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# Bread and Repression, Too: The Battle for Labor's Memory and the Lawrence Textile Strike of 1912

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Bread and Repression, Too:  
The Battle for Labor's Memory  
and the Lawrence Textile Strike of 1912

By

A.J. Hubbard

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for  
Honors in the Department of History  
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## **ABSTRACT**

HUBBARD, ANDREW J. Bread and repression, too: The battle for labor's memory and the Lawrence textile strike of 1912. Department of History, March 2018

ADVISOR: Andrew Feffer

This thesis focuses on the historiography of the Lawrence Textile Strike of 1912 as representative of a larger trend of repression of American labor narratives. The United States fails to bring events like Lawrence into the dominant cultural narrative, and lacks an institutional framework to memorialize labor's story. Accessible historical narratives on events like Lawrence could provide an essential component of contemporary organizing.

The thesis draws from oral history accounts, news coverage and analysis from 1912, resources at the Lawrence History Center collected throughout the city's process of memorialization, secondary historical accounts of the event, and formative works of labor history. The first chapter introduces the American labor narrative, the history of repression by authority, the efforts of labor historians to memorialize suppressed history, and the role that monuments, historians, and popular fictional accounts play in the formation of historical narratives. The second chapter offers the chronology of the Lawrence strike, followed by the two competing narratives born from the event, and how they were formed; first the pro-strikers' narrative, and then the "God and Country" counter-narrative, formulated after the strike. The second chapter ends by detailing efforts to repress the history of the strike, as compared to larger national trends to repress labor's narrative. The third chapter explores the process by which the contemporary narrative of the Lawrence strike was revived, followed by analysis of what the contemporary narrative looks like, and how it is accessible to the public. To conclude, the thesis considers contemporary American perceptions of the working class and how positive, public narratives on Lawrence and events like it can contribute to contemporary labor organizing.

## CHAPTER ONE: PUBLIC HISTORY AND THE AMERICAN LABOR INHERITANCE

*"From the standpoint of the masters, those who aid, abet and sanctify their right to plunder the workers are considered paragons of virtue and good citizenship."*<sup>1</sup>

-Joseph Ettor, from Essex County Jail, Lawrence, MA

*"Big business monkey,  
Nothing's funny,  
Big business monkey,  
Everything's money."*

-Daniel Johnston, "Big Business Monkey"

### I. A Fragmentary Introduction on Labor and Its Narrative

There is a popular construction of American history in which the suburban neighborhood barbecue owes everything to the fall of the Third Reich, in which Hitler's defeat was the moral hurdle after which we earned the sort of unceasing prosperity reserved for light beer advertisements. As the story goes, American streets, factories, and tenement houses were voided in favor of a new and sublime suburban sprawl - middle class became all. These Americans of the 1950s, with newly minted television sets and superlative haircuts, had no need for the worker's plight or images of urban poverty. As Robert Zieger states, "America seemed to have abolished the very idea of a working class..."<sup>2</sup> The labor struggle, in the aftermath of the Great Depression and during WWII, had been stashed away, bureaucratized, as part of Roosevelt's New Deal and war mobilization, and later excised from an American narrative which valued the fruitful union between booming industry and the middle class. Labor historians, for a time, followed suit, and worker-centric labor narratives began to disappear during the Second World

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<sup>1</sup> Ettor. *Industrial Unionism: The Road to Freedom*. Essex County Jail, Lawrence, MA. June 1912. Accessed online through IWW website publication archives.

<sup>2</sup> Zieger, Robert H., Timothy J. Minchin & Gilbert J. Gall. *American Workers, American Unions*. John Hopkins University Press: 2004. 184.

War, replaced for a generation with a field that Nelson Lichtenstein calls “industrial relations.” The most successful historians, much like the labor activists of the war period, were those who began “...stabilizing their relationship with employers and the state.”<sup>3</sup> This period saw some of the most effective national labor unions legitimized by the federal government in unprecedented ways, while radical elements of the labor movement were repressed by the government and expelled by their fellow organizers who saw incremental change and cooperation with industry and government as the best path forward. National narratives also welded working class consciousness with a sense of patriotic duty to contribute to the war effort.<sup>4</sup> This confluence of American and working class identity broke through an already fluid divide between solidarity for fellow workers and identification with the American state, and American workers “...performed prodigious feats of production and bore considerable sacrifices in the form of deteriorated working, living, and social conditions and did so, on the whole, with remarkably good cheer”.<sup>5</sup> Predictably, as a result of this new Cold War political landscape, identification with working class advancement was framed as anti-American in the age of McCarthyism.<sup>6</sup>

Unlike other industrialized nations, such as the United Kingdom and France, the American state did not contain - and remains void of - any considerable faction concerned with the memorialization of labor’s narrative. The U.S., steadfast in its clinging to the two party model, does not have a political party with major leverage whose concern or responsibility it is to memorialize labor history and foster solidarity among working class voters.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile,

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<sup>3</sup> Lichtenstein, Nelson. *A Contest of Ideas*. University of Illinois Press: Urbana. 16-17.

<sup>4</sup> Zieger, Robert H., Timothy J. Minchin & Gilbert J. Gall. *American Workers, American Unions*. John Hopkins University Press: 2004. 117.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 117.

<sup>6</sup> Lichtenstein, Nelson. “CLASS UNCONSCIOUSNESS: Stop Using ‘Middle Class’ to Depict the Labor Movement.” *New Labor Forum*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2012, pp. 10–13. JSTOR. 12.

<sup>7</sup> Zieger, Robert H., Timothy J. Minchin & Gilbert J. Gall. *American Workers, American Unions*. John Hopkins University Press: 2004. 60.

labor's history and accomplishments remain under constant threat from repressive forces in American industry and government. As a crucial element to the success of labor organizing in the future, the story of working people, and their history of struggle in the United States, must be brought into the dominant American historical narrative. The nation that so reveres and remembers its "Founder Fathers," its industrialists, and its generals should make room for the working men and women who fought for a living wage and a life worth living - for *bread and roses, too*.

When labor history was jolted back to life in the 1970s, it remained largely insufficient compared with the efforts of European bodies of organized labor in welding the story of workers' advancement to the larger popular narratives of American economic and political history. The New Left school maintained a broad dual focus; the initial impetus being to collect and detail the stories of everyday workers and reassert their importance in America's economic history, a task carried out with exhaustive dedication by historians like Herbert Gutman, David Brody, and Nelson Lichtenstein. Both Lichtenstein and Philip Dray write of their - and their contemporaries' - desires "...to revolutionize the teaching of American history, putting the experience of working men and women, slave or free, immigrants and native born, in unions or out, at the very center of the nation's narrative."<sup>8</sup> As Dray writes in the introduction to *There is Power in a Union*, "The photographs I'd seen in my junior high school social studies textbook of strikers marching or picketing seemed images of American heroism no less exemplary than the illustrations of 'Washington Crossing the Delaware.'"<sup>9</sup> As the workers were "brought back in" to this narrative, the aim of many labor historians became the revival of the "radical" elements of labor's story, the martyrs, the "Wobblies", the strikes and massacres, as well as the "recovery" of

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<sup>8</sup> Lichtenstein, Nelson. *A Contest of Ideas*. University of Illinois Press: Urbana. 8.

<sup>9</sup> Dray, Philip. *There is Power in a Union*. Doubleday: New York. 2010. 5-6.

what many felt was a progressive consciousness latent in the working class. When Melvyn Dubofsky's *We Shall Be All*, the pioneering and definitive account of the IWW's tumultuous history, arrived on the scene in 1969, Joseph McCartin states that it wound up on the bookshelves of historians, leftists, and discontented students who "...began to cast about for models of an authentic American radicalism that could sustain them over the long haul and rescue them from encroaching despair."<sup>10</sup>

The genesis, and relative popularity, of the new labor histories sparked debate among labor historians about what constitutes the ideal narrative for American labor's story. Was radical labor history, with a primary focus on worker's lives and reverence for the politically radical elements of the labor struggle, truly effective in recapturing the imagination of the American people? Or should labor historians focus more on unionizing efforts to revive the successes of the bureaucratic institutions which had provided so many tangible rewards? Howard Kimeldorf asserts that while the "...new labor historians set about documenting the many and varied ways in which class has been experienced in America," they lost sight of memorializing the practical successes of the large American unions.<sup>11</sup> This challenge highlights what some see as a preoccupation of labor historians, particularly from the 1990s through the present, with the reasons for organized labor's decline. Joseph McCartin summarizes the main sources of this decline, with the five most prominent being "...the impact of the Cold War purge of left-wing unions; the failure of labor to get more support from the Democratic Party (or, lacking that, to construct an alternative party); the bureaucratization of unions; the inhibiting impact of labor

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<sup>10</sup> Dubofsky, Melvyn. *We Shall Be All: Abridged Edition*. Ed. Joseph A. McCartin. University of Illinois Press: Urbana. 2000. vii-viii.

<sup>11</sup> Kimeldorf, Howard. "Bringing Unions Back in (or Why We Need a New Old Labor History)." *Labor History* 32.1 (1990): 91-103. Web.

law; the failure of unions to better link their cause to the civil rights and feminist struggles”.<sup>12</sup>

McCartin, like Kimeldorf, criticizes the general malaise of labor historians and their fixation with the decline of organized labor in the second half of the 20th century, advocating for the inclusion of public sector unionization in labor’s history. He asserts that the relative success of organizing in public sector unions subverts the dominant narrative of labor historiography by indicating that “...the very same years that saw the private sector lose union density witnessed the massive upsurge of public sector unions”.<sup>13</sup>

In the post-9/11 political landscape, labor’s struggle was once again superseded by narratives of patriotic duty. Efforts to unionize were labeled as “selfish” in the aftermath of the attack, and this, coupled with the Bush administration’s hostility to labor’s advancements, pushed the movement further on the defensive.<sup>14</sup> In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis and the worst recession since the 1930s, a sense of class consciousness has crept back into American political narratives, yet labor historians remain on the fringe of a continued search for the symbols and stories of solidarity that can resonate with an American working class in need.

## **II. Forced Forgetting**

The underrepresentation of labor’s struggle in public memory and the dominant American historical narrative is, in large part, the result of repression by governmental and commercial authority. Like any other movement for social justice, the labor struggle has been met with resistance, repression, partnership, and broken promises from governmental leaders at different times in different contexts. American labor historians, however, point out a uniquely

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<sup>12</sup> McCartin, Joseph. “Bringing the State’s Workers in: Time to Rectify an Imbalanced US Labor Historiography.” *Labor History* 47.1 (2006): 73–94. Web. 76.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 76.

