



THE DISPATCHER

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Angela Davis made an honorary member of Local 10 [page 3](#)



Graveside memorial: Local 13 President Ramon Ponce De Leon (center) remembers the sacrifices made by Dickie Parker and John Knudsen during the 1934 waterfront strike. Also pictured are Local 13 member Christian “C-Dog” Abito (left) and ILWU International Vice President (Mainland) Bobby Olvera, Jr.

Honoring Bloody Thursday in uncertain times

This year ILWU locals along the West Coast continued to honor Bloody Thursday in a variety of ways amidst uncertainties and changing restrictions on gatherings during the pandemic.

Bloody Thursday is the anniversary of the killings of Nick Bordoise and Howard Sperry who were shot by police in San Francisco on July 5th, 1934 during the Great West Coast Strike. The killings sparked a general strike in San Francisco and marked the turning point of the 1934 coastwise labor struggle that eventually led to the formation of the ILWU. The day is also a time to remember all six workers who were killed along the West Coast during the strike and serves as a celebration of the strike’s victory. Bloody Thursday is a time to honor the sacrifices made by Bordoise and Sperry in San Francisco, Dickie Parker and John Knudsen in San Pedro, Shelvy Daffron in Seattle, James Connor in Portland and Bruce Lindberg, a seaman killed in Hong Kong.

The day is also a time to reflect on all of the sacrifices made by generations of longshore workers who have struggled and fought to improve wages and conditions on the waterfront.

The strike began on May 9, 1934 when West Coast longshore workers struck, shutting down docks along 2000 miles of coastline, including the major ports of Seattle, Tacoma, Portland, San Francisco, San Pedro, and San Diego. The strike demands included a union-controlled hiring hall that would end all forms of discrimination and favoritism in hiring and equalize work opportunities; a coastwise contract, with all workers on the Pacific Coast receiving the same basic wages and working under the same protected hours and conditions; and a six-hour work day with a fair hourly wage.

Southern California

In Southern California, Locals 13, 63 and 94 saw the return of the Bloody Thursday picnic after local officials granted a last minute permit for an event at San Pedro’s Peck

Park. Volunteers planned the event in a short time frame. The event was planned in weeks instead of months. “Everyone really came together to make this happen,” said Local 13 Executive Board member John Seixas. “Luckily we already had the vendor lists and other things needed for the picnic already organized and in place because we’ve done this so many times.”

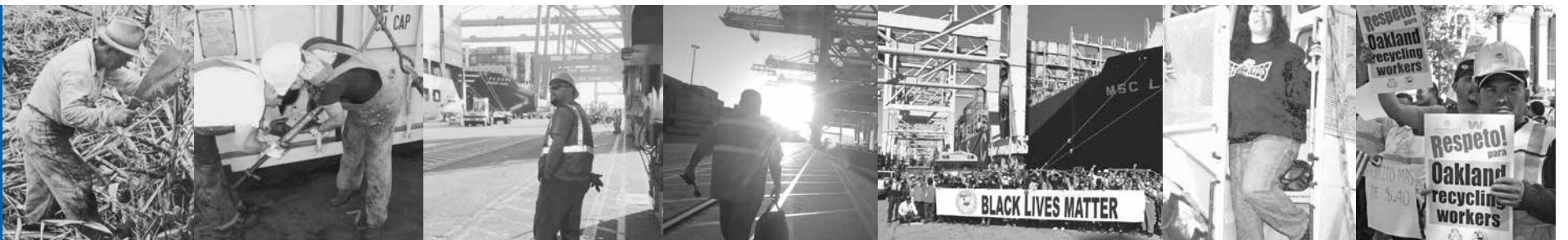
Honoring the First Blood Martyrs

The first – and some say most important part of the day--started with a graveside memorial service at Roosevelt Cemetery in Gardena where San Pedro High graduate Dickie Parker and Lomita resident John Knudsen, the first two martyrs of the 1934 strike, are buried.

Parker and Knudsen were both shot, along with five other union members, by company-employed goons shortly after midnight on May 15, 1934 at Berth 145 in Wilmington. It was the first of several deadly confrontations on the docks that year

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Maritime fuel workers win union in Tacoma supply chain

Operations and Maintenance Technicians in the Port of Tacoma, who will produce Liquefied Natural Gas to fuel TOTE Maritime ships, fought to be union and won an election in August at NAES Corporation to become new members of the Inlandboatmen's Union of the Pacific (IBU), the Marine Division of the ILWU.

"We are really excited to have joined together for respect and a voice on the job," said Israel Lopez, one of the O&M techs. "We know our strength comes from having each other's backs and solidarity from members in other operations connected to this one."

O&M techs were recruited by NAES from all over the country to relocate to Puget Sound, help commission the plant and begin to operate the facility. Within a short time, workers began to realize managers lacked experience, expertise and the ability to listen to employee concerns.

