



On the Line

Business Name

Volume 3, Number 2

Notes from the Chair's Desk

By Reuben Roth

Welcome to another issue of the *On The Line*, the Labor Studies Division newsletter. Our 2009 Annual Meeting will take place in San Francisco, and we have some wonderful paper sessions lined up. This year's SSSP theme is "Race, Ethnicity, and the Continuing Problem of the Color Line." It's a timely, important interesting theme with broad enough scope for any eager presenter.

We've also created some fantastic Labor Division sessions, and in an historic first, a session co-sponsored with a major union, the Communications Workers of America. Three sessions are co-sponsored with sister SSSP Divisions and the ASA Marxist section, which offers our members a unique opportunity to broaden their audience. [see p. 2]

The deadline for submissions is midnight (EST) on January 31, 2009. This date is fast approaching, so get your extended abstracts in as soon as possible. Yes, that's all you need to do: renew your membership and submit an extended abstract as soon as possible.

Despite all the best intentions of the incoming Democratic Administration, this economic crisis promises to get worse before it gets better. On top of that, we're looking at the continued restructuring of North America's manufacturing industries and a challenge from rising economic giants to the south and east. But workers aren't taking it lying down – as those who occupied Republic Window in Chicago, the workers who blockaded General Motors' headquarters in Oshawa, and striking American Axle workers in Buffalo – have all shown us. There's still an appetite to fight back

corporate restructuring and corporate greed.

Let me take a moment to plug our division. Of course those of you reading this are division members, but each of you probably knows of at least one deserving student who may be interested in scraping together the student membership fee of twenty bucks – about the equivalent to four cups of snazzy coffee – in order to join the SSSP and become a member of the Labor Studies Division. Why should a student join our division? Because we offer them an opportunity to kick-start their graduate career, to meet others who have similar interests in workplace issues, working-class resistance, unions, the labor movement, or even labor law. You could even "collectivize" 2 or 3 of your most promising students and encourage them to present a collective paper in San Francisco.

I'd like to extend my warmest congratulations Kendra Jason, from North Carolina State University, who was elected our Division Chair for 2009-2011. I met Kendra last year in Boston, when we both presented at the same session. Her paper, "Social Closure, Race and Labor Unions," was interesting and incredibly timely. Kendra is an energetic division member and a welcome addition to our group. I look forward to working with her in the future.

Let me close by thanking newsletter editor, Corey Dolgon, who eschews modern technology and doggedly and lovingly does each issue by hand.

Editor's Lament

By Corey Dolgon

No lament, really. Just a wish for more time to tell you about the possibilities this "new day" in America might mean. Instead let me briefly say that I think we have a unique, yet fragile opportunity to change the nation and the world. Now is not the time to let up or to trust the significant work to be done to one man, one administration, or any system that protects corporate or imperialist power. It is up to us to organize and demand single-payer health care, abolition of the death penalty, workers' rights, human rights, debt cancelation, etc., etc. Now's the time! Let's hope we have enough of it.

Labor Studies Division Sessions for 2009

Hurry! Review the Labor Division session themes below and submit your abstract (2-3 page summary) to:

<http://www.sssp1.org/index.cfm/m/349/fuseaction/sspsession.publicView>

The submission deadline is no later than midnight (EST) on January 31, 2009, don't delay!

2009 LABOR STUDIES DIVISION THEMES

Free Stuff!!!!

Session 1.

TITLE: Inequality and Struggle:

The Health and Well-Being of Workers

Cosponsored session with Health Division

Co-organizer: Corey Dolgon

Affiliation: Worcester State College Sociology Dept.

Address: Worcester State College, 486 Chandler St,
Worcester, MA 01602

Work #: 508-929-8534

Email: cdolgon@worchester.edu

Co-organizer: Emily S. Ihara

Affiliation: George Mason University

Department of Social Work

Address: 4400 University Drive MS 1F8,
Robinson Hall B378, Fairfax, VA 22030

Work #: (703) 993-2023

Email: eihara@gmu.edu

Session 2.

