

Working-Class Notes

The Newsletter of the Working-Class Studies Association

Volume 2, Issue 2

Spring 2008

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Some people think 2008 could be a watershed moment in American politics; others have lower expectations. On one thing, however, many people agree: the campaigns of Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton have unsettled conventional wisdom about race, gender, and class in American politics. At this moment, there's nothing certain about "the black vote" or "the women's vote." As I write, both candidates are courting the white working class. Whatever the outcome, their campaigns have stimulated an important and unprecedented public discussion of race and gender. That discussion is taking place across class lines, in living rooms, local bars, and union halls as well in the classroom and on the talk shows.

Sometimes the debates have been polarizing, as in: Who has it worse, women or people of color? Is a black woman who votes for Clinton a traitor to black men? Can a feminist vote for Obama without betraying the sisterhood? These questions may be unproductive, but they also serve a purpose, reminding us about the common goals of civil rights and feminism; making us think about the best way to advance those goals. And if such questions are reductive--if they essentialize race and gender--they also provide a space for more thoughtful public discussion about the complexities of social identity; about the critical relationships between class, race, gender, and sexuality. This is good news for working-class studies and for the Working-Class Studies Association

(WCSA). We can contribute to these discussions, but only if we make something of the opportunity. The June 5th-7th "How Class Works" conference at SUNY-Stony Brook on Long Island is one place to start. (See p. 8 for conference details.)

"How Class Works" will be an important venue for conversation among international scholars and social activists whose interests cover a broad spectrum of political, economic, and cultural issues related to labor and working-class life. The conference is also a great place to examine and promote the emerging field of working-class studies. On opening day--Thursday, June 5th--the WCSA will sponsor a lunch-time panel discussion on the potential for working-class studies. On Friday, June 6th, we'll hold our annual membership meeting, where we'll discuss committee reports (printed in advance on p. 3 of this newsletter) and determine the next slate of WCSA officers. The call for nominations is on p. 3. Aside from these "business" matters, the meeting is a real opportunity for WCSA members to shape the direction and future endeavors of the Association, including the 2009 WCSA conference in Pittsburgh.

The WCSA has maintained a stable membership since its founding in 2005 and has several accomplishments to its credit, including publication of this newsletter; establishing an annual conference; development of an awards program; and, this year,

creation of a new website at www.wcstudies.org. We already offer opportunities for activists and scholars to share ideas and resources and to engage in critical debates. We can do much more if we cast a wider net. One of our goals, coming out of the 2007 conference at Macalester College, was to increase our membership substantially and encourage greater membership participation. If we want a stronger and more effective organization, we need to re-double our efforts to achieve that goal.

I look forward to meeting WCSA members at the "How Class Works" conference. In the meantime, here are some things you can do:

- If you are not already a member of WCSA, join now. A membership application is on p. 12.
- If you are already a member, encourage colleagues and friends to join; and--*please*--consider joining a standing committee. Committees and committee chairs are listed on p. 2.

To learn more about the WCSA, visit our website at www.wcstudies.org.

In solidarity,

Kitty Krupat

President, WCSA

Working-Class Notes

Working-Class Notes is published twice a year, in fall and spring, by the Working-Class Studies Association. The deadline for submissions is October 1 for the fall issue and March 1 for the spring issue. Send submissions electronically to Sherry Linkon, sllinkon@ysu.edu. Issues are mailed to members and posted online in early December and early May.

Newsletter Editor: Sherry Linkon
Book Review Editor: Jack Metzgar
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Center for Working-Class Studies
Youngstown State University
Youngstown, OH 44555

Steering Committee Members

President: Kitty Krupat, Joseph S. Murphy Institute, Center for Worker Education at the City University of New York

Past-President: Peter Rachleff, Macalester College

President-elect: David Roediger, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

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Jane Van Galen, University of Washington, Bothell

Membership Renewal Reminder

If you haven't already done so, *please renew* your WCSA membership for 2008. In order to vote at the WCSA meeting held at annual conferences and to vote in elections, a member must be in good standing as of **April 15th** in the year of the conference and election.

Go to www.wcstudies.org/membership to renew your membership online or use the form on p. 12.

The WCSA listserv and membership database will be updated shortly and only actively enrolled members will receive online announcements and the biannual newsletter. If your contact information has changed since you joined, or if you have any questions about your membership, please email Terry Easton at terry.easton@lcc.gatech.edu.

