

NEWSLETTER

Southern Labor Studies Association

Fall 2010
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Message from the President

It was the best of times and the worst of times. With furloughs of state employees, wage freezes for staff and faculty, a dismal job market for new faculty and everyone else, virulent anti-immigrant sentiment, and a really big oil spill, it's been a tough year for southern labor. The good news is that this has been a wonderful year for SLSA. It doesn't balance out, of course, but we can enjoy the buzz just a little.

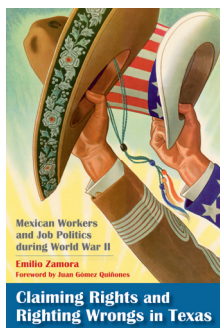
We've long had a helpful and responsive Executive Board, but all of a sudden it seems like we've got a mess (gaggle? pride?) of interested and interesting members who are committed to the organization and its work. Despite a significant but necessary dues hike from \$10 to \$25 dollars – grad students are still \$10 – membership is up, thanks to the work of the Membership Committee, chaired by Kerry Taylor, which has been generating lists of prospective members. Welcome new members! And thanks to Treasurer Evan Bennett for processing their membership forms and those of renewing members (watch for those renewal notices, ye ole members).

By the way, Evan is working on securing our official non-profit status so that we can start fund raising for graduate student prizes and other goodies.

Max Krochmal has been active in soliciting syllabi for our syllabus exchange, which you can read on our Google Group. All members should sign up – go to groups.google.com, look for Southern Labor Studies, add yourself, and take a look at the syllabi at the bottom of the page by clicking “view all.” There's Pamela Voekel's “Race, Gender, and Revolution in the Americas” syllabus, Susan O'Donovan's “African American History” class, Bob Korstad's “The Insurgent South,” and others. Please, while you're there, add yours. If you can't figure out how to do it, you can send your contribution to max.krochmal@gmail.com.

The Labor Outreach Committee chaired by David Zonderman has been having an interesting exchange about what sort
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Book Spotlight



In *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas: Mexican Workers and Job Politics during World War II* (Texas A&M University Press, 2009), Emilio Zamora traces the experiences of Mexican workers on the American home front during World War II as they moved from rural to urban areas and sought better-paying jobs in rapidly expanding industries. Contending that discrimination undermined job opportunities, Zamora investigates the intervention by Mexico in the treatment of workers, the U.S. State Department's response, and Texas' emergence as a key site for negotiating the application of the Good Neighbor Policy. He examines the role of women workers, the evolving political struggle, the rise of the liberal-urban coalition, and the conservative tradition in Texas. Zamora also looks closely at civil and labor rights work implemented by the League of United Latin American Citizens and the Fair Employment Practice Committee. The book is the winner of the 2010 Texas Institute of Letters Award for the most significant scholarly book, the winner of the 2009 Texas State Historical Association's Coral Horton Tullis Memorial Prize for the best book on Texas history, and has been nominated for the 2010 Robert W. Hamilton Award for the best book by a University of Texas professor.

Zamora is an associate professor of history and an associate of the Center for Mexican American Studies at the University of Texas at Austin.

Visit SLSA online at www.southernlaborstudies.org.

(Message from the President, Cont.)

of role SLSA can play beyond the groves of academe and within them, given our own labor relations problems. See David's submission to this newsletter for more information, as well as Joey Fink's contribution about graduate student labor. We hope to have some concrete proposals to discuss at the conference in April.

This newsletter is also the result of many people's labors but especially Beth English's. This is her second product of many, we hope. She's always looking for submissions for the next issue, and would welcome your feedback, I'm sure, at baenglis@princeton.edu. Watch in November for the call for contributions to the spring edition of the newsletter.

Jenny Brooks, our Vice President and Program Committee chair, organized our last annual meeting, which took place at the OAH in D.C. in April 2010. The gathering, which was very well attended, featured a panel discussion on teaching labor history in the South, and made a number of changes to the constitution and bylaws. In addition to raising our dues, we voted to sever our dues payment structure from LAWCHA, not because of any bad blood, but because we wanted to be able to contact new members more quickly than LAWCHA's setup allowed and because Duke University Press, which handles matters for LAWCHA, would not agree to

send out renewal information to our members. As a result, to renew your membership, you'll need to go to the SLSA website – not Duke's. We also dissolved a non-functioning graduate student committee (though we still have a grad student position on the board), and voted to make our practice of having grad students on every committee official policy. Most of the other changes were minor or semantic. The new constitution and bylaws are online at our website for you to peruse and enjoy at your leisure – or in case you suffer from insomnia.

