

# NEWSLETTER

## Southern Labor Studies Association

Spring 2012  
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### Message from the President

Welcome to the spring 2012 edition of the SLSA newsletter! Planning for the 2013 SLSA conference is underway. Thanks to Jana Lipman and Steve Striffler for their continued hard work on arrangements and planning for the conference in New Orleans next spring. They have identified great keynote speakers and sessions, and final arrangements will be coming soon. It already promises to be an engaging and provocative program in the Big Easy as we explore the “Many Souths” of southern labor and working-class history, past and present.

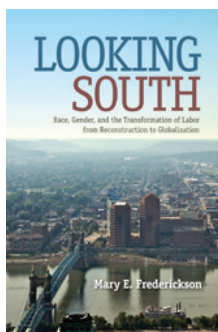
In other news, SLSA’s teacher outreach effort is helping to sponsor a labor session for the upcoming National History Day this summer. “Turning Points in History: The Civil War Story as a Workers’ Story,” will follow on W. E. B. Du Bois’ 1935 call to consider the Civil War as a general labor strike, and introduce participants to labor in the Civil War era, the role working women and men played in shaping both the course of the war, and the nation that arose from its ashes. Good work Susan O’Donovan and Cindy

Hahamovitch for forging these connections to the K-12 community! It is also time for our annual elections. Many thanks to Bethany Moreton, Zaragosa Vargas, and Jana Lipman for their service on the SLSA board. Now that they are rotating off the board, we need to fill three positions, so consider nominating yourself or someone you know. Board membership is an excellent way to network among scholars and activists who share an interest in southern labor and working-class history, and board duties are quite reasonable in terms of time and effort. Please send nominations to [Cindy Hahamovitch](#).

We continue to grow our membership base, but always welcome new ideas about how to reach out and expand. Feel free to contact our membership chair, Kerry Taylor at The Citadel with your ideas.

Jennifer Brooks  
Auburn University

### Book Spotlight



In the United States, cheap products made by cheap labor are in especially high demand, purchased by men and women who have watched their own wages decline and jobs disappear. Mary E. Frederickson’s *Looking South: Race, Gender, and the Transformation of Labor from Reconstruction to Globalization* (University Press of Florida, 2011, Southern Dissent Series) examines the effects of race, class, and gender in the development of the low-wage, anti-union, and state-supported industries that marked the creation of the New South and now the Global South. Workers in the contemporary Global South – those nations of Central and Latin America, most of Asia, and Africa – live and work within a model of industrial development that materialized in the red brick mills of the New South. As early as the 1950s, this labor model became the prototype used by US companies as they expanded globally. This development has had increasingly powerful effects on workers and consumers at home and around the world. Frederickson highlights the major economic and cultural changes brought about by deindustrialization and immigration. She also outlines the events, movements, and personalities involved in the race-, class-, and gender-based resistance to industry’s relentless search for cheap labor. For more information visit the [University Press of Florida’s website](#).

Mary E. Frederickson is professor of history at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, and is coeditor of *Sisterhood and Solidarity*.

Visit SLSA online at [www.southernlaborstudies.org](http://www.southernlaborstudies.org)

## The Lemon Project

Jody Allen and Cindy Hahamovitch  
The College of William and Mary

When prospective students and tourists come to visit The College of William and Mary, which was founded by royal charter in 1693, they learn a lot about its history: that it is the second oldest university in the country (after Harvard), that four US presidents attended, that it has the oldest university building in the country, the first Phi Beta Kappa chapter, the first honors code, the first law school. You get the idea. Soon tour guides may be adding new information to their script. A new brochure and new website pages reveal that the college bought 17 slaves and a tobacco plantation in 1718 and that the profits earned by those slaves provided student financial aid for the next 90 years; that the college sold off most of its workers during a budget shortfall and rented them thereafter; that professor and college president, Thomas Roderick Dew, was slavery's chief ideologue; that former commissioner of education, Davis Paschall, became president of the college in the 1960s as a reward for his leadership in preventing school desegregation; even that workers' wages have remained "very low" ever since. After 318 years,

"the college," as we know it here in Williamsburg, is coming to grips with its whole past, not just the bits that look good in an acceptance letter.

