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EDITOR'S CHOICE

Boston's Labor History in National and Historical Context, 1970-2020

Aviva Chomsky and Steve Striffler

Editor's Introduction: HJM *is proud to select as one of our Editor's Choice Awards for this issue Aviva Chomsky and Steve Striffler's* Organizing for Power: Building a Twenty-First Century Labor Movement in Boston *(2021) published by Haymarket Press. In this 50th anniversary issue we have endeavored to offer a range of articles that focus on assessing historic events and changes over the past fifty years, in addition to articles that offer reinterpretations of well-known topics or document lesser-known events.* HJM *is especially interested in publishing articles and showcasing books that provide a historical perspective on contemporary political, social, and economic concerns. The authors included in this splendid collection range from academics to activists. They offer thought-provoking and wide-ranging insights into current labor and economic issues, with special attention to the unique experiences of immigrants, women, and people of color. As one reviewer concludes,* Organizing for Power: Building a Twenty-First Century Labor Movement in Boston *is "essential reading for grasping the opportunities and challenges of trade unions in the U.S. today."* [1]

In the popular imagination, and in the public school curriculum, labor history often begins, and ends, with the famed "Lowell mill girls" of the 1820s-40s. In

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Massachusetts, some students might learn about the 1912 Lawrence strike and a few might even take a field trip to the Lowell National Historical Park or the Lawrence Heritage State Park, but most likely they will learn little else about unions or major labor struggles during their elementary or high school years.[2] *Yet, the world we are bequeathing to them is one of ever greater economic and class divides. As Chomsky and Striffler point out, "Massachusetts is now one of the most unequal states in the country, with Boston leading the way."*

Unfortunately, the Commonwealth is not unique. As Haymarket Press' synopsis explains, since the 2008 recession:

> *Boston's economy has become defined by a disconcerting trend that has intensified throughout much of the United States. Economic growth now delivers remarkably few benefits to large sectors of the working class—a phenomenon that is particularly severe for immigrants, people of color, and women.* Organizing for Power *explores this nation-wide phenomenon of "unshared growth" by focusing on Boston, a city that is famously liberal, relatively wealthy, and increasingly difficult for working people (who service the city's needs) to actually live in.* Organizing for Power *is the only comprehensive analysis of labor and popular mobilizing in Boston today. The volume contributes to a growing body of academic and popular literature that examines urban America, racial and economic inequality, labor and immigration, and the right-wing assault on working people.*

The following excerpt provides an illuminating overview of Boston's labor history in both national and historical context. It is reprinted from the editors' introduction, pages 7-19. Dr. Aviva Chomsky is a professor of History and coordinator of Latin American Studies at Salem State University. Dr. Steve Striffler is the Director of the Labor Resource Center and a professor of Anthropology at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. Both have written extensively on labor issues.

* * * * *

The making of Boston's working class was deeply shaped by industrialization and the associated waves of immigration from England, French Canada, and Ireland in the early nineteenth century, and from southern and eastern Europe in the latter half of the century. After European immigration was curtailed in the 1920s, Boston, like other industrial cities in the north, received new migrants: African Americans from the U.S. South, followed by Puerto Ricans in the 1960s, and other immigrants of color from Latin America and Asia in the later twentieth century. The city's economy

was global from the start. Shipping, trade, and finance were pivotal industries and their ties to slavery and the plantation economies of the West Indies and the U.S. South ran deep.

In Boston as elsewhere in the country, nineteenth-century immigrant and labor radicalism was mostly subsumed and contained by the rise of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) by the early twentieth century. The AFL had a long history of representing white, native-born, skilled craft workers and excluding immigrants, workers of color, and lower-paid, marginal workers. In much of the country, the Congress of Industrial Workers' (CIO) industrial unionism surged in the 1940s and 50s and challenged the exclusivity of the AFL while bringing Black and white workers together in unprecedented ways. In so doing, the CIO greatly expanded the reach of the labor movement among new sectors of low-wage workers and workers of color.

