

Labor Extension Bulletin

A Publication of the University of Massachusetts Labor Extension Program
 UMASS AMHERST ■ UMASS BOSTON ■ UMASS DARTMOUTH ■ UMASS LOWELL

VOLUME 17 ■ NUMBER 1 ■ SPRING 2015

Racial Justice Is a Union Issue

Since the killing of Michael Brown last August, we've heard many statistics about police behavior and mass incarceration. Here are some telling numbers from just one article in the Huffington Post:¹

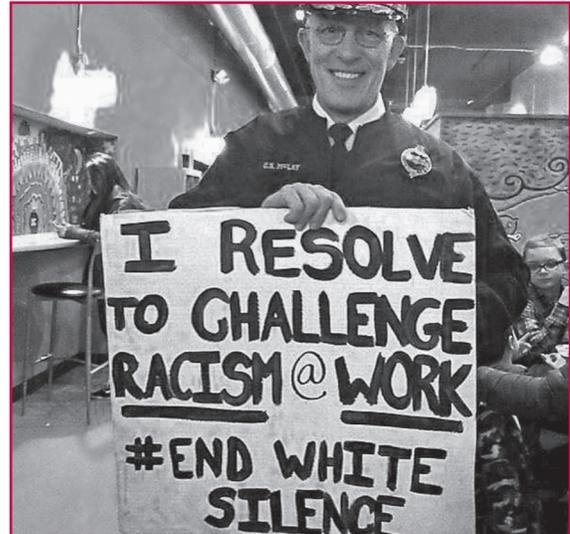
- In 2013, 86% of traffic stops in Ferguson, MO targeted African-Americans, and 92.7% of arrests involved African-Americans.
- 67% of Ferguson's residents are black, but 50 out of 53 officers in the Ferguson police force are white.
- 1 out of 3 black men nationwide can expect to go to prison at some point in their lifetime, compared to 1 out of 17 white men.
- In one month this past summer, at least 5 unarmed black men were killed by police in the US—Michael Brown, Eric Garner, John Crawford, Ezell Ford, and Dante Parker.

And, since August, we've begun to hear from labor leaders urging us to recognize these statistics for what they are—evidence of racism. AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, in his speech at the Missouri AFL-CIO convention in September, gave his reasons for why organized labor should be involved in the growing movement against racial injustice: "This tragedy, and all the complexities of race and racism, are a big part of our very big [labor] family as they always have been... We cannot wash our hands of the issues raised by Michael Brown's death. That does not mean we prejudge the specifics... [b]ut it does demand that we clearly and openly discuss the reality of racism in American life."²

In this *Labor Extension Bulletin*, we offer some ideas and resources to help union members and leaders take concrete steps to respond to President Trumka's call.

Educate your members: There are many ways to educate your leaders and members about racism and racial injustice. You could show President Trumka's speech at a meeting, followed by a group discussion. The union could send an email to all its members with a link to the speech or to an article, announcing that time will be set aside at the next membership meeting to talk about it. More formally, the union could sponsor a workshop so members could together examine the impacts of racism in our society and in our labor movement. (For lists of specific articles and workshops worth exploring, see the "Spotlight" and "Resource Corner" sections of this bulletin.)

Take a stand and join the movement: Join with United Steel Workers, AFSCME and many other union locals in passing a resolution condemning racist policing and recommitting your union to fighting



Pittsburgh Police Chief Cameron McLay's New Year's message.

for justice and equality for all. Join coalitions of union and community groups organizing around these issues. Mobilize your members to take part in any way they can.

Challenge racial injustice in your workplace: None of our workplaces are free from the effects of institutionalized racism. Request from management the data you need to analyze the hiring and promotional practices of your employers, and study your members' wages to identify where racism may be holding your members of color back. Use your contract negotiations as an opportunity to bargain for better policies and practices. Survey your members of color to determine when they encounter racist attitudes and behaviors at work, and conduct bystander trainings with your members so everybody can recognize and intervene in such situations. File grievances against managers who persist in racist behavior.