Our next event is our annual luncheon at the Southern Historical Association, sponsored jointly with the Southern Industrialization Project. The buffet luncheon, will happen on Friday, November 5 at 12:30 p.m. in Harris Hall of the Levine Museum of the New South in Charlotte. See the ad on page 5 for ticket information.

The officers who made all this happen have been wonderful but I have to reserve special mention for Alex Lichtenstein and Traci JoLeigh Drummond, co-chairs of the Conference Subcommittee, who were charged with (sentenced to?) organizing the Southern Labor Studies Conference in 2011. Those of you who have organized conferences know just how much work it is but they have gone way over the top. This conference, which celebrates the 40th anniversary of the Southern Labor Archives, promises to be an Event with a capital E. See the Program Committee chair's

report and our website for details. Suffice it to say here that there will be two keynotes, a walking tour, a film and discussion, meetings, luncheons, and a modest amount of drinking to soak up all the reception food. If Heather Thompson has her way, there will even be dancing, so bring your blue suede shoes just in case.

My next order of business is to get our K-12 Teacher Outreach activities up and running. In an effort to bring labor history to school kids in the South, we'd like to create links on our website to lesson plans, recommended readings and museum tours for kids of varying ages, and other resources for teachers (a speakers' bureau, perhaps). We also need to learn from those who are already doing teacher outreach systematically, including Bob Korstad of Duke and Bill Obrecht of the Virginia Historical Society in Richmond – see the Exhibit on Organized Labor in Virginia at the Virginia Historical Society, to name just one example of Bill's work. I'm particularly interested in hearing from members that are current or former K-12 teachers.

Clearly, there's a lot to do, and I'm very glad that we have more members to help do it. I look forward to seeing you in your dancing shoes in Atlanta.

Onward!

Cindy Hahamovitch
College of William and Mary

2011 SLSA Conference Graduate Student Travel Grants

The Labor and Working-Class History Association (LAWCHA) will provide four \$250 travel grants to graduate students whose papers have been accepted to the SLSA conference – co-sponsored by LAWCHA – in Atlanta, April 7-10, 2011. Requests for funding should be forwarded to Kimberley Phillips (klphil@wm.edu), and should include confirmation of the paper's acceptance, a short description of the paper, and a CV. Deadline for travel grant requests is January 15, 2011.



MEMORY AND FORGETTING: LABOR HISTORY AND THE ARCHIVE

**Southern Labor Studies Conference
Atlanta, Georgia
April 7-10, 2011**

**Celebrating the 40th Anniversary
of the Southern Labor Archives**

Sponsored by:

**Southern Labor Studies Association
Labor and Working-Class History Association
Southern Labor Archives
Georgia Southern University
Georgia State University
American Studies at Emory University
The Robert W. Woodruff Library at Atlanta University Center**

Keynote Addresses by:

**Robert Korstad, Duke University
Alessandro Portelli, University of Rome**

**For additional details visit:
www.southernlaborstudies.org**

Georgetown's Labor Center Initiative Is Launched

Joe McCartin, Director and
John Tremblay, Program Officer
Kalmanovitz Initiative for Labor and the Working Poor

In November 2009, Georgetown University inaugurated the Kalmanovitz Initiative for Labor and the Working Poor. The mission of the Initiative is to create a labor center at Georgetown that will bring the resources and constituencies of the university together with unions, policy-makers, working people, and their advocates in order to foster practical solutions to the real-world challenges that workers face in a fast-changing economy. Inspired by other university-based labor centers, student-labor solidarity work, and the tradition of Catholic labor schools (Georgetown is the nation's flagship Jesuit university), and conscious of the fact that the nation stands at a crossroads for the labor movement and labor policy, the Initiative seeks to foster a campus-labor nexus that can help spark innovations in both public policy and workers' organization.