"When managers refused to provide requisite trainings or follow protocols," added Israel, "we knew it was time to confront the situation."

Upon realizing the employer depends on union labor in the maritime supply chain, workers launched a campaign through IBU and ILWU earlier this year at NAES, which runs the operation in the Port of Tacoma to fuel TOTE vessels with natural gas.

TOTE's parent company Saltchuk also owns Foss Maritime, where for years IBU members have worked on tugs and barges transporting fuel, while ILWU Local 23 members have loaded TOTE's ships at the Port for decades.

"As we thought about how we could win our fight at NAES," said technician Tim Coto, "it just made sense we would go union and join with other IBU/ILWU workers able to affect operations when the employer violates our rights."

O&M techs marched on the plant manager to demand a response and an end to negligence. After upper management held a damage control meeting with employees



and failed to take meaningful action, workers were subsequently hit hard by a COVID outbreak at the plant.

After weeks of sickness and slow recovery, technicians were further met with news that the plant manager—not workers—had invited a different union in to meet with employees, in a clear attempt to divert employees into a sweetheart deal management could control.

Instead of taking the bait, technicians demanded equal access on the job for a worker-run union meeting in June, and took over a room in the plant with leaders from IBU and ILWU Local 23 to discuss a strong path forward.

"Workers made it clear it was time to move, and almost everyone quickly signed on to be IBU after the meeting," said IBU President Jay Ubelhart. "We all got on the same page about supply chain power and the industrial links connecting this facility."

"We shared our history with TOTE and our members' commitment to solidarity," said ILWU Local 23 President Jared Faker. "People really understood this employer needs smooth maritime and longshore operations in order to function."

While the company did not agree to voluntarily recognize workers, NAES clearly saw overwhelming unity when all but one employee signed on the petition, and realized they had little chance of dragging out the hearing process when workers quickly filed for an election. Instead, the company stipulated, agreeing to the appropriate unit of technicians eligible to vote in an election.

After receiving a ballot in the mail over the following weeks, almost every single technician came together again, donning an IBU shirt, flashing a thumbs up, and taking a picture to leave no question in managers' heads as to how tightly workers are unified at NAES.

On August 6, the National Labor Relations Board counted the ballots and certified the new union as IBU, with over 90 percent support.

"Our union collaboration as a team with better communication will make NAES safer," said Burt Zook, one of the technicians.

"We're thrilled to win this vote and ready to push right away for a good union contract," added Jon Enimpah, one of the technicians. "It's time we hold management accountable and nail down fair rules for everyone."



CORRECTION

Due to a layout mistake in the center spread of the June *Dispatcher*, a portion of the Local 13 Convention delegation was accidentally covered. As a result, Convention Delegate Mondo Porras (left) did not appear in the collage of the delegates. We apologize for the error.



Rally for workers' rights: On August 10th, ILWU Local 5 organized a rally to show support for the workers in the Portland area who are fighting for a union, a contract, or like Powell's workers, fighting to defend their hard-won contracts. Workers shared stories about their labor struggles at the event, which was followed by an action at Powell's City of Books where community members rallied to defend the recall rights of Powell's workers who were laid off during the COVID-19 shutdown. In the photo Local 5 representative Myka Dubay addresses the rally.

Photo by: Tove Holmberg

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AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka passes away at the age of 72

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka passed away on August 5th at the age of 72 after a lifetime of dedication to the labor movement. He was the son of a mine worker and he followed in his father's footsteps working in the mines of Western Pennsylvania to put himself through school.

After becoming a labor attorney, Trumka returned to Pennsylvania and dedicate his life to fighting for the people he grew up around and the people he worked with in the mines.

At the age of 33, Trumka was elected President of the United Mine Workers as part of a rank-and-file reform slate.

He made his mark as a labor leader during the nine-month Pittston Coal strike in 1989. The UMW utilized direct action tactics and civil disobedience to successfully beat back Pittston's

attempt to force concessions from workers and pull out of the industry-wide pension and health care funds.

In 1995, Trumka was elected AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer on the "New Voices" slate that emphasized the need to organize new union members and push unions to devote 30 percent of their budgets to organizing.

During Trumka's tenure as head of the AFL-CIO, the labor movement took more progressive positions on a host of issues including immigration and racial justice. After the police killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, the AFL-CIO formed a Commission on Racial and Economic Justice to encourage unions to tackle the reality of racism in American life.

During the 2002 lockout of ILWU longshore workers by the Pacific Maritime Association, Trumka, then AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer, sat in on the last six weeks of bargaining. Following negotiations, he was invited to address the Coast Longshore Caucus. "I want



2002 Negotiating Committee: Richard Trumka (front row, center) with the 2002 Negotiating Committee. Photo from the December 2002 issues of the *Dispatcher*.

to thank you for inviting me to be a part of this great union, this wonderful family, for what turned out to be one of the most incredible and satisfying experiences that I have ever had in my career," he said to the Caucus delegates. "I will carry the memories of this struggle with me for the rest of my life."

