

## Working Women's Fights for Labor Rights – 1911 & 2011: Snapshots of the Past Year's Local Labor Activities



1. March 25, 2011 was the 100th anniversary of the Triangle Factory fire in Lower Manhattan, the city's deadliest workplace tragedy of the past century. The fire claimed 146 lives, mostly young immigrant women. Many of those same workers had gone on strike the year before to demand improved pay, working conditions and labor union rights. Triangle, the largest garment firm in the city, resisted all such demands. In memory of those workers and the workplace safety movement and new labor laws they inspired, marchers, rallies and educational events were organized around the country.

In New York City that day, thousands rallied at the site of the factory (on right in above photo) now an NYU classroom building), one block east of Washington Square Park in Greenwich Village to hear labor activists, artists, union leaders and government officials (including U.S. Dept. of Labor Secretary Hilda Solis). [photo credit: Regional Labor Review]



History Professor Stanislaw Pugliese introduces new documentary on the Triangle tragedy.

2. "WHY OUR CLOTHES ARE STILL MADE IN SWEATSHOPS – AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT" was Hofstra's commemoration of the Triangle workers, held on campus March 24th (the day before the centennial). History Professor Stanislaw Pugliese first introduced a moving PBS documentary film of the Triangle tragedy. Then the keynote speaker, Charles Kernaghan, director of the Institute for Global Labor and Human Rights (formerly the National Labor Committee) showed TV news footage (largely ignored by the US media) of a similar fatal high-rise factory fire just months before in December 2010. At the Hameem factory in Savar, Bangladesh, where a mostly young female workforce sews garments for The Gap, 29 workers died (some jumping in terror from upper windows) and over 100 were injured after being trapped in workrooms reportedly locked by the owners. Most workers at the factory worked 80 hours per week and made only 28 cents an hour – just one tenth as much (in 2010 US dollars) as the Triangle workers did in 1911.



Charles Kernaghan



Joanna Grossman and Lilly Ledbetter

Mr. Kernaghan discussed how American fashion companies have slashed American jobs and labor costs by shifting nearly all of our clothing production overseas. He spoke in favor of a bipartisan bill before Congress, the Decent Working Conditions and Fair Competition Act, aimed at prohibiting the import, export, and sale of goods made with sweatshop labor. This event was organized by Hofstra's Labor Studies Program and was cosponsored by the Honors College, the Sociology Department, Latin American and Caribbean Studies Program, Center for Civic Engagement and the Department of Speech Communication, Rhetoric & Performance Studies. [photo credit: Lindsey Calabrese]

3. "EQUAL PAY DAY" events are organized each April at Hofstra by the Labor Studies Program. Last year, Lilly Ledbetter spoke of her historic role in the fight against gender discrimination at work. The event was cosponsored by the Women's Studies Program and the Hofstra Labor & Employment Law Journal [Photo credit: Regional Labor Review].





4. “Immigration’s Impacts on the Long Island Economy,” a major new research report, was released at Hofstra on November 17th, 2010. Long Island’s waves of new immigration recently have generated passionate public debate about the effects on local jobs, incomes and economic activity. Principal author David Dyssegaard Kallick (at right in photo above), Senior Fellow, Fiscal Policy Institute, presented the main statistical findings. Commentary was provided by: Patrick Duggan (Former Nassau County Deputy Executive; at far left in photo); Pearl Kamer (Chief Economist, Long Island Association; 2nd from left in photo) and Omar Angel Perez (Executive Director, The Workplace Project; 2nd from right in photo). The event was organized by the Center for Study of Labor and Democracy and the National Center for Suburban Studies. For a copy of the report, go to [hofstra.edu/cld](http://hofstra.edu/cld). [Photo credit: Regional Labor Review].



5. To celebrate the 75th anniversary of the nation’s Unemployment Insurance system, the Labor Studies Program and the Center for Study of Labor & Democracy organized a forum on “Unemployment and the Safety Net” on October 21, 2010. Andrew Stettner, Policy Co-Director of the National Employment Law Project, discussed why the federal unemployment insurance safety net has failed to keep pace, even before the 2008-09 recession, with the changing labor force, especially the growth in women, part-time and low-wage workers. He outlined reforms aimed at repairing benefit coverage in New York and other states. Hofstra commentators were Prof. Martha Weisel (Zarb School of Business) and Prof. Susan Joffe (Hofstra Law School). [Photo credit: Regional Labor Review].



