Labor Research and Action Network (LRAN) Conference, June 11-12

Posted on May 2, 2012 by Rosemary Feurer

LRAN is aimed to create a space for the generation and exchange of fresh ideas and thinking among labor leaders, activists, scholars and students. It is also to connect scholars with practicioners in order to form a more cohesive organizing or legislative campaign. The June conference will thus focus on innovative organizing campaigns (not limited to union initiatives) that are either informed by cutting edge research or raise challenging questions researchers ought to explore further; and new research that sheds light on critical organizing issues.

One of the principal goals of the Labor Research and Action Network (LRAN) is to create a space for the generation and exchange of fresh ideas and thinking among labor leaders, activists, scholars and students. A secondary goal is to connect scholars with practitioners where their expertise could play a key role in an organizing or legislative campaign. The June LRAN conference will thus focus on two intersecting areas of work: innovative organizing campaigns (not limited to union initiatives) that are either informed by cutting edge research or raise challenging questions researchers ought to explore further; and new research that sheds light on critical organizing issues.

As the LRAN conference planning committee, we have exciting news about the June LRAN conference, which will be **held at Georgetown on June 11th and 12th**.

Isabel Wilkerson will headline the opening plenary (http://isabelwilkerson.com). She's the Pulitzer Prize winning New York Times correspondent and author of The Warmth of Other Suns, a book on the Great Migration. Karen Nussbaum, Executive Director of Working America, will moderate a discussion on how crafting a narrative, told with memorable stories, could influence not just political opinion but worker organizing. We also have roundtables and plenary sessions planned to discuss innovative organizing campaigns and research, and to generate a space for creative thinking and exchange between scholars and practitioners.

© LAWCHA. All Rights Reserved.

The proposed agenda for the conference is attached and below. Registration for the conference will begin shortly. If you have ideas/research/campaign efforts you'd like to share with the session chairs, or even new ideas for roundtable discussions, please contact those listed in the agenda below. WE NEED YOUR IDEAS AND HELP TO MAKE THE CONFERENCE A SUCCESS! This agenda is a draft, and it's not too late to put your ideas into action for this conference.

If you are not on the LRAN list and are interested in participating in the conference, or have questions about this email or the conference, please email Erin Johansson at ejohansson@americanrightsatwork.org.

We are looking forward to this conference and hope you can join us.

LRAN conference planning committee:

Paul Clark, Penn State; Fred Feinstein, U. Maryland; Jeff Grabelsky, Cornell University; Erin Johansson, American Rights at Work; Amelia Kalant, UNITE HERE; Paul Landsbergis, SUNY; Jennifer Luff, Georgetown University; Dan Marschall, AFL-CIO; Thea Michailides, IUPAT; Leslie Moody, Partnership for Working Families; Cassandra Ogren, Teamsters; Lane Windham, U. Maryland

Conference fees

There is a conference registration fee of $50 for attendees ($25 for students/allies), unless the attendee is a current contributor to the Labor Research and Action Network. Conference attendees will also be responsible for covering their travel and an additional amount if they plan to attend the dinner/reception on June 11th. We will have funding available to assist with travel expenses for graduate students and practitioners from organizations without adequate funding. Please contact Erin Johansson if you will require funding to attend: ejohansson@americanrightsatwork.org

Conference registration will begin shortly.

Draft Agenda

© LAWCHA. All Rights Reserved.

Monday June 11th

3:30-5pm
Meeting to discuss LRAN organizational issues. Open to all interested.

5-8pm
Reception and dinner

8-9pm
LRAN Advisory Committee meeting

Tuesday, June 12th

8:15-8:45am
Registration and coffee

9-10:45am
Opening plenary – An exploration of how crafting a narrative, told with memorable stories, could influence not just political opinion but worker organizing

Moderator: Karen Nussbaum, Executive Director of Working America

Panelists:
Isabel Wilkerson (Pulitzer prize winning journalist and author, *Warmth of Other Suns*)
invited Drew Westen (author, *The Political Brain*)
Panel organizers: Jeff Grabelsky, Cornell (Chair), jmg30@cornell.edu; DanMarschall, AFL-CIO; Fred Feinstein, UMD

Break: 10:45-11am

11am-12:15pm

Concurrent roundtable discussions/strategy sessions:

1. Private equity

Matteo Colombi, Teamsters (Chair), MColombi@teamster.org; and Cassandra Ogren, Teamsters

© LAWCHA. All Rights Reserved.