"Richard Trumka's working-class values and commitment to organized labor were forged in the mines of Penn-

sylvania. He was a labor warrior with an unwavering commitment to uplifting all workers, improving workplace safety, and fighting to ensure that workers have a voice on the job," said ILWU International President Willie Adams. "We will honor his legacy by continuing to organize the unorganized, and fight to win passage of the PRO Act and President Biden's infrastructure package. Rest in power, Rich."

Angela Davis made an honorary member of Local 10 in Juneteenth induction ceremony



Juneteenth induction: Angela Davis was inducted into Local 10 as an honorary member during a special Juneteenth meeting and celebration at the Local 10 hall.

On Juneteenth, ILWU Local 10 honored civil rights icon, scholar, activist, and public intellectual, Angela Davis by making her an honorary member of the local.

Davis joins Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as an honorary member of Local 10 as well as performer Paul Robeson and illustrator Rockwell Kent who were both made honorary members of the ILWU during the 1943 International Convention.

Robeson was unanimously granted a lifetime honorary ILWU membership for his "steadfast devotion and service to the cause of democracy and to the economic and cultural advancement of all peoples." He was especially honored

for his support of sugar cane workers in Hawaii who were organizing and joining the ILWU to improve working conditions. Illustrator Rockwell Kent who was granted an honorary membership at the same time, illustrated the first issue of *The Dispatcher* in December 1942 and remained an ILWU supporter his entire life.

Juneteenth celebration

The induction ceremony for Angela Davis and Juneteenth celebration took place at the Local 10 hall. June 19th, also known as Emancipation Day and Freedom Day as well as Juneteenth, has been celebrated by African-Americans as a holiday since the late 1800s. It commemorates the end of slavery in America and the ongoing struggle for Black freedom. This year's celebration

was especially sweet since Juneteenth was finally recognized as a federal holiday—the first national holiday to commemorate the end of slavery in the United States.

Drill Team

The Local 10 Drill Team escorted Davis into the hall. The Drill Team then performed to the delight of the approximately 300 people in attendance.

Local 10 President Trent Willis welcomed everyone to the event and acknowledged ILWU International President Willie Adams, International Secretary-Treasurer Ed Ferris and Coast Committeeman Cam Williams who were all in attendance.

Local 10 Drill Team member Janice Smith kicked off the event with a stunt—
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Supply chain disruption gets the goods at P&B Intermodal

After a strike that paralyzed cargo operations and secured union recognition, workers at P&B Intermodal in the Port of Tacoma won a first contract in less than five months—and fundamentally changed the employer's business model.

In January, strong solidarity from ILWU Local 23 meant that P&B Intermodal workers could use their position in the cargo chain to take decisive job action. When employees walked off the job over company violations of federal law, Local 23 members refused to cross the picket line, bringing the union "hammer" to match the workers' "heat." Six hours after workers ended

the strike, P&B Intermodal gave in and formally recognized them as ILWU.

Soon after, P&B workers Levi Kamel, Thierry Williams, and Ethan Hanna-McCormack joined Local 23 President Jared Faker and the local's Labor Relations Committee, including Arturo Guajardo, Melanie Bowers, Jeremy Kamel, Don Faker, Ryan Whitman, Jed DiMaggio, and Joe Perrin in bargaining a first contract.

The urgency confronting the employer as a result of the supply-chain disruption quickly became evident. Over just six bargaining sessions, P&B Intermodal execs moved from remote, out-of-state Zoom meetings to flying into Tacoma to finish negotiations and sign a collective bargaining agreement. Upon reaching a tentative agreement in



June, workers unanimously ratified the contract, which took effect in July.

But even more telling than the timeline was the substance of the agreement: workers doubled the hourly wage rate, moving from 18.50 to 37.50. Previously unaffordable and mostly unused health care was replaced with 100 percent employer-paid plan premiums. And from having no retirement other than an optional 401(k) savings plan, workers won a new, employer-paid, defined-benefit pension plan, with starting accrual rate of 9.50 per hour.

While most first contracts make gains, workers used job action and supply chain solidarity to entirely transform P&B Intermodal's operation in the Port of Tacoma. When worker Heat was backed by the union Hammer, a sweatshop cutting every corner was forced to become a union shop, meeting area standards with enforceable protections for workers' rights on the job—a clear example of what can be won when members use our power in the cargo chain where we have it, while we have it.

