



# Center for Global Workers' Rights

## CGWR, FALL SEMESTER 2013

The **Center for Global Workers' Rights (CGWR)** is beginning its second academic year with two new members from Asia, Post-Doctoral Scholar **Jakir Hossain** from Bangladesh and **Renwei Liu**, a visiting scholar from China. Both are engaged with important projects relating to global workers' rights, as described in this newsletter. In addition, **Joyce Sinakhone** is working with the CGWR as a graduate student assistant and **Shelby Mastovich** as an undergraduate student assistant. Joyce and Shelby offer invaluable services as the CGWR takes on new initiatives, such as affiliation with the **Global Labour University** (described below by **Mark Anner**) and the development of a **Global Workers' Rights Resources portal**, <http://lser.la.psu.edu/gwr/resources.shtml>.

Write us if you have any thoughts or questions about the CGWR's work and to join our listserv in order to stay on top of the latest events: **cgwr@psu.edu**.

For events and news, visit our website <http://lser.la.psu.edu/gwr/>



**Railroad maintenance workers near Mangalore, India; photo by Abhijith B.Rao**

**You can also find us on Facebook: "The Penn State Center for Global Workers' Rights."**



## ACTIVITIES OF THE CGWR, FALL 2013

### Speaker Series:



**Garment workers Bangladesh; photo by 350.org**

On **September 12**, CGWR Post-Doctoral Scholar **Dr. Jakir Hossain** spoke on the "Standard-Rights Nexus in Bangladesh: Transforming Labor Standards into Workers' Rights." He described the challenges of transforming the plethora of standards already in existence into actionable rights for the health and benefit of workers in Bangladesh, offering suggestions on how to better align rights with standards through workers' organization and involvement.

On **October 22**, **Frank Bardacke** spoke about "Skilled Farm Work and the Immigrants Who Do It." He is an educator and long-time community activist based in Watsonville, California and author of *Trampling Out the Vintage: Cesar Chavez and the Two Souls of the United Farm Workers*. Bardacke is a former fieldworker himself and served as a crew shop steward, fighting for workers' rights under the first United Farm Workers (UFW) contract.

## **Global Labour University and New Workers' Rights Masters at Penn State**

In order to further encourage the study of global workers' rights, the CGWR is launching a new Master of Professional Studies in Labor and Global Workers' Rights. The 12-month program, which will have a focus on strategic corporate research and campaigns and workers' rights, is planned to start in the fall of 2014. The summer 2015 period will be dedicated to internships with labor unions followed by a capstone project. Students are expected to have at least three years of experience with a labor union or a worker-oriented organization. For more information on the program, please write: [lgwr@psu.edu](mailto:lgwr@psu.edu).

The MPS at Penn State will be the fifth program of the Global Labour University (GLU), which offers a network of Master's programs related to labor and globalization in Germany, South Africa, Brazil and India. The GLU and its affiliated organizations also organize annual conferences and alumni schools on topics of relevance to global labor. This fall, participants from 39 countries met in Mumbai to discuss issues of inequality and food security. The next conference, which will continue to explore the theme of inequality, will be held in Berlin on May 15-17, 2014. For more on the GLU Berlin Conference, see: [http://www.global-labour-university.org/fileadmin/download/CFP\\_Berlin\\_End.pdf](http://www.global-labour-university.org/fileadmin/download/CFP_Berlin_End.pdf). For more on the GLU, see: <http://www.global-labour-university.org/>.

### **MNCs and Inequality**

Mark Anner, Director of the CGWR, and Post-Doctoral Scholar Jakir Hossain are currently collaborating on a research project looking at multinational corporations (MNCs) and economic inequality in the global south. This study is expected to feed into a book by the Global Labour University on inequality within and among nations. The study examines how MNCs have reduced labor costs and enhanced labor flexibility in part by shifting economic risks and costs between firms and workers through subcontracting and other arrangements, including threatening relocation and outsourcing and through the proliferation of non-standard forms of employment—temporary, part-time, or informal. The project will provide examples from within the three GLU countries in the Global South: India, South Africa, and Brazil. More detailed illustrations will be provided on the global apparel industry in Bangladesh and Central America as an important example of the distributional consequences of MNCs operating in the buyer-driven global value chain.

