

# In Critical Solidarity

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

**Volume 7, Number 3**

**December 2007**

### Co-Chairs

Edna Bonacich

*University of California Riverside*

Jill Ebenshade

*San Diego State University*

### Chair-Elect

Michael Schwartz

*Stony Brook University, SUNY*

### Past Chair

Rick Fantasia

*Smith College*

### Secretary-Treasurer

Bruce A. Nissen

*Florida International University*

### Council

Carolina Bank Muñoz

*Brooklyn College, CUNY*

Jennifer J. Chun

*University of British Columbia*

Steven H. Lopez

*Ohio State University*

### Student Representative

Rachel Meyer

*University of Michigan*

### Section Homepage

<http://www.laborstudies.wayne.edu/ASA>

### Website Editor

George P. Mason

*Wayne State University*

### Newsletter Editorial Collective

Ruth Braunstein

Russell Ferri

Jeff Goodwin

Michael A. McCarthy

*New York University*

## Message from the Chairs

For the 2008 ASA meetings in Boston, not only do we have several exciting sessions planned, but we are also developing a miniconference in conjunction with the Association of Black Sociologists, entitled "Race, Labor, and Empire." Jill and Rod Bush of the ABS are co-chairing the event, which will take place in the afternoon/evening of Friday, August 1, and Saturday, August 2, 2008. We will be e-mailing the entire section membership shortly, giving you more information about the section and the miniconference programs, and encouraging you to submit papers. Our basic goal is to make sure that our section, and (hopefully) the labor movement, gives full attention to racial and ethnic issues and not strive for a phony "color blindness." At the miniconference, we hope to introduce an award for the best work on "race and labor," so please think about nominations or submitting your own work. If it proves successful, we will suggest to the section that it become a permanent award. So please keep your eyes peeled for announcements calling for papers!

*Edna and Jill*

## In this Issue

<b>2008 ASA Meeting Announcements</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Award Winning Publications</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Book Review (<i>Satanic Mills</i>)</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Campaign 2008</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Activism</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Film Review (<i>Made in LA</i>)</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Labor and the Law</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Conference Announcement</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>New Publications</b>	<b>19</b>

## Announcing the section's sessions and session organizers for the 2008 ASA meeting in Boston

---

**The Alliance Between Labor and the Democratic Party: Who Benefits?** -- Michael Schwartz ([mschwartz@notes.cc.sunysb.edu](mailto:mschwartz@notes.cc.sunysb.edu)). This session will discuss the long-term and ever-controversial alliance between the Democratic Party and organized labor. It will seek to evaluate the alliance from the perspective of both sides. What is the current state of the alliance? What has each side gained from the alliance and at what price? Has the equation of gains and expenses changed over time and, in particular, is it different now than in the past. Under what circumstances and to what effect has organized labor refused to engage the two party system, either by withdrawing from elections or by supporting minority parties?

**Organizing Alternatives Among Precarious Workers in the North and South** -- Rina Agarwala ([agarwala@jhu.edu](mailto:agarwala@jhu.edu)). "Precarious work" that is unregulated and unprotected by state law has long existed in the North and the South. Early theories predicted that such work would disappear as an economy grew to accommodate more formally protected jobs. In recent years, however, precarious work is said to be increasing due to pressures on firms to lower costs and remain competitive in a liberalized, global market. These trends raise important questions regarding changing relations between states and labor. What is the role of the state in industrial relations when the state promotes an unregulated, informal workforce? What alternative strategies are precarious workers using to improve their livelihoods when employers are not held legally accountable to their workers? What alternative models of worker mobilization strategies are emerging to accommodate these challenges? This panel seeks to address such questions using a comparative approach and invites papers focusing on empirical cases from either the North or the South.

**Changing Labor Markets, Changing Strategies: Worker Organizing Outside of the NLRB** -- Daisy Rooks ([arooks@ucla.edu](mailto:arooks@ucla.edu)) and Steve McKay ([smckay@ucsc.edu](mailto:smckay@ucsc.edu)). The decline of manufacturing, expansion of the service sector and changing regulatory contexts have resulted in new power relations between employers and workers, namely more "flexible" and volatile labor markets. Migration and changing legal contexts for immigration have transformed labor supplies and impacted workers' bar-gaining strategies as well, both in the U.S. and throughout the world. This session examines how workers and their organizations have responded to these changes using innovative, nontraditional strategies. In particular, we are interested in papers that examine workers' efforts that transcend traditional collective bargaining, and workers' efforts to organize and empower themselves and their communities that move beyond the workplace.

**Roundtables on Labor and Labor Movements**  
-- Barry Eidlin ([eidlin@berkeley.edu](mailto:eidlin@berkeley.edu))

## Announcing the section's award committees

### **Best Book Award**

The Chair of this Committee for this year is Steve McKay ([smckay@ucsc.edu](mailto:smckay@ucsc.edu)). Joining him on the committee are Marc Dixon ([mdixon@fsu.edu](mailto:mdixon@fsu.edu)) and Bob Ross ([rjross@clarku.edu](mailto:rjross@clarku.edu)). The Book Award will be given to the best book on labor and labor movements that has been published in the last two years, i.e., between Jan. 1, 2006, and Dec. 31, 2007. Nominations must be submitted by Feb 15, 2008. Please feel free to send nominations to Steve and the other members of the committee.

### **Best Article Committee**

This committee is composed of Chair Tamara Kay ([tkay@wjh.harvard.edu](mailto:tkay@wjh.harvard.edu)) and members Carolina Bank Munoz ([carolinabm75@gmail.com](mailto:carolinabm75@gmail.com)) and Ben Lind

([blind@uci.edu](mailto:blind@uci.edu)). This prize covers the same two years as the Book Award, i.e., articles published between Jan. 1, 2006, and Dec. 31, 2007. Nominations are due by March 31, 2008. Please send nominations to Tamara and the other committee members.

### **Best Student Paper Committee**

Cesar Rodriguez ([crodrigu@ssc.wisc.edu](mailto:crodrigu@ssc.wisc.edu)) is the chair of this committee. The other members are Daisy Rooks ([arooks@ucla.edu](mailto:arooks@ucla.edu)) and George Gonos ([gonosgc@potdam.edu](mailto:gonosgc@potdam.edu)). Papers written between Jan. 1, 2006, and Dec. 31, 2007, are eligible, and nominations are due by March 31, 2008. For this award, nominations are only likely to arise from our membership, so PLEASE submit good student papers to Cesar and the other members.

**The Nominations Committee of the  
Section on Labor and Labor  
Movements requests nominations  
for candidates for election to the  
following Section offices  
beginning in 2008**

**Chair-Elect** (3-year term: Chair-Elect, Chair, Past-Chair)

**Secretary-Treasurer** (3-year term)

**One at-large member of Council** (3-year term)

**One student member of Council** (2-year term)

For a list of the duties required of section officers see Section bylaws under "Documents" on the Section on Labor and Labor Movements website.

The deadline is November 30, 2007. Nominations should be submitted to all three members of the Nominations Committee:

Rick Fantasia, Committee Chair

[rfantasi@email.smith.edu](mailto:rfantasi@email.smith.edu)

Carolina Bank Muñoz

[carolinabm75@gmail.com](mailto:carolinabm75@gmail.com)

Jeff Salaz

[jsallaz@email.arizona.edu](mailto:jsallaz@email.arizona.edu)

## **Award-Winning Publications**

The winner of the Labor and Labor Movement's 2007 best book award is Steven McKay's *Satanic Mills or Silicon Islands? The Politics of High-Tech Production in the Philippines* (Cornell/ILR Press, 2006). This superlative study of transnational electronics production in the Philippines shows how and why the globalization of production in high-tech industries fails to bring First World working conditions to developing countries. But neither does globalization simply involve a homogenizing "race to the bottom."