—Jon Brier

Honoring Bloody Thursday in uncertain times



Puget sound memorial: Seattle-area ILWU Locals and pensioners gathered to honor Bloody Thursday with a wreath-laying ceremony at the cruise ship terminal followed by a memorial event at the gravesite of 1934 strike martyr Shelvy Daffron who was shot in the back on the evening of June 30th while checking on a rumor that non-union crews were about to sail two oil tankers in Point Wells just north of Seattle.

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between strikers and strikebreakers that involved the employer’s use of armed private guards or police. Parker died on the way to the hospital while Knudsen held-on for weeks before dying of his wounds. Public response to the killing of both men was impressive, with an estimated 8,000 lining the streets from San Pedro to Gardena to witness the procession of cars that stretched six miles. Law enforcement warned of a riot following the funeral, but because both events were peaceful, public support increased for the union cause.

Remembering the past, fighting for the future

Local 13 member Christian “C-Dog” Abito was the emcee at the memorial event this year. He called together the 100 attendees together at 9 a.m. and thanked everyone in attendance. Pacific Coast Pension Poet Laureate Jerry Brady recited his emotional and moving about Bloody Thursday.

ILWU International Vice President Bobby Olvera, Jr briefly addressed that gathering. He recalled the tough year that everyone faced with COVID. He paid tribute to the members of the

ILWU family that lost their lives to the pandemic and reminded everyone of ongoing struggles with employers.

“As we head into longshore negotiations, we’ve got a fight ahead of us,” Olvera said.” And today, as I stand here, we’ve got members up in Fresno from our warehouse division who have been locked out for 40 days, because their employer thinks 18 bucks an hour is too much. Every day that we go to work, we’re blessed with what we have. It’s not given to us. We keep it because we fight.”

Local 13 President Ramon Ponce De Leon painted an in-depth picture of the years leading up to the waterfront strike—an era of great economic inequality and uncertainty for the working class in the midst of the Great Depression.

“These men fought for a better life, a decent life with quality of work, for working conditions and for respect. We should never forget these two men, Dickie Parker and John Knudsen. Never forget them.”

Local 94 President Danny Miranda spoke about the upcoming contract longshore negotiations with the Pacific Maritime Association next year.

“We’ve got a big challenge coming up. But every contract is a challenge,” Miranda said. “You can ask all the old timers about the challenges we’ve faced. We want to think about what we have been through and understand how we got where we are. Who built this union? Everybody sitting around here right now—the rank-and-file. That’s our history. We’ve got a challenge ahead. Do we fear that challenge? No! We’re going to stand like they stood. Because one thing about us, you mess with one of us, you mess with all of us.”

Pacific Coast Pensioner President Greg Mitre was the final speaker. He reminded everyone about the record profits shipping companies have been making over the last year and that those profits were made because of ILWU labor.

Procession

At 10:30, engines roared to life in the classics cars, cruisers, hot-rods and Harleys that slowly pulled out of Memorial Park behind a symbolic hearse provided by All Soul’s Mortuary in Long Beach. The mock funeral procession made its way through a ten-mile trek south to San Pedro, passing by the Harry Brides bust on Harbor Boulevard before making its way to Peck Park for the Bloody Thursday Picnic.

Picnic with a purpose

The Bloody Thursday Picnic had all of the food and activities union members have come to expect despite the shortened time-frame the Local 13

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Portland event: Columbia River ILWU locals honored the Bloody Thursday martyrs with a march from the Local 8 hall to Terminal 1 with for a wreath laying ceremony. The event was captured by Oregon Public Broadcasting for an upcoming documentary on the 1934 strike.



Classic car caravan: The graveside memorial service to honor First Blood martyrs Dickie Parker and John Knudsen was followed by a caravan from Roosevelt Cemetery to Peck Park. The caravan included dozens of immaculately restored and maintained classic cars.



Kids corner: Children were treated to expert face paintings along with a variety of games and activities.



Family time: Families bonded over picnic games that were available throughout the park.

Events Committee had to plan the picnic. A wide-range and food and drinks were available at no cost to members and families that included hot dogs, hamburgers and pizza. Live music from several local bands and a large dance floor to keep the crowd hyped and moving. This year's picnic also featured a horseshoe tournament.

Kids had a blast

Much of the picnic festivities focused on entertainment for kids – which gave grown-ups a chance to relax and socialize while their children played safely on an assortment of activities that included bounce houses, games and face painting.

Pensioner & Auxiliary

The Southern California Pensioners Group had a booth with tables, chairs, food and goodies available for dozens who dropped-by. The always active ILWU Federated Auxiliary Local 8 worked the crowd, selling raffle tickets for a local benefit. The Local 13 Publicity Committee also set up a table

Seattle

ILWU members celebrated in Seattle with a small, socially distanced wreath-laying ceremony on the waterfront. The cruise ships traditionally work on July 5th and prior to the commencement of work, a ceremony is held and a wreath is released into the water to memorialize the workers whose lives were lost during the 1934 strike. Following the wreath laying service, members gathered at the graveside of Shelvy Daffron to pay their respects on honor his sacrifice that helped build the ILWU. The event was organized by the Seattle Pensioners Club.

