

In Critical Solidarity

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Newsletter of the Labor and Labor Movement Section of the ASA

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From the Chair (Steve McKay)



From the Chair:

We are happy to be kicking off a new volume and new format of our section newsletter. First off, I'd like to thank Mark Sherry for stepping up and taking the reigns as editor. Mark brings lots of experience and enthusiasm to the job and I hope you will heed his call for more member submissions as he tries to put out the newsletter more frequently. If you have ideas, contributions, links or photos, please contact Mark.

These are exciting, if difficult times for labor and labor movements: from the tragedies, yet recent hard-fought wage gains in the Bangladesh garment industry, to the exploding WalMart workers' and Domestic Workers' campaigns here in the US, to the movements for living wages across the globe.

Our section members have been at the frontlines of research (and often picket-lines), helping make sense of how a changing, more globalized economy is intimately connected to new forms of work and new ways of worker organizing. Coming off a very successful ASA meeting and mini-conference on Global Solidarity in New York City last summer, we hope to build on that momentum going into the New Year and towards our next meeting in San Francisco.

We are hoping for another strong showing in August and I urge you to submit your work for our panel sessions at the ASA Annual Meeting in 2014. As you can read on page...., we are moving to a new, open call for papers for our 3 panel sessions, which should allow for broader participation and let us better showcase more of the exciting research done in our section. In San Francisco, we will also continue our tradition of working with a local union for our section reception – in this case, we'll be partnering with UNITE HERE Local 2, a local with a long history of progressive unionism and worker/community organizing that dates back over 100 years.

So enjoy the newsletter, submit your work to our ASA sessions in San Francisco, and last, but not least, don't forget to renew your membership in the Labor and Labor Movements Section!

In solidarity,

Steve McKay

2014 ASA CONFERENCE



109th ASA Annual Meeting

August 16-19, 2014

Hilton San Francisco Union Square & Parc55 Wyndham Hotel,
San Francisco, CA

Hard Times: The Impact of Economic Inequality on Families and Individuals

America is a land of inequality. Moreover, the scope of economic inequality has grown sharply in recent decades. Since the beginning of the Great Recession in 2008, in particular, many Americans have lost ground. Its consequences have been particularly harsh for families with children.

With the theme, "Hard Times: The Impact of Economic Inequality on Families and Individuals," President Annette Lareau draws attention to the multiple ways in which inequality reverberates throughout American society and the world. The program will highlight social science research documenting the breadth and depth of economic inequality and the consequences for virtually every sphere of social life: education, health, family life, work, political participation, neighborhood life, religion, and experiences with the criminal justice system. Of course, the ramifications of economic inequality are not equally shared. The program will examine variations in economic inequality by race and ethnicity, gender, and immigrant status. Particular attention will be paid to social class differences in daily life. Our focus will not simply be on the impact of income inequality, but also the accumulation of debt and the consolidation of income into wealth. In addition to examining the poor and middle-class, special attention will also be paid to the experiences of the very wealthy. Hence, the program takes a broad view of economic inequality. The focus on "Hard Times" also seeks to understand the lasting consequences of being raised in times of economic uncertainty. Furthermore, it will critically examine programs of change, whether in the form of social movements or policy interventions.

Mark Your Calendar

The 2014 Online Paper Submission System will open on December 6, 2013. The deadline for submission is January 8, 2014 at 3:00pm EST. Authors should receive notice of the final disposition of their submission by March 14, 2014. April 30, 2014: Program schedule announced; no scheduling information is available prior to that date.

CFP – Labor and Labor Movements Section ASA Annual Meeting, San Francisco, 2014

The Labor and Labor Movements section is excited to announce the Call for Papers for next year's ASA Annual Meeting in San Francisco. The 2014 Online Paper Submission System will open on December 6, 2013 and the deadline for submission is January 8, 2014 at 3:00pm EST.

To encourage the broadest participation possible, our section has opted this year to have an open call for our 3 paper sessions. The open call means that your submission would not have to match any particular theme or topic related to labor and labor movements. We hope that moving to the open call format will allow a greater number of our members to submit their work and ensure a broad view of current research. From the submissions we receive, the program committee will then select and organize papers into what we hope will be an interesting group of panels that represent a variety of perspectives and areas of study. Those papers not selected for one of the 3 panels will automatically be recommended for our section's roundtable session.

Please note that although we are leaving the call for papers open in terms of topics, there are key themes that members have expressed interest in addressing, including: the changing nature of work and labor organizing, issues of globalization, new and contingent/precarious forms of work (and resistance to those forms), and new forms of worker representation.

Our section is also committed to addressing issues of diversity. Therefore, we actively encourage papers that deal with issues of race, class, gender, citizenship and sexuality. We also seek to have a range of scholars across all our panels and are particularly interested in engaging in scholarly discussions that bridge works between the Labor and Labor Movement Sections and other ASA Sections -- especially Racial and Ethnic Minorities, Asia and Asia America, Latino/a Sociology, Race Gender and Class, and International Migration.

A reminder: please submit your paper online to the “Section on Labor and Labor Movements” session organizer: Steven McKay. (There is also a Regular Session listed as Labor/Labor Movements, but that one is NOT organized by our section).

If you have any questions, please contact the program committee chair, Steve McKay (smckay@ucsc.edu).



New Newsletter Editor



Welcome to the new format of the Newsletter. I am your new Newsletter Editor, Dr. Mark Sherry from the University of Toledo.

