



James Green, 1944-2016

Posted on June 27, 2016 by James Gregory

With great sadness we mark the passing of James Green, former president of LAWCHA, scholar, activist, and mentor to countless labor historians. He died yesterday following a long battle with cancer. In April, at the LAWCHA-OAH banquet, Jim was honored with LAWCHA's Distinguished Service Award, the text of which follows:

LAWCHA's Award for Distinguished Service to Labor and Working-Class History this year goes to James Green, Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Massachusetts Boston, in honor of his exemplary contributions to the field and its members and this organization over so many years.

In seven books, many articles, films, exhibits, local tour guides, and other cutting-edge labor education and public history projects, Professor Green has opened new avenues of scholarly inquiry and pioneered new ways to communicate historical narratives to broad audiences.

Devoted first and foremost to education, Green has made labor history into public

history over the last half century at the University of Massachusetts, while providing models for other labor historians to follow, including by his role in documentaries of working-class history in “The Great Depression,” with Blackside Productions, and most recently “The Mine Wars,” aired nationally this year in PBS’s distinguished “American Experience” series.

As an activist, Jim has been part of nearly every struggle for social justice over the past five decades.

A founding member of LAWCHA, Jim was elected President in 2003 and during his term of office helped launch the organization’s journal, *LABOR: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*, serving later as associate editor.

For all of this and much more, we present this award to our colleague and comrade Jim Green.

Sadly,
James N. Gregory

Remembrances

If you’re in the Boston area, there will be [a celebration of Jim’s life and legacy on November 12](#).

If you would like to share your remembrance of James Green to be posted on this page in celebration of his life, please send them to Ryan.Poe@Duke.edu.

- David Frank, “[James Green \(1944-2016\): Labour History and Public History](#),” *Acadiensis*
- Bryan Marquard, “[James Green, 71, UMass Boston labor historian and writer](#),” *The Boston Globe*
- Jim O’Brien, “[Memories of Jim Green](#)”, LaborOnline
- Sam Roberts, “[James Green, Author and Human Rights Activist, Dies at 71](#),” *The New York Times*

Philip Chassler

In spring 2014, while preparing for retirement, when Jim was clearing his office here at University of Massachusetts Boston, he invited me to choose any of the remaining books as gifts from him to me (he'd already given away many of them, including a lot to the University library). Among those I chose were several he had written, he flattered me by inscribing each one with kind words—I'd known Jim and his work since the 1980s, yet only in the past decade was I able to call him a friend. Soon after he retired we had coffee together, a few months later he'd been diagnosed with leukemia. Apart from his retirement party in September 2015, I never saw Jim again. But we emailed each other and talked via telephone often. He would call me from his hospital room or his home: we talked shop, talked about his work, most recently he advised me about a labor studies course I am scheduled to teach this coming fall. While convalescing, he worked hard to get his last book, on the West Virginia Mine Wars, well publicized and into readers' hands. He worked with the producers of the PBS documentary based on his book—he appeared on that video. Throughout his ordeal (I never heard him call it that) Jim was always in good spirits, always vigorous. Talking with him you'd never know he was hospital or housebound, undergoing various treatments, suffering various side effects. A few days before his death, I missed what became his final call to me. Jim was a fine colleague and good friend.

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• James Gregory