Portland

Portland Columbia River Locals 4, 12, 21, 50, 53 and 92, Local 5, the Inlandboatmen's Union and Auxiliary 5 members joined Local 8 at the hiring hall to march to the pier at Terminal 1 for a memorial service and wreath ceremony. Torrae DelaCruz gave a history of the July 5th battle and the birth of the ILWU. Paul Brannard



ILWU Federated Auxiliary: Federated Auxiliary Local 8 sponsored a raffle to raise funds to support the important work they do for the ILWU family.

played *Taps* as Tom Owens placed the wreath in the river.

Documentary producer Nadine Jel-sing from Oregon Public Broadcasting filmed the ceremony for an upcoming OPB documentary on the ILWU and July 5, 1934.

Bay Area

The Bay Area Longshoremen's Association (BALMA) made the difficult decision to cancel their Bloody Thursday event but are hopeful that 2022 will all the safe return of the annual celebration at the Local 10 hall.

PROTECT OUR PROGRESS

NO on the RECALL

Local 19 members celebrate Juneteenth with actions to protect the port & save the historic home of Frank Jenkins

Members of ILWU Local 19 celebrated Juneteenth by organizing two events. The first was held on the Seattle waterfront at Terminal 46. The terminal is in danger of losing cargo-handling space to a planned expansion of the adjacent Coast Guard base. The event began at 9 a.m. with a motorcade starting at the Local 19 hall to the Terminal 46 main truck entrance.

At the event, Local 19 Education Committee presented a 6-panel poster display that featured historic articles from the Dispatcher covering the Cold-War era conflict between the union and federal government over The Magnuson Act. This port security legislation was enacted in 1950 and empowered the U.S. Coast Guard to screen maritime workers in the Puget Sound for communist ties and deny union workers the ability to freely access the docks and vessels.

The Magnuson Act was seen by the ILWU as a way to weaken militant unions including the LWU and the Marine Cooks and Stewards Union.

The Port Security Program on the disproportionately affected black dockworkers and seamen. Black members of the ILWU constituted two-thirds of longshore workers denied Coast Guard passes in the Puget Sound despite the fact that they comprised a minority of the union's membership. The Marine Cooks and Stewards Union also had a disproportionate number of Black members screened off of ships along with the entirety of their elected leadership. The Supreme Court eventually ruled the law unconstitutional in 1968.

Local 19 President Rich Austin, Jr. spoke at the event. He stressed the importance of stepping up the fight against racism and discrimination. "The past year has shown us that the struggle against racism in this country is as important as it has ever been. The struggle for equality is not over until the people who have been marginalized tell us it is over. Racism and discrimination have no place amongst the working class," Austin said.

The afternoon event was held outside the former house of Local 19 icon Frank Jenkins. Jenkins was a prominent Black & Filipino longshore



Rally for Frank Jenkins: ILWU members and community supporters rallied outside the former house of labor and civil rights icon and Local 19 member Frank Jenkins. The historic house is scheduled for demolition by a real estate developer to build efficiency units

worker, leader, and founding member of Local 19 who was known for his encyclopedic knowledge of the longshore contract and for being an important labor and civil right leader in the

Pacific Northwest. The Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies at the University of Washington participated in and contributed significantly to the afternoon event.

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Angela Davis made an honorary member of Local 10 in Juneteenth induction ceremony

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ning rendition of the Black National Anthem, "Lift Every Voice and Sing."

Protecting jobs at the Port of Oakland

Social justice attorney and ILWU Northern California District Council endorsed candidate for the 18th Assembly District, Janani Ramachandran, was one of several speakers at the event. Ramachandran praised the ILWU for being a "fierce fighter for justice" for decades and said she was honored to have the endorsement of the most social-justice-minded union in the country.



Lift every voice: Local 10 Drill Team member Janice Smith also wowed the audience with an amazing rendition of the Black National Anthem to start the Juneteenth celebration at the Local 10 hall.

"Together we will protect the Port of Oakland, our jobs, our livelihoods, and our communities," she said. "We will stand up to billionaire interests, sports stadiums, and condominiums because our jobs, our communities are at stake. We will not let them win."

After Ramachandran spoke, Willis thanked Ramachandran for opposing the Howard Terminal baseball stadium and emphasized the threat the project poses to longshore jobs at the Port of Oakland.

"We have a real crisis at the Port of Oakland. Billionaire John Fisher wants to build a playground where we work. He wants to build condominiums where we work," Willis said.

"If we allow condominiums to be built where we work, we won't be working there long. We have to support the people who are running for state offices and city and county offices that have the same positions we have."