None of these actions are easy, but as unionists the proudest parts of our history are when we have taken on the hard issues. In the words of President Trumka:

The test of our movement's commitment to our legacy is not whether we post Dr. King's picture in our union halls; it is do we take up his fight when the going gets tough, when the

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¹http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/08/22/ferguson-black-america_n_5694364.html

²<http://www.aflcio.org/Blog/Other-News/Trumka-in-Missouri-Speaks-on-Confronting-Racism>

Around THE STATE

Greater SE Mass Labor Council Women's Committee Training Saturday, March 14, 10 am–2 pm

Location: Labor Council Hall, 556 Pleasant St., New Bedford, MA

Cost: Free

Contact: Kim Wilson Venancio at kwilson@umassd.edu or 508.999.8781

Calling all union and community activist women in SE Mass to a special training, led by WILD leaders on building the women's committee.

Taking on the Corporatization of Higher Education Wednesday, March 18, 4–7pm

Cost: \$20 Faculty/Fully-employed, \$5 Student/Unemployed/Low-income

Location: University of Mass Boston

Register: <http://bit.ly/TakingonCorporatePHE>

Contact: Anneta Argyres at 617.287.7229 or anneta.argyres@umb.edu

At this forum, we will hear from leading union, student and faculty activists about the effects of the corporatization of higher education—both public and private—and about the innovative organizing strategies being developed to defend higher education.

Celebrating the Dignity of Care: A conversation with Ai-jen Poo Wednesday, April 1, reception at 1 pm, presentation 2–4 pm

Location: UMass Boston Ryan Lounge

Cost: Free

Contact: Wally Soper at Wally.Soper@umb.edu or 617.287.7267

The Brazilian Immigrant Center and the Labor Resource Center are pleased to invite you to meet Ai-jen Poo, Director of the National Domestic Workers Alliance and a 2014 recipient of the MacArthur "Genius" Award.

UMD Labor Education Center and the Greater SE Mass Labor Council Annual Legislative Breakfast

Saturday, April 18, breakfast at 8:30 am

Location: White's of Westport, 66 State Rd., Westport, MA

Cost: Please call for updated cost

Contact: Tehrene Hart at thart1@umassd.edu or 508.999.8007

This is an opportunity for local advocates for social justice to speak directly to the local legislative delegation.

May Educational Series

Four Wednesdays in May (May 6, 13, 20, and 27), 5:30–8 pm

Location: Greater SE Massachusetts Labor Council Hall, 556 Pleasant St., New Bedford

Cost: \$50 per member

Contact: Kim Wilson Venancio at kwilson@umassd.edu or 508.999.8781
Join other SE Massachusetts labor and community activists as we connect past social justice organizing to actions needed today. We will discuss the practical matters of being a strong workplace leader with learning specific skills needed to build your union and have a strong impact on justice in our communities.

Making Our Victories Count: Organizing Beyond Legislation The 29th Annual WILD Summer Institute

Friday–Sunday, June 19–21

Location: UMass Amherst

Cost: To be announced

Contact: Kathy Casavant at 617.825.0520 or kathy@wildlabor.org

WILD is an inspirational educational program that provides women with the leadership vision, confidence and skills to become more effective leaders and organizers in the MA labor movement. The program begins with dinner on Friday, June 19th, and continues through the weekend with workshops on leadership development and a variety of skill building workshops, ending at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, June 21st.

SAVE THE DATE: UMD Labor Education Center September Conference

Saturday, September 12, 9 am to 2 pm

Contact: Kim Wilson Venancio at kwilson@umassd.edu or 508.999.8781

SAVE THE DATE: Arnold M. Dubin Labor Education Center 40th Anniversary Dinner!

