



Jewish Labor Committee
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Organizational highlights of our activities during the first eleven months of 2013.

As the voice of the Jewish community in the labor movement and the voice of the labor movement in the Jewish community, the Jewish Labor Committee engages in programs of value to both communities.

The Jewish Labor Committee is a unique organization for Jews in the labor movement, such as union organizers, union staff or labor lawyers, as well as those who work either professionally or as lay activists in social justice organizations and those with a particular interest in Israel to work together on issues of common concern. Our regional offices carried out additional programs in 2013 that attracted individuals in their local Jewish communities who are interested in and involved in social justice activism.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Labor Seders: A Community Relations Tool

JLC has again organized “Labor Seders” in diverse communities across the United States. This program provides a unique community relations opportunity, where we bring together Jewish communal leaders, local labor leaders, representatives of diverse ethnic communities and public officials to “break matza” together and relate the themes of the Passover holiday to contemporary issues of mutual concern. In 2013, JLC sponsored, co-sponsored or in other ways aided Labor Seders in Boston, Philadelphia, Houston, West Orange NJ, New York City, St. Louis, San Francisco, Chicago and Washington DC. Most of these Labor Seders used the most recent edition of the *Jewish Labor Committee Passover Haggadah*. We’ve learned that our Haggadah has been a useful resource for other Jewish organizations and synagogues that conduct their own community Seders, as well as individuals working to make their personal Seders more interesting and relevant. The Labor Seders provide an opportunity for Jewish labor activists, organizers and staffers to participate in a meaningful Jewish ritual.

For the past few years, inspired by the JLC’s Labor Seders in Houston, special Interfaith Anti-Human Trafficking Seders were held to focus attention on the scourge of human trafficking. The JLC was pleased to be a cosponsor of these events, which use the Jewish Labor Committee’s Passover Haggadah. This year’s program was organized by the Houston Rescue and Restore Coalition and the Greater Houston Section of the National Council of Jewish Women, with the support of Houston’s Justice and Peace Council of Christ Cathedral Church, and the Houston-based Harris County AFL-CIO Council, which hosted the event.

At the 13th Annual Labor Seder hosted by New England JLC, Gann Academy, the Boston area Jewish high school, was honored for its commitment to being true to Jewish values in developing ethical policies regarding workers and in developing an ethical policy for hiring contractors. As in the past few years, many elected officials and union presidents attended the Labor Seder as well as leaders of the Jewish community. The NE JLC Labor Seder continues to be an intergenerational event.

The Philadelphia JLC Labor Seder was attended by two people running for Congress and an elected Philadelphia municipal official. Among Philadelphia’s prominent labor leaders, Wendell Young, President UFCW 1776, spoke about the fight



Philadelphia Labor Seder at Congregation Rodeph Shalom

to maintain 5,000 unionized jobs at state owned liquor stores. Pennsylvania State Senator Anthony Williams was one of the featured speakers.

2013 Jewish Labor Committee Human Rights Awards Dinner

The labor movement demonstrated its high regard for the JLC by its participation in our 2013 Human Rights Dinner, at which time we presented awards to United Auto Workers President Bob King and Christopher Shelton, who is a vice president of the Communications Workers of America (CWA). A host of national, regional and local union officers and members attended the event.

[l-r: UFCW President Joe Hanson, JLC Acting Executive Director Rita Freedman, CWA President Larry Cohen, JLC President Stuart Appelbaum, Christopher Shelton, Bob King, American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, and past President of the CWA—and the JLC—Morton Bahr.]



Workers' Rights/Economic Justice Campaigns

The JLC continues to collaborate with the AFL-CIO and the UNITE HERE union in working to mobilize support in the Jewish community for the global campaign in support of housekeepers and other workers at the Hyatt Hotel chain, whose management has for many years been trying to force workers to accept unfair contracts. The Jewish Labor Committee distributed model contract language for Jewish organizations booking events at any union hotel that would protect them from financial penalty if they would have to break the contract because a labor dispute arises after the contract is signed.



