

LEARN^{ing} TOGETHER

Summer 2020



Official Newsletter of the Labor Education Action Research Network

Message from the Incoming Faculty Coordinator of LEARN



Greetings, friends and colleagues:

My name is Todd Vachon, and I am delighted to introduce myself as the new Faculty Coordinator for the Labor Education Action Research Network. It is a great pleasure and an honor to take on this role with LEARN, coordinating and growing this great program.

I look forward to building upon the work that has been done in recent years under the leadership of my good friend and colleague, [Michael Merrill](#). I am also excited to bring some of my own ideas to light, but most importantly, I look forward to working with all of you, the LEARN community, to develop the educational tools and custom programs you need to grow as individuals and organizations. From the nuts and bolts of labor relations, to the rich history of the Union Leadership Academy, to collectively confronting the most pressing issues facing our society today, including income inequality, racial injustice, climate change, and the erosion of democracy in America, LEARN will remain to be both an educational resource for the community as well as a source of community.

For those of you I have not yet had the pleasure to meet, please allow me to share a little bit of background to give you a sense of the experiences I bring with me into this position. I grew up in a union household, son of a union carpenter and an 1199 healthcare worker in Eastern Connecticut. But my parents weren't always union workers. Up until the age of 12, I vividly remember financial hardship in the home. However, when my dad began his career with the Carpenters, I noticed a swift improvement in our quality of life. I got braces to straighten my teeth and glasses to improve my vision, thanks to the health fund, and my dad built our family house when I was in 8th grade. Having experienced those changes, I worked only on union jobs once I turned 16, including as a fire watch at the local nuclear power plant, where I was a member of the Laborers International Union, and as a member of the United Steelworkers when I worked second shift at a local paper mill.

I also became very aware of racial discrimination on many of the jobsites where I worked during those years. I came to realize that many of the opportunities I had been afforded, despite my working-class upbringing, were not always available to everyone. I carried this knowledge forward with me when I worked for three years as a public-school teacher in Brooklyn, NY and then when I began the Carpenters Apprenticeship program in my late twenties. I began reading books regularly while on breaks during this time on the topics of race, class, and gender inequality, and the many historical movements to confront these inequalities. I also began participating in local social movement organizations confronting inequality and expressing my concerns through music and writing. I continued to work as a carpenter until the Great Recession hit in 2008.

After a long period of unemployment, and little hope of work for the foreseeable future, I returned to college to study sociology, with a focus on labor studies. While in graduate school I worked with the Labor Education Center at the University of Connecticut, teaching classes for union members around the state and helping to organize and facilitate the state AFL-CIO's Annual Summer School for many years. I also became involved with some co-workers at the time and we initiated a successful organizing drive among the 2,100 graduate teaching and research assistants at the University, gaining recognition for the

UAW Local 6950 in 2014, bargaining our first contract in 2015, and I had the privilege of serving as the first President of the local until 2018.

After completing my PhD, I accepted a position here at Rutgers, in the School of Management and Labor Relations. I have been living in East Brunswick for the past two years with my wonderful partner, Genea, who is a labor relations professional in the city, and our three great children, Marley, Toliver, and Ebba.

I can't overstate how excited I am to embark on this next leg of my life adventure with all of you—the workers, managers, union members and leaders, advocates, and labor relations professionals across the state of New Jersey—as well as our wonderful program coordinator, Judy Lugo, who many of you already know is the real brains and muscle behind the whole operation.

My promise to you this coming year is to continue the great work LEARN has been doing all these decades and to explore exciting new opportunities to grow and best serve our constituents – you. With that in mind, you should know that my office door is always open, and I'd love to hear from you. Of course, it's a virtual office at the moment, but nonetheless, feel free to drop me a line anytime with ideas you might have for new LEARN programming, any questions you have about our current offerings, or just to say "hi." You can also [like us on Facebook](#) to stay up to date, and click [the link to our short survey](#) to share your email and programming preferences. I look forward to talking soon.

In the meantime, enjoy catching up on some of what we have been up to by reading through this newsletter, and as always, stay healthy and stay safe.



Todd Vachon, PhD.

Message from the Program Coordinator



Summertime Greetings to all! I hope everyone is doing well as we enjoy this beautiful summer weather.

My summer is flowing with gratitude for all the peace and positive vibes I have been enjoying at the Jersey Shore and being with my family and friends, that I treasure and my beautiful daughter, Ashley and my precious Grandchildren, Gisselle and Cameron.

Welcome to LEARN's new Faculty Coordinator, Todd Vachon. Todd's vision for the LEARN Program is buzzing with new activity and our renewed commitment to deliver outstanding labor relations programs and educational events that are vitally important to our community.