William and Mary is one of many colleges in the US that is reckoning with its slave owning and slave trading past, and not all of its efforts have been particularly bold. In 2009, William and Mary's Board of Visitors "acknowledged" without expressing regret for the fact that the college had "owned and exploited slave labor from its founding to the Civil War; and that it had failed to take a stand against segregation during the Jim Crow Era." Nearing his retirement as provost as the board was deliberating, Geoff Feiss pushed the board's members to link its feeble statement to more concrete action but he wanted something more than a statue, plaque, or one-time conference. Well aware of the long living wage campaign among black workers at the college and having read the 150-page collaborative paper written by Cindy Hahamovitch's labor history students on black workers at the college, Feiss also envisioned

something that would force the college to confront slavery's ongoing local legacy not just its slave owning past. The result was what came to be called the Lemon Project, after a man, known only as Lemon, whom the college once owned.

From the start, the initial co-chairs, labor historian Kimberley Phillips, and historian of Garveyism, Robert T. Vinson, were careful to include members of Williamsburg's black community in the Lemon Project's founding meetings and board, and all Lemon events are advertised heavily in the community. In essence, the Lemon Project serves as a clearinghouse and as a sounding board for research, teaching, and activism already happening on and around campus. Faculty members were already researching the college's slave-owning history, writing plays about the landing of slaves in North America (just up the road) in 1619, teaching classes about the college in the era of Jim Crow, and more. It has, however, led to some new initiatives. To date, three Lemon

*(Continued on p. 5)*

## Dream Summer

Dream Summer is a national internship for Dream Act student leaders. Last year the UCLA Labor Center and the United We Dream Network launched the first national Dream Summer internship. Over 100 students from across the nation were able to intern at various labor and social justice organizations. The Dream Summer internship program will enter its second year in order to continue to offer Dream Act student leaders the opportunity to develop their leadership skills.

This 10-week full-time internship will place Dream Act student leaders with social justice, labor, and Queer/LGBTQ organizations. The focus of work for Dream Summer interns will be determined by these organizations. For additional information including a list of tentative internship cities, key internship dates, application deadlines, and fees and costs for organizations interested in supporting a Dream Summer intern, visit [unitedwedream.org/resources/dream-summer](http://unitedwedream.org/resources/dream-summer) or [www.dreamresourcecenter.org/2012.html](http://www.dreamresourcecenter.org/2012.html). Email questions to [dreamsummer2012@gmail.com](mailto:dreamsummer2012@gmail.com).

## The Many Souths 2013 Southern Labor Studies Conference

The Southern Labor Studies Conference will be held in New Orleans, Louisiana, March 7-9, 2013 at the Double Tree Hotel. The conference theme, "The Many Souths" will ask participants to examine how scholars have conceptualized "the South": as rural and urban, as a single region and as multiple sub-regions (the Mountain South, Deep South, etc.), as part of the Caribbean, and as a region defined by particular sets of race, class, and gender relations.

New Orleans is an ideal place to do this, as it is often set apart as somehow "exceptional" or outside the South in popular culture and historical accounts. For some, it is a city distinct from the rest of the South, while for others, it is very much part of the South's economic and racial framework. Others see New Orleans as a Caribbean capital. In fact, New Orleans, like much of the South, is often "exemplary" of larger historical trends related to migration, deindustrialization, race relations, violence, the rise of the service economy, the importance of tourism, and working-class struggles.

The conference will offer a broad range of panels, keynote speakers, a New Orleans labor history tour, and the chance to engage with southern labor activists. Look for the call for papers soon, and in the meantime, put New Orleans, March 7-9, 2013 on your calendars.