As James R. Green and Hugh C. Donahue showed in their pioneering study, *Boston's Workers: A Labor History*, however, Boston's trajectory was particularly unfriendly to the industrial unionism of the mid-twentieth century. The city's economy was based in small-scale, lighter industries like shoes and textiles, which began to experience industrial decline early in the century. Although most studies of deindustrialization in the United States rightly focus on the 1980s and 1990s, in Boston the process started much earlier. The mainstays of Boston's unionized industries, "meat packing, printing, rail transport, textiles, docks, and light manufacturing" all went into steep decline after WWII. Government-funded urban renewal projects created some jobs, but "its long-term effects were to expand the low-wage, nonunion service and clerical sectors."[3] Thus Boston's, and New England's, industrial workers faced the challenges of capital flight, plant closures, and industrial decline a half a century before deindustrialization confronted what came to be known as the midwestern Rust Belt.[4]

Boston's trajectory of labor organizing was also out of step with that of the country's industrial heartlands. As Green and Donahue explain, "when a new industrial union movement, the CIO, arose to challenge AFL business unionism in the mid-1930s, Boston's workers took a backseat to the workers in the great, mass-production industrial centers . . . [The] working class as a whole did not take the great step forward in Boston that it took in other cities."[5] The city's unions retrenched into what Heiwon Kwon and Benjamin Day call "political collective bargaining," a top-down strategy exchanging loyalty to politicians for favors to their members.[6] Postwar migrants and immigrants to Boston faced a far less hospitable economy and labor movement than in many other northern cities.

New postwar immigrants entered low-wage sectors of the economy, and upward mobility was curtailed due to limited opportunities for gaining access to better, unionized employment. The first generation saw migration as a door to opportunity, but, especially among migrants of color, their children confronted joblessness, discrimination, and segregation. The civil rights and liberation movements of the 1950s and 1960s reflected their frustrations, raised expectations, and made them much less willing to accept poor working and living conditions.[7]

THE 1970s: A KEY DECADE

Labor historians have pointed to the 1970s as a transformational decade.[8] Global economic restructuring and deindustrialization, a concerted attack on unions, civil rights gains, the beginning of a new influx of immigrant workers from Latin America, and the Wars on Crime and Drugs coincided and interrelated to shift the contours of labor in the United States. Women and people of color pushed for unionization in the aftermath of gains associated with the civil rights and women's movements. The business class went on the offensive and successfully reduced the power of unions and working people. Private sector unions lost ground in the workplace and in the political arena. Growth in the public sector partially masked unions' decline in the private sector. Some white workers, encouraged by their employers and conservative politicians, turned their frustrations against the very groups who had just acquired basic rights and were pushing for economic justice—women and workers of color.[9]

In Boston, deindustrialization was well underway by the 1970s. By 1980, 54% of Boston's workers labored in office-related activities—the highest proportion in the country.[10] In 1972, Boston employed a third of the metropolitan region's workforce; by 1992, this was down to one fourth and the suburbs attracted both new businesses and relocations from the city. Even manufacturing grew in the larger metropolitan area, while declining by 44% in the city proper between 1972 and 1990. Boston also lost thirty thousand retail jobs between 1970 and 1990, while the retail industry exploded in the suburbs. The new suburban jobs were much less likely to be unionized.[11]

The city's population fell from 801,444 in 1950 to 562,994 in 1980.[12] Much of the population decline was due to white flight, as federal policies encouraged suburban development through highway construction and low-interest mortgage loans. Routes 128 and then 495 circled the city and laid the foundation for a booming new high-tech industrial corridor that drew its workers from the expanding suburbs. School desegregation—dubbed "forced

busing" by its opponents—came late to Boston, and it was met with violent protest. Like elsewhere in the northeast, desegregation ended at municipal boundaries, becoming a further motivation for white flight.[13]

The 1970s saw the beginning of a new surge in immigration nationwide, primarily of people of color from Latin American and Asia. Black migrants to Boston in the 1950s and '60s had come from the U.S. South. In the 1970s this pattern shifted and the Black population grew primarily with migrants from the Caribbean. These immigrants entered an already racially divided city and labor force, in the context of industrial decline.