You may notice that I have written the vast majority of this newsletter. I don't want to do that in the future; I just felt that a newsletter was very overdue so I wanted to get it out as soon as possible. This whole newsletter has been compiled within a week. I've tried to address a range of topics in the newsletter, including international issues, people of color, sexuality, and many others... I am really keen to solicit member input into the newsletter, and to produce the Newsletter more regularly. I deeply believe that scholarship in the labor movement can be engaged, theoretically informed, and accessible.

I want this Newsletter to be useful for you, and I'd like you to contribute, a lot. Ideally, it would be driven by the membership.

Please send any contributions to me – book reviews, discussions of research topics, conferences, announcements, protests, questions for solidarity, news stories, and anything else which our members would enjoy. My email is markdsherry@yahoo.com

I would also like to thank the outgoing newsletter editor, Paul Morgan, for the hard work he contributed to the Newsletter.



Mini-Conference on Labor and Global Solidarity – The US, China and Beyond

On Monday, 12 August 2013, the Labor Section participated in a mini-conference in New York regarding Global Solidarity.

After a breakfast and welcome to the Murphy institute, there was an opening statement from Katie Quan (UC Berkeley Labor Center) regarding “Building Relationships between Labor Sociologists in the United States and China Project”. At lunch, participants were able to attend keynote speeches from Ruth Milkman (Murphy Institute for Worker Education and Labor Studies, CUNY), Beverly Silver (Johns Hopkins University) and Luna Ranjit (National Domestic Workers Alliance) and throughout the day, there were 11 panels which they could attend as well.

Topics of the panels included:

- Labor in China I: The Broken Iron Rice Bowl: New Forms of Employment and Exploitation
- Labor Unrest and Countermovements in the Global South
- Informal Workers I: The Streets Are Ours! Street Vendors and Day Laborers Organize
- Monitoring International Supply Chains from the Shop Floor(s)
- Transnational Labor Organizing I: Learning from the Local
- Informal Work II: Women Workers Organizing in the Global Economy
- Transnational Organizing II: Theorizing the Opportunity of the “Global”
- Organizing (im)migrants – Here, There and in the Diaspora
- Labor in China II: Chinese Workers: Consciousness and Voice
- Rethinking Organizing: Emerging Strategies and Future Challenges
- Labor in China III: Representing Workers, Emerging Model

The conference co-organizers were Carolina Bank Munoz (Brooklyn College), David Fasenfest (Wayne State University), and Steve McKay (University of California, Santa Cruz). This Mini-Conference was the result of significant collaboration from many organizations and supporters: the ASA Labor and Labor Movements Section & the Society for the Study of Social Problems, the Asia and Asian American Section of the ASA, the Murphy Institute for Worker Education and Labor Studies at CUNY, the UC Berkeley Center for Labor Research and Education, the Manhattan College Labor Studies Program, Critical Sociology, the Center for Global Workers’ Rights, the Labour and Labour Movements Research Committee of the ISA, and the China Association of Work and Labor of the Chinese Sociological Association. Thank you to all those involved in organizing this valuable event.



Photo credit: Section Webpage

<https://www.facebook.com/ASALaborMovements>

Mini-conference Summary: Mark Sherry

Major Retailers Opening on Thanksgiving

Mark Sherry



Last year, 200 retailers opened on Thanksgiving Day.¹ This year, even more retail stores are doing that. Macy's, famous for their Thanksgiving Day Parade, has announced it too will open on that day. Toys 'R Us, has announced that they will also break with past practice and open on Thanksgiving Day. Many retail stores are opening (or opening earlier) on Thanksgiving Day – including Best Buy, Kohl's, J.C. Penney, Target, Staples, and Sears.

There are national PROTESTS AGAINST WAL-MART on Thanksgiving, following the arrest of 50 protesters in Los Angeles on November 7.

Interestingly, however, few of the labor protests associate the current attack on working conditions with the history of violent colonization that indigenous peoples have highlighted over the years, demonstrating the ongoing need for intersectionality in progressive struggles.

From the Daily Kos

"The competition to frame the Black Friday Walmart protests continues. Walmart, of course, has every reason to minimize the protests and OUR Walmart, the group organizing the protests, has every reason to exaggerate them. Since protests were basically crowd-sourced and ranged from tiny to big, it's probably impossible to determine the truth. No one is claiming that anything but a small fraction of Walmart's massive number of employees took part; on the other hand, it's a new thing that any Walmart employees are protesting, and these terribly underpaid workers do so at the risk of their jobs."²

From The Guardian

"The union-backed employee group OUR WalMart is planning a series of protests in the run-up to Thanksgiving. The group is calling on the company to use its \$17bn in profits to pay a minimum of \$25,000 a year for full-time work and to end what it claims is illegal retaliation against workers who protest pay and conditions. The group [recently organised a strike](#) in Los Angeles over what they called WalMart's "poverty wages". The action led to more than 50 arrests. Our WalMart has [written to President Barack Obama](#), asking him to meet with protesting workers and claiming the company is "helping to hold America back from this dream". OUR Walmart member Richard Reynoso said: "Personally, I don't know my schedule yet for Thanksgiving. Of course I hope I get to spend the holiday with my family. I am sorry to see other retailers continue to follow WalMart's shortsighted lead in forcing retail workers to cut Thanksgiving short with their families and in driving down wages across the industry. This is why changing WalMart is so important to workers at Walmart and all American workers. My co-workers and I are calling for changes that impact us year-round, not just during the holiday season."³

¹ <http://retailindustry.about.com/b/2012/11/21/200-retail-chains-announce-thanksgiving-day-store-hours-to-compete-with-wal-mart-thanksgiving-store-openings-make-the-2012-pre-black-friday-shopping-malliday-official-wmt.htm>

² <http://www.dailykos.com/story/2012/11/26/1164704/-Walmart-is-downplaying-it-but-Black-Friday-protests-were-historic#>

³ <http://www.theguardian.com/business/2013/nov/12/walmart-backlash-thanksgiving-day-opening>

Wal-Mart Protests

Mark Sherry

Some of the most interesting, and important, developments in recent years have been the labor movement's efforts against Wal-Mart: the attempt to unionize Wal-Mart; the protests against Wal-Mart's roles in global sweatshops (and their associated deaths and other human rights abuses); and the protests against extended working hours around the time of Thanksgiving; and the protests to force Wal-Mart to pay better its employees better wages.