Three current projects give a sense of how the Initiative hopes to realize its mission. In the fall of 2009, KI launched an outreach program to day laborers in Washington, D.C. This exchange program provides an opportunity for undergraduate students to go to day laborer hiring sites in D.C. twice each week to teach ESL classes and disseminate in-

formation on workers' rights. The curriculum seeks to teach workers basic phrases that allow them to market their job skills and help protect them from wage theft.

In May 2010, the Initiative inaugurated a series of briefings on Capitol Hill intended to bring together intellectuals, policy-makers, and worker advocates to discuss the problems facing working people today. In the first of these sessions, historian Nelson Lichtenstein, KI Research Director Jennifer Luff, and Emily Stewart of the Food and Commercial Workers Union reviewed the origins and implications of the current crisis in U.S. labor policy.

In the summer of 2010, the Initiative awarded faculty research grants to support work in line with its mission. One grant went to John Kline, a professor of international business diplomacy at the Georgetown School of Foreign Service, for a study of the Alta Gracia textile factory in the Dominican Republic, which produces "sweat free" clothing marketed by universities affiliated with the Workers Rights Consortium. His final report, which lauds the pro-

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Member News

Michael Honey, Fred and Dorothy Haley Professor of Humanities at the University of Washington, Tacoma, has collected and edited Martin Luther King's speeches given to unions on labor rights and economic justice. They will be published as *Martin Luther King: All Labor Has Dignity* by Beacon Press in January 2011. These are fifteen stimulating but mostly unknown speeches, and the collection includes a DVD excerpting two of them. Honey is also writing a book on John Handcox, troubador and poet of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, for Palgrave MacMillan's Oral History Series.

Heather Ann Thompson, Associate Professor of History at Temple University, is pleased to announce that her article, "Why Mass Incarceration Matters: Rethinking Crisis, Decline, and Transformation in Postwar America" has just been accepted for publication in the *Journal of American History*, and her article, "Rethinking Working Class Struggle through the Lens of the Carceral State: Toward a Labor History of Inmates and Guards" has been accepted for publication in *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*. In November she will be giving the keynote lecture for the Southern Association of Women's Historians at the Southern Historical Association's Annual Meeting and then will be speaking at the "Social Justice, Race, and Profiling: An Intergenerational Think Tank" at Case Western Reserve University.

The Southern Labor Archives (SLA) at Georgia State University has created a newsletter which includes information about newly-opened collections and recent events in the SLA. To receive the newsletter, contact Traci Drummond at tdrummond@gsu.edu. Visit SLA online at www.library.gsu.edu/spcoll/labor.

SLSA Builds on Campus Base

Membership Committee News
Kerry Taylor
The Citadel

Building on our strong base among academic historians, SLSA is aggressively recruiting scholars from other disciplines and graduate students, as well as union officers and activists, labor lawyers, and sympathetic public officials. Working from a list of names provided by the Membership Committee, President Hahamovitch has written dozens of personal invitations to join the Association and the early response has been encouraging. SLSA membership is up to 68 and should top 100 by the time of the spring conference. If you know of colleagues or associates who should be SLSA members, please forward their contact information to President Hahamovitch or to the Membership Committee (kerry.taylor@citadel.edu) and we'll make sure to follow through. North Carolina is currently the best represented state within SLSA, but we have yet to attract a single member from Kentucky, Missouri, or Mississippi!

As you make the case for SLSA to your colleagues and students be sure to mention that members receive the biannual newsletter, access to the syllabus exchange, and steep discounts on conference registration. More importantly, being an SLSA member connects you to a network of the brightest and most dynamic scholars and activists who are today linking southern labor history with modern day struggles for justice. Please also consider distributing our bookmark at upcoming meetings – especially the annual meetings of the Oral History Association (Atlanta), Southern Historical Association (Charlotte), American Historical Association (Boston), and Organization of American Historians (Houston) – at regional gatherings of workers and activists such as Jobs with Justice, or at state labor federation meetings.

SIP-SLSA Luncheon at the Southern Historical Association Annual Meeting

The Southern Industrialization Project and the Southern Labor Studies Association are sponsoring a joint buffet luncheon at the Southern Historical Association meeting in Charlotte, Friday, November 5 at 12:30 p.m. in Harris Hall of the Levine Museum of the New South. The Levine Museum is located in downtown Charlotte, just a short walk from the conference hotel. Susanna Delfino of the University of Genoa will be the keynote speaker. Meal tickets are only \$25.