The relationship of Boston's unions with its populations of color, including the new groups of immigrants of color, has been complex. Green and Donahue pointed out that the city's history of strong ethnic politics and the absence of heavy industry and CIO-style unions undermined the development of a multiracial working-class identity and politics. "Lacking the experience of integrated unionism created by the CIO in other cities," they write, "Boston unions have failed by and large to meet the city's racial crisis" of the 1970s they wrote at the end of that decade.[14] When Boston's Black and other workers of color mobilized in the 1960s and 70s, it was outside as much as inside of unions, and it was for access to jobs, housing, and schools as much as for greater rights in the workplace. Rising activism by workers of color coincided with ongoing job contraction, making it less likely that white males would open their unions to women and minority workers.

As Green and Donahue explain, "in an economy of scarce jobs and scarce housing, in which economic security is harder to obtain, efforts to desegregate in any area—schools, jobs, neighborhoods—will be perceived as a threat by many white workers, even in cases where desegregation benefits everyone by increasing federal and state funding." Boston-area labor unions focused less on defending the interests of the working class as a whole than on protecting the "limited privileges enjoyed by their white members." Within a contracting economy, trade "unions, which earlier won immigrant workers steady jobs and better working conditions," had become "part of the problem rather than part of the solution as far as minority workers are concerned."[15]

Women and people of color carried on their struggles both inside and outside the workplace. Community organizations such as "9to5," the United Community Construction Workers and the Third World Workers Association organized to press for the rights of women and workers of color for equal pay, treatment, and access to jobs. As Lane Windham noted, the women's organization 9to5 mobilized "the foremothers of what today is known as 'alt-labor,' the wave of workers' centers, associations, and campaigns that seek to build power for workers outside the collective bargaining paradigm in

the early twenty-first century."[16] Several of this book's chapters explore the emerging relationships between traditional and "alt" labor movements.

Increasing Black mobilization was one factor leading Boston's employers to begin recruiting in Puerto Rico to fill low-wage positions. As a new generation of Puerto Rican migrants began to arrive in the mid-1960s, the city's Spanish-speaking population increased from 1,000 in 1959 to 17,000 in 1969, and an estimated 40,000 by 1973.[17] As Michael Piore shows, Puerto Ricans were explicitly recruited to replace Black workers who were becoming less willing to accept conditions at the lowest-skill, lowest-wage jobs, especially in Boston's declining manufacturing sector.[18] Although they frequently entered into precarious sectors of the labor market within produce packaging, shoe manufacturing, and hospitals, close to half of the Puerto Rican workers in Piore's study held jobs in unionized workplaces. But the unions only reinforced the "bimodal job structure," providing strong representation to skilled, largely white workers, and providing Puerto Ricans with few services or benefits while ensuring that they subsidized a pension fund that few would ever draw upon.[19]

RACE, IMMIGRATION, AND INEQUALITY IN THE "MASSACHUSETTS MIRACLE"

Boston's deindustrialization and its spatial and racial divides continued as the underside to the city's and the state's revival after 1980. Manufacturing jobs in the city fell from 70,000 in 1969 to 10,000 in 2013, and 7,000 in 2016.[20] In Massachusetts as a whole, manufacturing jobs plummeted from 500,000 in 1990 to 246,000 in 2018[21] Healthcare and Social Assistance became the Commonwealth's largest employment category by 1995, and has only continued to grow since then, adding 40,000 workers between 2007 and 2011 and employing 16% of workers in the state.[22] The sector added 64,000 more jobs between 2012 and 2016, and by 2016 employed one of every six workers statewide.[23]