## Remembering David Montgomery

December 1, 1927 – December 2, 2011

From the Labor and Working-Class  
History Association

David Montgomery has had and will continue to have an incalculable impact on the historical study of workers' lives, aspirations, and struggles in the US and worldwide. He brought to his scholarship a perspective honed through years of his own trade union and political activism. He was a creative, defining force in the "new labor history," a historian who placed workers' self-activity, both on and off the job, at the center of the story and in the process fundamentally altered our understanding of the course of American history.

We learned from his major work the place of working-class struggles in the politics of Reconstruction, the traditions of shop floor control exercised by skilled workers, the profound challenge scientific management posed to workers in his own metal trades, the processes of class formation rooted in the "frictions of daily life" and in the limits to popular democracy imposed by state action, and the contradictions of globalization that recast the ethnic and racial composition of the working class and sowed the seeds of working-class internationalism, even as capitalism refashioned ever more powerful engines of accumulation. His research brimmed with new and diverse primary sources

and old sources freshly interpreted.

As a teacher and mentor he inspired whole generations of students and colleagues to pursue their own insights and their own understanding of the lives of workers, ever mindful of their agency and the economic and political structures of power that constrained their actions. He encouraged students to act in the present, ever attentive to the relevance of the past and its meaning.

In one of his last public talks, he ended an inspiring summary of the work he and his students had done with some final words to a next generation: simply "carry it on." And so we must.

You are invited to share your memories and stories of David Montgomery and his work on the LAWCHA website. In 2007 he received the first LAWCHA award for lifetime service to labor and working-class history.

Please send messages (limited to 250 words) for posting on LAWCHA's website to [Shelton Stromquist](#), and please identify yourself.

## University of Alabama's Department of American Studies 50th Anniversary Events

As part of its 50th Anniversary celebration, the Department of American Studies at the University of Alabama has partnered with the Summersell Center for the Study of the South and co-sponsors from the College of Arts and Sciences, the Arts and Sciences Diversity Committee, and the Departments of Criminal Justice, Gender and Race Studies, History, Modern Languages, and New College to present an exciting week of events.

On **Tuesday, March 27** at noon, Sarah Cornell, assistant professor of history at the University of New Mexico, will present a faculty brown bag discussion on "Race, Slavery, and Freedom" in the Summersell Room, ten Hoor Hall.

On **Wednesday, March 28**, a roundtable discussion and public forum "Southern Hospitality? Alabama's Immigration Law in Political and Historical Perspective" will consider the meaning and implications of Alabama House Bill 56. Participants will include: Sara Cornell; Matthew Frye Jacobson, professor of American studies and history, Yale University and current president of the American Studies Association; Isabel Rubio, executive director of the Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama; Sam Brooke, SPLC staff attorney, and lead litigator in *HICA v. Bentley*, challenging HB56. The event will take place at 5:30 p.m. in 205 Gorgas Library and will be followed by a reception.

On **Thursday, March 29** at 7 p.m., Matthew Frye Jacobson will speak in 125 ten Hoor Hall on the "Historian's Eye," his current online project which uses photographs and oral histories to create a documentary record of the recession which began in 2008. A book signing and reception will follow.

For more information, contact [Michael Innis-Jiménez](#).

## Women and Workers Unite Against the War on Women and Families

Joey Fink, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

On Sunday, March 11, three dozen men and women gathered in the Communications Workers of America union hall in Greensboro, North Carolina, to celebrate International Working Women's Day. The event was organized by NC Triad Jobs with Justice and co-sponsored by 11 local unions and women's rights associations. Elizabeth Freeze, a representative from Greensboro Planned Parenthood, explained the kinds of educational and preventative services that Planned Parenthood provides to women and families. In 2008, 17.4 million North Carolina women were in need of publicly funded health services and supplies because they had an income below the federal poverty level or were younger than 20. Freeze made it clear that workers' and women's health advocates have to stand together against intertwined attacks on public services and women's reproductive rights.