TITLE: The Globalization of Service Work:

Comparative Perspectives

Cosponsored Session with Marxist Section of the ASA

Co-organizer: Corey Dolgon

Affiliation: Worcester State College

Email: cdolgon@worchester.edu

Co-organizer: Bhavani Arabandi (ASA)

Affiliation: University of Virginia

Email: ba2a@virginia.edu

1) **LABOR VHS Tapes** - A free selection of labor union videos is yours for the asking. Many are valuable accounts of organizing campaigns, union education strategies, famous strikes, etc., and all are RARE, engaging, inspiring, and instructive. All that is asked is that you pay flat rate postage to get them to you. Contact Art Shostak: shostaka@drexel.edu.

2) **LABOR/UNION BOOKS:** Help complete your college, university, or public Library collection of high-quality labor/union books by culling a list of over 400 FREE books records, and 10 of the first 12 issues of *Labor 's Heritage: Quarterly of the George Meany Memorial Archives* (January 1989 - 1992) available from Art Shostak. All that is asked is that materials be catalogued, and the cost of mailing them to you be reimbursed. Contact shostaka@drexel.edu to review the lists. First come, first served.



2009 LABOR STUDIES DIVISION THEMES

Session 3.

TITLE: Youth, Organizing and Work

Cosponsored session with Youth, Aging, and the Lifecourse Division

Co-organizer: Heather Dillaway

Affiliation: Dept. of Sociology, Wayne State University

Address: 2263 FAB, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI 48202.

Work #: 313-577-3276

Email: dillaway@wayne.edu

Co-organizer: Reuben Roth

Affiliation: Department of Sociology, Laurentian University

Address: 935 Ramsey Lake Road, Sudbury ON P3E 2C6

Work #: (705) 675-1151 x 4362

Email: rroth@laurentian.ca

Session 4.

TITLE: SMOs, NGOs and Labor

Organizer: Chris Baker

Affiliation: Walters State Community College

Address: Morristown, Tennessee 37813

Work #: 423-318-2578

Email: Chris.Baker@ws.edu

Session 5.

TITLE: Current Controversies in Labor Politics and Reform

Co-organizers: Robert Ross and Steve Early

Cosponsored with the Communication Workers of America

Co-organizer: Robert J.S. Ross

Affiliation: Clark University, Dept. of Sociology

Address: 950 Main Street, Worcester, MA 01610

Work #: 508 793 7376

Co-organizer: Steve Early

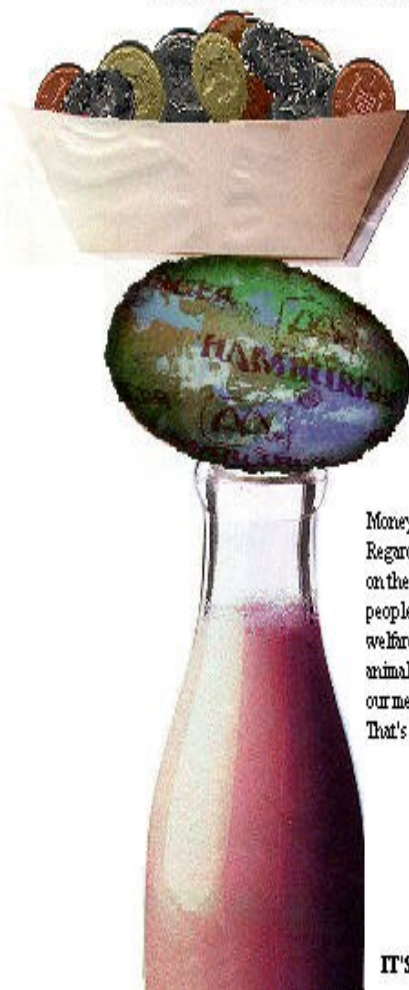
Affiliation: Communications Workers of America

Address: 11 Ely Road, Arlington, MA 02476

Work #: (781) 646-1489

E-mail: Lsupport@aol.com

What we're all about.



Money and profits. Regardless of the impact on the environment and people health, or the welfare for the millions of animals slaughtered for our menus. Exploitation. That's what we're all about.



IT'S A QUICKBUCK.

I saw this the other day and was struck by the implications of the campaign that inspired it—a Unite campaign by McDonalds' workers in New Zealand. Go to www.unite.org.nz for more info.

Coming Soon!

