

BUILDING BRIDGES

NEWSLETTER OF THE HARRY BRIDGES CENTER FOR LABOR STUDIES UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON VOLUME 17 SPRING 2008



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR JAMES GREGORY

IT IS A GREAT HONOR to be named the Harry Bridges Endowed Chair in Labor Studies. This is my 25th year as a

professional historian, 25 years of teaching, researching, and writing about labor history, western history, civil rights and immigration history. The story of Harry Bridges has been part of all of those endeavors. The Australian immigrant, who settled in California as a young man and helped create and lead the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, left a legacy that today extends far beyond that powerful union.

Much of what makes West Coast cities into showcases of progressive and labor-friendly politics connects back in various ways to Harry Bridges and the ILWU. Founded in 1937, the ILWU led the organizing campaigns of the West Coast CIO, launching a dozen other unions in the decade that followed. A beacon of activism on behalf of civil rights and civil liberties as well as unionism, the ILWU almost single-handedly kept progressive politics alive

during the McCarthy Era, giving the Pacific Coast a head start into the new radicalisms of the 1960s.

Next November when Seattle and the other West Coast cities cast ballots overwhelmingly for the Democratic nominee, that too will be part of Harry Bridges' legacy. He would not understand why we now call these "blue states" while Republicans claim the color red, but he would be pleased to see that his work and his union remain part of the root system of West Coast progressive politics.

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He would also be pleased to see what has been created in his name at the University of Washington. After his death in 1990, nearly 1,000 members, pensioners,

and friends of the ILWU donated more than a million dollars to create the Harry Bridges Endowed Chair and the Center for Labor Studies. It was an extraordinary undertaking, unique in form and impact.

Since it was launched in 1992, the Center for Labor Studies has accomplished a great deal. Each year we teach courses and provide scholarships to students committed to Labor Studies. We fund faculty and graduate student research, host lectures and conferences that connect the campus, the labor movement, and the community. Our endowments and other resources have grown, thanks to the continuing support of our friends in the labor movement. This year the Center has expended more than \$125,000 on scholarships, awards, grants, and research projects.

Our impact on the University of Washington has been profound. There are now 60 faculty members affiliated with the Center. They teach at the Tacoma, Bothell, and Seattle campuses and represent more than a dozen different disciplines and departments ranging from the social sciences to the health sciences, from the Drama School to the Law School and the School

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)

PLEASE WELCOME...

Professor James Gregory

In April, the Harry Bridges Chair passed to James Gregory. James Gregory is a Professor of History and an expert on labor history, immigration, and civil rights. He is the author of several prize winning books. Most recently, *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migration of Black and White Southerners Transformed America* won the 2006 Philip Taft Labor History Book Prize. He is the director of the Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project and other website public history projects that explore the labor history of the Pacific Northwest. In 2007, he was awarded the James D. Clowes Award for

the Advancement of Learning Communities (a University of Washington teaching award). Professor Gregory earned his Ph.D from the University of California, Berkeley in 1983. He taught at UC Berkeley and the University of Texas, Austin before joining the University of Washington faculty in 1993.



Andrew Hedden

Andrew Hedden is the new Program Coordinator of the Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies. Andrew

arrived in Seattle after five years living in Bellingham, where he worked as a student at the Social Issues Resource Center. He also has volunteered with many organizations, including Whatcom County Jobs with Justice and Community to Community Development. In 2007, he co-produced *Present In All That We Do*, a documentary film marking the one-hundredth anniversary of anti-Asian riots in Bellingham. Andrew received a B.A. from Fairhaven College in 2006.

GOOD, GREEN JOBS CONFERENCE: SATURDAY, JUNE 21ST

HARRY BRIDGES CHAIR

James Gregory

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Mayra Rangel, *Undergraduate Assistant*

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9am-4 pm

Mary Gates Hall, University of Washington

Keynote Speaker: Governor Chris Gregoire

TO REGISTER, visit www.coolstatewashington.org or contact Jessica Eagle at jessica.eagle@sierraclub.org, (206) 378-0114 x308. Register soon, as space is limited.

