

Union Women Celebrate 44th Annual Summer School at Hofstra

Over 160 women from dozens of different labor organizations gathered at Hofstra University July 27th through the 31st, marking the 44th annual Northeast School for Women in Unions and Worker Organizations. Presented by the United Association for Labor Education (UALE), the pre-eminent national labor studies organization, the regional summer schools use highly interactive “popular education” methods in four days filled with intensive workshops. Leadership, skill-building, networking, and educational programs were designed to train and empower women to take on leading roles in labor organizations. Summer schools provide a unique, rigorous, and immersive experience -- one suited to the best innovations of the current labor movement. The themes, topics, workshops, and panels speak to the urgency for gender equality in leadership, solidarity, and movement-building creativity.



Credit: Janette Pellegrini; CUNY SLU.

This year was the first that the Hofstra Labor Studies Program was selected to host the summer school, in a unique collaboration with the CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies (SLU). Most students spent the week living in campus dorms or nearby hotels, taking meals together. Classes were facilitated by labor educators from academic labor studies programs (including Hofstra, CUNY and Cornell) and from labor organizations, as well as by rank and file leaders.

The opening ceremony for this year's school featured a tribute to two widely influential women. Carolyn Jacobson was a founding member of the Coalition of Labor Union Women and communications director of the Bakery, Confectionery and Tobacco Workers & Grain Millers union for 28 years. A Cornell grad, she later helped found the Berger Marks Foundation, where she devoted many years to promoting leadership skills of labor union women. Lois Gray was the long-time director of Cornell University's Industrial and Labor Relations Center in Manhattan. Gray, who earned a Columbia PhD in economics under Nobel Prize winner Gary Becker, was appointed ILR director in 1956. Over the following half-century, her research, writing and mentoring to promote workers' rights and women's union leadership touched the lives of many thousands and served as a model for labor education.

In addition to the classroom and other activities, many participants travelled *en masse* to a rally in support of Best Market workers, protesting the purchase of 24 Long Island stores by nonunion grocer Lidl.



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At the opening tribute to Carolyn Jacobsen and Lois Gray (on screen upper right).
(Credit: *Regional Labor Review*)

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