



Leon Fink receives Sol Stetin Award for Labor History

Posted on May 16, 2014 by Rosemary Feurer

Congratulations to Leon Fink who received Sidney Hillman Foundation's gives 2014 Sol Stetin Award for Labor History.

The annual award, named after the late Sol Stetin, a Polish immigrant labor leader and co-founder of the American Labor Museum, is presented to a scholar who has contributed to greater public knowledge of the labor movement and working people in America.

Fink's professional training as a historian began at the University of Rochester, where he received his doctorate under Herbert Gutman's tutelage in 1977. Though he first taught as a Lecturer in the City College of New York, 1972-1974, his scholarly career largely developed at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1977-2000 and, since 2000, in Chicago.



Joan Suarez, retired District Director of UNITE-HERE and a judge for the Sol Stetin Labor History Award from the Sidney Hillman Foundation, presents the Stetin Labor History Award to Leon Fink.

Fink has written, co-authored, or co-edited 10 books, including his most recent publications, *Workers in Hard Times: A Long View of Economic Crises* (2014); *Sweatshops at Sea: Merchant Seamen in the World's First Globalized Industry, from 1812 to the Present* (2011); and *Workers Across the Americas: The Transnational Turn in Labor History* (2011). He has also been involved with national efforts to link public history and K-12 history education. He is founding editor of the quarterly journal *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*.

Sol Stetin, who moved from Poland to America with his family in 1920, at age 10, began working in the textile industry in 1930 and became active in the nationwide textile strike of 1934. He eventually became president of the Textile Workers Union of America, where he led the 17-year organizing drive at J. P. Stevens, one of the most ambitious organizing campaigns in the anti-union South. He was passionate about preserving the stories of workers' lives, and in 1983 he co-founded the American Labor Museum at the Botto House National Landmark in New Jersey.

The Sidney Hillman Foundation is named for the founding president of the Amalgamated

Clothing and Textile Workers Union, predecessor of Workers United. Since 1950 the foundation has honored journalists, writers and public figures who pursue investigative reporting and public policy in service of the common good.

Judges for the 2014 Sol Stetin Award for Labor History were Joshua P. Freeman, Dorothy Sue Cobble and Joan Suarez.

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.