Instead, this carefully researched book shows that "flexible accumulation" encompasses a wide variety of complex and locally-sensitive production regimes that secure worker commitment in new and different ways. McKay brilliantly reconstructs Michael Burawoy's classic "production politics" framework, providing novel theoretical ideas that will find audiences in a variety of sociological subfields, while at the same time providing riveting new empirical insights necessary for understanding labor's possibilities and challenges in the global economy. Methodologically, the book is exemplary for its rigorous comparative design, for its success in linking shop-floor processes to their external context, and for the quality of its rich and detailed ethnographic, interview, and statistical data. This book makes a crucial contribution to the contemporary study of labor and labor movements and will be read by sociologists in this and related fields for decades to come.

Honorable mention for the best book award goes to Ruth Milkman's *L.A. Story: Immigrant Workers and the Future of the US Labor Movement* (Russell Sage, 2006). This wonderful book capitalizes on Los Angeles's role as bellwether for national trends, offering an incisively intertwined analysis of recent shifts in U.S. workforce composition, change in the American labor movement, and economic restructuring. Its surprising historical narrative shows how legacies forged by former AFL unions

in the 1930s now convey advantages over former CIO affiliates, allowing the former to better weather the challenges of a deregulated, deindustrialized and casualized employment system by mobilizing immigrant workers. Deft comparisons of successful and unsuccessful union campaigns show compellingly that, to succeed, bottom-up, immigrant-worker organizing must be complemented by extensive legal, research, and financial resources and leadership commitment by established unions. Along the way, Milkman debunks many facile clichés—immigrants are unorganizable; immigration leads to union decline; global off-shoring undermines workers' collective capacity. This book is extraordinarily rich in a wide range of empirical data: aggregate statistics, vivid first-person interviews, and industry history. Written with great clarity and insight, this book is an exemplary piece of scholarship.

The section's best graduate student paper award for 2007 went to Cesar Rodriguez-Garavito at the University of Wisconsin at Madison for his paper, "Sewing Resistance: Transnational Organizing, Anti-Sweatshop Activism, and Labor Rights in the US-Caribbean Basin Apparel Industry (1990-2005)." The author provides an excellent synthesis of current work on transnational labor activism, framing, and dynamics of contention, and then analyzes anti-sweatshop Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs), using both ethnographic research and a data set the author compiled of 93 campaigns. It analyzes the tensions between unions and NGOs, and offers new insight into the growing efforts to build a transnational labor movement.

Honorable mention for the best graduate student paper goes to Denise Roca-Servat of Arizona State University for her paper, "The Case of Latino Construction Workers in Arizona: Implementing a Comprehensive Union Organizing Campaign." This is a participant-observation study of the "Justice for Roofers" union organizing campaign in Arizona, a case study situated in the larger literature on labor organizing among undocumented immigrants.

## Book Review

---

### Reconceptualizing the Labor Process

Michael A. McCarthy  
New York University

*Steven C. McKay, Satanic Mills or Silicon Islands? The Politics of High-Tech Production in the Philippines (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006). 253 pages. \$49.95 cloth, \$21.95 paper.*

Has high-tech production in the Philippines led to the formation of "satanic mills" or "silicon islands"? While critics of neoliberalism argue for the former and proponents the latter, Steven C. McKay says that the real answer is neither.

In this innovative research, McKay utilizes a range of concepts and rich ethnographic data to expand upon Burawoy's approach to the politics of work and the reproduction of capitalism more generally. He identifies distinct types of work regimes that are found in the EPZs in the Philippines, which don't neatly fall into the rough categories of "satanic mills" (i.e. isolating and coercive work environments) or "silicon islands" (i.e. innovative and fulfilling work environments). McKay distinguishes these regimes from one another by identifying the unique practices that the firms engaged in, in order to suppress or obvert unionization efforts and to secure varying levels of workers' commitment.

McKay begins to complicate the conclusions of Burawoy's earlier research by demonstrating that the skill level required for tasks, the level of autonomy, and how workers are organized on the shop floor (i.e., whether into teams or alone on a factory line), together create contradictory logics in the labor process that help to form distinct work regimes. He suggests that these logics are largely constrained by the nature of the product that the firm manufactures (i.e. capital-intensive or labor-intensive), the nature of production (i.e.,

complex or deskilled), and the competitive character of the market that the firm is in. On the one hand, when wages and market competition are low and the labor process is un-complex management will extract worker effort with simple direct and coercive control. On the other hand, in firms with acute technical and market demands, the disciplinary strategy that a firm utilizes will rely on softer forms of control. Given these divergent potentials, McKay argues that a complete explanation of how workers' commitment to a firm is secured requires an analysis that augments Burawoy's exclusive focus on the shop floor with an investigation of firm practices in the various localities that they draw their labor supply from.

In this sense, the author identifies an important additional area where the politics of high-tech production are formed: variation in localization strategies – taking advantage of uneven development and preexisting differences across localities in ways that correspond to production requirements. In order to successfully garner workers' commitment and effort, the internal strategy that a firm pursues will have to correspond to an external localization strategy that both reinforces and creates constraints on workers. According to McKay, "strategic localization" in the firms in his study, involves unique combinations of three components: selective and gendered recruitment, preempting union organizing, and conspiring with state officers. Coupled with dynamics located at the point of production, the particular ways in which firms localize their production completes the causal explanation for variation in workers' commitment to the firm.

McKay's prediction that firms exploit existing differences and intervene in the labor supply in labor markets to enhance various forms of factory discipline played out in the cases of the study. Each firm manipulated power differentials caused by gender ideologies and labor market segmentation. In doing so, they were able to employ highly skilled workers while at the same time garnering various levels of commitment.

However, such an intervention requires regulatory stability of labor market institutions, and general conditions that are favorable to firms. In order to satisfy these conditions, the firm becomes reliant on local and/or national state actors who act in ways that help reproduce the social relations of production. For instance, state enforcement of EPZs, the non-enforcement of labor laws, the dismantling of workers' rights, labor management committees, and state coordination of employee recruitment all contribute to circumscribe bargaining power of well-educated Filipino workers.

A potential flaw in the book is that we don't know if the ideal-typical work regimes that McKay identifies are exhaustive or how representative they are of other firms in the Philippines' high tech sector. Additionally, McKay says very little about the possible connections between the multinational firm's nation of origin and its particular work regime. His argument clearly claims that there is a minimal connection, with more technical factors taking precedent. However, in terms of empirical trends, there does seem to be a relationship. For instance, the European firm relied on collective bargaining, the American firm relied on a "human resources" strategy, and the Korean firm relied on coercion. Each seems rather predictable. While this could be a matter of case selection, the author failed to show that work regimes were not influenced by "best practices" in home countries.

In sum, this research is a very rich theoretical step forward in relation to how workers commitment is manufactured by firms. The work adroitly identifies the positive and negative incentives inside and outside of firms that are used to influence workers' attachment, effort, and loyalty. If they haven't already, our membership will likely find *Satanic Mills or Silicon Islands?* very useful. This is a must read for anyone interested in the labor process.