*Thank you for your continued support
to the WCSA.*

WCSA Committee Chairs

Awards

Peter Rachleff racheleff@macalester.edu

Communications

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Conference

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Kitty Krupat Kitty.Krupat@mail.cuny.edu

Committee Reports

Finance

2007 ended with a flurry of renewals and new memberships. We currently have over 200 members, and we expect to sign up additional members at the upcoming "How Class Works" conference. Special thanks to Sam Butler for setting up a PayPal account that enables us to efficiently process and track renewals and memberships.

In other news, in late fall 2007 the WCSA was officially deemed an Unincorporated Association. This designation allows us to have more portability with our banking transactions.

If you have questions about your WCSA membership or if your mailing or e-mail address changes, please contact WCSA Treasurer, Terry Easton, terry.easton@lcc.gatech.edu.

Communications

The WCSA launched its website, www.wcstudies.org, in the fall. All members should have received a userid and password to access the "members only" pages. If you have not received this or have misplaced it, please contact Sam Butler at sabutler@ic.sunysb.edu. We need people to give life to the website with updates to the calendar, suggested readings, reviews, graduate student news and discussion, and active moderated discussions of issues in working-class studies. A special thanks to Sam for his excellent work in setting up the site.

The Communications Committee is also considering ways to inaugurate a WCSA journal, first as an electronic journal through the website and later possibly as a hard-copy journal. A journal will require substantial editorial responsibilities undertaken by a number of people. The next step in development of the website will be identifying people to moderate list discussions and edit the journal. We also need to establish editorial policy. Less time-demanding possibilities also will be important, like keeping the calendar current. If you have ideas or want to be part of creating an online journal, contact Michael Zweig.

The WCSA suspended its listserv, working-class-studies, in November. The Communications Committee welcomes proposals for restarting the list, including the scope, structure, and rules for the WCSA listserv, especially from individuals who will also take on some responsibility for implementing the proposal. Contact Michael Zweig, WCSA Secretary, at michael.zweig@stonybrook.edu.

Elections

The WCSA Elections Committee invites nominations, including self-nominations, for the following positions:

President-elect (3-year term)

The responsibilities associated with this position change each year. During the first year, s/he chairs the Conference Committee, providing support and assistance to those who are organizing the

conference. During the second year, as President, s/he chairs the Outreach Committee and leads the Steering Committee. During the third year, as Past-President, s/he chairs the Awards Committee.

Secretary (2-year term)

The Secretary chairs the Communications Committee, coordinating work on the website, newsletter, possible journal, and any other communications projects the WCSA pursues. The Secretary is also a member of the Steering Committee.

3 Steering Committee Members (2-year terms)

Steering Committee members participate in discussions and decision-making for the Association. Each is also expected to serve on at least one WCSA standing committee: Outreach, Awards, Conference, Communications, or Finance.

1 Elections Committee Member (3-year term)

Elections Committee members solicit nominations for and manage the annual WCSA elections. The committee's work is usually completed in a two to three-month period in the spring or early summer of each year. During a member's third year on the committee, s/he will be expected to chair the committee.

Please send your nominations to Michelle Tokarczyk, at M_Tokarczyk@comcast.net, by **May 15th**.

Class Action

2008 has already been a busy year for Class Action. In January we had a very successful benefit concert with folksingers Charlie King, Karen Brandow, Claudia Schmidt, and Sally Rogers.

Since our organizational mission is Inspiring Action to End Classism, we've tried to spell out what we mean by ending classism. We've adopted the following four Guiding Principles:

1. A world without classism treats people of all class backgrounds, current class status, and rank with respect.
2. A world without classism supports the development of all people to their fullest potential.
3. A world without classism reduces differences in income and wealth, and meets everyone's basic needs.
4. A world without classism increases equality of voice in policy making in all organizations and institutions.

Let us know what you think. Do you have other ideas for principles that seem key to ending classism?

Since the start of 2008, Class Action has led workshops for students, staff, and faculty at high schools in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Pennsylvania. We've given workshops or presentations at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ; Grand Valley State University, Grand Rapids, MI; Boston University and Smith College in Massachusetts; and Ryerson University, Toronto, Canada. We've worked with VISTA volunteers who are working in high schools and on college campuses across the state of Massachusetts. We've also continued our work with Dartmouth College and taken part in a multi-day residency that allowed us to work with many constituencies across the campus.