### **Bangladesh's Garment Workers' Resistance Against Rights Violation**

CGWR Post-Doctoral Scholar Jakir Hossain is conducting research on garment workers' resistance against rights violations in Bangladesh. Learning from past workers' movements, he explores the evolving nature of the resistance and what might be considered the changing triggers of such opposition in Bangladesh's garment sector. Knowing the workers' past informal agitation is fundamental, not only to understand the current state of movement but also to prevent more violent forms of activity. The evolving nature of the workers' resistance against rights violation, and the changing triggers of resistance in Bangladesh's garment sector provide the pointers for future direction. Jakir will be in Bangladesh in early December to conduct a field study. He will develop a dataset of garment workers' agitation from 2005 until 2013 and conduct focus group and key informant interviews with garment workers, employers, government officials, and workers' representatives during his stay in Bangladesh.

## Center for Global Workers' Rights Team

**Mark Anner** is the Director of the Center for Global Workers' Rights (CGWR) and Associate Professor of Labor and Employment Relations and Political Science at Penn State. He holds a Ph.D. in Government from Cornell University and a Master's Degree in Latin American Studies from Stanford University. He is the author of *Solidarity Transformed: Labor Responses to Globalization and Crisis in Latin America*.

**Jill Jensen** is Visiting Assistant Professor working with the CGWR. She holds a Ph.D. in History from the University of California, Santa Barbara. Her research focuses on the International Labor Organization (ILO), a specialized agency of the United Nations. Her published work evaluates policies impacting women's earning and women's opportunities and debates surrounding human rights and global development.

**Renwei Liu** is a visiting scholar at the CGWR, and was awarded funding by the China Scholarship Council to pursue study at Penn State as a joint degree. She is a Ph.D. candidate of civil law from Southwest University of Finance and Economics, Sichuan, China, researching Chinese labor law, comparative labor law, industrial injury compensation, and industrial injury insurance.

**Joyce Sinakhone** is a graduate student assistant working with the CGWR on the Global Labour University (GLU) Master Program initiative and grants and projects. A second year master's candidate in Human Resources and Employment Relations, she studied at the GLU in Berlin in May and June 2013. Her master's thesis focuses on fast food worker organizing in Chicago.

**Jakir Hossain** is Post-Doctoral Scholar for the CGWR. He received his Ph.D. from the School of International Studies, University of Trento, Italy. Prior, he studied at the London South Bank University, the London School of Economics, and the Carleton University in Development Studies, Social Policy and Planning in Developing Countries, and Trade Policy and Commercial Diplomacy respectively. Dr. Hossain is currently on leave from the University of Rajshahi where he is an associate professor. He had been a visiting fellow at the School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University. He has written articles, policy papers, and briefs on labor rights, decent work, social dialogue, multilateral trading regime, and skill formation and learning.

**Lisa Pierson** is Administrative Assistant to the CGWR. She joined Penn State in 2008 working for Labor and Employment Relations. In her dual capacity she offers support for both the Center and the School, overseeing promotion and tenure, travel, event planning, and budgets. Lisa's assistance is vital for all aspects of the Center, ranging from long-term preparation for events to everyday operations.

**Shelby Mastovich** is a CGWR student research assistant. She is a senior majoring in Sociology with minors in Labor and Employment Relations and Anthropology. She has been involved with United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS) since her freshman year and participated in the Solidarity Immersion Program in the Dominican Republic in January 2013.

## Center for Global Workers' Rights Research Portal

To provide researchers, teachers, students, and activists with an entry point into the study of workers' rights on a global scale, the CGWR has launched a series of resource pages containing links to research databases, descriptions of international treaties and protocols, and reports and articles on the state of country-specific workers' rights protections. Penn State undergraduate student, Shelby Mastovich, and Assistant Visiting Professor Jill Jensen have been working on this project, offering access to videos for teachers interested in stimulating classroom discussions. These portray the extended struggles of workers in countries like Bangladesh to secure viable jobs and ensure safe working conditions—a fight that has been waged for decades; union activism in support of a fair globalization; and the truth about high-stress production process in the global supply system of the electronics industry. Students or activists can visit the research portal for details on standard setting and monitoring labor rights abuses, information about current trade union initiatives and sustainable development advocacy, and listings of other campaigns in support of global workers' rights—ranging from the grassroots level to the transnational. Visit the main page of the portal at: <http://lser.la.psu.edu/gwr/resources.shtml>.