## Campaign 2008

---

### Hillary Learned the Wrong Lesson from the 1994 Health Care Fiasco

Rose Ann DeMoro

The pundits might have it right on this one. Hillary Clinton did learn a lesson from her 1994 fiasco on healthcare reform. Unfortunately for most of us who don't have an Inc. after our name or a private jet to cart us around, it was the wrong lesson.

In the days leading up to the announcement of her latest, much anticipated health plan, Sen. Clinton threw around the word "consensus" a lot. In this case, the consensus she was seeking was with the same industry that so savaged her prior experience with healthcare. This time, she apparently wants to soften them up in advance with a proposal that will generate hundreds of millions of dollars in additional profits for the insurance giants. It's probably not a coincidence that she is also the top recipient of healthcare sector contributions to her presidential campaign. Looking past the bells and whistles -- which do at least include some good sound bites on retiree health and giving regular Americans the same health plan options as members of Congress -- the Clinton plan seems to rest on three shaky legs:

1. Forcing all Americans, who do not have current coverage and do not qualify for public assistance, to buy and maintain insurance
2. Mandating large employers to either provide health benefits or contribute to the cost of coverage.
3. Tax credits for just about everyone.

If the central elements here sound familiar, they should. The plan is a smorgasbord of the

worst elements of what we've seen and heard from some other presidential candidates and the plans floating around several state Capitols. Ironically, given the overheated reaction from Republican candidates, Clinton's plan most closely resembles the approach of two Republicans -- the Mitt Romney-crafted law in Massachusetts and the proposal by California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger.

That's hardly a badge of honor. The Massachusetts model is working best for those with public subsidies, and Schwarzenegger's plan is now buried in the minutia of a special legislative session while public support for it has been plummeting in the polls. The biggest failing of this plan, like the Romney and Schwarzenegger schemes before it and like most of the other Democratic candidates' proposals, is the abject failure to challenge healthcare industry price gouging and runaway costs.

Insurance premiums have climbed 87 percent the past decade, and though they have slowed a bit in the past year, the increase is still double the average increase in wages. That does not include, of course, the rising cost of deductibles, co-pays, prescription drug prices, hospital charges, and, the latest fad, annual doctor fees, like what many people are charged for the privilege of having a credit card or checking account.

This is only the biggest healthcare story of the year. One recent example. *Consumer Reports* last month reported that more than half of the "underinsured" postponed needed medical care due to cost and a third had to dig deep into their savings to pay for medical expenses. Another third of those over 50 said decisions about their retirement were adversely affected by healthcare costs, one quarter had outstanding medical debt, 38% postponed home or car maintenance repairs due to medical bills, and only 37% said they were prepared to financially handle unexpected major medical costs in the next year.

Throwing more Americans under the wheels of the insurance industry will not solve this

problem any more than criminalizing the uninsured is humane or sound health policy. Clinton's solution is a combination of tax credits, unspecified encouragement to drug companies to "offer fair prices," and promoting "consumer price consciousness in choosing health plans." But tax credits mostly benefit higher income Americans. And families grappling with skyrocketing prices, and no controls on costs, will likely choose the cheapest, high deductible plans that provide the worst coverage. The sad outcome may be seen in a report earlier this year by the American Academy of Pediatrics that families with high deductible health plans are far more likely to put off needed care, including immunizations and recommended treatment, due to the cost.

Sen. Clinton might have drawn an entirely different idea from her prior unpleasant history with the healthcare industry. She might have decided to cut them out of the business of profiting off pain, suffering and medical debt, and proposed a very different solution, such as expanding Medicare, Medicaid, or the State Children's Health Program to cover everyone. Accommodating the insurance behemoths, and effectively offering them massive public subsidies -- using the considerable power of government to force everyone to become paying customers of the private insurers -- is not the kind of leadership on healthcare we need.

*Rose Ann DeMoro is executive director of the California Nurses Association/National Nurses Organizing Committee and a national vice president of the AFL-CIO. This comment originally appeared on The Huffington Post, [www.huffingtonpost.com](http://www.huffingtonpost.com) (September 18, 2007).*

## Election 2008: Union Endorsements of Presidential Candidates

Ruth Braunstein  
New York University

Despite John Edwards' claims that he is the true representative of America's working families and the fact that he has received a number of key endorsements, it is actually Senator Hillary Clinton who leads the pack of Democratic Presidential candidates, with endorsements from seven labor unions. Senators Chris Dodd and Barack Obama trail behind, with one and two endorsements, respectively. As in past elections, candidates are engaged in intense competition over official endorsements from organized labor.

In late September, however, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) announced that it planned to postpone its decision regarding which candidate to endorse, although its state councils would be free to endorse whichever candidate they chose. The announcement was viewed as a setback for John Edwards, who has been working with the union's leadership for years and who is reported to have expected their formal support. In October, Edwards was endorsed by 12 state SIEU councils, including the Iowa and New Hampshire Councils. Obama received the endorsement of the Missouri-Kansas Council and only narrowly lost the vote for the New Hampshire Council's endorsement. An endorsement from the SEIU has been a key legitimizing symbol for Democratic candidates in the past; their support has financial benefits as well, with the Center for Responsive Politics reporting that the organization has donated more than \$25 million to candidates since 1989.

Similarly, the AFL-CIO also announced that it does not plan to issue an endorsement this early in the campaign, although its affiliated unions are free to endorse whichever candidate they choose. In the last election, the AFL-CIO waited until February 2004 before announcing its endorse-

**Endorsements by candidate**

**Senator Hillary Clinton**

- United Transportation Union (*125,000 members*)
- International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (*730,000 members*)
- Transportation Communication Union (*46,000 members*)
- National Association of Letter Carriers (*300,058 members*)
- International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers (*100,000 members*)
- American Federation of Teachers (*>1.4 million members*)
- The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (*1.4 million members*)

**Senator Chris Dodd**

- International Association of Fire Fighters (*280,000 members*)

**Senator John Edwards**

- United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners (*520,000 members*)
- United Steelworkers of America (*1.2 million members*)
- United Mine Workers of America (*105,000 members*)
- Transport Workers Union (*200,000 members*)
- 12 Service Employees International Union state councils (*>1 million members*): NH, IA, CA, WA, ID, MT, MN, MI, WV, OH, OR, MA.

**Senator Barack Obama**

- Correction Officers' Benevolent Association (*9,000 members*)
- Service Employees International Union Missouri-Kansas State Council (*15,000 members*)

ment for Senator John Kerry. The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, which donated over \$3 million to Democratic candidates during the 2006 elections, and the International

Brotherhood of Teamsters are also holding off on making endorsements until later in the campaign.

**Activism**

---

**It's Time for Labor-Oriented Sociologists to Step Up to the Plate!**

Bruce Nissen

During this past year, the American labor movement and labor rights groups such as American Rights at Work (ARAW) fought hard to pass legislation that would curb the worst abuses of American workers when they attempt to exercise their rights by forming a union. For the most part, sociologists were nowhere to be seen. Friends of mine at the AFL-CIO noticed this, and asked me why this was so. They noted that labor historians wrote op-ed pieces, sent letters to the editor, held workshops and teach-ins, and the like, all in support of the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA). Others, such as Law School professors, some political scientists, and other assorted academics also pitched in. But for the most part, sociologists were AWOL, and this was a puzzle to my labor friends.