Thursday, October 22, reception at 6, dinner at 7

Contact: Kim Wilson Venancio at kwilson@umassd.edu or 508.999.8781

The Resource Corner

Videos and articles to start conversations:

- AFL-CIO President Trumka's speech quoted in the main article (<http://www.aflcio.org/Blog/Other-News/Trumka-in-Missouri-Speaks-on-Confronting-Racism>)
- Labor leaders speak on the Ferguson Grand Jury ruling: Statements by AFL-CIO President Trumka, SEIU International and the UE General Executive Board (<http://portside.org/2014-11-25/labor-leaders-speak-ferguson-ruling>)
- Labor and racial-justice activist Bill Fletcher, Jr.'s reflections on lessons from labor's history: (<http://billfletcherjr.com/2014/nyc-police-killings-haymarket-massacre>)
- Former National Writers Union president Jonathan Tasini discusses the challenging issue of the NYC police union's response to Mayor de Blasio's comments: (<http://www.portside.org/2014-12-30/labor-must-reject-police-union-president-pat-lynch-s-bitter-bile>)

Workshops and educational resources:

- United for a Fair Economy has two workshops addressing racism and economic injustice: *The Growing Divide: Inequality and the Roots of Economic Insecurity and Closing the Racial Wealth Divide*. Both include participatory activities that engage participants in better understanding, and developing strategies to address, inequity. (http://www.faireconomy.org/projects/popular_economics_education/workshops)
- The UMass Labor Extension Program helped develop two workshops which examine the US's historical legacy of racism (*Building Solidarity: Exploring the political economy of race in the US*) and how racism has been used to divide and weaken labor unions (*Solidarity or Exclusion: Exploring the legacy of labor's response to racism*). Please contact the Labor Extension Coordinator in your region for more details.
- *Dismantling Racism: A Resource Book for Social Change Groups* is a compilation of materials designed to supplement workshops provided by the Western States Center in Portland, OR. (<http://www.westernstatescenter.org/tools-and-resources/Tools/Dismantling%20Racism>)
- *Race: The Power of an Illusion* is an excellent three part video series that explores genetics, history and systems that perpetuate racism and racial divisions. (<http://newsreel.org/video/RACE-THE-POWER-OF-AN-ILLUSION>)

Program Notes

■ UMASS AMHERST

In November the UMass Amherst Labor Center celebrated its 50th Anniversary with a two-day conference called “Reimagining Labor’s Promise.” With over 100 people in attendance, the event was a tremendous success, spotlighting the work of our distinguished alumni in the areas of labor organizing, research and law. We look forward to finding ways to continue these networking opportunities. We have also worked to continue our research collaborations with the Pioneer Valley Workers Center, assisting leaders in a survey of agrarian workers in the region. Initial findings of the survey were presented in December to members of the Massachusetts Food Systems Planning Team. As the Labor Extension program heads into the spring, we plan to continue our collaboration with the Workers Center, assisting them in developing a comprehensive workers’ rights training program.

■ UMASS BOSTON

The Labor Resource Center is moving to UMass Boston’s College of Liberal Arts! As sad as we are to leave CPCS—our home for over 35 years—we are optimistic that in CLA our programs will be able to grow and thrive. Stay tuned for more information about a new labor studies BA degree. In the meantime, our Certificate in Labor Leadership is still going strong, with our “Union Administration” and “Division of Labor: Debating Policy Issues” courses scheduled to run in the fall 2015 semester. For more information, contact Wally Soper (617.287.7267). On the research front, the LRC in conjunction with the Brazilian Immigrant Center recently released a new report about the domestic worker movement in Massachusetts, titled *Invisible No More: Domestic Workers Organizing in Massachusetts and Beyond*. You can download a copy of the report from the Resources page of the BIC website, www.braziliancenter.org.

■ UMASS DARTMOUTH

Congratulations to our long time director, Jose Soler, who will be retiring in August 2015. He has led the Labor Education Center through our increasing work with the community and into our 40th anniversary! Jose has been the director for over half the years we have been a Center. We are announcing a series of activities to bring together our long time supporters and new allies. The roll out will be at our annual Legislative Breakfast, held on April 18th, and the next event will be a four week, two hour a week session focused on strengthening our unions. We are coordinating a summer cook out with the Greater Southeastern Mass Labor Council around Labor Day. In September we will present a one-day conference on September 12 around building solidarity in the community. Finally, our annual awards banquet will be celebrated on October 22. An ongoing project with the Labor Council is in building a Women’s Committee. Our second meeting will be on March 14th as we will participate in a training presented by the Women’s Institute for Leadership Development on building these committees.

