

July 2015 — June 2016

Annual Highlights

Labor Center Joins UI College of Law



UI Professor of Law Angela Onwuachi-Willig leads discussion of recent developments in employment discrimination law at a January, 2016, Labor Center conference.

The Labor Center is excited to announce it is now part of the UI College of Law.

While its office location, staff, and mission remain unchanged, the Labor Center's new administrative home became the College of Law on July 1, 2016. The transition follows a recent reorganization of UI's Division of Continuing Education, where the Center was housed previously.

Overlapping expertise in areas of labor and employment law,

joint work on public policy research and student service learning projects, and long-



standing relationships with many faculty and staff made the College a natural fit for the Labor Center.

Collaborative projects in recent years have included close work with law school units like the UI Legal Clinic and UI Center for Human Rights

on issues including wage payment violations, non-discrimination rights of immigrant workers, and delivery of "know your rights" community education workshops on workplace laws. Likewise, UI law students have contributed for years to the Labor Center's research mission as graduate assistants.

Promising discussions already under way are exploring opportunities to build on these collaborations while continuing to "build the labor movement through education."

Labor Education Reaches Statewide Audience



A dozen intensive on-campus courses drew 338 participants in 2015-16.

Engaging adult workers both on and off campus, 2015-16 Labor Center education programs involved 2,245 participants from 65 different Iowa counties.

Popular classes included traditional labor relations subjects like collective bargaining, workplace rights, or grievance handling, as well as hot topics like improving organizational communications, technology skills, and building coalitions.

New curriculum ideas continue to emerge through consultation with program hosts in

communities throughout the state, as well as input from members of the Labor Center's Labor Advisory Committee.

Advisory Committee members representing a broad cross-section of private and public

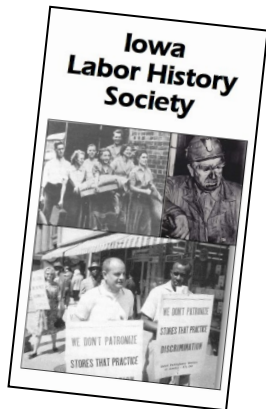
sector Iowa workers meet at least twice per year to review Labor Center course offerings and generate proposals for new projects, ensuring Labor Center programs remain responsive to the evolving needs and conditions of Iowa workers.



Off-campus classes reached over 1,900 workers during the year.



Members of the Labor Center's statewide Labor Advisory Committee met with Center staff in July, 2016.



2016 Labor Short Course attendees explored Iowa labor history during a field trip to the Iowa Labor Collections in the State Historical Society of Iowa.



New Labor History Society & Expanded Oral History Project Celebrate Lives and Labors of Diverse Working Iowans

Stretching from nineteenth-century immigrant communities, coal camps, farms, and rail towns to burgeoning twentieth-century industrial centers and beyond, Iowa has a rich and still unfolding labor history. A newly formed Iowa Labor History Society (ILHS) will ensure this past remains alive.

Momentum toward forming the new society built after union leaders, historians, educators, and librarians convened at the Labor Center earlier this year to learn from leaders of established societies in Illinois and Wisconsin.

ILHS will initially focus on enhancing and increasing public access to the treasure trove of existing labor history resources in the state, including several museums, published

books and articles, extensive labor archives, and the more than 1,200 worker interviews that make up the longstanding Iowa Labor History Oral Project. A joint project of the Labor Center, the Iowa Federation of Labor, and the State Historical Society of Iowa, ILHOP was initiated in the early 1970s and is widely recognized as one of the most comprehensive worker oral history collections in the world.

Labor Center Oral Historian John Mc Kerley continues to enrich the oral history collection, recording new interviews that expand the collection's attention to recent decades of Iowa labor history. A new



Oo Day Day, a member of UFCW Local 431 who works at Tyson Foods in Waterloo, is one of dozens of workers who contributed new oral history interviews to the Iowa Labor History Oral Project in the past year.

round of interviews devoted to documenting experiences of immigrant and refugee workers in Iowa's meatpacking industry is now under way, thanks to support from an Archie Green Fellowship awarded to the Labor Center by the U.S. Library of Congress' American Folklife Center.

Film Continues Campus-Community Discussion of Worker Rights Across "Food Chain"

"What we want, is to establish change," a member of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers explains in the trailer for new documentary, *Food Chains*.

The film documents the dramatic ways in which Florida farmworkers are combating exploitative working conditions, through grassroots organizing and development of a new "Fair Food Program" with major U.S. grocers.

A premiere Iowa screening hosted by the Labor Center and co-sponsored by several campus groups drew a full

house to the IMU in March, and concluded with discussion with Jose Oliva, Co-Director of the national Food Chain Workers Alliance.

Held during National Farmworker Awareness Week, the event extended discussion of themes raised in the Labor Center's 2015 "Injustice on Our Plates" conference, connected attendees to local



Jose Oliva, Co-Director of the national Food Chain Workers' Alliance, answers questions following a public screening of *Food Chains*.

groups, and contributed a unique focus on workers' rights to the UI's "Just Living" theme semester.