The 1980s brought the surge of growth in high technology and financial services known as the Massachusetts Miracle. After a downturn at the end of the 1980s, the state saw further economic expansion in the 1990s.[24] In *The Boston Renaissance* (2000), Barry Bluestone and Mary Huff Stevenson characterized Boston's trajectory during these two decades as a "triple revolution," made up of a demographic shift from white ethnic to multicultural, an industrial shift from "mill-based" to "mind-based," and a spatial shift from an economically-dominant central city to one that was part of a broader metropolitan region. The influx of high-tech industry

temporarily turned the Boston area into the Silicon Valley of the east coast; it was followed by an upsurge in high-end services like health and education, finance, insurance, real estate, and business services.[25]

After 1980 Boston's population began to rise again, reaching 617,594 by 2010. As whites were leaving the city, people of color were arriving. Boston's population went from 18% "minority" in 1970 to 30% in 1980, 37% in 1990, 51% in 2000, and 53% in 2010.[26] In the process, Boston's Black population became poorer (as middle-income Blacks also left) and more concentrated in a few deteriorating neighborhoods as gentrification pushed African Americans out of mixed areas like the South End. New development in the city emphasized housing and amenities to attract young, single, overwhelmingly white professionals back to the city, further increasing social divisions and racial segregation.[27]

For the city's growing population of people of color, the Miracle brought growing poverty and inequality. Most of the new jobs were located outside the city in the Route 128 corridor, inaccessible to city residents without cars. Latin American immigration continued to grow substantially in the 1980s, making Latinos the largest minority group in Massachusetts.[28] Beyond Boston, Latino and other poor immigrants of color concentrated in smaller deindustrialized cities like Lawrence and Holyoke that shared with Boston's poor neighborhoods conditions of deteriorating housing and lack of access to suburban jobs. The Latino poverty rate, which had almost doubled during the 1970s, remained at around 37% during the 1980s, the highest rate in the country.[29] For white workers in Massachusetts, annual income grew 22% between 1979 and 1999, while for Black workers it fell by 1.7%, and for Hispanics by 9.7%.[30] As Edwin Meléndez noted:

> the beneficial impact of the economic expansion on Latino poverty was offset by the type of jobs created, the concentration of Latinos in those cities that suffered the brunt of blue-collar job losses, the relatively low educational attainment of working-age Latinos, and the growing number of households with only one potential wage-earner.[31]

BOSTON BECOMES EVER MORE SEGREGATED BY RACE AND CLASS

Neighborhoods like Roxbury and Mattapan became both Blacker and poorer, and for those populations upward mobility was becoming increasingly unrealizable.[32] New immigrants continued to join older populations of color,

and Boston's Black population grew with migrants from Cape Verde, Haiti, Jamaica, and other parts of the Caribbean and Africa. (Some, though not all, Cape Verdeans identify as Black, as do a very few migrants from the Spanish-speaking Caribbean.)

The Latino population, initially primarily Puerto Rican, came to incorporate Cubans, Dominicans, Central Americans, Mexicans, and others. But unlike much of the rest of the country, where Mexicans comprise the largest number of Latinos, in Massachusetts over 40% of Latinos were Puerto Rican in 2014, and only 5% were Mexican.[33] It is also notable that the proportion of foreign-born residents is actually greater among Boston's Black population (32.8%) than among the Latino population (32.2%).[34]

Relations between established communities of color and newer immigrants sometimes replicated the same kind of competition that Green and Donahue described in the 1970s, where migrants compete with locals over a still-shrinking pie. Some of the city's initiatives to embrace diversity, transcend the racial divisions of earlier generations, and welcome immigrants seemed to only entrench older racial fault lines, continuing to exclude native-born African Americans. Thus, by the turn of the century Boston was home to what many considered to be a healthy, even booming economy, but also extreme economic inequality shaped by race and immigration. (The chapters in Part I trace these structural processes into the twenty-first century.)

