



LABOR EDUCATION &
RESEARCH CENTER

2017-2018

**BIENNIAL
REPORT**

Making Waves

Improving Lives in Oregon's
Workplaces and Communities



From the Director

In my recent conversations with workers, I have been struck by a recurring theme: an insistence on “having a voice” on the job and in the community at large.

I have seen this assertiveness coming from disparate sources: fast food workers demanding a \$15 an hour minimum wage, health care workers committed to providing quality care, and teachers who have declared that “their working conditions are students’ learning conditions.”

These sentiments have guided LERC’s efforts to “make waves” that support workers gaining the power to shape the conditions under which they live and work. We have pursued new educational initiatives. We have developed a diversity action plan to advance principles of equity and inclusion.

We have published analyses on the impact of charter schools, produced a film on the transformation of home health care in Oregon, and conducted research and educational projects aimed at enhancing workplace safety. And with the addition of dynamic new faculty members, we are prepared to expand our activities on behalf of Oregon’s workers.

LERC recently observed its 40th anniversary at a public gathering in Portland. Along with our many supporters, we celebrated the great work we have done together while acknowledging the challenges that lie ahead. To our supporters and partners, we offer this pledge: to continue making waves by helping workers speak with a powerful voice whenever decisions are being made that affect their lives.

A handwritten signature in dark blue ink that reads "Bob Bussel". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Welcome Lina Stepick and Mark Brenner

LERC is pleased to welcome two talented new faculty members who are working in our Portland office.

Lina Stepick, who will soon receive her doctorate in sociology from UCLA, has joined LERC as a labor policy researcher. In this newly created position, she will produce applied research that can be used by advocacy organizations, government agencies, community partners, and other stakeholders interested in employment, labor standards, equity and inclusion, and the empowerment of workers.

As a community organizer and researcher, Lina has worked on issues such as affordable housing, fair scheduling, transit justice, and pre-apprenticeship programs for formerly incarcerated workers. She has considerable experience producing research and reports that have broadened public awareness and influenced social policy on important issues related to work and employment.



Mark Brenner holds a doctorate in economics from the University of California Riverside and has over two decades of experience as a labor educator.

Mark got his start in the labor movement working with living wage campaigns across the country, first as a graduate student at the University of California and later as a researcher at the University of Massachusetts. He was the director of Labor Notes from 2005–2017, a well-known national network for grassroots labor activists. More recently, Brenner has worked full-time as an adviser to several unions, specializing in the areas of leadership development, contract campaign planning, and strategic communications. He has written widely on the U.S. labor movement and is the co-author of several books, including *A Measure of Fairness: How to Jump-Start Your Union*, and *Secrets of a Successful Organizer*.

Faculty and Staff



BOB BUSSEL
LERC Director and Professor

Along with University of Oregon political science professor Dan Tichenor, Bob co-edited *Oregon Historical Quarterly's* Winter 2017 issue titled "Oregon Migrations." This collection of essays emerged from a 2016 conference organized by the Oregon Historical Society, LERC, and the UO Wayne Morse Center for Law and Politics.



GORDON LAFER
Professor

Gordon's 2017 book, *The One Percent Solution: How Corporations Are Remaking America One State at a Time* (Cornell University Press), received the Michael Harrington Award from the American Political Science Assoc. for "demonstrating how scholarship can be used in the struggle for a better world."



SHERMAN HENRY
Career Instructor

At the Oregon Labor Law Conference in January 2018, Sherman led a workshop on using wellness and data-driven values to guide unions in bargaining health care, promoting better health outcomes for members, and building union loyalty and membership.



SARAH LASLETT
Career Instructor

Sarah participated in a project with the University of Washington Department of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences serving tradeswomen in the state. Sarah and her collaborators created a program that helps women in the trades to develop skills to address unsafe working conditions.



JENNIFER HESS
Research Associate Professor

Jennifer was co-author of a 2018 journal article in *Home Health Care Services Quarterly* titled "Protecting Workers in the Home Care Industry: Workers' Experienced Job Demands, Resource Gaps, and Benefits Following a Socially Supportive Intervention."



DEBORAH MAILANDER
Department Manager

Deb has researched the problem of workplace bullying and developed an informational flyer describing how to identify and prevent bullying. The Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries is using information from the flyer in its public outreach, and state legislators are drawing on this research in developing policy proposals.

OFFICE STAFF

LEIGH ROBERTS
Communications Specialist

NIKKI RUDIGER
Program Specialist

JENNIFER SMITH
Program Specialist

A Tribute to **Barbara Byrd**



In May 2017, Barbara Byrd retired after serving for twenty-two years as a faculty member at LERC and coordinator of our Portland office.

