

GREATER NEW HAVEN  
**LABOR**  
**HISTORY**  
ASSOCIATION

**267 Chapel Street | New Haven, CT 06513**

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**ANNUAL MEETING MAY 15 TO FEATURE PANEL ON  
LABOR'S RESPONSE TO SWEEPING ATTACKS; TROUP  
AWARDS TO PAULA AND FRANK PANZARELLA**

**Save the date and plan to be there!** GNHLHA holds its annual membership meeting on Sunday, May 15<sup>th</sup> from 1:30 to 4:30 at 267 Chapel Street. There will be a panel discussion featuring Cherlyn Poindexter, outspoken President of AFSCME Local 3144; Troy Rondinone, professor of History at Southern Connecticut State University; and (via Skype) Kenneth Germanson, President Emeritus of the Wisconsin Labor History Society, who has his finger on the pulse of the developing situation in that state. (*See his article beginning on page 9.*)

This year's Augusta Lewis Troup Pass It On Awards will be presented to long time members and peace and justice activists Paula Friedland Panzarella and Frank Panzarella, organizers of the annual May Day Celebration on the New Haven Green which is in its 25<sup>th</sup> year.

Frank has also been our troubadour for many years, so, in honor of his award, we're giving him a one-time pass this year. Taking his place will be Chuck Costa, the official 2011 Connecticut State Troubadour, who has released 4 independent albums and 2 EPs since 2002.

You'll receive a more detailed program of the meeting later this month.

*We have a big newsletter this month because a lot is happening! We hope you find the articles inside both informative and encouraging.*

*For more GNHLHA Notes, please see page 11.*

\*\*\*Annual Membership Dues Are Due on May 1<sup>st</sup>! Be an early bird and renew today...\$25 individual membership, one person, one year...\*\*\*

## **GNHLHA Drums Up Enthusiasm for Labor History in the Schools Legislation in 2011-2012**

**By Christine Saari, GNHLHA Outreach Coordinator**

The Greater New Haven Labor History Association has begun gathering support for a legislative initiative which would mandate the teaching of labor history as part of the existing history and social studies curricula in CT public schools. A task force led by GNHLHA board member Steve Kass will begin meeting in the fall to plan the campaign.

Kass, a retired teacher, proposed the *Labor History in the Schools* legislative initiative at the December CT AFL-CIO Executive Board annual meeting. The meeting was held at the Augusta Lewis Troup School in New Haven, hosted by the Greater New Haven Labor History Association. (See *February newsletter*.) The proposal was greeted with enthusiasm by the Board, which pledged its support.

Kass had learned of a similar piece of legislation successfully passed in Wisconsin in 2009. The driving force behind the Wisconsin initiative was the Wisconsin Labor History Society in conjunction with the Wisconsin AFL-CIO.

Many of GNHLHA's union members are seeing a lack of ownership over the labor movement within their youngest generation of workers. These workers are not aware of the origin of many of the benefits that workers currently enjoy, or of how those victories were won. Many unions also report a lack of education about labor history among these workers when they enter the work force. The *Labor History in the Schools* initiative addresses both issues.

Our recent pilot educational program called the "Family Work History Project" has demonstrated just how relevant labor history is to the lives of today's young people.

**How can you help?  
Sign the e-petition supporting Labor History in the Schools!**

GNHLHA has gathered over 230 signatures statewide on a petition supporting the initiative, which can be found at [www.laborhistory.org](http://www.laborhistory.org). You can show your support for these efforts, so vital to the labor movement, by signing the petition online. You must have a valid e-mail address to sign the petition.

### **How to sign the e-petition**

Go to [www.laborhistory.org](http://www.laborhistory.org) and click on Connecticut schools matter: sign the petition to support Labor History in the Schools!

### **Don't have e-mail?**

If you would like to pledge your support but do not have an e-mail address, call us at (203) 777-2756, ext. 2, and leave a message with your name and phone number.

### **Want to help us spread the word?**

E-mail us at [info@laborhistory.org](mailto:info@laborhistory.org) if you want to share the e-petition with others. We will respond with a message you can forward to your family, friends and colleagues.



## WE ARE ONE: THOUSANDS MARCH IN NEW HAVEN

By Mandi Jackson

Thousands marched in the streets of New Haven on March 30 in a call for unity, solidarity, and good jobs for all. The “We Are One” event was organized by a coalition of unions, community groups, students, and clergy, and was prompted not only by attacks on collective bargaining in Wisconsin and other states across the country, but also by persistent unemployment and underemployment in New Haven, and the city administration’s response to the current budget crisis. This response has consisted of demands for large concessions from city unions, teacher and police layoffs, and the proposed privatization of school custodial services.