Unlike other American cities that have expanded their borders over the twentieth century, Boston consists of a geographically small city where unions, despite their shrinking numbers, still play an outsized political role, ringed by multiple growing suburbs where unions have failed to make significant inroads. Contrasts characterize the city itself, its metropolitan area, and the state of Massachusetts. Frenetic growth and gentrification in Boston's downtown has only sharpened the marginalization of poor, still-segregated, urban neighborhoods, while leafy, exclusive suburbs border struggling, deindustrialized secondary cities such as Lawrence and Springfield, home to new immigrants from the Global South and with poverty rates of up to 90%.

Harris Gruman, Massachusetts Political Director of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), argues that labor revitalization requires transcending the borders of the city of Boston to confront the state as a whole. In terms of its economy, he writes:

> Massachusetts is like a large metropolitan system, and one significantly smaller than New York City or Los Angeles. It has 6 million inhabitants, and I can drive to my union's farthest-flung offices in under two hours. If we have pockets of extreme poverty

> in the old factory towns of Springfield and Lawrence, they relate to the overall affluence around them more like the Bronx does to New York City than a vast region like upstate New York or California's Central Valley does to those states. The desire of many legislators to Balkanize reform in Massachusetts by city or region is much like the efforts to concentrate economic reforms and community benefits within a single neighborhood of a large city or an affluent suburb or college town, and often worsens overall economic inequality at the state level.[35]

Gruman's chapter details SEIU's commitment to deepening ties with movements for progressive social change, one of the hallmarks of Boston's new unionism.

The SEIU is not alone in this stance. Labor-community alliances are now in vogue and new forms of solidarity have been emerging. As David Pihl, Jasmine Kerrissey, and Tom Juravich correctly point out in their 2017 accounting of Massachusetts labor, the "labor movement remains a powerful force in the Commonwealth working for fair and more just workplaces" and "has continued to launch creative campaigns to protect and expand workers' rights and standards of living."[36] Yet it is hard to tell whether recent manifestations of worker militancy are coalescing into something larger, or whether they are isolated expressions of anger from a working class that is sporadically rebellious and fed up, but without a clear path to building the collective strength necessary to consistently shape state and corporate power in meaningful ways.

BOSTON'S WORKERS AND UNIONS CONFRONT THE 21st CENTURY

The Massachusetts Institute for a New Commonwealth (MassINC) termed the first ten years of the new century as a "lost decade" for Massachusetts. The Miracle faded, and the state lost one hundred and fifty thousand jobs. Top earners increased their incomes by up to 10%, while low-wage workers saw their income stagnate or decline by up to 20%.[37] Massachusetts is now one of the most unequal states in the country, with Boston leading the way.[38] Nor did the post-2008 recovery do much to reverse these trends. In terms of expanding employment, Massachusetts recovered from the recession faster than the rest of the country, but over 85% of the new jobs were in low-wage sectors like food service, home health care, and cleaning services, and paid less than $38,000 a year.[39] Even as job creation

picked up in the second decade of the century, unemployment remained significant, and disproportionately high for Black and Hispanic workers.[40] Boston's small size and high rate of suburbanization—one of the highest in the country—contributed to "extraordinarily high unemployment rates for central city residents, particularly for minority communities."[41] Wages for those at the lower end of the labor market failed to recover after the recession had technically ended.

Closely related to the city and state's sharpening inequality, union density continued its decline during the new century. Although the state's constantly threatened public sector still enjoys relatively high rates of unionization, this alone has not been able to compensate for the ongoing decline in union density within the private sector (now at around 6%), especially in the context of cutbacks that have created further hardship for working people. Manufacturing employment in the state declined by over 17% from 2007 to 2017, including a nearly 30% decline in high-tech areas such as computer, semiconductor, and electronics production—the core industries that had driven the Massachusetts Miracle. Unionized printing and publishing industries also shed jobs.[42] Despite a number of successful organizing campaigns, the Massachusetts labor movement could not unionize enough workers in major growth sectors such as health care, hospitality, and other services to make up for the overall decline.

