
In Critical Solidarity

*Newsletter of the American Sociological Association's
Section on Labor and Labor Movements*

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Making Waves: Organizational Effects of the Living Wage Movement

Michael Mulcahy

In the twelve years since the first major success of the contemporary living wage movement in Baltimore, a wave of local living wage campaigns has swept across the U.S. At the end of 2006, the Living Wage Resource Center of ACORN listed a total of 140 living wage ordinances (LWO's) that have been adopted by cities, counties, and even a number of universities, and other entities such as public library systems and development commissions. Key living wage cities include Boston, Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, Miami-Dade, Milwaukee, New York, Omaha, Pittsburgh, San Antonio, San Francisco, San Jose, Santa Fe and Tucson. Over 15% of the roughly 600 U.S. cities with populations greater than 50,000 have adopted living wage legislation.

The local ordinances championed by living wage campaigns vary in scope, coverage, and content, but they typically mandate that employees of companies benefiting from public resources receive a wage sufficient to support a family of four in a particular locale above the federal poverty level. In addition to wage levels, many LWO's also include language covering wage indexing, health benefits, retaliatory employer behavior, paid days off, local job development policies and other matters. Most LWO's target firms with local government service contracts above a specified value (often \$25,000 per year), but some also cover businesses receiving development subsidies, tax breaks, or concessions in public facilities such as airports, firms in specially designated urban development zones, and/or those that are tenants on publicly owned property.

Most living wage campaigns have been conducted by local coalitions in which labor organizations play a key or leading role, along with religious, student, and community social justice organizations. For
<continued on page 4>

Black and Latina Women's Leadership in the Contemporary U.S. Labor Movement

Niki T. Dickerson

The leadership of black and Latina women in the U.S. labor movement is growing. Concerned about persistent and increasing race/gender labor market inequality, many of these leaders feel that the unique social justice orientation of the labor movement makes it a crucial vehicle to address the problems of minority workers. However, they feel that fundamental changes within the house of labor are necessary for it to do so. Women of color within the labor movement are pushing for structural change to increase the voice of women and people of color in the movement, and as a result are having a significant impact on the institution of labor.

I interviewed seven black and Latina women who hold leadership positions at the national level to gain a sense of the implications their growing involvement has for the labor movement. These women are using their positions to disperse power and knowledge to others throughout the institution to effect change at all levels within the house of labor and to workers in general. Weary of lip-service, the key strategy for these minority activists is centered on action, constant vigilance, and follow-through. They have allied with other groups to broaden their base of support and strengthen their efforts for inclusion. Gloria Johnson, one of the first women appointed to AFL-CIO's executive council, affirms, "Those of us who believe in what we're doing have got to stick together." <continued on page 6>

Also In This Issue

- *Meet the Candidates*, p. 2
- *Labor in the ISA*, p. 3
- *Upcoming Calls for Papers*, p. 7

Section Elections
MEET THE CANDIDATES

This year, members will elect one Chair-elect and one member of Council. More information about the candidates is available on the section's website: <http://www.laborstudies.wayne.edu/ASA/>

Chris Rhomberg, Yale University,
Candidate for Chair

Thanks to the work of dozens of persons, we have succeeded in establishing the section with more than 400 members. Yet we still have a lot of work to do, in the profession, in regard to the labor movement, and in the public sphere. Within the academy, many labor studies programs are still embattled or politically vulnerable. We need to protect the space we've won for our research, and make it a field where younger scholars can invest their energies productively and receive professional recognition. Regarding the labor movement, we must acknowledge that in the U.S. unions are still very much in crisis, and some observers regard *any* future for them with great skepticism. We need to look hard at current and long-term trends and possibilities for change, and to support workers' rights, not least of all in our own intellectual workplaces. More broadly, we can see the 2006 electoral end of Republican rule in Washington, and the upcoming 2008 U.S. presidential election, as opportunities to affect the climate of politics and policy concerning labor. Now more than ever, research in labor and labor movements is both necessary and timely. I look forward to working with section leaders and members to make the most of our success.

Michael Schwartz, SUNY-Stony Brook,
Candidate for Chair

In the past few years, the Labor Section has actively sought to nurture activism and public sociology in relation to the working class, both for the section and for its members. We have made good progress on this mission, and I would like sustain this momentum. At the same time, we have recently begun to think creatively about addressing the intertwined questions of anti-racism and internationalism. I hope to amplify these efforts and to integrate them with the section's already developing activism.

