

LaborFamilyNEWS

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SUMMER 2013

In this issue:



- **Evolution of a labor work family organization**
- **The Labor Project spins off**

UNIONS WIN IT!

Hard Work Pays Off for Paid Days

The Labor Project transition provides the opportunity to give a heartfelt thanks to unions, who have done so much to win paid family leave across the country. While labor has consistently provided the heft in federal economic security campaigns like Family Medical Leave Act, Healthy Families Act, Paycheck Fairness Act and others, we're happy to see increased activity on the State level as well.

Paid Family Leave

For example, California's Paid Family Leave law would never have passed without the strong leadership of the California Labor Federation and the many unions involved.

New Jersey's Family Leave Insurance program would not have been possible without the work of the NJ Time to Care Coalition members and partners. Key to that success was the strong participation and leadership of unions such as CWA, NJ State AFL-CIO, AFSCME, and AFT, and IUC. Over the course of the campaign, these organizations persistently worked

MORE ON 2

TRANSITION AND CELEBRATION

Labor Project Moves Ahead in Two Directions

BY STEFANIE KALMIN

We all know the African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child." Well, the same can be said of someone's brainchild, like the Labor Project. It takes many minds to nurture an organization. Especially today, where being small makes it harder to raise funding, be heard and have an impact. These days, being part of a larger organization is more sustainable.

So, after 20 years, when Labor Project founder and director Netsy Firestein decided it was time to take on new challenges, it was also a good time to assess how to continue doing this important work. "The Board discussion," says Firestein, "was not just about keeping the organization going. It was about keeping work family issues moving forward." How could they sustain – and continue to improve the coalition building, and keep work family issues up front in the labor movement?

The best way, they agreed, would be to support the most important facets of the organization already in place: the labor work, which has gained tremendous momentum, and the California Coalition, which has successfully set the trend for the rest of the country.

Both movements have found new homes under larger organizations that fit their agendas. Much as the Labor Project has done, the offshoots will thrive in coordination with others.

NATIONAL AGENDA GOES TO DC

Because it makes sense that the Labor Project's national agenda should operate closer to the nation's capitol, the program will continue its mandate in Washington, under the umbrella of **Family Values @ Work**, which is led by Executive Director Ellen Bravo. There are already close ties with this network of 21 state coalitions whose role is to spur the growing movement for family-friendly workplace policies such as paid sick days and family leave insurance.

The Labor Project's national policy director, Carol Joyner, will head the national effort by continuing the work she has already started around paid sick

days and paid family leave — broadening the support base in the labor movement, engaging unions in state and local campaigns and lobbying and strengthening connections. The Labor Project will also continue to house the union contract database and other great resources. Says Joyner, "This partnership expands our joint efforts to bring family friendly workplace policies to all."

CALIFORNIA COALITION STRENGTHENS ITS ROOTS

The California Work & Family Coalition will be joining the offices of **Next Generation** in San Francisco. Next Generation is a national non-profit that promotes solutions to the biggest threats facing us: climate change and the growing economic uncertainty that diminishes prospects for children and families. The move furthers the goal of expanding all Californians' access to paid

family leave, paid sick days, and other benefits important to working families.

At Next Generation, Jenya Cassidy, the Labor Project's California Policy Director, will continue to lead the state Coalition. "This new partnership will provide broader opportunities for both groups to create positive change," she said, "both in California and as part of the growing national movement to improve the economic security of children and families."

CONTINUING SUPPORT

Firestein and the Board are pleased with the new arrangements and think that friends and partners of the Labor Project should be as well. Confirms Art Pulaski, Labor Project Board chair and Secretary-Treasurer of the California Labor Federation, "The upcoming chapter is going to bring us to new heights. With the nationwide momentum behind our efforts, we are poised to deepen our relationships and win more rights and benefits for working families in California and across the country."

FAMILY VALUES @ WORK:
<http://familyvaluesatwork.org/>

NEXT GENERATION:
<http://thenextgeneration.org/>



UNIONS WIN IT!

FROM PAGE 1

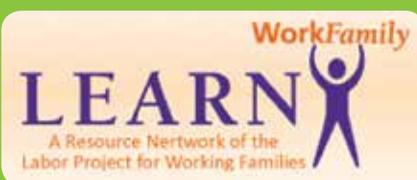
to keep family leave on the forefront of NJ's legislative agenda and get it passed into law.