Other speakers at the event included former ILWU International President Brian McWilliams, Local 10 members Vanetta Hamlin and Linda Adams, Bay Area Pensioners President Lawrence Thibeaux, and Local 10 pensioners Clarence Thomas and Jack Heyman.

Induction ceremony

When introducing Angela Davis, Willis recalled Davis's speech during the 2020 Juneteenth rally and march at the Port of Oakland where she stated that if she had not chosen to become a college professor, she would have wanted to be a member of the ILWU. "I thought that was one of the

greatest statements I've ever heard," Willis said.

Davis thanked Local 10 for the honor and recounted her long historical connection to the ILWU, and the shared commitment to internationalism she shares with the local.

"I am deeply grateful for this opportunity to be inducted as an honorary member of International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10," Davis said. She recognized "the role that this union has played not only in upholding workers' rights but in leading the struggle to combat racism and combat racial capitalism." Davis said that she was particularly proud to be inducted on Juneteenth.

"It's been one year since this great union led the major mobilization to protest the police murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and too many others on Juneteenth at the Port of Oakland. Local 10 has been at the forefront of radical unionism for my entire career. I learned from this union why workers are the very heart of revolutionary struggle," Davis said.

"I cannot explain how inspired I am to be inducted into this great union that has embraced the internationalist causes that have been close to my heart from the Abraham Lincoln Brigades in the Spanish Civil War to solidarity with the Chilean people as they resisted fascism of the Pinochet regime to the fight to end South African Apartheid and the current fight to end Israeli Apartheid. I cannot tell you how privilege I feel to be made an honorary member

of this local along with the great Martin Luther King. Let me end by saying as you all say, and we all must say, an injury to one is an injury to all."

1972 resolution supporting Davis

The ILWU's connection to Angela Davis dates back decades. At the 1971 ILWU General Convention, delegates passed a resolution urging full support for a fair trial for Davis and for her to be released on bail. Davis had been charged with murder because guns registered in her name were used in an armed takeover of a courtroom in Marin County, California, in which four people were killed. Davis was in jail for over a year before being granted bail in February of 1972. She was acquitted of all charges months later.

The Convention resolution on the Davis case linked her prosecution with the prosecution of other labor militants in American history including Tom Mooney and Harry Bridges. "Now there is a concentrated and relentless crusade to kill Angela Davis," the resolution read. "Prejudice and frame-up is now employed to crush black militancy. The same device has always been used against labor when the powers of big business and government decide that organized workers are 'getting out of line' in their struggle for a better life. When President Nixon, Governor Reagan and the big money press incite the legal lynching of Angela Davis, experience and common sense tell us to beware. These are our enemies too and it could well be us next time around."

Union By Law: New Book Recounts A Century of Struggle by Filipino American Labor Activists



Silme Domingo (left) and Gene Viernes (right), 1981. University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, UW 39786, UW 39787.

In 1989, the United States Supreme Court decided the landmark case, *Wards Cove v. Atonio*, rolling back decades of progress in civil rights. The Court ruled against Filipino American and Native workers who sought redress for racial discrimination in the Alaska cannery industry, weakening the 1964 Civil Rights Act and making it much more difficult for workers to prove cases against racism and sexism.

Union By Law: Filipino American Labor Activists, Rights Radicalism, and Racial Capitalism (University of Chicago Press), a new book by Michael W. McCann and George I. Lovell, professors at the Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies at the University of Washington, challenges the Supreme Court's decision by recounting the hundred year history of struggle for labor and civil rights by Filipino Americans that led to the *Wards Cove* case. The Court's ruling, McCann and Lovell argue, ignored "a long, dark, continuing history of legally enforced racial and class domination in America." Their book recounts that dark history while showing how, over multiple generations, Filipino American workers organized against it. In particular, the book highlights the important role played by the ILWU and its members through ILWU Local 37, known today as Inlandboatmen's Union, Region 37. At a time when struggles for racial justice are more important than ever, the new book draws on the history of the ILWU to show how the labor movement and the civil rights movement are often one in the same.

Beginning with the brutal U.S. invasion of the Philippines at the turn of the twentieth century, the first part of *Union By Law* tells the story of the first large wave of Filipino migrant workers to the West Coast United States, and their efforts at organizing workers on farms and in fish canneries from the Great Depression through the early days of the Cold War. Despite many different union locals, with varying affiliations and name changes, their efforts were frequently allied with the ILWU and outspoken union presi-

dent Harry Bridges throughout the 1930s and 1940s. The relationship ultimately resulted in the creation of cannery workers' union ILWU Local 37 in 1951, based in Seattle but representing workers throughout the Alaska cannery industry. Like Harry Bridges, immigrant leaders of Local 37, including Ernesto Mangaoang and Chris Mensalves, were accused of being Communists and targeted for deportation by the U.S. government during the Red Scare of the 1940s and 1950s. Also like Bridges, they were successful in defeating their deportation cases thanks to the strength of the ILWU.

