

the magazine of the
**Democratic
Socialists
of America**



DEMOCRATIC

LEFT

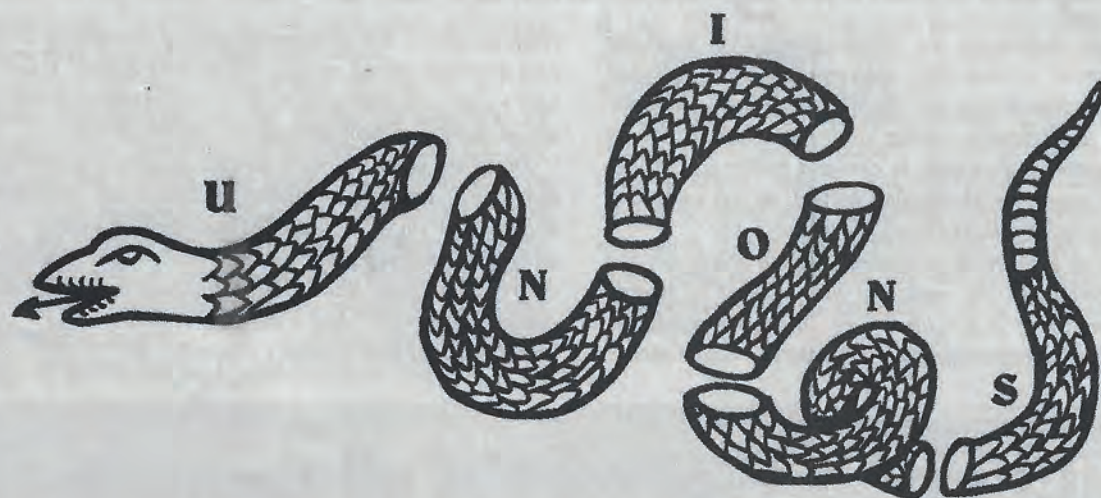
www.dsausa.org

Vol. XLI, No. 2



Fall 2013

WORKERS UNITING!



ORGANIZE, or DIE.

*Don
Hick*

THE LABOR ISSUE

The Chicago Workers' Collaborative: A New Organizing Model

Bill Barclay | Page 2

Low-wage Workers Rise for Pay Equity, Justice on the Job

Alicia Newton | Page 4

New Generation of Chinese Migrant Workers

Jenny Chan | Page 8

Divisions Grow on Immigration Reform

Duane Campbell | Page 12

Revival of US Labor

Amy Dean | Page 11

The co-editors of DSA's labor blog Talking Union (Duane Campbell, Stuart Elliott and Paul Garver) have contributed to and helped organize this special Labor 2013 issue, in the belief that all DSA members should understand and show solidarity with workers' struggles. Since January 2008, more than 2,300 posts in Talking Union have covered all sides of the issues that affect working people and labor unions in the USA and around the globe. Several articles in this issue of *Democratic Left* are adapted from posts by regular contributors to Talking Union.

For this issue we selected articles that deal with salient issues for the workers' movement in 2013 – organizing low-wage workers at home and abroad, the internal

debate within the AFL-CIO on organizing strategy, and immigration reform.

Space limitations require us to leave four related articles out of the print issue and post them only on the *Democratic Left* blog, accessible on the dsa.usa website:

- Nyegosh Dube, "A Worker Ownership Stimulus to Create Jobs and a More Democratic Economy"
- Paul Garver, "Genuine and Phony Agreements to Improve Worker Safety in Bangladesh"
- Maurice Isserman, review of "Brothers on the Line," a documentary on the Reuther brothers, directed by Sasha Reuther
- Harold Meyerson, "Labor Wrestles with its Future" ❖

Low-Wage Workers Organizing in the USA

Low-wage employees in Washington, D.C. working for federal contractors walked out and picketed along Pennsylvania Avenue. WalMart workers and their supporters are demonstrating and picketing at stores and warehouses nationwide to demand better scheduling and higher wages for themselves as well as job safety for garment workers in Bangladesh.

How can we prevent the continued growth of a low-wage economy and raise the wages of the millions of people now in these jobs? It has been very difficult to apply the traditional union organizing model in the low-wage sector.

High turnover, the widespread use of temporary workers and divisions along racial, ethnic and gender lines have kept wages low and have made it almost impossible to gain union representation through the NLRB process.

There are emerging new models of worker organization that can – and are – making a difference. Bill Barclay shows how the Chicago Workers Collaborative (CWC) embodies one such model. Alicia Newton describes similar efforts in Atlanta. Rand Wilson outlines how a legislative campaign to win "Just Cause" provisions in law for all workers could help workers organize. ❖

The Chicago Workers' Collaborative: A New Organizing Model

By Bill Barclay

"Low-wage labor is a subsidy to inefficient capital," said the Labour Organization economist in Norway to me in 2010, "and that is why we fight against the creation of a low-wage sector." But what do we do in a country, like the U.S., that already has a huge low-wage sector? And where eight of the 10 fastest growing occupations require only a high school education – or less? Established unions have made little progress in organizing these workers. But there are new organizing models that offer hope for the future.

The Chicago Workers' Collaborative (CWC) embodies one of these new models of organizing.

According to its website, it was founded in 2000 with the goal of "uniting low wage and temporary workers to bring down barriers for full employment and equality." The CWC defines itself as part of the labor movement and, like unions everywhere, requires members to pay dues. But the dues are set low: \$5/month, enough to

insure a commitment to the organizing process but not so much as to exclude the low-wage workers who constitute CWC's membership. Unlike union membership, however, CWC membership goes with the worker as s/he moves from one job to another. The CWC model thus builds upon both workplace and community.

Members of Chicago DSA's Greater Oak Park branch have worked with CWC in a variety of campaigns and actions. An early success illuminated the strengths of the CWC model as well as the links to established unions. Beginning in 2011, CWC, Northern Illinois Jobs With Justice (NIJWJ, which has



Bill Barclay

several DSA members on its steering committee) and the Laborers' Union mobilized to support the almost exclusively Latino workforce at ATMI Precast in Aurora, Illinois, in the Chicago metropolitan area.

ATMI's CEO had locked out the workers and tried to replace them with new hires from a temp agency. To support the ATMI workers, NIJWJ helped organize and joined marches and rallies, and raised funds to support workers fired for organizing. The capstone of the campaign was a January march to the home of ATMI Precast's CEO, during which we distributed leaflets to his neighbors. According to local media, the mobilization and march were unlike anything Aurora had seen in decades.

