



Labor Extension Bulletin

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

VOLUME 16 ■ NUMBER 2 ■ FALL 2014

New Worker Organizations and Traditional Unions: What Direction for the Labor Movement?

The AFL-CIO's convention in 2013 marked a major policy shift by the nation's largest federation of trade unions. Leaders of unions around the country came together to pass Resolution 5 titled, "A Broad, Inclusive and Effective Labor Movement". The resolution calls on unions to move away from a narrow focus on dues-paying members and to instead engage with "all workers who want to take collective action to improve wages, hours and working conditions". In order to do this the resolution asks affiliated unions to, "deepen their relationship with worker centers" as well as other organizations that represent workers not covered by traditional collective bargaining agreements.

Hailed as going back to labor's roots, as well as a panacea for labor's dwindling numbers and influence, worker centers have received much recent attention from activists. These alternative labor, or "alt-labor" structures have had a number of important successes in fighting for workers' rights. In particular, through the work of many of these organizations, the ongoing problem of wage theft has been brought to light and monetary settlements won for exploited workers.

That said, while there was significant agreement at the convention about the need for the AFL-CIO to strengthen ties with worker centers, activists and leaders on the ground continue to have many questions about how this will play out. In order to understand the possibilities and limitations of these alt-labor structures it is helpful to look at three different models that generally cover the range of these types of organization. Of course, it is important to keep in mind that each organization is different and that these categories are not mutually exclusive.

First, there are worker centers that are primarily funded by grants from foundations, and other outside sources. Often these funders are very large nationally known foundations. Many of these types of worker

"Our institutions, our unions will experiment. We will adapt to this new age. We will change and with your help, your ideas and your innovation, working men and working women will guide our country back to a better future where we have shared prosperity."

—Richard Trumka, President AFL-CIO, March 2013

centers have been active for more than twenty years.

Second, there are associations of non-union workers funded by unions, or the AFL-CIO. Some well-known examples of these are Our Wal-Mart/UFCW and Fight for 15/SEIU or America at Work/ AFL-CIO.

Finally, there are organiza-

tions that are groups of workers not covered by National Labor Relations Act, such as domestic workers and farm workers.

All of these types of alt-labor formations have had some degree of success in bringing substantive change to the lives of working people. They have done this by addressing issues in individual workplaces, bringing about policy change through legislation, and by making the demands of low-wage and immigrant workers known to the public. Their tactics have increased the visibility of these workers, led to financial settlements and, most importantly, built worker leadership. Despite these victories, there continues to be persistent concerns that these organizations may be vulnerable to the changing priorities of foundation funders.

But what about changing broader government policies that affect vulnerable workers who are outside of collective bargaining agreements? While unions may fight hard for these legislative changes, we have seen the most success when workers themselves advocate for legislation and create their own organizational bases for enforcement. This has certainly been the case with the *Massachusetts Temporary Workers Right to Know Law* and the *Massachusetts Domestic Worker Bill of Rights Law*. These laws, which create new protections and rights for workers outside the traditional labor movement, would simply not have been possible without the advocacy of workers acting through these alt-labor structures. While it is yet to be seen how these relationships between unions and worker centers will evolve, the commitment by the AFL-CIO articulated in Resolution 5 represents a recognition that future victories will rely on these continued collaborations.

Around THE STATE

Out of the Shadows: Reversing 60 Years of Exclusion for Domestic Workers, an LRC Thinking Big/Moving Forward Breakfast Seminar

Friday, October 17, 8-11 am

Cost: Free

NEW Location: SEIU 1199 (150 Mt. Vernon St., Dorchester MA)

Contact: Wally Soper, 617-287-7267, wally.soper@umb.edu

Join union members and community activists to enjoy a hearty breakfast and to hear stories from low-income women fighting for social and economic justice. Co-sponsored by the Brazilian Immigrant Center and SEIU 1199.

Organizing Effective Committees to Get Things Done!