<sup>14</sup> Zieger, Robert H., Timothy J. Minchin & Gilbert J. Gall. *American Workers, American Unions*. John Hopkins University Press: 2004. 276.

severe, corporatist response to Labor in the United States, due in part to the development of American industry: “In no other nation has organized capital so resisted organized labor, perhaps because in contrast to England and Europe, powerful American corporations developed before the emergence of strong centralized government or ‘overt class politics.’”<sup>15</sup> Conservative politicians and industrialists worked hard to expunge the idea of a working class from political rhetoric and national consciousness, particularly as “... the Cold War abroad and McCarthyism at home made suspect any references to the “class struggle.”<sup>16</sup> However, opposition to collective identity was not limited to the conservative sphere, as “Their success proved so great that liberals and progressives felt constrained to adopt much of the right-wing discourse”.<sup>17</sup>

Liberal historians and political scientists also helped foster an anti-collectivist and anti-leftist philosophy which embraced progressive ideology in principle, but advocated for change by “...accepting and working within the dominant social structures.”<sup>18</sup> Michael Paul Rogin criticizes the group theory conclusions of influential political scientist David Truman (1913-2003), whose advocacy for the idea of “nonpartisanship” and the necessity of unquestioned leadership among disparate political groups Rogin argues allowed for the “...failure of American radicalism”<sup>19</sup> In theorizing on how to unite disparate ideological factions of a larger political group, Truman asserts the need for a hierarchical structure which is ultimately governed by a single leader or group of elite representatives, whose own interests, by way of trying to sustain their own power, will inherently represent those of the larger group consensus. Rogin accuses Truman of concealing “...the problem of representation within a reified group, in which leader

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<sup>15</sup> Dray, Philip. *There is Power in a Union*. Doubleday: New York. 2010. 8.

<sup>16</sup> Lichtenstein, Nelson. “CLASS UNCONSCIOUSNESS: Stop Using ‘Middle Class’ to Depict the Labor Movement.” *New Labor Forum*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2012, pp. 10–13. JSTOR. 12.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* 12.

<sup>18</sup> Rogin, Michael Paul. *Ronald Reagan: The Movie*. University of California Press. 1987. JSTOR.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* 133.

and member interests were made identical by definition,”<sup>20</sup> and argues that, in practical application, such a structure prevents new discourse from entering the political structure, even when conditions and consensus outside a group changes: “When objective conditions radicalize sections of the masses...the bureaucratic leadership becomes a brake both on the development of radical consciousness and on the creation of new organizational structures.”<sup>21</sup>

Rogin argues that Truman’s theories have been highly influential in the shaping of liberal political organizations, using the American Federation of Labor as a key example of Truman’s structure, and of the “nonpartisan” desire to depoliticize inherently political objectives for immediate gain. Rogin asserts that, once established as a political player with sway, much of the AFL’s efforts were aimed at preserving a status quo in which they had any leverage at all: “Locally, unions reinforced the power of political machines. Nationally, the federation avoided large-scale reform political action that would have challenged the centers of power and used politics to restructure society.”<sup>22</sup> This bureaucratic liberal power structure, which emphasized deference to party and union leaders at the detriment to momentous change and new ideas, was similarly reflected in liberal ideology’s aversion to collectivist ideas and hostility towards Marxist doctrine and the exploration of American class structure. Truman’s hierarchical group structure is encapsulated in the political framework of the flashpoint decade of the 1960s, which saw a “liberal”, Democratic-led federal government which was often highly repressive of grassroots progressive organizing with collectivist or class-based objectives, such as the Civil Rights and antiwar movements.

Labor’s mission of collective action and solidarity has also been easily undermined by the individualism of America’s ideological framework, as well as entrenched social

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 116.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 132.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 132.

conservatism. And yet, as James Green argues, divisions and prejudice among labor activists themselves have also undermined the progressive ideal of labor history and its continued relevance, “The powerful influences of competitive individualism and ideological conservatism discourage many Americans from appreciating union history. But labor's enemies are not entirely responsible for its absence in many history courses. The unions' often exclusionary past has prevented women, immigrants, and minorities from seeing union history as relevant to their lives.”<sup>23</sup> While ideologies of individualism, nationalism, and religious or social conservatism discourage many white working class men from recognizing a history they might otherwise identify with as their own, working class women, immigrants, and minorities have little to latch onto within labor’s narrative as “their” history in the first place.

In a stroke of bitter irony, Melvyn Dubofsky links some of the erasure of working class consciousness with the gains of the very workers’ rights groups that promoted it, suggesting that as workers gain benefits and inch closer to a “middle class” lifestyle, they are not inclined to identify with the organizations or ideologies that propelled them there or are working for their benefit. Instead, workers ascribing to the middle class identify with the lifestyle they are striving to achieve: “...success, instead of breeding more success, only produced a new working class enthralled with a consumer society and only too willing, even eager, to trade working-class consciousness for a middle-class style of life. The ultimate tragedy, then, for all radicals, the American Wobblies included, has been that the brighter they have helped make life for the masses, the dimmer has grown the prospect for revolution in the advanced societies”<sup>24</sup>. Part of the allure of the American middle-class has no doubt been constructed and propagated for

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<sup>23</sup> Green, James. “Why Teach Labor History?” *OAH Magazine of History*, vol. 11, no. 2, 1997, pp. 5–8. Accessed through JSTOR. 5.

<sup>24</sup> Dubofsky, Melvyn. *We Shall Be All: Abridged Edition*. Ed. Joseph A. McCartin. University of Illinois Press: Urbana. 2000. 272.

political purposes, but an increase in financial security and leisure time also simply made stories of sixty-hour work weeks and chronic unemployment during the Depression era seem irrelevant.

### **III. The Ideal Labor History**

In other Western nations, like France and the United Kingdom, preservation of labor history is carried out by major bodies protected within each nation's political infrastructure, such as parties and federal departments. In this way, a portion of the state is responsible for memorializing labor's struggle and fostering working class solidarity through monuments, discourse, and political action. American labor historians lament the fact that the United States lacks the institutional framework of labor parties in their political landscape, and feel an extra strain to relay labor's history in a fashion that breaks through to mainstream U.S. popular memory. In the absence of the state's financial and political assistance, in the U.S. it is instead academic institutions that generate labor narratives.

Under current global economic conditions, the genesis of a powerful labor movement is of particular importance to labor historians. Despite the persistent feeling that the working class woes of the early 20th century are a thing of the past, "...more people are now working than at any time since the Depression in low-wage jobs created by 'the great American jobs machine,' and more Americans are working longer hours".<sup>25</sup> Noting that in the modern era, "...most union activism - at the bargaining table, the ballot box, and on the picket line - is designed to defend the status quo", Nelson Lichtenstein asserts that Labor faces a dire need for ideological leadership<sup>26</sup>. He believes that part of the purpose of labor history is to bring the historical struggle into relevance with a contemporary American audience. This poses the difficult question to historians of American labor as to what an ideal narrative of American labor would look like,

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<sup>25</sup> Green, James. "Why Teach Labor History?" OAH Magazine of History, vol. 11, no. 2, 1997, pp. 5-8. Accessed through JSTOR. 7.

<sup>26</sup> Lichtenstein, Nelson. *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor*. Princeton University Press: 2003. 17.

and how revisiting history could be useful in forging a working class consciousness for a 21st-century, globalized workforce.

Many historians and policy-makers argue that labor's revival requires first "...the restoration of the 'unwritten social compact' between capital and labor."<sup>27</sup> Lichtenstein, however, views this sort of sentiment, "first deployed in the early 1980s by liberals and laborites who were anxious to condemn wage cuts, denounce corporate union busting, and define what they seemed to be losing in Reagan's America", as indicative of the larger fate of union organizing in the post-WWII political spectrum.<sup>28</sup> He cites the former prevalence of wildcat strike organizing in the WWII era to note a seismic shift in union organizing towards "...a more insular, depoliticized entity".<sup>29</sup> The first step in restoring "potency" to labor organizing, then, is to revive the ideological dimensions of the movement which eschewed theories of incremental change in favor of sweeping reorganization of American class structure.

An important element in this step, as Lichtenstein argues, is to dismantle entrenched cultural perceptions surrounding the "middle class", which has come to describe nearly every class of people in the United States, "...linking together the fortunes of those on food stamps with families whose income tops out at just over \$500,000 a year."<sup>30</sup> Lichtenstein is a fierce proponent of bringing "working class" back into the progressive lexicon, in order to create a national narrative with which contemporary working people can identify. By its ubiquity and equivocal nature, "...the contemporary category of middle class has no sense of agency, purpose, or politics- while the idea of a working class is (by virtual definition) [suggestive] of all of

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<sup>27</sup> Lichtenstein, Nelson. *A Contest of Ideas*. University of Illinois Press: Urbana. 26.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 26.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 28.

<sup>30</sup> Lichtenstein, Nelson. "CLASS UNCONSCIOUSNESS: Stop Using 'Middle Class' to Depict the Labor Movement." *New Labor Forum*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2012, pp. 10–13. JSTOR. 11.

this”.<sup>31</sup> By using “...the kind of language whose emotive power and historic resonance match the political audacity of those who occupied both the Wisconsin statehouse and the Wall Street parks”, he asserts that we will “...educate millions of Americans to the realization that their future is linked to their own capacity for organization and empowerment”.<sup>32</sup>

This concept of catalyzing “the masses” through renewed class consciousness and identification with labor history is not without its detractors, who accuse certain labor historians of assuming a latent progressivism among working class people. Gerald Sider, for example, criticizes labor historian Herbert Gutman for assuming “...that agency is inherently-rather than only potentially-progressive, rather than also potentially self-destructive or, like a trip to Disneyland, just diverting”.<sup>33</sup> Sider argues that, before defining working class consciousness, historians and other academics should engage in far more dialogue with their working class “subjects”, and take “...the chance to listen, for hours and hours and hours and more”.<sup>34</sup> Labor and Socialist parties throughout Europe have prioritized this contact between the academic and working classes. In America, the need for such a dialogue is pertinent, as “...right-wing political elites have been far, far better at taking the complexities and ambivalences of working-class ideas and turning them against the working class than the left has been at recognizing, deeply, where people are and building progressive movements on that basis.”<sup>35</sup> Sider’s assertions raise an important challenge for those who tell labor’s story to understand the concerns of the modern American working class. And yet, Sider perhaps does not consider that some of the cultural context of American working class is, by its very nature, antithetical to the sort of collective

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 11.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 13.