Joyce Rothschild's Democracy in an Age of Network Governance, and Democracy at a Crossroads: Acknowledging Deficiencies, Encouraging Engagement, both published by the American Behavioral Scientist/SAGE.

Volumes include Carmen Sirrianni, et. al on community-based, social movement organizations; Bill Domhoff on the elite origins of not-for-profit sector ; and many others.

Book Review

By Art Shostak

Stern, Andy. 2006. *A Country that Works: Getting America Back on Track*. New York, NY: Free Press, 2006. \$24.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780743297677.

I want to call overdue attention to the one union-related book I believe you should read if you have time and energy for only one: Written by SEIU president Andy Stern, his cogent 2006 semi-autobiographic volume, *A Country that Works: Getting America Back on Track*, tells more about labor realities, warts and all, than we have any right to expect. Mixing unexpected candor, warranted pride, rare personal intimacy, and intriguing visionary politics, it stands out as a must-read for sociologists seeking distinctive leads to labor gains, losses, and prospects.

Sociologists will find three features of the SEIU of special interest: First, Stern, raised in a non-union, middle-class household, and a graduate of an Ivy League college, has the union he leads opt, whenever possible, for cooperation rather than conflict. Tough when necessary, it prefers to first offer to cut a deal, and only later rattle the cage. While careful to keep the union's powder dry, and well-known for employing dramatic militancy when left with no alternative, the SEIU offers to dampen shop floor militancy, aid employer productivity, and add value to work processes. In return, it expects better contracts, a fairer share of profits, and a sort of union-employer partnership based in mutual respect and appropriate wariness ("Trust, but verify"). Second, Stern does not hesitate to support a very small number of maverick Republicans the union finds situationally worthy, and he has sharp disagreements with lofty Democrats who mistakenly and condescendingly take Labor for granted.

Above all, Stern stands out among his peers in being an avowed far-sighted futurist. A close reader of Alvin Toffler's popular books about tomorrow, and a bold friend of Newt Gingrich (a Toffler devotee), Stern would upgrade unions into problem-solving and future-oriented organizations. He breaks ranks by daring to rue in public the meagerness of imagination of most top labor leaders, and he challenges them to join him in considering eclectic ideas uncommon in their mental world and comfort zone. Stern, for example, calls on unions to consider acting as outsourcers for benefits administration, compliance, hiring, training, and the setting of industry standards. He can imagine unions becoming a new permanent partner of employees whose work is transitory, a type he expects to greatly expand. Unions could advise, invest, and oversee retirement funds, as well as offer lifetime health care benefits at low cost.

Stern envisions global unions capable of supporting coordinated organizing campaigns aimed at the far-flung operations of multinational firms. He also dreams aloud about a day when global movements Labor, environmental, and other Do-Good operations - might combine in one synergistic body. The new organization would take groups that now focus separately on corporate social responsibility, the environment, human rights, labor, a, etc., and help them morph into something better, something we can only now glimpse (and wonder at the audaciousness of the notion, given all the organizational challenges it poses). Best of all, Stern has task forces actively promoting all of these ideas, and many more.

Stern, to be sure, has his fair share of detractors, and more all the time. He has been attacked as being high-handed, dictatorial, imperial, and insufficiently militant, among other things. It is difficult for outsiders like Labor Academics to weigh the merits of the opposing sides in the controversy, as, in much such disputes, things are not always what they seem to be. Almost everything that appears in the media has a spin attached, and an attentive neutrality is probably the best stance at present for concerned academics. Taken altogether, the Stern/SEIU situation links to what nearly everyone in Labor has long understood - namely, the status quo is not an option. The split in 2005, on the very eve of the 50th anniversary of the merger of the old AFL and the CIO, attests to the depths of hunger for profound change. Change to Win, the organization formed at that time, is guided in large part by Andy Stern's futurism, and it looks for help from two fast-improving sources—computer power and applied sociology.

Computer use is helping to bring members and officers together as never before in real-time communications of consequence. It adds muscle to boycott and strike projects across time/space borders, and it fosters the creation of overdue "electronic communities" (local, national, and global) with empowering heart, mind, and soul. Unions may yet achieve by 2015 what I call CyberUnion status, and thereby help assure their endlessly energizing renewal (Shostak, 1999; 2002). [continued on next page]

Book review Continued...