More information, including how to purchase tickets, is at:
www.usm.edu/oralhistory/events.php

Note: the date of the luncheon is incorrectly listed in the SHA printed program.

Program Committee Report

Jennifer Brooks
Auburn University

In the past few months, SLSA has maintained an active presence at a number of academic conferences. In March of 2010, at the Conference on Race, Labor, and Citizenship in the Post-Emancipation South at the College of Charleston, we joined with LAWCHA to sponsor “Forced Labor in the South after Slavery: the Longue Duree,” a roundtable discussion featuring SLSA members and others, including Heather Thompson (Temple), Alex Lichtenstein (Florida International), Talitha LeFlouria (Florida Atlantic), Douglas Blackmon (*Wall Street Journal*), and Robert Chase (Case Western). Topics covered included southern exceptionalism, the convict lease, and southern prison labor. Several SLSA members also chaired, commented, or presented at other sessions. At the Organization of American Historians’ annual meeting in Washington, D.C. in April, SLSA sponsored another engaging panel and discussion, “Challenging Teachers, Teaching Challenges in Southern Labor History,” featuring SLSA members Robert Korstad (Duke), Brett Rushforth (William and Mary), and Cindy Hahamovitch (William and Mary), and chaired by Joe McCartin (Georgetown). Participants discussed their experiences engaging three very different

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An Open Letter to the U. S. National Parks Service and the West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office

As citizens concerned with the faithful representation of America's rich and often turbulent national history, and as scholars and artists whose work has touched upon the history of coal mining labor in West Virginia and beyond, we write to express our strong opposition to the National Park Service's de-listing of Blair Mountain as a site of national historic significance, and to support the legal challenge to that decision launched by the Sierra Club, the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition (OVEC), Friends of Blair Mountain and the West Virginia Labor History Association. Many of us have worked productively with the Park Service in public history and heritage preservation projects in the past, and are hopeful that this mistaken decision can be quickly reversed.

As you are no doubt aware, Blair Mountain is the site of the largest armed insurrection on U.S. soil since the Civil War, and one of the most significant events in American labor history. Both the site's importance in our national history and the urgency of adopting energetic measures to preserve it were recognized by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, when in 2006 it designated Blair Mountain one of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places. The National Park Service seemed to accept that logic when, in March 2009, it included Blair Mountain in the National Register. We are concerned with the reversal of that decision in the face of pressure from coal companies eager to strip mine the area, and alarmed by very recent reports that mining equipment is already being moved onto the site. We therefore respectfully urge the National Park Service to immediately re-list Blair Mountain on the National Register of Historic Places.

Thomas G. Andrews
University of Colorado at Denver
Author, *Killing for Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War*

Harvard Ayers
Appalachian State University
Principal Investigator, Blair Mountain Archaeological Project

Stephen Brier
City University of New York
Co-author, *Who Built America? Working People and the Nation's Economy, Politics, Culture and Society*

Alan Derickson
Pennsylvania State University
Author, *Workers' Health, Workers' Democracy: The Western Miners' Struggle, 1891-1925*

Hazel Dickens
Singer and Songwriter from Mercer County, WV; National Heritage Award Recipient; Inducted into the West Virginia Music Hall of Fame
Writer, "West Virginia, My Home"

Traci JoLeigh Drummond
Archivist, Southern Labor Archives at Georgia State University Library

Kenneth Fones-Wolf
West Virginia University
Author, *Glass Towns: Industry, Labor and Political Economy in Appalachia, 1890-1930s*

Denise Giardina
American Book Award-Winning Novelist born in Bluefield, WV
Author, *Storming Heaven*

James Green
Professor of History and Labor Studies, University of Massachusetts at Boston
Associate Producer, *Out of Darkness: The Mine Workers' Story*

Cindy Hahamovitch
College of William and Mary
President, Southern Labor Studies Association

Jacquelyn Dowd Hall
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Director, Southern Oral History Program

Wess Harris
President, Appalachian Community Services; 2009 West Virginia History Hero
Editor and Publisher, *When Miners March*

Brian Kelly
Queen's University Belfast (N. Ireland); Fellow of the WEB Du Bois Institute, Harvard University
Author, *Race, Class and Power in the Alabama Coalfields, 1908-1921*