<sup>33</sup> Sider, Gerald M. "Cleansing History: Lawrence, Massachusetts, the Strike for Four Loaves of Bread and No Roses, and the Anthropology of Working-class Consciousness". *Radical History Review*, Volume 1996, Number 65: 48-83. 59.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 75.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 77.

action proposed in campaigns for workers' rights, and so part of the revival of labor organizing in the United States must involve a reconstruction of the dominant cultural narratives that honor the struggle of the working class.

In response to globalizing industry, labor historians assert the need for labor organizing, solidarity, and perceptions of “working class people” to become global. Many historians and labor figures recognize the difficulty of such an undertaking, but see no alternative given the changing economic landscape: “The way forward for labor must involve global networks or coalitions of wage earners to match the power of transnational firms, and that will require nothing less than new ways of thinking and new means of coordination”.<sup>36</sup> In response to international trade agreements such as NAFTA, Robert Zieger asserts that we have already seen labor activists engage in cross-border, international cooperation, for instance, between the United States and Mexico, whose case illustrating the capacity for multinational labor activism as well as its unique challenges: “...organizers and legal specialists from U.S. unions such as the UAW, the United Electrical Workers, the Teamsters, and UNITE, among others, traveled to Mexico to help foster independent labor unions among Mexican workers. John Sweeney’s historic trip to Mexico in January 1998, during which he snubbed the officially approved labor body in favor of meetings with unofficial rank-and-file representatives, symbolized this new approach”<sup>37</sup>. When Sweeney, head of the AFL-CIO from 1995 to 2009, spoke to a meeting of global economic elites not long after the 1999 World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle encountered extensive protests, he suggested that a healthy global economic system needs “...the incorporation of meaningful labor standards, such as those endorsed by the United Nations through its International Labour Organization (ILO). Failure of new globalized economic arrangements to

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<sup>36</sup> Dray, Philip. *There is Power in a Union*. Doubleday: New York. 2010. 667.

<sup>37</sup> Zieger, Robert H., Timothy J. Minchin & Gilbert J. Gall. *American Workers, American Unions*. John Hopkins University Press: 2004. 267.

endorse an end to child labor, to guarantee freedom of association, to prohibit gender and racial discrimination, and to acknowledge labor's right to organize and bargain would discredit the new world economic order and sow the seeds of endless confrontation”<sup>38</sup>. Globalizing labor infrastructure and labor law is a goal far from guaranteed in today's economy, but public intellectuals and leaders can and should begin the process of globalizing perceptions of a worldwide workforce and solidarity across borders. For this we can find certain popular labor heroes and narratives that resonate with global populations, such as the memory of the Haymarket martyrs of the 1886 Chicago demonstration. According to James Green, the story of the Haymarket martyrs has inspired over a century of labor activists across Central and South America, including Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano,<sup>39</sup> suggesting that solidarity for the working class has extended far outside national boundaries throughout the world. Still, this lofty aspiration of global solidarity will require disavowal among American laborites of many entrenched American cultural conceptions; they should prepare to reject the old pitfalls of “...Americans’ ‘excess of individualism,’ the nation’s ‘short-sighted brand of liberal capitalism,’ and the lack of a ‘constituency with an interest in the long term, or in visionary economic planning’”<sup>40</sup>. Reading Labor’s history can help with this task, providing a “... counterweight to overwhelming emphasis on individual rights in our history curricula, labor history illustrates the less appreciated struggle for collective rights.”<sup>41</sup> The ideal labor history, then, incorporates these many elements in a conscious and informed manner to appeal to a contemporary working class, illustrates the mass organizing power that they hold when working in solidarity, and emphasizes

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 267.

<sup>39</sup> Green, James. "The Globalization of a Memory: The Enduring Remembrance of the Haymarket Martyrs around the World." *Labor: Studies in Working Class History of the Americas*, vol. 2, no. 4, Winter 2005, pp. 11-23. EBSCOhost. 19.

<sup>40</sup> Dray, Philip. *There is Power in a Union*. Doubleday: New York. 2010. 670-671.

<sup>41</sup> Green, James. "Why Teach Labor History?" *OAH Magazine of History*, vol. 11, no. 2, 1997, pp. 5-8. Accessed through JSTOR. 6.

the need for long-term, sweeping, global strategies, as well as solidarity among global working populations.

#### **IV. Role of Monuments, Historians, and Artistic Accounts**

In a country like the U.S., saturated with information and, with sharply divided historical and political narratives, the question for Labor's historians and leaders is as follows: What is the most effective way of constructing and relaying a working-class narrative for broad consumption? In Lichtenstein's view, the historian should take advantage of his or her status as "expert" in the monolithic media landscape by "...leveraging the status and expertise that comes with being a professor to advance a set of historical understandings upon which a set of progressive politics and policies can be built".<sup>42</sup> In his view, it is the historian's duty as citizen to bring their expertise to the table in shaping national political dialogue, saying " ...all scholars should write for a larger lay public...Every historian should be a public intellectual. Such work not only makes use of their academic talents but also marks them as engaged citizens in a world where one's voice is just as important as the vote in the maintenance of a vibrant democracy".<sup>43</sup> The academic arena of history may seem indirect and far from the reality and day-to-day political consciousness of the everyday American. However, the imprint of dominant historical narratives are present across our political culture. Take, for example, the popular narratives of the Wild West and "the American frontier", and their contribution to the "excess of individualism", as well as justifications for imperial expansion and destruction of Native populations. Though few everyday Americans may relate in any practical way with images of the "cowboy" or American frontiersman, powerful historical perceptions such as these have seeped

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<sup>42</sup> Lichtenstein, Nelson. *A Contest of Ideas*. University of Illinois Press: Urbana. 40.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. 44.

into our political rhetoric and have become infused with the structure's very foundation, and remain points of common identification among Americans. The effective wielding and reconstruction of history shapes national identity, and, in a more specific sense, labor history, if effectively and often told, has a role to play in shaping working-class identity.

The implementation of visible and accessible memorials to Labor's history is another crucial element of building solidarity among the contemporary working class. The representation of working class history in monuments gets into the importance of place in our collective conscious. Rachel Donaldson uses the example of the effort to memorialize the Battle of Blair Mountain, the site of the most violent labor clash in American history as part of the "coal wars". Labor's opponents and conservative voices that stood in opposition to this effort understood, in Donaldson's view, that history truly is embedded in the locations in which it took place, and that to erase the physical record is to do the same to the collective memory of an event. One coalmining resident got to the heart of the mining companies' campaign to prevent memorialization, when he suggested "...the mining companies' desire to engage in mountaintop removal was also an attack on the historical memories embedded in the site: 'I think they want to destroy Blair Mountain and all memory of it'".<sup>44</sup> Donaldson asserts the necessity not just for local-level cooperation in memorial efforts, but for national organizations to contribute as well:

The labor movement is rife with martyrs, heroes, legends, and lore of national significance, but the memorialization of the places of this movement...has largely occurred at the local level rather than on a national scale. Although local and state historical societies and preservation agencies deserve commendation for recognizing sites of labor as important aspects of regional history, this kind of designation can be problematic insofar as it isolates these sites from each other and disconnects local events from a national movement.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Donaldson, Rachel. "Placing and Preserving Labor History." *Public Historian*, vol. 39, no. 1, 2017, pp. 61-83. 81-82.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* 77.

National recognition of historic labor sites and official registration of their monuments does not instantly recalibrate American identity towards working class solidarity, but it does inch the U.S. closer to public responsibility for the preservation of labor's history: "When places gain recognition by official means—with government agencies determining the real or symbolic value of a particular place—the place's stature in the public mind is elevated".<sup>46</sup>

Representations of the American working class have obviously made their way into popular culture, but portrayals are often stereotypical, depoliticized, or manufactured for conservative audiences. Popular narratives of working class Americans as portrayed in films, sitcoms, and music often mix a sense of sympathy and reverence for working class simplicity with complacency for the status quo. Fittingly, popular portrayals of the working class lack analysis of class structures, or a sense of urgency for working people's afflictions as they relate to the hegemonic capital class. Unfortunately, and perhaps to be expected, there is also an overemphasis on the white male members of the working class. We see this on the multitude of television shows about trucking, roads, ice, dirt, and deadly jobs; an all-American dichotomy between intrinsic pride in being a worker, and the denunciation of any desire to improve one's station through collective action or ideals. And, in contrast to the pervasiveness of these sorts of working class narratives, popular renderings of Labor's collective struggle and working class progress in American society are few and far between. Though we should not expect or rely on television programs to synthesize and disseminate our history, the average American's first point of contact with their history is often media representations like these, whose own ideologies reflect the cultural values informed by dominant historical narratives.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid. 81.

## V. Lawrence, 1912

This text will explore these broad topics - historiographical trends and the creation of historical narratives; the role of state repression in labor's narrative; the revival of labor history and working class consciousness; and varying methods of memorialization (academic, public, and artistic) - as they pertain to the Lawrence, MA textile strike of 1912, commonly referred to as the "Bread & Roses" strike. The strike is considered one of the most influential events in American labor history, a prominent victory for the IWW, and instrumental in improving working conditions throughout New England. Populated by colorful figures like "Big Bill" Haywood and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, and characterized by fatal local repression, the strike was, for decades afterwards, reviled in the community of Lawrence as an anarchistic, atheistic attack on the community organized by external agitators. This narrative, first popularized in Father James T. O'Reilly's "God & Country" counter protest that took place months after the strike first ended in 1912, meant that the seats of local power, "The police, the city, the mill owners, all those who'd come off poorly in the lengthy strike, were able to manipulate the public display of faith and patriotism to reassume their positions as the community's arbiters of law and morality"<sup>47</sup>. The "Bread & Roses" strike has since been reclaimed in positive terms, the dominant narrative now exalting the strike's organizers and diverse participants for their work. However, despite this and the event's purported importance, the "Bread & Roses" strike remains unknown to much of the general populace, and the effort to memorialize it has been fraught all the way through the 2012 centennial to now.

By offering background on the events and chronology of the strike itself, and then by exploring archival news reports, speeches, and publications from the strike's leaders,

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<sup>47</sup> Dray, Philip. *There is Power in a Union*. Doubleday: New York. 2010. 321.

participants, observers, and opponents, this text will analyze the historiographic narrative of the “Bread & Roses” strike. This will be accomplished through analyzing the initial conflicting accounts of the strike, and then tracing these strands to understand which of them became the dominant narrative memorializing the event at any given time, and why. This exploration will incorporate primary source materials on both the “God and Country” narrative that remained hegemonic for five decades after the event, and the revival of the “Bread & Roses” narrative from the 1970s up to the present. These, too, will include archival news reports, oral testimony, as well as significant academic and journalistic renderings of the event.

