

CENTER FOR GLOBAL WORKERS' RIGHTS

FALL / WINTER 2018-19

We are growing! For the first time since our founding, we are hosting *two* postdoctoral scholars, Paolo Marinaro who earned his Ph.D. in Sociology at the National Autonomous University of Mexico and Manuel Rosaldo, who earned his Ph.D. in Sociology at the University of California, Berkeley (page 5). And, with eight MPS students in Labor and Global Workers' Rights from Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Turkey, Brazil, Ukraine and the US, we have our largest Masters cohort to date (page 2). True to the Center's mission, we continue to engage in scholar-practitioner exchanges in crucial issues for workers around the globe. We began the fall 2018 semester with a talk by two labor activists/writers on strikes and state repression in China (see this page, below). In October, Center-associated Assistant Professor Rebecca Tarlau joined labor rights and food justice activists from Mexico, Morocco, Tunisia and the United States in a conference, "Realizing a More Fair Global Food Supply Chain," organized by the Solidarity Center (page 2). In November, Center-associated Assistant Professor Katherine Maich joined with domestic workers from more than 50 countries in Cape Town, South Africa to shape the future of their organization, the International Domestic Workers Federation (page 3). Our MPS students presented their research at Penn State's Annual Rural Studies Student Conference and MPS student Rafael Padilha joined with several Center faculty to discuss the implications of the rightwing rise in Brazil (page 4). We look forward to continuing our vibrant history of scholar-practitioner exchanges with our Spring 2019 Symposium: "Alternative Worker Movements at a Time of Political Crisis: Transforming Predicament into Possibility" (page 3). Finally, do not forget to check out page six for upcoming opportunities, notices, and a list of recent publications by Center faculty.

Chinese Labor Activists Discuss "Striking to Survive"

by Manuel Rosaldo, CGWR Post-Doctoral Scholar

On September 24, Chinese labor activists and authors, Fan Zhigang and Li Wen discussed their new book, "Striking to Survive: Workers' Resistance to Factory Relocations in China" at the Center for Global Worker's Rights. The book analyzes worker strikes in response to factory relocations in China's Pearl River Delta, a region known as "the World's Factory." The strikes were part of a rising sea of labor unrest in China, where thousands of labor strikes are estimated to occur every year. The vast majority of these strikes are organized spontaneously and without authorization from state-run labor unions. In the first decade of the 2000s, the wildcat strikes generated significant benefits: workers won unpaid back wages, pay raises, and improved conditions. The national government even implemented limited workers' rights policies. The wildcat strikes, however, have been less effective in responding to a recent development: just as multinational corporations once relocated their production to the Pearl River Delta, their supplying factories are now relocating to other parts of China and Southeast Asia in their unrelenting quest for a cheaper, more obedient workforce. Although the Chinese government exhibits some tolerance of the wildcat strikes, it has violently repressed efforts by student activists and labor NGOs to organize these atomized revolts into a coordinated movement. The repression has forced many labor activists to operate clandestinely, taking on factory jobs and attempting to organize their workplaces from within. To assist such efforts, Zhigang, Wen, and their colleagues have self-published a series of books on labor organizing. They covertly distribute these books to workers, which they hope will provide inspiration for future mobilizations.



Professor Elaine Hui introduces Fan Zhigang and Li Wen.

A New Cohort of Students at the MPS in Labor and Global Workers' Rights

by Paolo Marinaro, CGWR Postdoctoral Scholar

The Masters Program in Labor and Global Workers' Rights started its fifth year with the largest cohort of students in its history. This fall, five women and three men joined the one-year Masters of Professional Studies Program. Students hail from extraordinarily diverse backgrounds in Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Turkey, Brazil, Ukraine and the US. It is a remarkable group of labor practitioners and student activists focusing on gender, informal workers, and labor organizing in critical sectors of the economy. Students contribute substantially to the Program by enriching the debate with international expertise in labor relations and personal experiences from different geographies of the global supply chain. The Master's focuses on strategic corporate research and campaigns, international and comparative employment relations systems, and workers' rights in the global economy. During the summer, students will have the opportunity to participate in an internship with a labor organization and to complete a capstone research project. The MPS in Labor and Global Workers' Rights is hosted by the Center for Global Workers' Rights in the School of Labor and Employment Relations at Penn State. It is part of the Global Labour University (GLU) network established in South Africa, Brazil, Germany, India and the US. GLU offers Masters Courses and promotes research on global labor issues in collaboration with trade unions, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and the International Labour Organization (ILO).



