



CENTER FOR GLOBAL WORKERS' RIGHTS

SPRING SEMESTER 2016

Another exciting semester is coming to a close for the Center and the MPS program in Labor and Global Workers' Rights (LGWR). The semester was off to a great start with a talk by Lydia Edwards on organizing immigrant domestic workers in the Boston area (p. 1). Professor Paul Whitehead is leading a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on workers' rights, which now has 900 active students (p. 4). LGWR students and professors joined with USAS on March 21 for a presentation by a Nike garment worker from Thailand (p. 4). The Center welcomed to the School Assistant Professor Elaine Hui, who researches and teaches on labor in China (p. 5). LGWR students from India and Brazil report on recent protests and events in their countries (p. 2 and 3). Several of our MPS students are actively involved in an effort to unionize graduate students at Penn State (p. 3). The Center's final event of the academic year was on April 20, when Bhairavi Desai spoke on organizing taxi workers and the need for higher road labor practices (p. 5). The Center thanks all the MPS students who contributed to this newsletter and visiting scholar Katuscia Galhera for her outstanding work editing the newsletter.

Movement Attorney Lydia Edwards Comes to Penn State

by Rebecca Ruiz, LGWR Student

On February 3, the Center for Global Workers' Rights was pleased to host an evening with domestic workers' rights attorney from Massachusetts (MA) Lydia Edwards. Edwards has been a force in Boston's fight for fair and equitable treatment for immigrant women workers in the United States. She was also part of the grassroots organizing team that wrote the Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights, a MA law that provides for written contracts, maternity leave, and a notification requirement for termination.



Lydia Edward (center), USAS members, LGWR students, CGWR professors and staff
Photo: Matt Cordeiro, PA student power coordinator

During Edwards's talk at Penn State, she drew connections between U.S. history of slavery and racial violence, and the lack of rights for domestic workers. Edwards explained that because many formerly enslaved Black women served as domestic workers in the beginning of the 1900s, the government refused to provide them basic human rights protections. Even today, domestic workers in the U.S. do not have the right to form a union.

Edwards also discussed the post-traumatic stress that domestic care workers experience when a hospice patient whom they have been tending to for sometimes more than a decade passes away. Grief-stricken workers are often then forced to argue with surviving family members for pay only to pick up another hospice job in the next few weeks, and the cycle of trauma continues.

We are glad for having hosted you.
Best of luck in your journey, Lydia!

Stand with JNU: the anatomy of resistance

by Archana Prasad, JNU and GLU Professor, and Anjali Sinha, LGWR Student

Every evening at 5pm the students and teachers of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) gather outside the Vice Chancellor's office at the Administrative Block to hold an open classroom. An eminent intellectual from inside or outside the campus comes and delivers a lecture on the diverse meanings of nationalism and freedom. These lectures are a part of the larger movement for resistance against the right-wing attack on progressive premier universities in the country.

JNU, located in the capital city of India, New Delhi, is one of the most prestigious universities in India. One of the programs of JNU also happens to be in collaboration with the Global Labor University, similar to Penn State University's School of Labor and Employment Relations. The JNU Students Union has long been known for holding demonstrations within the university as well as ensuring their voice is heard and changes are made.

The current spate of protest comes on the heels of two big agitations. The first was the eight month long protest by the students of Film Training Institute of India when a sympathizer of the Hindu Right was appointed as the director of this premier institute. The second protest is the continuing struggle for justice for Rohith Vemula, a student who was driven to suicide in Hyderabad Central University. The JNU students and teachers have been in the forefront supporting both these protests, and therefore the government was looking for an opportunity to persecute them.



Student protest at JNU
Photo: Press Trust of India

A small innocuous program protesting the hanging of Afzal Guru a convicted person in the Parliament attack was chosen by the rightwing students as an opportunity to complain to the police that 'unlawful' activities were taking place in the university. Eager to please the BJP government, the new Vice Chancellor followed their bidding, and for the first time the police came into campus. This was unprecedented, and the teachers association came out in full strength to mobilize the world to support its students. A result of such student-teacher solidarity was the platform of STAND WITH JNU, which continues until now, and whose great success has been that the incarcerated students have been let off on interim bail. This mobilization of neutral teachers and students has thrown open a window to reconfigure the anatomy of resistance against rightwing neoliberalism embodied in the present Central Government.