WITH THE ECONOMY CURRENTLY IN A DOWNTURN, many have been looking towards investment in new “green” industries to boost the United States. Rising concern over global climate change has created new interest in cleaner, efficient energy sources such as solar and wind power.

Often when new economic initiatives are talked about, their effects on working people are left out of the discussion. The Good, Green Jobs Conference, hosted by the Bridges Center and the Blue-Green Alliance, puts the question of working people in the new green economy front and center. How can investment in green industries not only create new jobs, but jobs that pay living wages and support families?

The conference will feature speakers and panels, including Washington State Governor Christine Gregoire and King County Executive Ron Sims, who will outline the state of our economy and the potential of the new green industries. Representatives from both the labor movement and environmental groups will be present to ask, what is labor’s role in responding to global warming? Why should environmentalists prioritize the needs of working people?

Panelists will include Thurston-Lewis-Mason Counties Labor Council president Bob Guenther of IBEW Local 77, Puget Sound Energy Vice President for Energy Efficiency Services Cal Shirley, Solid Ground advocacy director Tony Lee and Climate Solutions economist Jessica Coven. Dave Harrison, who chairs of the Washington State Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, will moderate.

The Blue-Green Alliance represents a broad coalition of environmental and labor groups working to ensure the new green economy is a benefit to all people. Other labor leaders involved include Washington State Labor Council president Rick Bender, M.L. King County Labor Council executive secretary Dave Freiboth, United Steelworkers subdistrict director Jim Woodward, SPEEA labor representative Stan Sorscher, Worker Center (AFL-CIO) economic development specialist Patrick Neville and Seattle mayor’s labor liaison Rich Feldman.

“MESSAGE FROM CHAIR” (CONTINUED FROM COVER)

of Social Work. And because of them, the subjects of work, labor, class, and inequality have become important to the curriculum at UW.

And beyond the University, the Harry Bridges Center has been making important contributions. Students—hundreds now—have graduated and gone on to do important work, some in the labor movement and other social justice endeavors. Graduate students are now teaching on the faculties of colleges and universities across the country. Research projects

supported by the Center have resulted in important books, articles, websites, and public policy initiatives. Policy makers, media institutions, union leaders, and academic officials look to the Center for ideas and information.

All of this has been accomplished under the leadership of the five previous chair holders—David Olson, Chuck Bergquist, Margaret Levi, Michael Honey, Dan Jacoby—and with the support of so many of you. I look forward to continuing this important work.

EDUCATION IN ACTION: UW STUDENT LABOR ACTION PROJECT, THE FIRST FOUR YEARS

ROD PALMQUIST

THE ROOTS OF THE STUDENT LABOR ACTION PROJECT (SLAP) at the University of Washington trace back to 1997 when a group of students, with the help of Professor Margaret Levi and the Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies, formed the Student Labor Action Committee (SLAC). The work of SLAC was eventually carried on by a new organization, Washington Students Against Sweatshops (WSAS), whose members would go on to form the nucleus of SLAP in 2004.

In UW SLAP's first year on campus, students organized with campus unions SEIU Local 925 and WFSE Local 1488 to win much-needed pay raises. The following year, SLAP helped work on SEIU Local 6's Justice for Janitors campaign, which led to the union organizing sub-contracted janitors in buildings leased by UW. Then in 2006, the Laborers International Union of North America worked with SLAP to pressure a campus abatement sub-contractor to adopt a stance of union neutrality towards all their employees in the Northwest.

In 2007, SLAP grew four-fold and won a historic campaign that forced the UW Administration to sign on to the Designated Suppliers Program—a policy which will source future Husky apparel from garment factories that respect workers' rights to unionize and earn living wages.

After this on-campus victory, SLAP directed its focus to getting students involved more regularly in local labor struggles. Towards the end of the summer, SLAP joined members of Washington State Jobs with Justice in a picket at the Port of Seattle to protest the National Frozen Food Corporation's mistreatment of workers in

Teamsters Local 252 at a warehouse in Chehalis. This action was a huge success, and Jobs with Justice's disruption on the docks created the conditions necessary for ILWU Local 19 members to refuse to load one of the National Frozen Food Corporation's cargo containers.