New England JLC activists continued their support of Hyatt-chain hotel workers, here as part of a 200-strong rally at the Hyatt Regency Downtown, one of the three Boston-area hotels that fired long-term housekeeping staff and replaced them with outsourced workers at almost half the wages and with no benefits.

New England JLC has been fighting for over four years on behalf of the workers of Hyatt Hotels. NEJLC mobilized thousands of Jewish community members and hundreds of rabbis to sign petitions, participate in the boycott, write letters, and come to rallies and protests. Finally, on July 1st of this year, an agreement was reached and most Hyatt employees now have excellent union contracts. However there are a number of Hyatt hotels across North America not included in this agreement. JLC will continue to fight for those workers.

In Cambridge, Massachusetts, the New England JLC has been instrumental in organizing local rabbis and other clergy in a day of phone calls to hotel management at the Le Méridien, as well as organizing a prayer circle in the hotel lobby in support of the employees. Le Méridien workers and management have been engaged in a labor dispute since March 2012, when the workers attempted to present a formal request to management that they agree

to remain neutral while employees debated the possibility of joining UNITE HERE Local 26, the Massachusetts union of hospitality workers. Management refused to accept the request. Since then, hotel management has continued to deny the request for neutrality while Le Méridien workers have staged regular Thursday evening picket lines at the Hotel's entrance, joined often by community supporters.

The JLC is committed to the related causes of access to quality public education and fair contracts for teachers. This is especially true for Philadelphia's JLC chapter. Philadelphia JLC board members planned and rallied with the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers, the American Federation of Teachers, and other unions many times in Philadelphia and Harrisburg on behalf of nearly 4,000 teachers and other school staff who have lost their jobs and to keep attention on the crisis in PA of school closings and woefully insufficient funding. Philadelphia's JLC chapter is an active part of the newly-formed Philadelphia Coalition Advocating for Public Schools (PCAPS), comprised of over a dozen grassroots organizations. PCAPS has organized press conferences, engaged local and state political leaders, and participated in multiple marches and rallies, including the "Full Funding Fridays," which bring together individuals and organizations in weekly demonstrations in front a different underfunded Philadelphia school.

Also in Philadelphia, in partnership with Kol Tzedek Synagogue, JLC coordinated an event examining the city's public education crisis. Featured speakers included local teachers' union leaders, representatives from POWER (Philadelphians Organized to Witness, Empower and Rebuild), and parents offering testimony on the impact of the crisis on their families. Over 60 people attended this informative and spirited panel discussion. JLC Philadelphia also hosted Wilma Liebman, former President of the National Labor Relations Board, who addressed an audience of labor lawyers, Jewish and non-Jewish labor leaders, and young progressives, giving an overview of U.S. labor law and its political implications.



JLC Western Region at Chinatown Walmart: even those still inside shopping could not help but notice that something very important was happening here.

In Los Angeles, JLC has been at the forefront of fighting for the rights of carwashers through the Carwash Workers Organizing Committee. Many of these workers are immigrants and lack access to the structures and knowledge of processes through which they can organize and fight for fair treatment and improved working conditions. The JLC Western Region has also joined with hundreds of other labor, faith and community activists who rallied in the street in front of the Los Angeles Chinatown Walmart to protest that corporation's low-wage poverty policies.

The New England JLC has been advocating for the rights of immigrant workers. It has coordinated events geared towards engaging members of this community through events such as the a Mothers Day breakfast centered around celebrating those in the caregiving industry, and a public demonstration that invited members of the public to share their own immigrant story in an effort to build solidarity with immigrant workers and raise awareness around unfair labor practices they face.

