

In the Past 4 months...

The UMass Labor Extension Program Has Provided Trainings On These Topics...

- **The Boss Can't Do That, Can He? A Training on Health and Safety and other Workers Rights**
Western Mass SABES
English for New Bostonians
ESOL program
- **Immigrants and the Labor Movement: Exclusion or Solidarity**
NE Women's Summer School
- **Political Mobilization**
NE Women's Summer School
- **Grievance Handling**
SEIU Local 615
- **Discrimination and Sexual Harassment in the Workplace**
E-Team
- **Popular Education**
The New England Consortium
- **What's Happening with the State Budget?**
North Shore Central Labor Council

- **What the #&*/ Is Happening to the Economy?**
Open Enrollment for Merrimack Valley unions
- **Assertiveness**
WILD
- **Leadership (advanced level)**
WILD
- **Handling Group Dynamics**
Training for WILD teachers

- **Talking Politics and the Economy**
WILD
- **Leadership Development Training of Trainers**
WILD
- **Steward as Organizer**
WILD

To Contact the UMass Labor Extension Program:

■ **UMASS AMHERST LABOR EXTENSION PROGRAM**
Labor Center, Gordon Hall
418 N. Pleasant St.
Amherst, MA 01002-1735
Dale Melcher: 413-545-6166
Fax: 413-545-0110
email: dmelcher@lrrc.umass.edu

■ **UMASS DARTMOUTH LABOR EXTENSION PROGRAM**
Dubin Labor Education Center
285 Old Westport Road
North Dartmouth, MA 02747
Kim Wilson: 508-999-8781
Fax: 508-999-9168
email: kwilson@umassd.edu

■ **UMASS BOSTON LABOR EXTENSION PROGRAM**
CPCS Labor Resource Center
100 Morrissey Blvd.
Boston, MA 02125-3393
Tess Ewing: 617-287-7352
Fax: 617-287-7404
email: tess.ewing@umb.edu

■ **UMASS LOWELL LABOR EXTENSION PROGRAM**
1 University Ave.
Lowell, MA 01854
Susan Winning: 978-934-3127
email: susan_winning@uml.edu
Mike Prokosch: 978-934-3239
email: mike_prokosch@uml.edu
Fax: 978-934-4033



Labor Extension Bulletin

VOLUME 10 ■ NUMBER 3 ■ FALL 2008



UMass Amherst
Labor Extension Program
Labor Center, Gordon Hall
418 N. Pleasant St.
Amherst, MA 01002-1735
A105125

Labor Extension Bulletin

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

VOLUME 10 ■ NUMBER 3 ■ FALL 2008

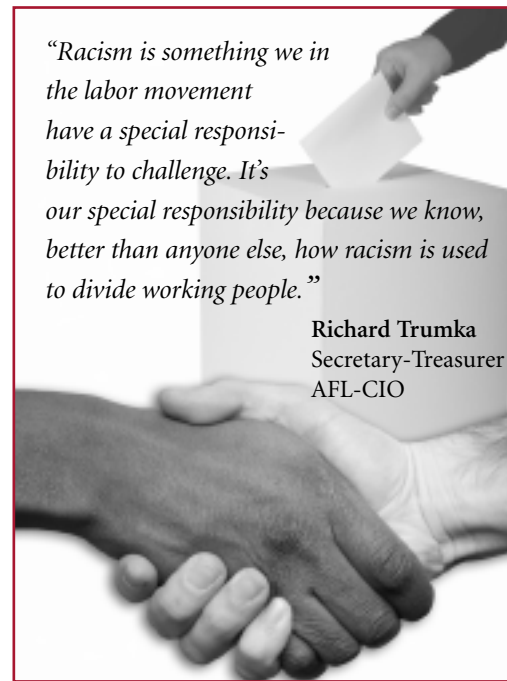
Decoding the 2008 Election

This year's election has generated subtle and not so subtle messages about gender, race, and even age. Those messages lead right down to fault lines that have divided workers since the beginning of our labor movement.

So this election presents an opportunity we've faced before: to engage co-workers in conversations that begin to unravel their complicated feelings, fears, and worldviews. In this article we particularly want to look at racially coded comments about the Black man who is running for president, like:

- "Somehow I don't trust him."
- "He's not looking out for the average person. He's only looking out for 'special interests'."
- "He's a Muslim."
- "I call him Osama."
- "I have no problems with him but I can't get my members to vote for him."

All these comments apparently express discomfort in voting for a Black candidate. But we can't be sure. "Special interests" may mean "big business," not racial minorities. And this ambiguity makes the conversation tricky. Instead of assuming we know what the other person means, we'll do better to ask questions, let them tell us what they mean, and leave them thinking about what they just said.



"Racism is something we in the labor movement have a special responsibility to challenge. It's our special responsibility because we know, better than anyone else, how racism is used to divide working people."

Richard Trumka
Secretary-Treasurer
AFL-CIO

So if we hear "I can't get my members to vote for him," we could ask questions like: Why won't they? What would get them to re-think their position? If nothing would persuade them, is that good for our unions? What can we do about it?