Labor Notes Conference: Troublemakers gather together!

by Hyunsu Hwang, LGWR Student

The 2016 Labor Notes conference was held in Chicago from April 1 – 3. It was a great experience to join it. Several things surprised me. First was the size. I've been to many international conferences, but never to one so huge. 2,000 people who proudly called themselves "troublemakers" gathered together from across the country and around the world. The 3-day conference was filled with more than 130 meetings, workshops, films, and events. Second was the passion of the unionists in attendance. I could feel the union spirit everywhere. I was overwhelmed by the enthusiasm of so many participants wanting to learn and share tactics and strategies.



Hyunsu Hwang at the "Teachers uprising around the world" panel at Labor Notes Conference
Photo: Denny Monteiro, LGWR student

I spoke on a panel that focused on the education sector. Our title was "Teachers uprising around the world". I shared the many challenges facing Korean teachers today. All the participants expressed enormous encouragement to Korean teachers in their big fight for union rights. It was a really moving moment. Teachers around the world are facing the same threats: privatization, high-stakes testing, government repression of union rights, and austerity measures. The Labor Notes conference was a great opportunity for me to witness a 21st century labor movement with vim and vigor. Yes! Most world progress has been made by people known as 'troublemakers.'

Students say no to the attempt of coup d'état in Brazil

by Katuscia Galhera, CGWR Visiting Scholar, and João Gabriel Buonavita, LGWR Student

Brazil is a young democracy. In 1989, we elected our first president democratically for the first time after a violent military dictatorship that had ruled the country with the support of the United States' foreign policy during the Cold War from 1964 to 1985. The Brazilian Constitution dates back to 1988.

Structural corruption, however, still remains in the country. Recently, investigation of a huge case of corruption, called *Lava Jato*, has been led by federal judge Sérgio Moro. Moro is inspired by and following the steps of magistrates in the Italian operation *Mani Pulite*, in which the judiciary leaked information to the media. However, and despite the involvement of most Brazilian parties in *Lava Jato*, the case is reaching out disproportionately to affect the Workers' Party. The *Central Unica dos Trabalhadores* (CUT), linked to the party, is a partner in the Global Labour University, hosted also by Penn State.

Concomitantly, the Brazilian president Dilma Rouseff is being indicted for delaying payments to public banks in order to compromise with social programs as *Bolsa Família* and *Minha Casa, Minha Vida*. The Ethics Commission in the Congress - with members involved in *Lava Jato* - just approved the text of impeachment, voted in the House of Representatives and been voted in the Senate. The prognosis is that the Workers' Party doesn't have an adequate *governabilidade* ability - the capacity of a government to make coalitions with numerous parties in the fragmented Brazilian political system. Eduardo Cunha, the head of the House of Representatives, is capable of making these coalitions and is leading the attempt of impeachment after the president did not block investigations into his conduct. Differently from Rouseff, Cunha is a defendant. Most social movements, Latin American presidents, and regional and international organizations - such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC), the Organization of American States (OAS), and the Union of South American Nations (USAN) - stood up for the president. Brazil might be suspended from the *Mercado Comun del Sur* (Mercosur), as it happened with Paraguay after Fernando Lugo was impeached.

Rouseff's impeachment would demonstrate that our young democracy is still fragile. A federal judge leaking out information, a highly biased media, and a Congress that is undermining the Executive threatens to destabilize our political institutions, leading, at best, to a *coup d'état*.



March Against Impeachment and in Favor of Unity, São Paulo, Dec. 16, 2016

Photo: CUT

Exciting worker organizing is happening right at Penn State!

by Coalition of Graduate Employees



**Irene Arellano, LGWR Student,
speaking at CGE event
Photo: Mark Anner**

The Coalition of Graduate Employees (CGE) has begun an authorization card drive in an effort to unionize graduate student employees. This move towards unionization transpired after graduate employees faced severe changes to health care coverage in 2014, which inspired conversation about protections graduate employees need as vulnerable but essential laborers for the university. Following canvassing, discussions with the Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA) opened. The CGE and PSEA decided to move forward together with an authorization card drive. After we build support through signing union authorizations cards, we will turn them into the Pennsylvania Labor Relations Board to hold a vote.