The ATMI temp workers did not have the skills necessary to keep the factory running at capacity. In February 2012, the rehired ATMI Precast workers voted 74-9 to affiliate with the Laborers' Union. Three months later, the workers obtained a good contract: protection against arbitrary dismissal, ATMI Precast to pay 75 percent of health insurance costs, seniority in job protection and wage increases over each of the next three years.

Recently CWC has concentrated its efforts in two directions. First, building support among the large number of workers at the assembly and fabricating plants that ring the Chicago metropolitan area. These include Sony, Phillips Norelco, Kraft, Weber Grill and others. Second, CWC is part of the larger effort to organize Wal-Mart by focusing on the supply chains and the logistics centers. Wal-Mart's largest distribution center is in Joliet, 50 miles southwest of Chicago. In the latter campaign, CWC is allied with Warehouse Workers for Justice and the United Electrical Workers.

In their organizing work the CWC has had to recognize that, although it is class exploitation that sends some of us into assembly plants and others to Wall Street, there are multiple facets of hierarchy and domination in the U.S. workforce. Employers in the Chicago area frequently seek to pit the African-American and Latino workers against each other in order to suppress demands for a say in the workplace. CWC has responded with a "Building Bridges" initiative that helps workers from both groups understand each other and the commonality of their positions and brings them in solidarity with one another's struggles.

Of course, race and ethnicity are not the only divisions in the U.S. labor force – gender plays a role as well. And here the story of how CWC works is even more complicated. CWC starts with the consciousness of the individual male worker. Some men are ready to see that gender inequality is another part of the larger structure of oppression in U.S. capitalism; others aren't there yet. But, when a CWC organizer says to them, "Well, you know what your boss is like. Don't you think your wife/sister/daughter needs protection against that person, against the possibility of sexual abuse?" they begin to get it.

That's why CWC has created Women's Rights committees at two of their worker centers. These committees focus on creating space, support and leadership development for women workers who experience sexual harassment and/or assault. These attacks occur both through the actions of the temp agency males who assign (or deny) jobs and by supervisors in the assembly plants where most CWC

Continued on page 4

Democratic Left

(ISSN 1643207) is published quarterly at 75 Maiden Lane, Suite 702, New York, NY 10038. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY (Publication No. 701-960). Subscriptions: \$10 regular; \$15 institutional. Postmaster: Send address changes to 75 Maiden Lane, Suite 702, New York, NY 10038. Democratic Left is published by the Democratic Socialists of America, 75 Maiden Lane, Suite 702, New York, NY 10038. (212) 727-8610. Signed articles express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of the organization.

Editorial Committee:

Michael Baker, Duane Campbell, Stuart Elliott, Paul Garver, Jeffrey Gold, Michael Hirsch, Barbara Joye, Frank Llewellyn, Simone Morgen, Mark Schaeffer, Jason Schulman, Joe Schwartz

Production: Barbara Segal

Founding Editor

Michael Harrington (1928-1989)

Democratic Socialists of America share a vision of a humane international social order based on equitable distribution of resources, meaningful work, a healthy environment, sustainable growth, gender and racial equality, and non-oppressive relationships. Equality, solidarity, and democracy can only be achieved through international political and social cooperation aimed at ensuring that economic institutions benefit all people. We are dedicated to building truly international social movements – of unionists, environmentalists, feminists, and people of color – which together can elevate global justice over brutalizing global competition.

DSA NATIONAL OFFICE

75 Maiden Lane, Suite 702, New York, NY 10038 • 212-727-8610

www.dsasa.org

Contents

Low-Wage Workers Organizing in the USA	2
The Chicago Workers' Collaborative: a New Organizing Model.....	2
Low-Wage Workers Rise for Pay Equity, Justice on the Job	4
"Just Cause": Isn't it Time for all Workers to Have More Job Security?	6
Low-Wage Workers Organizing Abroad	7
New Generation of Chinese Migrant Workers	8
Labor's Self-Evaluation	11
Why the Revival of US Labor Might Start With Non-Union Workers.....	11
Divisions Grow on Immigration Reform	12
2013 DSA Convention.....	15

Cover art by Gary Huck
<http://www.solidarity.com/hkcartoons/huckpage.html>

members work. Sex is the common currency for too many of these men who control access to jobs. Many Women's Rights Committee members have experienced sexual exploitation in their workplaces and see the committees as a way to: (1) create safe spaces for women to be supported, learn how to speak out and feel unified and powerful with other women; (2) bring more women into the leadership of the organizing work; and (3) call out the abusers through legal, media and direct action to create a case for the need to adopt Basic Industry Standards Agreements.

The low wage/temp worker sector in northern Illinois encompasses more than 300,000 workers. The CWC is implementing an organizing approach that can change this sector from one of the super-exploited to one where a living-wage job brings the possibility of upward mobility. These experiments in organizing models are a crucial part of the future of worker power in the US. ❖

Bill Barclay is on the Steering Committee of Chicago DSA and serves as DSA National Member Organizer.

Low-wage Workers Rise for Pay Equity, Justice on the Job

By Alicia Newton

Low-paid workers are fighting back. The day before Thanksgiving 2012 in Atlanta, I joined the nationwide Black Friday protest against Walmart.

The largest corporate employer and retailer in the nation, Walmart has aggressively resisted organizing efforts for decades. While Craig Jelinek, CEO and president of Costco, came out in support of raising the minimum wage, Walmart is mum. Despite its \$15 billion in annual profits, the mega-retailer bemoans recent sales numbers that are lower than expectations.

"At Costco, we know that paying employees good wages makes good sense for business," said *Jetliner*. The average wage at Costco was \$45,000 in 2011, according to *Fortune*, while the average salary at Sam's Club was \$17,486, says Glassdoor.com. If the minimum wage were increased to an austere \$9, the average Walmart employee would receive a raise.

Walmart employees and ex-employees with whom I spoke would agree to share their stories only if they could remain anonymous. Uniformly, they said they struggle with fear and blatant disrespect at the hands of their behemoth employer, suffering low wages, overtime wage theft, erratic schedules, reduced hours and the threat of losing their jobs.

"I worked 98 hours in a two-week period during the holiday season last year at Walmart and was paid for 40 hours," said an ex-Walmart employee. "Walmart policy states supervisors have to enter overtime into the system each day an employee works over [base time]. My supervisor called me into work but never entered the time into the system and I never got paid." Wage theft is not a new charge for Walmart. In January, Walmart was added to another lawsuit alleging wage theft at a California warehouse in January.

This movement has empowered low-wage worker organizing efforts across our nation.