When the conversation creates openings, we want to spark a discussion about how racism continues to divide working people and what that means for us a labor movement. As AFL-CIO vice president Richard Trumka said at this summer's Steelworkers convention, "Racism is something we in the labor movement have a special responsibility to challenge. It's our special responsibility because we know, better than anyone else, how racism is used to divide working people. We've seen how companies set worker against worker—how they throw whites a few extra crumbs off the table—and how we all end up losing. But we've seen something else, too. We've

seen that when we cross that color line and stand together no one can keep us down.... That's why the labor movement—imperfect as we are—is the most integrated institution in American life."

While these are difficult conversations, there are resources available to inform the conversation. See *The Resource Corner* for some helpful materials.

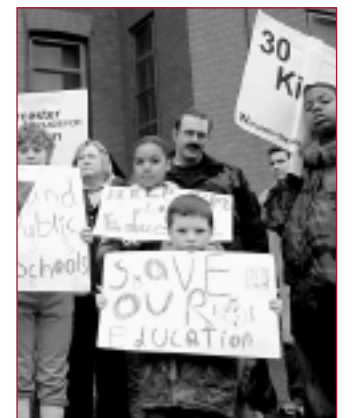
Is the campaign to repeal the income tax a teachable moment?

Who can forget just six years ago when the campaign to repeal the income tax in Massachusetts was supported by 45.3% of voters. This campaign has resurfaced as Question 1 on the state's ballot this November 4. We are starting to hear the dire statistics. According to the Boston Globe, eliminating the income tax would cost the state roughly \$12.7 billion or about 40% of the state budget. Some policy analysts have said that firing every state employee would only save about \$5 billion.

How can we as community builders and advocates for social change participate in this discussion? One way to see this situation is as a unique teachable moment to talk about the role of government and fair taxes.

UMass Labor Extension has materials and training about the role of government, tax system, and the forces behind the income tax repeal. Please see the Spotlight section to learn of more resources relating to this campaign.

To quote a line from the Coalition to Save Our Communities, "Times are hard enough. Let's not make them worse."



Around THE STATE

Race and Presidential Politics

September 24, 6-8 pm

Cost: Free

Location: UMass Lowell, O'Leary Library, Room 222

Contact: Sue D'Amore at 978-934-3256

Join us for a discussion with Bill Fletcher, Jr. longtime labor and international activist. We will address:

- How will race and racism affect voter behavior in November?
- How is a Black presidential candidacy affecting conversations about race within the US labor movement and other social justice movements?
- How can activists put the discussion of race front and center?
- What can we do to take advantage of this opportunity and to work to identify and overcome racism where it exists?



UMass Dartmouth Arnold M. Dubin Labor Education Center Annual Awards Banquet

October 23, 6:00 Reception, 7:00 Dinner

Cost: \$40 per person

Location: Venus de Milo Restaurant, Swansea, MA

Contact: Diane Cruz at 508-999-8007

Join the SE Massachusetts labor movement at our largest regional gathering. This year we honor New Bedford mayor, Scott Lang, and Dave Wallace, Director, MA Division of Apprenticeship Training. Come to meet, greet, network, and celebrate.

S P O T L I G H T

COALITION FOR OUR COMMUNITIES and ONE MASSACHUSETTS



The Coalition for Our Communities is a broad umbrella group of civic, human services, environmental, labor, faith and business organizations. Their mission is to oppose and defeat the ballot question to eliminate the income tax (see story in this newsletter). Visit their website if you would like to participate in this campaign. The site contains fact sheets in English and Spanish as well as a range of other materials and information about meetings and contacts. The site is at: <http://www.votenoquestion1.com>.

One Massachusetts is a relatively new organization that has formed to change public attitudes towards government by promoting a positive vision of government as the place where we come together to address changes collectively. ONE Mass is also a learning community consisting of regionally based civic, social and political activists who come together for a training curriculum that includes budget and tax policy literacy, advocacy and strategic communications based on the Demos How to Talk about Government Project. To learn more, visit <http://onemassachusetts.org/>.

Program Notes

■ UMASS AMHERST

Summer work, as usual, focused on two summer programs for union women—the *WILD (Women's Institute for Leadership Development)* week-end program, and the Northeast Summer School, held this year at the University of Connecticut. We taught weeklong workshop on political mobilization and a short workshop on immigrants and the labor movement. In addition we offered, with UMass Boston LEP, a daylong training on our Workers Rights curriculum for ESOL instructors and counselors. We continued conducting interviews for the Center's Future of Work research project on immigrant labor in the Pioneer Valley. This fall we will teach our undergraduate course on women and work. If you know students at UMass Amherst suggest that they check out this and other undergraduate courses offered by the Labor Center, such as Labor and the Global Economy (Fall) and Labor and Work in the U.S. (Spring). We continue to work with the Hampshire Franklin CLC and the Pioneer Valley AFL-CIO (see Steward's Training in *Around the State*.)