The Jewish Labor Committee is deeply concerned about the increase in income inequality. We have been advocating for an increase in the minimum wage. This fall, as Labor Day and Rosh Hashanah came within days of each other, JLC President Appelbaum's Labor Day Op-Ed article, *Join the Campaign to Raise the Federal Minimum Wage!*, was published and disseminated by the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, as well as by such publications as Philadelphia's *Jewish Exponent*, Florida's *Jewish Journal*, the *St. Louis Jewish Light*, the Minnesota-based *American Jewish World*, the *Arizona Jewish Post*, Colorado's *Intermountain Jewish News*, and the *Chicago Jewish News*, The Wichita, KS-based "*Talking Union*," Springfield, MO's *KY3.com*, California's *Burbank Leader*, and others shared it, and the article was highlighted on websites of many union local and central labor council websites.

This November, a referendum appeared on the New Jersey ballot to raise the state's minimum wage. Working in collaboration with the New Jersey State AFL-CIO, the JLC issued a statement in support of the increase, and an opinion article by Acting Executive Director Rita Freedman and Associate Director Arieh Lebowitz - in support of a ballot referendum to raise the wage - was published by such papers as the Teaneck-based *Jewish Standard*, the Whippany-based *New Jersey Jewish News*, and the Cherry Hill-based *Jewish Community Voice*. We're pleased to report that the minimum wage increase was passed overwhelmingly by voters in New Jersey.

The JLC, together with colleagues in a number of other national and local Jewish organizations, was able to secure passage of a resolution in support of fair pay by an overwhelming majority of delegates to the annual conference of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs taking place in Washington, DC. The JCPA encompasses a network of 14 national and 125 local independent Jewish community relations agencies. The Jewish Labor Committee, a founding member of the JCPA, was one of the sponsors of the resolution, along with the National Council of Jewish Women, the Anti-Defamation League, the Detroit Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC), Hadassah, the Rhode Island JCRC, the Union for Reform Judaism, the Silicon Valley, CA JCRC, and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. Passage of such a resolution helps keep the organized Jewish community on record as being in support of fair pay.

Locally, both the Philadelphia and New England JLC Chapters have been working collaboratively with other local organizations to fight for the passage of municipal earned sick days' legislation. In Philadelphia, the coalition with which JLC was partnered succeeded in seeing the legislation passed by the Philadelphia City Council, only to see it vetoed by the mayor. In Boston, the NE JLC has been working with the Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action (JALSA) to collect signatures to get a minimum wage increase and earned sick days on the ballot. As of this writing, it appears that the state house is expected to pass the proposed wage increase, which sailed through the state senate in mid-November, and would raise the minimum wage from \$8 to \$11 per hour.

For most of this year, the New England JLC has been working on supporting the proposed Massachusetts Domestic Workers Bill of Rights Legislation (DWBR) which would establish basic workplace rights for nannies, housekeepers, and caregivers employed in private homes. The NEJLC Regional Director wrote an op-ed, published in Greater Boston's *Jewish Advocate*, entitled "High Holidays are the Time to Support Domestic Workers."

The world watched in horror as over 1,100 garment workers were killed in April when a substandard factory in Bangladesh collapsed while they were at their jobs. Such tragedies are killing and injuring men and women in many places around the globe where labor costs are low and working conditions are unconscionable. Soon after the collapse, the Jewish Labor Committee initiated an online petition calling on the management of Walmart to join the international agreement of major retailers to commit to preventing such disasters from happening again. A number of well-known firms have signed on to just such an accord, that provides for a mandatory independent inspection program, mandatory improvements in workplace safety, and binding arbitration enforceable in the courts of the country where a company is based. However, Walmart and other companies have opted to do their own unenforceable audits of factory conditions, a type of self-auditing that has proven to be ineffective.

In January, New England JLC members stood outside the GAP store in Harvard Square on Martin Luther King, Jr., Day, protesting the company's refusal to sign onto a comprehensive fire-safety program in garment factories in Bangladesh. A preventable fire in a clothing factory near the Bangladesh capital of Dhaka killed 112 workers last November. NEJLC members participated in three other area vigils against Walmart and H&M, which at that time had also refused to sign onto the comprehensive fire-safety program.