The fastest growing occupation in the U.S. is home health care aides. Many home health care aides make less than minimum wage. These workers who care for our most vulnerable and fragile citizens, our sick, disabled, and elderly, have no labor law protections.

"I try to find my own jobs because something has to be done about the agencies," said one health care aide I interviewed. "Agencies like Senior Helpers in Atlanta charge clients \$18 an hour and pay us \$8.50 an hour with no benefits and no overtime. I have two children. Even when I find my own jobs, the pay rarely exceeds \$10 an hour and a typical day is 12 hours, with no overtime."

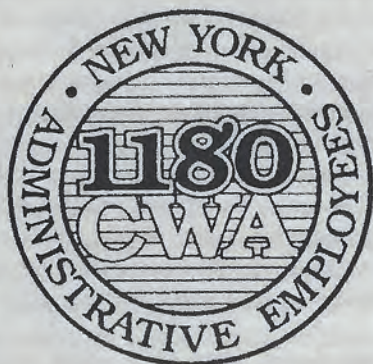
In March, health care workers rallied in St. Paul, Minnesota to win the right to organize. Minnesota state law grants organizing rights to workers employed by home health care agencies, but not to workers providing so-called "self-directed" care, or services in which home-bound patients themselves direct their aides. These workers are excluded from organizing because of the false characterization of their status as independent contractors.

Fast food workers make up another large group of unorganized workers. The Fast Food Forward campaign organized New York City fast food workers to strike. Targeting Wendy's, McDonalds and Burger King, hundreds of workers participated in the first-ever strike demanding higher wages and the ability to organize a union without retaliation.

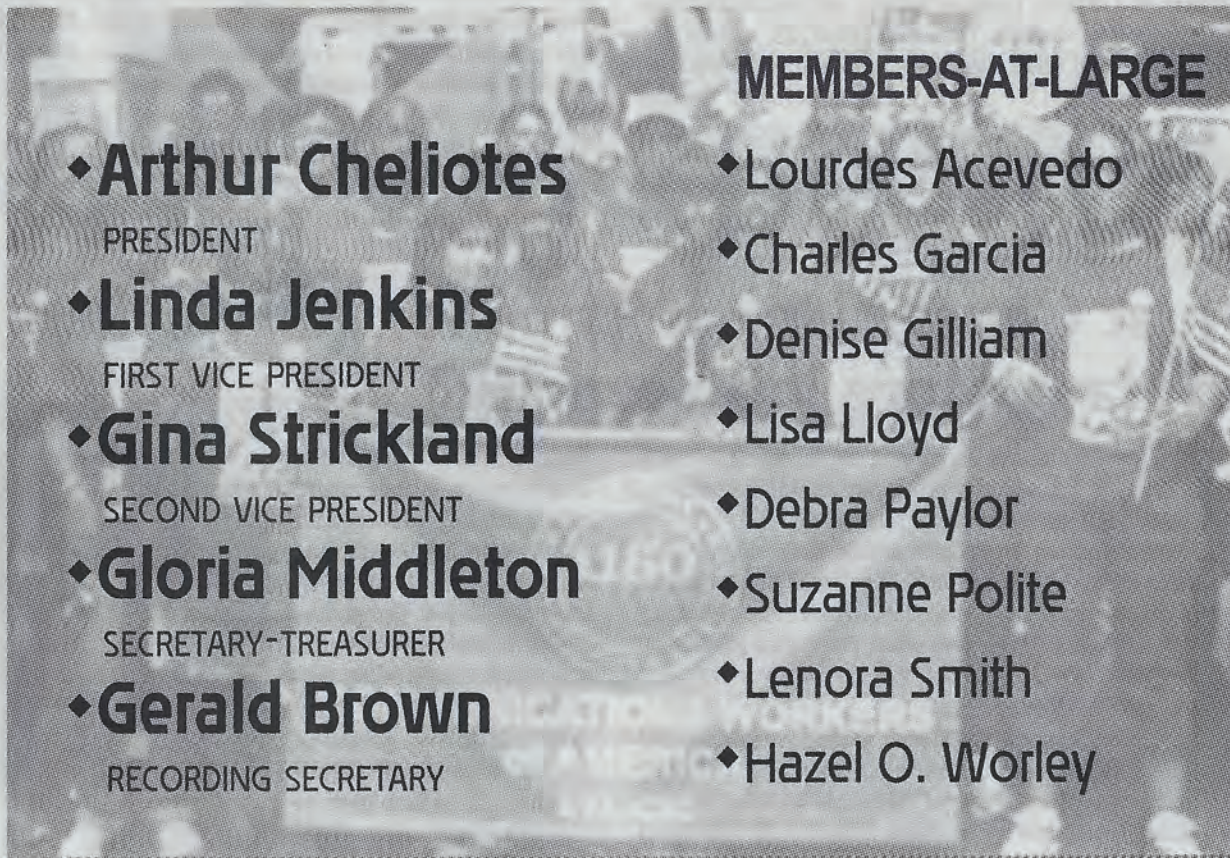


Alicia Newton

BEST WISHES FROM CWA LOCAL 1180, AFL-CIO



MAKING GOVERNMENT *Work For You*



MEMBERS-AT-LARGE

◆ Arthur Cheliotas

PRESIDENT

◆ Linda Jenkins

FIRST VICE PRESIDENT

◆ Gina Strickland

SECOND VICE PRESIDENT

◆ Gloria Middleton

SECRETARY-TREASURER

◆ Gerald Brown

RECORDING SECRETARY

◆ Lourdes Acevedo

◆ Charles Garcia

◆ Denise Gilliam

◆ Lisa Lloyd

◆ Debra Paylor

◆ Suzanne Polite

◆ Lenora Smith

◆ Hazel O. Worley

LOCAL 1180, COMMUNICATIONS
WORKERS OF AMERICA, AFL-CIO

6 Harrison Street ~ New York, NY 10013-2898

PH. (212)226-6565 FAX (212)966-6831

WEBSITE: www.cwa1180.org

The most powerful lobby against restaurant workers is the National Restaurant Association. Executive Vice President Scott DeFife sounded the same false alarm heard since 1938 when the minimum wage was enacted: "Any additional labor cost can negatively impact a restaurant's ability to hire or maintain jobs." Pressure from the association, led by former Board Chair Herman Cain, continued to exclude tipped workers from minimum wage standards. Tipped workers' wages have been stagnant at \$2.13 an hour for two decades. Organizations like the Fast Food Forward campaign in New York City leveraged the Black Friday worker strikes to continue momentum for restaurant workers.