I couldn't tell them why. The Employee Free Choice Act would do three major things: (1) Allow workers to choose a union simply by signing a card or petition indicating their desire to be represented by a union; (2) Stiffen the penalties against employers who break the law, making law-breaking activity something to avoid rather than advantageous; and (3) Provide for mediation and arbitration of a first contract when employers continue to try to "bust" the union by refusing to negotiate an initial contract. While these three things wouldn't solve all problems or all violations of workers' rights, they would go a long way to remedy some of the most egregious violations of human and worker rights when employees try to unionize.



Our voice as scholars and “public sociologists” is badly needed in this battle. The labor movement and ARAW are asking that we compose op-ed pieces all around the country this coming year in support of passage of the EFCA. They will be happy to supply anyone willing to do so with a packet of materials on the EFCA, sample pro- and con- op eds that have been done to date, arguments on why the EFCA is needed if we believe in human rights and labor rights, etc. All we have to do is be willing to help.

Personally, I think the Labor and Labor Movements Section of the ASA should be able to generate op-eds in newspapers in every state of the union. And we should be able to do even more in the ten or so “battleground” states where the fate of this legislation may ultimately be decided. Well funded right wing forces have already stimulated numerous op-ed pieces, letters to the editor, and grossly distorting “ads” attacking unions as enemies of democracy and employee voice. We need to answer back.

At the annual meeting of our section, those present voted to authorize setting up a Public Affairs Task Force to work on issues like this. Since I had suggested the idea, I was chosen, “Army-style,” to lead it. I’m happy to do so, but our new task force will need volunteers from all over the country to write op-eds.

I’m asking people to please email me to indicate what you’re willing to do. There could be two levels of involvement: (1) you’re willing to write an op-ed and submit it to a newspaper or set of newspapers in your state; or (2) you’re willing to join the task force to take a more active role by stimulating your fellow sociologists to engage in activities like these (op-eds, letters to the editor, appearing on talk shows, etc.)

In our section, I think we should easily be able to get at least 50-100 people willing to do an op-ed, and around 10-15 people willing to serve on the task force. **TO EVERYONE READING THIS, THIS MEANS YOU!** Please email me what you’re willing to do. If you volunteer to do

an op-ed, we’ll help you with materials/ examples and help coordinate issues like which news-paper to submit them to.

Please email me at [Bruce.Nissen@fiu.edu](mailto:Bruce.Nissen@fiu.edu). Let me know what you’re willing to do. This is THE critical public policy labor issue facing our nation right now. Let it not be said that sociologists were not there for the struggle!

## A view from an anonymous rank-and-file activist in New York City

"Steven Havermeier"

What happens to radical college students when they graduate? Do they lose their politics and leave activism behind? Do they find ways to join movements outside of campus life?

When I graduated from college, I didn’t know which way to turn. I considered myself a radical, but that only seemed to rule out possible jobs and lifestyles. Think tanks, Washington, the State Department and the Democrats were not the solution for me. Instead, I wanted to be a part of the labor movement.

Unfortunately, the most readily available jobs in the movement were union staff jobs. Through my experience as an activist in United Students Against Sweatshops, I observed that many unions did not effectively represent the interests of their members. Furthermore, the labor history I learned also supported this conclusion. Ultimately, I became convinced that real political change in the labor movement could only come from workers themselves. This idea ruled out most non-profit jobs as well, leaving me with the only remaining option of getting a Rank-and-File job and becoming a union member.

Though it did not exist at the time, the Rank-and-File Youth Project would have been a great help to me in my job search. Founded in early 2005, the Youth Project has helped many young

people develop their politics and become effective union activists. Based out of New York City, the Youth Project is supported primarily by Solidarity, a socialist organization that works in the labor movement. During my job hunt following graduation, I contacted Solidarity, hoping that they could point me in the right direction. The organization helped me research union jobs in New York. They also told me I should attend the Inside Organizer School (IOS), the first national event put on by the Rank-and-File Youth Project.

IOS was held in August of 2005 in New York City. There I was surprised to meet a crowd of around fifty other young people who were also committed to the labor movement but skeptical of the labor bureaucracy. The school itself consisted of a variety of workshops and group activities intended to build organizing skills. There was a lot of energy and optimism in the air, and people were talking about moving cross-country to join promising struggles in strategic industries.

After the school, a few activists moved to New York City, and together we formed a local chapter of the Youth Project. Through the chapter we tried to coordinate our efforts, but initial attempts proved to be difficult. Some of us were socialists, others anarchists, others simply labor dissidents, but we all agreed that the labor movement could only change from the bottom up, in a democratic manner. Some of us took jobs in the same shops and industries, but in general our efforts were as diffuse as our interests.

Since that time the Youth Project has changed. Most importantly, the focus of the group has become broader than simply rank-and-file union jobs. Participants now include undergraduates, union staffers, graduate students and non-union workers. The requirement for participation is simply a left-orientation and a commitment to revitalizing the labor movement. The Project now holds national conference calls where young activists can discuss a range of labor-related political issues. In New York, we regularly hold meetings of ten to twenty activists.

As for my job, I'm still working the same one I took three years ago. Organizing at work is much easier now than it was when I first started, and I am always thankful to Solidarity and the Rank-and-File Youth Project for the help and support they provided me.

## Chinese Labor Unions and CyberUnionism

Arthur Shostak

*“The color of the cat shouldn’t matter as long as the cat catches mice.” -- Chairman Deng Xiaopong, 1992*

Where China is concerned, certain aspects of its market socialism look bright: By 2010, for example, it is likely to have the world’s largest economy, up from fourth in 2005 (Mantsios, 53). Less clear by far is the near future of its labor movement. Busy reinventing capitalism, China is also busy experimenting with trade unionism, much as it has done since the first guilds were formed over 1,500 years ago in the Song Dynasty (420-478 A.D.).

Conventional unions date back to 1914, and only banded together in an All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) in 1925. Created as an umbrella body for unions backed by the government, the ACFTU is now the largest labor organization in the world. It has over 160 million members (out of nearly 800 million workers) organized in 1,170,000 grassroots local unions covering 2,330,000 enterprises. (Fong) Along with almost every other major institution in China, the ACFTU is presently struggling to re-define itself.

Since its founding the ACFTU’s “Chinese characteristics” have had it primarily mediate between employer and employee to promote harmonious relations. While it continues to have strong ties with the Communist Party, and while many of its local officers are allegedly subserv-

ient to the employer, it is a “mistake to understate its role in advancing workers’ interest.” (Mantsios, 60). The Federation has always had a feisty cadre of staff militants, especially at local levels, and it has long exposed poor working conditions, lobbied for improved labor laws, litigated on behalf of members, and pressured the Government to enforce the country’s labor law.<sup>1</sup>

Most recently, the ACFTU has grown beyond its cautious support of workplace mobilization against exploitation in a single workplace (excessive mandatory overtime, illegal piece rates, false deductions, etc.). Following years of pressure it surprised outsiders in 2006 by vigorously organizing workers at 62 Wal-Mart stores in 30 cities. By the year’s end it was well on its way to unionizing 60% of all foreign-funded firms, for a dramatic gain of many millions of members. (Fong) Vexed by the rise of rival independent unions in some of China’s major manufacturing zones (not sanctioned by the government), the ACFTU apparently seeks to rise to this challenge.