A recent article on these protests emphasized the vulnerability of Wal-Mart to collective protest and community concerns – it was entitled “Walmart is a Ruthless Corporate Monster - but it's Not too Big to Fall.” This sense of optimism in the weight of a combined labor-community campaign against the world's largest retailer is inspiring those who are joining in the protests, nationally and internationally.

The fact that so many of Wal-Mart's employees rely on food stamps has not escaped its critics – particularly given the fortunes made by its CEO. For instance, Walmart CEO's Retirement Plan is over 6,000 times more than the average made by Wal-Mart employees. In fact, this was the biggest disparity of any of America's 10 biggest companies.

The following table was taken from a study by NerdWallet.⁴

Company	CEO Pension Value	Average 401k Balance per Worker	CEO Pension Multiple
1 Walmart	\$113,157,559	\$18,303	6,182
2 McKesson	\$115,822,288	\$122,768	943
3 GE	\$53,184,790	\$83,386	638
4 AT&T	\$42,744,354	\$78,223	546
5 Philip Morris	\$60,450,060	\$238,577	253
6 Pfizer	\$34,541,840	\$153,860	225
7 ExxonMobil	\$68,072,125	\$469,885	145
8 Bank of America	\$7,698,032	\$54,762	141
9 Google ¹	\$9,105,779	\$70,517	129
10 Oracle ¹	\$14,866,191	\$153,195	97
Median			239

¹ Google and Oracle do not offer pension plans to their CEOs. Amounts reflected are for their deferred compensation plans.

Critics argue that Wal-Mart is effectively subsidized by the Governemnt, because it pays its employees so poorly, that they have to rely on Government food-stamps to make ends meet.

Wal-Mart's treatment of its own employees has been another constant theme of critics.

⁴ <http://www.nerdwallet.com/blog/2013/ceo-compensation-pension>

The graphic below was taken from the “JadedSkeptic” website:⁵



The following comments, which are particularly useful for labor studies people in terms of their reflections on changing labor movement tactics, come from a fascinating article in “The Nation” by Josh Eidelson⁶:

The current effort against Walmart exemplifies some key tactics being taken up within an embattled US labor movement: alternative organizational structures that aren't about collective bargaining; organizing across a supply chain and beyond those workers considered a corporation's legal “employees”; and short-term “minority strikes” in which workers walk off the job to embarrass their employer, engage the public and inspire more co-workers to join them. The specter of management retaliation represents the greatest challenge to such efforts. The number of Walmart workers who choose to strike on November 29 will be a measure of how well OUR Walmart can meet that challenge.

⁵ <http://jadedskeptic.blogspot.com/2012/11/the-trouble-with-going-to-walmart.html>

⁶ <http://www.thenation.com/blog/176054/walmart-workers-plan-widespread-massive-strikes-and-protests-black-friday-2013>

In the classroom

*So... do you teach about Walmart in your classes?
What kinds of teaching materials do you use?
Have you had guest speakers from OURWalmart?
Have your students attended any protests?*



*We'd love to hear from you ... in a "Letters to the Editor" section of the next newsletter.
Please email markdsherry@yahoo.com*

UN Derecognizes Staff Unions

Mark Sherry

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon derecognized the staff unions representing the organization's 65,000 staff in July of this year, and workers, unions and allies are running an "urgent action campaign" to challenge this decision.

Working for the UN is terribly dangerous: over 200 of their staff have been killed in the last ten years, and over 550 staff have been attacked. They work in dangerous locations and war zones; and look to their unions to negotiate topics like protections for workers in dangerous situations and redeployment procedures.

Ban Ki-moon is refusing to negotiate with the unions, but says he will "consult". The not-so-funny irony is that the UN is supposed to uphold international human rights and labor rights conventions.

The International Trade Union Confederation has called on the UN to reverse this decision.

For more information, see <http://www.staffcoordinatingcouncil.org/>

NO STAFF
=
NO UN

"Emergency Street Cleaners" used in Madrid Strike

Mark Sherry

After 11 days on strike (protesting a plan to lay off almost 1/5 of their workforce, as well as implementing 17% pay cuts), "emergency street cleaners", backed by police, are doing the work of the striking workers.

Neoliberal governmentality, globalization, and austerity have had disastrous economic effects on Spain – it is struggling with 25% unemployment. There are frequent public protests about the cuts.

Editor's note: This article was written on November 17 and events are moving so quickly, it cannot be relied upon to be current when you are reading it.

Rana Plaza Victims Await Compensation

Mark Sherry

When Rana Plaza collapsed in Bangladesh, 1129 people were killed. This remains the deadliest garment-factory incident in history. There were around 5000 garment workers employed in the building. Unfortunately, however, companies such as Walmart, Carrefour, Bonmarché, Mango, Auchan and Kik are holding up the compensation process. They are refusing to sign an agreement to compensate the survivors and families of victims who were killed in the Rana Plaza fire in Bangladesh.