Saturday, September 20, 8:30-12 noon

Cost: \$10

Location: 1199 Office, 2nd Floor, 150 Mt Vernon St., Dorchester, MA

Contact: Susan Winning @ 978-934-3127 or susan_winning@uml.edu

This workshop, co-sponsored by WILD and UMass Lowell Labor extension, will focus on some of the essential building blocks of organizational health and success: how to run a good meeting (set the agenda, facilitate the discussion etc.) and build effective committees.

Union Rights to Information

November 2014, date TBD - 6:00- 9:00pm

Cost: \$20

Location: UMass Lowell

Contact: Susan Winning @ 978-934-3127 or susan_winning@uml.edu

In this workshop, useful for both private and public sector, labor attorney Robert Schwartz, will examine the right to information in detail. Participants will have the opportunity to practice with mock exercises.

Union Steward Practical Skills and Internal Organizing

Tuesday, October 7, 14, 21, 28, 2014 - 5:30pm to 7:30pm

Cost: \$50.00 for all sessions, sorry we are unable to prorate cost

Location: TBA in New Bedford or Dartmouth, MA

Contact: Kim Wilson Venancio at 508-999-8781

Join with other union stewards, leaders, and activists in learning the fundamentals of being a steward, knowing your rights and responsibilities, advocating in Weingarten interviews, grievance handling, and most important, organizing your coworkers to win at work.

Annual Arnold M. Dubin Labor Banquet

Tuesday, October 21, 2014 - 5:30 reception, 6:00 meal

Cost: \$40.00 for one, \$400 for a table of ten

Location: Venus de Milo, Swansea, MA

Contact: Jose Soler at 508-999-8796

Please join us in our annual celebration of the victories and struggles of the SE Mass labor movement and beyond. This year we will specifically honor the work of alternative worker formations, as highlighted in the main story, Our Walmart, the Massachusetts Domestic Workers Alliance, and the New Bedford worker center, CCT.

The Resource Corner



More about Worker Centers:

Immigrant Worker Center Collaborative (IWCC) is a collective learning and resource for immigrant worker centers, a force for building cross-ethnic solidarity and a mass-based immigrant worker rights movement, and a strategy space to develop collective campaigns for greater impact. Members from all participating worker centers convened last year and crafted the state's first Workers' Bill of Rights, a platform of baseline rights that IWCC members would use individually and collectively to assert workers' rights to decent working conditions. IWCC member groups include the Brazilian Immigrant Center, Brazilian Women's Group, Centro Comunitario de Trabajadores (New Bedford), the Chelsea Collaborative, Chinese Progressive Association, Fuerza Laboral (Rhode Island), MassCOSH, the Metrowest Worker Center/Casa do Trabalhador, and the Lynn Worker Center for Economic Justice.

www.network.facebook.com/pages/Immigrant-Worker-Center-Collaborative/102548866465662

For link to website of member groups, go to:

www.jatwork.org/workercenters.php

Program Notes

■ UMASS AMHERST

It has been a busy few months as Clare Hammonds finishes her first year as the labor extension coordinator. Over the past year we have been involved in several community projects focused on educating and organizing around food systems work in the Pioneer Valley. In one project we partnered with the Pioneer Valley Worker Center to conduct in-depth surveys and interviews with restaurant workers in a local community. The research will be completed and a report will be issued in early fall 2014. We have also begun work on a second project that is a collaboration with the Western Massachusetts based Agrarian Learning and Action Network. The project involves surveys and interviews with farm laborers. In addition to these research projects, we have continued to participate in the work of WILD and the NE Summer School for Union Women, teaching leadership classes at both schools.

■ UMASS BOSTON

We are very pleased to announce that Chris Hoeh, graduate of the Labor Studies program at UMass Boston and second-grade teacher at Cambridge Friends School, is one of the 2014 recipients of the Southern Poverty Law Center's Teaching Tolerance Awards for Excellence in Teaching. Chris is being recognized for his innovated approach to teaching anti-racism, inclusion, solidarity and union organizing in his classroom. To see a video about his exciting classroom curriculum, go to: www.tolerance.org/blog/meet-2014-teaching-tolerance-award-winners. As we head into the fall semester, we're looking forward to welcoming new students into our Certificate in Labor Leadership program. This coming spring semester (which starts in January!) we will be offering our course on international labor issues, "Workers of the World Unite!" as well as a weekend-intensive course on Workers Rights. If you are interested in learning more about this program, or if you want to take one of our Spring 2015 courses, please contact Wally Soper at 617.287.7267.