■ UMASS BOSTON

Many supporters of the LRC and alums of the Labor Studies Program are aware of the difficulties that have beset our home College at UMass, the College of Public and Community Service, over the past 2 years. Our current students and recent graduates have borne the brunt of the loss of resources during these difficult times. They have had their classes cancelled, professors laid off and student supports such as writing workshops and peer tutors eliminated. Labor Studies students, the great majority of whom are full-time workers, have been particularly impacted by the drastic reduction in night classes and academic programs. But a new day has dawned on CPCS. In June, the College community met with Chancellor Keith Motley who told us that he expects the College "not to survive but to thrive." On July 7, Prof. Cuf Ferguson, a strong supporter of the LRC and the Labor Studies Program, took over as the CPCS administrator. We look forward to rebuilding better than ever in the days ahead.

■ UMASS DARTMOUTH

The UMass Dartmouth Labor Extension Program continues to contribute to build bridges between unions and community in our support of Mass Senior Action and participation in the Fair Wage Project. This project is a joint effort of unions, immigrant organizations, and community groups that work directly with the Attorney General's office on wage theft of immigrant workers through violation of the state's wage and hour laws. We appreciate the work of Massachusetts Jobs with Justice in kick starting our program, which is a sister program to Boston's Fair Wage Project. This fall, Labor Extension will work with the UMD Sociology Department to organize a campus roundtable discussion on immigrant workers in New Bedford. Other upcoming events include the Labor Center's annual award's dinner on October 23 and the presentation of a new credit course on the Future of Work, offered in the Spring of 2009 as Sociology 301: The Sociology of Work. Please contact Kim Wilson for more information at 508-999-8781.

■ UMASS LOWELL

What is sapping labor's strength and threatening its future? One huge but hidden trend is the erosion of solidarity. Workers are more and more isolated from each other as management automates, speeds up, combines, eliminates, and contracts out our jobs. We call this "working alone," and Charley Richardson's article on this union-killing trend is in the September issue of New Labor Forum. Meanwhile, we're building a comprehensive database of unions in our region and their education needs. We've also been co-leading various trainings on the right-wing crusade against public sector workers; why our union model is broken; how to build a union from the bottom up; and women's leadership development—developing curriculum and training teachers for WILD; recruiting teachers and teaching at the Northeast Summer School for Union Women.

Organizers' Roundtable

Second Tuesday of every month, 9:30 to 11:30am

Cost: Free

Location: IBEW Local 103

Contact: Bill Corley, 617-436-3710

Roundtable discussions on topics of interest to union organizers.

Steward's Training

Thursday evenings, 6:30-9, October 16, 23, 30 and November 6 and 13

Cost: TBA

Location: The first four classes will be held at Gordon Hall, 3rd floor conference room, 418 N. Pleasant St., Amherst, MA. Last class is at an area restaurant.

Contact: Dale Melcher at 413-545-6166

Basic stewards training for current stewards and those considering becoming stewards. Topics include: roles and responsibilities of the steward, legal rights (including Weingarten and Duty of Fair Representation), basic grievance handling, and a mobilizing approach to problem solving. The final class will be dinner with a guest speaker. This program is co-sponsored by the Hampshire Franklin CLC and the Pioneer Valley AFL-CIO.

The Economy and You: Economic Literacy for a New Generation of Union Leaders

Dates: Weekly for six weeks in October and November, night of the week and dates TBA

Location: UMass Boston

Cost: \$50 for not-for-credit students

Cosponsor: Labor Resource Center and Labor Extension Program
Are prices going up but your paycheck isn't? What is happening to jobs, including yours? Is the economy in a recession, and if so, why and what can we do about it? This class will explain economics in a fun, interactive, participatory manner. Taught by UMass Economics Professor and long-time unionist and labor educator Marlene Kim. For information, contact Tess Ewing at 617-287-7352.

The Resource Corner

Below are some resources to help think about and have conversations with co-workers and others on the issue of race. All of these resources can be found at the Race and Politics page of the Labor Extension Program website: <http://www.cpcs.umb.edu/lep/>.

WEBSITES:

Black Commentator is an independent weekly Internet magazine dedicated to the struggle for economic justice, social justice, and peace. <http://www.blackcommentator.com/>

Community Change is a Boston based center for collaboration to promote racial injustice and equity, with a library of books, videos, and reference resources on topics of race, discrimination. <http://www.communitychangeinc.org/>

People's Institute for Survival and Beyond is a national and international collective of anti-racist, multicultural community organizers and educators dedicated to building an effective movement for social transformation. <http://www.pisab.org/>

Political Research Associates track different ways the right wing is using race. <http://www.publiceye.org/index.html>

ARTICLES AND SPEECHES

Facing Rumors, Fear & Race by Bill Fletcher Jr: http://www.finalcall.com/artman/publish/prnter_5003.shtml Remarks by AFL-CIO Secretary-

Treasurer Richard L. Trumka at the USW Convention (See excerpt in main article on page 1) <http://www.aflcio.org/mediacenter/prspmt/sp07012008.cfm>

Speech by Senator Barack Obama: 'A More Perfect Union', March 18, 2008: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zrp-v2tHaDo>; or http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/A_More_Perfect_Union

Crisis in the U.S. Labor Movement: The Roads Not Taken by Elly Leary; http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/A_More_Perfect_Unionhttp://www.monthlyreview.org/0605leary.htm