For the ACFTU to make new gains it will have to employ the ongoing Information Revolution in fresh and creative ways. “Digital packets and beams of light are invisibly but profoundly transforming China.” (Sheff, xiv) Some Chinese enthusiasts liken this virtual revolution to *Rou hu tian yi* (adding wings to a tiger) (Sheff, xvi) China is already the world’s second largest national market for personal computers, with far more Internet users (197 million in 2006) than has the United States (Prestowitz, 74.) As well, set-top boxes are seeking to bring broadband via the Internet to 370 million TV sets (Faris, 209). The country boasts the world’s longest, fastest, and lowest-cost high-bandwidth network.

1) CyberUnionism. Where China’s labor movement is concerned, the significance of computer power takes two forms: It can aid efficiency and effectiveness in getting the union’s work done (some work plants, for example, have as many as 200,000 workers who deserve high-quality representation). (French) And it has made

it possible for ACFTU affiliates to adopt a new 21st century model of unionism, one I have come to call – CyberUnionism.<sup>2</sup>

As I have explained it in recent years to trade unionists in Britain, Canada, Denmark, Israel, Norway, and Sweden, this model is arguably the most promising of all the alternatives for Organized Labor in our Information Age. While I am not an expert on China, and only know what I have read in the extensive literature, I would humbly suggest the CyberUnion model just may warrant adaptation here by the ACFTU, its affiliates, the independent unions, and comparable pro-Labor NGOs.

A CyberUnion is a labor organization intent on endlessly making the most creative and empowering uses possible of computer power. It has computer tools at its core, rather than periphery. Less obvious, though no less significant, is a CyberUnion’s attention to futuristics, innovations, services, and traditions (F-I-S-T). Attention to these four aspects of unionism sets the CyberUnion apart from yesteryear’s models (business, social, community, etc.), and helps make a case for the adaptation soon by Chinese Unions of CyberUnionism.

Employ of the CyberUnion model could help make the following differences: Futuristics: A Chinese CyberUnion could hire expert forecasters to help it learn as early as possible where workplace technology and relevant domestic and global industries are heading.<sup>3</sup> This should enable it to promote timely training to help its members stay relevant. The Federation could anticipate massive layoffs, and take measures in court or in militant action to help assure the payment of fair severance pay, pay for work performed, and social insurance, all of which are not always part of the scene.<sup>4</sup>

Innovations: A Chinese CyberUnion could be an early adopter of cutting-edge services, such as awesome cell phone systems, teleconference equipment, and so on, likely to boost efficiency and effectiveness. Likewise, it could experiment

with such Western innovations as Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) and Appreciative Inquiry (AI), two relatively new aids to end grueling labor conditions and boost workplace productivity and worker well being.

**Services:** A Chinese CyberUnion could offer free language classes on the Internet to help bridge a gap among members who use between six and twelve different regional language groups. It could offer to sell computers at a great discount, thanks to the volume buying labor can arrange (as demonstrated already by unions in Sweden, Norway, and elsewhere). And, it could use the Internet to vigorously petition the State for help if members are left with slashed pension funds and worthless company stocks.

**Traditions:** A Chinese CyberUnion could use computer power to uniquely honor its own history and culture. Efforts could be made to create an oral history and video record of the reminiscences of older members, complete with archival storage. Many relevant labor songs, anecdotes, and historic speeches might be added to the Web site, along with streaming video celebrations of special days and events in the organization's honorable past.

2) **Digerati.** If Chinese union members are soon to profit from adoption of this four-part CyberUnion model the ACFTU and its constituent labor organizations will have to make room at the top for a type known in the West as Digerati, Labor's especially knowledgeable computer users.<sup>5</sup> Often fully as capable and creative as their (much better paid) counterparts in business, the Digerati could soon prove the critical ingredient in assuring the success of the Chinese CyberUnion model.

Among many other aids, the Digerati can aid rapid Internet polling of the membership where vital matters must be decided. This can facilitate democratic decision-making, provided care is taken to assure the voters first have adequate information on which to base informed decisions. In 2004 the ACFTU indicated it might soon seek

a national law to require the secret ballot election of shop floor union officers, a move the Digerati could be very helpful in implementing. (Compa, 29).

Many Digerati encourage adoption of a monitored chat room. They believe it can help create a virtual "community" of members, and bolster union solidarity. It can air workplace problems, and help publicize constructive responses to them (the ACFTU 2005 Annual Report highlights discrimination in employment, sexual harassment, the wage gap between men and women, and serious violations of the Labor Law). (Compa, 79)

Much as Karl Marx envisioned, the Digerati can urge unionists to draw extensively on the Internet (a Fourth International-of-sorts). In this way workers can join arms around the globe for concerted industrial action (massive boycotts, demonstrations, etc.). With over 3,500 Labor Union Web sites on-line worldwide in 2006 alone, and with more being added weekly, the Digerati see remarkable opportunities here for pro-Labor global networking and international labor solidarity.<sup>6</sup>

3) **Doubts.** Skeptics may scorn CyberUnionism as part of the New China's urgent drive to create the impression of modernity "without the underlying substance of critical thought or democratic governance." (Vine, 75) Proponents will remain hopeful. Other critics may argue it cannot catch on because it departs too far from convention and breaks too many rules. What they overlook, however, is that "nearly the whole of China's twentieth century was spent overturning one set of rules or another ... following the rule book of the day before brought tragedy the day after. China is a country where the public has repeatedly learned ... that finding ways around rules offers hope and dignity." (Fishman, 243).

**Summary.** China's modern rise, and especially its unique recent blend of capitalism and socialism, is clearly one of the transformative events of our time. When the story is written

decades from now, it might take note of the conversion of the country's unions to

CyberUnion status, and credit this change with much of the nation's continued gains in general wellbeing, productivity, profitability, union gains, and worker satisfaction.

In the years ahead China's unions may falter badly.<sup>7</sup> Or, they may draw handsomely instead on four CyberUnion attributes (F-I-S-T) and thrive. If the Chinese Labor Movement makes bold and creative use of computer power, its contribution to the wellbeing of members and to China's greatness will bring honor to all.

### Notes

1. For a balanced assessment of the ACFTU, though one that comes out hopeful, see Greg Mantsios, "What Are They Thinking: Ideologies and Realities in the United States and China," *New Labor Forum*, Fall 2006, pp. 52-63.

2. See, in this connection, Arthur B. Shostak, *CyberUnion: Empowering Labor through Computer Technology* (M.E. Sharpe, 1999). See also "On the State of CyberUnionism: An American Progress Report," *WorkingUSA* (June 2005), pp. 403-22, and Arthur B. Shostak, ed., *The CyberUnion Handbook: Transforming Labor through Computer Technology* (M.E. Sharpe, 2002).

3. A valuable guide is available from *An Old China Hand: John Naisbitt, Mind Set! Reset Your Thinking and Future* (Collins, 2006).

4. On the many abuses suffered by workers, especially migrants to the cities, and among them, the women, see Lance Compa, *Justice for All: The Struggle for Worker Rights in China* (American Center for International Labor Solidarity, 2004).

5. For more on the digerati, see Alexander Bard and Jan Soderqvist, *Netocracy: The New Power Elite and Life After Capitalism* (Reuters, 2002);

*David Sheff, China Dawn: The Story of a Technology and Business Revolution* (Harper Business, 2002); and Stephan Faris,

"Meet the Next Disney," *Fortune* (Nov. 28, 2005), pp.205-6, 208-9, 212, 214.

6. See, in this connection, <http://labourstart.org>, a non-stop source of fast-breaking news of labor happenings in over 100 countries, as sent in daily by over 95 volunteers in these countries.