Likewise, the chances of Labor's recovery gain as more and more applied sociologists apply their expertise. This is not easy, as trust must be slowly and earnestly earned, and advice is best given on request and with great diplomacy. You will probably have to pass what the SEIU calls the "hang test," or the ability to "hang out comfortably with a social service worker, school aide, or janitor, or have lunch at a diner or a beer in a neighborhood bar" (Stern, p. 122). Assisting the Labor Movement as an applied sociologist isn't for every academic, but those who do come to "carry a card" help everyone gain on our shared dream of Bread and Roses too.

References

Shostak, Arthur B. 1999. *CyberUnion: Empowering Labor through Computer Technology*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

Shostak, Arthur B. 2002. *The CyberUnion Handbook: Transforming Labor through Computer Technology*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

Art Shostak, longtime Labor Educator (25 years as Adjunct Sociologist at the Meany Center, etc.), has a new book that could be used by union locals to create a new interest group made up of area educational activists, school reformers, and pro-labor teachers and school administrators. The reader-friendly, jargon-free book advocates a whole new approach to K-12 schooling, one that adds the FUTURE to the current focus on the Past and Present. Titled - ***Anticipate the School You want: Futurizing K-12 Schooling*** - it can be had in paperback from Art at a special low price (\$12 plus S&H) : contact him at [HYPERLINK "mailto:shostaka@drexel.edu"shostaka@drexel.edu](mailto:shostaka@drexel.edu) _

A Commonwealth of Toil: Folksongs and the U.S. Labor Movement

Corey Dolgon, a Ph.D in American Culture and Sociology Professor for over 10 years, has put together a singing lecture on the role of folksongs in the U.S. labor movement. Corey is a long-time labor activist and organizer and has used folk songs to build solidarity on the line and engage students in the classroom. This lecture covers labor history from a multicultural perspective and examines the role of folk songs in workers' lives.


Corey Dolgon's "singing lecture" is a hit. Those who attended his presentation for the U of L Labor-Management Center from union retirees to active union member to academics and management were entertained and enlightened.

A good time and good learning.

—John Ralston, Director University of Louisville
Labor-Mgt. Center



For info contact Corey Dolgon at cdolgon@worcester.edu/617-298-0388



Many thanks to Bob Ross for writing this excellent piece on short notice. This is the kind of work we need and should help us all as we try to teach and practice a labor sociology for the 21st Century.

THE REPUBLIC WINDOW OCCUPATION AND LABOR SOCIOLOGY

By Robert J.S. Ross Clark University

As workers for Republic Window in Chicago occupied their factory on December 5, 2008, social scientists immediately began thinking about the Flint sit-down strikes. Herein, some quick notes of comparison.

At Republic Window the workers demanded the severance and vacation pay owed to them; the plant was shutting down. Their union, the United Electrical Workers (UE) was small, shrinking, and is widely known as a left wing, democratic union.

When the Flint sit-downers sat in they were part of an industry-wide movement to organize the auto complex. Their union was surging and sit-downs were occurring throughout the Midwest. Their strike was basically for recognition. GM was not closing the plant, or the others that were occupied. One source cites the US Bureau of Labor Statistics to count 48 sit-downs in 1936, involving 88,000 workers, and then 477 sit-downs involving 400,000 workers in 1937, 52 sit-downs with 30,000 workers in 1938. (1) Auto union membership increased from 35,000 in 1935 to 375,000 in 1937. (2)

The Republic workers struck in part for benefits that the employer was legally compelled to supply under the WARN act – more widely known as the plant closing law – that guarantees workers either advance notice or severance pay in the event of mass layoffs or shutdowns. (3) While the Wagner Act had been passed by the time the Flint workers sat down in 1936-37, their actions were not framed as forcing the employer to meet existing legal or contractual obligations. Although GM obtained a court injunction against the strike, neither Michigan Governor Frank Murphy nor President Roosevelt would agree to use force to enforce it; later the tactic was declared illegal by Congress.

As did Gov. Murphy and President Roosevelt, President-elect Obama was supportive of the workers cause. On December 7th, 2008, Obama said:

“When it comes to the situation here in Chicago with the workers who are asking for their benefits and payments they have earned, I think they are absolutely right,” ... “What’s happening to them is reflective of what’s happening across this economy.”

