

### Message from the President

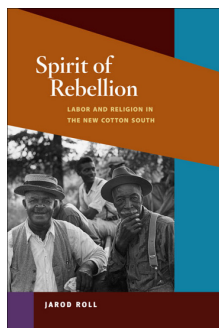
What an honor it has been to serve as SLSA president for the past year and a half. We have such wonderful members and such active and generous officers. The absolute highlight has been working with Alex Lichtenstein and Traci Leigh Drummond to craft the program for the upcoming SLSA conference. But there have been other crowning moments, like when Heather Thompson's elections committee came up with a fantastic slate of candidates for the upcoming election in two weeks; or when Max Krochmal emailed out of the blue to volunteer to create a new website for the organization (check it out). Just a few electronic conversations with Susan O'Donovan resulted in the first SLSA-sponsored workshop for teachers at the upcoming National History Day conference. Susan and her K-12 Outreach Committee also created a

list of resources for teachers on our website (I was thrilled to see "coming soon" disappear from the website after several years!). I'm not sure this counts as a crowning moment but Tom Klug, LAWCHA's treasurer, who had been collecting dues money from our new members through Duke University Press for a couple of years, also wrote out of the blue to tell us that Duke, after doing an audit, had "found" over seventy new members we didn't know we had. We were thrilled at the infusion of new members (and their dues). Even more remarkably, finding a venue for our next SLSA conference in 2013 took just one email. Steve Striffler, an anthropologist at the University of New Orleans, agreed to host immediately. Evan Bennett, Jacob Remes, our executive board members, and others have kept this organization humming. I'm not

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### Book Spotlight

In *Spirit of Rebellion: Labor and Religion in the New Cotton South* (University of Illinois Press, 2010), Jarod Roll documents an alternative tradition of American protest by linking working-class political movements to grassroots religious revivals. He reveals how ordinary rural citizens in the South used available resources and their shared faith to defend their agrarian livelihoods amid the political and economic upheaval of the first half of the twentieth century.



On the frontier of the New Cotton South in Missouri's Bootheel, the relationships between black and white farmers were complicated by racial tensions and bitter competition. Despite these divisions, workers found common ground as dissidents fighting for economic security, decent housing, and basic health, ultimately drawing on the democratic potential of evangelical religion to wage working-class revolts against commodity agriculture and the political forces that buoyed it. Roll convincingly shows how the moral clarity and spiritual vigor these working people found in Pentecostal revivals gave them the courage and fortitude to develop an expansive agenda of workers' rights by tapping into existing organizations such as the Socialist Party, the Universal Negro Improvement Association, the NAACP, and the interracial Southern Tenant Farmers' Union.

*Spirit of Rebellion* is the winner of the Herbert G. Gutman Prize from the Labor and Working-Class History Association. Jarod Roll teaches American history at the University of Sussex, England, where he is founder and director of the Marcus Cunliffe Center for the Study of the American South.

(Message from the President, Cont.)

sure what's going on out there in SLSA land, but I like it.

In the coming months, and especially at the conference in Atlanta, I hope we'll continue and deepen our conversations about how this organization can harness the energies of its members and make best use of all our time. The National History Day workshop, which member Jay Driskell from Hood College will lead, is a great example of a small event that has the potential to have a big impact. The upcoming conference's focus on archives has the potential to inspire archivists, historians, and other folk around the South to

collect and preserve materials related to working class history. At the Atlanta conference, our Labor Outreach Committee, along with LAWCHA's Committee, will be meeting to scheme about what our two organizations ought to be doing to support workers' movements and learn from them. What is the appropriate role of our organization? Should we launch a campus organizing institute, as some committee members have proposed? Should we be a clearinghouse for information on fair wage campaigns, prison labor, immigration detention? Should we create an electronic clipping service for information on southern labor news? Should we simply publicize the activist work that members are already doing? With your help, perhaps by our 2013 con-

ference in New Orleans we'll have far more to report.

As Jennifer Brooks prepares to take over as president this summer, she can breathe easy knowing that all she has to do is coordinate the amazing efforts that so many people are already making on behalf of this organization. Thank you all.

Cindy Hahamovitch  
College of William and Mary

### **Lioneld Jordan Fellowship in Labor and Working-Class Studies**

The Lioneld Jordan Fellowship has been established at the University of Arkansas Libraries Special Collections Department to honor the leadership and vision of Lioneld Jordan, the current mayor of Fayetteville, Arkansas. Mr. Jordan was an undergraduate student at the University of Arkansas, a carpenter with the UA Physical Plant for 26 years, president of AFSCME Local 965, president of the Northwest Arkansas Labor Council, and he is a champion of working families.