## Research into the campaigns of low wage workers in the United States

By Joyce Sinakhone

**Joyce Sinakhone is conducting her master's thesis research on the fast-food workers movement, and is assisting the Center in launching its new Master's in Labor and Global Workers' Rights program.**

In recent months, low-wage workers across the nation have been standing up against exploitative practices and seeking improvements for all U.S. workers, including those often not afforded basic employee protections. The gains made prevent wage depression, the replacement of stable jobs with precarious positions, and eroding working conditions. On August 29, 2013, fast food workers staged a coordinated strike that involved 58 cities, despite being employed in a notoriously anti-union industry. In 2012, most of the 3.6 million workers who earned the federal minimum wage (\$7.25) or below worked in service occupations such as food preparation. Recently, however, these low-wage workers have been demanding pay increases and the fair chance to organize with the help of union-backed community groups. Such workers are fighting for a living wage and the chance to form a union without retaliation, and their numbers are on the rise. Job growth during the recession has been led by low-wage service occupations.

It is yet unclear whether retail and fast food workers around the nation will be able to achieve a living wage, but some companies have already proven that it is possible. Costco famously offers better wages compared to competitors, but fast food companies also profited while paying workers fair remuneration. Detroit-based burger eatery Moo Cluck Moo boasts a starting wage of \$15 per hour and In-N-Out offers benefits for part-time and full-time employees along starting wages far above the federal minimum.

For the full article, go to <http://lser.la.psu.edu/gwr/index.shtml>.



Chicago fast food workers strike, August 29th; photo by Daniel X. O'Neil

## USAS Fall 2013 Campaign

By Shelby Mastovich

**Shelby Mastovich is a student research assistant with the Center for Global Workers' Rights and a leader in the Penn State chapter of United Students Against Sweatshops.**

United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS) is a student-led democratic organization that influences universities to uphold workers' rights standards. Last year, Penn State USAS successfully pressed the university administration to suspend its contract with the brand Adidas due to workers' rights violations involving the brand's refusal to pay \$1.8 million in legally-mandated severance pay to workers of the PT Kizone factory in Indonesia. Penn State's action in this regard created a domino effect for other schools, with 18 in total severing ties with Adidas. With economic pressure from these decisions, for the first time in history, Adidas actually negotiated with the workers' union in one of its supplier factories over severance pay.

This year USAS is focusing efforts on the Accord for Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh, which represents a historic, legally-binding agreement that holds brands liable for the safety of workers. The USAS End Deathtraps Campaign calls on Penn State to make crucial additions to its purchasing code of conduct, requiring licensees that manufacture collegiate apparel in Bangladesh to sign onto the Accord. If any of those brands refuse to do so, Penn State will cut appropriate contracts until they do sign.

To read the full article, go to <http://lser.la.psu.edu/gwr/studentfunding.shtml>.



## Research by Members of the Center Team

Mark Anner's article, "Corporate Social Responsibility and Freedom of Association Rights: The Precarious Quest for Legitimacy and Control in Global Supply Chains," (2012, *Politics & Society* 40(4): 604 – 639) was awarded the James G. Scoville International/Comparative Best Paper Award at the Labor and Employment Relations Association meeting in June 2013 in St. Louis. For the paper abstract see: [http://www.scholarsstrategynetwork.org/sites/default/files/ssn\\_key\\_findings\\_anner\\_on\\_corporate\\_responsibility\\_and\\_freedom\\_of\\_association\\_rights.pdf](http://www.scholarsstrategynetwork.org/sites/default/files/ssn_key_findings_anner_on_corporate_responsibility_and_freedom_of_association_rights.pdf).

Jill Jensen, along with labor historian Nelson Lichtenstein, has recently completed an edited volume, *West Meets East: The ILO from Geneva to the Pacific Rim* (forthcoming, Palgrave MacMillan, 2014). The volume includes scholarly articles which debate the meaning and the value of ILO action in nations of the Pacific Rim, including the United States, Chile, China, Japan, Cambodia, and Australia. For a more detailed description of the book, go to <http://lser.la.psu.edu/gwr/events.shtml>.