In the summer of 2012, Georgia state Labor Commissioner Mark Butler defied federal law by denying unemployment benefits to seasonal school workers. Contract cafeteria workers, bus drivers, crossing guards, and custodians were joined by college students, Teamsters Local 728, Atlanta Jobs with Justice, and other supporters to organize for workers' rights. In April 2013 the state Labor Department decided to comply. This summer, workers received unemployment just like their publicly employed nonseasonal counterparts.

Domestic workers are also organizing, reviving the work begun by Atlanta native Dorothy Bolden when

she established the National Domestic Workers Union in 1968. For example, in February, a revived Atlanta chapter of the National Domestic Workers Alliance began organizing domestic workers and working to pass a "Bill of Rights" for domestic workers statewide. At present, no laws or regulations protect domestic workers from discrimination or guarantee them a minimum wage, health insurance, sick days, overtime, or any other basic employment right.

A recent study of wage theft among low-wage workers, conducted by the New Jersey-based immigrant-organizing effort New Labor and by Jason Rowe of Harvard University, found an epidemic: 36.1 percent of low-wage workers surveyed were not paid in full for wages that had been promised.

Organizing efforts against a structure where the rich get richer and the poor scrape by are rising. Low-wage workers are organizing in greater numbers and in sectors once immune because of company suppression. Now, the need for survival is scaling the wall of fear. ❖

Alicia Newton is the lead consultant and owner of Learning Path LLC and a member of Atlanta 9 to 5. She blogs at alicianewton.com.

'Just Cause:' Isn't it Time for All Workers to Have More Job Security?

By Rand Wilson

The next collective bargaining battleground is likely to be the job security provisions of union contracts, including the "just cause" clause.

Instead of waiting for such an attack, labor should seize the opportunity to champion the passage of just cause standards into state laws. It's a labor law reform proposal that will appeal to all workers while putting employers on the defensive.

It's long overdue.

The United States is alone among industrialized countries in allowing workers to be considered "at will" employees and dismissed for any reason – justified or not, unless protected by a union contract or individual agreement. Governments such as France, Germany, Japan and the United Kingdom require employers to have a "just cause" to dismiss non-probationary employees. Just cause appeals to basic fairness, just as due process does in court. Workers who believe they have been fired unfairly have the opportunity to contest their dismissals before various types of industrial tribunals. In the U.S., such recourse is available only to public employees with civil service protection and/or union-represented workers with access to a negotiated grievance/arbitration procedure.

At-will employees have no job security: they can be fired for a mistake, an argument with a supervisor, a

critical comment about the enterprise or management, taking a sick day, a complaint about working conditions or pay, or involvement in outside political campaigns – all activities that just-cause protected workers can take part in without worry.

One state has passed a law: The Montana Wrongful Discharge from Employment Act was passed in 1987.

Applicable to non-union non-probationary employees, it prohibits discharges without good cause, allows workers to sue for up to four years of back pay, and provides a method for workers to recover attorneys' fees. Despite fear-mongering by opponents, the Big Sky state's robust economic growth has not been affected. Statutes in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands also prohibit termination without the slightly more ambiguous "good cause."

Winning state just cause legislation would certainly not be easy. But building a movement to win it offers union leaders and activists an opportunity to champion an issue that would benefit all workers and also help union growth. Short of



Rand Wilson

winning state legislation, local unions, Central Labor Councils and workers' centers could seek to enforce a community just cause standard through workers' rights boards and/or strategically applied public pressure on employers.

A "just cause for all" campaign could engage working people at many different levels. One can imagine communities declaring certain areas "just cause zones" while other activists could be involved using the proposed legislation as a "litmus test" for politicians to gain labor support in electoral campaigns. Still others could be involved in holding hearings on the importance of achieving a "just cause for all" standard and lobbying for resolutions with their city councils.

Some union leaders have voiced concerns that winning just cause for all could make the main reason workers join unions irrelevant. However, if just cause campaigns succeed, workers will have more security to participate in union campaigns. Union leaders and organizers will be able to make the point that they are experts at enforcing just cause protections and can provide representation at hearings etc.

Even if campaigns for just cause do not succeed, millions of non-union workers will learn about the concept (especially if campaigns are based on ballot referendums) and the increased security it could bring to their lives. By popularizing the just cause concept, more workers may respond by thinking, "If we can't get this important protection through legislation, let's get it by forming a union!"

Meanwhile, when employers seek to roll back the just cause articles in our contracts, union members won't be in the same position we were with the attacks on health care and defined benefit pensions. Instead, we will have laid important groundwork to fend off the employers' attack by building broader public support for union job security provisions.

Imagine the labor movement leading a \$50 to \$100 million campaign over the next five years to win just cause protections for all workers in eight to 10 states where grassroots movements have shown a desire to pursue it. Employers (and their political handmaidens) would be on the defensive. Most likely they would spend five or 10 times more than our side to defend the "freedom to fire." By over-reaching, it would actually help us raise more awareness about the importance of having just cause job protections.

A major Just Cause for All campaign would make labor a champion of the 99 percent and spur more workers to form unions. The sooner we get started the better! ❖

Rand Wilson is on the staff of SEIU Local 888 in Boston. Wilson was the founding director of Massachusetts Jobs with Justice and has been active in community-labor coalition building for more than 30 years. This article is adapted from a post that originally appeared in the Stansbury Forum.

Low-Wage Workers Organizing Abroad

Organizing low-wage workers has an inescapable global dimension. The vast majority of low-wage workers live in Asia, Africa and Latin America. These workers often produce export goods for U.S. and European markets that used to be manufactured by higher-waged unionized workers in those countries. When these global workers unite to improve their wages and working conditions, their struggles should be supported by those who want a better world for all, both out of basic human solidarity and also in our own self-interest.

Among the most emblematic efforts of embattled global workers to organize are the Chinese internal migrant workers at Foxconn.¹ Activists and academics committed to supporting that pivotal struggle have been conducting a serious and wide-ranging discussion about the conditions under which internal migrant workers in China organize themselves. Eli Friedman, currently teaching at Cornell University, published a seminal article in *Jacobin* magazine² that was the subject of an open forum in March 2013 sponsored by *Jacobin*, *Talking Union and Labor Notes* that brought together prominent academics and activists from the Chinese Diaspora with their American equivalents. Friedman theorized

that as assembly factories were relocated inland in China migrant workers might become more rooted in these less distant communities, and begin to make political demands like those of the traditional industrial working class.