A report about the struggle for compensation by the Clean Clothes Campaign and the International Labor Rights Forum can be found at the following website:

<http://www.cleanclothes.org/resources/publications/still-waiting>

Below is the executive summary of this report:

“Six months after the Rana Plaza building collapse and eleven months after the Tazreen Fashions fire, the injured workers and the families who lost loved ones face immense financial hardship. In addition to the physical pain and psychological trauma, they are suffering from loss of income while continuing to await full and fair compensation from government, factory owners, and European and North American brands and retailers. This report by the Clean Clothes Campaign and the International Labor Rights Forum is an examination of the aftermath of these two garment industry disasters in Bangladesh. We avoid using the word “accidents” because we acknowledge that these tragedies could have been prevented with proper fire and building safety measures and with respect for workers’ right to refuse dangerous work. The report finds that as of yet very little compensation from the negligent parties responsible for the catastrophes has reached the survivors and the families of the deceased. A process for delivering compensation to the families of workers who died at Rana Plaza has now begun and there are some promising steps forward on developing a mechanism that will enable this much-needed compensation to become a reality. What is missing is the commitment from the majority of brands with links to the Rana Plaza factories to pay the money needed. In the six months since Rana Plaza, many of the brands and retailers sourcing from Bangladesh have taken some first steps towards a safer industry by forming the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh, which now has more than 100 signatories. This is a start – but much more needs to be done. All apparel companies sourcing from Bangladesh must join the Accord and all responsible companies should urgently participate in the compensation process for Tazreen and Rana Plaza victims. There must be a commitment from all brands to ensure compensation funds are sufficient to cover full and fair compensation payments to all the victims and their families. The initial outcry after these horrific tragedies must be translated into a sustained and continuous call for change throughout the industry, a change that will ensure that the women who make our clothes finally get the respect and dignity they deserve.”



Millennials have more positive attitudes to Unions

Mark Sherry

A Pew Report which indicated that Millennials have more positive attitudes towards unions than their older counterparts has garnered a great deal of attention from the labor movement.

The AFL-CIO discussed the results of this Report in a recent blog post:

<http://www.aflcio.org/Blog/Other-News/What-Millennials-Really-Think-about-Unions-You-ll-Be-Surprised>

One key finding was that 61% of respondents aged 18 to 29 had positive attitudes towards unions.

The paradox is that although younger people have more favorable attitudes towards unions, they are actually less likely to be union members because of the structural changes in the economy (such as the rise of part-time work), as well as employer intimidation, anti-labor laws, difficulty organizing in the private sector, and the lingering effects of the recession.

Here is a quote from the AFL which summarizes their position on trying to engage younger workers:

Well, good news, young workers of America! The AFL-CIO has spent the last 10 years exploring alternative forms of union membership, and there are ways for anyone to join the labor movement.

In 2003, Working America was formed to provide education, job training and workplace support for workers without collective bargaining agreements. With more than 3 million members, Working America provides assistance to anyone who needs it. [Click here for more info on becoming a Working America member.](#) And to find out more about [joining a union, check this out.](#)

Additionally, at the 2013 AFL-CIO convention, delegates overwhelmingly agreed to explore alternative methods of unionization and invite any worker to become part of the movement. Resolution 5 urged affiliate unions to make membership available to any worker who wants to join the labor movement. Many unions are already experimenting with associate membership programs in industries they represent, providing training and support for employees of nonunion employers.



A Broken Bargain for LGBT Workers of Color

Mark Sherry

LGBT workers of color face unique challenges and many of the barriers they experience – and the ways in which these barriers can be overcome – were discussed in a report released in November, 2013 entitled “A Broken Bargain for LGBT Workers of Color.”

You can download the report at <http://www.lgbtmap.org/file/a-broken-bargain-for-lgbt-workers-of-color.pdf>

The report highlights barriers that are related to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and/or gender identity. The three major barriers which it identifies are educational barriers; employment discrimination; and unequal pay, benefits, and taxation.

The report argues that LGBT people of color “are some of the most disadvantaged workers in the United States—and face extraordinarily high rates of unemployment and poverty.”

Some of the basic statistics which are outlined in the report are:

- As many as one-third of LGBT people are people of color.
- The LGBT population includes large numbers of immigrants.
- LGBT workers of color are geographically dispersed.
- Large numbers of LGBT workers of color are raising children.
- LGBT youth are at high risk of becoming homeless.
- LGBT workers of color are at significant risk of being unemployed.
- LGBT workers of color are at significant risk of poverty.

The report offers detailed recommendations for action to fix the broken bargain for LGBT workers of color, including recommendations for federal, state and local governments, as well as schools, universities, and employers.

One part of the Executive Summary states that “Instead of having a fair chance to get ahead, LGBT workers of color often are held back by a combination of barriers that adversely affect their ability to get a quality education and find good, family-supporting jobs in workplaces that are free of discrimination. While it can be hard to identify exactly how the forces of bias and prejudice based on race, sexual orientation and gender identity intersect, the fact is that they do so to the detriment of LGBT workers of color, making them some of the most disadvantaged workers in the U.S. workforce.”