On December 10th the sit-down at Republic ended when the firm’s lenders agreed to finance \$1.75 million in benefits. As of January 15th, 2009 it appears that a further victory for the workers was imminent as a green technology firm was negotiating to purchase their plant.


For some sociologists and labor activists the differences between the two events are quite large, especially the context in which there is not yet a discernable “upsurge” in organizing and mobilizing. (4) On the other hand, political sociologists would point out that support from elected officials may have been decisive in convincing the firms – employer and banks – to “do the right thing.” Whether the Republic Windows sit-down presages a surge in organizing remains to be seen; it may depend partly on the success of the labor and allies to pass the Employee Free Choice Act. In any case, it is a nice story to write about as one waits to watch the inauguration on TV!

1. See Sidney Fine, *Sit-Down: The General Motors Strike of 1936-1937*. University of Michigan Press, 1969. Also: “The Sit-Down Strike in the 1930s.” High beam encyclopedia at: <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3468301105.html> Accessed January 20, 2009.

2. High Beam, op cit.

3. The law creates an exemption from the notice/severance requirement in the event of exigent circumstances. The workers’ might – or might not – have prevailed in court.

4. Cf. Dan Clawson, *The Next Upsurge: Labor and the New Social Movements*, ILR Press 2003.





And many thanks to political writer David Bacon for editing a special version of this for our newsletter.

BLACKS AND IMMIGRANTS BRING IN THE UNION: Why The Union Won at Smithfield

By David Bacon

When workers at Smithfield Foods' North Carolina packing house voted in the union on December 11, the longest, most bitter anti-union campaign in modern labor history went down to defeat. Sixteen years ago workers there began organizing with the United Food and Commercial Workers. In 1994 and 1997 the union was defeated in elections later thrown out by Federal authorities, because the company created an atmosphere of violence and terror in the plant. In 1997 one worker was beaten after the vote count. Company guards were given the ability to arrest workers, who were held in a detention center in the plant they called the company jail. Many workers were fired for union activity. And in recent years, immigration raids swept the plant in the middle of the union drive, adding to the climate of intimidation.

It was no surprise, then that the pro-union vote (2,041 to 1,879) set off celebrations in house trailers and ramshackle homes in Tarheel, Red Springs, Santa Paula, and all the tiny working class towns spread from Fayetteville down to the South Carolina border. Relief and happiness are understandable in this state, where union membership is the lowest in the country. But Smithfield workers were not just celebrating a vote count. Their victory was the culmination of an organizing strategy that accomplished what many have said that U.S. unions can no longer do – organize huge, privately-owned factories.

Five thousand people work in the world's largest pork slaughterhouse, where they kill and cut apart 32,000 hogs every day. Efforts by the modern U.S. labor movement to organize factories the size of the Tarheel plant have not been very successful for the last two decades. In fact, private-sector unionization has fallen below 8 percent of the workforce. The giant electronics plants of Silicon Valley have an anti-union strategy so intimidating that unions haven't even tried to organize them for years. Japanese car manufacturers have built assembly plants and successfully kept workers from organizing, in spite of efforts by the auto union.

The price for labor's failure to organize Japanese plants became clear in December's Congressional debate over the auto bailout proposal. Southern Republican Senators demanded that the United Auto Workers agree to gut its union contracts to match the non-union wages and conditions at Nissan, Honda and BMW. The presence of the non-union plants threatens to destroy the union, and the same dilemma exists in industry after industry.

Unions pin their hopes on the Employee Free Choice Act. This proposal would require a company like Smithfield to negotiate a union contract if a majority of workers sign union cards. It would avoid the kind of union election that took place at Smithfield in 1997, where workers voted in an atmosphere of violence and terror. EFCA would also put penalties on employers who fire workers for union activity. At Smithfield, the company rehired in 2006 workers it fired for union activity in 1994. But it was only obliged to pay the fired workers for their lost wages, and even then was allowed to deduct any money they'd earned during the decade their cases wound through the legal system. EFCA would substantially restrict the kind of anti-union campaign Smithfield mounted for 15 years.