"We are creating a movement that will transcend this rally," said the Rev. Abraham Hernandez, one of the event organizers. "Our coalition is fighting to change the direction of this city and this state."

In advance of the march, hundreds of community members, faith leaders, students, and union members from across the state gathered at the upper corner of the New Haven Green. Many wore brightly colored stickers designating their New Haven neighborhoods. Rev. Scott Marks, pastor at New Growth Outreach Ministries, led people with live music and chants as the crowd swelled to more than 500 people. A bus load of residents from Church Street South, a low-income housing development across from Union Station, carried signs demanding more affordable housing, and a real future for the families of Church St. South, which is slated for redevelopment. A short time later, union members flooded onto the front steps of the First and Summerfield Church, at the corner of College and Elm streets, exchanging chants and cheers with the crowd that had gathered on the green. One crowd chanted “Whose streets?”, and the other crowd responded from across the street with “Our streets!” as

community and clergy leaders led the start of the march from the corner of the Green down College Street.

By the time the march reached the steps of City Hall it had swelled to an estimated 3000 people, with marchers wearing signs that identified them as “Public and Private Sector Workers”, “Students and Youth”, “Unemployed and Retired”, or “Community and Faith”. The temperature had dropped significantly since the first people had gathered by College and Elm streets, but spirits remained high.

Banners declaring “We Are one” and identifying all of the diverse groups represented in the march formed a backdrop against City Hall.



Many speakers referenced the upcoming

anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who died on April 4, 1968 fighting for the collective bargaining rights of public sanitation workers. “We cannot honor the dreamer but allow politicians and corporations to trample his dream,” said Claudine Wilkins-Chambers, of AFSCME Local 3429, a 41-year paraprofessional in the New Haven school system.



Isaiah Lee, a Wilbur Cross High School junior, rallied the crowd on

behalf of public school students. “We see our teachers, our custodians, our nurses getting laid off, and we hear our government saying they expect us to be productive members of New Haven — well I don’t think so,” Lee said. “You mess with our teachers, you mess with us!”

“An injury to one is an injury to all,” declared John Olsen, president of the Connecticut AFL-CIO. “We did not create the mess in this state and in this nation.”

“We’re lucky to be alive because there’s a new spirit in this world. You can see it in Wisconsin. You can see it in Egypt. You can see it here,” said John Wilhelm, international president of UNITE-HERE. “It doesn’t matter how old or young you are. We are one.”

“Bargaining rights are civil rights,” said Marcy Kaufman, an executive board member of UNITE HERE Local 34, and the graduate registrar in Yale’s history department. Kaufman declared that private sector workers like herself would stand by public sector workers, like UNITE HERE Local 217 member, Betty Alford—a New Haven school cafeteria worker—who stood by her side, and spoke about her fight for a fair contract.

Public officials in attendance included state Rep. Patricia Dillon, D-New Haven, former Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz, now a candidate for the U.S. Senate in 2012; and several members of the Board of Alderman.

“We only have one street shut,” said Robert Proto, president of the Greater New Haven Labor Council. “The next time we come out, we’re shutting the city down.”

*Mandi Jackson is an author and labor researcher.*



*The photographs in this article are reprinted from the New Haven Independent, March 31, 2011: “A Wisconsin Wind Blows In” by Gwyneth K. Shaw*

**Join us for International Workers’ Day,  
Sunday**

**May 1<sup>st</sup>, New Haven Green, 12-6 p.m.  
For details, go to**

## Martin Luther King and Labor

1929-1968

By Lula White

Atlanta. Montgomery. Birmingham. Oslo. Memphis.

We think of these cities when we recall Rev. King's life, death and legacy.

Why was King in Memphis?

City sanitation workers there toiled under difficult circumstances. They suffered discrimination, lack of respect, poor treatment, low pay and dangerous working conditions.

An article from *The American Prospect* in January, 2007, by Peter Dreier (Distinguished Professor of Politics at Occidental College), tells the story of why Martin Luther King, Jr. went to Memphis on what turned out to be his last journey. Excerpts from his article follow:

“The strike began over the mistreatment of 22 sewer workers who reported for work on January 31, 1968, and were sent home when it began raining. White employees were not sent home. When the rain stopped after an hour or so, they continued to work and were paid for the full day, while the black workers lost a day's pay. The next day, two [black] sanitation workers, Echol Cole and Robert Walker, were crushed to death by a malfunctioning city garbage truck. [They were trying to escape the pounding rain.]”

“These two incidents epitomized the workers' long-standing grievances. Wages averaged about \$1.70 per hour. Forty percent of the workers qualified for welfare to supplement their poverty-level salaries. They had almost no health care benefits, pensions, or vacations. They worked in filthy conditions, and lacked basic amenities like a place to eat and shower. They were required to haul leaky garbage tubs that spilled maggots and debris on them. White supervisors called them “boy” and arbitrarily sent them home without pay for minor infractions that they overlooked when white workers did the same thing. The workers asked Memphis Mayor Henry Loeb and the city

council to improve their working conditions, but they refused to do so.”