Closing the Wage Gap for Women of Color

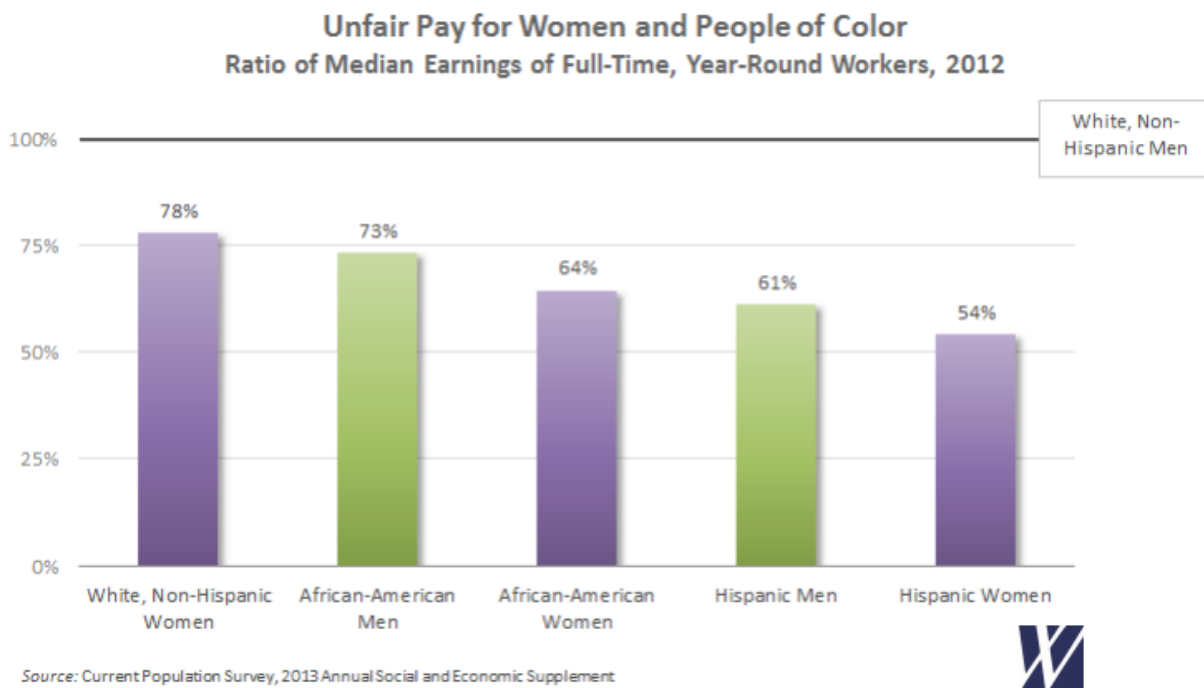
Mark Sherry

A new report from the National Women's Law Center highlights the economic inequalities experienced by working women of color. Entitled [*Closing the Wage Gap is Crucial for Women of Color and Their Families*](#), the report uses the most recent Census data to explore the position of US covers women working in full time.

The basic facts of the wage gap are pretty simple: full-time working women make 77 cents for every dollar made by men who work full-time.

The situation is even worse for women of color. African American women only make 64 cents for the same data and Hispanic women only 54 cents, for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men. Overall, this means the yearly incomes of these women are incredibly significant: African-American women earn \$18,650 less, and Hispanic women earn \$24,111 less, than white, non-Hispanic men.

Closing the Wage Gap states "Although enforcement of the Equal Pay Act and other civil rights laws has helped narrow the wage gap over time, addressing the significant disparity that remains is critical for women and their families."



Women of Color are not only paid a lot less than White Men, they are paid less than White, non-Hispanic Women and less than Men of Color. The Report states quite clearly: "Women of Color Need a Pay Raise." Improved wages, and closing the income gap, would help Women of Color feed their families, pay their bills, and relieve the financial strains that they experience because of their overwhelming rates of poverty. The last sentence of the Report states "For women of color and their families, every dollar counts. That's why it's more important than ever to close the wage gap for women of color."

#ripplesofdoubt (Trigger Warning: deals with sexual harassment)

Mark Sherry

The Twittersverse and scientific blogosphere exploded with discussions of the hashtag “ripplesofdoubt” recently. It started off as a blog by Monica Byrne about an experience of sexual harassment by an (then unnamed) “prominent science editor and blogger”⁷. She later named the person as Bora Zivkovic, Blogs Editor for Scientific American. Zivkovic then acknowledged the event happened, apologized to the woman and his wife, and said that he was ashamed of himself.⁸

What happened next has raised the issue to national prominence: so many women talked about their experiences of work and harassment by men in positions of power, and the psychological affects it has on them.

The shared experiences of sexual harassment which happened online deserves serious scholarly attention from labor scholars. Many people have focused on psychological responses – shock, anger, sadness, self-doubt, reassessing their own embodiment in terms of attractiveness – but a sociological analysis of the mix of class, race, gender, sexuality and embodiment, will undoubtedly prove very powerful. I encourage you – or your students – to consider studying it.

Older Workers Hit Hard By Recession

Mark Sherry

A report in the *LA Times* on November 10 suggested that workers over 55 had been hit much harder by this Recession than previous downturns, and had experienced longer waiting times as they struggled to find a new job.⁹

In the 1990s, the highest rate of unemployment for older workers was 5%; it reached 7.4% in August 2010.

Since the Recession started, the number of older workers who are unemployed has doubled – it now stands at 2 million people throughout the US.

Interestingly, while older workers generally have a lower unemployment rate than the general population, they are experiencing much longer periods of unemployment than the general population when they do lose their jobs.