But EFCA by itself will not build strong unions, which workers can use not just to win elections but to make substantial changes in the workplace. The union at Smithfield wasn't created on election day. Workers had already organized it in the battles that preceded the vote. They did much more than sign union cards. They had to lose their fear, and show open support for the demands they'd chosen themselves, like lower line speed to reduce injuries, rehiring workers fired because of their immigration status, or giving workers a paid holiday for Dr. King's birthday. Packinghouse laborers then had to learn to make management listen to those demands by circulating petitions and forming delegations to demand changes.

The union strategy relied on organizing resistance to immigration-related firings, and uniting a diverse workforce of African Americans, Puerto Ricans and immigrant Mexicans. In 2007 Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents and company managers cooperated in two immigration raids that produced a climate of terror organizer Eduardo Peña likened to "a nuclear bomb." Immigrant workes left the plant in droves. The Smithfield raids were two of many in recent years, used to punish workers when they've tried to improve conditions.

The plant's citizen workers felt the effects along with the immigrants.

[continued on following page]



[continued from preceding page]

For months afterwards, the organizing campaign was effectively dead, with many leaders deported and union activity halted by fear. It was only when African American workers who'd fought to win the King holiday became the core of a new generation of leaders that the struggle to build the union could continue.

If Black and Latino immigrant workers hadn't found a way to work together, the union drive would have ended with the raids. And if the company and ICE had succeeded in convincing half the plant that the other half really had no right to work because they lacked legal immigration status, workers would have been unwilling and unable to defend each other. In the end, both groups found a common interest in better wages and working conditions. But they also had to agree to defend the right of each worker to her or his job, and treat any unfair firing an attack on the union, whether the victim was Black, Mexican, or Puerto Rican.

The Smithfield firings were made possible by employer sanctions, the Federal law that prohibits employers from hiring undocumented workers. The law makes working a crime for people without papers, and became the pretext for firing immigrant union leaders. That's why the AFL-CIO voted in 1999 to call for the law's repeal. The Smithfield raids show that changing immigration law is as necessary for organizing unions as passing reforms like EFCA.

Outside the Tarheel plant, the union grew roots in working-class communities, and became part of workers' lives. They took English classe in its office and marched in demonstrations for civil rights. That coalition turned the company's anti-labor actions against it, exposing its record in the place where Smithfield was most vulnerable – in the eyes of consumers.

The election result was the product of a long-term organizing effort and commitment. With a similar commitment, other unions can do the same, no matter how big the plant or anti-union the employer. But it takes a strategy based on building a real union in the workplace and community. That's what workers did at Smithfield.

And with changes in labor and immigration law, workers won't have to conduct a 15-year war to accomplish the same goal.

New Labor Book!


Carolina Bank Muñoz. 2008. *Transnational Tortillas: Race, Gender, and Shop-Floor Politics in Mexico and the United States*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press.

This book looks at the flip side of globalization: How does a company from the Global South behave differently when it also produces in the Global North? A Mexican tortilla company, "Tortimundo," has two production facilities within a hundred miles of each other, but on different sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. The workers at the two factories produce the same product with the same technology, but have significantly different work realities. This "global factory" gives Carolina Bank Muñoz an ideal opportunity to reveal how management regimes and company policy on each side of the border apply different strategies to exploit their respective workforces' vulnerabilities.

The author's in-depth ethnographic fieldwork shows that the U.S. factory is characterized by an "immigration regime" and the Mexican factory by a "gender regime." In the California factory, managers use state policy and laws related to immigration status to pit documented and undocumented workers against each other. Undocumented workers are subject to harsher punishment, night-shift work, and lower pay. In the Baja California factory, managers sexually harass women--who make up most of the workforce--and create divisions between light- and dark-skinned women, forcing them to compete for managerial attention, which they understand equates with job security.

"Carolina Bank Munoz's rich ethnographic fieldwork in two tortilla factories, one in Mexico and the other in the United States, has produced an extremely well crafted, highly accessible book on the role of state policy, race, gender, and immigration status in the labor process and, more precisely, labor control. The author of this must-read book for labor and immigration scholars and activists, provides a well-researched and convincingly argued analysis of how managers employ an 'immigration regime' on one side of the border and a 'gender regime' on the other to discipline labor. The importance of this book lies both in the theoretical contributions that it makes to several literatures and the practical insights that it offers to organizers of low-wage and immigrant workers."