2018-2019 MPS Faculty and Students

Realizing a More Fair Global Food Supply Chain

by Rebecca Tarlau, CGWR-associated faculty

On October 11, 2018, the Solidarity Center organized an international symposium, "Realizing a More Fair Global Food Supply Chain." The symposium took place at the University of California, Los Angeles Labor Center in downtown Los Angeles. Labor rights and food justice activists from Mexico, Morocco, Tunisia and the United States participated, sharing their experiences organizing for agricultural workers' rights. The Center for Global Workers' Rights is a long-term partner of the Solidarity Center and was invited to participate in the event. Rebecca Tarlau attended the symposium on behalf of the CGWR.

The head of the Solidarity Center, Shawna Bader-Blau, started off the event reminding everyone that it was not an academic conference, but rather a discussion about strategies for building power. The highlight of the conference was hearing from the workers. Ramon Torres, the president of the newly formed farmworkers' union in Washington, *Familias Unidas por la Justicia*, talked about the power that workers felt negotiating their first collective contract. Saida Bentahar, from the Workers



A panel on "Building Power in the Fields" with farmworkers Saida Bentahar (Morocco), Abelina Ramirez Ruiz (Mexico), and Ramon Torres (U.S.).

Democratic Federation in Morocco, talked about the active role of women in their collective bargaining efforts. Abelina Ramirez Ruiz, the Secretary of Gender Equality for the National Independent and Democratic Union of Farmworkers (SINDJA, Mexico), described the achievements of a work stoppage they organized, bringing visibility to a sector of workers that had been forgotten. Participants also emphasized the importance of research on the global food supply chain, at one point referencing a recent CGWR report. What was the take-home point of the meeting? Despite the many challenges to promoting a more just global food supply chain, this goal is indeed possible if workers are at the forefront of these struggles.

The Center for Global Workers' Rights to host 8th Annual Symposium

On April 4 and 5, the CGWR will host its 8th annual symposium, "Alternative Worker Movements at a Time of Political Crisis: Transforming Predicament into Possibility." This symposium will analyze alternative approaches to worker organizing that seek to increase the inclusivity and militancy of labor movements by contesting norms and adverse leadership practices. We are particularly interested in approaches that prioritize democratic participation, direct action, and intersectional and international solidarity. We will trace global strategies and geographies of alternative worker movements, with careful attention to their interactions with local political regimes and cultures.

EIGHTH ANNUAL CGWR SPRING SYMPOSIUM // APRIL 4-5, 2019

Alternative Worker Movements at a Time of Political Crisis:

Transforming Predicament into Possibility



Center Symposium, April 4-5, 2019

The symposium seeks to answer the following questions: What are historic examples of alternative worker movements and what lessons can be gleaned from their successes and failures? At a time when right-wing populists are stoking racism, xenophobia, and misogyny, how can alternative and/or revitalized worker movements provide a counter-narrative about the sources and solutions to working peoples' economic woes? What is the role of such movements in increasing the power of women, people of color, LGTBQ+ people, and immigrants? How does the organization of precarious and informal workers contribute to the transformation of the tactics, targets, alliances, and demands of the labor movement? When do reform caucuses within worker organizations generate innovation and renewal and when do they lead to self-destructive forms of factionalism? What catalyzes worker movements to shift from acting as narrow-minded economic actors into broad agents for progressive change?

International Domestic Workers Federation holds 2nd Global Congress in Cape Town

By *Kate Maich, CGWR-associated faculty*

From November 16-19, domestic workers from more than 50 countries gathered in Cape Town, South Africa to shape the future of their organization, the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF), at its 2nd Global Congress. Since its founding in Montevideo, Uruguay in 2013, the IDWF has grown to a membership of more than half a million domestic workers, and it is the first global union led by women. Center-associated Assistant Professor Katherine Maich worked as part of a research team to document the congress along with sociologists Mary Romero and Jennifer Fish and historian Eileen Boris.



Domestic workers and delegates gather with Nkosi Phathekile Holomisa, Deputy Minister of Labour, South Africa, and Hester Stephens, SAWSASU President; first day of the IDWF Congress.

Held at Salt River's historic Community House, a longtime site of anti-apartheid political activism and labor and community organizing, domestic workers and delegates gathered to discuss a number of key issues facing the movement. Central themes included strategies around organizing migrant workers, ending gender-based violence, implementing ILO Convention 189, approaching the care crisis, and striving for occupational safety and health. Leadership was elected for the next five years, involving key organizers from South Africa, Hong Kong, and Argentina, and several regional and global goals were laid out for the next five years. The IDWF also unanimously passed an emergency resolution supporting Central American migrants and condemning the Mexico-U.S. border militarization.

Maich was honored to document this historic moment in the growing and dynamic movement of domestic workers organizing globally. The movement faces many challenges, however, and as Witbooi reminded the 250 workers, delegates, and observers gathered in Cape Town before returning home, "The hard work starts now."