Barbara compiled an exemplary record during her years at LERC. She won widespread praise from students as an engaging and inspirational teacher with expertise on a wide variety of subjects. In recent years Barbara gained a national reputation for her pioneering work on climate change and her integral role in helping develop strong alliances between environmental and labor groups. Barbara has also worked tirelessly in the arenas of apprenticeship, economic and workforce development, and gender equity to promote policies that empower workers and enhance the quality of community life.

In addition to these achievements, Barbara has served ably for over a decade as secretary-treasurer of the Oregon AFL-CIO. More recently, she played an instrumental role in creating the Cascade Regional Labor Leadership Institute, an innovative program for top level labor and community leaders from Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia. This program represents a fitting capstone to Barbara's distinguished career.

Barbara's devotion to helping workers realize their potential has been unwavering, and she has touched many lives in her roles as a labor educator and labor leader.

Although Barbara has officially "retired" from LERC, she is still working with us on several important projects and continues to be a valued colleague and mentor. We wish her a productive and fruitful retirement filled with exploration, adventure, and the opportunity for some well-deserved relaxation.

Ripple Effects: **Education That Empowers and Inspires**

Unions and organizations served by topic area

Staff Training

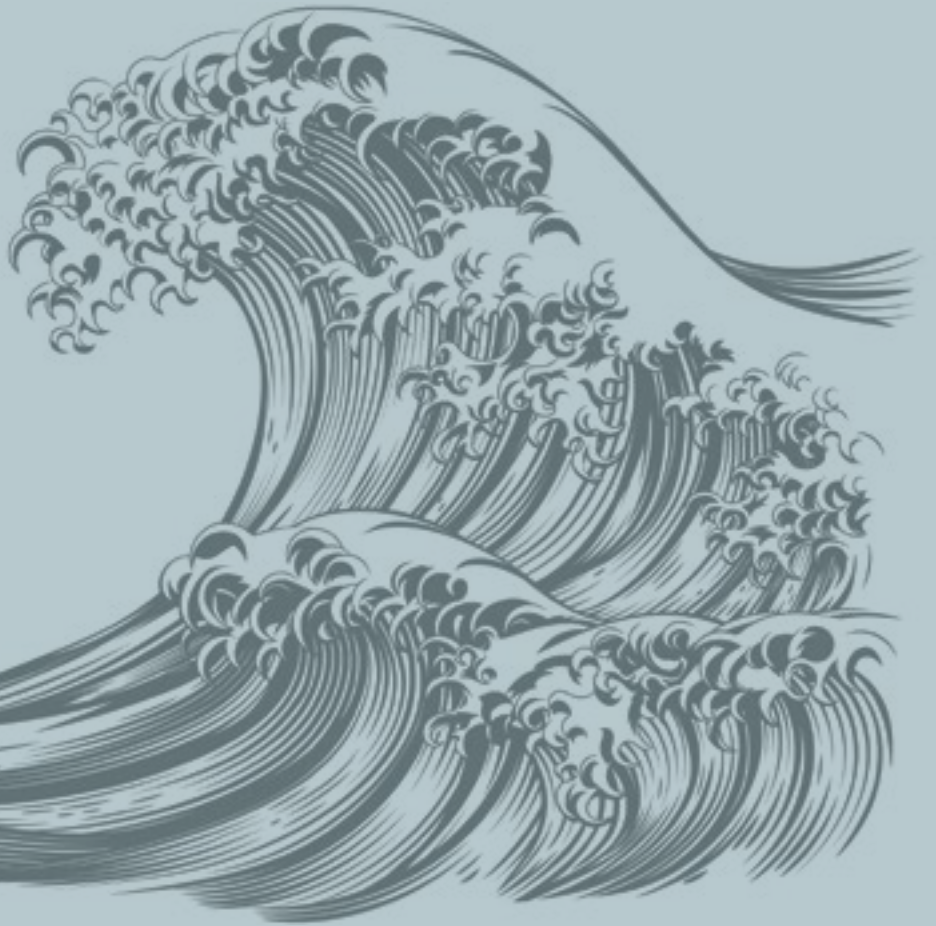
- SEIU Local 49
- UNITE-HERE Local 8
- Oregon Nurses Association

Internal Organizing

- IBEW Local 1245
- Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace

Leadership Development

- Oregon Education Association
- Oregon Nurses Association
- Oregon School Employees Association
- IBEW Local 1245
- Association of Flight Attendants



Collective Bargaining

- AFSCME Local 3512
- AFT Local 111
- District Council of Trade Unions (Portland)

