

Professors on Strike, Immigrants on the March: Snapshots of Local Labor Activities in 2003



1. The U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in February led many unions to join tens of thousands of other New Yorkers in a large protest march in Manhattan on March 22, 2003. [photo by Gregory DeFreitas]

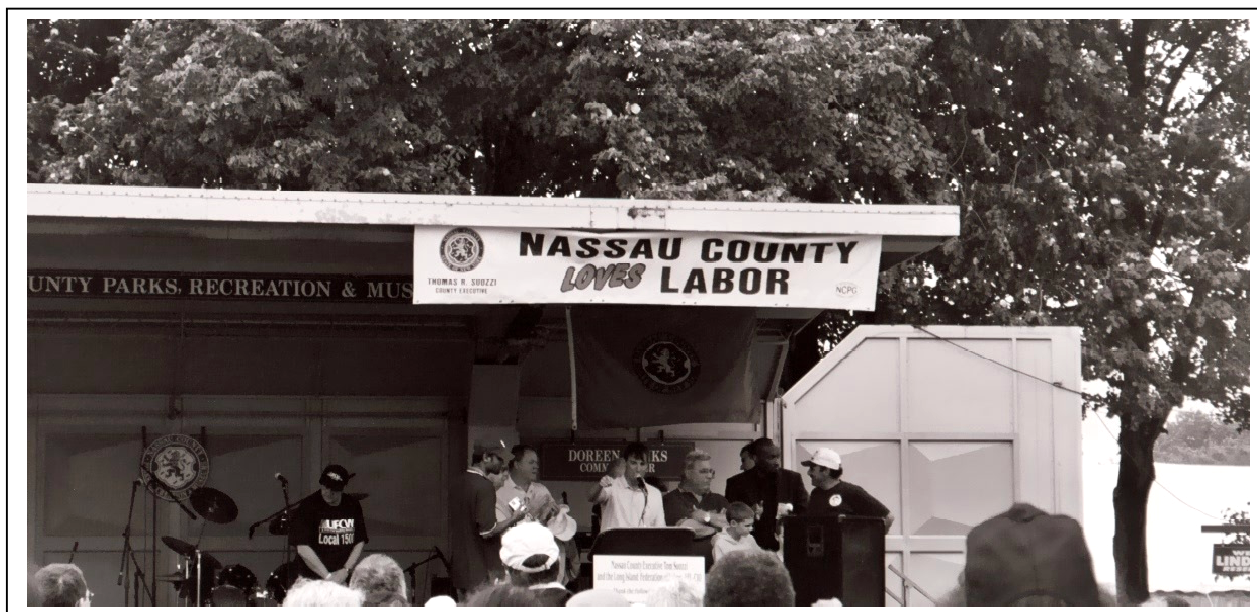


2. The "Immigrant Workers' National Freedom Ride" culminated in a rally of immigrant families, community and labor organizations in Flushing Meadows Corona Park on October 4th. The Freedom Ride was a nationwide, summer-long mobilization to spotlight challenges to immigrant rights. [photo by Robert Burkavage]



3 & 4. Faculty at the C.W. Post campus of Long Island University fought a nearly 3-week strike over pay, benefits and workload issues. Despite increasing student tuition 18.9% over the past 3 years, the university's administration was demanding faculty concessions, including: larger class sizes, increased teaching loads for research faculty, and increased health insurance payments by new faculty. The strike, the sixth at Post since 1974, began September 8th and won support from many Post students and from faculty at nearby universities, as well as substantial media coverage. The administration threatened to lay off striking faculty and to dock their pay up to \$6,600 – threats that union leaders labeled unjust attacks on the legal right to strike. When the final contract was approved, the faculty won an 11% salary hike over the 3-year term, a 1% “equity bonus” to reduce pay inequities, a cut in all faculty workloads to 9 credit hours per semester., and a \$3,600 cap on pay docked during the strike. The faculty union, AFT Local 3517, NYSUT, represents 324 full-time faculty. The 800 adjunct teachers at Post are represented by a different, non-striking union.

[photos by Charles Hildreth]



5. The first “Labor Picnic” in Nassau County was organized by the L.I. Federation of Labor on September 13th, the weekend after the NYC Labor Day Parade. Union families enjoyed music, sports and picnic lunches in Eisenhower Park. [photo by Kerry Lloyd]



6. Three former maquila factory workers from Honduras spoke at Hofstra on October 27th at the start of a national tour to report their personal experience of human and labor rights violations at factories in their country that supply some of the largest American clothing lines. In photo: Fabia Gutierrez, Lydda Eli Gonzalez and Martha Iris Alberto (front, left to right); behind them, l to r, are: Gregory DeFreitas (director, Hofstra Labor Studies), Barbara Briggs and Charles Kernaghan (National Labor Committee). Their tour sparked nationwide media attention to low wages and abusive labor conditions in a factory producing the American clothing line *Sean Johns*, owned by celebrity Sean “P. Diddy” Combs. Nineteen-year-old Lydda Gonzalez sewed his clothes for \$33/week minimum wages at the SETISA sweatshop factory in the San Miguel Free Trade Zone. The public outcry after the workers’ testimony won major concessions from Combs and SETISA: abusive supervisors were replaced, working conditions improved, and in December the workers were allowed to vote in a union. [photo: Rachel Velasco]

The tour was organized by the National Labor Committee, which has won national attention for exposing systematic violations of human and worker rights in Chinese factories making Mattel toys, in Disney’s clothing plants in Bangladesh, in Alcoa factories in Mexico, and in Nicaraguan factories supplying Kmart and Wal-Mart. The event was presented by the Labor Studies Program and by the Center for the Study of Labor & Democracy. Cosponsors included the Caribbean & Latin American Studies Program, Hofstra College Women’s Studies, New College Women’s Studies, the Honors College, HOLA & Students Against Injustice.