Racial Justice and Labor Rights Focus of Black Workers' Conferences

"We should be talking about these issues all the time, not only when a crisis happens," commented Greg Hearn, Business Agent for Teamsters Local 238, during Iowa's first-ever Black Workers' conference, held over the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday weekend in January.

Over forty workers and community members from Cedar Rapids, Des Moines, Iowa City, the Quad Cities, and Waterloo convened

for the conference in Iowa City, which was coordinated by the Labor Center and sponsored by the Iowa City Federation of Labor.

Attendees spent the day sharing experiences and exploring intertwined relationships between race and labor in the past and present. Workshop sessions focused on U.S. labor and civil rights history, recent trends in employment discrimination law, and practical tools for enforcing rights at work. The day concluded with an exchange of ideas for connecting local unions to contemporary racial justice movements.

John Campbell, a leader in his local union's Civil Rights Committee for decades, expressed that he was motivated to drive from Des Moines to attend the conference because of a commitment to the future: "Look, I'm finite,

I'm dying, every day. We all die. But the movement goes on. And how does it go on? New people. New education. New vision. That's how it goes on. You talk about what gives me satisfaction. That's what does. Finding those people. Getting them involved."



Over 40 attendees from dozens of eastern Iowa workplaces took part in Iowa City Federation of Labor's January, 2016, Black Workers' Conference.

The event fostered intergenerational conversations and networking across a range of diverse workplaces, while connecting

local issues to ongoing labor movement initiatives to address persistent racial inequalities—including the work of the national AFL-CIO Labor Commission on Racial and Economic Justice, first convened in 2015 with a statement that begins with acknowledging that "America's legacy of racism and racial injustice

has been and continues to be a fundamental obstacle to workers' efforts to act together to build better lives for all of us."

Sparked by interest generated at the January event, a second Black Workers' Conference took place in the Quad Cities in June, and

planning is under way for another event in Des Moines.



Several members of United Steelworkers Local 105 from ALCOA's Bettendorf Works attended the June, 2016, Quad Cities Black Workers' Conference.

"New education. New vision. That's how [the movement] goes on."

John Campbell, Black Workers' Conference attendee



Iowa City conference attendees discuss themes of exclusion and inclusion in labor history.



Quad Cities conference attendees examine roles of union civil rights committees.

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About the Labor Center

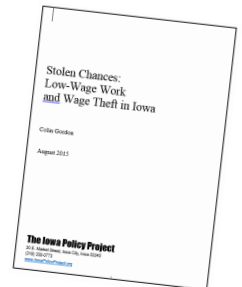
The Labor Center is a unit of The University of Iowa College of Law. Since 1951, the Center has acted as a bridge between the University and Iowa's labor community. Our mission is to provide educational programs and resources to Iowa workers and their unions.

The Center annually conducts a series of **open-enrollment, non-credit short courses and seminars** on the UI campus, and regularly **travels to communities across Iowa** to provide classes on a range of topics tailored to the needs and interests of Iowa workers and union representatives.

Our staff also provide **research assistance and technical information** to worker organizations, serve as a **resource for UI faculty, staff, and students** interested in labor studies, and disseminate information on labor issues to the public.

New Research, Publications, and Resources

Labor Center staff contributed to a two-year participatory research project involving local low-wage workers, leaders of the Center for Worker Justice, and policy researchers, which culminated with the 2015 Labor Day release of **"Stolen Chances: Low-wage Work and Wage Theft in Iowa,"** an Iowa Policy Project report authored by Colin Gordon.



Labor Center Honored with Local Labor Council Award



Robin Clark-Bennett, Jennifer Sherer, and Sarah Clark accepted the Iowa City Federation of Labor 2016 Organizational Award on behalf of the Labor Center at the group's annual chili supper and awards ceremony in January.

Other recent publications and conference presentations by Labor Center staff included:

- John McKerley and Jennifer Sherer, **"The Iowa Labor History Oral Project,"** LABOR 13:1, 2016.
- Emily E. LB. Twarog, Jennifer Sherer, Brigid O'Farrell, and Cheryl Coney **"Labor Education and Leadership Development for Union Women: Assessing the Past, Building for the Future,"** *Labor Studies Journal* 41: 9-35, March, 2016.
- Barbara Byrd, Jeff Grabelsky, Paul Iversen, Jason Kozlowski, Sarah Laslett, David Reynolds, Katherine Sciacchitano, **"Educating for Change: How Labor Education Centers and AFL-CIO Bodies Can Grow and Transform Together,"** United Association for Labor Education.
- Matt Glasson completed an updated and expanded version of the Labor Center's **"Iowa Workers' Rights Manual."** Available on the Labor Center web site, the manual summarizes how state, federal, and local statutes apply to Iowa workplaces.
- Robin Clark-Bennett and Jennifer Sherer presented a session on **"Internal Organizing 101"** at the 2016 United Association for Labor Education conference in Washington, DC.
- Labor Center graduate assistant Mitchell Lingo presented results of a year-long project to analyze trends in Iowa Workers' Compensation case decisions at the 2016 Iowa Workers' Compensation Advisory Council conference.