Nationally, unions took stock of their declining fortunes in the form of two structural changes at the turn of the century. In 1995, the "New Voices" slate took leadership of the AFL-CIO, vowing to revitalize the labor movement by committing to a mass organizing campaign, particularly within growing low-wage sectors of the economy. Then, a decade later, some of the unions most associated with New Voices broke off from the AFL-CIO entirely, forming the Change to Win coalition, and espousing almost the same goals that New Voices had proclaimed. Led by the SEIU (Service Employees), and to a lesser extent UNITE HERE (Hotel and Restaurant Workers), the United Farmworkers, the Laborers, and others joined together, vowing once again to prioritize organizing the low-wage service sector. Several large-scale nationwide campaigns seemed to show the promise of this new commitment, as home health-care workers, janitors, nurses, and hospitality workers were organized in large numbers.

It is interesting to note that the unions leading New Voices and Change to Win almost all came out of an AFL union tradition, but with new energy and commitment to transcending the AFL's racial and gender exclusivity and to embracing immigrant and other workers of color. The AFL's roots were in pre-heavy industry, pre-NLRA [1935 National Labor Relations Act],

unregulated sectors that bear significant resemblance to unorganized and growing sectors of today's economy. AFL unions tended to be occupationally based [often characterized as skilled "craft" unions] rather than factory-based, decentralized. AFL unions focused on controlling local labor markets rather than relying on NLRB-sponsored elections [National Labor Relations Board]. They have thus been well positioned to pursue new tactics like corporate campaigns and community mobilization.[43] In this respect, the historic weakness of the CIO in Boston that labor historians Green and Donahue lamented could become a strength as older AFL organizing strategies become newly relevant.

Critics, however, pointed out that even this massive commitment to organizing has failed to stem the tide of declining numbers.[44] Boston unions have been slower to embrace some of these changes due to their tradition of Kwon and Day's "political collective bargaining"—the top-down approach that pursues short-term alliances with politicians who exchange political support for concrete and immediate benefits for union members. Although this strategy delivered gains to relatively privileged sectors of Boston's working class for decades, it has kept a core group of unions largely isolated from efforts to build a more radical labor movement committed to advancing working-class power and interests in a larger sense.[45]

Yet as the chapters in *Organizing for Power: Building a Twenty-First Century Labor Movement in Boston* attest, despite these obstacles, the city's labor movement has been visible and active since Trump's election. Workers are organizing particularly within the leading sectors of the post-industrial economy, in education, finance, medicine, and the low-wage service industries that meet the needs of the better-paid professionals who work in those sectors.

Strikingly, in New England "more than half of union members are doctors, lawyers, teachers, architects, and other white-collar employees."[46] Reflecting the public and service-sector orientation of the state's unions, the largest unions in Massachusetts are the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA), the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the Association of Federal, State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), and the Massachusetts Nurses Association (MNA). Nurses and teachers are now one dynamic epicenter of organized labor in Boston and Massachusetts.

Some unions are also reaching out actively to organize the lower sectors of the service economy. Some of the city's unions, perhaps most notably SEIU and UNITE HERE, are challenging old-style political unionism by focusing on organizing workers and workplaces that have been underrepresented within the house of labor. These campaigns came relatively late to Boston.

Justice for Janitors, which began in Denver, Pittsburgh, and Los Angeles at the end of the 1980s, did not reach Boston until the new century. By 2016, after more than a decade of organizing, SEIU Local 32BJ was representing sixteen thousand janitors in the Boston area, or about 90% of the workforce. These workers were earning between $17 and $25 an hour, with benefits.[47] Similar gains were sought at area universities. In October of 2016, 3,500 graduate students at Harvard organized through the UAW and voted in the union in the largest NLRB election in a decade.[48] As Carlos Aramayo's chapter highlights, this effort was preceded by UNITE HERE's success in organizing over one thousand low-wage workers at area universities between 2012–2014 and was then followed by a successful strike in the fall of 2017 by food service workers at Harvard. Similarly, as Amy Todd explores, adjunct faculty at area campuses have also gotten the union bug.