Jennifer J. Chun, University of British Columbia,
Candidate for Council

Since 2000, the ASA Labor and Labor Movements section has created an important space for the presentation of new research and dialogue on the changing world of work. From organized panels on new forms of service worker organizing to special sessions on the linkages between academics and trade unionists, the labor and labor movements section has broadened our understanding of the dilemmas, constraints and opportunities facing workers and their collective organizations. The jointly organized Mini-Conference on Global Labor stands out as an important highlight over the past six years. By bringing together new and innovative research on labor in a comparative and international context, the section has begun the important work of making connections between labor scholars and labor movements around the world. If elected to council, I hope to build upon and strengthen the section's commitment to globalizing our understanding of labor and labor movements. In my capacity as Vice President of the ISA RC-44 Labour Movements Research Committee, I will work towards deepening the ties between Sociologists working on labor in North America and around the world. This can include regular newsletter updates between the section and RC-44 as well as more active forums for exchange and collaboration. As the challenges and opportunities facing labor become more globally intertwined, especially in countries in the Global South, I also hope to create more opportunities for discussion and collaboration among Sociologists researching labor and labor movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Steven McKay, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee,
Candidate for Council

The labor and labor movement section is growing and vibrant, reflecting how central work and workers' movements are to the study of inequality and justice. What excites me about the section is its potential to grow even stronger by embracing a number of related areas that remain untapped. In particular, I would like to see the section put more emphasis on the critical study of work in relation to labor organizing. This year, I joined the Program Committee to push for more sessions in this area, and as a Council member would continue to advocate in this direction, particularly since the theme of the 2008 Annual Meeting is "Worlds of Work." The section has also begun to move beyond established trade unions toward a broader approach to labor movements involving all working people, their
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communities and other organizational forms. In particular, we could better address immigration, international labor movements and workers in the Global South, for whom our support, solidarity and research can be particularly helpful as they face increasingly hostile conditions. Finally, I heartily support recent efforts by section members to highlight issues of race and racism in connection with work and labor movements. If our section is to be both inclusive and reflexive (as well as attract a broader spectrum of new members), we must address the lackluster record of the established labor movement to involve more people of color. As a Council member, I would put these key issues on our active agenda by collaborating with other sections, as well as with community-based activists and organizations to create sessions or even a mini-conference that would attract a larger, more diverse group of participants. We could also use our section's prizes to reflect this broader agenda.

The Global Union Research Network **(GURN)**

The GURN, established in 2004, is a cooperative project of the International Trade Union Confederation, the Trade Union Advisory Committee of OECD, the Global Union Federations, and the ILO's Bureau for Workers Activities and Institute for Labour Studies. The purpose of the network is to provide trade unions, allied institutions and the labor movement more generally with a mechanism and process to share research and information via the internet and in face to face encounters at workshops. The GURN initiates and disseminates research, publishes a newsletter, hosts online conferences, sponsors workshops, and manages a listserv of 450 subscribers from 67 different countries. Through the library of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, GURN members have access to a full-text data base of 160 journal articles relevant to the renewal of the global labor movement. Priority topics include migration, bilateral and regional trade agreements, global value chains, poverty eradication, multinational enterprises, international financial institutions, and sustainable development. The papers from a GURN workshop on Globalization, Unions and Development held at the World Social Forum in 2005 will be published by the ILO in 2007. The papers from a more recent workshop on the Impact of Global Production Systems on Trade Union Strategies can be found at the GURN website. Individuals, trade unions, policy institutes and pro-labor academics are welcome to join the network. Visit GURN at <<http://www.gurn.info/>>.

--Mary Margaret Fonow, Arizona State University

Labor in the ISA: RC 44

Robyn Magalit Rodriguez

The International Sociological Association's (ISA) XVI World Congress of Sociology convened in Durban, South Africa from July 23-29, 2006. Well over 3000 people joined in conference activities over the course of the week. The theme of the Congress for 2006 was "The Quality of Social Existence in a Globalizing World."

The session organizers of the Research Committee on Labor Movements (RC44) were Rob Lambert from the department of Organisational and Labour Studies, School of Business at the University of Western Australia, and Anthea Metcalfe, a staff member of the Sociology of Work Research Unit (SWOP) at Wits University in South Africa.

RC 44 featured 12 sessions that examined the impacts of neo-liberal globalization and the restructuring of work in specific countries. Moreover, the sessions highlighted workers' national and transnational organizing strategies, including different approaches to community unionism, new types of partnerships among trade unions, social movements and NGOs, and novel forms of labor transnationalism. RC44's session topics also included: "Theorizing the Future of World Labor," "Changing Worlds of Work," "Gender and Labor," "Labor and Social Movements," and "Labor in Transitional Societies."