“On February 12, 1,300 black sanitation workers walked off their jobs, demanding that the city recognize their union (the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFSCME) and negotiate to resolve their grievances. They also demanded a pay increase to \$2.35 an hour, overtime pay, and merit promotions without regard to race.”

AFSCME Local 1733 invited Martin Luther King to come to Memphis to support its struggle. He answered that call. He counseled and inspired them with his words. He strategized with union leaders and members. More importantly, he drew much needed national attention to the union's plight and cause.

Civil rights giants joined King. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People President Roy Wilkins, the Reverend James Lawton of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Bayard Rustin, architect of the March on Washington came to Memphis to support the strikers.



Black workers in Memphis, riding on the back of a garbage truck. In a pouring rain, two men (Cole and Walker) tried to take cover as best they could by climbing onto a perch between a hydraulic ram used to compact the garbage and the inner wall of the truck.

Somewhere along the drive, the ram activated, crushing the two men to death.

March 29, 1968. We recall the poignant pictures of marching strikers carrying their picket signs, which read “I am a man.”



April 3, 1968. When violence threatened to mar the strike, King returned to Memphis one last time to reinforce his message of nonviolence and social justice. He died the next day.

On April 12, 1968, strikers won recognition for their union and wage increases.

It is important to remember that Martin Luther King’s dream included both racial and economic justice: jobs and freedom.

*Lula White is a member of the GNHLHA Executive Board and a 1961 Freedom Rider.*

*Dreier’s article concludes:* “President Johnson ordered federal troops to Memphis and instructed Undersecretary of Labor James Reynolds to mediate the conflict and settle the strike. The following week, King’s widow, Coretta Scott King, and dozens of national figures led a peaceful memorial march through downtown Memphis in tribute to Dr. King and in support of the strike. Local business leaders, tired of the boycott and the downtown demonstrations, urged Loeb to come to terms with the strikers. On April 16, union leaders and city officials reached an

agreement. The city council passed a resolution recognizing the union. The 14-month contract included union dues check-off, a grievance procedure, and wage increases of 10 cents per hour May 1 and another five cents in September. Members of AFSCME Local 1733 approved the agreement unanimously and ended their strike.”

## On Wisconsin!

### Birthplace of Labor Rights

By Ken Germanson, President Emeritus, Wisconsin Labor History Society

100 years ago, the state of Wisconsin led the nation into a whole host of reforms for worker rights, becoming the first state to enact a worker's compensation law, leading in developing unemployment compensation, creating an apprenticeship program and in setting stricter rules governing child labor.

These reforms—made possible through the partnership of the Progressive Governor Bob La Follette, a brain trust of reform-minded professors from the University of Wisconsin and a burgeoning labor movement—soon were imitated across the land.

In 1959, the state again proved to be a leader when it became the first to enact a law protecting municipal employees from discrimination for union activity. Limited collective bargaining rights for state employees were granted in 1960.

In the stubbornly frigid winter of 2010 – 2011, the state again may have begun to lead the nation in a revitalization of the U. S. labor movement. It all came about because of the November election of an avowedly conservative governor (former Milwaukee County Executive Scott Walker) and a turnover of the State Legislature from Democrats to Republicans, many of them elected with the rightwing Tea Party agenda.

Quite unexpectedly, Governor Walker sent into the Legislature several score of pro-business bills, demanding immediate action (without amendment). The most radical was a so-called Budget Repair Bill that had a clause that would cripple, if not actually kill, collective bargaining rights for public employees. Everyone was expecting some of this type of

legislation, but his action was devastatingly, shockingly extreme.

And he wanted it passed within a week, even before he had been in office for a month. Two dramatic responses occurred almost immediately.

The Wisconsin labor movement called for workers to descend on the State Capitol within days. Teachers, firefighters, snow plow drivers, social workers and electricians and their children joined demonstrations daily, with successive weekend rallies growing in size until well over 100,000 filled Capitol Square on the weekend of March 12. The rallies were notably peaceful, and soon became the focus of attention throughout the state, eventually the nation and even throughout the world.

The second factor was the decision by all 14 Democrats in the State Senate to flee to Illinois in order to rob the Senate of the quorum needed to pass the Repair Bill. They held out for over three weeks, living in a series of hotels just across the state line, thus blocking the passage of the bill.



Both actions reinforced the other, with the Senators emboldened to continue their resistance as the crowds in Madison grew. Supporters of union rights gained purpose, realizing that their actions helped to motivate the holdout, the only action that would thwart the Governor's agenda.