We've also worked with the staff and Board of the Leeway Foundation in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and conducted a number of workshops for different programs at the Annie E. Casey Foundation. We've worked with the Minority Fellowship Program of the San Francisco Foundation. We've done work with anti-poverty and youth leadership agencies and the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C. We've presented at the Conference of the National Association of Independent Schools and the White Privilege Conference. We've organized day and weekend-long Exploring Class workshops in western Massachusetts, New York City, and San Francisco. We organized our first Color of Class workshop, looking at the intersections of race and class. We'll be leading an Institute at the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in May in Orlando, Florida. All in all it's been busy.

From the Centers

A necessary first step towards achieving Class Action's mission of inspiring action to end classism is to raise class consciousness. We support the development of trainers and educators dedicated to this work, and believe that making anti-classism training materials available is an effective means of moving forward towards building a movement to end classism. We would appreciate your assistance in this effort. In particular, we would like your input on:

1. Key elements you believe need to be included in any anti-classism training.
2. Must-read background materials, for anti-classism trainers and/or participants.
3. Exercises, training activities, and/or anti-classism curricula you find very effective or useful, along with any training notes you'd add.
4. Other individuals who you think we should be talking to.

5. What's been most helpful to you in your own development of awareness around class.

Contributions, suggestions, or questions by email: dlopesdarosa@classism.org, or by regular mail to Class Action at P.O. Box 350, 104 Russell Street, Hadley, MA 01035-0350.

If you'd like to receive our E-news or if you'd like to receive our print newsletter, please let us know at info@classism.org.

Chicago

On November 30, 2007, the Chicago Center for Working-Class Studies held a community forum on the "Politics of The New Chicago Labor Movement: The Future of The New Chicago Labor/Community Coalition." The

session was co-sponsored by the Roosevelt University Mansfield Institute for Social Justice and the Murray-Green Library of Roosevelt University. The program

consisted of two panels. The first focused on local issues impacting the city's working class and featured Hank Scheff (AFSCME Director of Research & Employee Benefits) on privatization, John Bartlet (Executive Director of the Metropolitan Tenants Organization) on housing, and Alejandra Ibanez (Pilsen Alliance) on housing and public transportation. The second panel addressed the creation of labor-community group coalitions which resulted in critical victories in the aldermanic races in the 2007 city elections. This panel featured Jorge Ramirez (Secretary-Treasurer CFL), Genie Kastrup (SEIU State Council Political Director), and William McNary (Co-Director Citizen Action Illinois).

In December, a Chicago steering committee was formed for the 2009 Labor and Working-Class History Association (LAWCHA) annual conference titled, "Race, Labor, and the City: Crises Old and New." Co-

sponsored by the Fund for Labor Culture and History and supported by unions and other local organizations, the conference at Roosevelt University promises to bring together a diverse group of scholars, academics, and activists. The steering committee includes Liesl Orenic (Dominican) and Erik Gellman (Roosevelt) as co-chairs as well as Leon Fink (UIC), Jim Wolfinger (DePaul), Ron Cohen (Indiana Northwest Emeritus and Fund for Labor and Culture), James Thwinda (Workers' Rights Board and Jobs with Justice), and Lou Weeks (UNITE-HERE). This committee encourages participation from any member of LAWCHA in the Midwest. If you're interested, please contact Lisa Phillips (Indiana State), LAWCHA's midwest coordinator, at lphillips7@isugw.indstate.edu. In the meantime, keep an eye out for the upcoming call and save the dates of May 27-31, 2009, for travel to Chicago.

In February, the CCWCS sponsored a book event for Bob Breving, a long-time Chicago labor activist and educator, celebrating the publication of his new book, *Changing Society: The Lives of Worker Heroes who made a Difference*. You can read more about Breving's book on p. 10, in Book Notes.

In March, CCWCS Steering Committee members Carrie Breitbach (Chicago State University) and Winifred Curran (DePaul) coordinated an event titled "Women in the Global City," held at the Rudy Lozano Public Library in Pilsen, a rapidly gentrifying Latino neighborhood. This event brought together activists and scholars concerned about education policy, urban planning, and housing issues to talk about how the remaking of Chicago into a "global city" - one attractive to businesses and tourists worldwide - has restructured the city's educational, environmental, employment, and housing policies.