Following this, the text will examine the role of institutional repression of the memory of the Great Lawrence Textile Strike, particularly illuminating the role it played in the hegemony of the “God and Country” narrative. By employing primary source materials that reflect the dominant cultural standards of their time, including the 50th anniversary “God and Country Edition” of the *Lawrence Eagle Tribune* newspaper, the text will contextualize the perceptions surrounding Lawrence within the greater historical milieu of 20th century America. Next, the revival of the pro-strikers’ narrative that was repressed for over five decades will be discussed. By considering the role of a new generation of labor historians, labor organizers, Lawrence community members, and artists, the text will illuminate how the contemporary “Bread and Roses” incarnation was formulated and crystallized.

The text will then examine the public memorials, dominant historical narratives, and popular reconstructions or media that demonstrate this positive memorialization of the 1912 strike. Analysis of the historical narratives will include influential works like Boyer and Morais’ *Labor’s Untold Story* and the fourth volume of Philip Foner’s *History of the Labor Movement in the United States*, as well as the strike as depicted in history curricula. In examining monuments

and memorials to the event, the text will examine local statues, national exhibits, community events, and will put particular emphasis on the activities of the Lawrence History Center and their effort to erect a permanent memorial to the strike, at last accomplished as part of the 2012 centennial. Lastly, the text will delve into accounts of the strike and its organizers in popular media, such as artistic renderings, and music. This is in order to synthesize which elements of the strike's history pervade accounts intended for public viewing, and what this suggests about our identification with the Lawrence strikers' and how their story can inform a global working class moving forward.

## CHAPTER TWO: LAWRENCE 1912 AND THE BATTLE FOR MEMORY

*"We chant no ancient, mystic rune  
Of mail-clad knights of old,  
Of searchers for the holy grail,  
Or fabled fleece of gold;  
We trace no faint heraldic lines,  
No legends strange and dim,  
But sing in simplest form and phrase, ,  
Plain Labour's triumph hymn."*

-Robert H. Tewksbury, "A City of Today", Jun 1, 1903

*"Repression!"*

-The Clash, "Remote Control"

### I. The Events and Chronology

When poet Robert H. Tewksbury was called upon to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Lawrence's founding, he did not deny that the city's character was steeped in industry and in labor.<sup>48</sup> Lawrence was one of two of the early republic's great industrial experiments that arose, along with its sister city of Lowell, along the banks of the Merrimack River. Boasting massive mills, these Massachusetts cities became industrial centers for the production of cotton and wool textiles well into the 20th century. The tumultuous growth of the New England textile industry saw powerful textile corporations and the families that owned them rise and fall through the next half century as Lawrence became "The City That Weaves the World's Worsteds."<sup>49</sup> By the 1910s, the American Woolen Company was ascendant. William M. Wood and his father-in-law Frederick Ayer had established American Woolen by consolidating various failing mills in the

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<sup>48</sup> Robert H. Tewksbury. "A City of Today". Anniversary Poem Read at Lawrence City Hall. June 1st, 1903. Reprinted at Lawrence History Center, Lawrence, MA.

<sup>49</sup> Lawrence History Center, University of Massachusetts Lowell History Department. *Bread and Roses Strike of 1912: Two Months in Lawrence, Massachusetts, that Changed Labor History*. Digital Public Library of America. April 2013. "A City of Weavers and Wool".

Merrimack River Valley, claiming a virtual monopoly on textile production in the region and control over employment in the city of Lawrence.<sup>50</sup>

Lawrence's growing industry produced not only a class of immense wealth, but also a class of exploited mill workers. Thousands of men, women, and children went to work for the American Woolen Company in the Washington, Everett, Wood, Ayer, and Pacific Mills in Lawrence, where they lived in tenement-style apartment housing. These apartments were home to immigrant families from more than 50 different nations,<sup>51</sup> which earned Lawrence its nickname "The Immigrant City". Lawrence tenements at this time had exceptionally high rates of mortality, child endangerment, starvation, and sickness. This impoverished melting pot festered with resentment against the mill-owning class by the 1910s, although labor organizing remained scarce. The IWW presence that had been building throughout the decade before in Lawrence had only captured the imagination of a few hundred residents by New Year's 1912.<sup>52</sup>

This was, of course, until the American Woolen Company decided to reduce the wages of its textile workers. The move came in response to a new Massachusetts labor law that took effect on New Year's Day 1912, which required that weekly hours worked by women and children in textile factories be reduced from fifty-six to fifty-four. It was Polish women workers that first sounded alarm against the 26-cent reduction in their already starvation-level wages, and on January 11th walked out on the job, demanding their 2 hours worth of pay be restored.<sup>53</sup> The following day, workers at the Washington Mill also walked out citing the decrease in their wages, and the strike had begun.

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<sup>50</sup> Watson, Bruce. *Bread and Roses: Mills, Migrants, and the Struggle for the American Dream*. Penguin Books, 2006. 23-24.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. 8.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. 54.

<sup>53</sup> Leslie H. Marcy and Frederick Sumner Boyd. "One Big Union Wins" in *The International Socialist Review*. Volume XII. April 1912. Photocopy in Lawrence History Center, Lawrence, MA. 615.

The IWW, led by organizer Joseph Ettor, who was called in from Manhattan at the beginning of the strike by Lawrence native Angelo Rocco, was able to capitalize quickly on the strike's beginning. The organization began hold multilingual meetings, demonstrations, and led the worker's coalition in demanding higher wages, better conditions, and the right to organize without retribution from their employers at the American Woolen Company.<sup>54</sup> From there, the mill owners' and local government's reaction saw the situation devolve into chaos, including mass demonstrations and arrests. After just a week of striking, news of a foiled dynamite plot in the Lawrence tenements plunged the city into greater tension, and arrests of strike leadership began. It was later discovered the person who planted the dynamite, a local undertaker who was eventually caught and fined, intended to frame the leaders of the strike, and had even received a "large payment...under unexplained circumstances shortly before the dynamite was found," from American Woolen President William Wood.<sup>55</sup>

As the strike continued and tens of thousands of workers remained in the streets shaken but with no sign of retreating, local authority intensified the crackdown. Lawrence's new mayor Michael Scanlon requested the involvement of the Massachusetts state militia, and standoffs between police authority and large crowds of strikers became common.<sup>56</sup> On January 29th, the strike turned fatal when 32-year old Anna LoPizzo, a recent Italian immigrant and striker, was shot dead in a crowd of marchers. Local authority took advantage of these tragic circumstances and erroneously charged strike organizers Ettor and Arturo Giovannitti as "accessories before the fact" to LoPizzo's murder, suggesting, though they were nowhere near the site of the tragedy,

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<sup>54</sup> Lawrence History Center, University of Massachusetts Lowell History Department. Bread and Roses Strike of 1912: Two Months in Lawrence, Massachusetts, that Changed Labor History. Digital Public Library of America. "The Strike" and "Provocations".

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. "A Community Responds".

<sup>56</sup> Robert Forrant and Susan Grabski. *Lawrence and the 1912 Bread and Roses Strike. Images of America*. Arcadia Publishing: 2013. 45-46.

“...that they had inflamed the minds of the workers with inflammatory speeches to the point, that they, the workers, had rioted and killed Anna LoPizzi [sic].”<sup>57</sup>

Mill owners and community authority believed the jailing of Ettor and Giovannitti would exhaust the strikers’ purpose, direction, and enthusiasm, but the action arguably had the opposite effect. Instead, IWW heavy hitters “Big Bill” Haywood and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn traveled to Lawrence to fill the vacuum, ensure the strike’s continuation, and mix their charisma with provocative new strategies. The strikers were able to successfully draw national sympathy with a strategy dubbed “The Children’s Exodus,” in which children of impoverished Lawrence strikers were sent to New York City, Vermont, Philadelphia and elsewhere to live with sympathetic families that could afford to feed and clothe them. By the time of the Children’s Exodus, a sharply divided nation had its eyes on the strike which was being increasingly framed in national newspapers as violent, mob-ruled, and anarchistic; the strikers required the kind of action that would give the “...bitter and vindictive strike a human heart.”<sup>58</sup> The strategy of shipping Lawrence children off to homes of strike sympathizers elsewhere was adapted from a strategy employed in successful strikes in Italy, Belgium, and France, which would not only relieve poor striking parents of children they were troubled to provide for, but would also shift public opinion in favor of the desperate parents.<sup>59</sup> When community police moved to arrest the mothers of a new batch of children leaving for Philadelphia on Feb. 24th, there was a national outcry, leading President Taft to order a federal inquiry into the Lawrence situation, and Congress to open hearings on conditions in the city.<sup>60</sup> Before Congress, Lawrence mill workers, including the young Camela Teoli who had been scalped in a factory accident, detailed the poor conditions for

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<sup>57</sup> *Ettor and Giovannitti Before the Jury at Salem, Massachusetts: November 23rd, 1912*. Published by the Industrial Workers of the World. Chicago, IL. 1912. 3.

<sup>58</sup> Watson. 141.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. 143.

<sup>60</sup> Dray, Philip. *There is Power in a Union*. Doubleday: New York. 2010. 317.

officials, who compiled the information into an official report. Now firmly in the national spotlight, the Children's Exodus and the investigation that followed moved "...public opinion decidedly in favor of the Lawrence mill workers."<sup>61</sup>

Recognizing these changing tides, mill ownership resumed negotiations with strike organizers. Strikers rejected an initial offer of a 5% raise in pay, and on March 12th the strike ended when mill owners submitted to many of the strikers' additional demands, proving an immense, if brief, success for striker organizers and Lawrence textile mill workers.<sup>62</sup> In the immediate aftermath of strike victory, around 27,000 Lawrence workers saw wage increases from 5 to 25 percent, wage growth which then extended to textile workers throughout New England.<sup>63</sup>

## **II. The Narratives**

### **a. The Strikers**

Directly after the Lawrence Strike, sympathetic commentators called it the "greatest victory in American labor history."<sup>64</sup> In the development of their narrative of the strike, labor organizers and strikers appealed for sympathy in the face of horrific working conditions, extreme poverty, and repression by corporate and local leadership. Much of the pro-strike rhetoric became familiar; "In Socialist publications, strikers were always 'starving,' the mill owners 'thieves' and 'parasites,' and the strike itself a romantic reincarnation of the Paris Commune."<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Dray. 317.