There are a number of concerns we wish to address through the process of unionization, including health care, mental health care, the Ride for 5, stipends, and childcare for employees with families. Yet this list is not exhaustive - we understand that each graduate employee has unique needs, and we are interested in yours. How can a union best serve you? Please tell us. CGE usually meets on Thursdays from 6-8 p.m. in room 241 of the Municipal Building (near Schlow Library). If you would like to learn more about the CGE and how to get involved, please go to cge-psu.com

Penn State Professors Reaching Activists Worldwide through Massive Mini-Courses in Worker Rights

This spring, Professor of Practice Paul Whitehead and Professor Mark Anner are playing a leading role in offering two free, massive, open, on-line courses (MOOCs) to anyone in the world with a computer. The first mini-course – now available at the website “Iversity” - is entitled “Worker Rights in a Global Economy.” The second, “Worker Rights in Global Supply Chains,” will begin shortly.



Students around the world participate in GLU MOOCs
Photo: MOOCs' website

Whitehead serves as lead instructor in the Global Economy MOOC. 2,700 persons have participated since its March launch, and of them, about 900 are current on all course requirements. According to their postings of personal backgrounds, students include employees or supporters of unions, government agencies, corporate social responsibility departments, and civil society organizations all around the globe. Here's how one mini-course participant recently evaluated her experience: "I've just begun the course, but even limiting my reaction to the first videos, my excitement is uncontrollable! THIS is the content I have been looking for everywhere!"

This coming fall, Anner will help to launch the course on supply chains, a subject he has researched extensively. The courses include a special feature consisting of in-person workshops being organized in dozens of cities around the world. To set up those events, GLU alumni have stepped forward to pitch in and help across many countries.

Nike Worker Speaks Out

by Denny B. Monteiro, CGWR Student

Noi Suparlai, a garment worker from Thailand who produced Nike apparel, came to Penn State on March 21st, 2016. She spoke at the “Nike worker tour” about how she and over 2,000 coworkers’ struggle against abuses by the billionaire brand. The event was promoted by United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS) as part of their campaign “Just do the right thing”.

Recently, Nike refused to allow the Workers Right Consortium, an independent monitoring organization, to inspect the brand’s contracted factories. Nike has a license contract with Penn State. In a meeting with the university administration, Noi asked for Penn State to pressure Nike to allow independent inspection in their factories by cutting Penn State’s ties with the brand. In response, the administration said that they support Nike’s decision to conduct factory monitoring with the Fair Labor Association, a body funded mostly by corporations. Maureen Riedel, manager of trademark licensing at the university, who also sits on the Board of Directors of the FLA, did not attend the meeting.



Noi Suparlai, USAS members and LGWR students
Photo: Anjali Sinha, LGWR student

Penn State’s USAS chapter participated in the USAS national conference at the University of Pittsburgh on February 26 and 27. Around 300 students attended workshops to sharpen their organizing skills. The Nike campaign was one of the main focuses of the event. Students were able to share tactics used in different chapters across the country to leverage their campaigns. Besides its international solidarity activity, USAS works to raise awareness about exploitation of workers on campuses and help them to organize unions.

Taxi Workers' Leader Calls for New Rules for the Uber Economy

by Lane Widham, CGWR Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow



Bhairavi Desai, co-founder and Executive Director of the New York Taxi Workers Alliance
Photo: Desai's courtesy

Bhairavi Desai believes taxi drivers deserve a fair shake, both in the United States and around the world. She spoke at Penn State on April 20 as part of the Center for Global Workers' Rights speakers series, urging high road labor practices, even in the face of industry disrupters like Uber and Lyft.

A native of India, Desai has been organizing taxi drivers since 1996. She is the co-founder and (since 1988) Executive Director of the 18,000-member New York Taxi Workers Alliance. More recently, she has become the President of the National Taxi Workers Alliance. In 2013, Bhairavi became the first Asian American and first non-traditional union representative to be elected to the AFL-CIO Executive Council.

In 2012, NYTWA won a livable income raise, first-time regulations of taxi companies, and a Health and Disability Fund for drivers, the first for taxi drivers nationwide and one of the first for independent contractors. NYTWA has increased drivers' incomes by 35%-45%, secured over \$15 million in emergency aid to drivers, and provided pro bono or discounted legal, financial management, and health services to over 10,000 drivers and families.