For more information on the Chicago Center, contact Liesl Miller Orenic, Department of History and American

Studies, Dominican University, lorenic@dom.edu.

Youngstown

The Center for Working-Class Studies (CWCS) has been a busy place this spring. Because Ohio played a pivotal role in the Democratic primary, and because Youngstown is widely seen as the typical working-class, deindustrialized community, many reporters visited, asking us to predict how the working class would vote. We offered our own views but also helped them make contact with area workers, union leaders, and community activists. Along with reporters from the *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*, and *St. Louis Dispatch*, we've worked with a news crew from PBS's *Nightly Business Report* and correspondents from the Dutch, Swedish, British, and Japanese news services. And as we tell every journalist who comes to town, we study media uses and representations of Youngstown and the working class. Our commentaries appeared in a letter to the editor in the *Wall Street Journal* and in op-eds in the local press. In both places, we argued that it's a mistake to assume that only working-class voters are influenced by race, gender, and class. You can read this and other op-eds on our website.

Our Steel Valley Voices project continues to collect family and community history materials reflecting the ethnic and racial diversity of the Mahoning Valley. Working with individuals, community groups, and churches, we're identifying possible sources to expand the collection to include the African-American, Puerto Rican, and Croatian communities. A collaboration with Youngstown State University's (YSU) History Department and Maag Library, Steel Valley Voices provides opportunities for graduate students to gain hands-on experience building electronic archives and developing web resources.

Our partnership with YSU's

journalism program continues, with two field trips that give journalism majors opportunities to explore work, class, and community issues in and beyond the Mahoning Valley. You can see some of the work produced during our first journalism road trip to Sago, West Virginia, on our website. This year, students traveled to Allentown, Pennsylvania, and Virginia Beach. We hope to add their stories to the website soon.

This year's lecture series wraps up with visits by global labor expert Katie Quan and ethnomusicologist Aaron Fox. We've already begun planning next year's series. In October, we will host Alessandro Portelli and Tim Strangleman for a workshop and presentation on new approaches to studying work.

As part of a year-long strategic planning process, the CWCS has welcomed several new faculty affiliates, including two English professors, Corey Andrews and Tim Francisco, sociologist Denise Narcisse, anthropologist Paul Gordiejew, Bonnie Young-Laing from YSU's social work department, Paul Carr from education, and Hunter Morrison, a specialist in urban planning. You can read more about these new Center members and learn about our other projects by visiting the CWCS website, centerforworkingclasstudies.org.

Michigan State

Our Daily Work/Our Daily Lives (ODW/ODL) at Michigan State University (MSU) is currently readying last year's MSU Museum exhibit, "Workers Culture in Two Nations: South Africa and the United States," for its opening as a traveling exhibit in South Africa. The exhibit will open on May 1st at the Red Location Museum in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. Port Elizabeth is often called the "Detroit of South Africa" because both Ford and General Motors opened plants there early in the 20th century. Red Location

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From the Centers (continued)

Museum is located in one of the oldest Black townships surrounding Port Elizabeth. Red Location was named for the rust color of the corrugated iron roofs on the township's barracks style housing from the end of the 19th century. The exhibit covers the work lives and culture of agricultural laborers, miners, autoworkers, and domestics in both countries. The exhibit will also be available for travel to sites in the U.S.

MSU's College of Social Science has awarded internal funding to ODW/ODL for programming over the next few years. This new budget will allow ODW/ODL to bring speakers to campus, arrange new exhibits, and buy art for the growing Workers Culture collection at the MSU Museum.

We are also working to arrange the digitization of the UAW Local 602 oral history project (former Fisher Body, now Lansing Delta Plant of General Motors) which was completed in 2006. This project involved local union members interviewing 125 active and retired members, skilled trades, supervisors and managers, union activists and community members who grew up and/or started small businesses in the shadow of the Verlinden Mill

which GM demolished and replaced with the new Delta Township plant.

The 2008/2009 brown bag series is almost complete. All presentations take place 12:15 am - 1:30 pm in the MSU Museum Auditorium.