Corine Mack, former vice president of Transit Workers Local 100, then shared her experiences as a New York City

transit worker, where she was one of the first African American women train operators. Mack found common ground with her male Irish-American co-workers by reminding them that all families, not just women, benefit from maternity leave. In contract negotiations, Mack's union won 14 months of family leave for transit workers (prior to passage of the Family and Medical Leave Act). Dr. Alma Adams, who has served in the North Carolina General Assembly as the 58th district's representative for nearly nineteen years, warned that the "war on women" has many fronts. Half of the delegates who lost their seat in the General Assembly because of district redrawing were women, and women held 58% of the recently eliminated state jobs. She encouraged the women and men gathered together to celebrate women's day to be vigilant, active, and united against attacks on women, workers, and families. "We're on the menu," Adams reminded the audience, "so we better be at the table."

(Lemon Project, Cont.)

Project courses have been developed on topics ranging from slavery, to Jim Crow, to the education of African Americans in Virginia. Independent study students are investigating the anti-slavery sentiments of William Short, a close friend and secretary to Thomas Jefferson, and James Monroe's sometimes contradictory views on slavery. Additional research includes the segregationist views of Rawls Byrd, superintendent of the James City County Schools during the Jim Crow era (who has a local school named after him), and the legacy of Jim Crow on campus as experienced by current students.

The Lemon Project has provided some funding for those endeavors but, more importantly, it promotes all those disparate efforts. An annual symposium – the second will occur later this month – brings the campus and community together to hear about all those activities, and the [Lemon Project's website](#), provides links to news of events, research, and newly digitized archival finds.

How long all this will continue no one knows, but as southern labor history meets Truth and Reconciliation Commission meets campus politics, it's something to watch.

## A Week in the Life of a South Carolina Union Hall

Kerry Taylor, The Citadel

Since the 1920s, Charleston, South Carolina, has been among America's favorite tourist destinations. Each year nearly four million people explore its restored planters' mansions, venerable houses of worship, and picturesque narrow streets along which the Preservation Society has erected historic markers for more than one hundred homes. It is by any measure an extraordinary historical landscape built largely by black hands and with wealth generated by black labor.

Two miles north of the "historic district" is an even more extraordinary building – of much more recent vintage, but also built by black labor. This is the hiring hall for the International Longshoremen's Association, Local 1422. Every day, three to five times a day, several hundred members line up according to skill and seniority to await assignment to an incoming or outgoing ship. The hiring process is the hall's primary function, and the union fought long and hard for control of it. But the 10-year old union hall also nurtures the Low Country's rich tradition of community and labor organizing by serving as a home for dozens of progressive groups and initiatives.

On one recent Thursday evening, 20 nurses and medical assistants gathered to view a film on the 113-day Charleston hospital workers strike of 1969, which for a few months in the spring and summer of that year raised hopes for the successful fusion of union power with soul power. At the other end of the building, Occupy Charleston circled up for their General Assembly, at which they evaluated their headline grabbing disruptions of the recent South Carolina Republican Party primary. The following afternoon, 25 women gathered at the hall for the Golden Girls Birthday Club – a social club who meet monthly to crochet and share laughs, memories, and covered dishes. This is a senior group like few others, however. The women's bonds of love and friendship were forged

*(Continued on p. 7)*

## Labor Research and Action Network

The Labor Research and Action Network (LRAN), launched in June 2011, is gaining momentum across organizing and academic leaders. Our mission is designed to create a more dynamic and organic relationship between labor academics and labor practitioners who are engaged in cutting edge research and organizing. Georgetown University's Kalmanovitz Initiative for Labor and the Working Poor will host LRAN's next conference June 11-12, 2012.

Volunteer leadership, from academic and workers' rights organizations, has been meeting regularly and developed three core program areas to provide a centralized platform to connect scholars who are interested in strategic research and advocacy efforts that support workers with practitioners and activists; create unique spaces for the generation and exchange of fresh ideas and thinking among labor leaders, activists, scholars, and students through regular gatherings and virtually, via a website and listserv; and mentor young scholars through student participation in all aspects of LRAN work and the building of a fellowship program to fund original student research.

Tax deductible donations to support LRAN's work can be made [online](#).