Paid Sick Days

In partnership with Family Values @ Work local coalitions and the Labor Project's National Initiative, local unions have fueled the path to victory in Seattle, Portland, Oregon, New York City, Connecticut and Washington DC paid sick days campaigns.

Connecticut's Governor Malloy has said publicly that his state never would have won PSDs without union boots on the ground.

With victories still to be won, unions are advancing work and family legislation across the country. State Federations, Central Labor Councils and other union groups play an invaluable role in building labor tables and coalitions nationwide. "Labor brings power to these campaigns," says Carol Joyner, LPWF's National Policy Director. "They increase the wins and promote a progressive social agenda for the entire nation."



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INSIDE STORY

SOWING SEEDS OF CHANGE

The Growth of Work Family Issues

BY STEFANIE KALMIN

Social change has been a 20-year journey for Labor Project founder and director Netsy Firestein. As she prepares herself and the organization to thrive under new roofs this summer, Firestein talked about how both she and the Labor Project have grown.

Theoretically, the seeds of the Labor Project were sown when Firestein, then a 26-year old with a social work degree and a penchant for organizing, landed a job running an employee assistance program at District 65 UAW in New York. The stories over childcare conflicts and lack of flexibility, she recalls, were "heartbreaking" and "outrageous." At Columbia University, represented by the union, a worker who had been at her job for many years had to cope after an adult daughter died of cancer and a boss denied her request to flex her hours so she could take her grandchildren to grief counseling. Flextime was also denied to a new mom who asked to alter her schedule so she could deal with a colicky baby.

That common theme led Firestein to teach workshops and research stronger family-friendly contract language. "But the issues really came into focus," she says, "when I had my own children. Then 'the personal became political.' How was I going to get to the childcare center on time to deal with my own work and family?"

Fast forward to a move to Northern California, where Firestein put together a conference for the Child Care Employee Project (later called Center for the Childcare Workforce) on childcare issues for unions, and recognized that many were tackling the same subjects but not communicating. From that conference, labor leader Margaret Shelleda, Marcy

Whitebook and Firestein brought together San Francisco Bay Area labor leaders and local labor councils. It was just the beginning.

In 1992, the Labor Project for Working Families was born. Firestein wrote a newsletter and gathered work family contract language, and the organization's reputation grew.

DIVERSE PROJECTS

In 1993, when the Family and Medical Leave Act passed, Firestein worked with the Employment Law Center to facilitate workshops for union leaders and shop stewards. Then, UNITE HERE Local 2, the San Francisco hotel workers' union, asked for help negotiating contract terms around childcare. After a big win, including an employer-paid fund to assist workers with child- and elder-care, the Labor Project helped with implementation.

The Labor Project next joined Oakland's SEIU Local 616 to organize home healthcare workers. Since these individuals often worked alone, part-time, and out of their homes, the Labor Project helped establish a workers' center. A key task also was to collect and disseminate contract language and to consult with unions around the country on bargaining for work family issues. In the late 90s, the Labor Project worked closely with Karen Nussbaum and the newly formed AFL-CIO Women's Department to develop a series of fact sheets on bargaining.

As the Labor Project's reputation grew, Firestein received invitations to speak nationally. It was in Washington, DC in 1999, that she had a pivotal conversation with Donna Lenhoff, a

leader on the FMLA and then of the National Partnership for Women and Families: "Family medical leave had already passed, and I asked 'what's next?' When Donna said 'paid family leave,' I thought 'that's impossible!'" Soon, however, the Labor Project was onboard, organizing a labor/community coalition in California.

When California received funding to explore a state paid family leave bill, the years of coalition building paid off. "We hadn't done anything like that before," says Firestein, "but we had good relationships with unions, and we knew how to organize a diverse, broad coalition." The California Labor Federation agreed to be the bill's sponsor, and thanks to their know-how around the legislative landscape, along with the expertise and advocacy of the many organizations and unions in the coalition, the bill was introduced and passed in the same year. With a win in California, the Labor Project started the Paid Family Leave Collaborative, five organizations focused on implementation. And, not wanting to lose momentum, the Labor Project formed the California Work and Family Coalition to help expand family leave laws and win paid sick days.

