

NEWSLETTER

Southern Labor Studies Association

Fall 2012
vol. 3, no. 2

Message from the President

Welcome to the Fall 2012 (and now Winter, more or less) SLSA Newsletter. As I write this blurb, many parts of the country along the East Coast, the Northeast, and into the Midwest are still reeling from Hurricane Sandy—our thoughts go to all those affected by this monumental storm, as well as our hope for a full recovery.

Activities engaging the SLSA today include, most immediately, the ongoing planning for the “Many Souths” conference in New Orleans, March 7-9, 2013. We have excellent special programs lined up, including a session featuring New Orleans musicians, a keynote address by Adolph Reed, and an immigration activist panel discussion which will be videotaped and published by the e-journal, *Southern Spaces*. Hotel and registration information are available

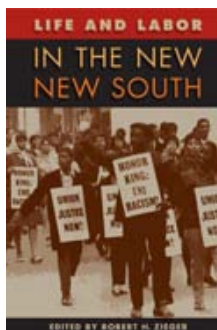
at the SLSA website, and we hope to see many of you in the Crescent City in the Spring. Again, thank you to Jana Lipman, Steve Striffler, and Max Krochmal for all their work in planning this event.

Believe it or not, it is never too early to start planning our next biennial meeting! Cindy Hahamovitch, past president of SLSA, (and award-winning author—see page 6!!) has graciously volunteered the College of William and Mary as our host venue in Spring 2015. Robert Chase of the College of Charleston has generously agreed to chair the conference committee, and Cindy and Robert will be pulling together a new conference crew very soon. Many thanks for their willingness to take on this important task,

(Continued on p. 2)

Book Spotlight

Life and Labor in the New New South, edited by Robert Zieger (University Press of Florida), is a collection of essays that explores the dynamic new face of Southern labor since 1950. *Life and Labor in the New New South* weaves together the best work of established scholars with emerging cutting-edge research on ethnicity, gender, prison labor, deindustrialization, rapidly changing demographic and employment patterns, and popular response to globalization.



Contributors to the volume include Jane Berger, Michael Bess, Robert Bussel, Robert Chase, David Ciscel, Michael Dennis, Tami Friedman, Michael Honey, Max Krochmal, Timothy Minchin, Bruce Nissen, and Michael Pierce. The essays examine such topics as southern deindustrialization, union activism in the healthcare industry, labor-community coalitions, the politics of southern anti-unionism, and immigrant labor in southern agriculture. *Life and Labor in the New New South* creates a distinguished profile of a southern workforce that has been dramatically transformed since 1950, with the pace of change accelerating over the past two decades.

Robert Zieger is Distinguished Professor of History Emeritus at the University of Florida and author of *For Jobs and Freedom: Race and Labor in America since 1865*.

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. 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. Visit the [archives online](#) for information on the application process and the archives' holdings.

Applications must be received electronically by May 15, 2013.

(President's Message, Cont.)

and thanks to the College of William and Mary for being our future host.

Last Spring we elected new Executive Board members. Welcome to Mary Ellen Curtin (American University), Max Krochmal (Texas Christian University), and Steve Striffler (University of New Orleans). If you missed the boat this time in joining the Board, we will have elections again in Spring 2013—it's never too late. And remember that SLSA has several interesting committees that always need a helping hand. To investigate these opportunities, go to the [people page](#) on our website.

Another exciting development this year is the offer of lifetime membership in SLSA, at a fee of \$500, payable in full over the course of one year. We developed this option in response to requests from members, and I encourage you to take advantage of this offer. If you are interested, please contact our treasurer, [Evan Bennett](#), to work out the details.

Finally, thanks to Joey Fink for pulling together our Fall newsletter!

Jennifer E. Brooks
Auburn University

Bittersweet Harvest Exhibit

The University of Alabama Department of American Studies is hosting "Bittersweet Harvest: The Bracero Program 1942-1964" from February 16, 2013 until April 28, 2013 in the J. Wray and Joan Billingsley Pearce Foyer of the Amelia Gayle Gorgas Library in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

This traveling exhibit is on loan from the Smithsonian Institute's National Museum of American History. Through photographs and audio excerpts from oral histories, it examines the experiences of workers who were members of the Bracero Program. The program began in 1942 to fill labor shortages in agriculture and the railroads caused by World War II. The Bracero Program eventually became the largest guest worker program in US History, and by the time it was cancelled in 1964, an estimated 4.6 million contracts had been awarded.

Bittersweet, the bracero experience tells a story of both exploitation and opportunity to earn money. The exhibit is free and open to the public.

Please call 205-348-5940 or [email](#) for further information, hours, or directions.

In the Belly of the Beast Organizing Labor Scholars and Activists in North Carolina

David A. Zonderman
SLSA Vice-President

North Carolina has the dubious distinction of the lowest unionization rate in the United States (2.9% in 2011). Despite the historical hostility to trade unions, scholars and activists in the state have recently created two new organizations to promote engaged research on and public support for progressive public policies including the right to organize and bargain collectively, living wages, and quality health care for all. These two organizations—Scholars for a Progressive North Carolina (SPNC) and the Center for the Study of Class, Labor and Social Sustainability (CLASS)—bring together academics in a variety of disciplines with labor and community activists for regular workshops, policy planning sessions, and public advocacy and mobilization events.