A good majority of these sessions were focused on the new challenges facing South Africa's labor movement during the contemporary period of political transition and labor market restructuring. Beyond South Africa, papers on Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique offered session participants a broader perspective on labor issues in the African continent.

A new board was elected at the conclusion of the congress, with Rob Lambert (Australia) at its helm as president. Members of our ISA section, including Kim Scipes and Kim Voss, were also elected to the board; and Jennifer Chun and Dan Clawson are among the vice-presidents. Members from universities in Australia, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Brazil, Sweden, Uganda and Canada, as well as a representative from <continued next page>

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 the ILO, were also elected to the board.

Drawing inspiration from Michael Burawoy's vision of "public sociology," in RC44's December 2006 newsletter, Lambert urges RC44 members to sustain their "concern for the fate of our times" and engage in both reflexive and instrumental forms of knowledge production aimed toward addressing the crises facing labor movements globally. His hope is that "RC44 will continue to deepen a community of scholarship that moves between these forms of engagement."

Additionally, the new board, together with past President Edward Webster, expressed a commitment to both sustaining and expanding the membership base of RC44. The board has pledged to increase the involvement of scholars and activists from the Global South, specifically from Latin America and Asia, whose absence from RC44 sessions was noticeable, though some RC44 members did present research on countries in the two regions. The board pledged to actively recruit individuals based in Latin American and Asian countries. Moreover, the board plans to devote future newsletter issues to these regions. Board members also expressed concern about the declining participation of Europe-based scholars. Under President Eddie Webster's leadership, RC44 membership from Africa has been solid. At present, the region represents the second largest membership group in RC44. The U.S., Australia, and Canada are also well-represented in RC44.

RC 44's newsletter, which comes out three times yearly, features briefs on members' research, calls for papers, conference reports, and discussions about members' engagements with labor and other social movements. RC44 also aims to actively maintain its website (<http://www.socsci.mcmaster.ca/globallabour/>) as well as to launch its Global Labor journal to offer more opportunities for intellectual exchange among members. Members of the Labor and Labor Movements section of the ASA are encouraged to join RC44 (for a fee of \$20 for 4 years) and can do so on-line. The next ISA will take place in Goteborg, Sweden, from July 11-17, 2010. †

Robyn Magalit Rodriguez is Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at Rutgers University and Treasurer of RC44. Email: <robyn.m.rodriguez@rutgers.edu>

Recent Books of Interest

*Eileen Boris, Leon Fink, Julie Greene, Joan Sangster, and Mercedes Steedman, eds, "The New Women's Labor History." Special issue of the journal *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*. Duke University Press, 2006.

*Rachel Sherman, *Class Acts: Service and Inequality in Luxury Hotels*. University of California Press, 2007.

*Ted Smith, David A. Sonnenfeld, and David Naguib Pellow, eds. *Challenging the Chip: Labor Rights and Environmental Justice in the Global Electronics Industry*. Temple University Press, 2006.

Send your publication announcements to the editor at rachel.sherman@yale.edu

<Mulcahy, cont. from page 1>

revitalizing unions struggling to reverse decreasing membership and density trends, and to overcome the labor movement's historical legacy of troubled relations to other progressive social movements, the coalitional structure of local living wage campaigns provides a much needed framework and opportunity for forging positive relationships with likely religious and community allies.

Indeed, as some research on the living wage movement suggests, the organizational relationships formed or strengthened in local living wage coalitions may be the most important achievements of the movement as a whole. For while the improvements in wages, benefits, and working conditions for those workers directly covered by LWO's are substantial, the number of workers covered is typically quite limited, in most cases less than 3% of the local low-wage workforce. Thus far there is little evidence of significant local "ripple effects" of LWO's on the wages and working conditions of workers not directly covered by the ordinance.