Jenny Chan's article addresses this issue. A leading activist with Hong Kong-based Students and Scholars against Corporate Misbehavior (SACOM), she is also co-author of a forthcoming book on Foxconn workers (with Ngai Pun and Mark Selden). Alluding to a poem by former Foxconn worker Yan Jun, she analyzes the real conditions faced by young migrant workers in China. While building the capacity of these workers to organize democratic unions and bargain from a less unequal footing with Foxconn and other giant manufacturers is the core objective, organized international solidarity in the form of consumer pressure mobilized on Apple and other global electronics corporations plays an important role. ❖

¹Paul Garver, "Chinese Students and Workers Confront Global Capitalism," *Democratic Left* XL, 3 (Winter 2012)

²Eli Friedman, "China in Revolt," *Jacobin*, Issue 7-8 (August 2012),

New Generation of Chinese Migrant Workers

By Jenny Chan

Editor's Note: This article is excerpted with the permission of the author from a longer article that originally appeared in Labor Notes. That article began with a critique of a talk given by Leslie Chang, author of Factory Girls. In her book and talk, Leslie Chang propounded a positive vision of young female factory workers liberated from village life and transformed into successful, self-driven entrepreneurs through learning English and computer skills.

What is life really like for China's 262 million rural migrant workers, the core of the new working class?

Young Chinese workers, better educated than their predecessors, have strong expectations of higher wages, better working conditions, and career advancement. The rural households from which they come retain land-use rights to small plots of land in their native villages. For many, this land staves off starvation in times of adversity, but it cannot provide a livelihood – least of all for the increasing numbers of second- or even third-generation rural migrants who grew up in the cities and have no farming skills.

Young migrants generally return to their villages only to marry and have children. This pattern persists because most “low-skilled,” “low-educated” migrants are not permitted to change their household registration (*hukou*) from rural to urban. Even after years of working in the city, these families are denied equal access to many welfare, health, and retirement benefits, and their children cannot receive urban public education, especially in the higher grades.

This spatial separation between production in the city and child-rearing in the countryside means that rural migrant workers cannot become completely proletarian; they are caught between two worlds. Min [a worker interviewed by Chang] “chooses” to pursue “a life that is worth living,” but is only able to do so by leaving behind her two daughters and her husband in the village.

Twelve-hour days of high-speed repetition on a production line are not pleasurable or self-fulfilling. Chang tells us, however, that the pressures and pains of the assembly line do not matter to these young workers – much less alienation from the products of their labor. They “could not care less about who buys their products.” What they do in the factory, and how miserable their living conditions are, is unimportant to them. They live to earn income and to buy designer goods in the bustling city of Dongguan (in South China).

Rather than investigate the challenges faced by this new generation of workers, Chang reaffirms her own narrative:

a myth of personal struggle and success.

Within 12 months in 2010, 18 young migrant workers attempted suicide at facilities of Foxconn, China's largest private employer and the primary manufacturer for Apple and many other electronics giants. Fourteen died, while four survived with crippling injuries. These workers were between 17 and 25 – in the prime of youth.

The tragedies alarmed Chinese society, as well as the international community. The responsibility is not Foxconn's alone – although, as the manufacturer of more than 50 percent of the world's electronic products, it is an enormous player and bears direct responsibility. Nor are the problems limited to Foxconn workers or to those producing Apple products.

They extend far beyond the factory floor, to the global corporate giants headquartered in the West and East Asia, who put the profit squeeze on Foxconn and other producers in their commodity chains.

This poem [see page 10], written by former Foxconn worker Yan Jun in memory of her fellow workers who had committed suicide, captures the reality migrant workers confront:

Jun's generation misses their parents and loved ones. Many think of “going home.” Nevertheless, the hopes and dreams of most remain fixed on the cities. They have fled stagnant villages that hold, for them, only the promise of slow death. Chang discourages global consumers from reflecting on the workers who manufacture our iPads at heavy personal cost. Indeed, she naively suggests we pin our hopes for workers' well-being on the benevolence of Apple.

As one of the world's biggest and richest companies, Apple goes through the motions of policing its suppliers while distancing itself from responsibility. But Apple causes illegal forced overtime by imposing short delivery deadlines on production. Apple forces down wages by pressing for ever-lower prices. Labor disputes over wages and benefits, overtime work, production safety, termination of employment contracts, exploitation of student interns including child labor, and forced job transfers have surged. Chinese workers have joined a range of actions – from lawsuits to wildcat strikes. Some of these actions have achieved remarkable success. Apple



Jenny Chan

and Foxconn now find themselves in a limelight that challenges their corporate images, requiring that they at least pay lip service to labor reforms. But workers at 1.4 million-strong Foxconn who have tried to voice their concerns have been blocked by management or the company's union, affiliated with the state and the Communist Party. The Chinese state's regulatory power is potentially strong – yet it has chosen to permit, and even facilitate, deepening inequalities.

their universities' purchasing power to require Apple to assume responsibility for factory conditions. What if student activists were to picket iCampus (authorized Apple campus stores) and negotiate with university administrators to press Apple to recognize the legitimacy of Foxconn workers' demands? University anti-sweatshop movements in the West have had success against apparel multinationals. They've helped unions in developing countries negotiate with Nike, Adidas, and Russell Athletic. Students and

I'm Like You

For My Departed Brothers and Sisters

I'm just like you
I was just like you:
A teenager leaving home
Eager to make my own way in the world.
I was just like you:
My mind struggling in the rush of the assembly line,
My body tied to the machine.
Each day yearning to sleep
Yet in despair, fighting for overtime.
In the dormitory, I was just like you:
Everyone a stranger
Lining up, drawing water, brushing teeth
Rushing off to our different factories
Sometimes I think I'll go home
But if I go home, what then?
I was just like you:
Always yelled at
My self-respect trampled mercilessly
Does life mean turning my youth and my sweat into
raw material

Leaving my dreams without a soul, collapsing with
a bang?
I was just like you:
Told to work hard
Follow instructions and keep still.
I was just like you:
My eyes, lonely and exhausted,
My heart, agitated and panicky.
I was just like you:
Entrapped in rules
The pain makes me wish for an end to this life.
The only difference:
In the end I escaped the factory,
And you died young in an alien land.
I see in your determined bright red blood
Once more the image of myself
Pressed and squeezed so tightly I cannot move.

*(Translated by Gregory Fay
and Jeffery Hermanson)*

In this multilayered network of corporate interests and state power, young migrant workers in the rapidly growing industrial sector are struggling to define and defend their rights. As the labor shortage drives up minimum wages and aggrieved workers hold protests, all these forces are combining to challenge the low-cost, export-oriented development model. Conscientious consumers in the U.S., China and other parts of the world are calling on Apple and other global companies to respect workers' rights and dignity.