SPNC gathers historians, sociologists, economists, and health and education policy analysts in a cooperative relationship with the North Carolina Justice Center, the state's leading research and advocacy group on progressive social policy projects. Scholars work with the Center's analysts and community organizers on issues ranging from immigrant rights campaigns to support for public education. Academics, activists, and advocates regularly write op-eds, conduct research for position papers, and testify before the North Carolina legislature.

The CLASS Center, housed at Duke University, has launched a series of lectures and workshops to bring to-

gether faculty, students, and labor and community activists to discuss opportunities for addressing pressing problems on labor and class-related issues, as these intersect with race, gender, citizenship status, and sexuality to shape public life. The Center recently hosted Kim Bobo, Executive Director of Interfaith Worker Justice in Chicago, who gave a series of presentations on her recent book *Wage Theft in America*. As a result of Bobo's visit, the Center is exploring opportunities for organizing an anti-wage theft campaign and seeking support for opening a Worker Center to coordinate a range of labor-related efforts in the state.

These organizations have evolved rapidly over the past two years, ever since discussions first began about how to respond to the growing conservative assault on the public sector and working people's most basic political rights. SPNC and the CLASS Center both stand as testimony to the possibilities for organizing scholars and activists in the midst of hostile political climates to develop engaged research projects and education programs on critical issues of public policy. The message from those engaged in the growing groups is: if we can build such active networks in North Carolina, with its century-long "tradition" of open resistance to labor organizing, then scholars and activists can create more of these alliances anywhere in the United States.

Become a Member of the Southern Labor Studies Association

Annual membership is \$25 (\$10 for students and the unemployed); lifetime membership is \$500. Members receive the biannual newsletter, access to the SLSA Syllabus Exchange, steep discounts on conference registration, and access to other members via the SLSA listserv.

To join, visit
www.southernlaborstudies.org

Labor Research and Action Network

The Labor Research and Action Network (LRAN) is an exciting collaboration connecting academics and labor practitioners to build workplace and economic power for working people in this country. We believe that these strengthened relationships between researchers and labor organizers will enhance the quality of our respective areas of work, enrich our separate and shared experiences, and elevate our impact on the world.

Incubated in the spring of 2011, LRAN has garnered interest across the organizing and academic communities. Our founding event, a symposium at Georgetown University in June 2011, attracted 165 attendees from a dozen states. Our 2012 conference attracted nearly 200.

What LRAN does:

- *Connects experts to practitioners:* LRAN connects practitioners employing innovative strategies with scholars from a variety of disciplines who are interested in strategic research and advocacy efforts that support workers. We are building a database of scholars who can provide research, op-eds, legislative testimony or other forms of support.
- *Convenes a national conference:* At our conferences, respected scholars, leaders and staff of unions and worker centers, student leaders, and staff of allied organizations share lessons from historic and current campaigns, exchange big ideas, teach about innovative strategies, and share best practices.
- *Supports new scholars in the field:* LRAN is pursuing funding for a postdoctoral fellowship program in Labor Studies for recent PhD recipients as well as funding for dissertation fellowships. Recent PhDs (for postdocs) or graduate students who have advanced to candidacy for the PhD (for dissertation fellowships), in any scholarly discipline and at any accredited US university, would be eligible if their research topic contributes to understanding the dynamics of labor relations. Fellowships would be awarded by a selection committee of faculty and other LRAN members.
- *Maintains an online community of labor academics and labor practitioners:* LRAN is now building a Web site, listserv+, and a matching service for researchers and organizing campaigns. The listserv+ is a private, mem-

bers-only, web-based forum that combines the functions of a listserv, online forum/newsgroup, and a wiki.

The LRAN Advisory Committee

Union Representatives

Maria Elena Durazo, Executive Secretary–Treasurer, Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO

Iain Gold, Director, Strategic Research and Campaigns Department, International Brotherhood of Teamsters

Michelle Sforza, Director, Corporate Affairs and Strategic Research, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees

Christian Sweeney, Deputy Director, Organizing Department, AFL-CIO

Worker Center Representatives

Elvis Méndez, Organizer and Researcher, Immigrant Worker Center Collaborative

Mariana Viturro, Deputy Director, National Domestic Workers Alliance

Academic Representatives

Fred Feinstein, Senior Fellow, University of Maryland School of Public Policy

Beth Gutelius, PhD student in Urban Planning and Policy, University of Illinois at Chicago

Jeff Grabelsky, Director of Union Building Strategies, The Worker Institute at Cornell University

Gordon Lafer, Associate Professor, University of Oregon, Labor Education and Research Center

John Logan, Professor and Director of Labor and Employment Studies, San Francisco State University

Ruth Milkman, Professor of Sociology and Director of the Murphy Institute, City University of New York

Nonprofit Representatives

Algernon Austin, Director of the Program on Race, Ethnicity, and the Economy, Economic Policy Institute

Stephen Herzenberg, Executive Director, Keystone Research Center

Join us by emailing [Erin Johansson](mailto:Erin.Johansson@lrn.org). There is no membership fee to join, though [donations are encouraged](#).