Supporting Israel; Opposing BDS, and Combating Anti-Semitism and other Forms of Intolerance

Following the massacre at a Jewish Day School in Toulouse last year, and the firebombing of a Jewish supermarket in Sarcelles, near Paris, along with a doubling of reported incidents of anti-Semitism in 2012 from the year before, JLC President Stuart Appelbaum joined with other leaders of the American Jewish community who traveled to France this past February to hold a series of meetings demonstrating our solidarity with the Jewish communities in France, and simultaneously show our concern over the rise of anti-Semitism in that country. The delegation

was organized by the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations - the JLC is a founding member of the Presidents' Conference - and they had separate meetings with President Francois Hollande, Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault, Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius, and Interior Minister Manuel Valls. In addition to meeting with top government officials, the delegation met with a number of Christian and Muslim religious leaders, the Mayor of Paris, and the leadership of French Jewish communal organizations and of several other European Jewish communities. The delegation also spoke with Islamic communal leaders in Toulouse, and visited the site in southern France where Jews were deported to Auschwitz. French Jewish communal leadership welcomed the delegation as well, and was very appreciative of the support from the U.S. Jewish community.



Meeting at the Office of French Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault.

When we learned that world-renowned physicist Stephen Hawking had decided to publicly boycott an international Presidents Conference of world leaders in different fields, hosted by Israeli President Shimon Peres, the Jewish Labor Committee urged our members and supporters to voice disapproval of Hawking's decision, which had been made at the urging of activists within the boycott divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement. Similarly, the JLC issued and widely distributed a statement criticizing the Irish Teachers Union's resolution calling for a boycott of Israel.



Twenty-two teachers, Chicago Teachers Union members, at the Illinois Holocaust Center in Skokie, IL

For many years, our Chicago office has been arranging study tours of the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center, in Skokie, IL, for local public school teachers, in coordination with the Chicago Teachers Union. This July, 22 teachers, all members of the CTU, participated in our study tour. Our Chicago regional director

arranged for a grant to fund these annual tours *in perpetuity*.

To commemorate Martin Luther King, Jr., Day, a number of Jewish and labor publications published an article by JLC President Appelbaum that focused on King's support of Israel. Earlier in the year, we distributed a speech by an Australian Cabinet Secretary that discussed Australia's support of Israel.

The Jewish Labor Committee issued a statement in support of the renewal of talks between the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority. At the same time, we condemned the European Union's announcement banning financing and cooperation with Israeli institutions, including research grants, scholarships and cultural exchanges, in the West Bank, the

Golan Heights, Gaza and East Jerusalem which, coming at a delicate time, could have undermined the talks. President Appelbaum joined with other Jewish communal leadership who sent a community letter to Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in support of Israel rejoining peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians, an effort brokered by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry. The letter received wide coverage in the U.S. and Israel.

JLC lay and professional leaders are in ongoing contact with key people of the TULIP (Trade Unions Linking Israel and Palestine) initiative. President Appelbaum is one of the three international trade union leaders of the project, the other two being the heads of the Australian Workers' Union and the UK's Community Union. JLC also remains an active member of the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany.

Community Outreach and Engagement Nationally and in the Regions

As part of the Jewish Labor Committee's work to strengthen its longstanding relationships with the leadership of labor unions in the United States, we have started a new issue paper series. Our first paper, which we will distribute widely, explores the increase in income inequality in the U.S., the decline in labor union density, and how these have contributed to a shrinking of the middle class. We are also working on issue papers dealing with Israel, including one on why we do not support the movement to boycott, sanction and divest from Israel. Israel, as we noted last year, is facing an increasingly hostile international environment, as calls for boycotts, divestment and sanctions attest.