John H. M. Laslett
University of California at Los Angeles
Editor, *The United Mine Workers: A Model of Industrial Solidarity?*

Daniel Letwin
Pennsylvania State University
Author, *The Challenge of Interracial Unionism: Alabama Coal Miners, 1878-1921*

Ronald L. Lewis
West Virginia University
Author, *Transforming the Appalachian Countryside: Railroads, Deforestation, and Social Change in West Virginia, 1880-1920*

Alex Lichtenstein
Florida International University
Author, *Twice the Work of Free Labor: The Political Economy of Convict Labor in the New South*

James W. Loewen
University of Illinois
Author, *Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong*

Scott Reynolds Nelson
College of William and Mary
Author, *John Henry: Steel Drivin' Man—The Untold Story of an American Legend*

Brandon Nida
University of California at Berkeley
Project Partner, Blair Mountain Archaeological Project

Barbara Rasmussen
Lead Historian for the National Register of Historic Places Nomination for Blair Mountain
Author, *Absentee Landowning and Exploitation in West Virginia, 1760-1920*

Karin A. Shapiro
Duke University
Author, *A New South Rebellion: The Battle Against Convict Labor in the Tennessee Coalfields, 1871-1896*

Carl R. Weinberg
Editor, *Organization of American Historians Magazine of History*
Author, *Labor, Loyalty and Rebellion: Southwestern Illinois Coal Miners and World War I*

Robert H. Woodrum
Georgia Perimeter College
Author, "Everybody Was Black Down There": *Race and Industrial Change in the Alabama Coalfields*

Southern Labor Studies Association Syllabus Exchange

The Southern Labor Studies Association solicits submissions of completed course syllabi on themes related to labor and working-class history in the American South. We welcome both surveys of this topic as well as specialized classes on employment in a particular industry or place (such as mining in Appalachia, textile work in the Piedmont, etc.), different systems of work (slavery, indentured servitude, convict labor, waged labor, housework, etc.), or the relationship of labor and class to larger forces such as electoral politics, social movements, white supremacy, and patriarchy. We also encourage courses that explore oral history methodology, service learning, and other forms of field work in the southern context.

Please send submissions in PDF format to Max Krochmal at max.krochmal@gmail.com. The Exchange is password protected, and only SLSA members have access to the syllabi.

(Georgetown Labor Center, Cont.)

gram is available online at ibd.georgetown.edu/117448.html.

As we enter our second year, we are excited to continue these projects and we look forward to expanding the scope of our collaborations with internal and external partners. In September 2011, the Initiative will host a conference organized by *Labor: Studies in the Working-Class History of the Americas* at Georgetown. We envision developing a working-class studies curriculum that will draw related faculty and undergraduate students into our work. And we plan to offer fellowships to practitioners in the labor and policy-making worlds who will be in residence at the University working on projects related to KI's mission.

For more information about the Kalmanovitz Initiative, see lwp.georgetown.edu, or email KILWP@georgetown.edu.

(Program Committee, Cont.)

audiences with southern labor and working-class history. Bob Korstad discussed taking southern labor history on the road to meetings of high school teachers. Brett Rushforth discussed the rewards and travails of exploring Indian slavery with a class of freshmen by having the students create short documentary films. Cindy Hahamovitch discussed a project in which her upper-level undergraduates combined oral and archival research to write a 150-page collective history of black workers at the College of William and Mary from the era of slavery to the 1970s.

The Program Committee's next event is a luncheon lecture co-sponsored by the Southern Industrialization Project at the Southern Historical Association Annual Meeting in Charlotte. SIP President Susanna Delfino, of the University of Genoa, Italy, will present "An Amazingly Multifarious World of Labor: Social Aspects of the Economic Modernization of the Antebellum South." Tickets for the luncheon at the Levine Museum are \$25 and must be purchased by October 15. See the ad on page 5 for more details.