Member News



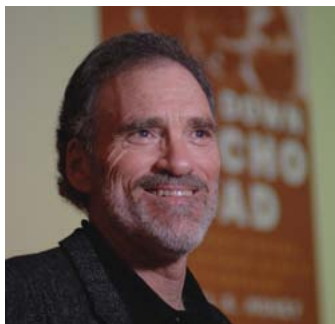
In Spring of 2013, **Bob Zieger** is teaching a non-credit course on US labor history at Oak Hammock, a senior accommodations center in Gainesville, FL. Central to the course is exploration of the theme of a “broken narrative” of American labor history, as suggested by the juxtaposition of labor’s sometimes-heroic past with the tribulations—and opportunities—facing working people and the labor movement today.



Cindy Hahamovitch is thrilled to announce that her 2011 book, *No Man’s Land: Jamaican Guestworkers in America and the Global History of Deportable Labor* (Princeton University Press) won the James A. Rawley Award for the Best Book on US Race Relations, the Merle Curti Award for the Best Book on US Social History—both from the OAH—and the Taft Labor History Book Award, 2012. She will be resting on her laurels while pretending to work on two new projects, a global history of guestworkers and a 1933 death penalty case from Broward County, Florida. In a fit of insanity, she volunteered to host the 2015 Southern Labor Studies Association conference. Condolences [can be emailed](#).



Joey Fink was the 2012 recipient of the Reed Fink Award in Southern Labor History. She presented on her dissertation, “The Many Norma Raes: Working-Class Women in the Struggle to Organize J.P. Stevens in the 1970s,” on November 13, in a talk co-sponsored by the Southern Labor Archives at Georgia State University Library and Georgia State University’s History Department.



All Labor Has Dignity, **Michael Honey**’s recent edited book of Martin Luther King’s labor speeches, takes the reader from Highlander Folk School in 1957 to the Memphis sanitation strike in 1968, and many previously unknown speeches in between. As part of the push-back against Republican efforts to kill public employee unions, the AFL-CIO and its locals and labor councils are distributing hundreds of copies to officers and members. To add a framework of economic justice and labor rights to the King holiday celebrations, Beacon Press wants to get the book into the hands of K-12 teachers and college students. For review and exam copies, contact [Caitlin Meyer](#). The Walter Reuther Library at Wayne State now also has a [digital photo and text archive](#) on the Memphis sanitation strike, with an introduction by Honey.

Sam Fishman Travel Grant Program

The Walter P. Reuther Library of Labor and Urban Affairs is accepting applications for the 2013 Sam Fishman Travel Grant Program. This grant program honors one of Michigan's great labor-leaders, Sam Fishman, and provides support for faculty, students, independent researchers and union members to defray the costs of travel to and research costs for use of the Reuther Library's extensive labor collections within the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs.

Applicants must complete the application form, which can be found under "Scholarships" on the [Reuther Library's website](#). Applications must be postmarked no later than January 11, 2013. Awardees must use the grant by the end of 2013 and will be required to submit a two page research report along with their expense report at the end of their visit.

Complete listings of collections and finding aids from the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs can be found under "Collections" on the [Reuther Library's website](#).

LaborOnline

New from the Labor and Working-Class History Association

We write with exciting news of the takeoff of LaborOnline, a new blog on the LAWCHA website that will deepen and extend the content of LAWCHA's flagship journal, *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*. Piloted by new Associate Editor Rosemary Feurer—and assisted by an all-star cast of designated blog contributors—LaborOnline will feature commentary on a host of issues, contemporary and historical, as well as "instant" dialogue and debate among readers and authors about the contents of the print journal.

Join the fun at www.lawcha.org/LaborOnline. Just log in and follow the ongoing discussions. Throw in your two cents there or suggest a new thread of your choosing! You can also join the conversation on Twitter @LaborOnline.

Leon Fink
Editor, *Labor*

Shel Stromquist
LAWCHA President

I am excited to work with such a great group of folks getting this new initiative off the ground, and hope it serves as a lasting platform for discussion and intellectual creativity for LAWCHA and labor history as a whole. To facilitate full discussion and ease of use, I have created a handful of helpful [video tutorials](#) for WordPress that can help you get started.

We are still working out kinks in both LaborOnline and the new LAWCHA website, so I invite everyone to do their best to find bugs or come up with some suggestions for LaborOnline (and LAWCHA itself, if you have the time). If you have questions, suggestions, comments, or concerns, please [email LAWCHA](#).

Ryan Poe
LAWCHA Executive Assistant



THE MANY SOUTHS

**Southern Labor Studies Conference
New Orleans, Louisiana
March 7-9, 2013**

**For Registration and Lodging Information visit:
www.southernlaborstudies.org**

**Need assistance finding a roommate or
program information to plan your travel itinerary?
Contact Joey Fink.**