As the fall semester is rapidly approaching, we prepare to hold classes remotely; I look forward to assisting you with your inquiries and needs. See you soon in our online classes.

Best wishes for your continued success in LEARN Program classes.

Be Well and Stay Healthy!

Judy Lugo

In Remembrance of Professor David Bensman, 1949–2020



Our hearts are heavy as we share news of the passing of David Bensman, professor in the Labor Studies and Employment Relations Department who retired earlier this Summer.

David Bensman began his career at Rutgers in 1978 and over the course of his tenure with the university, served as a professor within the Department of Labor Studies and Employment Relations as well as chair and director of the department's undergraduate and graduate programs.

David made a major contribution to scholarship on labor history specifically, and the labor movement more broadly. He is the author of *Central Park East and Its Graduates: Learning by Heart, Rusted Dreams:*

Hard Times in a Steel Community, The Practice of Solidarity: American Hatters in the Nineteenth Century, and Who Built America? Volume II.

His recent work on port truckers is captured in this op-ed published in Dissent: "[Port Truck Drivers on Strike! A Dispatch from Two of the Nation's Largest Ports](#)" and this one published in the American Prospect: "[The Battle Over Working Time: A Countermovement Against Neoliberalism](#)."

David was also an early pioneer of online education at SMLR. But most importantly, he was a caring mentor and friend to dozens of labor studies students over the multiple decades of his career at Rutgers and made a significant difference in many lives.

As the LEARN community, we extend our condolences to David's family and friends and share in their profound loss.

[Click this link to view a recording of the service](#), which was held on July 28, or leave a message of remembrance.

[You can read an obituary](#) written by SMLR's Steve Flamisch [here](#).

Thank You to Outgoing LEARN Director, Michael Merrill



NJ Assemblyman Thomas P. Giblin (right), president of the Essex-West Hudson Labor Council, [AFL-CIO](#) honored SMLR's Michael Merrill this week for a lifetime of contributions to worker education. Merrill retired as LEARN director on June 30, but remains on the SMLR faculty part-time.

On behalf of the entire LEARN community, we would like to thank Professor Michael Merrill for his lifetime of contributions to worker education, including most recently as the Director of LEARN. Before arriving at LEARN, Merrill earned his Ph.D. in history and economics at Columbia University in 1985. He has taught at Rutgers and Princeton and been a senior administrator at the National Labor College and SUNY Empire State College. His passion for worker education carries on through his writing, his participation in the International Federation of Workers' Education Associations, and his ongoing labor history courses in the Dept. of Labor Studies and Employment Relations at Rutgers. Thank you, Mike!

Professor Merrill's farewell message to the LEARN community [can be read here](#).

SOME RECENT PROGRAMS



NJ COVID-19 • WEEKLY UPDATE



Co-Sponsored by: NJ-WEC, Rutgers L.E.A.R.N., and Jersey Renews

COVID-19 Weekly Updates: Saving Lives, Protecting Workers

A Weekly Webinar series with more than 20 episodes dating back to the start of the Covid-19 Pandemic in March. In this weekly series, we hear from and talk with public health experts, government officials, medical personnel, legal experts, front-line workers, and worker representatives about the latest developments in the fight against COVID-19. The series is sponsored by WEC, Rutgers LEARN, and Jersey Renews and airs on Tuesday mornings @ 10am via Webex.

Weekly attendance has steadily been between 100-200 participants, with over 400 participating on two occasions. Previous guests have included **Dr. David Michaels**, Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA under President Obama, **Deborah Cornavaca**, Deputy Chief of Staff of Outreach for Governor Murphy, **Robert Asaro-Angelo**, Commissioner, NJ Dept. of Labor and Workforce Development, **Chris Neuwirth**, Assistant Commissioner, NJ Dept. of Health, **Carey Booker**, Assistant Commission NJ Dept. of Education, **Steve Kaplan**, Deputy Regional Administrator, US-DOL, OSHA, as well as many legal experts, frontline workers, and worker representatives from healthcare, education, transportation, manufacturing, construction, warehousing, facilities, property services, and other industries.

Find a complete list of past episodes and related resources [here](#).

Preventing Unemployment During COVID-19: Lessons from European “Short-Time” Employment Schemes

Rutgers LEARN partnered with SMLR’s Center for Global Work and Employment and the Transatlantic Labor Institute to put on a webinar on “Short-Time” employment schemes on June 18.

[Recording available online.](#)

Under the impact of COVID-19, the level of unemployment in the United States has risen to about twice that in Europe, with low-income people, BIPOC communities (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color), and women disproportionately bearing the brunt of the pandemic’s labor market fallout. This webinar explores how European countries have used “short-time” employment schemes to buffer economic displacement by allowing companies to apply for publicly sponsored wage replacement as they reduce employees’ work hours (including to zero). The first two presentations review the features and impacts of different European schemes and report on German unions’ successful push to increase the wage replacement rate for workers who remain on shorter hours for more than three months. Presentations on the U.S. cover worker organizations' efforts to manage the economic consequences of the pandemic and relate the history of the American shorter-time movement to the present moment.