<sup>62</sup> Lawrence History Center, University of Massachusetts Lowell History Department. *Bread and Roses Strike of 1912: Two Months in Lawrence, Massachusetts, that Changed Labor History*. Digital Public Library of America. April 2013. "The Strike Ends, A Legacy is Born".

<sup>63</sup> Lawrence History Center, University of Massachusetts Lowell History Department. *Bread and Roses Strike of 1912: Two Months in Lawrence, Massachusetts, that Changed Labor History*. Digital Public Library of America. April 2013. "The Aftermath".

<sup>64</sup> Marcy and Boyd. "One Big Union Wins" in *The International Socialist Review*. 613.

<sup>65</sup> Watson. 127.

The strikers' had a charismatic group of individuals spearheading their narrative, like Bill Haywood and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn. The strikers employed various ways to disseminate their version of the events, including publications, meetings, and manifestoes in many different languages. Publications often carried urgent and provocative messages which emphasized the righteous cause of the Strike, as well as the violent response by community authority, such as the following call to arms;

“HELP! HELP! THEY ARE MURDERING US. The Strike of Lawrence is Still On. Ten Thousand Men, Women and Children Are Still Fighting On the Fighting Line. Police, Courts and Injunctions are Still in Use to Drive the Workers Back Into the Mills that Have Not Settled....”<sup>66</sup>

Strikers' accounts included lamentations about the squalor and poverty experienced by the city's workforce. An article written in the strike's aftermath in *The International Socialist Review* describes the horror of the mill workers' living conditions in overcrowded tenement houses; “In each apartment there exist two, three and even four families...the stench throughout the apartment was sickening...In every other way they are in an abominable and filthy condition...Under such conditions it is not to be wondered at that the infant mortality of Lawrence is 400 in 1,000. That is a death rate that is tantamount to murder - the murder of the innocents.”<sup>67</sup>

Pro-strike narratives similarly pointed to the violent suppression by Lawrence authority. “...every barbarity known to modern civilization had been perpetrated by police, military, courts and detectives, the willing tools of the bosses. Pregnant women were clubbed and their children delivered prematurely. Children were beaten in the streets and jails. Men were shot and

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<sup>66</sup> Print Copy of 1912 Strikers' Leaflet. Lawrence History Center, Lawrence, MA.

<sup>67</sup> Marcy and Boyd. 615.

bayoneted, the jail cells were filled.”<sup>68</sup> In his Speech on the Case of Ettor and Giovannitti, leading IWW organizer Big Bill Haywood stressed the violent nature of community repression by bringing up the deaths of Anna LoPizzo and 16-year old John Ramey, a member of the picket line band whose “only weapon” was “...a cornet in his hand.”<sup>69</sup> The violent, overblown response by Lawrence authority was also well illustrated by the Children’s Exodus, and became a key component of the pro-strike narrative. Washington Senator Miles Poindexter, who threw his support behind the strike, penned one scathing rebuke of Lawrence police detainment of women attempting to put their children aboard trains out of the city. Poindexter asserted that the mill owners, with assistance from “...the police, the militia, the Prosecuting Attorney and the local Judges, are making a concentration camp of Lawrence.”<sup>70</sup> Calling it an “assault on liberty,” Poindexter continued by forewarning of the grave Constitutional implications if “crowds of peaceable people can be assaulted by officials of the Government, brutally treated and incarcerated without any charge,” and suggesting that if such “people can be forcibly kept in Lawrence at the pleasure of the mill owners, to work at starvation wages, or starve, then they are in reality slaves.”<sup>71</sup>

The Children’s Exodus and the subsequent congressional testimony also provided essential national outlets for strikers to present and authenticate accounts on the impoverished and dilapidated conditions in Lawrence. In testimony before Congress, for example, Margaret Sanger was able to report on the condition of the children that had arrived in Manhattan off the train from Lawrence, corroborating that they “...were malnourished and dressed in rags. Most

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<sup>68</sup> Marcy and Boyd. 613.

<sup>69</sup> Haywood, William D. "Speech on the Case of Ettor and Giovannitti," May 21, 1912. Accessed online through WaybackMachine. 8.

<sup>70</sup> Miles Poindexter. "Slaves Made of Strikers, Says Senator Poindexter". Newspaper Photocopy from Lawrence History Center, Lawrence, MA. 1912. 1.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. 7.

had no underwear, though it was wintertime, and their shoes were worn out. The huge woolen mills of Lawrence produced more cloth than any other mills in the world, yet the mill children had no woolen clothing to wear on the bitterest of winter days.”<sup>72</sup>

According to the strikers’ narrative, the mill-owning class and Lawrence authority relied on an unlawful cruelty contrary to national ideals of “liberty” and “freedom”. Strike organizers pointed to the continued detainment of Ettor and Giovannitti as further evidence of the injustice that community authority was willing to inflict upon citizens asking for nothing more than their natural rights. Speaking as a defendant in the murder trial of Anna LoPizzo, Joseph Ettor believed that, with his presence in the court, community authority was putting the revolutionary socialism of the IWW on trial. “For my part, I have not been tried on my acts. I have been tried here because of my social ideals,”<sup>73</sup> Ettor asserted. He continued in his defense of his rights: “I want to state further, gentlemen, that whatever my social views are, as I stated before, they are what they are. They cannot be tried in this courtroom.”<sup>74</sup> Giovannitti, too, saw a great and dangerous hypocrisy embedded within the moralistic rhetoric of local and national authority, whose foremost goal he knew to be maintaining the status quo challenged by the IWW. In a poem written to Joseph Ettor for his 27th birthday- spent preparing to defend himself in court - Giovannitti employs a caustically sarcastic tone, and prods at the repressive forces of authority that jailed him and his friend with heaps of false well-wishes,

“Let us drink a new toast to the dear Woolen trust,  
To the legions of ‘Country and God,’  
To the great Christian cause and the wise, noble laws,  
And to all who cry out for our blood;  
Let us drink to the health of the old Commonwealth,

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<sup>72</sup> “Thirty-Five Children Are Coming”. Pamphlet found in Lawrence History Center, Lawrence, MA. Barre, VT. 4.

<sup>73</sup> *Ettor and Giovannitti Before the Jury at Salem, Massachusetts: November 23rd, 1912*. Published by the Industrial Workers of the World. Chicago, IL. 1912. 20.

<sup>74</sup> *Ettor and Giovannitti Before the Jury at Salem, Massachusetts: November 23rd, 1912*. Published by the Industrial Workers of the World. Chicago, IL. 1912. 37.

To the Bible and code in one breath,  
And let's so propitiate both the church and the state  
That they'll grant us a cheerful, quick death."<sup>75</sup>

This poem, seemingly laughing in the face of the potentially deadly consequences for having been wrongfully accused of this crime, suggested Giovannitti's view that the much-venerated institutions of Church, state, and the judiciary, which supposedly uphold the peace and prosperity of "the American way", were in fact repressive enforcers for the corporate class.

Though Giovannitti's poem reproves the institutional framework of the American nation, the IWW could, when it desired, also frame itself as defenders of a sacred part of the American tradition. The organization, for example, had fought for freedom of speech in numerous battles across the country. IWW organizers were not averse to contrasting the supposed values of the American republic with the reality of a corrupt and repressive American power structure. This identification with certain tenets of "American democracy," such as freedom of speech and the right to assembly, benefitted the IWW in bringing their message to the people of Lawrence. The Wobblies, as the IWW were called, strived to build an image of frontier-like communalism and shared experience through "...songs and stories. They were sentimental, almost old-fashioned in a way, and they liked to sing and talk as they sat around campfires."<sup>76</sup> Made up of righteous saboteurs and hardened working men and women, the IWW was the union of "...a tough, merciless West,"<sup>77</sup> and its crusade against iron-fisted authority paralleled the American frontier myth. Despite their reproach of American power structure, the IWW ingrained in its image a sense of nostalgia for American cultural tenets of fairness and autonomy.

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<sup>75</sup> Arturo Giovannitti. "To Joseph Ettor, On His 27th Birthday" in *Poems / Poemas*. El Corno Emplumado: 1966. Lines 9-16.

<sup>76</sup> Richard O. Boyer. Herbert M. Morais. *Labor's Untold Story*. Pittsburgh: United Electrical, Radio & Machine Workers of America. 1955. 172.

<sup>77</sup> Watson, 56.

By their own account, most of the city's strikers' were in no way anti-American, and employed symbols of the American nation and rhetoric of the American Dream to draw in sympathy and urge town and state authority to embody the nation's stated principles. In the view of reactionary, anti-strike forces in Lawrence, the strikers are "...somehow un-American, but while they're in the streets, engaged in protest, they're carrying American flags".<sup>78</sup> There are remarkable photos of strikers and militiamen clashing head to head, both sides sporting American iconography and waving flags, as if to assert to one another their side's commitment to two contradictory cultural frameworks both viewed as resolutely American. These violent physical clashes prompted a different battle on the plane of culture and memory over symbols of American identity and who, if anyone, they belong to. Through "investing Old Glory with extraordinary emotional and symbolic significance, immigrant strikers sought to link their struggle with American ideals of justice and fair play,"<sup>79</sup> thereby asserting their ownership of an American identity that was consistently devalued by anti-immigrant forces in their community.

There were more plainly radical elements that shaped the strikers' coalition beyond this assertion of the immigrant worker's right to call themselves American and live to an American standard. This was especially among I.W.W. operatives, whose self-proclaimed socialist status and advocacy for a united working class were far more easily cast by conservative voices as threats to national order and less sympathetic to the general American public. In a February speech to an audience at Carnegie Hall in 1912, Bill Haywood detailed his vision that saw American labor on the precipice of national upheaval, asserting that, from Lawrence, "...the IWW would extend the strike nationwide."<sup>80</sup> While individual strikers in Lawrence were most

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<sup>78</sup> Robert Forrant. Personal interview. Jan. 19th, 2018.

<sup>79</sup> Ardis Cameron. *Radicals of the Worst Sort: Laboring Women in Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1860-1912*. University of Illinois Press, 2005. 177.