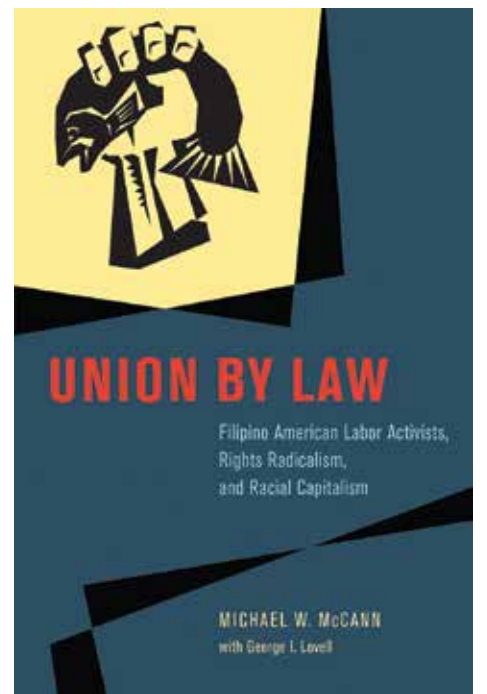
Part two of *Union By Law* charts the rise of a second generation of Filipino American labor activists in the 1970s and 1980s. Working in the cannery industry alongside their fathers, young workers were appalled at the conditions of racial segregation in the canneries, and by the complacency and corruption of union leaders who accommodated it. Inspired by Seattle labor organizer Tyree Scott, who organized Black contractors to challenge racial discrimination in the construction trades, young workers like Gene Viernes, Silme Domingo, and his brother Nemesio Domingo filed anti-discrimination lawsuits against the canneries - including the class action suit that would reach the Supreme Court in 1989. The reformers were also elected to leadership positions in ILWU Local 37, and as part of the KDP (Katipunan ng Demokratikong Pilipino, or Union of Democratic Filipinos), moved the ILWU to challenge the repressive dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines by passing a resolution to investigate the regime's anti-labor practices at the ILWU's international convention in 1981. Tragically, shortly after the convention, on June 1, 1981, Silme Domingo and Gene Viernes were shot and killed in Local 37's union hall in Seattle. Following years of legal trials and organizing led by Silme's sister Cindy Domingo and Local 37 leader Terri Mast, it was proven that the two were killed at the order of Marcos himself, with the help of a corrupt union president, and the likely complicity of the U.S. government.

While these stories have been told before, McCann and Lovell are the first to tie them together into one

comprehensive history. As legal scholars, the authors are especially interested in how Filipino Americans have confronted repressive and racist laws, and used legal strategies as a tool in their struggle for labor rights and civil rights. Migrant workers first arrived from the Philippines as colonial subjects with ambiguous legal status, but through their labor organizing and union activities gained access to citizenship and representation. Legal action played a central role in the fight against the deportation of ILWU Local 37's leaders, and was a critical part of fighting racial segregation in the canneries in the 1970s. It also was crucial in achieving justice following the assassinations of Silme Domingo and Gene Viernes, including a landmark judgment against Ferdinand Marcos.

"For workers, the law is not always in our interest," reflects Inlandboatmen's Union Secretary-Treasurer Terri Mast, one of the many activists profiled in *Union By Law*. "The law doesn't always protect us. In fact it's made things very difficult for labor. But what I've learned is that in the midst of class struggle, we have to use all our tools, be that the legal system, governmental agencies, or whatever is in front of us. Most importantly it's about building broad coalitions, community alliances, and building a workers' movement."

Union By Law is a product of one of those alliances between the labor movement and academic scholars. The result of twenty-five years of research, including extensive archival research and dozens of personal interviews, the book was made possible in part by the Harry Bridges Center at the University of Washington, which provided funding for the book. McCann and Lovell, both former Directors of the Bridges Center, developed relationships with the ILWU and Filipino American labor activists through the Bridges Center's



activities, including Terri Mast, retired IBU Region 37 Director Rich Gurtiza, and activist scholar Ligaya Domingo. The Labor Archives of Washington, established by the Bridges Center with the support of the ILWU in 2010, was also a crucial resource for the book.

"*Union By Law* comes at a very important juncture in our country," says Cindy Domingo, another of the longtime activists featured in the book. "As I watched the impeachment hearings on the insurrection at the Capitol in Washington DC, I couldn't help thinking that we have been the ones fighting to create and save the real democracy in the United States. And we have done it in the streets, in our homes, in our schools, and in the Court all the way to the Supreme Court. We are the ones that have given true meaning to the word democracy and brought life to it through our life's work."