Another report, from the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research¹⁰ found that almost 50% expect to retire later than they previously thought — usually, they expected to be three years older beyond their estimate when they were 40. From a sociological perspective, the inequalities were interesting: those who were most likely to expect to be working longer were men, racial minorities, parents of minor children, people earning less than \$50,000 a year, and people without health insurance.

⁷ <http://monicacatherine.wordpress.com/2012/10/09/this-happened/>

⁸ <http://blog.coturnix.org/2013/10/15/this-happened/>

⁹ <http://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-older-jobs-20131110.0.6385586.story#axzz2kHYVJxlp>

¹⁰ <http://www.apnorc.org/projects/Pages/working-longer-older-americans-attitudes-on-work-and-retirement.aspx>

Student group protests T-Mobile “Electronic Sweatshops”

Mark Sherry

On November 5, United Students Against Sweatshops in Charleston protested against what they called “Electronic Sweatshops” in T-Mobile stores.

United Students Against Sweatshops is an interesting organization which labor scholars might want to explore. In September, the AFL-CIO and United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS) entered into a national partnership to collaborate on global solidarity campaigns.

USAS describes itself as “a national student labor organization fighting for workers' rights with locals on over 150 campuses.”

Its website, which is <http://usas.org/>, indicates that its main campaigns are: “Campus Worker Justice; Garment Worker Solidarity; Kick Wall Street off Campus”; Justice for T-Mobile Workers; and Stand with Walmart Strikers.

The website states that there are particular health and safety issues for T-Mobile workers:

*“Workers face an enormous amount of stress and even their bathroom breaks are strictly monitored. These workers have reported abnormally high amounts of anxiety attacks, ulcers, and depression as a result. The environment is so stressful that many workers have required medical care while others have taken unpaid leave to heal. **Doctors in one town have seen so many T-Mobile workers for stress and anxiety that they call it the “T-Mobile disease.”** (emphasis in original)*

Graduate Students

Graduate Students are strongly encouraged to submit articles about their work! It helps get you connected, and networking is a key tool for improving your knowledge of the discipline, as well as creating other opportunities for collaboration and study.

Please submit!

Contact Markdsherry@yahoo.com

Graduate Study on Farm Laborers

Laurie Michaels, University of Toledo

I am currently doing a thesis on the precarious, hazardous and exploitative conditions faced by farm workers in Ohio and North Carolina, based on 18 months of ethnographic fieldwork with the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC). North Carolina was chosen as a site for study because it ranks first in tobacco production in the United States. There are estimates that over 100,000 migrant and seasonal farmworkers work in North Carolina. Toledo, Ohio was chosen as another site for study because it is the base of FLOC. Farm workers experience dangerous conditions and poor pay, and are also sometimes the subject of human trafficking, sexual or physical abuse, and unsanitary housing conditions. Farm workers are often undocumented workers, facing hostile political and cultural discourses which position them as “illegal aliens,” with the ever-present threat of deportation. The threat of deportation means that many workers are reluctant to engage in visible opposition to their oppressive conditions.

The key questions which the thesis addresses are:

How and why do farm workers (many of whom are undocumented workers) organize collectively? What discourses bring them together – or potentially divide them? What sort of theoretical frameworks and methodologies are most useful in interpreting the precarious situation of these transnational workers? What lessons can FLOC teach regarding transnational organizing?

Neoliberal governance is creating different kinds of transnational subjects, and is particularly threatening the positions of vulnerable groups such as non-citizens, undocumented workers, and their family members. In such a political and cultural climate, FLOC becomes an essential advocacy organization for a group that I have labeled “precarious workers” who often work in the informal economy. FLOC advocates about wages, working conditions, housing, safety, family and immigration issues – a broad political agenda which addresses many of the concerns of a workforce dominated by Mexican workers who have been brought to the United States to perform work that many others would refuse because of its low-paid and hazardous nature.

I am using an intersectional perspective, which highlights the differences as well as similarities among farm worker experiences. For instance, female farm workers report much higher rates of sexual harassment on the job. And Mexican workers (who constitute the vast majority of farm workers) face specific forms of anti-immigrant, anti-Mexican racism. Additionally, younger workers (and state laws allow such work from children as young as 12) face particular challenges.



Despite the fact that many transnational workers are not citizens of the US, there has been an increasing resistance to the anti-immigrant sentiment which often permeates American political discourse. FLOC has led the way in Ohio in promoting a far more inclusive vision of respect, equality, workers' rights, and fair labor practices.

I would love to hear from scholars and activists working on similar projects. Please contact me at Laurie.Michaels@rockets.utoledo.edu



XVIII ISA WORLD CONGRESS OF SOCIOLOGY

FACING AN UNEQUAL WORLD:
CHALLENGES FOR GLOBAL SOCIOLOGY

横浜
YOKOHAMA



13-19 July 2014

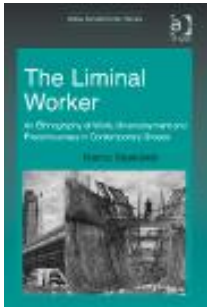
RC44, the Research Committee on Labor Movements, has an incredibly exciting array of sessions which have been proposed. Proposed sessions include:

