



# The Sidney Hillman Foundation

Alice Kessler-Harris

is the 2016 recipient of the

Sol Stetin Award for Labor History



Alice Kessler Harris

Born into an Eastern European immigrant family living in war-time Great Britain, Alice Kessler-Harris played a foundational role in shaping the field of women's labor history. She began her career as an historian rescuing from obscurity the Jewish needle trades women who built the International Ladies Garment Workers Union—in the process discovering anew the

pivotal role played by those passionate women radicals who battled both male privilege and sweatshop exploitation. From century-old penny papers, Kessler-Harris recovered the voices of these anonymous young women. "Jewish women courted the unions," wrote Kessler-Harris, "that should have been courting them."

Starting in the 1970s she published a series of path-breaking articles that became classics and an inspiration to a generation of feminist historians of the working class in the U.S. and abroad. This work culminated in her 1982 book, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States*, a canonical work in this field. In 2001, she published *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men, and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in Twentieth Century America*, which won the Bancroft Prize, and, in 2012, the acclaimed biography: *A Difficult Woman: The Challenging Life and Times of Lillian Hellman*.

A committed trade unionist who worked as a labor educator in collaboration with District 65, and a public intellectual who has fought sex discrimination in courtroom testimony and editorial page opinion pieces, Kessler-Harris has served as the president of the Labor and Working-Class History Association, the American Studies Association, and the Organization of American Historians. Today she is the R. Gordon Hoxie Professor of History at Columbia University.

Kessler-Harris will be honored at the Hillman Prizes in Journalism ceremony and reception Tuesday May 3, 2016 at the Times Center in New York City.

All are welcome. For more information and to RSVP, please visit [hillmanfoundation.org](http://hillmanfoundation.org)

## The Stetin Award

Sol Stetin (1910-2005), as President of the Textile Workers Union of America, spearheaded the ambitious campaigns to organize southern textile workers, including the 17-year organizing drive at J. P. Stevens. He also played a pivotal role in the founding of The American Labor Museum at the Botto House, the nation's first museum dedicated to the labor movement.

Stetin spent his lifetime fighting for a better life for working people and was passionate about preserving the stories of workers' lives. The Sidney Hillman Foundation established the Sol Stetin Award for Labor History to honor a labor historian who has made significant contribution to the field, researching and telling the stories of working peoples' lives.

Previous recipients of the Stetin Award

- 2014 Leon Fink
- 2013 Marcus Rediker
- 2012 Nelson Lichtenstein
- 2011 Melvyn Dubofsky
- 2010 Dorothy Sue Cobble
- 2009 James Green
- 2008 David Brody
- 2007 David Montgomery