ILR Labor Advance, Fall 2008

ILR Extension Labor Programs

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Welcome to our new newsletter for Cornell's ILR Extension Labor Programs, the Cornell ILR Labor Advance. We plan to publish twice a year to keep you informed about labor programs, events, research, issues and services at Cornell ILR that can assist you and your organization.

In the past several years, our labor work at the ILR Extension has broadened to include many aspects beyond the traditional and vital labor education and training we have been known for since 1947. Through it all, our mission remains advancing the world of work for workers and their communities. We conduct research for unions, convene public policy debates and look at cross-union and international issues that impact the labor movement around the globe. We participate in large global and national projects affecting workers around the world. And, we explore issues that concern workers who may be outside the traditional membership structures of the labor movement.

We constantly hear from our friends and colleagues outside Cornell, “We didn’t know you did that, too …” The purpose of the new Cornell ILR Labor Advance is to give you a fuller picture of our work, and the impact it’s having on the labor field, public policy and advancing workers’ rights, including the big issues affecting the future of the labor movement.

You are our partners—so please contact us with your feedback on this first issue and let us know how this newsletter can best serve the needs of your labor organization.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Sally Alvarez
Director of Labor Programs

Labor at a Crossroads

BY FRED KOTLER, DIRECTOR, NYS AFL-CIO/CORNELL UNION LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE


More than 80 high-level and emerging union leaders and staff attended six days of workshops, plenary sessions and social events as part of the institute’s 13-month, 12-credit certificate course that includes four weekend seminars, elective courses and individual projects.

A wide range of public and private sector unions are represented from industries as varied as entertainment, health care, education and construction. This joining of leaders from throughout the labor movement distinguishes the Cornell program from single-organization based education and training.

The opening plenary session, presented by Jeff Grabelsky, director of Cornell University’s Union Building Strategies Program, urged union leaders to think strategically as a labor movement rather than as stand-alone unions. The rest of the week was spent in workshops on regional power building, strategies for increasing labor’s impact beyond the workplace and in communities, analyzing leadership styles and behaviors, developing strategic leverage, and engaging in a series of team-building challenges in an afternoon outdoors at the nearby Cayuga Nature Center.

Key presenters included noted University of California labor historian Nelson Lichtenstein; and the longtime civil rights activist and leader, Rev. Nelson N. Johnson, pastor of Faith Community Church, Greensboro, N.C., who spoke about “Building a Movement for Social Change: Challenges and Opportunities for the 2008 Presidential Election.” Jeff Faux, founding president of the Washington, D.C.-based Economic Policy Institute, shared his views on a global elite that is waging class warfare against working people throughout the world. Faux emphasized the common interests among workers in the United States, Mexico, and Canada, and he argued for a unifying strategy among the labor organizations in the three nations.

“Our class at the Union Leadership Institute really examined what it means, and what it would take, to build unity among labor organizations in terms of strategy, yes, but resources as well,” said Mike Riggio, who directs the White Collar Division of AFSCME’s 120,000-member District Council 37 in New York City. “On a small scale, we made the idea of unity a reality by raising $3,000 from the members of our class to help the organizing work of the United Farm Workers. An ethos of the Institute is that it challenges those of us in the labor movement to see ourselves not just as leaders of our local unions, but as a community of union leaders who together can shape an agenda to win concrete gains for all working people.”

The institute is conducting a formal evaluation among alumni and sponsors to measure its long-term impact on individual and organization leadership development.

For more information about the Union Leadership Institute, contact Fred Kotler, Director, at fbk2@cornell.edu or 607-255-4462, or Anne Sieverding, Coordinator, at acs5@cornell.edu or 607-255-9191.
Working Parents for a Working New York

BY KC WAGNER, DIRECTOR, WORKPLACE ISSUES

Quality, accessible and affordable child care are essential for parents to work the necessary hours, improve their skills and perform their jobs without undue absence or lateness on the job.

“I had to fine my first sitter because she was always drunk and now my son’s girlfriend sits for me. It’s cheaper but she’s always late so now my good attendance is down the tube.”

“I adapted my sister’s four kids who were in foster care and with my son’s girlfriend sits for me. It’s cheaper but she’s always late so now my child care is down the tube.”