6. Public sector workers found themselves the targets of budget-cutting mayors and governors across the country over the past year. Recession-strapped local governments, required by law to annually balance their budgets, typically opted for spending cuts over tax hikes to trim their deficits. Tens of thousands of New York City teachers, police, sanitation workers and others marched to a “Save Our City” rally at City Hall on June 16, 2010 to protest planned layoffs and demand alternative budget options. [Photo credit: Regional Labor Review].

**CSEA** **Talkin’ Labor**  
**with Local 830**  
 Hosted by CSEA Local 830 President Jerry Laricchiuta  
**AIRING ON WGBB AM1240 - Wed. at 6:30 pm**

Local & National Events: Spring/Summer 2011

NY METRO

**February 3, 10, 17 & 24** – African-American History Month features the annual Labor Studies film series “Africans At Work: Life and Labor in Africa and America.” Location of Feb. 3-17 showings: Guthart Cultural Center Theater. On Feb. 24 at 2:20 pm, we host special guest filmmaker U. Roberto Romano introducing his documentary “The Dark Side of Chocolate”. Location: Multipurpose Room East, Student Center. Free admission. For schedule of each film, visit: [www.hofstra.edu/laborstudies](http://www.hofstra.edu/laborstudies).

**March 24** – “Why Our Clothes Are Still Made in Sweatshops: Commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the Triangle Factory Tragedy.” The Triangle Fire of 1911 in Lower Manhattan was the city's deadliest industrial tragedy of the 20th century (in which 146 mostly young immigrant workers died). In recent years, American fashion companies have shifted nearly all of our clothing production overseas. But unsafe work conditions, child labor and human rights abuses remain all too common in the industry. Charles Kernaghan and his National Labor Committee have been a leading force in the global fight for an end to such sweatshop labor. Come hear him discuss his high-profile campaigns against the sweatshops behind the Kathy Lee Gifford/WalMart clothing line, Disney's merchandise empire, and other well-known brands and the current global movement to reform the sweatshops in which many Americans clothes are made. Excerpts of the new PBS documentary on the Triangle fire will also be shown, introduced by History Professor Stan Pugliese. At 2:20–3:45 in The Greenhouse, Hofstra Student Center.

**April 7 & 8** – “Social Security and the National Labor Relations Act – a 75th anniversary Assessment” As part of Hofstra's 3-day scholarly conference – “1935: The Reality and the Promise”– scholars and government officials debate the past and future of two hugely important New Deal programs: government old age assistance and the system of labor-management regulations established by the National Labor Relations Act: “Social Security – Americans’ Retirement at Risk?” on April 7 at 4-5:30 p.m. in Cultural Center Theater; panel members: Kirsten Downey (author of new biography of FDR’s Labor Secretary, Frances Perkins) and Susan Jacoby (author of new book Never Say Die); moderated by Prof. Ed Zychowicz (Prof. of Finance, Hofstra Business School). “The NLRA – Still Labor’s Magna Carta?” on April 8 at 10:30 a.m.-12 noon in Axinn Library, room 246; panel includes: Roger Clayman (Director, Long Island Federation of Labor); Grant Hayden (Hofstra U. Law School); and Susan Rubisch-Gissler (Carlow University).

**April 12** –“Equal Pay Day” – “Immigrant Women Fight for Fair Pay,” featuring: Norma Murillo (UNITY Housecleaners Coop & The Workplace Project); Tracey Walters (SUNY Stony Brook); and Lauris Wren (Hofstra Law School's Refugee and Asylum Clinic). Moderated by Brenda Elsey (Hofstra History Dept.). Organized by Hofstra's Labor Studies Program and the Women's Studies Program; cosponsored by Hofstra Labor & Employment Law Journal and Latin American and Caribbean Studies Program. For info., call 516-463-5040 and visit: [www.hofstra.edu/cld](http://www.hofstra.edu/cld) and [www.pay-equity.org](http://www.pay-equity.org).