In contrast, living wage campaigns often forge or strengthen organizational relationships that have various kinds of "ripple effects." One such effect can be seen in the dramatic spread of campaigns themselves, facilitated by decentralized inter-organizational communication networks and by <continued next page>

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national organizational relationships resulting, for example, in living wage training conferences and living wage conference calls, co-sponsored by labor and community organizations. Positive organizational outcomes of living wage campaigns, such as new or strengthened labor-religious-community coalitions, also contribute to the successful *implementation* of LWO's, as Stephanie Luce's research has shown. The coalitional outcomes of local living wage campaigns are also making waves in new but related policy arenas, such as campaigns for city-wide and state-wide *minimum* wage legislation covering far more workers than LWO's, or local campaigns to regulate wages and working conditions in "big box" retail stores.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly for the future of the U.S. labor movement, the organizational networks formed or strengthened in local living wage coalitions have also benefited union organizing efforts. LWO's often stipulate employer neutrality and/or card check in union organizing campaigns, but the organizational networks may ultimately prove even more important for union organizing. As we know, U.S. employers regularly violate workers' right to organize with impunity, and workers risk unemployment, social isolation and emotional trauma when they try to exercise that right. In the absence of meaningful legal protections, unions can better defend workers' rights when they are able to shift the terrain of unionization struggles from the "hidden abodes of production" to local public spheres. Then employers' anti-union campaigns and violations of workers' rights can be subjected to public scrutiny and moral critique. In the wake of successful living wage campaigns, these local organizational/cultural contexts are characterized by new and/or strengthened ties between local labor organizations and morally authoritative community, religious and student organizations, and by increased public awareness of the relationships among poverty, low-wage work and workers' rights. In Los Angeles, for example, the living wage campaign gave rise to a new faith-based organization, Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE) that has spoken out in support of workers' right to organize and publicly denounced employers' union-busting campaigns. The creation of a new community-based union, the Solidarity Sponsoring Committee, in the course of the Baltimore living wage campaign, represents an example of how these coalition

campaigns can foster different kinds of workers' organizing.

Work by Stephanie Luce, Dan Clawson, Janice Fine, Jen Kern, Isaac Martin, Bruce Nissen, Robert Pollin, David Reynolds, Chris Tilly, and other scholars and activists has shed light on the basic outlines of the movement's characteristics, trajectory, and achievements. It behooves us now to seek a better understanding of conditions under which living wage campaigns forge or strengthen relationships between labor, religious and community organizations, and ultimately facilitate workers' efforts to organize in order to articulate their interests and protect their rights over the long haul.†

Michael Mulcahy is Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Connecticut – Stamford Campus. He does research on labor organizations and labor movements at the local and global levels of analysis.

New Publication Launched

SOCIETIES WITHOUT BORDERS is co-edited by Judith Blau and Alberto Moncada, and published by Brill, NL. It is a biannual, with the first issue published in July 2006. One of the main ideas behind *Societies Without Borders* is to bring scholars from different continents closer together by showing their different approaches to the same research material, especially human rights and public goods. Many scholars from developing countries, paradoxically, have utopian ideas that they pursue, whereas progressive US scholars, for example, are more engaged in criticism. *Societies Without Borders* aims at bridging this gap. But there is more to it: *Societies Without Borders* also aims at breaking down the walls between the disciplines of Social Sciences, Environmental Sciences, and the Humanities

Societies Without Borders publishes articles by scholars, activists, teachers, and practitioners who understand the importance of collaborative efforts to affect and study change, for the dissemination of knowledge, and for case-based prototypes. Clear terminology and language are essential for this journal. It is the official journal of Sociologists without Borders, which has chapters in Spain, the U.S., Brazil, Chile, Italy, and Venezuela.

Win Friends and Influence People!
Be the Newsletter Editor

We are looking for a new editor for *In Critical Solidarity*, beginning Summer 2007. If you're interested, please email Rick Fantasia at rfantasi@email.smith.edu

<Dickerson, cont. from page 1>

Many of the women's efforts were channeled through grassroots collectives organized into minority caucuses or constituency groups. These groups strategically launched the careers of minority leaders to increase the voice and representation of minority groups by gaining access to decision-making functions in their unions. Maria Neira of AFT often heard from other Latinos, "You have a foot in the door, you have to represent us." Gloria Johnson recalls, "At executive council meetings if something wasn't being said that needed to be said, I stood up."

Even the visibility of minority female leaders can serve an important function. "My presence serves as a signal to others that women of color can be in a leadership position," Maria Neira of AFT tells me. A common perception among many minority workers, both unionized and non-unionized, is that unions do not represent the interests of minority workers. However, as Bronfenbrenner and Hickey's work has demonstrated, organizing campaigns headed by women of color have significantly higher success rates than others. Further, according to Clayola Brown, head of the A. Philip Randolph Institute, the ties many minority leaders have with minority communities and organizations often generate crucial alliances that the movement desperately needs at the current moment. Efforts such as these are critical for the movement, given that the only groups that experienced growth in rates of unionization between 1998 and 2004 were Latinos and white women.