But no corporation can behave "conscientiously." That would violate the iron principle of maximum profits. Instead, local university researchers and Western trade unionists have explored direct engagement with workers through in-factory rights trainings.

How could institutional consumers at universities leverage their purchasing power to pressure Apple to comply with national labor laws and their own corporate codes of conduct? The campus-based digital product market has become highly competitive. This means concerned students and faculty can mobilize to leverage

faculty, with support of international trade unionists and non-governmental labor groups, have gained access to brands' suppliers in Mexico, Honduras, Indonesia and other countries to monitor working conditions, facilitate the signing of collective contracts, and support the formation of unions through democratic elections.

In Hong Kong and mainland China, student activists are now appealing to Apple consumers worldwide to support Foxconn workers. If the new generation of workers succeeds in building real unions and community-based workers' centers, they will transform the future of labor and democracy, not only in China but throughout the world. ❖

Jenny Chan (wlchan_cuhk@yahoo.com) is an advisor to Students and Scholars Against Corporate Misbehavior in Hong Kong. She is a co-author, with Pun Ngai and Mark Selden, of Separate Dreams: Apple, Foxconn and a New Generation of Chinese Workers, forthcoming.

**Members and Officers of the International Association of
Machinists and Aerospace Workers**

Proudly supports the

Democratic Socialists of America

*Keep fighting to bring economic and social
justice to working men and women.*

INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT

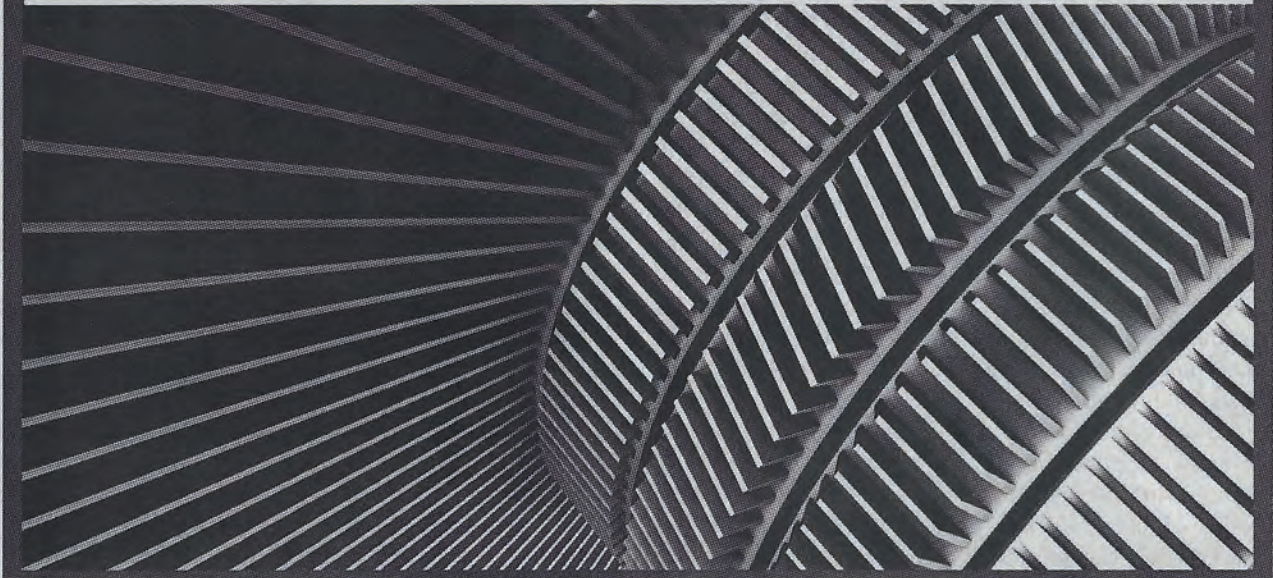
R. Thomas Buffenbarger

GENERAL SECRETARY-TREASURER

Robert Roach, Jr.

GENERAL VICE PRESIDENTS

Dave Ritchie, Lynn D. Tucker, Jr., Robert Martinez, Jr.,
Richard Michalski, Philip J. Gruber, Gary R. Allen,
Sito Pantoja and Mark Blondin.



Labor's Self-Evaluation

Faced with an ongoing decline in union membership, the AFL-CIO has been conducting an unprecedented re-evaluation of its organizing strategies, opening the discussion up to external experts and voices. Four thousand, seven hundred persons attended discussion forums hosted by labor councils, state federations and unions, while thousands more workers participated online. The results indicate a strong mandate to create a more robust and diversified labor movement that would include members of the growing "precarariat" of workers without formal rights to organize, and to join with community allies in a common struggle for the rights and needs of all working people.

An article by labor reporter and editor Harold Meyerson, who was consulted by the AFL-CIO in this process, appears on the Democratic Left blog. Several creative organizing efforts in low-wage industries, from the Teamsters' campaign to organize port truck drivers to the fast-food and warehouse workers campaigns, include large numbers of undocumented workers. Duane Campbell analyzes the dynamics of the campaign for genuine immigration reform that would benefit millions of these workers.

Amy Dean interviews Working America director Karen Nussbaum about an ambitious plan to convert the organization into a broadly-based alternative for working Americans who do not have collective bargaining rights on the job. ❖

Why the Revival of US Labor Might Start With Nonunion Workers

By Amy B. Dean

For workers in America, it can be hard to know where to turn when a boss pays you late or not at all, doesn't provide benefits, or just yells at you for no good reason.

That's why Working America, a "community affiliate" of the AFL-CIO that focuses specifically on nonunion workers, launched a website last month that makes it easy to get that kind of information. FixMyJob.com is a bit like WebMD, but instead of typing in your aches and pains, you tell it about problems at your workplace. Launched on June 5, the site quickly garnered 5,000 visitors, according to Working America organizer Chris Stergalas.

After choosing from a comprehensive list of workplaces and problems, visitors to FixMyJob.com get a set of resources and options for taking action. While unionization is a part of the solution for many problems, the site also informs workers about labor laws and instructs them on how to advance proposals to defend their rights. The site is a part of Working America's expanded new campaign to organize people in their communities in all 50 states, says Executive Director Karen Nussbaum.

In both online and offline campaigns, Nussbaum said, the aim of Working America is to reach beyond the workplace and rally support at the local level for a pro-labor agenda. Working America's list of priorities includes living wage laws, expanded health care, adequately funded public schools, and the protection of voting rights.

