



The year rolled to an end with harrowing news for our center. On December 17, 2019, Chen Weixiang, a much beloved alumnus of the Masters in Professional Studies (M.P.S.) program in Labor and Global Workers' Rights, was arrested in China in retaliation for his sanitation workers' rights advocacy. Thankfully, he was released fifteen days later, after a massive outpouring of international support (see below). Our thoughts and solidarity are with Chen and the hundreds of labor and human rights activists who remain imprisoned in China.

Our team continues to grow! We welcomed two new faculty members, Postdoctoral Scholar Jinyoung Chang and Assistant Research Professor Catherine Bowman (page 6). Also, we were proud to host two dynamic visiting scholars, Dr. María Luz Rodríguez Fernández from Spain (*¡que vuelvas pronto!*) and Katarzyna Rakowska from Poland (*Wracaj szybko!*) (page 2). And center-affiliated faculty members continued to engage in cutting-edge research. Assistant Professor Katherine Maich and Research Affiliate Paulo Marinaro are collaborating with the Argentinian researcher and artist, Sol Aramendi, on a new study about how technological transformation informs labor responses to platform capitalism (page 4). Assistant Professor Rebecca Tarlau launched a new book on the Brazilian Landless Workers' Movement's (MST) struggles for agrarian and educational reform (page 4). And center director Mark Anner published a new center report on workers' rights and garment supply chains in India (page 3). It has been an honor and joy to welcome the sixth cohort of M.P.S. students in our affiliated program in Labor and Global Workers' Rights, who hail from Nigeria, Cameroon, Bangladesh, Sweden, China, and Peru (page 2).

On February 15 and 16, 2020, we hosted a film festival featuring nine documentaries about the labor rights struggles of women workers (page 3). On March 26 and 27, we planned to continue to explore the intersection of labor rights and gender equity at our Ninth Annual Symposium (page 6). Unfortunately, the symposium has been postponed to a yet-to-be determined date.

Detained LGWR Alumnus Released by Chinese Authorities After International Mobilization

Chen Weixiang, a 2018 graduate of the Master of Professional Studies program in Labor and Global Workers' Rights at Penn State, was arrested on December 17, 2019 in Guangzhou, China. Chen is a labor activist who has advocated for sanitation workers' rights since college. He has created online support groups for sanitation workers and has run the website "XinHuanwei" (Hearts for Sanitation Workers). His effort has contributed significantly to improving the well-being of sanitation workers. For instance, he helped them retrieve overdue wages amounting to more than 10 million RMB (US \$1.43 million). Chen's work, by the standard of any democratic societies, is mild and is a normal part of labor relations in other countries. However, in authoritarian China it is seen as posing challenges to the political regime.



LGWR alumnus and labor rights activist, Chen Weixiang

Chen's arrest attracted significant international media attention. More than 10,000 people signed an online petition to urge the Chinese government to release him. In total, he was detained for fifteen days for "picking quarrels and provoking trouble," a charge often used by the Chinese government to suppress activists. Chen's arrest is by no means an isolated incident. In the past few years, the Xi Jinping administration has tightened the space of civil society and has become increasingly harsh toward rights lawyers, feminist activists, ethnic minorities, and labor activists. In 2019 alone, more than 100 labor rights advocates were arrested. Upon his release, Chen encouraged his supporters and the international community on social media to continue paying attention to and supporting other arrested labor and social activists.

Welcome to the New Cohort of M.P.S. students in Labor and Global Workers' Rights!

We are proud to welcome the sixth cohort of Masters in Professional Studies (M.P.S.) students in our affiliated Labor and Global Workers' Rights program! The M.P.S. program is designed for mid-career labor practitioners and worker organizers from across the world. This year, they will complete coursework on a broad range of labor issues around the informal and formal economies, gender and race at work, corporate research and campaigns, international and comparative employment relations systems, and comparative organizing models. During summer 2020, students will have the opportunity to participate in an internship with a labor organization and to complete a capstone research project. The program is part of the Global Labour University, a network of universities in five countries (Brazil, India, Germany, South Africa, and the United States), along with global union federations, national unions, and the International Labour Organization (ILO).