These individual and collective campaigns have effected concrete changes at the organizational level. In 2000 six AFL-CIO minority constituency groups came together to form the Labor Coalition for Community Action (LCCA) to demand greater inclusiveness of minority unionists. LCCA's most significant victory was pushing through the adoption of the AFL-CIO's Resolution on Diversity and Full

Participation at the 2006 AFL-CIO convention. This resolution included a provision for the affiliation of the minority constituency groups, a requirement that affiliates report the demographics of their membership and leadership, and a mandate that delegates to the convention where key decisions are made reflect the union's membership. The most important mandate of the resolution allotted a seat on the executive council to each of the six constituency groups. The challenge now, Gloria Johnson tells me, is for the groups to identify and submit names of leaders to take on these positions: "We will be there ready and waiting," she asserts.

These activists employ both a top-down and a bottom-up (grass roots) approach. Roslyn Pelles of the AFL-CIO says the next step to follow-up the resolution is to "...educate [union members] around the language [of the resolution] and push to make them a reality." The strategy is to inform members of the mandates resulting from the resolution and push for changes at the local level. At the Summit on Diversity held before the 2006 AFL-CIO convention, Clayola Brown urged the minority unionists to "...go back and speak up within your unions." Maria Portalatin of AFT travels around the country and urges other Latinos, "I tell people to get involved or no one will hear your voice...the labor movement is the only way for Hispanics to obtain dignity and respect...[you] have to make this organization work for you...[you] have to get involved."

Efforts such as these shift institutional practices embedded in unions and work to reconceptualize the movement's core identity. It is only through conscious and sustained action that real change in the labor movement can occur. Clayola Brown's declaration—"We are a force to be reckoned with!"—that opened the Summit on Diversity holds tremendous promise for workers of color and the labor movement at large.†

Niki T. Dickerson is an Assistant Professor in the School of Management and Labor Relations at Rutgers University. She studies the structural features of the U.S. labor market that enable or hinder access to employment opportunities for black and Latino workers. This article was adapted from "We are a force to be reckoned with!": Black and Latina Women's Leadership in the Contemporary U.S. Labor Movement" published in Working USA: The Journal of Labor and Society, September 2006.

Calls for Papers

Work, Employment, and Society Conference

The journal *Work, Employment, and Society*, in conjunction with the British Sociological Association, is holding its triennial meeting in September of 2007 at the University of Aberdeen. The organizers of this international conference are seeking papers for presentation on numerous topics within the sociology of work and labor markets. Abstracts for presentations should be submitted for review by **February 1st 2007**. Abstracts will be refereed and contributors will be notified by March 1st 2007.

For more information on the conference, please consult our Web site:
<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/wes2007/index.php>

LSJ Special Sessions at 2007 UALE Conference

The *Labor Studies Journal* invites submissions of papers on the theme of labor and immigration for the LSJ Special Sessions at the 2007 UALE Conference. The deadline for proposals is **January 30, 2007**. The best of these papers will also be published in a special edition of the *Labor Studies Journal*, to be guest edited by Carolina Bank Muñoz and Stephanie Luce.

We encourage papers on themes such as labor, migration and unions; building alliances between immigrant communities; building alliances between US-born and immigrant workers; labor law and immigrant workers; new strategies for organizing immigrant workers; lessons from worker centers; and immigration, globalization, and building an international labor movement.

Please see the Conference page of UALE website for details on how to submit paper proposals
 <http://www.uale.org/conference_2007/Conference_2007.htm>

Call for Contributors to *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*

Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society is seeking contributions from scholars and activists for a Comparative Perspectives Symposium on Women's Labor Activism, to be published in Spring 2008.

Contributors to this symposium should inform feminist scholars in other parts of the world about women's labor activism in their region. Is women's labor activism a focus for feminists in the region? Are women organizing around issues of work? If so, how and to what effect? If not, what are the forces, factors, and phenomena preventing activism or organization?

The length of your symposium contribution should be 1250-1500 words or roughly 5-6 double-spaced manuscript pages. Although the print copy of the journal is published in English, the University of Chicago Press has agreed to include a version in a second language as well in the electronic version of the journal, which is accessible online. If you would like to enable scholars to have access to your work in a second language, please feel free to include that version as well.

Interested contributors should send a brief abstract and biographical statement or CV to Karen Alexander (kalexander@signs.rutgers.edu) by **February 1, 2007**. Completed essays will be due by April 1, 2007.

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