LGWR Students Participate in Rural Studies Conference

by Kofi Asianowa, MPS student in Labor and Global Workers' Rights

On November 2, seven students from the Labor and Global Workers' Rights MPS program presented papers at Penn State's 6th Annual Rural Studies Student Conference. Each student presented papers relating to their country of origin, which they had prepared for Dr. Rebecca Tarlau's course on Agricultural Workers and Rural Organizing. Several participants described these excellent presentations as a conference highlight.

Sherif Olanrenwaju presented on "Agrarian History of Nigeria: Cocoa, Palm Oil and Crude Oil." His paper focused on the effects of oil extraction on youth employment and the decline in agricultural activities. Bashiratu Kamal discussed her paper, "Oil Palm (Wonder Fruit) production in Ghana: a bane or success?" Focusing on multinational corporations and small holder farmers, her paper discussed profit sharing and the importance of government intervention in Oil Palm production. Anna Popovych presented a paper on "Rural Economy and National Identity in Ukraine," which focused on the country's agrarian history and the changing dynamics of agrarian identity. Ekin Ortuk presented on "The History of Agrarian Relations in Turkey, the legacy of small-scale farming." She discussed the contributions of small-scale farmers in Turkey and their contributions to the growth of the economy. Pnehwon Harris described the history of Liberia in the "History of Land Dispossession & Agrarian Transitions (Pre-1822 to present)," focusing on the conflict between the indigenous populations and the Americo-Liberians. Rafael Padilha's presentation on "Brazilian Agrarian History and the Peasantry Re-Framed" shed light on issues of land dispossession, indigenous populations, and transitions in farming. Finally, Allison Petonic brought the conversation back to Pennsylvania, presenting on "Dispossession and Disconnection from Land-based work in the Western Pennsylvania Tri-State." This was the first time presenting at an academic conference for many of the students, but we hope it was not their last!



Bashiratu Kamal presents on palm oil production in Ghana.

CGWR Participates in Panel on Brazilian Elections

by Ekin Ozturk, MPS student in Labor and Global Workers' Rights

On November 7th, four members of the Center for Global Workers' Rights participated in a panel discussion titled "Fascism in the Americas: Reflections on the Rise of the Far Right in Brazil and Beyond." The speakers discussed Brazil's newly-elected president, Jair Bolsonaro. Proudly promoting sexism, xenophobia, homophobia, and racism, Bolsonaro is the latest indicator of the rise of the far right across the continent. CGWR director Mark Anner introduced the forum, which brought together a range of university centers and departments to analyze the depth of the problem and collectively strategize for change. Postdoctoral Scholar Manuel Rosaldo shared his reflections on the life and career of Bolsonaro. Separating his observations into three acts, Rosaldo described the former army captain's ascent from being a fringe figure to a reactionary populist challenger to the president elect. Later, MPS Student Rafael Padilha offered reflections from his personal experiences as a student activist in Brazil. Padilha said that he believes Bolsonaro represents Brazil's authoritarian past that progressive forces fought against. Students in Brazilian universities had resisted the regressive educational policies of Bolsonaro's allies in the past. Padilha believes that there is hope for resistance under the presidency of Bolsonaro, emphasizing the need to continue the struggle. Associate Professor Rebecca Tarlau concluded the conference with a hopeful note, emphasizing the strong labor movement and working-class power despite the repressive regimes in Brazil. Other speakers included Sarah Townsend (Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese), Zachary Morgan (History and African American Studies), and Krista Brune (Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese).



CGWR student Rafael Padilha presents on his experiences in student activism in Brazil.

Spotlight Shines on Paolo Marinaro, Postdoctoral Scholar, Center for Global Workers' Rights

Dr. Paolo Marinaro joined the Center for Global Workers' Rights (CGWR) in August 2018. His research focuses on class and gender in the global economy with a particular emphasis on cultural processes and emotions. Employing an intersectional approach, he explores the dialectic between labor militancy, affectivity, and global economic restructuring with a regional focus on the U.S. - Mexico border. He recently earned a Ph.D. in Sociology from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), and also holds an M.A. in Sociology of Culture and B.A. in Philosophy and the History of Ideas from the University of Turin, Italy.



Dr. Paolo Marinaro of the CGWR

Based on ethnographic research, his doctoral dissertation focuses on alternative worker movements claiming the right to bargain collectively and fight for the freedom of association in Mexican automotive factories. Mexico's rise as one of the major global car manufacturers in the last ten years relies upon the extreme reduction of labor costs implemented by repressive forms of labor control. Trade unions have played a significant and controversial role in this process, colluding with companies and the government to control workers' demands through corruption and other illegal means. Marinaro's research shows how workers build grass-roots independent organizations to fight against trade unions by engaging in wildcat strikes and establishing international solidarity.