SLSA's Conference Sub-Committee, chaired by Traci

Drummond and Alex Lichtenstein, is busily organizing the biennial SLSA conference, which will celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Southern Labor Archives at Georgia State University. Entitled "Memory and Forgetting: Labor History and the Archive," the conference is scheduled for April 7-10, 2011 in Atlanta at the Sheraton Atlanta Hotel. Robert Korstad of Duke University and Alessandro Portelli of the University of Rome will be keynote speakers. The conference will also include a walking tour, a reception at the archives, a preview of David Blackmon's film "Slavery By Another Name," and maybe even a dance. The conference will host the annual meetings of the SLSA, LAWCHA, and the editorial board of *Labor*. Sponsors include the Southern Labor Archives, Georgia State University, Georgia Southern University, Emory University, the Robert W. Woodruff Library and, of course, SLSA and LAWCHA.

SLSA is interested in sponsoring lectures, panels, workshops, walking tours, and other events at academic conferences, union meetings, and in classrooms around the country. If you are interested in organizing such an event or would like help doing so, please contact me at jeb0002@auburn.edu.

Report from the Labor Outreach Committee

David Zonderman
North Carolina State University

College and university campuses across the Southeast have seen a recent surge in labor mobilization and protest – living wage campaigns, anti-sweatshop efforts, and union organizing drives. Two members of the SLSA Labor Outreach Committee – Bethany Moreton at the University of Georgia and Jana Lipman at Tulane University – provide insights into what is happening on their campuses. President Cindy Hahamovitch adds a note about campus campaigns at George Mason University and the College of William and Mary.

University of Georgia

The University of Georgia has been the site of a vigorous, sustained Living Wage Coalition for several years. In 2006-2007, the University Council created an ad hoc Committee for the Pay and Benefits of Low Wage Employees. Its final report recommended ten concrete steps to improving the terms of hourly employment at UGA, including raising the minimum hiring rate, equalizing pay between permanent and “temporary” staff – who are often ineligible for benefits even though employed in the same job for years – and avoiding subcontracting. Though unanimously endorsed by the University Council, the recommendations have not been implemented by the administration.

Student activists – some the first in their families to attend college – have collected thousands of signatures and have staged teach-ins and rallies in collaboration with campus workers and with organizations like Students for Latino Empowerment, the Black Affairs Council, the Women’s Studies Student Organization, and the Progressive Student Alliance, and occupied the central administration building until granted a meeting with the President of the University to deliver petitions. They have won public endorsements from distinguished visiting speakers like the Rev. Jesse Jackson, Prof. Manning Marable, Naomi Klein, and former Black Panther Elaine Brown. Working through local churches and one-on-one contact with the staff in dorms and dining halls, living wage supporters host an annual Worker Appreciation picnic that brings students and campus employees together and offers information about workplace protections, free legal help, and computer access. Every week, there is a vigil at the town’s busiest in-

tersection with petitions, student-generated information, and banners that say “Honk for a Living Wage.” The noise is deafening.

The student activists and their allies have also attended training workshops with the successful living wage staff and student activists from Atlanta’s Agnes Scott College, and have sponsored speakers from the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, United Students Against Sweatshops, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Teamsters, the Trail of Dreams student march for immigrant rights, and the local Mexican and Central American immigrant communities, as well as civil rights veterans. Students have conducted interviews with immigrant poultry workers, brought in strikers from plants in North Carolina, and collected individual testimonials by Latina and African-American employees about racial discrimination in campus jobs. In the spring of 2010, student filmmakers made a documentary about low-wage work at UGA “Chop from the Top: The Case for a Living Wage” (request a free copy by writing to livingwageuga@gmail.com), which is being shown by campus, church, and community groups around Athens to great acclaim.

One result of this consistent, high-quality campaign has been to force issues of spending priorities and economic justice into virtually every public conversation. Administrators can assume that anytime they appear in a forum with a microphone, student activists will ask uncomfortable questions about the pay and conditions of low-wage work at the University, the frantic rate of building projects and the burgeoning administrative ranks alongside ever-rising student-faculty ratio, and the hikes in employees’ share of benefit contributions that undo wage increases as fast as they are won. Staff and faculty, often too afraid for their own jobs to speak up in public, wait around afterward to thank the students for voicing their concerns. This broader critique is building coalitions around the state.