LABOR STANDARDS FOR ALL

The PFL win solidified the Labor Project's shift toward work on legislation and public policy. "It's good to bargain and gain contract language around these issues," explains Firestein, "but if you leave that company, you don't have that benefit. We need local, state and federal laws that provide minimum labor standards for everybody. Then unions can bargain up from the basic laws."

After it became obvious that national organizations didn't want to fund single-state efforts, inspiration came from a casual conversation in a swimming pool, where Firestein and Ellen Bravo, director of 9 to 5, decided to form a network of coalitions with other states. Family Values @ Work was born. Besides raising money for the states, FVAW has become a huge force on the national scene. With 21 states now participating, there have been many wins on family leave and paid sick days at the state and local level. There is now a huge network of grassroots organizations, advocacy groups and unions throughout the country, working together on these issues. The Labor





“The Labor Project’s role has been to ‘represent’ the labor voice and to ensure that unions are involved in every aspect of this work.”

— Netsy Firestein, Labor Project Founder and Director

Project has succeeded in getting unions involved in local campaigns as well as at the national level. Unions have been a part of every paid family leave and paid sick days win.

The Labor Project also has helped to convene child care organizations and unions organizing child care workers in California. The coalition — VOICE — advocated for increased child care funding and the right of child care workers to unionize. This innovative group has built long-lasting relationships and collaborations.

In the mid-2000s, the Labor Project received a grant to develop an online database of union contract language on work and family issues. This became LEARN, the only existing online database of its kind. Developed with a committee of unions, it has over 1,000 contract clauses on everything from childcare to flexible schedules, adoption, family leave, eldercare and more. Recently, a series of bargaining fact sheets posted on the Labor Project website summarized the best examples.

In 2008, as the number of national groups working on these issues grew, the Labor Project helped form the Work Family Strategy Council, a network of 15 national organizations, including membership organizations, those

focused on federal work, research organizations and FV@W representing state work. The Labor Project’s role has been to “represent” the labor voice and to ensure that unions are involved in every aspect of their efforts. The Council helps to coordinate and focus this work and develop long-term strategies. These collaborations have made this movement stronger. Around this time, as the Labor Project’s work gained a national focus, Carol Joyner was hired as national policy director in Washington, DC, to work more directly with national unions, make headway in developing influence on federal legislation and engage unions in the local state coalitions through FV@W.

From a one-person effort in the Bay Area, the Labor Project has grown into a peopled organization with national impact. “We’ve been persistent,” reflects Firestein, “I never had a union leader say to me that these issues aren’t important. It’s just that there are 50 other things on the list. So our role has been to keep work family issues as a priority in the labor movement. These aren’t just women’s issues....They are core economic justice issues, and we have to frame them in a larger whole. Now labor leaders get it. We’ve put work family issues on the map, and I’m proud of that.”

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

The Labor Project is proud of its talented and dedicated staff. Here is a brief update on those who have helped make the project a success over the last 20 years.

Ferheen Abbasi

An administrative assistant work-study student with the Labor Project, Ferheen will be a fourth-year Molecular Cell Biology and Japanese double major at UC Berkeley. She eventually would like to become a Women’s Rights lawyer with a focus on Asia.

Lissa Bell

Lissa helped to coordinate the Labor Project’s first labor/community coalition in California as well as coauthoring a report on labor and work/family issues. She then worked as a community organizer in Seattle, and on state work and family policies at the National Partnership for Women and Children. Lissa is now a teacher in Washington D.C.

Jenya Cassidy

Jenya has developed grassroots family leave laws training, helped produce California educational materials, edited our national newsletter – Labor Family News – and directed our statewide policy efforts. As part of the transition, she will continue this work, directing the California Work & Family Coalition in partnership with Next Generation in San Francisco.

Brandy Davis

Brandy left her position as the Labor Project’s policy coordinator to return to Los Angeles and the legal-aid community as managing attorney at the LA Center for Law and Justice. She manages a pilot program to increase access to justice for low-income parents in family law and domestic violence cases.