This year, SLAP has concentrated its energies on making sure that the UW is satisfactorily following up on its anti-sweatshop commitments, and continuing work with Jobs with Justice. In January, one member from SLAP—April Nishimura '09—participated in a delegation organized by United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS) to visit workers at a garment distribution center in Mobile, Alabama. Students talked with the workers who were members of Teamsters Local 991. Workers at the factory, run by the New Era Cap Company, had decided to affiliate with the Teamsters in response to unhealthy working conditions, unannounced and sometimes forced overtime, low wages, and racial discrimination. USAS informed its chapters that many colleges, including the UW, sourced hats from the factory. As a result of SLAP's pressure, the UW was the first university in the country to take action against New Era on this issue, and the collective action of USAS groups at other schools helped win a fair first contract for the workers.

UW SLAP members' engagement with labor issues is not confined to direct action. As a result of joining the group, many students become involved with the Bridges Center. For example, Rachel Taber decided to minor in Labor Studies



after joining SLAP, and has been awarded both the Labor and Employment Relations Association and Martin and Anne Jugum Scholarships. Another member and founder of SLAP, Akson Mounlamai, received the Martin and Anne Jugum Scholarship in 2003. Finally, just this past year over a dozen SLAP members participated in Margaret Levi's Introduction to Labor Studies class and Jim Gregory's Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project seminars.

This linking of activism with academic pursuits in labor studies is very important, as it has resulted in more students becoming allies of the labor movement by taking action in solidarity with working people's struggles in and outside the classroom. Whether our members support a given union's protests, engage in civil disobedience, help with a given local's campaign, or document the past accomplishments of labor as students, UW SLAP is always looking for more ways to work in solidarity with workers, both on campus and around the state. We are the future of the labor movement, and we are organizing today.

To learn more about SLAP, visit the group's website at www.uwslap.org

STAFF UPDATES



Mayra Rangel

Mayra Rangel is the new undergraduate assistant for the Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies. Mayra is in her third year of undergraduate study at the

University of Washington. She is a Political Science and Latin American Studies major. She volunteers with organizations that promote workers rights and social justice.

Kelli Larsen

Former Program Coordinator Kelli Larsen has moved on to the King County Department of Community and Human Services. She is working to staff two citizen oversight boards responsible for the Veterans and Human Services Levy. Kelli is excited to continue her work for social justice in this new environment and will definitely keep in touch with all the good people at the Bridges Center.

Christopher Schulze-Oechtering Castañeda

After serving for the past two years as the Undergraduate Assistant for HBCLS, Christopher Schulze-Oechtering Castañeda is graduating this spring with a B.A. in Political Science and a minor in International Studies. He has already been hired on for a full time position at the National Court Appointed Special Advocates Association, a locally based non-profit organization which advocates for abused and neglected children in the legal system. He would like to also announce that he will be getting married in the summer of 2009.

SUPPORT THE HARRY BRIDGES CENTER FOR LABOR STUDIES

THE HARRY BRIDGES ENDOWED CHAIR AND CENTER FOR LABOR STUDIES were founded through the initiative of members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union. We continue to build upon that legacy in order to provide support for UW students, research, public programs, and other labor-related activities.

We need your support to continue to provide these valuable opportunities. All donations are tax-deductible; checks should be made out to the University of Washington Foundation (use the memo line to indicate which fund you wish to designate for your contribution). If you would like to use a credit card, please visit:

www.uwfoundation.org

You can choose to contribute to the following funds:

- **Harry Bridges Endowment:** Supports the endowed Chair and Center for Labor Studies
- **Martin and Anne Jugum Scholarship:** Provides tuition for outstanding undergraduates
- **Martha Duggan Fellowship:** Provides support to graduate students who study or provide caring labor
- **Bridges Community Outreach and Events Fund:** Provides maximum flexibility to support special events, teaching, and scholarship
- **The Theodore L. and Doris M. Hansen Endowment:** Provides annual income for the Community Outreach and Events Fund
- **David J. Olson Endowed Fund:** Supports students in the Department of Political Science



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