<sup>80</sup> Watson. 131.

concerned with an increases in their wage and the ability to feed themselves and their families, the IWW always kept one eye on a seemingly distant horizon; the lofty aspiration of global socialism. After the Lawrence strike was over, IWW operatives who pressed ever forward suggested that, “The Battle of Lawrence is but one engagement. The Big Fight has just begun.”<sup>81</sup> Socialism was rising in popularity at the time of the 1912 strike - the same year in which perennial Socialist Party candidate Eugene Debs received 6% of the popular vote for the presidency.<sup>82</sup> Despite this growing popularity and success of the IWW in Lawrence, more conservative organizers like Samuel Gompers of the American Federation of Labor remained unconvinced of the staying power of the IWW’s strategies and rhetoric. In a piece he wrote reviewing the strike, Gompers denied antagonism between the I.W.W. and the A.F.L., but remained patronizing towards and unsupportive of radical labor tactics employed throughout the strike in Lawrence, stating, “The A. F. of L. has been taught by experience to expect the excitable, violent, and even revolutionary, talk of the leaders at the beginning of big strikes of non-unionists to give way to the systematic methods of the A. F. of L.”<sup>83</sup> Gompers was by no means the only one who took issue with the IWW’s philosophy and methodology; even many self-identified Socialists denounced the I.W.W. as “recklessly radical”, especially for this very belief in “imminent revolution.”<sup>84</sup>

The IWW’s advocacy for labor organizing across ethnic and gender barriers proved particularly controversial even to many in the American labor movement, and yet pro-strike organizers in Lawrence highlighted this element as a cornerstone of the strike’s success and a blueprint for the future. *The International Socialist Review* affirmed that “...a new chapter has

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<sup>81</sup> Marcy and Boyd. 628.

<sup>82</sup> John Wooley and Gerhard Peters. “1912 Presidential Election” in *The American Presidency Project*. University of California, Santa Barbara. Accessed online February 16th, 2018.

<sup>83</sup> Samuel Gompers. “The Lawrence Strike.” in *American Federationist*. Vol. XIX. April, 1912. 289.

<sup>84</sup> Watson. 133.

opened in the history of New England and the United States...For the first time in America a method of organizing men and women of twenty different nationalities and leading them to victory has been found.”<sup>85</sup> This construction of the strike served, in many ways, as a direct rebuke to more conservative forces in the American labor struggle who focused most of their energy on the organizing of white, male, skilled workers. Through their success in Lawrence, the IWW and the strikers they led “...defied the assumptions of conservative trade unions within the American Federation of Labor that immigrant, largely female and ethnically diverse workers could not be organized.”<sup>86</sup> Bill Haywood was especially proud of the IWW’s success in organizing disparate groups, and remarked on its potentially revolutionary implications, “You could see the German reaching across a mulligan stew shaking hands with a Frenchman. No question of nationality. I have spoken to those Italians in a meeting and asked them what country they belonged to. And they said, ‘The Industrial Workers of the World.’”<sup>87</sup> As “barriers of nationality fell before the commonality of class,”<sup>88</sup> the strikers’ narrative soon became defined by the image of this “...unity of men, women, and children of diverse immigrant backgrounds organized around basic human needs by a benevolent IWW.”<sup>89</sup>

The IWW’s devotion to socialism and cross-national organizing was often infused with direct opposition to broader institutions of nationhood and religion, in line with traditional Marxist thought. One IWW publication quotes Joseph Ettor “...on one occasion taking up the various national, religious, and other devices by which the workers are divided by the bosses,

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<sup>85</sup> Marcy and Boyd. 628.

<sup>86</sup> Lawrence History Center, University of Massachusetts Lowell History Department. *Bread and Roses Strike of 1912: Two Months in Lawrence, Massachusetts, that Changed Labor History*. Digital Public Library of America. April 2013.

<sup>87</sup> Haywood, William D. "Speech on the Case of Ettor and Giovannitti," May 21, 1912. Accessed online through WaybackMachine. 13.

<sup>88</sup> Watson. 144.

<sup>89</sup> Dray. 323.

said in part: ‘In the shop there is no flag. In the shop there is no religion. In the shop there is no party. In the shop there is no nation. In the shop there is only work and workers. In the shop the workers must get together on basis of their work and attack their exploiters.’”<sup>90</sup> These ideas were particularly radical to the Lawrence community authority, and were the sorts of ideologies easily attacked by the progenitors of the “God and Country” narrative that took hold in final months of 1912.

### **b. God and Country**

Even after their success, trouble loomed for the strikers’ coalition. Organizers Joseph Ettor and Arturo Giovannitti remained imprisoned awaiting trial, while mill owners quickly began the quiet work of dismantling the strikers’ gains through incremental wage cuts, firings, industrial spies, and blacklistings. By the time Ettor and Giovannitti were acquitted on Nov. 26th, 1912,<sup>91</sup> two days before Thanksgiving Day, any grateful feelings for the IWW’s presence had been suffocated by a counternarrative put forth by conservative community authority.

Post-victory, I.W.W. leaders had remained in the city to protest the continued detention of organizers Ettor and Giovannitti, and local authority looked for a way to reestablish their own legitimacy and purge the I.W.W. from the city. Narratives of the strike developed by the mill-owning class were unpopular among people in Lawrence; American Woolen President William Wood’s official “...appeal to [the strikers] to return to your work and faithfully discharge your duties,” was ignored, and the strategy of trying to invoke personal sympathy for the slighted mill owners had been all but abandoned a few weeks into the strike.<sup>92</sup> Desperate pleas for order by Lawrence authority and the police were not much more moving to the mass of Lawrence

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<sup>90</sup> *Ettor and Giovannitti Before the Jury at Salem, Massachusetts: November 23rd, 1912*. Published by the Industrial Workers of the World. Chicago, IL. 1912. 15.

<sup>91</sup> “ACQUITTED, THEY KISSED.; Ettor, Giovannitti, and Caruso Thanked Judge and Jury.” in *The New York Times*. Nov. 27, 1912.

<sup>92</sup> “Pres. Wm. M. Wood Makes Statement”. *The Evening Tribune*. Jan. 20, 1912.

citizenry, particularly after people went back to work at the end of March. Nascent anti-strike accounts in mid-1912, which framed authority figures as “... protectors of life and property” opposing “...9,000 frenzied foreigners aroused to a state of irresponsible fury by the incendiary speeches of their leaders,”<sup>93</sup> contained elements of what would soon become the dominant narrative of the event, but distant and impersonal publications of this sort were not enough to subdue the enthusiasm for the I.W.W.’s presence that subsisted after their victory in the strike. Reappropriating the story of the strike from the IWW and its supporters would require the authority of the local Catholic Church, a cultural institution whose principles and popularity aligned with a broad swath of the Lawrence working population, but whose conservatism served the interests of Lawrence’s existing ruling class.

The “God and Country” narrative of events in Lawrence was propelled by fears of socialism, anarchism, and atheism, which were concentrated into strong anti-I.W.W. sentiment. The I.W.W. were easily cast as outside agitators waging ‘...an attack on religions, on freedoms of the Union, the American way of life and the flag.’<sup>94</sup> The man credited with revitalizing the sense of civic responsibility to “God and Country” after the strike was Father James T. O’Reilly. O’Reilly was one of the most distinguished public figures in Lawrence; one citizen recalled decades later that he was the first person in the city with a car.<sup>95</sup> When the strike first began, the most influential priest in the community had escaped from the frigid Lawrence January for a recuperative vacation in Florida. Weeks passed by before Father O’Reilly made his way back to Lawrence after reading in a Florida newspaper that his city was “in the grip of Socialism”.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> T.O. Marvin. “Handling the Lawrence Strike” in *The Protectionist* Vol. XXIII. April, 1912. 658.

<sup>94</sup> Teddie Gallagher. “James T. O’Reilly, O.S.A.: A Life for God and Country”. *The Augustinian*. Fall 2013. 12.

<sup>95</sup> Lillian Donohoe. Interview by Yilderay Erderner. Oral History Interview. Lawrence, MA. April 18, 1989.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

As the most powerful Catholic priest in Lawrence, Father O'Reilly was not necessarily a friend of the mill-owning class prior to the 1912 strike. There existed sharp religious factionalism between the uniformly bred, Boston Brahmin, Episcopalian mill ownership and their workforce, made up of amalgamated Irish and Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Syrian Christian, and Jewish employees.<sup>97</sup> Among the various Catholic parishes in Lawrence, those associated with second or third generation immigrant populations such as St. Annes, a "...fixture in the life of the Franco-American community," had, in previous strikes, preached "obedience to authority," and "loyalty to the mill."<sup>98</sup> By 1912, community religious leaders largely sided with mill ownership, though there were notable exceptions, including the city's Unitarian minister and Roman Catholic priest Mariano Milanese.<sup>99</sup> The latter of these two helped solicit funds for the strike in church. Father O'Reilly's own fervent opposition to the 1912 strike was not necessarily predictable. Having assumed a mediation role on the arbitration committee in six previous strikes, he had been repeatedly criticized by mill management as being favorable towards laborers.<sup>100</sup>

O'Reilly's primary objections to the Lawrence Strike were focused on the involvement of the I.W.W. and their doctrine of anti-capitalist socialism. O'Reilly used his sermons and publications to rail against the evils he believed threatened to poison the workingmen of his beloved community. "The all-absorbing question of the day is the question of socialism," O'Reilly wrote in his monthly digest *Our Parish Calendar*. "Our readers never dreamt how near they were to a practical demonstration of the great need of being better informed of this

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<sup>97</sup> Watson, 134.

<sup>98</sup> Cameron, 52-53.

<sup>99</sup> Watson, 86.

<sup>100</sup> Gallagher, 11.

destructive force”.<sup>101</sup> A religious appeal against this new and enigmatic European import was a more effective tool in building anti-strike sentiment than the mill-owners’ paternalistic pleas to return to work, and it remained relevant even after the strike ended in March. Still, it required an inciting event to clamp down on the popularity of labor organizers who had become folk heroes to many in Lawrence, and bring to the foreground this undercurrent of anti-socialism that Father O’Reilly helped define.