FALL 2008 BROWN BAG SCHEDULE

SEPTEMBER 12, FRIDAY

Walter Hawthorne
Department of History
MSU

"Black Slave Ship Crew:
Labor, Bondage and Freedom in
the Early Modern South Atlantic"

OCTOBER 23, THURSDAY

Beth Stewart
Phoenix Mills Oral History
Project

"The First Rosie the Riveters':
The Women of Henry Ford's
Phoenix Mill, 1922-1948"

NOVEMBER 14, FRIDAY

Denver Brunsman
History Department
Wayne State University

"Laboring under the Union Jack:
British Naval Impressment in the
18th-Century Atlantic World"

Member News

Mike Rose has started a blog on his new website, mikerosebooks.com. Along with information on his work, the site includes interviews from a variety of media outlets, including one with Studs Terkel.

San Antonio (Texas) Independent School District will launch its 2008 school year with "Literacy and Leadership with an Attitude" August 18-20. **Patrick Finn**, author of *Literacy with an Attitude: Educating Working-Class Children in Their Own Self-Interest* will address San Antonio's 5,000 teachers as part of the proceedings.

BOOK NOTES

Our Way of Life (Bottom Dog Press), Ray McNiece

Hailed by critics as "our Whitman" and "a modern day Woody Guthrie," Ray McNiece may be best known for his one-person theatre pieces and his poetry musicals with the Tongue-in-Groove band. This new collection of poems is part political protest and part celebration of an America that somehow endures behind, below, and beyond the corruptions of corporate government. With what one fellow poet calls "distressed yet solidly built realism," McNiece takes us on a tour of "our way of life" that begins with "Flag Coffins," wanders through Appalachia, the Slovenian Polka, a broken New Orleans, an abandoned Kansas and Ohio, asking "Who Killed America," and ending with a "Love Song for Cleveland," McNiece's hometown. One critic calls it a paean to "a country that, despite the heartache found permeating everything, is still alive, vital and staggeringly beautiful."

Book Review: William T. Vollmann, *Poor People* (Ecco Press)

by Corey E. Andrews, Department of English, Youngstown State University

Recently reissued in paperback, William T. Vollmann's *Poor People* (2007) takes direct inspiration from the classic chronicle of American poverty *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* by James Agee and Walker Evans. Like its predecessor, *Poor People* confronts readers with photos and vignettes, both supplied by the author in his travels as a journalist. However, Vollmann challenges the literary and visual inheritance of Agee and Evans by insisting that he will not allow "guilt" to cloud his reporting on worldwide poverty. Instead of following their example (which he describes as "an elitist expression of egalitarian longings"), *Poor People* provides a documentary record of widely-varying responses to a simple, yet devastating question: Why are you poor?

Best known as a novelist whose recent work *Europe Central* won the Pulitzer Prize, Vollmann is perfectly suited for the task of asking and recording answers to this question. His early novels, particularly *Whores for Gloria* and *The Royal Family*, were set in the often squalid underworld of San Francisco's Tenderloin district, and his empathetic accounts of the prostitutes, addicts, and homeless of that area have won him many admirers. His work as a nonfiction journalist in *Poor People* displays similarly engaging empathy with the poor people he meets, people whose lives are marked by perceptions of insignificance, invisibility, and apathy. The great merit of Vollmann's book, especially for those interested in the relation of class, work, and poverty, can be found in the author's tenacious search for answers to the question of poverty. Rather than rely on statistical data supplied by the United Nations and other political bodies, Vollmann exposes the reality of the lives recorded by such data. From garbage collectors in Asia to beggars in Russia, from Chinese prostitutes to destitute villagers in Kazakhstan, *Poor People* offers visual and textual evidence of the overwhelming experience of poverty.

Modeled as part travelogue, part reportage, the book provides a very wide scope for the discussion of poverty in the contemporary world. Vollmann examines poverty with scrupulous attention to differing economies, and his assessment of livable wages in various countries is eye-opening and persuasive. His writing style is highly personal and idiosyncratic, but it is quite accessible and rich in detail and description. Above all, *Poor People* provides access to the personal lives of poor people, their characters and experiences, making them understandable and deeply human in their virtues and flaws. This distinguishes *Poor People* from *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, for Vollmann treats his subjects with great respect, very little fear, and a strong sense of kinship.