Guests included:

Thorsten Schulten, Head of the "Labor and Wage Policy in Europe" Unit at the Hans Böckler Foundation’s Institute of Economic and Social Research (WSI).

Horst Mund, Head of the Transnational Dept., IG Metall (Industrial Union of Metalworkers, Germany).

Kris Rondeau, Director of New England Organizing Project and the 2018-19 President of the Labor and Employment Relations Association (LERA).

Dorothy Sue Cobble, Distinguished Professor of Labor Studies and History, Rutgers University-New Brunswick.

[A full recording of the Webinar](#) as well as links to the presentations that were made can be found on the website for the Center for Global Work and Employment.



Just Transition - You've Heard the Term, Now Hear the Story

JUST TRANSITION: LOVE IT, HATE IT
YOU'VE HEARD THE TERM, NOW HEAR THE STORY



Les Leopold
Author, Labor
Institute/Public Health
Institute Director



José Bravo
Executive Director
Just Transition
Alliance



Jenice View
Associate Professor
George Mason
University



Dave Campbell
Secretary-Treasurer
United Steelworkers
Local 675



Casey Camp-Horinek
Environmental Ambassador
Ponca Tribe of
Oklahoma



WED. JULY 22, 8 p.m. ET
Register: bit.ly/jt1p0722 | [#justtransition](https://twitter.com/justtransition)

HOST
Todd Vachon
Facility Coordinator
LEARN/Rutgers



In partnership with the Labor Network for Sustainability and the Just Transition Listening Project, LEARN Faculty Coordinator, Todd Vachon, leads a discussion on the history of the just transition movement from those who played a part in its origins, including the labor and environmental justice leaders who founded the Just Transition Alliance.

From deindustrialization and outsourcing to automation, climate change and efforts to mitigate it, and now the Covid-19 pandemic wiping out millions of good jobs, how can we ensure public health and safety while also ensuring steady employment and shared economic prosperity? One possible solution has come to be known as a just transition.

Guests include:

Les Leopold, author of *The Man Who Hated Work, but Loved Labor: The Life and Times of Tony Mazzocchi*

Jose Bravo, Executive Director, Just Transition Alliance

Jenice View, Professor, George Mason University

Dave Campbell, Financial Secretary, United Steelworkers Local 675

Casey Camp-Horinek, Elder and Hereditary Drumkeeper of the Ponca Tribe of Oklahoma

A recording of this timely and important discussion, which has already been watched by over 1,500 viewers, [can be viewed online](#) on the LEARN Facebook page.

Union Leadership Academy – Collective Bargaining



In Collaboration with the International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 68, a ULA on Collective Bargaining was offered this past spring with instructor Pete Donatello.

Unfortunately, as with most things during this time, the class was interrupted by the pandemic. Instruction will resume and the course will be completed at a later date TBA.

RECENT RESEARCH

Undocumented Workers in Service Sector Most Likely to be Harmed by COVID-19 Job Losses

Estimated Undocumented Workforce in Selected At-Risk Industries

Industry	Total Employed 2018	Estimated Undocumented	Percent Undocumented
Restaurant and Bar	266,237	43,645	16.4%
Retail (excluding grocery, gas, hardware, liquor)	201,182	42,000	20.9%
Taxi, Limo, School and Charter Buses	93,463	9,239	9.9%
Personal Care Services	62,262	6,155	9.9%
Amusement, Gambling, Recreation	54,760	8,967	16.4%
Hotels and Lodging	51,390	8,418	16.4%
Childcare Services	36,197	3,578	9.9%
Air Transportation	17,972	1,777	9.9%
Performing Arts and Spectator Sports	11,389	1,126	9.9%
Museums, Historical Sites, Parks	1,840	182	9.9%
Total	796,692	125,086	15.7%

Data Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages* ; Migration Policy Institute, *Profile of the Unauthorized Population*

In April, CIWO's Janice R. Fine, LEARN's Todd E. Vachon (also a CIWO Fellow), and New Jersey Policy Perspective's Brandon McKoy published the *Undocumented Workers in Service Sector Most Likely to be Harmed by COVID-19* policy brief. The brief found that undocumented immigrants account for a disproportionate 15.7 percent of the workforce in the service sector industries hardest hit with job loss, despite making up approximately 6 percent of New Jersey's population.