With the University’s budget declining by more than 18% over two years, and a pattern of disinvestment in its human resources going back almost 15 years, Living Wage has thrown its support behind Georgia Students for Public Higher Education. Hundreds of students from all over

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(Labor Committee, Cont.)

the state converged on the capitol last March to protest proposed cuts of \$600 million and a 77% tuition hike. Shocked by the sight of protesters from Georgia's normally placid campuses, the Republican legislature backed off from its doomsday plan. "From the start," reads the students' website, "we in GSPHE advocated a 'no cuts' message and pushed for solidarity with workers and measures that supported the entire public sector. We framed our struggle in the context of an economic crisis that affected all working people unfairly and identified several proposals already raised in the Georgia General Assembly that could raise hundreds of millions in a more equitable manner." Per-student state funding is the lowest it's been in 15 years, but these student-activists are clearly learning plenty about solidarity and the struggle for social justice.

Tulane University

As part of a national campaign to "Clean-Up Sodexo," the SEIU targeted Sodexo shops on college campuses nationwide, including Tulane and Loyola in New Orleans. SEIU currently represents workers at Xavier and Dillard Universities in New Orleans. Students at Tulane formed the Tulane Undergraduate Solidarity Committee (TUSC) and organized several actions last spring, including a barbecue in recognition of dining hall workers, a campus-wide petition, and a solidarity action during a one-day walkout. From these activities, there has emerged the need to create more robust free speech protections for all students and workers on private campuses alongside the right to organize.

In spring 2010, a majority of Tulane dining hall workers declared that they had signed union cards. In support of these workers, more than 1,000 students signed a petition for a labor code of conduct at Tulane, and more than one hundred faculty members signed a letter broadly endorsing workers' rights to organize at Tulane. The University initially responded by asserting Tulane's commitment and respect for its workforce and "if they so desire, to have union representation, which is guaranteed by the National Labor Relations Act." The administration went on to distance itself from the labor conflict as an issue between Sodexo and its workforce, adding that student concern in the union campaign was "appropriate" and "laudatory" for Tulane's engaged student body. The administration passed the student petition regarding the labor code of conduct to the Social Issues Committee in the University Senate, where it is still pending.

All of these actions took place as the semester closed. The workers in the main dining hall on campus ended the semester with a one-day walkout. Many students joined the workers outside in a late morning protest, which included picketing, marching, and many speeches. By late afternoon the same day, the University charged four student leaders with administrative student misconduct charges that ranged from harassment of fellow students to disobeying administrative orders. Three of the students were found "responsible" for one charge, namely failing to obey administrative directives. In addition the two graduating seniors received written notices stating, "should you return to campus after this date and participate in any unauthorized protests and/or rallies, you may be issued a restricted presence letter from Tulane University Police Department or arrested for criminal trespass." In addition, SEIU organizers are now required to register with Tulane campus police when they are on campus.

Regardless of the outcome of the SEIU campaign, at this point, workers' rights and desire for collective bargaining have become intertwined with students' rights to free speech and the definition of community engagement on Tulane's campus.

George Mason University

Students at George Mason University are also participating in the Sodexo campaign, demanding "KICK OUT SODEXO!" GMU students formed Students for Workers' Rights this academic year and in collaboration with workers and other student groups such as the GMU College Democrats, are working to address labor rights abuses faced by Sodexo food service workers on the GMU campus, and to assist workers in securing a decent wage, affordable health insurance, and justice in the workplace. About 60 GMU cafeteria workers engaged in a walkout to protest working conditions in the dining halls in early September. When workers voted to strike on September 8, Sodexo began the process of hiring prisoners from the Fairfax County Jail to take over the jobs of potential strikers. GMU spokesperson Dan Walsch stated about Sodexo's use of prison labor, "This is not unique to George Mason. . . . Other universities participate in similar programs. These guys are nonviolent offenders who may have had a DWI, or not paid their child support, and we have not had any problems." He added, according to the *Fairfax Times*, that "GMU's priority is that dining services at the campus continue without disruption," and that "although

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The Impact of the Financial Crisis on Academia

A View from Below

Joey Fink

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Several recent articles have launched strong critiques at American higher education in light of the financial crisis. The tenure system is under fire as an inefficient, self-serving relic of bygone times. Community colleges and online courses are viable competitors with liberal arts schools as tuitions and student loan debt soars. How does the financial crisis impact current and future graduate history students in particular?