The problems I have with *Poor People* are quite minor given the overall achievement of the book. Vollmann never fully describes differences between the "poor" and the "working poor," a distinction that would be extremely useful to consider in relation to working-class studies. In addition, the book largely concentrates on the experience of world-wide urban poverty outside the U.S., where only New York City, Miami, and San Francisco are visited. The condition of the poor in the American Midwest and the South would have been powerfully served with analysis in *Poor People*. Still, Vollmann's book is a thought-provoking, engaging, and teachable study of the lives of poor people in our world.

HOW CLASS WORKS – 2008



A conference at the State University of New York at Stony Brook June 5–7, 2008

Topics include: The color line in the 21st century and the legacy of Theodore W. Allen - single-payer health care - corporate practices in higher education - teaching class - white working-class anger in the UK - lessons of the Charleston 5 - class and the legal system - class and religion – labor law and union strategy - plus many more in 55 sessions.

Speakers confirmed include: Sam Anderson, Catherine-Mercedes Brillantes Judge, Pedro Caban, Rose Ann DeMoro, Fuat Ercan, Claudia Fegan, Bill Fletcher, Jr., Tami Gold, Elizabeth Hoffman, Sara Jarayaman, Stathis Kouvelakis, Sherry Linkon, Meizhu Lui, Manning Marable, Jack Metzgar, Nelson Motto, Manny Ness, Bertell Ollman, Jeff Perry, Catherine Pouzoulet, Dave Roediger, Andrew Ross, John Russo, Vinny Tirelli, Michelle Tokarczyk, Richard Trumka, Joe Wilson

Plus over 180 presentations in working-class studies from graduate students, faculty, union and community activists -- from Australia, Canada, France, Greece, Ireland, Lithuania, New Zealand, Nigeria, Turkey, UK, and US -- plus film, music, photography, poetry

To see the full program and register visit the conference pages
at www.workingclass.sunysb.edu

Sponsored by the Center for Study of Working Class Life
Conference Coordinator – Michael Zweig: (631) 632-7536 or michael.zweig@stonybrook.edu

BOOK NOTES

***Transforming the City: Community Organizing and Urban Political Change (Kansas),* Marion Orr, ed.**

***We Make Change: Community Organizers Talk About What They Do – and Why (Vanderbilt),* Kristin and Joe Szakos**

Taken together, these two recent books provide a comprehensive update on the state of community organizing in working-class and poor communities in the U.S. The first volume, edited by Brown University political scientist Marion Orr, collects thematic essays by engaged academics from different disciplines and various metropolitan areas (including New Orleans, Chicago, El Paso, Baltimore, and Los Angeles). Grounded in scholarly analysis of specific issues related to differences in the political economy and racial and class dynamics of different cities, as well as differences in organizing strategies and traditions, the volume combines both rich detail and broad assessment. Because the contributors developed their analyses as part of a long-term working group, there is a conceptual unity and coherence unusual in anthologies. Among the concerns the authors develop are how changes in the national and international economy have changed local ecologies and how organizers have responded by fostering a more dynamic relationship between local organizing and national movements for social justice. In contrast, *We Make Change* is based on interviews with organizers from a variety of communities and organizing traditions by the wife-and-husband team of Kristin and Joe Szakos. In-depth profiles tell the life stories and probe the views of 14 organizers from small towns and cities, men and women of different races and economic backgrounds, ranging in age from those in their twenties to those in their sixties. Other chapters address issues based on more than 80 interviews focused on the lives and work of organizers. William Greider says, “The most wonderful thing about *We Make Change* is that it’s so much fun to read. It’s like a personal tour of America where you get to meet the most engaging, optimistic kind of citizens – people who love this country’s possibilities and are working to fulfill them.”

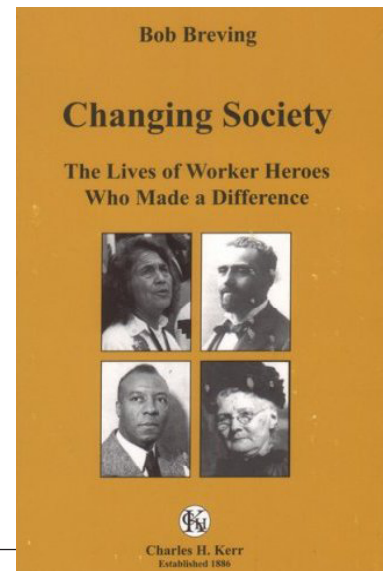
***On the Global Waterfront: The Fight to Free the Charleston 5 (Monthly Review),* Suzan Erem and E. Paul Durrenberger**