Héctor L. Delgado, University of La Verne, author of *New Immigrants, Old Unions: Organizing Undocumented Workers in Los Angeles*



Obama Shows Labor Stripe

A Note From the Field

President Barack Obama nominated as Secretary of Labor, Rep. Hilda Solis, the first Latina elected to the California Senate. The daughter of Mexican and Nicaraguan immigrants, Solis, currently serving in her fifth term in the House of Representatives, is a feminist, environmentalist, labor activist, and a staunch defender of workers' rights. In 1996, she led the fight to raise California's minimum wage and in Congress she co-authored the Green Jobs Act, legislation that authorized \$125 million for job training in environmentally friendly occupations. Organized labor and workers' advocacy groups are hailing her nomination. *Change to Win* Chair, Anna Burger, writes, "Solis has a life-long record as an advocate and activist for the cause and concerns of working Americans. She has fought to provide working families with a safe workplace, a healthy environment, a decent standard of living, affordable health care and equal opportunity. Congresswoman Solis does not just vote on behalf of workers, she is their unwavering and tireless voice. She has one of the strongest pro-worker voting records in Congress and is a sponsor of the Employee Free Choice Act." From SEIU.Org, "The announcement of Representative Hilda Solis as President-elect Obama's Secretary of Labor is great news for America's workers. Solis comes from a union family and has never forgotten her roots in her public service career. Her appointment is a win for the prospects of the Employee Free Choice Act and the economic future for the people of this country who get up and go to work every day." On UNITE HERE's website, "UNITE HERE is thrilled to have a proven advocate for working Americans named our new Secretary of Labor. With this appointment and a firm commitment to a stimulus package that helps working people including the Employee Free Choice Act, the President elect is affirming his commitment to bring working families the kind of change they voted for." Perhaps not since Frances Perkins, Franklin Roosevelt's labor secretary, has labor had such a strong advocate for workers' rights in the Department of Labor; a stark contrast from the Bush administration.

Submitted by: Héctor L. Delgado
Professor of Sociology
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
University of La Verne
1950 3rd Street
La Verne, CA 91750
909-593-3511, Ext. 4475

The economy is affecting my community because we live precariously, day to day. Our community is in the backrooms of many kitchens, serving food to the very people who despise us, and who yet control our economic destiny. We are working mostly in the shadows of large, ornate buildings---compartmentalized into hallways with no sightlines to the buffet du jour...access denied. We may, however, be allowed to take the plates of those who are finished with the buffet. We are sweeping floors, and taking out the trash. We are working two jobs, more than fifteen hours everyday---we are hustling and helping others in our community find economic support as well. Our community watches children, but not always *our* children---our love and nurturing has become a commodity---but we negotiate well for this emotional service. We are in the streets, but not always *our* streets. No, these are the streets of the elite. We manicure their lawns, we build their fences--and they build theirs--the biggest fence of all. Like East and West Germany, this fence is like a prison, a divorce, a separation between mother to the south, and father to the north. Our community is nowhere many would likely go, unless they can flip a house and gentrify our neighborhood. As for me, nearly everyday I watch the stock market. I have a computer, and besides chatting with family and friends, I check the markets. Nearly every day I fear that the currency will go lower and lower in value. Everyday I call relatives and assure them that I can survive this transition--that it will all be worth the struggle, the fear, and the sadness. Everyday my job becomes less and less secure, as the tourists stop spending money. Every day my hours get cut. I have no benefits, so it's the hours that matter. Everyday I expect the worst to happen--rock bottom. A currency with as little value as my homeland--it's inconceivable, really. At this point, I can no longer sustain my family from here--it no longer adds up, and I return, for I am a migrant worker and an immigrant from Yucatan, Mexico, trying to cut a deal with both governments and both economies. One is Mexico, my mother, who provides emotional security for me. The other, the United States, is my father, who provides my economic security. Right now, my father is dying, and my mother is calling me home

Submitted by: David Piacenti
Visiting Lecturer
Department of Sociology & Anthropology
Indiana University-South Bend