7. On the dangers posed by the reluctance of the Communist Party to share power, see Minxin Pei, "The Dark Side of China's Rise," *Foreign Policy*, March-April, 2006, pp. 34-40, and James Kynge, *China Shakes the World: A Titan's Rise and Troubled Future – and the Challenge for America* (Houghton-Mifflin, 2006).

## Film Review

---

### Watching Made in L.A.

*Made in L.A. A Film by Almudena Carracedo and Robert Bahar. Premiered on PBS on September 4, 2007.*

Robert Ross  
Clark University

*Made in L.A.* is a demonstration of conditions in the global garment business and a challenge to those who would change them. The film shows us why L.A. became known as the "Sweatshop Capital of the U.S." in the 1990s. Working for \$3 an hour in places where Maura says "they throw your dignity to the floor," she and María and Lupe were part of an American garment sweatshop labor force of about 250,000 when the Forever 21 campaign began in 2001. In my book, *Slaves to Fashion*, I calculated that the number of garment workers in the 2000s had declined from the 1990s not because conditions improved, but

because the industry was migrating away from L.A. and the United States.

The film challenges us as well. The challenge is both personal and political. The three women and the Garment Workers Center staffer, Joann Lo, glow with courage and dedication. Their stories appeal to us across the divides of ethnicity, gender and class. Lupe is inspired to become an organizer; Maura grapples with her shyness; María explains to us how "her whole body hurt" under the abuses of the L.A. sweatshop system. The women maintain their commitment through a long legal struggle, and they come to sense their own ability to change their circumstances. They challenge us to consider our own efforts. The challenge also concerns public policy.

Since 2001 when the Forever 21 campaign began, L.A. has lost over one-quarter of all its apparel manufacturing jobs (now there are only 77,000 jobs). The official hourly wage rate, an overestimate because it is the product of false reporting by contractors to U.S. and California agencies, nevertheless shows a five percent loss in purchasing power (a loss of over \$950 per year for L.A. garment workers). Even as the Forever 21 workers won a pledge from that retailer to see to it that their contractor shops would be law abiding, the industry was deserting L.A. Maura says, "It's hard to find work." Once made in nearby Mexico, now the kind of low price clothing Forever 21 sells to young people is usually made in Asia.

When the campaign began, the Latina women in L.A. faced abusive conditions in which unscrupulous employers in the United States were competing against other unscrupulous employers in Central America. In 2000, I visited a plant in Managua where cameras were trained on the guarded entrance to the jeans factory and workers were closely questioned if they were seen talking to the union activists at the gate. But even those Latina sisters lived in nearby workers' districts in their own homes, part of a vibrant community life. In southern China's export factories, young women live in walled or fenced factory

complexes, in single sex dormitories, crowded in rooms with many-tiered bunk beds, and they work even longer hours than the workers in L.A.

or Managua. At the outset of the Forever 21 campaign (2000-2001), Mexico and China manufactured roughly equal shares of the U.S. clothing import market. Five years later, at the end of 2006, China manufactured approximately 30 percent of the U.S. clothing market, while Mexico only manufactured about 8 percent.

In the global "rag-trade" there is a "race to the bottom" in labor standards, where China and other low-wage Asian countries define the bottom. To combat the "race to the bottom," students have demanded that their universities pledge to procure logo t-shirts in factories that allow workers to exercise their rights to form unions. State and city governments have joined a State and Local Government Sweatfree Consortium to insure that taxpayer dollars for uniforms are spent only in factories with fair labor policies. Political leaders and citizens are demanding that we form trade policies that protect workers as well as we now protect the interests of investors. The women of "Made in L.A." deserve no less.

*Robert Ross is the author of Slaves to Fashion: Poverty and Abuse in the New Sweatshop. He is a professor of Sociology at Clark University, where he is also the director of the International Studies stream, the elected faculty chair, and the former chair of the Sociology Department. His work has appeared in The Nation, Foreign Affairs, In These Times and other publications.*

**Congratulations to Elizabeth A. Hoffmann of Purdue University, who has been granted tenure and promoted to the rank of Associate Professor of Sociology.**

## Labor and the Law

---

### On the Hill: Legislative Update

Ruth Braunstein  
New York University

Although it has become clear that the highly publicized Employee Free Choice Act is not likely to pass during the 110th Congress, legislators are currently considering a slew of other labor-related bills. Below are some highlights.

#### Issues in the Workplace

The Re-Empowerment of Skilled and Professional Employees and Construction Tradesworkers (RESPECT) Act seeks to amend the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA). In this case, the bill will change the definition of a “supervisor” to (1) require the individual to have authority over employees for a majority of the individual's work time; and (2) remove authority to assign other employees and to responsibly direct employees as conditions for being considered a supervisor (Source: THOMAS). This bill has been scheduled for debate in the House and has been sent to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

#### Worker Health and Safety

The Protective Equipment for America's Workers Act, currently under review in the House Subcommittee on Workforce Protections, would require the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to improve its enforcement regarding protective equipment for workers. Also under review by this subcommittee is a bill that would expand the scope of certain aspects of the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993. The Healthy Families Act, which has been introduced in both the House and the Senate, addresses the provision of sick leave to employees and their families.

#### Unionization

As always, central to debates about workers’

rights is the conditions under which labor be allowed to organize. The Employee Free Choice Act seeks to amend the NLRA in order to create a more efficient and fair system for organizing unions that would recognize a union as a bargaining representative without a secret-ballot election if a majority of employees authorized the representative through a card-check. The bill had broad support on the left, but drew criticism from the right regarding the “undemocratic” nature of circumventing the secret-ballot election process. Although the bill passed the House on March 1 by a vote of 241 to 185, the Senate voted 51 to 48 on a Motion to Invoke Cloture on the Motion to Proceed on June 26, meaning the bill is unlikely to pass during this session of Congress.

The House and Senate Committees of the Judiciary are currently reviewing another bill – the Arbitration Fairness Act of 2007 – that would amend the United States Code with respect to pre-dispute arbitration.

#### Discrimination

The lion’s share of labor-related legislation addresses the problem of discrimination in the workplace. Currently under consideration are proposals that address discrimination based on age, gender, sexual orientation, race, national origin, religion, and interestingly, one’s genetic information.

On November 7, the House passed the Employment Non-Discrimination Act of 2007 by a vote of 235 to 184, with 35 Republicans joining the majority of Democrats voting for the bill, and 25 Democrats voting against the bill, mainly citing concerns that the bill did not also outlaw discrimination based on gender identity. Although the original House version of the bill (introduced in May) contained language regarding the prohibition of employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity, a revised version (introduced in September), limited the purview of the bill to sexual orientation only, a compromise measure supported by Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) despite the fact that the exclusion of bisexual and

transgender employees from protection under the revised bill drew criticism from several LGBT rights organizations. The bill also provided an exemption for employers that qualify as religious groups. Sen. Kennedy (D-MA), chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, issued a statement saying that he would move quickly to introduce a similar bill in the Senate and that he believed it could pass as early as next year. Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME) has agreed to so-sponsor the bill. The Senate version could replicate the House version or it could add language that also extended protection on the basis of gender identity.