In January 2000 some 130 members of the International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA) picketed the docks in Charleston, South Carolina, to protest the use of nonunion labor by a Danish shipping company. They were met by 600 heavily armed “riot police,” who provoked a scuffle, after which five longshoremen – four black, one white – were arrested and charged with “felony riot” and the threat of five years in jail. Unintimidated, ILA Local 1422 and its president Ken Riley mobilized its predominantly African-American membership and local community, reaching out to other unions across the U.S. and around the world. After solidarity actions in various European ports, the shipping company agreed to stop using scab labor in Charleston, but the court case went on for nearly two years. In the end, the felony charges were reduced to misdemeanors, and the Charleston 5 pled “no contest,” paid small fines for what had always been bogus charges, and returned to work. *On the Global Waterfront* tells the story of how this outcome was achieved and, in the process, shows the power of port workers everywhere to stop or delay the movement of goods in a just-in-time global economy. The book jacket calls it a “compelling narrative of a local struggle, a transformed union leader, and a newly energized workers movement.”

BOOK NOTES

Changing Society: The Lives of Worker Heroes Who Made a Difference (Charles H. Kerr), Bob Breving

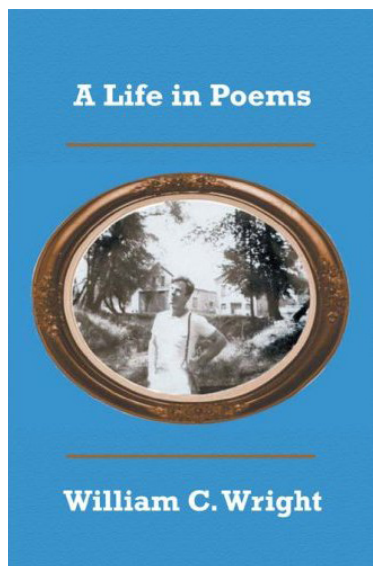
For nearly two decades Bob Breving has been helping union leaders develop their writing skills by having them research and write about “worker heroes.” From the beginning, students asked for model essays that would help them see how to organize material and use simple language with “action verbs” to communicate complex information and ideas. After initial hesitation, Breving provided a brief essay on Eugene Debs. Students then asked for more about the history of labor struggles and other heroes. *Changing Society* is the complete collection of Breving’s worker-hero biographies over the years, from John Peter Altgeld to Dolores Huerta. The result is a way of teaching and sparking interest in labor history that has proven to be especially relevant for both local union leaders and high school students.



Sugar String, Sue Doro

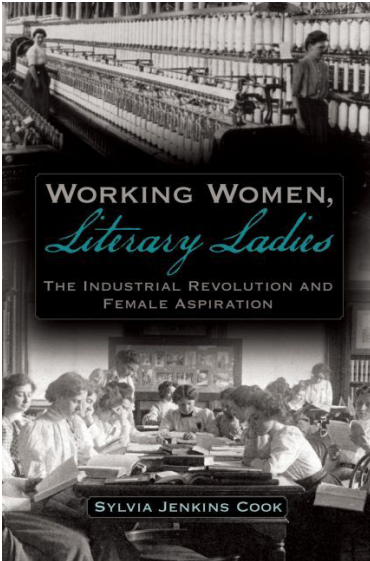
Author of a working-class classic, *Blue Collar Goodbyes*, Sue Doro has a new collection of her poems. Janet Zandy gives it the following endorsement: “*Sugar String*, tied tightly around white bakery boxes, is transformed by Sue Doro’s poetic machining into sturdy filaments, essential fiber sustaining her through working-class poverty, father abuse, mother loss, and the cruel silencing of a kid with imagination and wonder. Neither sugary nostalgia nor bitter reminiscence, surprising in their wit and power, amazing in their recalled detail, Doro’s poems take on dead rats, mean relatives, alcoholic fathers, stilts, lowered expectations, no money, and wells of grief to emerge as narratives of struggle and survival and love. Sue Doro epitomizes the strength and power of human expression.” Self-published, the new volume can be ordered directly from Sue at tradesis@aol.com