For many years, JLC has reached out to congregations across the country to ask rabbis to discuss Jewish teachings about workers' rights, including perhaps utilizing a sermon based on the Torah reading of the Sabbath before Labor Day. In early September, JLC members, rabbis, and friends coast-to-coast participated in "Labor on the Bimah" activities this year.

PJLC's Director worked closely with representatives from AFSCME 33 and 47 to create an Interfaith clergy/labor coalition on behalf of Philadelphia's working poor and in order to begin to organize to help municipal workers who have worked without a contract for four years to advance their cause.

JLC's Los Angeles-based Western Region has been advocating and organizing around a number of issues. The Director of the JLC Western Region spoke at rallies for SEIU 721 on behalf of court workers facing court closings in Los Angeles. JLC Western Region helped to coordinate events at National Council of Women and became a member of the steering Committee for Third Annual Jewish Women's Conference and participated in Black and Brown Clergy Coalition meetings on immigration. JLC Western Region also cosponsored a rally with Food Chain, Bet Tzedek and other groups to protest Disney's and Gap's refusal to sign safety agreement for Bangladeshi garment workers. This event was attended by Tazreen fire survivor and Bangladesh Workers Center Director.

Our Chicago JLC regional director participated in the 5th anniversary of the ICE raid on the Agriprocessors kosher meat processing plant in Postville, Iowa. The primary purpose of the march and rally, in front of the Federal Building, was to call attention for the need for comprehensive immigration reform. Chicago JLC attended rallies in support of Chicago teachers, in support of Hyatt workers, and in a march in support of a \$15 Living Wage for Chicago workers in the downtown area. Chicago JLC arranged for a rabbi to give an invocation at the national convention of the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, held in Chicago.

And the Philadelphia JLC is also continuing its Jewish Labor Series of public panel discussions around current issues. The PJLC's online publication, the *Jewish Labor Journal*, provides information about the Jewish community and American labor history, current local and national issues concerning workers' rights and social justice. The journal can be read at <http://jewishlaborjournal.org>

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

JLC Regions and the National JLC continued to strengthen their infrastructures

The Philadelphia Jewish Labor Committee (PJLC) has been recruiting new members to its local board, including influential individuals within the Jewish and labor communities, and is working on developing a local rabbinic advisory cabinet, similar to one organized earlier by the New England JLC. Lynne Fox, a prominent local labor leader, became the Chair of the PJLC in 2013. PJLC created and convened several Social Action Committee meetings and selected two banner issues: Join PFT in the fight for Public Education in Philadelphia, and collaborate with AFSCME in fight for contracts for municipal workers, and against proposed furloughs affecting city workers and services.

The New England JLC (NEJLC) has recently established an Advisory Council of local influential people who include elected officials, union leaders, rabbis and directors of other non-profit organizations who will advise the JLC Board as to how to best achieve its mission. The first NEJLC Advisory Board meeting was June 13th at the New England Regional Carpenters Hall. The approximately 40 people who attended were thoughtful, experienced leaders who have worked in the labor movement or in the Jewish community or both. They included elected officials, rabbis, union leaders, and Jewish community activists. Of the 40 attendees, 15 were NE JLC Board members and 25 were Advisory Board members.

The JLC's increased Online Presence

The Jewish Labor Committee's main Facebook page – <https://www.facebook.com/Jewish.Labor.Committee> - continues to gain more visibility, and more people and groups "like" the page. This includes people from many countries; a good proportion of them were not previously connected to us in any way. They include people in Germany, the UK, Australia, Canada, France, Italy, Poland, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Austria and Israel. Our newer local FB pages for the New England JLC, the Philadelphia JLC, the JLC Western Region and New York's United Federation of Teachers' Jewish Heritage Committee / Educators' Chapter of the JLC also have attracted growing numbers of people. Our partnership with "Network for Good," a non-profit organization that since July 2010 has enabled us to receive online donations, is continuing to produce positive results.



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[Please check the appropriate level of membership.]

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