Perhaps the highest profile of the discrimination-focused bills this year is the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, which was introduced following a the Supreme Court's 5-4 decision in May 2007 that required pay discrimination lawsuits be filed within 180 days of the alleged discrimination. The bill's namesake, Lilly Ledbetter, had filed a lawsuit claiming that she was paid less than her male counterparts during her 19-year tenure as an employee of a Goodyear Tire plant. Although Ms. Ledbetter won her initial lawsuit, the Supreme Court ultimately dismissed her case, ruling that the discrimination had occurred at the time of her hiring 19 years prior, and that current law required she file suit within 180 days of that original act of discrimination. The bill that is currently before the Senate seeks to amend Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 "to clarify that a discriminatory compensation decision or other practice that is unlawful under such Acts occurs each time compensation is paid pursuant to the discriminatory compensation decision or other practice, and for other purposes." (Source: THOMAS) The bill passed the House with 97% of Democrats supporting and 99% of Republicans opposing and has been placed on the Senate's legislative calendar.

The Senate Committee on Health, Education,

Labor, and Pensions is currently reviewing several other bills that seek to address issues of discrimination. These include the Paycheck Fairness Act, which would provide remedy to victims of wage discrimination based on sex, and the slightly broader Fair Pay Act of 2007, which would include wage discrimination based on sex, race or national origin.

The Workplace Religious Freedom Act of 2007, which has been introduced in the House and referred to the Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions, seeks to amend Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to address certain forms of religious accommodation in the workplace.

Finally, the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2007 seeks to prohibit discrimination by both insurance companies and employers on the basis of one's genetic information. This issue is expected to receive increasing scrutiny as genetic testing for a variety of chronic illnesses becomes a more routine aspect of preventative healthcare and as companies struggle to meet rising healthcare costs for their employees. The bill passed the House with bipartisan support and is currently scheduled for debate in the Senate

## Supreme Court Review

Russell Ferri  
New York University

During the 2006-2007 term the Supreme Court ruled on two key cases involving labor. Both were both controversial, and one has led to a response from Congress.

In *Long Island Care at Home, LTD., et al. v. Coke* the Court decided that it was within the authority of the Department of Labor to determine that domestic service workers are exempt from minimum wage and overtime regulations, even if the workers are employed by



third-party agencies. The unanimous decision, written by Justice Breyer, argued that the legislation was written in a way that clearly allows the Department of Labor to make interpretations of the law such as this one, and that any alterations will have to be made by Congress. If Congress decides not to respond to this decision, a new presidential administration would be free to interpret the overtime regulations differently.

In an even more controversial decision, the Supreme Court ruled 5-4 that Lilly Ledbetter, a retired supervisor at a Goodyear plant in Alabama, was unable to sue for wage discrimination because she failed to do so within 180 days of the “initial acts of discrimination.” In this case, those acts were several evaluations completed early in her tenure that were unfavorable due to her being a female. Ledbetter argued that each subsequent paycheck that reflected the discrimination was an act of discrimination and thus meant she was within the statute of limitations. The Court rejected this argument in an opinion written by Justice Alito, joined by Roberts, Scalia, Kennedy, and Thomas. In a vigorous dissent, Justice Ginsburg argued that not only is the majority opinion unfaithful to the intent of Congress when it passed Title VII and previous Supreme Court decisions dealing with workplace discrimination, but also that the Court’s reasoning is impractical in most workplaces. “Compensation disparities often occur,” Ginsburg writes, “in small increments,” and “are often hidden from sight.” Thus, to require a filing in 180 days is a very unreasonable (if not impossible) burden, the effect of which will essentially be to prevent most, if not all, cases of wage discrimination to be tried in the courts.

Congress has reacted with the Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, which passed the house on a 225-199 vote and is now awaiting approval in the Senate. President Bush has said he will veto it (see Ruth Braunstein’s “Legislative Update).

The Court has agreed to hear several cases

involving key labor issues for its 2007-2008 term. In *Federal Express v. Holowecki* the Court will decide whether employees can pursue discrimination claims against a company even when the EEOC fails to formally notify the company of the employee’s desire to do so (as the law now requires). In *Sprint v. Mendelsohn* the court will decide whether so-called “me too” evidence is admissible in discrimination claims. The plaintiff, Ellen Mendelsohn, is claiming age discrimination and is seeking to have other employees testify in Court regarding Sprint’s alleged discrimination against employees based on their age. The trial court prohibited her from doing so.

## Conference Announcement

---

### HOW CLASS WORKS 2008 Conference

SUNY Stony Brook, June 5-7, 2008

#### CALL FOR PRESENTATIONS

The Center for Study of Working Class Life is pleased to announce the How Class Works – 2008 Conference, to be held at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, June 5 - 7, 2008. Proposals for papers, presentations, and sessions are welcome until December 17, 2007 according to the guidelines below. For more information, visit our Web site at [www.workingclass.sunysb.edu](http://www.workingclass.sunysb.edu).

#### Purpose and orientation

The conference seeks to explore ways in which an explicit recognition of class helps to understand the social world in which we live, and ways in which analysis of society can deepen our understanding of class as a social relationship. Presentations should take as their point of reference the lived experience of class; proposed theoretical contributions should be rooted in and illuminate social realities. Presentations are welcome from people outside academic life when

they sum up social experience in a way that contributes to the themes of the conference. Formal papers will be welcome but are not required. All presentations should be accessible to an interdisciplinary audience.

### **Conference themes**

The conference welcomes proposals for presentations that advance our understanding of any of the following themes.

**The mosaic of class, race, and gender.** To explore how class shapes racial, gender, and ethnic experience and how different racial, gender, and ethnic experiences within various classes shape the meaning of class. Special focus: the legacy of

Theodore W. Allen's work on the invention of the white race and its implications in the new racial and ethnic mix of 21st century U.S. society.

**Class, power, and social structure.** To explore the social content of working, middle, and capitalist classes in terms of various aspects of power; to explore ways in which class and structures of power interact, at the workplace and in the broader society.

**Class and community.** To explore ways in which class operates outside the workplace in the communities where people of various classes live. Class in a global economy. To explore how class identity and class dynamics are influenced by globalization, including experience of cross-border organizing, capitalist class dynamics, international labor standards.

**Middle class? Working class? What's the difference and why does it matter?** To explore the claim that the U.S. is a middle class society and contrast it with the notion that the working class is the majority; to explore the relationships between the middle class and the working class, and between the middle class and the capitalist class.

**Class, public policy, and electoral politics.** To explore how class affects public policy, with

special attention to health care, the criminal justice system, labor law, poverty, tax and other economic policy, housing, and education; to explore the place of electoral politics in the arrangement of class forces on policy matters. Special focus: class, health, and health care.

**Class and culture.** To explore ways in which culture transmits and transforms class dynamics.

**Pedagogy of class.** To explore techniques and materials useful for teaching about class, at K-12 levels, in college and university courses, and in labor studies and adult education courses.

### **How to submit proposals for How Class Works – 2008 Conference**

Proposals for presentations must include the following information: a) title; b) which of the eight conference themes will be addressed; c) a maximum 250 word summary of the main points, methodology, and slice of experience that will be summed up; d) relevant personal information indicating institutional affiliation (if any) and what training or experience the presenter brings to the proposal; e) presenter's name, address, telephone, fax, and e-mail address. A person may present in at most two conference sessions. To allow time for discussion, sessions will be limited to three twenty-minute or four fifteen-minute principal presentations. Sessions will not include official discussants. Proposals for poster sessions are welcome. Presentations may be assigned to a poster session.

Proposals for sessions are welcome. A single session proposal must include proposal information for all presentations expected to be part of it, as detailed above, with some indication of willingness to participate from each proposed session member.