Equity and Inclusion

- AFSCME Council 75
- Carpenters Industrial Council

Steward Training

- IBEW Local 659
- UFCW Locals 324 and 555
- Bakery Workers Local 114
- City of Bend Employees Association
- IATSE Local 154

Curriculum Development

- National Education Association

Institutes and Conferences

- OR AFL-CIO Summer School
- Arbitration Institute
- Collective Bargaining Institute
- Public Employee Relations Conference
- Portland Metro Leadership School
- ILWU Local 142
- Summer Institute for Union Women

Making Waves: 30 Years of PERC

In May 2018, LERC hosted its 30th Public Employment Relations Conference (PERC) in Salem. Co-sponsored by the Oregon Labor and Employment Association (LERA) and the Oregon Public Employer Labor Relations Association (ORPELRA), PERC attracted over 200 attendees representing labor, management, neutrals, and other practitioners engaged in public sector labor relations.

In keeping with its tradition of providing a forum for vigorous engagement and debate, the biennial conference examined critical issues that have emerged in the public sector workplace: promoting equity and inclusion, the increasing use of technology for surveillance purposes, protecting employees against violence at work, countering sexual harassment, and interest-based approaches to bargaining.

During a stimulating lunchtime panel, Elana Pirtle-Guiney, the governor's labor and workforce policy adviser, and Melissa Unger, executive director of SEIU Local 503, discussed the implications of the *Janus* case, a Supreme Court

decision that would rescind agency fees in the public sector. The conference concluded with a PERC tradition, featuring members of the Employment Relations Board (ERB) explaining their decisions on important cases.

The conference also provided participants with a set of *Working Papers in Oregon Public Sector Labor Relations*. Edited by LERC professor emeritus Marcus Widenor, the papers included a review of ERB policy on “the duty to provide information” by former ERB chair Kathryn Logan and a piece on “technological change in Oregon’s public sector workplace” by attorneys Jason Weyand, Kyle Abraham, and Nicole Elgin.

PERC’s popularity is rooted in the belief that public sector practitioners can set the standard for the ethical conduct of labor relations and resolve conflict in principled ways that serve mutual interests. LERC fully supports this belief as an important component of its mission as a public service program.



Making Waves: Launching the Labor Leadership Academy

In March 2018, LERC launched the **Labor Leadership Academy**, a new program designed to help emerging union and community leaders respond effectively to the urgent challenges of our times.

Under the direction of LERC faculty members Sarah Laslett and Sherman Henry, the Leadership Academy attracted a cohort of 22 leaders from seven northwest unions: the Oregon Nurses Association, AFSCME, the United Food and Commercial Workers, the Machinists Union, the Teamsters, the Theatrical and Stage Employees, and the Bakery Workers. Over the course of six months, Academy participants shared knowledge and explored strategies to

activate members and improve conditions in both the workplace and the community.

The Academy combined intensive classroom training, relevant readings, peer coaching, and mentoring from LERC faculty. Working in teams or with other leaders, cohort participants developed field projects that advanced important goals for their organizations.

Participants made presentations on their field projects at the OR AFL-CIO Summer School in August 2018 and received certificates at a rousing graduation ceremony. We look forward to recruiting a new cohort in 2019 and building on the success of this initial effort.



“The Academy has helped build a foundation for membership recruitment, understanding leadership styles, and identifying good issues for campaigns. And the feedback received from other union leaders across the region has been invaluable.”

Rachael Mounts and Maria Lavelle Oregon
Nurses Association

“The LERC Leadership Academy has been instrumental in expanding the leadership skills of our field project team in a concrete way. It has also been inspiring to work with other labor staff and stewards.”

Cory Finnegan
Teamsters Local 206

Making Waves: Labor Black History Events



“When we educate our members and the community about our common struggles, we can then forge a bond and build stronger unions to support our families, communities, and country.”