The fellowship is intended to encourage innovative study in the historical problems, identities, philosophies, and especially, the expressive cultures of working people in Arkansas. A special purpose of the fellowship is to support research that will result in publications (traditional or online) from scholars who are exploring important, innovative topics relative to the lives of working people that might fall outside of the parameters of traditional academic research and funding. The stipend can be used for any purpose related to the research project, including reproduction of materials, oral history interviewing, and traveling and lodging. Documentation will be required for reimbursements.

The Fellowship provides financial assistance for graduate students as well as junior and senior faculty using the University of Arkansas Libraries Special Collections Department collections related to Arkansas labor history, labor culture, labor education, labor lore, occupational folk life, trade union traditions, and worker culture – all broadly defined. Applicants may be from any relevant academic discipline, including but not limited to anthropology, art, communications studies, cultural studies, drama, English, folklore, geography, history, journalism, labor studies, literature, political science, sociology, or gender studies. Persons associated with the University of Arkansas are eligible for this fellowship.

Reimbursement for expenses up to \$500.00 will be awarded for the academic year 2011-2012. Funds will be awarded on a reimbursement basis.

Applications must include: a written proposal, of no more than 1000 words, describing the proposed research project and its significance; the research question and methods to be used; a projected timeline; an estimated budget; a preliminary bibliography; applicant's CV. Applications will be accepted beginning March 30, 2011 and must be postmarked no later than May 30, 2011. Fellowship awards will be announced no later than June 15, 2011.

Send all materials in paper format to: Jordan Fellowship Committee; University of Arkansas Libraries Special Collections Department; 365 N. McIlroy Ave.; Fayetteville, AR 72701-4002.

# Memory and Forgetting: Labor History and the Archive

15th Bi-Annual Southern Labor Studies Conference  
April 7-10, 2011

Alex Lichtenstein  
Florida International University

Those of us who care about keeping the history of labor and the working class alive in the US currently face at least four interrelated crises. First, there is a crisis of memory, as labor's heroic past in building democracy faces obliteration from the nation's popular and public culture. In some instances, this is a physical process, as the struggle to preserve West Virginia's Blair Mountain as a National Historical Landmark in the face of coal companies seeking to strip mine near this historic site of labor struggle attests.<sup>1</sup> The threat to sites of memory and to the public history of labor mirrors the shrinking place for working-class history in college and high school classrooms, part of a more general devaluing of the humanities facing educators and students in the US.

Of course, these twinned crises of public and classroom pedagogy pale before the daunting terrain faced by American working people themselves. As Michael Kazin notes in the latest issue of *Dissent* magazine, with the precipitous decline of unions, workers are now virtually bereft of the only institution dedicated to voicing and representing their collective interests within the polity.<sup>2</sup> An all-out assault on public-sector unions appears to be poised to follow the deliberate gutting of their private sector counterparts that characterized the last three decades of labor history.<sup>3</sup> Finally, most workers in the US and the rest of the industrialized or "developed" world face a very real crisis of work itself: fewer and fewer people can count on productive, meaningful, secure, and remunerative labor, not to mention some kind of social wage to go with it. The conditions of those millions of workers, from China to Lesotho to Honduras, who produce the goods consumed in the developed economies are even worse, resembling nothing so much as those faced by American workers a century ago. That, if nothing else, should impel us to preserve US

labor's history.

With the challenge of these quadruple crises foremost in mind, the 2011 Southern Labor Studies Conference is dedicated to exploring the themes of memory and forgetting in labor history. Convening in Atlanta April 7-10, at the Sheraton Hotel, the conference coincides with the 40th anniversary of the Southern Labor Archives at Georgia State University. The selection and arrangement of panels and events seek to promote common dialogue among labor historians, the archivists they depend on to locate, construct, and organize the "archive" of working-class history (especially in the US South), filmmakers injecting labor stories into public culture, and the activists who keep alive a flame for labor's future. How, we want to ask collectively, can preserving, interrogating, and making visible labor's past help contribute to its potential future?