Newly minted PhDs, of course, face a grim job market. With nearly two-thirds of all college teachers serving as non-tenure-track adjuncts and making, by some accounts, as little as \$8.50 an hour, there is little incentive to finish graduate school quickly. Graduate students serving as teaching assistants may already be grumbling about having their labor exploited, and the pressure on TAs is sure to mount as departments put a freeze on new hires and classroom sizes grow. Teaching assistants, I argue, are in a particularly tough spot. To paraphrase Jacqueline Jones, ours is a labor of love and labor of frustration. On the one hand, we gain practical teaching experience and build portfolios. It is also not an exaggeration to say that TAs impact a new generation of voters and workers on a daily basis. Many undergraduates will experience the most immediate and intimate contact with university faculty via their TAs and for labor history graduate students, discussion sections may be the first time their undergraduates are exposed to histories of the poor, the working class, and the disenfranchised. On the other hand, it is harder to maintain a commitment to this labor of love while staring at a stack of 60 or more bluebooks to grade and listening to the sound of your funding clock winding down.

Moreover, the impact of the financial crisis on access to funding, quality of education, and increases in workload is unequally distributed throughout academia. Ivy League institutions have tightened their belts while public institutions have been virtually gutted. For graduate students at a public university hit hard by the economic crisis, increased class size translates into less time spent on grant and fellowship applications. For undergraduates, it is a ripple effect: if the quality of teaching and mentoring drops, fewer undergraduates will be encouraged to apply to graduate school and will be at a disadvantage to compete for spots in shrinking programs or for external funding. This can have profound implications for the demographics of history departments.

The current debates over how higher education needs to adjust in this economic climate have the potential to stimulate more frank discussions about how aspects of graduate education and advancement in academia unfairly disadvantage certain groups. In debates over the tenure system, the fact that this system, for example, already forces many women to make tough choices regarding family planning, needs to be addressed. While considering how to improve the quality and efficiency of higher education, it should be remembered that many institutions fundamentally rely on underpaid graduate student labor. There needs to be clear expectations regarding teaching assistants' workloads, solid training and support, and avenues for recourse facilitated by the department.

Finally, graduate students have a right to organize as laborers. True, those of us employed by public institutions in so-called "right to work" states cannot have bargaining agents represent us. This does not mean, however, we cannot organize at all. Graduate students can form alliances with faculty, administration, and non-academic workers on campus and establish connections with local groups and unions. At the University of Tennessee, for example, the United Campus Workers is made up of over a thousand members from faculty, staff, and the student body. Due to their efforts in 2000 to organize around the Living Wage Campaign, University of Tennessee employees received a 4% raise, with the lowest paid workers receiving 5.3%. Though it surely goes without saying – at least among this audience – it bears repeating in these tough times: collective action brings change.

(Labor Committee, Cont.)

Sodexo workers are not GMU employees, they are part of the university community. . . [A]ny information about possible unfair treatment brought to the university's attention would be forwarded to Sodexo and, if the university deemed it appropriate, it would consider intervening to achieve a solution."

The College of William and Mary

At William and Mary, the living wage campaign for campus workers is heating up again after 11 years. The Tidewater Labor Support Coalition (TLSC), along with housekeeping staff and several student organizations held demonstrations on campus on September 9 and September 17 to protest a number of issues including starting pay rates and raise scales for the College's housekeeping workers, the decision to not fill seven vacant housekeeping positions, and increases in workloads for current staff. TLSC representatives subsequently met with William and Mary's Vice President for Student Affairs and its Vice President for Administration to discuss the issues raised in the demonstrations. According to the College's student newspaper, *The Flat Hat*, "TLSC has announced plans for future demonstrations," while "[Vice President for Administration Anna] Martin said she thought conversations between students and the College's administration could lead to constructive changes."

A short compilation of interviews with William and Mary housekeeping staff can be found on YouTube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=kCnaWjg6vO8.

THE SOUTHERN LABOR STUDIES ASSOCIATION

Studying, Teaching, and Preserving Southern Labor History

Mission:

- To enhance connections between academics and labor activists in the U.S. South;
- To promote working class history in public school curricula and provide resources for public school teachers;
- To encourage the posting of regional events and discussions of interest to scholars of southern labor on a listserv;
- To connect and promote graduate students doing work on southern labor and working-class studies (in a variety of disciplines) with one another;
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