Before the launch of Working America, Nussbaum had served as founder and director of 9to5, National Association of Working Women; as director of the Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor; and as an advisor to former AFL-CIO president John Sweeney. I recently spoke with her about her vision for Working America, about FixMyJob.com, and about what the 50-state expansion means for the prospects of union revival.

Working America was founded in 2003 partly as an answer to the question of how to mobilize people who are not union members but would benefit from activism by and for working people. Nussbaum said that, from the beginning, her staff "concentrated on talking to workers in their communities." Scoring success in mobilizing blue-collar voters for electoral

campaigns, the organization created a foundation of members, and it is increasingly attempting to mobilize them around broader issues like working conditions, paid sick leave, and the right to join unions.

She added that the ultimate goal of Working America is "finding the connections with collective bargaining." But she's experimenting with different ways of organizing that might lead there. "It's about taking whatever path opens on the way."

In past years, Working America focused on battleground states during elections. But regional and statewide labor federations have pushed the organization to expand to all 50 states over the next five years. At first, Nussbaum said, that goal seemed "preposterous," but she has come to embrace it. Ultimately, she said, she appreciated the strategic value of supporting local labor structures as they connect with community allies and work on issues that go beyond a single workplace.

One reason why the 50-state strategy is necessary is the national proliferation of so-called "right-to-work" laws



Amy Dean

Continued on page 12

and attacks on voting rights, two issues that Working America has taken up in Pittsburgh.

Nussbaum describes the approach taken by activists leading the Pittsburgh campaign:

These are a group of mostly white people in their 40s and 50s. They decided that voter protection actually was the key issue for them. Their group set a goal of reaching a million people in the Pittsburgh area on the issue. Part of that million was going to be reached by doing letters to the editor and circulation of the newspaper and so on. It also included things like a guy who said, "I go to my hardware store every weekend and everybody there knows me, so I will set up a table at the hardware store every weekend," which is what he did. Another woman said that she dropped her father off at adult daycare every day, and so she would talk to the workers and other people at the adult daycare center.

This type of organizing taps into the existing frustrations that people have – in the Pittsburgh case obstacles to voting – and showing them how they can make a difference. "It's everybody recognizing their own networks," Nussbaum said. "I think that's the key to organizing, isn't it?"

She explained that Working America encourages people to see themselves as leaders within their own social circles, and, as it did in the case of the man in the hardware store, this recognition makes it easier to take action.

Nussbaum sees FixMyJob.com as a complement to these offline campaigns and as a means for introducing people to the labor movement. "Some people who use these tools will get turned on and they will become activists for life," she said. "Some will fail, but it will help create a new environment that I think supports what we're already beginning to see bubble up." ❖

Amy Dean is a fellow of The Century Foundation and principal of ABD Ventures, an organizational development consulting firm that works to develop new and innovative organizing strategies for social change organizations. Dean is co-author, with David Reynolds, of A New Deal: How Regional Activism Will Reshape the American Labor Movement. Dean has worked for nearly two decades at the cross section of labor and community-based organizations linking policy and research with action and advocacy. You can follow Dean on twitter @amybdean, or she can be reached via amybdean.com.

During the last year there was substantive unity between immigrants rights groups, community groups, religious groups, and major parts of organized labor in the effort to craft a comprehensive immigration reform bill. Now, with the amendments and passage of Senate bill SB744 at the end of June, this unity is challenged. The draft of SB744 by the Gang of Eight was always a compromise. There is, for example, a redesigned guest worker program, a new special status for H-1B hi-tech workers, enhanced border enforcement, an extended period of time required for application for legal status, and more.

Conservative Republican forces in the Senate amended the bill to achieve a massive \$46 billion expansion of border control and enforcement. The National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, a network of grassroots community groups of which DSA is a member, sharply criticized these developments. The Dignity Campaign and Presente (a new on-line group that claims to speak for the Latino community) has called the bill unacceptable, while the big Washington D.C. lobbying groups such as the National Council de La Raza continue to support the bill.

Labor unions are caught between a rock and a hard place. The national AFL-CIO praised the passage of SB744 in the Senate. Richard Trumka said,

The United States Senate today moved our country a big step closer to building a common sense

immigration system that will allow millions of aspiring Americans to become citizens.

But, Trumka added,

Unfortunately, the bill has become less inclusive, less compassionate and less just since it emerged from the Gang of 8's bipartisan compromise.

We will work to see the bill offer even more protections to workers, more access to needed benefits, a far less militarized, more sensible border security program and fewer obstacles to aspiring Americans. Clearly, no further compromise to the roadmap to citizenship can be tolerated by the labor movement or our allies. (AFL-CIO. June 27, 2013.)

The Service Employees International, which has been one of the more active advocates for the bill, saw the passage of the amended SB744 as a major victory for working people. SEIU Vice President Eliseo Medina said,

By Duane Campbell



Duane Campbell

FIGHTING TOGETHER FOR WORKERS' RIGHTS

STAND
FIGHT
BACK!

UP

UNITED STEELWORKERS
USW
UNITY AND STRENGTH FOR WORKERS

www.usw.org

What we can undoubtedly affirm is that this bill will set a new precedent and will mend much of our broken immigration system. It will allow millions of our friends, colleagues, families and neighbors to enter the threshold into American society, democracy and our economy. The lives of all families will be impacted for the better as will our economy that will stand to flourish.

What lies ahead will not be easy or pretty, but what stands before the House is a model of compromise that stood the test of scrutiny, heated debate and challenging amendments. The bill is an agreement between two political parties that found common ground in upholding a roadmap to citizenship unfettered by burdensome barriers, protecting future and current working families and strengthening the unity of families.

The Labor Council for Latin American Advancement also endorsed the bill as it was passed in the Senate.

In addition to an unnecessary and very expensive border surge, costing some \$46 billion additional dollars inserted into the bill at the behest of lobbyists for technology and security firms, the current Senate bill will exclude millions of people from applying for legal status because of the income requirements that penalize the working poor. This bill is now for at most 8 million people, not the original 11.1 million. Immigrant community groups and unions have proposed far more progressive alternatives. And, the bill expands the E-Verify work identification system.

A number of repressive bills are being prepared in the Republican-dominated House of Representatives. Rep. Bob Goodlatte (R. Virginia – 6th), chair of the House Judiciary Committee, has a bill, HR 1773, which would re-establish the prior bracero program (guest workers) with many of its worst features, tying the work visa to a single farm corporation, company housing, controlled wages, an external “savings” bank, and more. Other Republican bills in the House include HR 1417, the

Border Security Act, HR 2131, the Skills Visa Act, and HR 1772, the Legal Workforce Act (E-Verify). Goodlatte has also announced that legislation coming out of his House panel will not include a pathway to citizenship. And, there are a number of Republicans in the House, such as Rep. Steve King of Iowa, who only want the enhanced border enforcement with sharply restricted provisions for changing immigrants’ status.