The new cohort consists of seven students who bring a wealth of experience promoting labor rights across a range of geographic, industrial, and organizational contexts. The students hail from Peru, Nigeria, Cameroon, China, Sweden, and

Bangladesh. In these countries, they pursued a range of labor rights initiatives in diverse sectors including sanitation, nursing, textile manufacturing, journalism, mining, retail, and higher education. They worked in a variety of types of organizations such as labor unions, global labor federations, labor rights NGOs, student movements, immigrant rights organizations, media foundations, government agencies, transnational development agencies, and the International Labour Organization. Welcome one and all to the CGWR family!



The 2019–20 M.P.S. Faculty and Students

Center Hosts Visiting Scholars from Spain and Poland

In fall 2019, the center hosted two visiting scholars, who gave presentations, collaborated on research projects, and participated in classes and center events. From October 7–27, we were joined by Katarzyna Rakowska, a Ph.D. candidate in sociology at the University of Warsaw. Her research focuses on the right to strike in contemporary Poland and the role of women in labor movements. She is also an activist in a Polish grassroots workers' union called 'Workers' Initiative.' "I was impressed by CGWR, its faculty and students," Katarzyna said. "I have met committed labor organizers and activists from all over the world and learned firsthand about workers' rights and struggles."

Also, from November 4–December 8, we welcomed María Luz Rodríguez Fernández, an associate professor in Labour and Social Security Law at the University of Castilla-La Mancha (Spain). She was a member of the Spanish Parliament and worked in Spain's Secretary of State for Employment. Her research interests include the impact of the economy 4.0 on labor market institutions, the impact of the EU economic crisis on social rights, gender equality in employment relations, and collective bargaining. She has authored six books, including *Digital Economy: Its Impact on Work Conditions and Employment* (2017) and *Collective Bargaining, Equality, and Democracy* (2016). Luz said, "Professors at the CGWR are really brilliant and excellent academics, so my stay there has been really fruitful for my research activity. But I would also like to highlight the excellent atmosphere of collaboration and friendship that reigns in the CGWR, which made my research visit an unforgettable experience."



CGWR Visiting Scholars, Katarzyna Rakowska (left) and Dr. María Luz Rodríguez Fernández (right)

Center Organizes “Women Workers in Struggle” Film Festival

On February 15 and 16, 2020, CGWR hosted a film festival titled “Women Workers in Struggle: Organizing for Voice and Power Around the Globe” in Foster Auditorium. For more than a century, women’s activism has slowly but steadily transformed the global terrain of struggle, resulting in greater gender equality. However, the labor market has been one of the most challenging areas for women to advance. The inequality between women and men, as well as between women, has been persistent and has even increased in some cases. Unpaid/underpaid reproductive labor is disproportionately performed by women, and many of their jobs are concentrated in low wage industries, such as food service, home care, cleaning, and garment production. Globalization and lack of worker protections have also imposed new challenges on women workers, especially in the Global South.

This two-day film festival was composed of documentary films presenting a glimpse into the situations of women’s working lives across the globe, in their own vivid voices. These films depicted the exploitative nature of many of these industries, but importantly, they also showed the politics of how women have fought for their rights at work, at home, and within broader civil society. The films portray a variety of struggles of women workers, including sex workers’ unionizing in the United States, a supermarket workers’ 510-day strike in South Korea, female farmers’ organizing in Brazil, the fearless women union leaders in Bangladesh garment factories, and the care workers’ struggle in Poland. The festival was organized by postdoctoral scholar Jinyoung Park and assistant professor of Labor and Employment Relations and Sociology, Katherine Maich. The festival was co-sponsored by the Sustainability Institute, the Department of Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies, the School of Labor and Employment Relations, Penn State University Libraries, and the College of Liberal Arts.



