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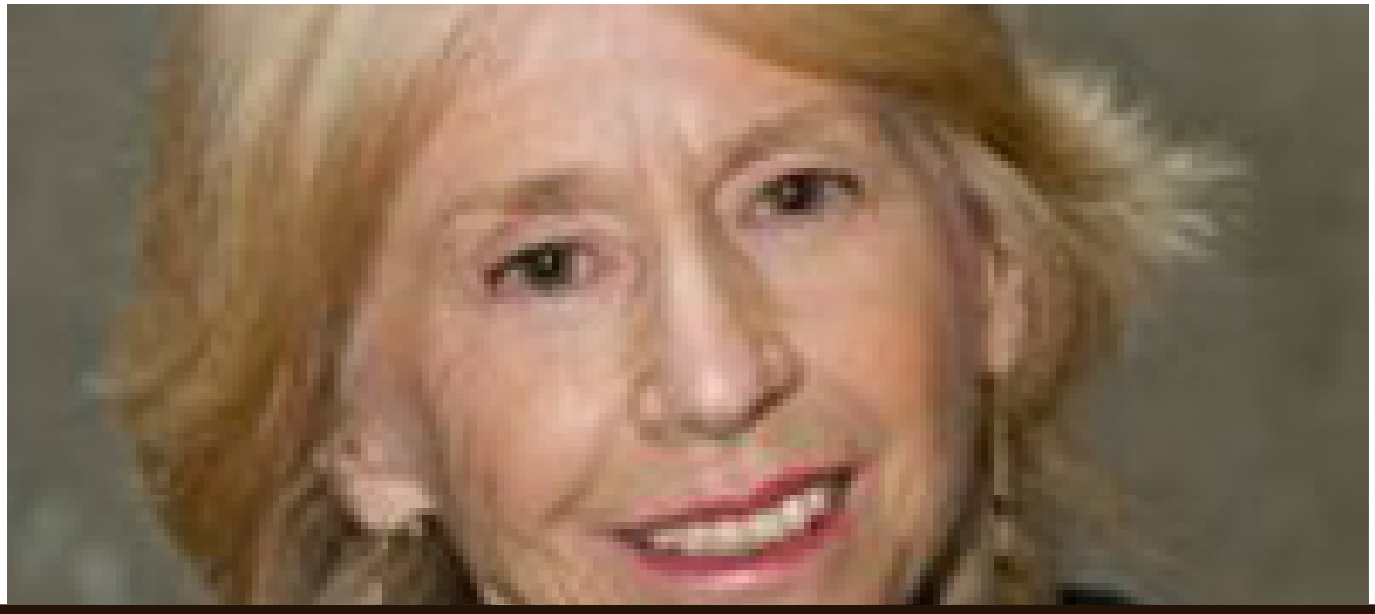

Judith Stein, 1940-2017

Posted on May 16, 2017 by James Gregory

It is with a heavy heart that I forward the news that Judith Stein has passed away after a long struggle with cancer. A dedicated member of LAWCHA, she was a Distinguished Professor of History at City College and Graduate Center of the City University of New York and the author of key books and articles. Labor historians will know best her books The World of Marcus Garvey: Race and Class in Modern Society (1986), Running Steel, Running America: Race, Economic Policy, and the Decline of American Liberalism (1998), and Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the 1970s (2011).

Those who knew her well will have more to say, but for a start I would note that we have lost one of our great intellectual warriors. Her books did not take the easy road. Instead she forced us to engage challenging propositions and impressed us with her research and forceful argumentation.

Last June, she sat for an interview with Jacobin that shows some of her spark,

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dedication, and the ideas that animated her work

“Workers Leave the Democratic Party?: An Interview with Judith Stein.” A historian debunks liberal myths about racism, the New Deal, and why the Democrats moved right.

Memoriam from her brother

Judith has long been one of the scholars I’ve long most admired. In addition to her books, I’ve always loved hearing her as a commentator at conferences. She was always able to cut right to the heart of any subject with an incredibly incisive mind, an astute read, and of course, tremendous wit. She’s able to point younger scholars to the key questions that need to be addressed and the big picture; but then was able to do that with senior scholars too! I feel like we’ve long been partners in promoting rigorous political history and political economy! My students will continue to draw so much from Pivotal Decade and Running Steel, Running America. I’m honored I’ve been able to serve with her on the Editorial Board of ILWCH for over 15 years.

We will keep fighting the fight for democracy and justice—and against political lunacy!

Author

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  James Gregory

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