To this end, the conference promises an exciting array of events. Thursday night's (April 7) keynote address will be given by Robert Korstad of Duke University, longtime practitioner of southern labor and oral history, and author of *Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy in the Mid-Twentieth Century South*. Bob's talk is entitled "Searching for a Usable Past: Fifty Years of Writing Southern Labor History." Friday's (April 8) lunchtime keynote features Alessandro Portelli of the University of Rome (La Sapienza), probably the single most important practitioner of working-class oral history working today. Sandro's address, "Thirty Years of Field Work in Harlan County," coincides with the recent release of his book, *They Say in Harlan County: An Oral History*. The conference itself consists of twenty-two panels, running the gamut from an examination of the holdings of the Texas Labor Archives to a retrospective look at the Freedmen and Southern Society's monumental documentary editing project on emancipation. A pair of panels will consist of screenings of documentary films (*Morristown: In Air and Sun* and *Wildcat at Mead*), followed by panel discussions. In addition, on Friday night at the Atlanta University Center's new Robert Woodruff library, there will be a pre-screen-

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1. See the Open Letter to the US National Park Service, October 5, 2010, prepared by Brian Kelly and signed by many LAWCHA and SLSA members; <<http://hnn.us/roundup/entries/132195.html>>, accessed January 17, 2011.

2. Michael Kazin, "Learning from the Debacle: It's the Institutions, Stupid," *Dissent* 58(Winter 2011): 5-6.

3. Steven Greenhouse, "Strained States Turning to Laws to Curb Labor Unions," *New York Times*, January 4, 2011, A1.

## 2011 Southern Labor Studies Conference Program Highlights

Thursday, April 7

11:00-1:00

LAWCHA Board Meeting

1:30-3:30

Sessions

3:30-5:00

LAWCHA General Meeting

6:30-9:00

Reception and Keynote

Robert Korstad, Duke University

“Searching for a Usable Past: Fifty Years of Writing  
Southern Labor History”

Friday, April 8

8:30-10:00

SLSA General Meeting; Sessions

10:15-11:45

Sessions

12:00-1:30

Luncheon

Alessandro Portelli, University of Rome

“Thirty Years of Field Work in Harlan County”

1:30-3:00

Sessions

3:15-5:15

Sessions

6:30-9:00

Session and Reception

“Southern Exposure: The Stetson Kennedy Archives”

Saturday, April 9

8:00-10:00

*Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*  
Editorial Committee Meeting

8:15-3:00

Sessions

3:30-6:30

Plenary Session and Walking Tour at the King Center  
“All Labor Has Dignity: Revisiting Martin Luther King,  
Jr.’s Gospel of Labor Rights and Economic Justice”

9:00-12:00

Dance Party

Sunday, April 10

9:00-12:00

Atlanta Labor Tour with Cliff Kuhn

For full program details, visit the SLSA website:  
[www.southernlaborstudies.org](http://www.southernlaborstudies.org)

(Memory and Forgetting, Cont.)

ing of portions of Andrea Kalin’s new film, “Dissident at Large: Stetson Kennedy Unmasked,” followed by a panel discussion including the filmmaker, and, if we are lucky, Stetson himself. Also on the program (Saturday, April 9) are two workshops sponsored by SLSA’s Labor Outreach Committee and LAWCHA’s Labor Activism Committee, focused on campus labor activism.

The conference will conclude with a walking tour and plenary session held on Saturday afternoon (3:30-6:30) at the King Center for Non-Violent Social Change, at the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site. Convened by Michael Honey, author of *Going Down Jericho Road: The Memphis Strike, Martin Luther King’s Last Campaign*, this capstone event is organized around King’s dictum that “All Labor Has Dignity,” also the title of a new collection of King’s speeches on labor edited by Honey. We have invited longtime civil rights and labor activist and contemporary of King’s, the Reverend C.T. Vivian, to offer concluding remarks at this event.

We should be under no illusion that a mere academic conference of archivists and historians can, by itself, do much to combat the multiple threats facing working people today. Still, we hope that the conference will serve as a reminder of the simultaneous necessity of preserving and explaining – actively remembering – labor’s past in order to help secure its future. Lest we forget, Dr. King himself spoke to the importance of labor’s past, noting that “History is a great teacher. Now everyone knows that the labor movement did not diminish the strength of the nation but enlarged it . . . Those who attack labor forget these simple truths, but history remembers them.”

(See p. 7 for conference registration and lodging information).



## News from the Southern Labor Archives

### PATCO Records to Be Digitized

The decertification of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO) stands as a watershed in American labor history, continuing to inform labor-management relations in the United States to this day. Researchers interested in studying PATCO's records will soon have access to them online. The National Historic Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) has awarded a grant in the amount of \$90,000 to Georgia State University Library to digitize portions of this controversial union's records and make them available online. The PATCO records are already part of Georgia State's Southern Labor Archives. Work on the project is expected to take approximately 20 months. At its completion, all scanned documentation (about 179,000 pages of text) will be searchable, for free. The project will begin in April 2011.