“Women Workers in Struggle” Film Festival, February 15–16, 2020

Center Publishes Study on Indian Garment Workers and Global Supply Chains

The majority of workers in India’s garment export sector do not earn an income that covers their basic needs, are forced to work overtime hours (which are often unpaid), and face verbal abuse at work. The causes for these poor working conditions are linked to weak labor laws and a squeeze down the supply chain by large multinational firms that demand low production costs and short lead times to meet the needs of the ‘fast fashion’ retail model. These are some of the findings by center director Mark Anner published in a new center research report, “Sourcing Dynamics, Workers’ Rights, and Inequality in Garment Global Supply Chains in India.”

Mark also finds that the real dollar price paid by buyers for apparel exported from India to the United States between 1994 and 2017 declined by 62.81 percent. He finds an 11 percent increase in the speed-to-market demands of buyers. To address these problems, Mark recommends adjustment in purchasing practices to include “Total Costing for Sustainable Supply Chains (TCSSC).” TCSSC includes the costs of compliance with core labor standards, safe working conditions, reasonable hours of work, and adequate living wages, as well as external environmental sustainability. Assisting Mark with this research project in establishing contacts and providing much needed context was Madhumita Dutta, the center postdoctoral scholar in 2016–17. The full report can be accessed on the center website here: https://ler.la.psu.edu/gwr/documents/copy_of_CGWRGarmentSourcingandWorkersRightsinIndiaNov.152019.pdf



Presentation of the report by Dr. Mark Anner in Bangalore, India.

New Research Project Receives Grant, Studies Digital Organizing

In July 2019, the Center for Global Workers' Rights started a new research project directed by Assistant Professor Katherine Maich and Research Affiliate Paolo Marinaro, in collaboration with Argentinian independent researcher and artist based in New York City, Sol Aramendi. *"The Future of Work, and the Future of Organizing: A Comparative Study of Digital Platforms in the Informal Economy"* looks at how technological transformation informs labor responses to platform capitalism. Digital technologies have rapidly transformed work and labor relations across the globe as seen in the ubiquitous rise of platforms such as Uber, Lyft, Airbnb, Deliveroo, and Rappi, among a myriad of others. Much of the media and academic attention has emphasized the cheap, fast delivery of goods and services for clients and customers, celebrating the rise and rapid proliferation of the on-demand economy, the growing number of jobs, and its overall flexibility. However, more recently, scholars have shown how digital platforms, far from offering entrepreneurial opportunities, strictly control on-demand platform workers through the algorithmic management of the labor process by exacerbating existing inequality.

Professor Maich and Dr. Marinaro focus on the experience of food-delivery workers and domestic workers in Mexico City and New York City by asking how platform-workers harness digital tools to take control over the terms of their work and potentially organize worker associations or unions. They are interested in analyzing how different gender and migration regimes shape worker organizing in platform capitalism. On April 26–27, 2020, Katherine, Paolo, and Sol will present preliminary findings at CGWR's Ninth Annual Symposium, drawing on focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation with domestic workers cooperatives in New York City and food-delivery workers' organizations in Mexico City.



An Uber Eats rider makes a delivery in Mexico City.
(Photo Credit: Stefano Morrone)

Dr. Rebecca Tarlau Publishes Book on the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement (MST)

Over the past 35 years the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement (MST), one of the largest social movements in Latin America, has become famous globally for its success in occupying land, winning land rights, and developing alternative economic enterprises for more than a million landless workers. The movement has also linked education reform to its vision for agrarian reform by developing pedagogical practices for schools that foster activism, direct democracy, and collective forms of work. Contrary to the belief that movements cannot engage the state without demobilizing, the MST has demonstrated that educational institutions can help movements recruit new activists, diversify their membership, increase technical knowledge, and garner political power.