This panel will bring together practitioners and academic experts to develop, through case studies, and other reference materials, a better strategic understanding of Private Equity (PE) firms and begin to identify: Who are the stakeholders and how does PE matter to society? How do we measure PE's social and financial performance, and where do we find this data? What are the business strategies employed by PE funds and the underlying strengths and vulnerabilities of each? What are successful counter strategies adopted by and available to labor unions? How does the changing relationship with the broader environment matter (credit cycle, regulatory framework, public focus, political legitimacy, funders, workers…)?

2. International labor issues

Paul Clarkand Mark Anner, Penn State (Co-chairs), pclark@la.psu.edu; Fred Feinstein, UMD; Jamie McCallum, Middlebury College

This roundtable will bring together scholars and labor practitioners to discuss efforts to ensure greater respect for global workers' rights, including corporate campaigns, consumer activism, codes of conduct, strategies to improve state enforcement mechanisms, and efforts to increase supply chain transparency. Recent research and strategic campaigns will be reviewed, such as Alta Gracia in the Dominican Republic,Nike and Russell in Honduras, and Apple and Foxconn in China. The central questions this roundtable will explore include: Which efforts hold the greatest promise for providing the deepest and most sustained improvement in respect for core workers' rights in global supply chains? What more can be done in terms of activism and research to help achieve and reinforce such efforts? And what are the most effective strategies for building solidarity and worker power on an international level?

3. Campaigns to Improve Occupational and Public Health and Safety

Paul Landsbergis, SUNY (Chair), paul.landsbergis@downstate.edu; Cassandra Ogren, Teamsters

Labor activists, researchers, trainers and health professionals are involved in a wide variety of campaigns to improve working conditions, reduce precarious work, and reduce workplace health and safety hazards. A number of these campaigns also involve efforts to protect the public from injuries,illnesses and environmental degradation/pollution. Discussion leaders will describe campaigns involving truck

© LAWCHA. All Rights Reserved.

and bus drivers, recycling workers,restaurant workers, immigrant workers, workers in green jobs, and others.

4. Campus organizing 101

Amelia Kalant, UNITE HERE (Chair), akalant@unitehere.org; Lane Windham, UMD

This campus organizing roundtable will focus on practical organizing strategies for professors, graduate students, union staffers and others who are working for social and economic justice on campus. A panel that will include a UNITE HERE organizer and participants from campus campaigns will lead the group. The group will share obstacles they've encountered in solidarity or direct union organizing campaigns, and the group will work together to brainstorm strategies and solutions.

Boxed lunch: 12:15-1:45pm

1:45pm-3pm
Analyze to Win: New Research on Labor and Organizing

Jamie McCallum, Middlebury College (Chair), mccallum@middlebury.edu

This session will examine new research on labor emerging from the academy and the wider movement. The increasing popularity of research-driven union campaigns provides one of the greatest opportunities for collaboration between organizers and academics. What is or should be the role of strategic research in union organizing? In what ways can academic research inform labor struggles? How can we increase our capacity to do effective and innovative research? These questions and others will be addressed by a group of practitioners and academics.

3-3:15pm
Break

3:15-4:45pm
Innovative organizing campaigns

Thea Michailides, IUPAT (Chair), tmichailides@iupat.org

Individuals from in-the-field and academia will examine past strategies and efforts in order to generate discussion of how to create innovative campaigns in the future. This conversation will be focused on tactics we, as organizers and labor movement

© LAWCHA. All Rights Reserved.

activists, may employ as we work to reinvigorate and grow the labor movement and generate broader public knowledge of what worker solidarity and unionism mean. We hope that in creating a forum for debate and dialogue we can derive new and creative ways to demonstrate that unions benefit communities, families, industry and the economy.

4:45-5:15pm
Closing remarks

Author

- 

  Rosemary Feurer

  Rosemary Feurer is Professor of History at Northern Illinois University. She is the author of *Radical Unionism in the Midwest, 1900-1950,* among other books and essays. She is working on The Illinois Mine Wars, 1860-1940 and a new biography of Mary Harris "Mother" Jones.

© LAWCHA. All Rights Reserved.