One of the key objectives of the CGWR is to monitor and call attention to attempts by firms or states to violate or make more difficult the fulfillment of workers' rights. Members of the Center have taken part in on the ground research associated with worker freedom and organization as well as general working conditions. To view the report, "The Formalization and Unionization Campaign in the Buenaventura Port, Colombia," by 2012-2013 CGWR Post-Doctoral Scholar Dan Hawkins, visit our webpage: <http://lser.la.psu.edu/gwr/index.shtml>.



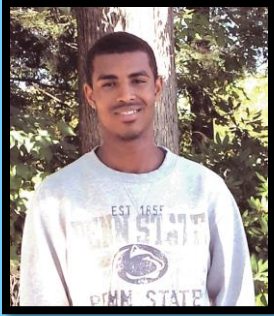
**Construction workers in Southwest China; photo by Renwei Liu**

## Chinese and US Industrial Injury Compensation By Renwei Liu

**Renwei Liu is a visiting scholar with the Center for Global Workers' Rights**

In China, it is a compulsory regulation that a company should pay the industrial injury insurance for its employees, which 181.72 million people have bought as of late June 2012. However, some employers in private enterprises have not paid their employees' industrial injury insurance. If these workers get injured, many of their requests for compensation are rejected. Once subjected to industrial accidents, they may become impoverished or return to poverty, owing to the injuries.

The US industrial injury compensation system has a long history. It has developed and been subjected to tests for more than a hundred years. Through a study of the US system, and a comparison with the alternative system in China, Renwei is eager to seek a way for China to set in place a comprehensive and effective approach benefitting workers in that country. To accomplish all the necessary research, she has already made many first-phase preparations for an investigation into China's industrial injury compensation. Beginning in 2012, she began her research in the Sichuan province of China, interviewing officials from both the government and labor, including the Social Security Bureau, Labor Arbitration Committee, and unions. She spoke to arbitrators, lawyers, employers and employees, and has written two hundred pages of interview transcripts, taken over one hundred pictures, and collected case data regarding workers' compensation and the difficulties existing in its practical operations. Here in the United States she hopes to learn more about the American approach to what is proving a vexing Chinese policy dilemma.



Ronnie Mixon

### **“Alta Gracia” intern Ronnie Mixon**

This year’s Alta Gracia intern, Ronnie Mixon, is originally from a small town in South Carolina. Currently, he is a junior with a major in Labor and Employment Relations with double minors in Psychology and Dispute Management and Resolution. Before joining United Students Against Sweatshops he was part of the Multicultural Business Society where he held the Corporate Chair position. In the fall of 2012 he joined United Students Against Sweatshops, and this past summer he participated in the Solidarity Immersion trip to the Dominican Republic, with funding from the CGWR.

### **Opportunities for Student Funding**

The CGWR encourages the development of student projects that examine themes related to the protection of workers’ rights in the global economy. As part of this effort, the CGWR offers funds in support of individual or collaborative undergraduate and graduate student research on associated themes. If you are a student interested in research on a topic related to global workers’ rights, please email us at: [cgwr@psu.edu](mailto:cgwr@psu.edu).

### **Post-doctoral Scholarship**

The CGWR provides opportunities for scholars engaged in research matching the Center’s agenda by supporting a yearly post-doctoral scholarship. Post-doctoral scholars help organize CGWR events and teach in the School of Labor and Employment Relations. For application information regarding the 2014-2015 post-doctoral position, look for postings on the Center website starting in December 2013.

### **STUDENT ACTIVISM: United Students Against Sweatshops, Penn State chapter**

USAS is a student organization that is committed, through direct action, to holding the University and the brands that produce University logo apparel responsible for ethical business practices. It advocates for workers’ rights in the global economy, particularly in regards to workers’ rights to form unions, bargain collectively, and receive appropriate benefits and a living wage. USAS meets every **Monday at 5:00 p.m. in 369 Willard**. Students interested in more information can contact Shelby Mastovich ([sam5851@psu.edu](mailto:sam5851@psu.edu)).



Center for Global Workers’ Rights Office:  
501 G Keller, University Park, PA 16802

Phone: 814-865-0751 Fax: 814-867-4169  
Email: [cgwr@psu.edu](mailto:cgwr@psu.edu)

For additional information: <http://lser.la.psu.edu/gwr/>