



#6 August/September 2007

Labor Line is designed to help funders stay current with new developments in the labor movement, and new partnerships between unions and community organizations. It is prepared monthly by the American Rights at Work Education Fund, a grantee of several members of NFG's Working Group on Community and Labor Partnerships.

DID YOU HEAR THE ONE ABOUT THE GOOD BOSS?

In the 21st century workplace, adversarial relationships pitting employers against unions increasingly are being replaced with cooperative labor relations models. In observance of Labor Day, American Rights at Work profiled successful partnerships between employers, their employees, and their unions in the third annual edition of the Labor Day List: Partnerships that Work.

Among the companies listed: Thompson Electric gets labor kudos. Workers take priority at Thompson Electric which works in partnership with its union, the IBEW. Read more: [Beacon \(OH\) Journal](#)

Americanrightsatwork.org

AND WHAT ABOUT THE BAD BOSSES OUT THERE?

Heard the one about the boss who wouldn't pay for his employee's doctor's bills even though the employee was hurt on the job...and she was his own daughter?! In this radio report, Public Radio International's Marketplace profiles a new project by the AFL-CIO's Working America, compiling horror stories on bad bosses.

[Marketplace](#)

UNIONS FIGHT FOR IMMIGRANT WORKERS

Labor unions went to court on August 29 to block Bush administration rules designed to force employers to fire illegal workers, The rules, set to take effect next week, "would place millions of U.S. citizens and (legal) non-citizens ... at risk of losing their jobs" because of government errors and employers' fears of prosecution, the AFL-CIO and its affiliates in San Francisco and Alameda County argued in a U.S. District Court law suit. [San Francisco Chronicle](#)

ORGANIZING DAY LABORERS

David Montgomery, a Washington Post staff writer, chronicled some workers with a difference in the August 6 issue of the paper. Read about workers organizing around culture, their music, art and more as they also seek justice through the Day Laborers' Organizing Committee.

[Washington Post](#)

[National Day Laborer Organizing Network](#)

MINE OWNER'S SORRY HISTORY

Just after the tragic accident in the Crandall Canyon Mine in Utah, the New York Times chronicled a history of problems in the owner's mines, including violating federal labor laws. The mine where the work incident occurred was non-union.

http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/24/us/24murray.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

\$2.78 MILLION DOLLAR FINE OWED BY CINTAS IN WORKER'S DEATH

Also in August, the New York Times reported on another company, Cintas Corporation, the nation's largest supplier of uniforms, when federal officials called for a \$2.78 million penalty against Cintas for violations at its Tulsa plant, where a worker died when he was pulled into a large industrial dryer.

[New York Times](#)

GAMBLING ON LABOR

D. Taylor heads the Culinary Workers Union, an affiliate of Unite Here, a union that is anticipated to play a major role in the upcoming Democratic presidential primary in Nevada. The union represents more than 60,000 members and "What we represent is what a unionized service economy can be," said Taylor, who goes by just his first initial. "Our folks aren't rich, but they're doing OK."

[Los Angeles Times](#)

WEBSITE WATCH

In more than 40 cities in 25 states across the country, Jobs with Justice engages workers and allies in campaigns to win justice in workplaces and in communities where working families live. It reaches working people through the organizations that represent them—unions, congregations, community organizations—and directly as JwJ activists. Nearly 100,000 people have signed the Jobs with Justice

pledge to “Be There” at least five times a year for someone else’s struggle as well as their own.

JWJ.org

REPORTS WORTH A READ

America Gets a Raise-One State at a Time

Labor Line #5 reported on this new study commissioned by the Discount Foundation and researched and written by Tom Gallagher, to learn about the impact of state minimum wage campaigns on low- wage workers. It’s now available on the foundation’s website:

[Discount Foundation](#)

What the Public Really Wants on Unions

Union membership now stands at only 12 percent of all workers and just over 7 percent of all private sector workers—dismal numbers after three decades of steady decline for the labor union movement that won us our end-of-summer three-day weekend. Yet a look at the public’s views on labor unions shows that slipping union membership is not at all related to anti-union sentiment. Americans’ opinion of labor unions is unusually positive and that interest in joining unions is at historically high levels according to a new study by the Center for American Progress

[Center for American Progress](#)

[Read the full report](#)

GRANTEE PROFILE : Community Labor United (CLU)

Community Labor United (CLU) is a Boston-area partnership of seven labor unions and ten community organizations. CLU was launched in 2004 with the goal of marshalling the power of organized labor and organized communities to protect and promote the interests of low- and moderate-income people in the Greater Boston area. Through a program of coalition building, research and policy development, public education and grassroots mobilization, CLU aims to move forward policies that promote quality jobs, secure healthcare and affordable housing for all of the Boston area’s working people.

Collectively, CLU’s member organizations represent thousands of low- and moderate- income people in the Greater Boston area, people of all ethnicities, ages and backgrounds. Members include groups that uphold workers’ wages and rights,

as well as groups addressing housing, health, environmental justice, violence prevention and human rights.

One of CLU's first actions was to undertake an analysis of the inequities of income and power in the Boston region and propose a set of steps to change that balance. "*The Hourglass Challenge*," released in December 2006, paints an ominous picture of a region that is deeply divided by wealth, education, race, and language. As the region has continued to shed relatively high-paid manufacturing and public sector jobs, the economy that has emerged most resembles an hourglass, with an abundance of low-wage service jobs on one end, high-wage professional jobs on the other and few jobs in the middle of the spectrum. Such polarization promises to persist well into the future. CLU believes that an economy that relies on the quality of its labor force to expand existing businesses, universities and hospitals—and to attract new ones—cannot grow when a significant part of that labor force cannot sustain itself.

The report also includes recommendations on how CLU and its partners can organize and change policy for a better future. Among these are: developing progressive public leadership, more equitable distribution of public resources, negotiating with developers for community benefits, increasing public participation in the economic development decision-making process, planning and zoning reform, improving wage standards and enforcement, and lowering barriers to unionization.

CLU achieved an early success with its first campaign, *Our Schools, Our Futures*, that led the Boston Public School System to redirect the approximately \$2.5 million it spends annually to repaint school buildings. Rather than simply putting the contracts out for bid, the school system has established a partnership program in which Boston residents who are professional painters carry out the school repainting, as they train and mentor Boston youth who aspire to be painters. Other reforms prompted by the campaign have led to the increased use of union companies to paint public schools.

CLU has just launched a new campaign: *Secure Jobs, Secure Communities*, that is bringing community organizations together with the local property services union in a very innovative partnership to demand community accountability over some of the biggest landlords and business owners in downtown Boston.

CLU is funded by a number of foundations that are members of NFG's Working Group on Labor & Community Partnerships, including the Needmor Fund, the Discount, Hyams, New World, Ottinger, and Solidago Foundations, among others.

Dave Beckwith, Executive Director of the Needmor Fund, says that, despite its relative youth, "CLU has in place all the elements of success. The lead staff person has a track record we know and respect and a long-term commitment to the organization. It's connected to a wider network of similar groups for encouragement, learning, troubleshooting and support. Its funding represents a mix of labor and community-based interests, in which neither side dominates and there's room for growth and diversity. The member organizations are broad and real. And while CLU's initial campaigns and goals are appropriately modest, its long-term vision is magnificent and bold and could deliver real benefits to the lowest wage workers, immigrant families, and others."

For more information, visit CLU's website: <http://massclu.org/>