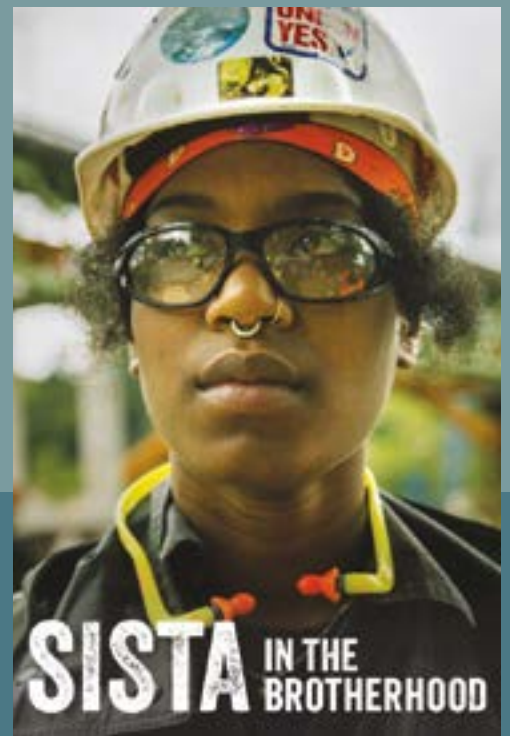
Donna Hammond,
IBEW Local 48

Since 2017, over 600 Oregonians have attended LERC’s Labor Black History events at the UO campuses in Portland and Eugene. Coordinated by LERC faculty member Sherman Henry, these events have highlighted the African American struggle to obtain full citizenship in the workplace through unionization.

The 2017 event featured William “Bill” Lucy, an AFSCME leader in the historic Memphis sanitation strike of 1968, a founding member of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, and a 2018 NAACP Chairperson Award honoree. Lucy appeared with labor historian Michael Honey who showed the documentary film *Love and Solidarity: Rev. James M. Lawson and Nonviolence in the Search for Workers’ Rights*.

In 2018, Donna Hammond shared her experiences as an African American woman who became a union electrician and later a business agent in a male-dominated industry. Also, Dr. Roberta Hunte of Portland State University presented her film *Sista in the Brotherhood*, a stirring story of the challenges faced by women of color in the construction industry.

The 2018 Labor Black History series culminated with an appearance by Bill Fletcher Jr., a noted author and labor educator. Fletcher’s presentation on race, labor, and the quest for a just economy provided powerful insights for trade unionists, students, and academics. These Labor Black History events underscore LERC’s commitment to address racial and gender inequality in the workplace and advance principles of equity and inclusion in all aspects of our work.



Making Waves: Advancing Equity and Inclusion

Creating an Equity Lens and Toolkit for AFSCME Council 75

In an intensive project extending over many months, LERC faculty members Raahi Reddy and Sarah Laslett worked closely with AFSCME Council 75's Diversity Committee and its staff to create an equity lens and a toolkit for use by the Council and its affiliated local unions.

The equity lens is a graphic depiction of the journey organizations must travel in order to realize their equity and inclusion goals. The toolkit provides concrete guidelines on assessing barriers, establishing specific goals, developing active strategies to implement them, and creating tools for evaluation and assessment of equity & inclusion practices. It is the practical "how to" companion guide to the equity lens. This toolkit drew heavily on the Toronto & York Region Labour Council publication, *A Leader's Guide to Strengthen Unions: Moving Beyond Diversity*.

Along with members of the Diversity Committee, Reddy and Laslett conducted workshops on the Equity Lens and Toolkit at AFSCME Council 75's convention in April 2017. Diversity Committee Chairperson Chinetta Montgomery received a standing ovation for this work from convention attendees.



Making Waves: Creating Safe and Healthy Workplaces for Workers

COMPASS (Community of Practice and Safety Support)

LERC faculty member Jennifer Hess has continued her work in improving workplace safety through two important projects. COMPASS is part of a Total Worker Health™ program within the Oregon Healthy Workforce Center at Oregon Health Sciences University. COMPASS training aims to enhance the health and safety of Oregon home care workers (HCWs) by encouraging them to share best practices and problem-solve issues unique to their isolated work environment.

Dr. Hess and her collaborators on the COMPASS project are developing new materials to address the special needs of Personal Support Workers (PSWs) who provide care to individuals with physical and developmental disabilities. The expanded COMPASS materials will reach a broader worker audience, providing relevant information and support to keep them healthy and safe.

Safety Voice for Ergonomics (SAVE)

Construction workers have rates of musculoskeletal injuries that exceed the national average. Among construction workers masons rank high for overexertion and back injuries, and apprentice masonry workers represent an especially vulnerable population with little training in job safety or speaking out about job hazards.

SAVE is a five-year research project focused on developing ergonomics and safety communication education for masonry apprentices. In partnership with the International Masonry Institute (IMI) and the Bricklayers and Allied Craft (BAC) Union, Dr. Hess and her collaborators helped create and evaluate training modules covering basic principles of ergonomics, identifying hazards and proposing solutions, and speaking up effectively. Over 100 instructors across the US have gone through a SAVE Train-the-Trainer program, and the curriculum has been well received by masonry instructors.

Once finalized over the next year, the SAVE training will be distributed to instructors at over eighty IMI training and Job Corps centers across the US. As thousands of masons complete their apprenticeships, they will better understand how injuries occur and what strategies can be used to prevent them.

