and richly ethnographic. He shows that neither of the conventional answers to his question – he calls them "consent" and "coercion" for short – accurately captures what a number of the contingent workers he comes to know tell him. They say that they find intrinsic value in the work they do, thinking about overcoming its physical and mental challenges much as athletes do. Kojima draws on Marx, Bourdieu and Wacquant to help him make theoretical sense of what he sees and hears. He makes no claims about the generalizability of the psycho-social dynamics that he documents, but gives us valuable new conceptual tools with which to explore Burawoy's question in other sectors and countries.

Graduate Student Paper Award Honorable Mention:

Kyle J. Arnone, “A Negative Case Analysis of the Union-Solidarity Nexus”

Kyle Arnone’s paper uses a union organizing drive among deregulated port truckers in the Los Angeles-Long Beach area to explore the factors that determine the impact of union organizing efforts on worker solidarity. Arnone shows that, contrary to common assumptions, high levels of worker solidarity developed among these truckers, precisely because of the (unintended) impacts of trucking deregulation. Moreover, again contrary to what many analysts would expect, the union’s organizing efforts fragmented and eroded this worker solidarity. Out of these “negative” findings, Arnone develops a theory of how union organizing strategies interact with different levels and configurations of worker solidarity to yield very different outcomes in terms of workers’ capacity for collective action. This theory helps us to understand the conditions under which the centralized, staff-led organizing model developed by unions like the SEIU builds worker and union power, and when it undermines them. In other words, it is useful to the labor movement as well as interesting to sociologists.

Graduate Student Paper Award Honorable Mention:

Marcel Paret, “Precarious Politics: Struggles for Redistribution and Recognition in the US and South Africa”

Michel Paret’s paper also focuses on contingent labor, which he calls “the precarious class.” While Kojima focuses on the motivations of individual members of this class, Paret asks about the politics of the group: who do they struggle for and against, what do they struggle for, and how do the answers to those questions differ from those given by the element of the working class embedded in the formal sector? Paret explores two types of political struggle -- those that focus on the distribution of material resources, and those that focus on group recognition – in two locations: Los Angeles and Gauteng, South Africa. He argues that cross-case differences in levels of unemployment, and in the citizenship status of the precarious class, result in political dynamics that are the inverse image of each other. By helping us to see these patterns clearly, and offering a simple but powerful account of what factors account for them, Paret’s paper is a valuable contribution to our understanding of precarious class politics.