[You can read the brief here.](#)

UPCOMING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

Union Leadership Academy – Employment Law – Fall 2020 [Online]



**UNION
LEADERSHIP
ACADEMY**

An online Union Leadership Academy course on Employment Law is scheduled for this fall 2020 and will meet from 5:30-8:30 every Tuesday for 6 weeks starting on October 6.

The course, which will focus on sexual harassment & workplace bullying, workers' compensation, disability, healthcare law, etc. will be taught by LEARN instructor and attorney, **William Schimmel** of the law firm Weissman and Mintz. **REGISTER TODAY:** (848) 932-9504 or judithwl@smlr.rutgers.edu

2020-2021 LEARN Certificate Course Catalogue - Coming Soon!

We are in the process of finalizing course offerings and instructors for our certificate programs this coming Fall and Spring semester. Programs will include Public Sector Labor Relations, Labor and Employment Law, Negotiation, Arbitration and Conflict Resolution, and the Union Leadership Academy.

Please keep an eye out for an email and social media postings announcing the schedule!



NEW! Programs Currently Under Development

Some of the new programs we are currently working on developing, include:

Managing with Social Justice Values (Certificate program under construction)

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (Various workshops)

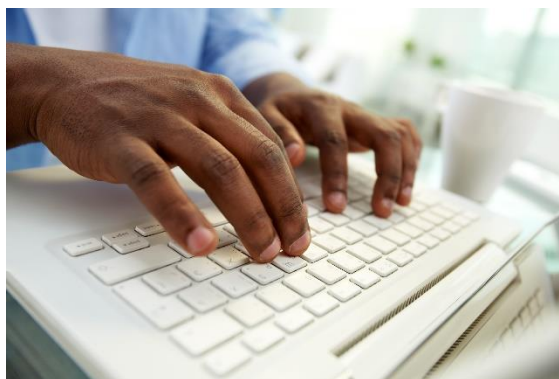
The Organizer Academy (with OTEC)

OTHER NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Note on Remote LEARNing

As you have likely heard by now, Rutgers is continuing with remote education throughout the fall semester. This directive applies to all LEARN programming as well. Although many of our programs are offered “off campus,” they are still Rutgers programs and must comply with the remote learning plan.

While this is certainly not the news we had hoped for, maintaining the safety of our students, faculty, and staff is of the utmost importance. This means we must remain remote for the time being. LEARN faculty and staff are currently preparing to provide the best possible remote learning experience for the fall. Many of our mainstay programs have already been customized to fit remote learning, and we are excited to offer new programs designed from the ground level for online education. We are optimistic that the learning we undertake together during this time will make for a stronger program in years to come and provide exciting new versatility to our programs when we are able to return to in-person education.



Thank you for being a part of the LEARN community.

Please feel free to reach out with any questions or concerns. - Todd & Judy

Please “Like” Our New & Improved Facebook Page



We have updated and improved our Facebook page! Every day you will find new, interesting reads, information about upcoming programs and courses, fun photos, and links to valuable information. When you have a moment, please check it out:

<https://www.facebook.com/RutgersLEARN/>

And please be sure to **LIKE** the page!

Welcome to Incoming President, Jonothan Holloway

Rutgers LEARN welcomes Jonothan Holloway as the 21st President of Rutgers University. Holloway, 52, has served as Northwestern University provost since 2017. Before moving to Northwestern, Holloway was the dean of Yale College and Edmund S. Morgan Professor of African American Studies, History, and American Studies at Yale University. Congratulations, Dr. Holloway. Welcome to Rutgers and to New Jersey!



THE PEOPLE THAT POWER L.E.A.R.N.

ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP

Todd E. Vachon, PhD – Faculty Coordinator
Judy Lugo – Program Coordinator

FACULTY OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Sue Schurman, PhD
Carla Katz, Esq.

THE INSTRUCTORS

Labor and Employment Law

Melanie Lipomanis, Esq.
Ursula Leo, Esq.
Lisa Schur, Esq.
Rosemarie Cipparulo, Esq.
Carla Katz, Esq.
John Burton, Esq.

Negotiation, Arbitration, and Conflict Resolution

William Dwyer
Don Dileo
Joan Parker
Saul Rubinstein, PhD

Public Sector Labor Relations

James Mastriani
Mary Beth Hennessy-Shotter, Esq.
Jonathan Roth, Esq.
Joyce Klein, Esq.
Steven Weissman, Esq.

Union Leadership Academy

William Schimmel
Peter Donatello
Nat Bender
John Castella
Barry Kushnir
Don Dileo

THE COMMUNITY

All of you that attend LEARN programs, share your personal and professional knowledge, and help to shape future programs. Thank you!



© 2020 Labor Education Action Research Network

50 Labor Center Way | New Brunswick, NJ 08901

Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations

www.smlr.rutgers.edu