The new century also saw considerable labor-related activism outside of traditional union structures. The expansion of worker centers is perhaps the most conspicuous example of attempts by nonunionized, low-wage, and largely immigrant workers to improve conditions both at and beyond the workplace. A total of five worker centers existed nationally in the early 1990s, a number that exploded to over 150 by the mid-2000s,[49] and to around 230 by 2018.[50] Many are now loosely organized through a number of umbrella networks, including the National Day Laborers Organizing Network, the National Domestic Workers Alliance, the Restaurant Opportunities Center United, the National Guestworker Alliance, the Food Chain Workers Alliance, and the National Taxi Workers Alliance. As Aviva Chomsky explains, worker centers have a social-movement orientation that focuses on economic and immigrant rights while trying to establish alliances with a wide range of groups, including religious actors, state agencies, labor unions, and other progressive organizations.

Although worker centers are typically not rooted in the workplace, and generally do not attempt to organize workers with the purpose of establishing unions and seeking collective bargaining agreements, they do target employers and have had considerable success in acquiring back wages. They have also pressured local and state governments to enforce labor laws and improve conditions for workers. Although their relationship with labor unions has at times been uneasy, the AFL-CIO has now established partnerships with worker centers throughout the country in an effort to reach more deeply into working-class communities.[51] These types of alliances, in turn, have laid the groundwork for broader campaigns around issues including immigrant rights, wage theft, and the *Fight for $15* that attempt to expand the labor movement beyond work and unions, Gruman

argues in his chapter. In his interview with Noam Chomsky, Jeff Crosby shows how organizing marginalized groups within and outside of unions and building coalitions with progressive community organizations grew out of and contributed to that local's more radical political orientation. We have also included two chapters on innovative organizing in Providence, Rhode Island, the major metropolitan area closest to Boston, both because of the social and economic linkages that make it part of the greater Boston area, and because of the significance of these organizing efforts that directly address some of the major themes of the book.

Community-union alliances are exploring new, more radical ways of transcending unions' traditions of political bargaining. They are fighting to bring a larger, working-class agenda into city and state politics, organizing inside and outside of the workplace particularly with respect to the minimum wage, sick leave, and wage theft. Gruman's chapter traces how the Raise Up Massachusetts coalition has used legislative initiatives and, when those failed, successful ballot initiatives to raise the minimum wage and to make Massachusetts the first state to require employers to provide paid sick days. Raise Up Massachusetts falls under the umbrella of the SEIU's national strategy beginning with the Fight for a Fair Economy in 2011, and the Fight for $15 in 2012.

Both of these campaigns sought to grapple with the twin issues of a hostile political environment and declining membership—despite massive organizing campaigns—through alliances that mobilize working-class communities to press for political change beyond unions' traditional work with the Democratic Party. In Massachusetts, as in California and some other states with robust ballot initiative processes, the initiative has proven a fruitful arena for mobilizing coalitions and achieving concrete gains, as well as for pressuring politicians from the grassroots rather than the backroom.

Other groups, such as the Policy Group on Tradeswomen Issues have led the fight to give women better access to jobs in the (higher paying) building trades. And as Enid Eckstein writes, some initiatives, such as the "No on 2" campaign led by the Massachusetts Teachers Association to thwart the push for charter schools, have shown how a particular group of workers and the working-class public share common interests in the struggle to insure that "common goods" such as education remain in the public domain.

The chapters in *Organizing for Power: Building a Twenty-First Century Labor Movement in Boston* show that Boston's labor movement is taking an all-of-the-above approach to confronting the crisis facing both organized and unorganized workers. As Erik Loomis reminds us in his insightful conclusion, the challenges arrayed against workers in the twenty-first century are steep.

The region's unions must find ways to build and utilize political power in more effective and coherent ways, advancing their own short-term interests while also working with a wide range of groups to build power for the labor movement as a whole. To revitalize the labor movement, we must continue to work to organize new sectors and new workers, to re-energize existing unions, to form coalitions between unions and community organizations, to push a working-class political agenda in state and local government, and to fight for rights for unorganized workers and immigrants.