PATCO spent the 1970s struggling to improve the American air traffic control system and the working conditions of its members. When numerous bruising negotiations with the FAA could not provide an adequate response to their needs, the union, under more aggressive leadership, went on strike August 3, 1981. Despite receiving PATCO's support during his election bid, President Reagan responded to the strike by firing more than 11,000 air traffic controllers and decertifying the union.

*(Continued on p. 7)*

## From the (Teaching)

### Trenches

K-12 Outreach Committee

Susan O'Donovan  
University of Memphis

The K-12 Outreach Committee has been busy this fall. Besides welcoming new members and appointing a new chair, the committee has begun developing an online resource bank for primary and secondary educators. Meant to promote the study of labor history at all educational levels, the K-12 teaching website will eventually make available primary sources, teaching tips, bibliographies of the more important secondary literature, and short informative essays. That's the goal. Our starting point is much more modest: an annotated bibliography of existing digitized resources that teachers and students may access through the SLSA website. In early January, as many of you may remember, we sent out a call to the SLSA membership for suggestions, and the response has been generous and swift. We can always use more ideas though. Quality digitized archives are proliferating at an astonishing rate and if you have favorites, please pass them along to Keri Leigh Merritt (klm13@uga.edu). We would need the name of the collection, the web address, a short description of the kind of materials users will find, and if you're feeling especially helpful, a line or two about how you've used them in your own classroom.

The K-12 Outreach Committee has also begun discussing other ways in which we can encourage educators to incorporate labor history into their curricula. Possibilities range from sponsoring teaching sessions at conferences to conducting teachers' workshops through organizations like National History Day. There are plenty of other possibilities, but once again, the Committee would be delighted to hear from SLSA members: where do you see us going in the near, or distant, future?

K-12 outreach done right takes considerable time and effort. It is also one of the most important contributions we can make to our broader communities as scholars. The impact can be immediate and it has a wonderful multiplying effect. Each teacher we work with represents dozens of students who will benefit from the insights we convey. To enjoy the fullest effect, however, we have to reach more than a handful of teachers, and that requires, appropriately enough, ample supplies of labor. So please, if you have an interest in K-12 outreach, offer a workshop, contribute to the teaching website, or maybe even join our committee. Whatever you do will be deeply appreciated.

## Creating an Archive

### Working-Class Feminism in the South

Joey Fink and Jessie Wilkerson  
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

The Southern Oral History Program (SOHP) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is engaged in a major initiative, “The Long Civil Rights Movement: The South Since the 1960s.” This project gathers interviews with men and women who in the years following the sit-ins and protests of the 1960s fought to keep the doors of equal opportunity open and to extend the civil rights struggle into new arenas. The newest focus of the project is a close look at activism and organizing in the South around issues of women’s rights. Until very recently, the scholarship on the women’s movement has focused almost entirely on the urban Northeast and on the experiences of educated, middle-class women. Yet this grassroots movement sprang up throughout the country, took distinctive forms in small towns and rural areas, had a profound impact on local cultures, and was often connected to women’s experiences as workers and unionists.

This past May and August, SOHP interviewers talked with women and men in eastern Tennessee, southwestern Virginia, and southeastern Kentucky. The interviewees told stories about the appearance of small “consciousness-raising groups” to the entry of women into male-dominated workplaces and their leadership in unions and grassroots organizations. We interviewed avowed feminists as well as women who did not necessarily see themselves as feminists but were path breakers nonetheless. In more than sixty interviews, women discussed their memories of social justice struggles and the ways their identities – from labor, civil rights, and environmental activists to artists, attorneys, and mothers – informed those struggles. In our interviews with working-class women, they shared stories that reveal how class critiques and gender struggles intertwined in their activism. Our interviewees offered potent critiques of capitalism and found creative and courageous ways to keep the democratic promises of the social justice movements of the 1960s alive into the 1980s. The interviews will be deposited in the “Documenting the American South” archive in the Southern Historical Collection at UNC. We are working with our partners at the Southern Historical Collection to make these interviews accessible to researchers and available online. They offer a promising and rich resource for incorporating women’s voices in the narratives of working-class history and the women’s movement in the 1970s and 1980s.