Emma Catague Elaine Ko Terri Mast Leni Marin and Cindy Domingo in anguished protest at the funeral for Domingo and Viernes. From CJDV pamphlet ca. 1981. University of Washington Library Special Collections, UW.



Contract ratified: ILWU Local 30 members in Boron voted to ratify their contract with Rio Tinto on June 29th. Local 30 President Thomas Marshall said that negotiating team was able to win pay raises in a number of areas throughout the agreement and prevented the company from increasing health care costs for Local 30 members. With assistance from the International’s Organizing Department and solidarity and support from Southern California ILWU Locals, Local 30 mobilized the membership to put pressure on Rio Tinto. As the deadline for the expiration of the contract extension approached, Local 30 members and their families organized early morning demonstrations outside the gates to show their unity, solidarity, and determination to accept nothing less than a fair contract.



Solidarity with Local 6: The Bay Area Pensioners club donated \$1,000 to the Stratas Food Solidarity fund to support Local 6 members who have been locked out by Stratas Foods since May 4th. Donations to the fund can be sent to Local 6 at their hall at 99 Hegenberger Rd, Oakland, CA 94621. In the photo are the officers of the Bay Area Pensioners Club (left to right): Vice President Norm McCloud, President Lawrence Thibeaux, and Secretary-Treasurer Brian R. “Six Pack” McDonald.

TRANSITIONS

- NEW PENSIONERS:**
Local 4: Joseph F. Bielas;
Local 10: Gregory Smith;
Local 12: Ernest Torres; **Local 13:** Joe V. Cortez; Jimmy D Steele; Eric Erikson; Ronald G. Freeney; Craig W. Haenny; Christopher K. Henrich; Steven R. Hill; Gary Kelley; William H. Robbins; Stephen J. Mintz; Pete Monti; Cassandra Moore; **Local 21:** Barry S Mackey; **Local 23:** Garry L. Mc Neill; **Local 46:** Jess J. Herrera; Ruben C. Perez; **Local 52:** Teresa K. Lewis; **Local 63:** Lawrence Del Castillo; Elizabeth A. Ahumada; Michael A. Hallet; Wayne H. Johnson; Candy Jean Ruggeri; Yvonne A. Smallwood; Thomas Perez; **Local 63 (OCU):** Janet Gills; Bea Wright; Patty Cahill; Lilijana Galic; **Local 94:** Fred S. Delprino; Matthew J Jurevich;

DECEASED ACTIVE MEMBERS:
Local 13: David Rico; **Local 94:** David L. Howard;

DECEASED PENSIONERS:
Local 8: Freddie McGee;
Local 10: Joseph Cresci; James Daniels; Emery Sullivan Jr.;
Local 13: Mark A. Kuha; Robert Lara; Thomas C. Mladinich;
Local 19: Robert F. Burden;
- Local 21:** Roy A. Christison;
Local 23: Leslie L. Richardson;
Local 24: Mike L. Donovanick; Michael R. Mcfadden; **Local 34:** Robert L. Garitano; John P. Larkey, Jr.;
Local 52: George S. Nelson;
Local 53: Rodney D. Worman;
Local 63: Roger L. Montoya; John M. Torres; **Local 94:** Fred E. Bingham Jr. (Gladys); William R. Croasdale; Dale Franklin;

DECEASED SURVIVORS:
Local 8: Parthene G. Frasier;
Local 10: Suzanne Lindner; Betty Jimmerson; **Local 13:** Maria L. Bustamante; Darlene Gonzalez; Violet Ketchum; **Local 19:** Annie J Favro; Christine E. Johnson; **Local 21:** Betty B. Birtchet; **Local 23:** Aurora Cassatt; **Local 29:** Lorraine Miramontes; **Local 32:** Renise R. Burpee; **Local 34:** Elizabeth Mendiola; **Local 52:** June P. Maurice; **Local 63:** Elevia L. Hallet; Local 75; Concepcion C Alcaraz;
Local 91: Louise G. Brueckner; Salome S. Perez; **Local 92:** Dawn M. Fowler; **Local 94:** Eloise P. Monroy; Mary D. Kostrenich;

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Local 19 members celebrate Juneteenth to protect the port & save the historic home of Frank Jenkins

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Jenkins himself ran afoul of the Port Security Program when he had his Coast Guard permit was pulled in 1955 after he testified on behalf of Harry Bridges during his deportation trial. His Coast Guard pass was eventually reinstated after Jenkins fought the ban in court.

The goal of the demonstration was to raise awareness about the historic nature of Jenkins’ former home at 1419 24th Ave E in the Central District or Historic Africatown Seattle—a rapidly gentrifying neighborhood near the waterfront that is now proposed to be demolished in order to build small efficiency units. A progressive local Seattle blog and social media project called Vanishing Seattle made Local 19 members aware of the pending demolition of Jenkins former home.

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