Paolo comes from a working-class neighborhood in Turin, Italy. His personal experiences and militancy have shaped a research trajectory throughout Italy, Mexico and the U.S. Presently, he is focusing on the changing relations between the state and the labor movement in Mexico.

Spotlight Shines on Manuel Rosaldo, Postdoctoral Scholar, Center for Global Workers' Rights

Dr. Manuel Rosaldo's introduction to the labor movement came as a freshman at Wesleyan University when the janitor who worked in his hall quit because she became sick and could not afford health insurance. Manuel helped organize student solidarity with campus janitors who were fighting to win union recognition, a living wage, healthcare, and ESL classes. After graduating, he organized retail workers in New York City and hospital patients in New Haven with the UNITE HERE! and SEIU labor unions. Later, he pursued doctoral studies in sociology at the University of California at Berkeley. There, he learned that the majority of the world's workers toiled in informal jobs and that labor scholars and unionists had traditionally dismissed them as too weak and fragmented to collectively organize. Manuel became curious about the potentials and challenges of informal worker organizing.

Manuel's dissertation analyzes the labor rights struggles of waste pickers, a "least likely" case for successful organizing due to their extreme marginality and atomization. He conducted 28-months of research in Brazil and Colombia, home to two of the world's oldest and largest waste picker movements. Manuel's article, "Revolution in the Garbage Dump: The Political and Economic Foundations of the Colombian Recycler Movement," published in *Social Problems*, won two awards at the 2017 American Sociological Association meetings. Manuel also holds a Master's Degree in Global Affairs from New York University, where he wrote a thesis on debates over the commercialization of microfinance based on field research in southern Mexico. Previously, he worked for three years as a founding editor for *Dowser*, a social change media organization.



Dr. Manuel Rosaldo collects recyclables in Bogotá during dissertation field research in 2015

Spring 2019 Compressed MOOC on Decent Work in Global Supply Chains

The Global Labour University will launch its 2nd Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on Decent Work in Global Supply Chains. This compressed version of the original course will begin in March 2019 and go for four weeks. Mark Anner, the Center Director, will be the lead instructor. More details on the course will be posted on the GLU website as they become available: <https://www.global-labour-university.org/392.html>

Recent Publications by Center Team Members

Anner, Mark and Galhera, Katuscia. 2018. "Employment Relations in Latin America." In *The Routledge Companion to Employment Relations*. Adrian Wilkinson, Tony Dundon, Jimmy Donaghey, and Alexander Colvin (editors). New York: Routledge. Pp. 387-401.

Hui, Elaine. 2018. "Effort to Form Union in China Meets Ferocious Repression." *Labor Notes* (<http://labornotes.org/2018/09/effort-form-union-china-meets-ferocious-repression>)

Hui, Elaine, and Friedman, Eli. 2018. "The Communist Party vs. China's Labor Laws." *Jacobin* (<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2018/10/china-communist-party-labor-law-jasic>)

Rosaldo, Manuel. 2018. "Salvaging Cardboard, Plastic, and Dignity" (a book review essay on *Reclaiming the Discarded* by Kathleen Millar). *European Journal of Sociology*.

Tarlau, Rebecca. 2018. "Social Movement-Led Participatory Governance of Public Education: The Case of the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement." In *Another Way: Decentralization, Democratization and the Global Politics of Community-Based Schooling*, eds. K. A. Heidemann and R. A. Clothey. Boston: Sense Publishers.

Of note: Mark Anner's article, "CSR Participation Committees, Wildcat Strikes and the Sourcing Squeeze in Global Supply Chains," *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, (2018) 56 (1): 75-98, was recently listed as one of the of BJIR's top 20 most downloaded articles of the past two years.

Visit our **Labour Rights Indicators project** with newly released 2016 data:

<http://ler.la.psu.edu/gwr/labour-rights-indicators-database>

Now Accepting Application, Postdoctoral Scholar Position! See <https://psu.jobs/job/84924>

Apply to our MPS program in Labor and Global Workers' Rights. Assistantship available! March 1 deadline:

<http://ler.la.psu.edu/gwr/mps-in-labor-and-global-workers-rights>

NEW FILM SERIES!

This spring, CGWR is teaming up with The Sustainability Institute to organize a labor rights film series, which highlights intersections between labor rights and related issues such as racial, gender, and environmental justice.

The inaugural film, *Sorry to Bother You* (2018), will be shown on January 22 at 7pm in Kern 112 in conjunction with Martin Luther King Week events.

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