■ UMASS DARTMOUTH

This summer, the UMass Dartmouth Dubin Labor Education Center has been focused on work with the Women's Institute for Leadership Development (WILD), which was held this June at UMass Dartmouth, as well as planning for programs in the fall of 2014. In May, we offered an Advanced Training for Union Officers, which was led by Attorney Robert Schwartz and was well attended. We look forward to offering a four week Steward Class in October, details in Around the State. We have also worked with a group of social movement oral historians to create a short video on the work of the Labor Education Center. Most important, we gathered over fifteen of our supporters to participate in interviews. An eight minute version of this video can be found by an internet search for UMass Dartmouth Labor Education Center within YouTube. We hope to release an extended version in the near future.

■ UMASS LOWELL

The core course of the Work, Labor and Society (WLS) minor wrapped up in the spring with student presentations on the service learning projects. We are talking with potential new community partners to increase the number of projects for next spring. The WLS faculty group will petition the university to formally change the name of the minor to "Labor Studies Interdisciplinary Minor", which more clearly describes the content and purpose of the minor. Director Susan Winning worked with two women's summer programs, chairing the curriculum committee for WILD as usual, but adding a facilitation skills training and successfully recruiting some young women to teach at the WILD summer Institute. She hopes to develop a mentoring program for new teachers. She also participated in the Northeast regional summer school for union women, teaching an advanced leadership class as well as an economic class. In the fall, our program will concentrate on building the Charley Richardson Endowed Scholarship, working towards our goal of raising \$25,000.

S P O T L I G H T

Victory for Domestic Workers!



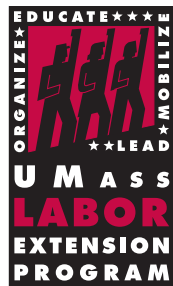
After several years of energetic and effective organizing, the Massachusetts Coalition for Domestic Workers (MCDW) and their allies succeeded in getting the Massachusetts Domestic Workers Bill of Rights passed into law. Massachusetts follows three other states in passing such legislation, and the Massachusetts bill is the most progressive. The bill will protect workers and employers by requiring clear guidelines for employers and workers including: a written contract, 30 days' notice of termination for live-in workers, and maternity leave for workers, among other protections.

Domestic Workers make all other work possible --- that has been the rallying cry for hundreds of members of the MCDW as they have organized to ensure dignity and respect for Massachusetts' nannies, house cleaners and care workers. Domestic workers, excluded from basic state and federal labor rights, often experience some of the worst labor violations—long hours, low pay, no benefits—and their isolated workplaces leave them vulnerable to abuse and mistreatment. With the signing of the law in July, the more than 107,000 Domestic Workers will now have labor rights in the state of Massachusetts. For more info, see: www.braziliancenter.org/index.php?page=news&family=Domestic_Workers

Also, to hear in detail about this campaign and plans for next steps to continue to advance domestic workers' organizing,

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UMass Amherst

Labor Extension Program

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200 Hicks Way

Amherst, MA 01003-9277

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In the Past 4 months...

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

- **Anti-Oppression Workshop**
WILD, Summer Institute
- **Building an Economy That Works for Us!**
Northeast Union Women's Summer School
WILD
- **Collective Bargaining**
UALE Northeast Women's Summer School
- **Common Sense Economics**
Regional AFL-CIO training of trainers
- **Facilitation and Popular Education**
WILD
- **Facilitation and Workshop Planning Training**
Massachusetts Early Educators Union

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
Anneta 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>

- **Grievance Stewards Workshop**
Professional Staff Union/MTA/NEA
- **Inequality Theater**
WILD, Summer Institute
- **Leadership Development Introduction**
WILD, Summer Institute
- **Leadership Development: Advanced**
Northeast Union Women's Summer School
- **Strategic Planning**
New Lynn Coalition
- **Take Back Our Economy: A Common Sense Economics Workshop**
North Shore Labor Council's Education Conference