A Life in Poems (Bottom Dog Press), William C. Wright



Bill Wright was born in 1914 in Norwalk, Ohio, and met his wife Cris first as a Boy Scout and then later when they both were teenagers circulating petitions to free the Scottsboro Boys. Marrying in 1937, they moved to Cleveland’s West Side, where Bill attended a CIO labor school. He then went to work at Republic Steel to organize for the Steel Workers Organizing Committee and at various smaller factories as a rank-and-file organizer for the United Electrical, Radio & Machine Workers (UE). He was Army infantry in World War II, earning a Bronze Star and Purple Heart in the Battle of the Bulge, and then returned home to run his father’s small dairy and struggle to maintain the family’s small farm. For the rest of the 20th century, living in Sandusky, Ohio, he was a peace and justice activist, along with Cris until she died in 1984, founding and participating in a wide range of groups from civil rights to the women’s movement, from anti-war to anti-apartheid, and a life-long commitment to Veterans for Peace. This collection of poems is an autobiography in verse, some written as remembrances, some from “back in the day.” Introduced by a brief biography of Bill (and Cris) by Larry Smith, Bottom Dog editor and publisher, and supplemented by family photos across more than 90 years, the poems are about work and life, Wright’s love of peace and justice, of activism and work in all its mental and manual forms, and of Cris and of their growing, working, and acting together.

BOOK NOTES



***Working Women, Literary Ladies: The Industrial Revolution and Female Aspiration* (Oxford), Sylvia Cook**

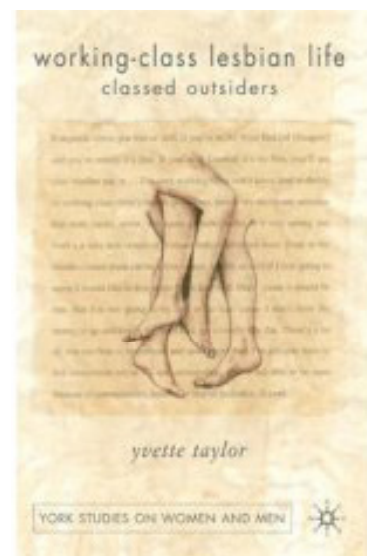
Both literary analysis and social history, this book looks at the literary productions of 19th- and early 20th-century “factory girls” who struggled to develop a life of the mind even as their work tied them to the rhythms of machines and managerial control. Beginning with the original factory-girls journal, *The Lowell Offering*, Sylvia Cook examines a series of texts across nearly a hundred years, including Emma Goldman’s periodical *Mother Earth*, Lucy Larcom’s epic poem of female factory life, and Theresa Malkiel’s *The Diary of a Shirtwaist Striker*. With sensitivity to both the lives out of which these works emerged and their often complicated receptions by middle-class readers and writers, Cook “traces the hopes and tensions generated by the expectations of working-class women as they created a wholly new way of being alive in the world.”

***One Day for Democracy: Independence Day and the Americanization of Iron Range Immigrants* (Ohio University), Mary Lou Nemanic**

A study of “festive culture,” *One Day for Democracy* shows how the celebration of the 4th of July evolved during the 20th century on the Minnesota Iron Range, a series of mining communities where immigrants from some 30 different ethnic groups formed a distinct American subculture, diverse in many ways but decidedly working class. In the early part of the century, the celebration meshed various Old World carnival traditions that included rough games, cross-dressing, and general rowdiness. As radio and then television exposed the Range to a wider, national, and mostly middle-class popular culture, 4th of July began to include beauty queens and marching bands. Nemanic shows how the Range subculture simultaneously adopted, resisted, and assimilated the more homogenized national culture, and in doing so vividly contrasts working-class and middle-class values across a century of change.

***Working-Class Lesbian Life: Classed Outsiders* (Palgrave Macmillan), Yvette Taylor**

An original study of women who identify themselves as working-class and lesbian, this book examines the significance of class and sexuality in their biographies, everyday lives, and identities. Beginning with subjects like intimacy, sex education, and leisure that are typically associated with sexuality studies, Yvette Taylor develops a complex class analysis based on interviews with working-class lesbians. Using her interviewees’ accounts of their own lives, Taylor demonstrates the “double jeopardy” of living a “defying, deviant and stigmatized status.” According to the book jacket, “From classroom sanctions and prohibitions to post-school transitions, both class and sexuality . . . profoundly affect material possibilities and impossibilities, as well as identifications and dis-identifications.” The result is both a critique of queer theory and a personalized account of the political economy of sexuality and class.



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