Center-affiliated Assistant Professor Rebecca Tarlau shared these insights and many others on November 14 at a talk and launch party for her book, *Occupying Schools, Occupying Land: How the Landless Workers Movement Transformed Brazilian Education* (Oxford University Press, 2019). The event was hosted at Webster's Café and Bookstore, where 65



Assistant Professor Rebecca Tarlau addresses a packed house at Webster's Bookstore and Cafe.

attendees were treated to live Brazilian music, snacks, and drinks. It was one of many book talks that Rebecca is giving this year across the United States and Canada. M.P.S. Student Luis Mendoza called the talk a "moving demonstration of organized communities' agency to overcome economic constraints." He elaborated that, "The book describes the struggles for the right to land and education, which are essential to understanding the recent history of many Latin American countries. The cry that 'the land is for those who work it,' which was born in 1911, is still in force in many countries that need comprehensive agrarian reform."

Spotlight Shines on Dr. Catherine Bowman, Assistant Research Professor of Labor and Employment Relations

Dr. Catherine (Cate) Bowman joined the center in August 2019. Her research focuses on structural inequality as produced through the U.S. immigration system. Her dissertation – “Flexible Workers, Fissured Workplaces: Cultural Exchange for Hire in an Era of Precarious Labor” – links sociological, legal, and labor studies approaches in analyzing the J-1 Summer Work Travel (SWT) Program, a cultural exchange visa that thousands of U.S. employers have come to rely on to secure short-term and seasonal workers by targeting foreign college students during their summer recess. Drawing on data that Cate obtained for more than 94,000 participants through a hard-fought Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) process, she employed a mixed-methods approach of archival research, qualitative, and quantitative analysis of SWT demographic and labor market information.

The results of Cate’s findings were featured in a July 2019 report, *Shining a Light on Summer Work: A First Look at the U.S. Employers Using the J-1 Summer Work Travel Visa*. The report, a collaboration of groups like the AFL-CIO and the Economic Policy Institute, aims to educate lawmakers and the public about the need for program reform. While at CGWR, Cate is also working with CGWR director Mark Anner on an Open Society Foundations’ initiative to support union and NGO leaders in their development of a shared evaluation of their previous efforts, including gaps and strengths, and a common strategic framework for better aligning their work over the next five to ten years in the area of global supply chains and migrant workers’ rights. Cate will join the faculty of Austin College in fall 2020 as an assistant professor of sociology.

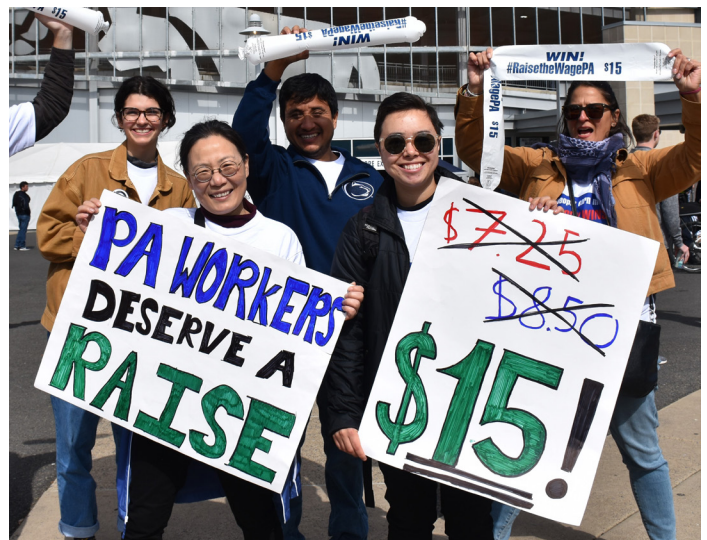


Dr. Catherine Bowman

Spotlight Shines on Dr. Jinyoung Park, Postdoctoral Scholar, Center for Global Workers’ Rights

Dr. Jinyoung (Jini) Park, who holds a Ph.D. in Labor and Industrial Relations from Cornell University, joined CGWR in August 2018. Her doctoral dissertation focuses on the roles of international actors in building industrial relations systems in Myanmar and Cambodia. In contrast to conventional Industrial Relations (IR) theories, which assume that there are only domestic actors in IR systems, the experiences of these newly industrialized countries suggest a strong influence of international actors such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), international brands, and foreign governments in institutionalizing IR systems and local unions’ behaviors. She holds an M.A. in Women’s Studies from Ewha Womans University in South Korea. Her master’s thesis analyzed how the gender-sensitivity of trade unions influenced the level of commitment and participation of women workers across several trade unions.