The event came in the form of a September 29th demonstration led by the I.W.W. The organization, still actively planning demonstrations in support of Ettor and Giovannitti’s release, brought in Carlo Tresca to keep a spotlight on the trial. On this particular day, he led a demonstration which highlighted some of the most radical ideological tenets present in I.W.W. organizing: “no American flags were carried, and amid scores of red flags someone held a banner bearing the anarchist slogan ‘No God, No Master.’”<sup>102</sup> Conservative voices in the community quickly pounced on Tresca and the I.W.W., deriding their protest as atheistic and disgraceful. For those in the Lawrence community like O’Reilly, this was the day the I.W.W. presented the sacrilege of its philosophy in unambiguous terms, which had to be met with a similarly unambiguous, patriotic, God-fearing response. Enlisting local Catholic leadership in service of Protestant mill owners, the city’s Alderman Paul Hannagan proposed “...a mammoth civic parade”.<sup>103</sup> When 32,000 people marched, stars and stripes in hand, under the banner of “God and Country” on the Catholic Holiday of Columbus Day, 1912, it was not only framed as a rebuke of the I.W.W. and atheistic socialism, but “that the patriotic citizens of Lawrence had saved the city” from a great evil.<sup>104</sup> By the time of Father O’Reilly’s Golden Jubilee in 1924,

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>102</sup> Watson, 225.

<sup>103</sup> “No God -- No Master”. *Lawrence Eagle Tribune: “For God and Country” Edition*. Sept. 22, 1962.

<sup>104</sup> Gallagher, 17.

Lawrence was dominated by the “God and Country narrative”, and the I.W.W. were pushed out of the city, and their national operations were breaking apart. When O’Reilly was honored for his 50 years of service to the Lawrence community, he was framed first and foremost as “... a voice of reason against the I.W.W., a true patriot, priest and hero for God and Country”.<sup>105</sup>

Following the God and Country parade, local governmental authority capitalized quickly on a rising tide of anti-I.W.W. feeling. In the fortnight ahead of the “God and Country” parade, the Lawrence Citizens’ Association had been founded “...with a mission to defend the good name and fame of the city,”<sup>106</sup>, and they played an integral part in keeping nationalistic, fervently religious, anti-strike sentiment alive in the months following the parade. They kept Lawrence street corners adorned with red, white, and blue. They held a Thanksgiving celebration where notable speakers delivered addresses on a theme of “Citizenship and not partisanship”<sup>107</sup>, exalting devotion to flag and country with frequency. Community leaders from all around Massachusetts joined in the celebration; Cardinal William O’Connell sent a written statement to Father O’Reilly to read at the event, in which he lauded the God and Country parade he felt “...destroyed the false impression given by a few socialistic and atheistic disturbers at the time of the recent labor troubles.”<sup>108</sup> The advocates of the “God and Country” narrative who spoke at the Citizens’ Association celebration not only railed against socialism, but played into fears of infiltration by an immigrant “other” while remaining theoretically inclusive. The address made by Massachusetts Supreme Court Justice Charles DeCourcy struck at this tension, when he claimed that “...with the well intentioned immigrant came others not only ignorant of our language and laws, but imbued with old world prejudices and beliefs that are destructive of peace

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>106</sup> *Lawrence, Massachusetts: A Story of Protest, Patriotism, Thanksgiving and Truth*. Eagle-Tribune Print: Lawrence. 1912. 2.

<sup>107</sup> Samuel J. Elder in Ibid. 3.

<sup>108</sup> Cardinal William O’Connell in Ibid. 9.

and orderly progress.”<sup>109</sup> This notion that immigrants can only be accepted upon conforming to American cultural standards allowed proponents of the “God and Country” narrative to support programs of “Americanization”.

In the eyes of Lawrence authority, “Americanization” programs heralded an ideal immigrant, the kind which shed radical tendencies of “the Old Country” in favor of complete assimilation and deference. “God and Country” advocates focused some of their effort on reclaiming control over immigrant identity within Lawrence, which had become a key element of pro-strike narratives, through pageants and community programs founded on “Patriotism” and “Civic Pride”.<sup>110</sup> Immigrant women, in particular, became targets of these programs, as their widespread leadership of and participation in the 1912 strike “...ruptured images of passivity” and “...challenged the economic order as well as the sexual labeling upon which it was based.”<sup>111</sup> Community members lauded women who marched in patriotic garb in the “God and Country” parade as exemplars of venerated old standards like “republican motherhood”, and pointed to them as the ultimate aspiration of immigrant women who must shed any allegiance that deviated from traditionalist American renderings women’s role.<sup>112</sup> The “God and Country” narrative quickly became justification for Lawrence authority to campaign against all forms of radicalism they felt threatened the fabric of their peaceful community.

As it was disseminated by authority in and outside of Lawrence in the decades after the strike, the God and Country narrative was intertwined with other dominant cultural trends, including the First Red Scare and hard-line anti-immigrant attitudes. When Lawrence textile workers went out on strike again in 1919, fears of “bolshevism at large” swept through the city’s

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<sup>109</sup> Charles A. DeCourcy in *Ibid.* 5.

<sup>110</sup> Cameron, *Radicals of the Worst Sort*. 178.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.* 174.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.* 184.

streets.<sup>113</sup> In that same year, the labor tumult of Lawrence moved to the national stage; some 20% of American workers walked out on the job in nationwide strikes, including hundreds of thousands of steel workers in the Great Steel Strike of 1919.<sup>114</sup> Fears of immigration festered with this “...upsurge in organizing, and the people who were pushing for quotas and harsher immigration legislation used the stories of immigrant radicalism,” to sow the seeds of xenophobia.<sup>115</sup>

By the time of the 50th anniversary of the Lawrence Strike in 1962, a generational purge of American radicalism had been completed, and a fervently anti-radical, especially anti-Communist, “God & Country” mentality became the cultural standard. Fifty years after the 1912 strikers braved a frigid Massachusetts winter to confront mounted militiamen to assert their rights, the city commemorated the courage of the “God and Country” parade. Community leaders held a reenactment of the event, and the *Lawrence-Eagle Tribune* newspaper devoted its Sep. 22nd, 1962 issue to celebration of the parade, in conjunction with various business and organizations, and to urge community members to attend the reenactment on the following day. This collection of tributes, advertisements, and anecdotes provides a sprawling examination of how the most dominant narrative of the strike was popularly constructed fifty years later. The paper was published a month before Cold War tensions would reach their historic height in the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962, and so the Cold War zeitgeist was one of which saturated all corners of American life.

Common elements from across the special edition paper include the conception that the city “...in 1912 was a lush garden of fear and hatred”, and that the initial understated and benevolent strike “...was stolen from the people by outside agitators from the radical Industrial

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<sup>113</sup> John A. Fitch. “Lawrence: A Strike for Wages or For Bolshevism?” April 5, 1919. 42.

<sup>114</sup> “Our Labor History Timeline”, AFL-CIO Website. Accessed January 23rd, 2018.

<sup>115</sup> Robert Forrant. Personal interview. January 19th, 2018.

Workers of the World.”<sup>116</sup> In the 1962 construction, the common heroes of the strike were militia members and local police, whose activation prevented complete anarchy from swallowing up the city.<sup>117</sup> The most praise, of course, was heaped on the organizers and marchers of the October 1912 Columbus Day parade, whose achievement is framed with truly Trumpian eloquence in the headline: “Great Crowds. . . Great Flag. . . Great Day”.<sup>118</sup> In one veneration of the Oct. 12 parade entitled “Repudiation of Anarchy,” the newspaper includes a quotation describing the event as “the greatest out-pouring of patriotic fervor ever witnessed up to this time in the United States.”<sup>119</sup> The 1962 version of events asserted that the tens of thousands who marched provided an immeasurable service by resisting violent class agitators, the likes of which now once again threatened “Freedom,” “Democracy,” and the global world order. One particularly bellicose Sears Roebuck and Co. advertisement asserted a dire need to emulate the “God and Country” paraders, writing to dedicated consumers of Whirlpool appliances that, “...more than ever before, it is important for all Americans to safeguard Democracy. For united we stand - divided we fall. The ‘God and Country’ Parade tomorrow, one of the most impressive parades ever to take place in this country, will represent heart-felt patriotism of thousands of people in our community.”<sup>120</sup> Two days later, the *Tribune* reported that 200,000 spectators watched paraders march once again for “God and Country” through the city’s thoroughfares.<sup>121</sup>

### III. Repression

After the Second World War, conservative voices employed images of a modernizing, prosperous, suburban America in a deftly woven narrative, seeking “...to frame the ‘labor

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<sup>116</sup> *Lawrence-Eagle Tribune: For and God and Country Edition*. Sep. 22nd, 1962.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> “Repudiation of Anarchy” in Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> “200,000 Watch Lawrence’s ‘God And Country’ Parade. *Lawrence-Eagle Tribune*. Sep. 24, 1962.

question' of that era in a fashion that would deradicalize labor, generate loyalty to country and corporation, and ensure harmonious class relations"<sup>122</sup> Magazines like *Fortune* proclaimed that the "...day of oppression and exploitation was past", and that America was "...itself a 'permanent revolution,' providing ever-rising standards of living in an atmosphere of political, religious, and personal freedom."<sup>123</sup> Ideas of class and wealth disparity had been purged from the mainstream political lexicon, and Labor's tactics had been bureaucratized and purified of Communist influence.<sup>124</sup> The Cold War era that provided ideological foundation for the *Lawrence-Eagle Tribune* "God and Country Edition," also subordinated Labor's struggle within American popular memory, and further affixed popular narratives of American history as "...a largely top-down story," where progress was credited to corporate and governmental leaders granting social change in acts of seemingly unprompted benevolence.<sup>125</sup> Working class organizers, and particularly those informed by left-wing politics, had no place in this new narrative as agents of change, and the story of "...the Communists and their 'fellow travelers' - was repressed and expelled from public culture."<sup>126</sup> Yet roots of this Cold War era historical construction preceded the mid-20th century decades which stamped out an opposing historical narrative; corporate, governmental, and community efforts to repress Labor's success and story are frequent throughout U.S. history. The preeminence of the God and Country narrative fifty years after the Lawrence Strike, and its virulently anti-Communist, ultra-patriotic national equivalent, resulted at least partially from concerted efforts by local, state, and national to suppress pro-labor narratives.

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<sup>122</sup> Nelson Lichtenstein and Elizabeth Tandy Shermer. *The Right and Labor in America*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 2012. 11.

<sup>123</sup> Zieger. *American Workers, American Unions*. 167.

<sup>124</sup> Lichtenstein. "CLASS UNCONSCIOUSNESS". 12.

<sup>125</sup> Forrant. Personal Interview. Jan. 19, 2018.

<sup>126</sup> Denning, Michael. *The Cultural Front: the Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century*. London: Verso, 2010. 464.