These experiences were recorded by Working Parents for a Working New York, an initiative launched in 2007 and funded by the New York City Council. Led by Brooklyn-based Councilmember Bill de Blasio, it studies the effect of child care subsidies for selected members of the city’s unionized workforce over a two-year period: 1199SEU Home Care Workers; District Council 37 AFSCME Municipal Hospital Workers; and Teamsters Local 237 School Safety Guards.

The study focuses on the variables of attendance, productivity and quality of care.

The initiative is backed by the New York Union Council, a committee of the New York City Central Labor Council and New York State AFL-CIO, District Council 37 AFSCME, Teamsters Local 237, 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East; Transport Workers Union Local 100; United Federation of Teachers Local 2; UNITE HERE, IAM, SEIU 1199, OPEU Local 153; CWA District 1, Locals 1105 & 1108; District Council 1700 AFSCME, Civil Service Employees Association; NYS Nurses Association; Council of Supervisors and Administration; Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1055; American Federation of Government Employees District 2, Local 32-BTU; NYS Public Employees Federation; UAW Locals 209 & 210; UFCW Local 1500; United Postal Workers; and United Teamster Store Local 3.

Cornell ILR directs the project team doing the case study research. Supporting the study is a labor-management partnership consisting of DC77 NYC Health and Hospitals Corporation (HHC), Local 237 AFSCME, Police Department and 1199SEIU/NYCHC Homecare Subcontractors. The Consortium for Worker Education administers the child care subsidies from the Agency.

Cornell ILR and Union Local 237, who represented IBEW Local 3 at the Academy.

The program ran for four Saturdays over a six-week period, and culminated in the awarding of a Leadership Certificate from Cornell. Bill Fletcher, Jr., AFGE education director, and former president of TransAfrica Forum, gave the Academy’s opening address on April 16, 2008.

The second session of the Black Trade Union Leadership Academy is scheduled for the spring of 2009. Please contact Steven King at 212-340-2821 or sk995@cornell.edu to register or for more information.

Cornell Launches New Black Trade Union Leadership Academy

STEVE KING, PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Excitement and anticipation were in the air at the ILR School Conference Center in New York City on April 12, 2008, when Cornell launched the new Black Trade Union Leadership Academy. Modeled on a highly successful program for black union leaders at the University of California Berkeley Labor Center, Cornell’s new program grew out of requests from a number of unions in the NYC area for a similar program.

Focusing on a united, yet diverse, labor movement capable of creating and achieving a common agenda for working people is a challenge faced by every union. This unique new leadership program helps leaders develop a critical approach to the relationship of black workers and the labor movement, both historically and today. A key component is examining the role of organizing and its impact on black workers, unions, the larger labor movement, and the black community.

“The Black Trade Union Leadership Academy was a very valuable program in providing insight on the history, struggles, accomplishments and the importance of African Americans in the labor movement,” said Academy participant Sharon Lowel-Hall, who directs education and training for CSEA Local 1000. “The information gained was helpful in providing leadership skills and empowerment to organize the unorganized and internally build unity and solidarity in our unions.”

The curriculum was developed in consultation with leaders and educators from UFT/CSA, Teamsters, DC37, UNITE-HERE, AFGE, and the AFL-CIO. Lessons learned in the California program were shared by Katie Quan, who spent the year in NYC as Cornell’s Visiting Labor Scholar from the UC Berkeley Labor Center. Veteran labor educator Bernard Moore from UNITE HERE taught the program, ably assisted by ILR staff-legends Gabriella Cabrera and Steven King. Participants came from a wide range of unions, including 1199SEU/NABET-CWA Local 16; Laborman’s (LEROF); DC 37 – AFSCME; CSEA; and Teamsters Local 210.

“Cornell’s Academy, with its focus on developing Black labor leaders … will improve the lives of workers and strengthen the labor movement”

The Academy’s curriculum focuses on critical thinking, power analysis, strategic planning and how effective leaders combine working toward a vision and sharing power in order to achieve it. Bernard Moore guided participants as they deconstructed common notions of leadership and its relationship to power, entitlement, identity and identification. Through self analysis, role plays and case studies, participants discovered the impact that identity and entitlement have on hearing the right message, moving others toward a vision, organizing, and the application of leadership.