She started to engage with activism as a student, co-founding a female student’s committee, focusing on the issues of class and gender at a university in South Korea. After completing the master’s degree, she worked for fifteen years as an international feminist labor activist, organizing both domestic and international women workers’ organizations in South Korea and Asia. During this time, she held various roles and responsibilities such as research director, program officer, and the Asia program coordinator. These included conducting research on various issues faced by women locally and regionally, coordinating an international campaign to lift minimum wages across Asia, organizing exchange programs of women workers from different countries, and directing training programs for women’s empowerment.



Dr. Jinyoung Park (front left) canvasses for a living wage outside a Penn State football game on October 5, 2019.

Center for Global Workers' Rights to Host its Ninth Annual Symposium

UPDATE AS OF MARCH 10: *The symposium has been postponed until further notice due to rising cases of the Coronavirus.*

On March 26 and 27 at the Graduate Hotel, the CGWR will host its Ninth Annual Symposium, titled "Women Workers in Struggle: Organizing for Labor Rights and Gender Equity." The symposium will bring together scholars and activists from across the globe to analyze movements of women workers across a range of historic, geographic, and economic contexts. On March 26, panels will analyze the role of women workers in labor education (11:00 a.m.), supply chains (1:45 p.m.), and the on-demand economy (3:45 p.m.). Panels on March 27 will cover immigration (11:30 a.m.) and organizing within and beyond unions (1:30 p.m.). Keynote addresses will be given by Distinguished Professor Dorothy Sue Cobble of Rutgers University (March 26 at 9:00 a.m.) and Karen Nussbaum, the founder of 9to5 and co-founder of Working America (March 27 at 9:30 a.m.).

On March 26 at 7:00 p.m. in 112 Kern Building, we will organize a special screening and discussion of "9to5: The Story of a Movement" by Oscar-winning filmmakers Julia Reichert and Steven Bognar. This illuminating documentary tells the story of a group of female office workers in Boston in the early 1970s who decided that they had suffered in silence long enough and created an organization to force changes in their workplaces. Largely forgotten today, the movement addressed still-relevant issues such as sexual harassment, pay equity, the "glass ceiling," and the need for employer-supported family and medical leave. It will be followed by a discussion with 9to5 founder, Karen Nussbaum. For more information about these events, check out our website: <https://ler.la.psu.edu/gwr>.



Women leaders of the February 2019 strike of over 50,000 auto workers in Matamoros, Mexico
(Photo credit: Paolo Marinaro)

Recent Publications by Center Team Members

Anner, Mark. 2019. "Predatory Purchasing Practices in Global Apparel Supply Chains and the Employment Relations Squeeze in the Indian Garment Export Industry." *International Labour Review* 158 (4): 705-727.

Clark, Paul F., Greg J. Bamber, **Paul V. Whitehead,** Lois S. Gray, Sandra Cockfield and Kay Gilbert. Forthcoming. "Does Modernizing Union Administrative Practices Promote or Hinder Union Revitalization? A Comparative Study of US, UK and Australian Unions." *British Journal of Industrial Relations*.

Hui, Elaine Sio-ieng. 2020. "Labor-Related Civil Society Actors In China: a Gramscian Analysis." *Theory and Society*: 1-26.

Tarlau, Rebecca. 2019. "Education, Pedagogy and Social Movements in Latin America." *Oxford Handbook of Latin American Social Movements*. Ed. F. Rossi. Oxford University Press.

Announcements

Visit our Labour Rights Indicators project:

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

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