## Member News

This past November, **Lauren Braun-Strumfels** and **Carl Lindskoog**, together with their colleagues, organized a community teach-in at Raritan Valley Community College in Branchburg, New Jersey, to connect their struggle to obtain a fair contract with broader issues of economic justice. On a day specifically designed to inspire insight and encourage action, Carl led a lunchtime discussion on “Student Activism and the Economic Crisis,” focused on the Arab Spring, global student movements, and the Occupy movement, encouraging students to see the role their peers have claimed in recent protests. Lauren facilitated an evening conversation on “Labor Activism and the Economic Crisis,” where she led fellow faculty, students, and teachers from the area to consider the role that work plays in our lives today and historically, how our work has defined our value as citizens, and how workers’ protest and organized labor has written into our social consciousness the meaning of work.

**Beth English** is a recipient of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission’s Pennypacker Fellowship. As a scholar in residence at the Pennsylvania State Archives and Library during summer 2012, she will be conducting research for a book project on prison labor and inmate cultures in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century prisons tentatively titled “From the Workhouse to the Big House: Class, Culture, and Contested Control.”

**Joey Fink** appeared on WUNC’s live radio show, “The State of Things,” on March 6 with Southern Oral History Program associate director, Rachel Seidman, Southern Historical Collection archivist Laura Clark Brown, and Sallie Bingham Center curator Laura Micham. They discussed the importance of women’s history and the challenge of “finding” women in the archives. Seidman and Fink talked about the SOHP’s ongoing efforts to bring women to the forefront of southern history, and Fink shared excerpts from her recent fieldwork in east Tennessee, where she and colleague Jessie Wilkerson conducted interviews for the SOHP’s “Long Women’s Movement in the American South” project. Their fieldwork charted a grassroots women’s movement in which civil rights activism, unionization drives, and economic and environmental justice campaigns interacted to produce a class-inflected feminism. In April, Fink and Wilkerson will share the interviews they conducted with working-class women in a roundtable at the OAH conference.

According to the College of William and Mary’s History Department website, **Cindy Hahamovitch’s** *No Man’s Land: Jamaican Guestworkers in America and the Global History of Deportable Labor* (Princeton, 2011) has won the OAH’s Merle Curti Award, and the OAH’s James A. Rawley Prize in American History. The author can neither confirm nor deny the veracity of this report until the OAH annual meeting. She is allegedly working on a global history of human trafficking in between Girl Scouts, swimming lessons, grading, and advising. Fortunately, the Girl Scouts provide bodyguard services for a measly badge. Now that she’s an award-winning author, she’ll need them.

**Scott Nelson’s** book, *A Nation of Deadbeats: An Uncommon History of America’s Financial Disasters* will be published by Knopf in September. He is at work on a book about labor, violence, and agriculture on the northwestern edge of the South tentatively titled “The F Street Mess: The Railway Kings and the Coming of the Civil War.”

**Paul Ortiz** reports that the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program at the University of Florida has recently produced three video lectures on the history of the farm labor movement in the United States. Two of these videos are being used this week by the Coalition of Immokalee Workers for CIW’s Fast for Fair Food community organizing workshops in Lakeland, Florida. All of the videos may be accessed at the [Samuel Proctor Oral History Program’s YouTube channel](#). The first workshop lecture is titled “The Historical Context of Fasting,” the second workshop lecture is titled “Farmworkers and the Civil Rights Movement,” and the third video features stirring testimony from Nely Rodriguez, a longtime member of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers. In this clip Rodriguez discusses the intricate labor involved in picking tomatoes as well as the things that led her to becoming an organizer with CIW. Her testimony was given at the Interfaith Alliance for Immigrant Justice Press Conference in Gainesville on July 28, 2011.