■ UMASS LOWELL

The Labor Education Program spent the fall in discussions with the UML Sociology Department and successfully completed process for the labor program to be housed within the Sociology Department, a goal of our program for some time. We are scaling down our current office and planning to move to smaller space with sociology on south campus by early spring. We look forward to increased collaboration our move will create. We are co-teaching the “Introduction to Labor Studies” class this spring with some new service learning partnerships for students. We hosted attorney Bob Schwartz for a workshop on Information Requests and another on Just Cause. We are funding a graduate student who is doing research to help the Lynn “Reclaim Our Schools” coalition to better develop its strategy for funding public education in the city.

S P O T L I G H T

COMMON SENSE ECONOMICS

An Economy That Works for All 

In response to the largest redistribution of wealth in our nation’s history which is brutalizing our communities, families, unions and workers, the AFL-CIO has developed **Common Sense Economics (CSE)**, a mass education and organizing tool. Through CSE’s modules, workers examine the policies that shape our economy—policies which favor corporate profits over fairness, which exploit the vulnerability of young and immigrant workers, which continue to discriminate against women and workers of color, and which can be changed by an educated, organized and unified labor movement!

The final CSE module on mass incarceration has just been released. This module is designed to help participants understand how the criminal justice system we live in shapes human lives and our economy. Together, the modules on globalization, immigration, women and families, young workers, and mass incarceration help us all see how our economic system is failing, and in many cases oppressing, working people.

For more information about CSE, go to the AFL-CIO’s website (www.aflcio.org/About/Common-Sense-Economics).

To schedule a CSE workshop for your union, contact your Labor Extension Coordinator or Jan Schaffer (jschaffe@aflcio.org).

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UMass Amherst

Labor Extension Program

Labor Center, Thompson Hall

200 Hicks Way

Amherst, MA 01003-9277

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In the Past 6 months...

The UMass Labor Extension Program has provided trainings on these topics...

- **Strategic Planning:**
North Shore Labor Council
- **Understanding and Using Just Cause:** SEIU 509
- **Principles and Practices of Popular Education:** WILD
- **US History of Teacher Unions:**
Boston Teachers Union, MA Jobs with Justice, Boston Truth Coalition
- **Internal Organizing:**
IMSEUA at Wellesley College
- **Building Our Strength at Work—Interim Bargaining:** SEIU 509
- **Facilitating Union Meetings:**
Boston Teachers Union
- **Stewards Training:** SE Region

To Contact the UMass Labor Extension Program:

■ UMass Amherst Labor Extension Program

Labor Center, Thompson Hall, 200 Hicks Way

Amherst, MA 01003-9277

www.umass.edu/lrrc

Clare Hammonds: 413-545-6166 Fax: 413-545-0110

email: chammonds@soc.umass.edu

■ UMass Boston Labor Extension Program

CPCS Labor Resource Center, 100 Morrissey Blvd.

Boston, MA 02125-3393

www.umb.edu/lrc

Annetta Argyres: 617-287-7229

email: anneta.argyres@umb.edu

■ UMass Dartmouth Labor Extension Program

Dubin Labor Education Center, 285 Old Westport Road

North Dartmouth, MA 02747

www.umassd.edu/labored/

Kim Wilson Venancio: 508-999-8781 Fax: 508-999-9168

email: kwilson@umassd.edu

■ UMass Lowell Labor Extension Program

600 Suffolk St., 5th Floor, Suite 503

Lowell, MA 01854

www.uml.edu/LaborEducation

Susan Winning: 978-934-3127

Fax: 978-934-4033

email: susan_winning@uml.edu

Contact the UMass Labor Extension Program at <http://umasslep.org>

Racial Justice Is a Union Issue

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fight gets real against evils that still exist today. When a new immigrant gets mistreated by management because they don't speak the language—that is our fight. When an African-American worker doesn't get a promotion or fair pay because of the color of his or her skin—that is our fight. When women are paid less than men for the same work—that's a fight for every single one of us.

We cannot afford to have 'my issues' and 'your issue.' We must all stand together and mobilize around our issues... That is what solidarity means.