Workers in the blue city of Boston and the blue state of Massachusetts face many challenges that are common to workers nationwide, and others that arise from the particularities of local history. As Boston's working people struggle to meet these challenges, new leadership, new organizations, and new ideas reveal a still-thriving working-class culture and potential that is continuing to unfold.

HJM

This *Editor's Choice Awards* selection was reprinted with permission of Haymarket Press (Chicago) and is excerpted from Aviva Chomsky and Steve Striffler's edited volume, *Organizing for Power: Building a Twenty-First Century Labor Movement in Boston* (2021). This excerpt is from the Editor's Introduction, pages 7-19.

Notes

1. Immanuel Ness, reviewer; quoted on the Haymarket Press website.
2. For a volume on labor history that could be used at the high school level, see Thomas Juravich, William F. Hartford, and James Green, *Commonwealth of Toil: Chapters in the History of Massachusetts Workers and Their Unions* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996). It provides an excellent example of making scholarship accessible to a popular audience. The brief, lively chapters are extremely well written.
3. James R. Green and Hugh C. Donahue, *Boston's Workers: A Labor History* (Boston: Boston Public Library, 1979), 106, 118.
4. See Clete Daniel, *Culture of Misfortune: An Interpretive History of Textile Unionism in the United States* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell/ILR Press, 2001); William F. Hartford, *Where is Our Responsibility? Unions and Economic Change in the New England Textile Industry, 1870-1960* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996).
5. Green and Donahue, *Boston's Workers*, 106.

6. Heiwon Kwon and Benjamin Day, "The Politics of Labor in Boston," in Lowell Turner and Daniel B. Cornfield, eds. *Labor in the New Urban Battlegrounds: Local Solidarity in a Global Economy* (Ithaca, NY: ILR Press, 2007), 97–98.
7. Michael Joseph Piore, "The Role of Immigration in Industrial Growth: A Case Study of the Origins and Character of Puerto Rican Migration to Boston," MIT Department of Economics Working Paper 112A (May 1973), 23. See Mel King, *Chain of Change: Struggles for Black Community Development* (Boston: South End Press, 1981), 95-100 on the United Community Construction Workers. More recently, Donna Jean Murch, *Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010) has explored the radicalization of second-generation and new Black migrants from the South to Oakland, California, during that city's post-WWII industrial decline. See Elizabeth Hafkin Pleck, *Black Migration and Poverty: Boston 1865-1900* (New York: Academic Press, 1979), 117, on the northern-born origin of 1960s urban rioters.
8. See Judith Stein, *The Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the 1970s* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011); Jefferson Cowie, *Staying Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: The New Press, 2012); Lane Windham, *Knocking on Labor's Door: Union Organizing in the 1970s and the Roots of a New Economic Divide* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017).
9. See Windham, *Knocking on Labor's Door*, 65; Bill Fletcher Jr. and Fernando Gapasin, *Solidarity Divided: The Crisis in Organized Labor and a New Path toward Social Justice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 43; Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).
10. James E. Blackwell, "Jobs, Income and Poverty: The Black Share of the New Boston," in Phillip L. Clay, ed., *The Emerging Black Community in Boston: A Report of the Institute for the Study of Black Culture* (Boston: University of Massachusetts at Boston, 1985), 6–79, 43.
11. Barry Bluestone and Mary Huff Stevenson, *The Boston Renaissance: Race, Space, and Economic Change in an American Metropolis* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2000), 15, 94-95; Colin Gordon, "Declining Cities, Declining Unions: Urban Sprawl and U.S. Inequality," *Dissent Magazine*, Dec. 10, 2014.
12. City of Boston, *Boston's People and Economy* (2012), 207. www.boston.gov/sites/default/files/fy12-volume1-bostons-people-and-economy.pdf.
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