Below is an excerpt of Jessie Wilkerson’s interview with Marian Groover, May 25, 2010 in Clinton, TN. Groover started factory work as a young adult to help support her family. In the 1970s, she joined women across the country as they used Title VII legislation to demand work in high-paying, traditionally male workplaces. She eventually got a job at the ALCOA plant in Alcoa, Tennessee, joined the United Steel Workers, and became an advocate for working women. Her interview demonstrates the kind of provocative stories and telling reflections our interviewees shared with us.

Below, Groover talks about wearing a button that said “This is What a Radical Feminist Looks Like” on the outside of her work clothes. She discusses how men in the workplace reacted to her, and how she defended feminism in her conversations with them.

MG: We had a man who was the chairperson for the education committee who was ahead of his time. He had worked there during World War II, so he saw the women there. His terminology was “there was more of a cohesiveness.” And a lot of people said, “Oh, that was because of the war.” He said it was because the women were more willing to bond together for things for everybody, not just for themselves. He got me to join the education committee, and he taught me a lot of things about what to try to do to be as a really good leader. The first time he saw my button he said, “That probably doesn’t need to come in the plant.” I said, “It’s been in the plant.”

He said, “It’s not good. You’re fighting too many battles with that here. Do you want to be a union leader?” I said, “I can’t change who I am to be a union leader.”

JW: So, did he think for you to be a union leader, you had to leave behind feminist ideas?

MG: He felt like it would offend and cause more people who would have been with me to look at me differently, so I kind of rolled that back, but what I did – and I had never pushed it in anybody’s face, but I had to wear long-johns and heavy clothes. In the winter, we wore all kinds of extra clothes, and I always had it on my outside coat in the winter.

*(Continued on p. 7)*

## 2011 Southern Labor Studies Conference Registration and Lodging Information

The Southern Labor Studies Association will hold its bi-annual conference, "Memory vs. Forgetting: Southern Labor and the Archive," April 7-10, 2011 in Atlanta, Georgia. The conference will also serve as LAWCHA's annual meeting.

### Registration:

Registration for the 2011 Southern Labor Studies Conference is currently open. Advance registration fees are \$65 for SLSA members, \$90 for non-members, and \$40 for students. Early registration will end March 15, 2011. Please register by visiting the SLSA website at [www.southernlaborstudies.org](http://www.southernlaborstudies.org).

### Lodging:

The conference will be held at the Sheraton Atlanta ([www.sheratonatlantahotel.com](http://www.sheratonatlantahotel.com)), which has reserved a special room block for SLSC attendees. Rooms are \$129 per night for a double room, not including taxes and fees. Rooms at the conference rate can be reserved by calling 888-625-5144.

(Southern Labor Archives,  
Cont.)

The National Historical Publications and Records Commission, a statutory body affiliated with the National Archives and Records Administration, supports a wide range of activities to preserve, publish, and encourage the use of documentary sources, created in every medium ranging from quill pen to computer, relating to the history of the United States.

Digitizing the PATCO records is part of Georgia State University Library's ongoing effort to redefine itself, providing numerous resources, quality assistance, modern technology, and a welcoming setting. Today, the library is truly universal on campus; it is the center that unites the entire university.

For more information, contact Barbara Petersohn, Digital Projects and Grants Librarian, Georgia

State University Library, at 404-413-2860 or [bpetersohn@gsu.edu](mailto:bpetersohn@gsu.edu).

### Also of Note

*The Great Speckled Bird*, Atlanta's underground newspaper (1968-1976), is being scanned in its entirety and will be available online for free starting fall 2011.

To celebrate its 40th anniversary, the Southern Labor Archives and Georgia State University Library's Women's Collection are joining forces for an exhibit and panel discussion. Save the date: April 10, 2011, 2:00-3:30. If you are in town for the SLSA conference, you should consider attending this event. More information to follow, via the SLSA listserv. This will be an RSVP-required event.

(Creating an Archive, Cont.)

People had seen it, and nobody had ever said a word about it.

What I did was, I started talking to people in break rooms about feminists, and it was a hot-button issue. They'd say, "We wouldn't want our wives to do that," and I said, "You don't want your wife to work? You don't want your wife to have money? You don't want your wife to vote? You don't want your wife to decide what she wants to do?" "Well, yeah, we want that," and I said, "Well, that's all a feminist is. A feminist says 'I am a person who's entitled to everything that you get in America.'" My dad told me to use that because that brings them back to what it means. You're not saying, "I'm different from you;" you're saying, "I have the same rights you do. I can stand up and say this. I can be educated."