On March 10, the Republican leader of the Senate called a hurry-up meeting without proper notice, removing the collective bargaining measure from the bill and acting on it separately, passing it within 30 minutes. The action ended the need for the Senators' holdout, and the "Fab 14" returned to the state, receiving a heroes' welcome the following weekend during the largest demonstration yet.

But the fight wasn't over. The Democratic district attorney of Dane County (Madison) filed a suit seeking a court order to declare the vote illegal due to lack of a 24-hour notice for the special meeting. (It violated the state's open meeting law, the suit said.) A few days later, a Dane County judge granted the temporary injunction, halting the anti-union action.

The final disposition of this anti-union law is still in doubt, with final court decisions pending. The bill could be re-offered, but solid Republican support for it may have eroded. Many Republican legislators found in returning to their home districts that support for unions was strong, and in the General Assembly four representatives voted "no" on the bill. There are indications that at least three Republican senators will vote "no" too, destroying the needed majority on a re-vote. Thus, the Republican leadership is holding off on a new vote.

The astounding solidarity of Wisconsin's labor movement – assisted by many persons who felt such a law was unjust and immoral – proved to delay enactment of this strong anti-union law. The

solidarity also showed something else: that the labor movement was alive and kicking. Commentators from around the country echoed the words of Michael Moore, the movie producer, who told 100,000 cheering demonstrators on March 5, "You have aroused the sleeping giant known as the working people of the United States of America."

Time will tell whether the remarkable solidarity of the Wisconsin unionists and their supporters will lead to renewed strength for the nation's labor movement. No question about it: Wisconsin, which historically has been the birthplace of many progressive actions in the nation, again is leading in building a potential new and stronger labor movement.



(Photos in this article are from [www.buzzfeed.com/.../the-best-protest-signs-at-the-wisconsin-capitol](http://www.buzzfeed.com/.../the-best-protest-signs-at-the-wisconsin-capitol))



# MORE NEWS FROM THE GREATER NEW HAVEN LABOR HISTORY ASSOCIATION

By Joan Cavanagh, Archivist/ Director

There is much going on in the labor movement nationally, statewide and locally, and the Greater New Haven Labor History Association continues to fulfill its mission to educate and inform about the sacrifices, struggles and victories of working people in our community. Below are just three highlights of our ongoing work:

- The **“New Haven’s Garment Workers: An Elm City Story” exhibit** continues its travels, constantly finding new venues that are excited to receive it. In February, it completed a successful seven week stint at the Fusco Building at One Long Wharf. Two panels from the exhibit, dealing with the tragic 1957 Franklin Street Fire, were displayed at the Legislative Office Building at the State Capitol from March 21-25 as part of a ConnectiCOSH commemoration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire in New York.

Currently, the exhibit is showing at the Azoth Gallery at the Main Branch of the New

Haven Public Library, 133 Elm Street, through May 13<sup>th</sup>.

- The production of the **“Our Community at Winchester: An Elm City Story” exhibit** is in progress. It contains over 200 images and will draw on oral history interviews with retired workers at USRAC as well. **We are still collecting stories, artifacts and memorabilia.** If you have something

to contribute, please email [joan@laborhistory.org](mailto:joan@laborhistory.org) or call me at (203) 777-2756, ext.2.

- The school **Family History Work Project and upcoming Labor History in the Schools initiative** are discussed in detail elsewhere in this newsletter. Writes Outreach Coordinator Christine Saari, who has administered the pilot project, “Many students report that they have gained deeper connections, knowledge and admiration of their family members’ work lives, creating the kind of dialogues the labor movement so desperately needs to have with our next generation of workers.”

Our current Board of eight people and our two staff members work hard to accomplish the mission of the organization. In order to continue and broaden our work, **we must increase the numbers of Executive Board members who are committed to the mission. Could you volunteer three to six hours of your time per month to help?**

Please let us know!

## ROBERT WOLFSON, 1933—2011

We are sad to learn of the death of the husband of our long time member, Nina Wolfson. Bob was a self-employed automotive tool salesman, a graduate of Quinnipiac University, avid sports fan and swimmer, active member of New England Lighthouse Lovers and, with Nina, of the

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**The Greater New Haven Labor History  
Association is now on Facebook!**

**Connect and Grow Our Community**

Visit [www.laborhistory.org](http://www.laborhistory.org) and click “Like”  
by our Facebook button to show us you’re  
glad we’re there! You’ll see this:



**Click “like”**

Or, search for “Greater New Haven Labor History Association” on Facebook and you’ll find us. Once you get there, you’ll find posts informing you about local labor history events and news about organizations and people of interest. You can even share your own thoughts, ideas and links on our wall. What do you have to say about the importance of labor history in today’s world? Let us know on Facebook! Thanks for your support!