Crossroads NC is a recently-formed organization of North Carolina scholars interested in using knowledge of the past to inform public debate today. Its mission is to foster conversations about North Carolinians’ shared heritage that can guide decision making and promote democracy and prosperity for all. The steering committee – **Robert Korstad, Lisa Levenstein, Nancy MacLean, Bruce Orenstein, and David Zonderman** – has

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## 2012 Reed Fink Award in Southern Labor History

One or more fellowship(s) of \$250-\$500 are awarded annually to individual(s) whose research in the Southern Labor Archives will lead to a book, article, dissertation, or other substantive product. The recipient will make a presentation about his/her research to the Georgia State University community and the fellowship amount will be awarded thereafter.

Professors Merl E. Reed and Gary Fink were instrumental in the establishment, development, and use of the Southern Labor Archives at Georgia State University from the early 1970s. Today, the Southern Labor Archives has over 500 collections used by researchers from throughout the Southeast, the United States, and the world. Created in 2000, the Merl E. Reed Fellowship in Southern Labor History was named, at the urging of Dr. Fink, to honor Dr. Reed's career and role in the founding of the Southern Labor Archives. After Dr. Fink passed away in 2008, Dr. Reed requested that the name be changed to honor Dr. Fink as well. The Reed Fink Award in Southern Labor History now honors both men and their many contributions to education, labor studies, and the Southern Labor Archives.

Faculty, graduate students, upper-level undergraduates, and recognized independent scholars and artists are encouraged to apply. To be considered for the 2012 Reed Fink Award in Southern Labor History, applicants should submit an application, statement of intent, and relevance to archival holdings. Application and additional information is available [online](#). All materials should be submitted by May 15, 2012. We currently only accept submissions of materials in electronic form. Please submit all required materials as a single PDF document and e-mail it to [Traci Drummond](mailto:Traci.Drummond). For more information contact Traci Drummond, Archivist, Southern Labor Archives, Georgia State University Library, 404-413-2880 or [tdrummond@gsu.edu](mailto:tdrummond@gsu.edu).

### (Member News, Cont.)

identified two projects for 2012. First, the group will partner with the North Carolina Justice Center, a progressive advocacy and research organization dedicated to economic justice, to develop an infrastructure that involves scholars' research capabilities and status as experts in their fields to change the public conversation about issues such as unemployment compensation and poverty's causes and remedies. Second, Crossroads NC will help facilitate a fall state-wide day of education/action on voting rights, which the NC legislature has threatened with photo ID proposals and restrictions on access to early voting. Crossroads NC will provide any interested campus or community organizations a student-produced documentary as well as access to local scholars to lead forum discussions on the issue. Anyone interested in the documentary and voting rights project should contact [Bruce Orenstein](#). For more general information, contact [Nancy MacLean](#) or [Lisa Levenstein](#) or graduate assistant [Ryan Poe](#).

### (South Carolina Union Hall, Cont.)

on the picket line in 1969. Last month, four strike leaders celebrated their birthdays, including soft spoken 87-year-old Naomi White, who was one of the Hell's Angels – a secretive group of union supporters who enforced strike discipline 40 years ago.

After a weekend of wedding receptions and dance parties, the hall returned to politics when the Carolina Alliance for Fair Employment (CAFE) met to discuss strategies for assisting area taxi cab drivers and city workers in their struggles for better wages and working conditions. And the following night it was the healthcare workers again, drawing lessons from the film and planning their response to possible layoffs caused by the digitization of patient records. Two nights later, College of Charleston history professor George Hopkins, addressed Occupy Charleston on organized labor and the South – a presentation that reminded activist Courtney Faller of the region's strategic import: "We should not simply be asking and hoping for support from our fellow Occupiers, we should be demanding it and expecting it. The frontline is here, and it manifests itself in bills like H-4652 (the state's most recent union-busting bill). Occupy Wall Street and others should be joining us in opposition and bringing visibility to the fight that again, is happening here, not up there."

There is no tourist map to direct visitors to 1142 Morrison Drive, and no carriage driver will make it this far north to draw attention to the union hall's significance. Unlike most of historic Charleston, however, there is life in this building. Local 1422 members and the community that has come together around the hall are well aware of the power of black labor, past and present.