Submit proposals as hard copy by mail to the How Class Works - 2008 Conference, Center for Study of Working Class Life, Department of Economics, SUNY, Stony Brook, NY 11794-4384 or as an e-mail attachment to [michael.zweig@stonybrook.edu](mailto:michael.zweig@stonybrook.edu).

**Timetable:** Proposals must be received by December 17, 2007. Notifications will be mailed on January 16, 2008. The conference will be at SUNY Stony Brook June 5- 7, 2008. Conference registration and housing reservations will be possible after February 15, 2008. Details and updates will be posted at <http://www.workingclass.sunysb.edu>.

### Conference coordinator

Michael Zweig  
 Director, Center for Study of Working Class Life  
 Department of Economics  
 State University of New York  
 Stony Brook, NY 11794-4384  
 631.632.7536  
[michael.zweig@stonybrook.edu](mailto:michael.zweig@stonybrook.edu)

## New Publications

---

Kathleen R. Arnold, *America's New Working Class: Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in a Biopolitical Age* (Penn State Press, 2008).

Andrew Battista, *The Revival of Labor Liberalism* (University of Illinois Press, 2008).

Edna Bonacich and Jake B. Wilson, *Getting the Goods: Ports, Labor, and the Logistics Revolution* (Cornell University Press, 2007).

Kate Bronfenbrenner, ed., *Global Unions: Challenging Transnational Capital through Cross-Border Campaigns* (Cornell University Press, 2007).

Ethel C. Brooks, *Unraveling the Garment Industry: Transnational Organizing and Women's Work* (University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

Teri L. Caraway, *Assembling Women: The Feminization of Global Manufacturing* (Cornell University Press, 2007).

Hector L. Delgado, "Unions and the Unionization

of Latinas/os," forthcoming in *Latinas/os in the United States: Changing the Face of America*, edited by Havidan Rodriguez, Rogelio Saenz, and Cecilia Menjivar (Springer, 2008).

Gertrude Ezorsky, *Freedom in the Workplace?* (Cornell University Press, 2007).

Richard B. Freeman, Peter F. Boxall, and Peter Haynes, eds., *What Workers Say: Employee Voice in the Anglo-American Work Place* (Cornell University Press, 2007).

Richard B. Freeman and Joel Rogers, *What Workers Want* (updated edition, Cornell University Press and Russell Sage Foundation, 2007).

Joseph Gerteis, *Class and the Color Line: Interracial Coalition in the Knights of Labor and the Populist Movement* (Duke University Press, 2007).

James B. Jacobs, *Mobsters, Unions, and Feds: The Mafia and the American Labor Movement* (New York University Press, 2007).

Monika Krause, Mary Nolan, Michael Palm, and Andrew Ross, eds., *The University Against Itself: The NYU Strike and the Future of the Academic Workplace* (Temple University Press, 2007).

Jacques E. Levy, *Cesar Chavez: Autobiography of La Causa* (University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

Caitrin Lynch, *Juki Girls, Good Girls: Gender and Cultural Politics in Sri Lanka's Global Garment Industry* (Cornell University Press, 2007).

Steven C. McKay, *Satanic Mills or Silicon Islands? The Politics of High-Tech Production in the Philippines* (Cornell University Press, 2007). See book review in this issue.

Guy Mundlak, *Fading Corporatism: Israel's Labor Law and Industrial Relations in Transition*

(Cornell University Press, 2007).

Daniel J. Opler, *For All White-Collar Workers: The Possibilities of Radicalism in New York City's Department Store Unions, 1934-1953* (Ohio State University Press, 2007).

Kris Paap, *Working Construction: Why White Working-Class Men Put Themselves—and the Labor Movement—in Harm's Way* (Cornell/ILR Press, 2006), \$19.95 paper, \$55.00 cloth, 272 pages; ISBN: 978-0-8014-7286-2.

Kris Paap worked for nearly three years as a carpenter's apprentice on a variety of jobsites, closely observing her colleagues' habits, expressions, and attitudes. As a woman in an overwhelmingly male—and stereotypically “macho”—profession, Paap uses her experiences to reveal the ways that gender, class, and race interact in the construction industry. She shows how the stereotypes of construction workers and their overt displays of sexism, racism, physical strength, and homophobia are not “just how they are,” but rather culturally and structurally mandated enactments of what it means to be a man—and a worker—in America. The significance of these worker performances is particularly clear in relation to occupational safety: when the pressures for demonstrating physical masculinity are combined with a lack of protection from firing, workers are forced to ignore safety procedures in order to prove—whether male or female—that they are “man enough” to do the job. Thus these mandated performances have real, and sometimes deadly, consequences for individuals, the entire working class, and the strength of the union movement. Paap concludes that machismo separates the white male construction workers from their natural political allies, increases their risks on the job, plays to management's interests, lowers their overall social status, and undercuts the effectiveness of their union.

Grace Palladino, *Skilled Hands, Strong Spirits: A Century of Building Trades History* (Cornell University Press, 2007).

Piya Pangsapa, *Textures of Struggle: The Emergence of Resistance among Garment Workers in Thailand* (Cornell/ILR Press, 2007).

Marina de Regt, *Pioneers or Pawns? Women Health Workers and the Politics of Development in Yemen* (Syracuse University Press, 2007).

Cesar F. Rosado Marzan (Chicago-Kent College of Law), "Solidarity or Colonialism? The Polemic of 'Labor Colonialism' in Puerto Rico," in *Working USA, The Journal of Labor and Society* (2007), Vol. 10. No. 3, 287.

Art Shostak, Emeritus Professor of Sociology, Drexel University, recently published three articles: (1) For the January 2008 issue of *Contemporary Sociology*, he reviewed four recent books in an essay entitled "Can Labor Last? Or Again Lead? And Can We Help?" (The books are *Race and Labor Matters in the New U.S. Economy*, edited by Manning Marable, Immanuel Ness, and Joseph Wilson (Rowman and Littlefield, 2006); *L.A. Story: Immigrant Workers and the Future of the U.S. Labor Movement*, by Ruth Milkman (Russell Sage Foundation, 2006); *Slaves to Fashion: Poverty and Abuse in the New Sweatshops*, by Robert J. Ross (University of Michigan Press, 2004) and *A Country that Works: Getting America Back on Track*, by Andy Stern (Free Press, 2006). (2) "Making the Most of Technology," in *Union Futures*, a pamphlet published by the Union Ideas Network (Trade Union Congress, London), August 2007. (3) "Boomer Alert! Trends Worth Careful Attention," *Career Planning and Adult Development* (Fall 2006), 22, 3, pp. 104-111. On June 2, Shostak gave an invited address on "Creative uses of Computer Power by Chinese Unions" at the International Conference on Market Socialism held in Beijing, China. And from August 26 through the 31st he was a guest lecturer in Ontario, Canada, for the National Union of Professional and Governmental Employees.

David Shulman, *From Hire to Liar: The Role of Deception in the Workplace* (Cornell University Press, 2007).

David O. Stowell, ed., *The Great Strikes of 1877* (University of Illinois Press, 2008).

Shelton Stromquist, ed., *Labor's Cold War: Local Politics in a Global Context* (University of Illinois Press, 2008).

Michael Wallace, "After Taft-Hartley: The Legal-Institutional Context of U.S. Strike Activity, 1948-1980," *Sociological Quarterly* (2007) 48:769-99.

Robert H. Zeiger, *For Jobs and Freedom: Race and Labor in America Since 1865* (University Press of Kentucky, 2007).