“Great program. I will be using this in class.”

Michael Underwood
First year IMI instructor

“Thanks for this information. The industry should have started this years ago.”

S. Drew Richins
Year two IMI instructor

“This is going to change the industry, look forward to it.”

Moses J. Mora
Year two IMI instructor



Making Waves: Telling the Story of the “Care Revolution” in Oregon

LERC director Bob Bussel helped produce a documentary film titled *The Care Revolution: The Transformation of Home Health Care in Oregon* in collaboration with University of Washington at Tacoma professor Sonia De La Cruz. Grounded in extensive interviews with workers and incorporating the perspective of other key stakeholders, *The Care Revolution* traces the history of home health care organizing in Oregon. The 28 minute film explains how union representation by SEIU Local 503 has transformed the lives of caregivers and the populations they serve. In addition to improving their conditions of employment, home care workers have obtained new training opportunities, created higher professional standards, developed a strong statewide political presence, and gained additional resources to improve the quality of care for their constituents.

In collaboration with SEIU, LERC will be hosting an Oregon premiere of the film on January 25, 2019 in Salem and working thereafter to disseminate the film more broadly. *The Care Revolution* is especially timely and relevant given the rising number of people who are likely to be served by in-home caregivers as the U. S. population ages.

“LERC’s documentary on Home-care and Personal Support Workers in Oregon tells the story of the in-home care program in Oregon in such a way as to lift up and celebrate the work and struggle of the people who have fought to grow and protect this strong and dynamic union. This movie brilliantly chronicles our wildly successful efforts.”

Rebecca Sandoval
President
Home Care Workers Council
SEIU Local 503



Making Waves: Path-breaking Research on Charter Schools & Public Education

One of the key dynamics reshaping education and the work of school teachers around the country is the growth of charter schools.

Charters have grown from a handful of innovative experiments into large chains of schools run by central corporate offices. They now serve a growing share of students in many states, prompting school officials to raise concerns regarding the fiscal impact of this expansion on public school districts and students.

In 2018, LERC faculty member Gordon Lafer produced a first-in-the-country direct measure of this impact, focusing on three urban school districts in California. In a report titled *Breaking Point: The Cost of Charter Schools for Public School Districts*, published by In The Public

Interest, Lafer found that the expansion of charter schools resulted in a net loss of tens of millions of dollars annually in each of the districts studied. Professor Lafer's findings attracted substantial national and local media attention. They were also disseminated via a webinar hosted by the National Education Policy Center and through workshops hosted by the National Education Association.

Oakland schools superintendent Kyla Johnson-Trammel, who presented the report in a joint press conference with Professor Lafer, praised the report as a critical tool to "help us make better decisions for using our limited funds."



Citing the report's estimate of a \$65.9 million annual loss in state funding due to students attending area charter schools, San Diego Unified School District Superintendent Cindy Marten called for greater local control in the review of charter applications: "*Only with robust local control and true accountability will our children continue to thrive in San Diego.*"

Making Waves: The Cascade Region Labor Leadership Initiative

The most recent session of the **Cascade Region Labor Leadership Initiative (CRLLI)** concluded in March 2018.

Spearheaded by LERC emerita professor Barbara Byrd, CRLLI is an advanced leadership training program co-sponsored by the Oregon AFL-CIO, the Washington State Labor Council, and the British Columbia Federation of Labour. It is modeled on a successful high-level national leadership program developed by the AFL-CIO and The Worker Institute at Cornell University.

Along with enhancing personal leadership skills and promoting organizational change, the CRLLI seeks to inspire closer collaboration and stronger working relationships among organizations in the Pacific Northwest. Participants have especially appreciated the opportunity for candid and intensive discussions aimed at building a vibrant movement to advance social and economic justice in the region.

Forty-seven labor and community leaders have completed the program to date, and plans are underway for the next CRLLI cohort to begin its work in June 2019.



“The Cascade Regional Leadership Labor Institute is one of the most impactful leadership programs I’ve experienced. Learning from and with other leaders has deepened my commitment to the work and provided me a support network of other smart, dedicated labor and community leaders.”

April Sims
Political and Strategic Campaign Director
Washington State Labor Council

“I walked away with more tools at my disposal and a deeper understanding of what it means to lead. Having the continued support and perspective of other committed leaders has been instrumental in my development as a union leader.”

Minh Nguyen
Director of Organizing
Oregon Nurses Association



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1289 University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403-1289
e: lerc@uoregon.edu • w: lerc.uoregon.edu
541-346-5054



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