**April 28** – “Workers Memorial Day,” a nationwide day of remembrance to recognize the thousands of U.S. workers who die and millions more who become disabled each year just doing their job. In New York State alone, each year an average of over 220 workers die on the job and nearly 280,000 are reported to become ill or injured as a result of their work. For information on local events, visit: [www.nycosh.org](http://www.nycosh.org).

**April 29** – “Mourn for the Death of Workers & Fight for the Living,” a conference on job safety at 10 a.m.-3 p.m. on Long Island, hosted by the New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health (NYCOSH) and The Workplace Project at Economic Opportunity Commission, 134 Jackson St., Hempstead. For info., call LI NYCOSH at 631/435-1857.

**May 1** – Annual Immigrant Rights Mayday March. Meet at 1 pm in Foley Square at Worth St., Lower Manhattan (Centre & Lafayette Sts.).

**May 2** – “Mayday at the Movies: Comedy & Tragedy At Work:” the 10th annual day-long festival of new films and classics on work and working people, with introductions and discussion led by academic experts. At Guthart Cultural Center Theater (central campus, entry 1st floor, Axinn Library), Hofstra University. Free admission, seating limited, arrive early. Presented by Hofstra’s Labor Studies Program and the Center for Study of Labor & Democracy. For film schedules and other info. call: 516/463-5040.

**May 6** – Annual spring conference of Labor & Employment Relations Association, L.I. Chapter. Starts 9 am at DeSeversky Center, New York Institute of Technology, Old Westbury, NY. For info. call: 516/746-9307 or visit: [www.lilera.org](http://www.lilera.org).

**June 2** – New York Committee for Occupational Safety& Health (NYCOSH) 33rd Annual Awards Dinner; 6–8:30 pm at United Federation of Teachers headquarters, 52 Broadway, Manhattan. For more info., see: [www.nycosh.org](http://www.nycosh.org).

**June 9-10** – “The Impact of the Global Economic Crisis on the Workplace,” 64th annual conference of the Center for Labor & Employment Law, NYU. At Vanderbilt Hall, 40 Washington Square South. For info., visit [www.law.nyu.edu/centers/labor](http://www.law.nyu.edu/centers/labor).

**June 10** – Labor & Employment Relations Association of Long Island’s Spring Meeting. At Nassau Co. Bar Association in Mineola, NY. For info. call: 516/746-9307, or visit: [www.lilera.org](http://www.lilera.org).

**July 18-22** – Women's Union Summer School at Rutgers University, organized by the United Association for Labor Education (UALE). For info., contact Donna Schulman via email: [dlschulman@work.rutgers.edu](mailto:dlschulman@work.rutgers.edu).

RELEASE DATES FOR MONTHLY LABOR MARKET INDICATORS

2011 RELEASE DATE	NATIONAL			REGIONAL	
	Employment & Unemployment	Job Openings & Turnover	Real Earnings	U.S. Metro Employment	New York Employment
MARCH	4	11	17	18	4, 25
APRIL	1	13	15	6, 27	15
MAY	6	11	13		20
JUNE	3	7	15	1, 29	17
JULY	8	12	15		15
AUGUST	5	10	18	3	19
SEPTEMBER	2	7	15	28	16

Sources: National Statistics – U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS): The Employment Situation; Job Openings and Labor Turnover (JOLT); Real Earnings; and Metro Area Employment & Unemployment. <http://www.bls.gov>  
NY State and Local Statistics – NY State Dept. of Labor: Monthly Press Release. <http://www.labor.state.ny.us>.

NOTE TO READERS:

If you know of upcoming labor-related meetings or conferences, collective bargaining contract expirations or renewals, or other events you would like considered for our next Calendar, please send us a brief description, together with the time, place, contact person, and their telephone number. Either fax this information, with a cover sheet addressed to **Regional Labor Review**, to fax # 516-463-6519; or email us at: [laborstudies@hofstra.edu](mailto:laborstudies@hofstra.edu).