- **Asian Labor Insurgency**
- **Authors Meet their Critics: Three New Perspectives in Global Labour Studies (Rina Agarwala, Ruy Braga and Jamie McCallum)**
- **Building Global Worker Communities among Migrant Worker Diasporas**
- **Chinese Workers in the Global Economy: Structural Conditions and Agency of Resistance**
- **Closing the Enforcement Gap: Improving Employment Standards for Workers in Industrialized Market Economies and Beyond**
- **Confronting the Challenge of Global Corporate Empires**
- **Geopolitical Turmoil and the Fate of the Labor Movement in the 21st Century: 10 years after Forces of Labor**
- **Mobilizing at the Margins: Comparing Informal Worker Organizing Around the World**
- **No Borders, No Boundaries: Organizational Changes, Strategic Innovations and Prospects for a Global Labour Movement**
- **Organizing East Asia's Precarious Workers**
- **Precarious Employment Regimes: Divergent Trajectories of Regulation and Union Mobilization**
- **Precarious Labor and Working Class Resistance in Comparative Perspective**
- **Precarious Work and Employment Risks in East Asia**

As well, the following Roundtables have been proposed: Labor Sociology in Capitalist Peripheries; Structural and Associational Power in the New Global Order; Global Capitalism, Uneven Development, and Local Labor Regimes in Comparative and World-Historical Perspective; Promoting Worker Organizing and Social and Economic Justice through Activist-Scholar Research Collaborations; Does Economic Growth Mean Ecological Catastrophe? Challenges for Labour?; Redefining the Spaces of Politics: Gender, Migration, Subjectivity and Affect; Precarious Labour: Perspectives from Europe; Challenges of Building Labor's Collective Strength in Asia; Informally-Employed Workers Engaging Capital and the State: From Neighbourhoods to Public Spaces; New Organizing Strategies for Confronting Gender Bias and Discrimination for Women Workers.

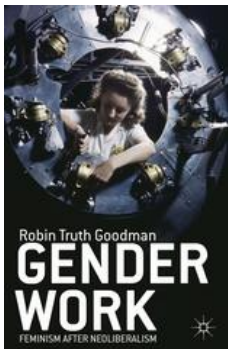
There are also joint or integrated sessions: The Global Migration of Gendered Care Work; Workers' Livelihood Struggles and New Collectivities in the Global South; Intimate Labor in Asia; Labor and Environmental Movements; Land and Labor in the Global Political Economy; Organizing the Production of Alternative Visions to support Social and Eco-Justice; the Global Migration of Gendered Care Work; and Unionism and the Critique of the Work Organization.

New Books



Manos Spyridakis, *The Liminal Worker, An Ethnography of Work, Unemployment and Precariousness in Contemporary Greece*, Ashgate, 2013.

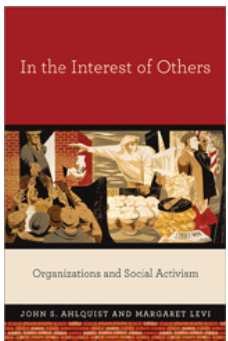
Publisher's description: *The Liminal Worker* examines the experience of work, employment, employment insecurity and precariousness in a context of high unemployment and welfare state crisis in modern Greece. A theoretically-informed, anthropological exploration of the notion of work in contemporary western society and its relation to processes of political decision making, this book challenges the mainstream conception of work as an economic or purely productive activity, presenting a comparative analysis of work as a social phenomenon. Drawing on original empirical research, it explores the key themes of the transformation, experience, meaning and narrative of work and its relation to attendant social - policies. A unique examination of the complicated experience of work and labour relations within power systems, institutions and organisations, as well as the reactions and survival strategies of ordinary actors facing precariousness in their daily existence, *The Liminal Worker* elaborates upon the notion of the anthropology of work and investigates the connection between ethnographic data (and its critical analysis) and the formation of policy.



Robin Truth Goodman, *Gender Work: Feminism after Neoliberalism*, Palgrave, 2013.

Publisher's Description: Recently, labor has acquired a re-emergent public relevance. In response, feminist theory urgently needs to reconsider the relationship between labor and gender. This book builds a theoretically-informed politics about changes in the gendered structure of labor by analyzing how the symbolic power of gender is put in the service of neoliberal practices. Goodman traces the cultural contextualization of 'women's work' from its Marxist roots to its current practices.

From the income gap to the gendering of industries, Goodman explores and critiques the rise of corporate power under neoliberalism and the ways and whys that femininity has become one of its principle commodities.

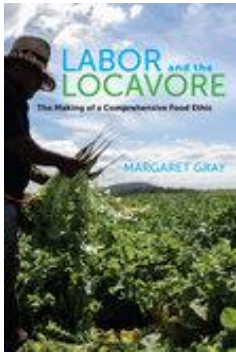


John S. Ahlquist & Margaret Levi, *In the Interest of Others: Organizations and Social Activism*, Princeton University Press, 2013

Publisher's Description: *In the Interest of Others* develops a new theory of organizational leadership and governance to explain why some organizations expand their scope of action in ways that do not benefit their members directly. John Ahlquist and Margaret Levi document eighty years of such activism by the

International Longshore and Warehouse Union in the United States and the Waterside Workers Federation in Australia. They systematically compare the ILWU and WWF to the Teamsters and the International Longshoremen's Association, two American transport industry labor unions that actively

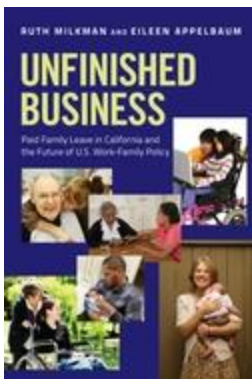
discouraged the pursuit of political causes unrelated to their own economic interests. Drawing on a wealth of original data, Ahlquist and Levi show how activist organizations can profoundly transform the views of members about their political efficacy and the collective actions they are willing to contemplate. They find that leaders who ask for support of projects without obvious material benefits must first demonstrate their ability to deliver the goods and services members expect. These leaders must also build governance institutions that coordinate expectations about their objectives and the behavior of members. *In the Interest of Others* reveals how activist labor unions expand the community of fate and provoke preferences that transcend the private interests of individual members. Ahlquist and Levi then extend this logic to other membership organizations, including religious groups, political parties, and the state itself.