The New York taxi group joined with the Taxi Workers Alliance of Pennsylvania in 2011 to found the National Taxi Workers Alliance, which now has affiliates in New York City (New York), Philadelphia (Pennsylvania), Austin (Texas), Montgomery County (Maryland) and San Francisco (California) and active organizing drives in several cities. NTWA's mission is to organize the 250,000-plus taxi workforce around the country under one powerful union.

Spotlight Shines on Elaine Hui

Assistant Professor of Labor & Employment Relations

by Katuscia Galhera, CGWR Visiting Scholar

"Workers all over the world are facing the same problems caused by neoliberalism and they face the same class enemy. Workers within a particular country cannot fight back on their own; they need a broader class solidarity and a class response to problems that are facing the world right now", says Elaine Hui, PhD, the new assistant professor who joined the Center for Global Workers' Rights this semester. Under her leadership this spring semester, students are enjoying her amazing course, "Labor and Employment Relations in China in Comparative Perspective".

Professor Hui is a former post-doc at the City University of Hong Kong, earned her PhD at the University of Kassel, and is an alumnae of the Global Labour University (GLU) in Germany. Her background in academia includes the fields of Political Science, Anthropology, and Labor Studies. She also has a trajectory in social movements, whether with labor Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) or labor unions, organizing women workers at the community level, sub-contracted janitors, or workers at Disneyland in Hong Kong.

Besides pursuing academic activities, her plans at Penn State include understanding better the U.S. labor movement and multiculturalism. Welcome to our team, Professor Hui!



Dr. Elaine Hui

Recent Publications by Center Team Members

Lane Windham, forthcoming in 2017. *Knocking on Labor's Door: Union Organizing and the Origins of the New Economic Divide*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Katiuscia Galhera and Joao Veiga, 2016. "Entre o Lar e a 'Fabrica': Trabalhadoras Bolivianas da Costura na Cidade de Sao Paulo". In *Discussoes Contemporaneas Sobre Trabalho Escravo: Teoria e Pesquisa*, Ricardo Rezende Figueira, Adonia Antunes Prado, Edna Maria Galvao de Oliveira (organizers). Rio de Janeiro: Mauad.

Mark Anner and Helen Liu. 2016. "Harmonious Unions and Rebellious Workers: A Study of Wildcat Strikes in Vietnam." *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 69(1): 3-28.

Mark Anner and Jakir Hossain. 2016. "Multinational Corporations and Economic Inequality in the Global South: Causes, Consequences and Countermeasures in the Bangladeshi and Honduran Apparel Sector." In *Combating Inequality: The Global North and South*, Alexander Gallas, Hansjörg Herr, Frank Hoffer, and Christoph Scherrer (editors). New York: Routledge. pp. 93-110.

Mark Anner and Jennifer Bair, 2016. "The Bulk of the Iceberg: A Critique of the Stern Center's Report on Worker Safety in Bangladesh." Center for Global Workers' Rights (CGWR), Pennsylvania State University. <http://lser.la.psu.edu/gwr/documents/CGWRCritiqueofSternReport.pdf>

Mark Anner, 2015. "Labor Control Regimes and Worker Resistance in Global Supply Chains," *Labor History*, (3): 292-307.

Post-doctoral and Visiting Scholars Positions, and Student Funding

The CGWR provides opportunities for scholars engaged in research on workers' rights by supporting a yearly post-doctoral and hosting visiting scholars. It also offers funds in support of individual or collaborative undergraduate and graduate student research on themes related to the protection of workers' rights in the global economy. For more information, go to: <http://lser.la.psu.edu/gwr/>

MPS Program in Labor and Global Workers' Right

The Center, through the School of Labor and Employment Relations and in coordination with the Global Labour University, offers a twelve-month MPS program in Labor and Global Workers' Rights. The program, designed for mid-career US and international labor practitioners. For more information, see: <http://ler.la.psu.edu/gwr/mps-in-labor-and-global-workers-rights>

CGWR Labour Rights Indicators Dataset

The CGWR "Labour Rights Indicators" webpage provides comprehensive numerical and textual information on country-level compliance with freedom of association and collective bargaining rights that is comparable between countries and over time.

See: <http://tur.la.psu.edu/>

Global Labour Journal

Don't forget to check out the latest issue of GLJ, an open access, online journal co-hosted by the CGWR.

See: <https://escarpmentpress.org/global labour>.



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