“Cornell’s Academy, with its focus on developing Black labor leaders with strong analytical ability and an understanding of the importance of building ties to community organizing efforts, will improve the lives of workers and strengthen the labor movement,” said Derek Jordan, who represented IBEW Local 3 at the Academy.

The program ran for four Saturdays over a six-week period, and culminated in the awarding of a Leadership Certificate from Cornell. Bill Fletcher, Jr., AFGE education director, and former president of TransAfrica Forum, gave the Academy’s opening address on April 16, 2008.

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The United Nations released the world’s most comprehensive green jobs analysis in September 2008. Sean Sweeney and Jill Kubit of the Cornell ILR School’s Global Labor Institute co-authored the report with Michael Renner, a senior researcher at the Washington, D.C.-based Worldwatch Institute.

The 350-page study “Green Jobs: Toward Sustainable Work in a Low-Carbon World” is part of the Green Jobs Initiative, a joint collaboration between the U.N. Environment Programme (UNEP), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC).

The study documents the significant progress made so far in creating green jobs around the world, particularly with the growth of renewable energy. Many of the conclusions suggest that green jobs could grow on a massive scale in the years ahead through development of renewable energy sources, energy efficiency, fuel-efficient vehicles, reforestation, sustainable agriculture and by expanding public transportation.

Investment in renewable energy has increased dramatically to around $150 billion annually, or roughly 30% of total investment in green energy generation. This has generated at least 2.3 million jobs in wind, solar and other clean energy sources.

However, the report makes clear that a green jobs future for the planet is by no means inevitable. The levels of investment required to generate mass-level green jobs have yet not materialized. Many billions of dollars are needed to drive investment in green buildings and public transit systems, and clean energy. The market can only do so much, concludes the report, and the pace of change needs to be accelerated dramatically given the threat of climate change.

“Governments must therefore take the lead, and do so in ways that are conducive to the growth of green jobs that are well rewarded and protected,” says Sweeney.

The report also points to the need for a transfer of resources from the rich countries to the poorer regions in order to assist adaptation to climate change. A well-resourced program of adaptation will create millions of green jobs in the global South, particularly in agriculture and environmental services.

The report also draws attention to the need for workers and communities to be protected during the transition to a low-carbon future—particularly those in energy-intensive industries who may see declines in employment. Also, not all green jobs are good jobs. The recycling industry in many parts of the world—particularly China—is extremely hazardous. The state of the world’s labor market, where roughly one in three workers are either underemployed or unemployed, is not conducive to the growth of green jobs that are well rewarded and protected.

“There is nothing intrinsically fair or just about either the process of becoming green or the end result,” according to the report. “The issue is not simply about the transition itself, but what follows the transition—the goal being a new mode of production and consumption that allows for greater social inclusion, equity, and opportunity.”

Cornell’s Global Labor Institute hopes to continue its research and advocacy work in green jobs and sustainable work and will continue its partnership with Worldwatch. The Cornell-Worldwatch team is attempting to link various institutes around the world into a “global green jobs observatory” in 2009 in order to monitor and observe green jobs developments on the ground and in the policy arena.

To download the full report, visit: http://www.unep.org/labour_environment/feature/green_jobs.asp

Spotlight on Research

Arts and Entertainment

New York State is a major arts, media and entertainment industry center that generates $27.5 billion of economic activity, including $9.8 billion in wages and more than 195,000 jobs. Recent work in this area by ILR Extens- 

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Summer ILR Extension Labor Research Fellows Program Connecting Ithaca campus students with ILR Extension Division labor educators, researchers and practitioners in New York City, the ILR Extension Research Fellows Program this summer included seven undergraduate and graduate students. The students and their projects were:

Allison Arotsky (Arts and Sciences ’09)—women’s ways of organizing

Megan Aussen (ILR ’10)—labor-related consent decrees

Natalia Navas (ILR ’09)—journalists covering labor and employment issues in the developing world

Erik Stein (MLIR ’09)—construction industry trends in New York City

Jacob Slovik (ILR ’08)—healthcare reform

Mayte Tapia (ILR Ph.D., ’10)—Cornell Global Labor Institute sustainable development initiative and green jobs

Dannis Chen (ILR ’09)—Harry Van Andale Internship Program/Immigration as it relates to the legacy of Harry Van Andale

The Cost of Misclassification

Ten percent of the seven million private-sector workers in New York State are misclassified as independent contractors, allowing employers to avoid withholding state and federal income taxes, unemployment insurance taxes and workers’ compensation payments.