Margaret Gray, *Labor and the Locavore: The Making of a Comprehensive Food Ethic*, University of California Press, 2013.

Publisher's Description: In the blizzard of attention around the virtues of local food production, food writers and activists place environmental protection, animal welfare, and saving small farms at the forefront of their attention. Yet amid this turn to wholesome and responsible food choices, the lives and working conditions of farmworkers are often an afterthought. *Labor and the Locavore* focuses on one of

the most vibrant local food economies in the country, the Hudson Valley that supplies New York restaurants and farmers markets. Based on more than a decade's in-depth interviews with workers, farmers, and others, Gray's examination clearly shows how the currency of agrarian values serves to mask the labor concerns of an already hidden workforce. She also explores the historical roots of farmworkers' predicaments and examines the ethnic shift from Black to Latino workers. With an analysis that can be applied to local food concerns around the country, this book challenges the reader to consider how the mentality of the alternative food movements implies a comprehensive food ethic that addresses workers' concerns.

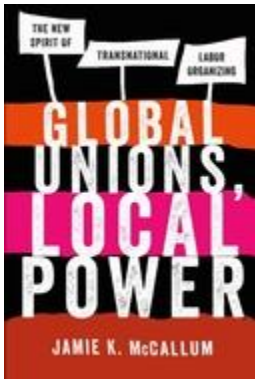


Ruth Milkman and Eileen Appelbaum, *Unfinished Business: Paid Family Leave in and the Future of U.S. Work-Family Policy*, 2013. California

Publisher's Description: *Unfinished Business* documents the history and impact of California's paid family leave program, the first of its kind in the United States, which began in 2004. Drawing on original data from fieldwork and surveys of employers, workers, and the larger California adult population, Ruth Milkman and Eileen Appelbaum analyze in detail the effect of the state's landmark paid family

leave on employers and workers. They also explore the implications of California's decade-long experience with paid family leave for the nation, which is engaged in ongoing debate about work-family policies. Milkman and Appelbaum recount the process by which California workers and their allies built a coalition to win passage of paid family leave in the state legislature, and lay out the lessons for advocates in other states and localities, as well as the nation. Because paid leave enjoys extensive popular support across the political spectrum, campaigns for such laws have an excellent chance of success if some basic preconditions are met. Do paid family leave and similar programs impose significant costs and burdens on employers? Business interests argue that they do and

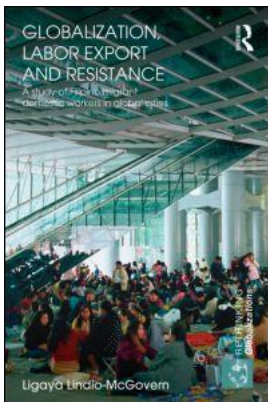
routinely oppose any and all legislative initiatives in this area. Once the program took effect in California, this book shows, large majorities of employers themselves reported that its impact on productivity, profitability, and performance was negligible or positive. Unfinished Business demonstrates that the California program is well managed and easy to access, but that awareness of its existence remains limited. Moreover, those who need the program's benefits most urgently—low-wage workers, young workers, immigrants, and disadvantaged minorities—are least likely to know about it. As a result, the long-standing pattern of inequality in access to paid leave has remained largely intact.



Jamie K. McCallum, *Global Unions, Local Power: The New Spirit of Transnational Labor Organizing*, Cornell ILR Press, 2013

Publisher's Description: *Global Unions, Local Power* tells the story of the most successful and aggressive campaign ever waged by workers across national borders--a worldwide effort to organize security guards at G4S, the second largest private employer on earth. In particular, the book focuses on the strategies and outcomes within North American, South African and Indian unions. The book argues that changes in political economy have encouraged unions to develop new

ways to organize workers by establishing new rules of engagement through which to exercise power over their employers. Paradoxically, the book demonstrates that US unions, despite being generally regarded as weaker than their European counterparts, are in the process of remaking the global labor movement in their own image. Based on more than two years of fieldwork in nine countries, the book redirects questions of labor transnationalism back to the local context, still the place it matters most.



Ligaya Lindio-McGovern *Globalization, Labor Export and Resistance: A Study of Filipino Migrant Domestic Workers in Global Cities*, Routledge, 2013.

Publisher's Description: Moving beyond polemical debates on globalization, this study considers complex intersections of gender, race, ethnicity, nationality and class within the field of globalized labor. As a significant contribution to the on-going debate on the role of neoliberal states in reproducing gender-race-class inequality in the global political economy, the volume examines the aggressive implementation of neoliberal policies of globalization in the Philippines, and how

labor export has become a contradictory feature of the country's international political economy while being contested from below. Lindio-McGovern presents theoretical and ethnographic insights from observational and interview data gathered during fieldwork in various global cities—Hong Kong, Taipei, Rome, Vancouver, Chicago and Metro-Manila. The result is a compelling weave of theory and experience of exploitation and resistance, an important development in discourses and literature on globalization and social movements seeking to influence regimes that exploit migrant women as cheap labor to sustain gendered global capitalism.

If you have any new books you'd like mentioned or reviewed, please send the details to markdsherry@yahoo.com

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Please renew for this Section as well!

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