Nicola Dones

After working on contract language, trainings and developing the UNITE HERE Local 2 and ATU 192 dependent-care funds for the Labor Project, Nikki went to work for the California Nurses Association, as assistant to Executive Director Rose Ann DeMoro. CNA was a founding member of National Nurses United, the largest national union of RNs in the United States.

Lea Grundy

After an internship followed by work coordinating the Labor Project’s homecare workers project with SEIU Local 616, Lea worked at UC Berkeley’s Labor Center and the SEIU California State Council. She went on to cofound GroundWorks Campaigns, which focuses on the person-to-person side of politics, leading field campaigns for issue and candidate elections statewide.

Carol Joyner

As the Labor Project’s national policy director, Carol has worked in Washington, DC, to broaden and diversify the base of unions, advocacy organizations and community groups engaged in economic security issues such as paid sick days and paid family leave on the federal and local levels. As part of the transition, she will continue to lead these efforts in partnership with Family Values @ Work.

Greer McVay

Greer worked on the Labor Project’s successful Paid Family Leave campaign. She has since worked as program director of the California Bar Foundation, public relations and communications manager at Chevron, and communications consultant at Kaiser Permanente. Currently, she’s a senior communications manager at the Oakland Housing Authority.

Vibhuti Mehra

Vibhuti served as the Labor Project’s communications and development director, where she developed the LEARN online database, FlexPack, many other materials and the award-winning website. Last fall, she and her family moved to Toronto, Canada, where she got to be a full-time mom to her toddler. Recently, she became office manager for the AIDS Committee of York Region, supporting people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.

Brenda Munoz

At the Labor Project, Brenda worked on expanding the Work and Family Coalition, pushing new legislation, and developing programs for parents and teens through the UNITE HERE Local 2 Child and Eldercare Fund. After completing an M.A. in public policy at UC Berkeley, she worked for the Government Accountability Office. Last year, she joined the Kaiser Permanente Labor Management Partnership, ensuring that public sector unions have information to provide members with the best health care options.

Through its 20 year history, the Labor Project has had four births (including twins), two marriages, family leaves, sick children and parents and many work and family challenges. We have also lost very dear colleagues and mentors in our movement including Tim Sampson, Joannie Chang, Blanche Grosswald, Beth Schulman, Walter Johnson and Catherine Trafton. We keep them in our hearts.



In this Issue:

Big, bold and positive changes for the Labor Project

SAVE THE DATE • FRIDAY, JULY 26, 2013

Labor Project for Working Families

20th Anniversary Celebration & Symposium

4:30-6:00 pm Symposium

with Mary Kay Henry, Sarita Gupta, Ellen Bravo and Ann O'Leary

6:00-8:30 pm

Dinner reception, Friends, Awards Program

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It's my final "Netsy Notes," and not easy to put my thoughts about 20 years into a single column! We started a simple two-page newsletter in 1993, documenting union bargaining on work and family issues. My kids were eight and five...and I was a whole lot younger. Our Bay Area organization quickly expanded nationally, but always with a small staff. We left our mark by developing relationships, collecting contract language, forming collaborations and, later, coalitions, but always bridging the labor and the advocacy world around issues related to child care, eldercare, flexible work hours and family leave. We learned that unions were in fact accomplishing a lot of innovative bargaining on these issues but often didn't know what other locals were doing.



Each year, *Working Mother* magazine's issue on the 100 Best Companies for Working Mothers drove us crazy because a union often had negotiated the benefits but was given no credit. So we worked to highlight union successes in this area... and then to elevate the issues within the union. Then we moved from a focus on bargaining to public policy, and worked to pass Paid Family Leave in California. But it's still frustrating that many people who can use it here don't know about it, and that it has only spread to one other state...so far. The good news is many organizations are now collaborating to make this movement stronger.

There are innovative efforts going on—restaurant workers organizing for paid sick days, domestic workers campaigning for rights, and a new movement of the eldercare workforce. It's a good time for both the Labor Project and myself to grow in new and creative directions. But working on this transition has felt like finding an adoptive home for my children. I wanted the perfect fit! So I couldn't be prouder of the new "parents": Family Values @ Work and Next Generation. I'm excited to see what comes next. With love, affection and solidarity, and as my friend Tim Sampson used to say...Onward!

Netsy Freston

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