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Online Programs: Distance Learning

The On-Line Labor Studies Certificate Program was launched in 2007 by Cornell ILR Extension. It is the first distance-learning program the ILR School has offered specifically for union members and activists.

Union members from California to Florida, Alaska to Maine, Ireland to United Arab Emirates now have the opportunity to learn from members of the Cornell Adjunct Faculty Association as well as ILR Extension Faculty about employment and labor law, labor history, contract bargaining and other subjects critical to the development of leadership skills and an activist’s orientation.

Although most students had never taken an on-line course before, they said they enjoyed interacting with unionists from other states, countries and backgrounds. “The major advantage of the on-line courses is that the work can be done at your convenience,” said Edward A. Cescato, Executive Vice President of the Niagara Falls Teachers union. “So even though my job as a teacher, my family responsibilities, and my position as an officer in my local union require a great deal of time and commitment, the on-line courses allow me the flexibility to participate in the class whenever I have the time.”

Customized Education and Training

Often a labor union’s specific goals are best addressed through the collective training of its members, offices or staff. Cornell’s labor staff work with unions to custom design an education program on topics such as strategic planning, organizational and staff development, preparation for collective bargaining and new-member organizing. These custom programs can be held at the union’s headquarters or at Cornell ILR’s conference center in Manhattan.

For more information, contact Gene Carroll at gc32@cornell.edu or at 212-340-2853.

News and Recognition

Upgraded Cornell ILR Conference Center in NYC

Cornell ILR’s KC Wagner, at left, was honored for her work on domestic violence awareness by the NYS Coalition Against Domestic Violence at the group’s 30th anniversary dinner in Albany on April 29. Presenting the award to Wagner is Ruth Reynolds, president of the Coalition’s board of directors.

Acknowledgements

A giant mucho gracias goes out to the many people who contributed to the production of this first edition of ILR Labor Advance: Sally Alvarez, Legna Cabrera, Mary Catt, Gene Carroll, Linda Donahue, Maria Figueroa, Steve King, Fred Kotler, Jill Kubit, Peter Lazey, Jenn Morley, Joan Roberts, Anne Sieverding, Sean Sweeney, KC Wagner, Pam Whitefield and Joe Zappala.

News and Recognition

ILR Workplace Issues Director KC Wagner Honored

Union made and union installed: Carpenters’ Union members (l. to r.) Mark Di Pasquale, Jim McGuinness and Andrew McGuinness plan the final touches for the upgraded Cornell ILR Conference Center in NYC that re-opened on October 1, 2008.

ILR Workplace Issues Director KC Wagner Honored

Cornell ILR’s KC Wagner, at left, was honored for her work on domestic violence awareness by the NYS Coalition Against Domestic Violence at the group’s 30th anniversary dinner in Albany on April 29. Presenting the award to Wagner is Ruth Reynolds, president of the Coalition’s board of directors.
The Union Leadership Workshop Series – New York City

January to June 2009

The Union Leadership Workshop Series based in New York City is a non-credit practical education, training and leadership development program designed for labor union officers, staff, stewards, member activists and worker advocates. Workshops run weekdays 9:00 AM - 4:30 PM at the Cornell-ILR School Conference Center, 16 East 34th Street, 6th floor, Manhattan. For more info contact 212-340-2827 or jp424@cornell.edu

Fees: Unless indicated otherwise, the fee for a one-day program is $350; a two-day workshop is $500; and three days is $750. Fee includes food service and class materials.

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To register call 212-340-2827 or send Email to jp424@cornell.edu

College Credit Labor Studies Program – New York City

WINTER 2009

Register now for the Cornell Labor Studies Program in NYC! Winter 2009 courses begin the week of January 5th and run one evening a week for 12-weeks. This program offers area union leaders, activists, and staff the opportunity to earn college credit while gaining a strong theoretical and practical understanding on union-side labor relations. All courses are specifically designed to meet the needs of working adults. Class size is small and structured to build on the knowledge and experience of all participants. Admission is open to all, tuition is low ($550 per course) and partial scholarships are still available.

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If you are interested in enrolling or have questions about the program, please call or Email Program Director Pamela Whitefield (212) 340-2847 or pw39@cornell.edu

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