The House leadership approach is to produce a series of bills on separate issues, not a comprehensive bill. They plan, for example, to get a majority vote on the enhanced border enforcement, drones, and prison growth, while knowing that an independent bill offering a reasonable pathway to citizenship would fail in the Republican House. By dividing up the issues they intend to win on the repressive measures and block comprehensive immigration reform such as that favored by community groups, labor and DSA.

Since the bill is so bad, and likely to get worse, why then do national labor leaders argue that the bill should be supported? Well, it is something. Both SEIU and UNITE/HERE among others, have hundreds of thousands, perhaps over a million workers who hope for legalization. The argument is that we should get them through the pipeline – even at the cost of a repressive bill.

Let’s take Richard Trumka at his word: “Clearly, no further compromise to the roadmap to citizenship can be tolerated by the labor movement or our allies.” (AFL-CIO. June 27, 2013.)

It is clear that the House will make further compromises and limits on the roadmap to citizenship. And then some bill or bills will go on to a Senate/House Conference Committee. Maintaining a coalition between labor and community groups, including some labor/workplace-based community groups, will be difficult.

(Article written on Aug. 1, 2013. We have no information on subsequent actions in the House of Representatives at press time.) ❖

Duane Campbell is professor emeritus of bilingual multicultural education at California State University Sacramento, a union activist and chair of Sacramento DSA. He has worked on immigration reform issues for over 30 years.

THANK YOU

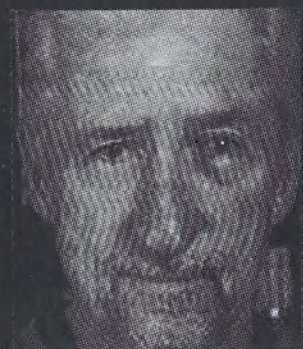
We’re very pleased to acknowledge the generous bequest from the estate of Eleanor Simmonds. Eleanor worked for and supported DSA all these years as a longtime member of the San Diego DSA chapter, never giving up hope for a socialist future. We are humbled when someone has had a full, meaningful life and chooses to leave part of their estate to DSA to carry on our work building a movement that furthers their values.

DSA values bequests of all sizes. To learn more about making an investment in the future and putting DSA in your will, contact us at (212) 727-8610 or see www.dsausa.org/bequests.

2013 DSA CONVENTION

Join David Bacon, Tom Hayden, José La Luz, Michael Lighty, John Nichols, Catherine Tactaquin, Steve Williams and DSA activists from across the country at the DSA national convention, October 25-27 in Oakland, California.

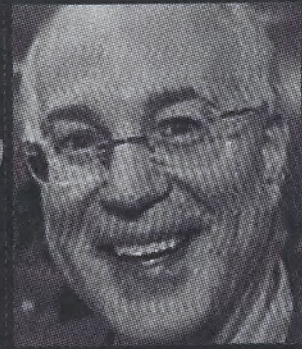
Newly confirmed convention speakers:



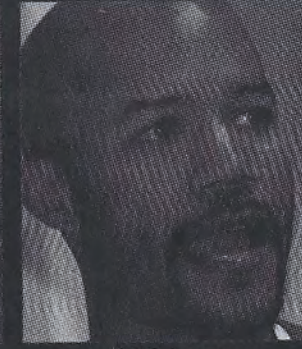
Hayden



Tactaquin



Lighty



Williams

Registration required: www.dsausa.org/convention or call 212-727-8610.
This website will be periodically updated with new information.

Book your hotel room now: the convention takes place at the Hilton Garden Inn in Emeryville (between Oakland and Berkeley), CA. Rooms are \$139 a night for Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights but \$169 for Thursday October 24. We are confirmed for October 24-27.

NOTE: when you register using the "DSA" event code, if you book for Thursday through Sunday the reservation system gives you the \$169 rate. Only when you take the second step by hitting "continue" does it then show the correct rates.

The national office can assist with finding roommates to share hotel costs, childcare, and financial aid for low-income and youth members. Registering online at www.dsausa.org will provide you with additional details.



TALKING union

A PROJECT OF THE DSA LABOR NETWORK

Visit us at
talkingunion.wordpress.com



"DSA's Talking Union is an invaluable forum for lively exchanges about labor politics and organizational strategy. We need more places where there can be informed debate, discussion, and healthy disagreement about the unfinished work of union revival. Talking Union is definitely one of them."

—Steve Early, Labor journalist and former CWA organizer

"Labor faces not only an external economic crisis, but an internal crisis on strategy. DSA's Talking Union provides a means for progressive labor activists to think through the framework and steps that are so necessary in order to revitalize the union movement and build a new labor movement."

—Bill Fletcher, Jr., executive editor, *blackcommentator.com*; co-founder, Center for Labor Renewal; co-author, *Solidarity Divided, The Crisis in Organized Labor and a New Plan Toward Social Justice*

"Talking Union is a great blog for student labor activists both to check out what is happening around the country and connect with their community on worker rights issues. It is an essential read for students interested in learning more about workers' rights and how they can become part of the great movement for workers' rights and economic justice."

—Maria Escobar, former national coordinator, Student Labor Action Project

Change the USA! Join the DSA!

Yes, I want to join the Democratic Socialists of America. Enclosed are my dues (includes a subscription to Democratic Left) of:

\$65 Sustainer \$35 Introductory \$20 Low-Income/Student

Yes, I want to renew my membership in DSA. Enclosed are my renewal dues of:

\$65 Sustainer \$45 Regular \$20 Low-Income/Student

Enclosed is an extra contribution of: \$50 \$100 \$25 to help DSA in its work.

Please send me more information about DSA and democratic socialism.

Name: _____ Year of Birth _____

Address _____

City / State / Zip _____

Telephone _____ E-Mail _____

Union Affiliation _____ School _____

Bill my credit card: Circle one: MC Visa No. ____/____/____/____

Expiration Date ____/____ Signature _____

month year

My interests are:

- Labor
- Religion
- Youth
- Anti-Racism
- Feminism
- Gay and Lesbian Rights
- International
- Other _____

Return to:

Democratic Socialists of America

75 Maiden Lane, Suite 703

New York, NY 10038

212-727-8610

dsa@dsausa.org

www.dsausa.org