This campaign to control public memory began seven months after the strikers' success. The "God and Country" narrative was applied as an approachable veneer to a campaign by Lawrence authority to repress positive commemoration of the strike. Through combined efforts to discredit the IWW and drive them from the city, "public authorities in Lawrence; police, mayor, city officials and definitely the Church...essentially condemn the strike, and the history of the strike just disappear[ed] from public discourse in Lawrence."<sup>127</sup> The Church and local government represented the ideological or cultural arm of strike repression, recasting the heroes of 1912 as defenders of the status quo, intensifying Americanization programs under the banner of reviving civic responsibility and protecting the American way.

Immigrant women were particularly pressured by community authority, who created programs "...that would 'educate' the foreign-born woman in the areas of domestic hygiene, food preparation, and child rearing,"<sup>128</sup> in an effort to mold a foreign and potentially subversive group into ideal representations of "American motherhood." The central body in charge of this approach became the International Institute for Women, financed in part by the city's leading manufacturers.<sup>129</sup> The Institute opposed the pro-suffrage, pro-labor elements that had "infiltrated the Young Women's Christian Association", and provided similar services to poor immigrant families that emphasized "American ideas of domesticity, motherhood, and patriotism."<sup>130</sup> The cultural framework of the "American family," properly reverent and patriotic, was imposed upon immigrants in Lawrence as reinforcement of the of the ascendancy of "God and Country."

An arm of economic repression against the pro-strike narrative came from the mill-owning class, which quickly endorsed the God and Country revision of events. When strikers

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<sup>127</sup> Forrant. Personal Interview. Jan. 19, 2018.

<sup>128</sup> Cameron. *Radicals of the Worst Sort*. 172.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. 174.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid. 174-175.

returned to work in the spring of 1912, recriminations by corporate authorities were swift and incisive. The mill ownership and management circulated blacklists of employees, and fired those who helped organize the strike or those with IWW affiliation.<sup>131</sup> Facing incessant ideological assault by the cultural campaign of “God and Country,” and a high tide of suspicion of their motives, the IWW infrastructure in Lawrence was effectively dismantled by the mill-owning class with little protest from the city’s people: “By the summer of 1913, only seven hundred workers in Lawrence would admit to being Wobblies. The names of these diehards were circulated among mill owners.”<sup>132</sup> In a matter of months, the IWW had been successfully cast by Lawrence authority as the primary public enemy.

Anti-socialist, ultra-nationalist elements of the city were emboldened immediately after the inception of the God and Country narrative, with fatal consequences. Just a week after the parade, IWW Lithuanian Branch member Jonas Smolskas had his skull fractured by three native-born Lawrence men who took issue with Smolskas sporting a pin confirming his IWW membership.<sup>133</sup> The IWW financed the expenses of Smolskas’ funeral, the third victim of the strike after Anna LoPizzo and John Ramey.<sup>134</sup> These consequences of anti-IWW, anti-striker efforts were not uncommon nationwide, and the effort for strike repression was enforced further through state-sanctioned violence by police, particularly in strikebreaking “red squads,” and vigilante action by citizen groups such as the American Legion. By the time of the next major textile strike in Lawrence in 1919, where textile workers now walked out on the job in hopes of securing a 48-hour workweek, “...the city wanted nothing to do with the militia, parades, or mass meetings on the common. Police from Lawrence and neighboring towns handled crowds. All

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<sup>131</sup> Anonymous blacklist from Strike of 1912, Lawrence History Center, Lawrence, MA.

<sup>132</sup> Watson. *Bread and Roses*. 244.

<sup>133</sup> Jonas Stundza. *Bread and Roses Heritage Committee*. Accessed through Lawrence History Center.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

public assembly was banned.”<sup>135</sup> Church leaders across Lawrence fell into line almost instantly with the God and Country narrative and fought the strike, including Father Milanese, who had been sympathetic towards the 1912 strike.<sup>136</sup> Police authority, meanwhile, repressed this strike violently, resulting in the death of a striker, and the emergence of vigilantism, which saw strike organizers Anthony Capraro and Nathan Kleinman kidnapped and beaten.<sup>137</sup> A visit to Lawrence by IWW organizer Joseph Ettor a few years after the initial strike in 1912 would reveal the speed and efficacy with which this “God and Country”-backed campaign of community repression smothered pro-strike sentiment in the city: “...he [Ettor] was intercepted by cops and made to board the next outbound train, the community raising not a whimper of protest.”<sup>138</sup>

From the Lawrence strike onward, and through the interwar period, authorities across the country labeled IWW operatives and comparably “radical” groups as enemies, and initiated violent crackdowns on their operations. Crackdown was particularly brutal in the West Coast city of San Diego in the same year that the Wobblies were helping organize strikers in Lawrence. To counter an influx of IWW organizers pouring into San Diego in 1912 to campaign for their free speech rights, “...the San Diego City Council passed dozens of ordinances against street speaking and attempted to ban the IWW outright,” validating their repression through legal means.<sup>139</sup> With effective clearance from the local government, the city’s police then violently enforced these laws and “...turned arrested Wobblies over to vigilante gangs in the middle of the night, night after night, where they were beaten, branded and tortured, tarred and feathered, humiliated (often by being forced to kiss the flag and sing the national anthem), and finally abandoned in the

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<sup>135</sup> Watson. *Bread and Roses*. 251.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. 251.

<sup>137</sup> “Lawrence Mill Workers strike against wage cuts, 1919” from *Global Nonviolent Action Database*. Compiled by Swarthmore College. <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu>. Accessed online Feb. 11th, 2018.

<sup>138</sup> Dray. 323.

<sup>139</sup> Cohen, Michael. “‘The Ku Klux Government’: Vigilantism, Lynching, and the Repression of the IWW.” *Journal for the Study of Radicalism*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2007, pp. 31–56. 36.

middle of the desert just over the county line.”<sup>140</sup> This union between police authority and conservative, anti-labor vigilante gangs provided an early prototype of the sorts of activities Legionnaires engaged in throughout the interwar period with local and federal authorities. As in locations throughout the country, the San Diego vigilante gangs were often populated by representatives of community authority, including, in one victim’s estimation, “bankers and merchants,” “leading Church members,” those from the “Chambers of commerce and the Real Estate Board,” “the press and the public utility corporations,” and even “members of the [city’s] grand jury.”<sup>141</sup>

Nationwide, Red Scare fears of bolshevism propelled this sort of anti-Communist, ultra-nationalistic citizen vigilantism to the frontlines of labor repression, typified perhaps most popularly by the self-styled defenders of “Americanism,” the American Legion. But even more than these fears of radical ideology seeping into the American fabric was the realization of labor’s growing power. During the First World War, the Wilson administration bestowed new legitimacy upon American organized labor, particularly that of the more moderate American Federation of Labor (AFL), which supported his electoral bid.<sup>142</sup> Wilson’s National War Labor Board (NWLB) took a decidedly pro-labor stance in resolving “...festerling industrial conflicts,”<sup>143</sup> under the leadership of Frank Walsh. Union membership ballooned, and, by the war’s end in 1919, America was facing the year with the most strikes in its history up to that point.<sup>144</sup> The end of WWI, however, catalyzed a stark contrast in federal authorities’ reaction to organized labor, as the Wilson administration dissolved the NWLB, raided the offices of the IWW and other radical organizers, and invoked wartime powers to help crush the 1919

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid. 36.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid. 36-37.

<sup>142</sup> Zieger. *American Workers, American Unions*. 38.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid. 39.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid. 39.

steelworkers' strike and deport immigrants "...deemed to have no constitutional rights."<sup>145</sup>

Wilson's attorney general, A. Mitchell Palmer, imbued his anti-strike crusade with fears of rampant radicalism inspired by the Bolshevik Revolution, and a fruitful alliance between federal authorities, the corporate class, and citizen vigilante groups was born.

The ideology of Legionnaires, who formed in this same strike-torn year of 1919, contained within it many of the seeds of the Cold War era political characterization of what acceptable labor organizing should look like. Namely, they required deference to federal authority and thorough condemnation of radical organizers. This made pro-labor commemorations of events like the Lawrence strike of 1912, an event whose participants defied community authority in favor of radical organizing, a further taboo. In their assessment, "...the Legion's Americanism required working-class citizens to be deliberative, accommodating, and incremental in pursuing their economic and political interests to be considered 'American,'"<sup>146</sup> and so when Legionnaires found themselves allied with the cause of laborites, it was with those like the AFL, whose moderate, "antiradical" stance and preference for collective bargaining endeared them to the American Legion (35).<sup>147</sup> Perceiving themselves as a "...unique kind of police power, which could discipline disloyalty and reestablish the principles central to the nation's identity,"<sup>148</sup> Legionnaires were driven to violent extremes against the IWW, the Socialist Party, and pacifists to prevent what they feared was a descent into anarchism.<sup>149</sup>

The economic downturn of the Great Depression, with unemployment rising above 25%, provided a new chance for organized labor, both of the state-accommodating and radical

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid, 40-41.

<sup>146</sup> Christopher Nehls. "The American Legion and Striking Workers During the Interwar Period" in *The Right and American Labor*. Ed. by Nelson Lichtenstein and Elizabeth Tandy Shermer. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 2012. 29.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid. 35.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid. 41.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid. 34.

varieties, to reassert themselves with new legitimacy. Communist and Socialist organizers imparted leadership in many mass protests and strikes, especially as the Depression hit its height, and yet this “...never coalesced into a mass movement or achieved the kind of political consciousness,”<sup>150</sup> that radical organizers envisioned. Even in nation’s most desperate hour, the ideological cult of the “American way” still permeated political discourse and prevented, in Zieger, Minchin, and Gall’s view, a “not system-threatening” of radical leftism or rightism from emerging in response to the crisis.<sup>151</sup> Still, the reemergence of radical labor forces, particularly American Communists, meant that conservative voices also escalated their attacks on the elements of labor organizing which they found most threatening, more convinced than ever “...that labor activism was being driven by a subversive conspiracy.”<sup>152</sup> The partnership between official community authority and citizen vigilante groups continued through the era of the Great Depression as a primary tool for the repression of radical labor activity, especially as strike activity grew in this era of immense economic turmoil. In California in the mid-1930s, for example, the statewide American Legion had a close working relationship with authorities, “...collecting and distributing information on radicalism, radical groups, and individual radicals - all those considered potentially subversive.”<sup>153</sup>

Meanwhile, the Roosevelt administration, like Wilson before him, legitimized the moderate elements of the American labor movement in unprecedented ways in response to economic crisis, such as the creation of the National Labor Relations Board with the Wagner Act of 1935. As conservative agents physically repressed radical strike activity on the local level, they took aim at federal policies like these, sowing the seeds of suspicion that would one day

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<sup>150</sup> Zieger. *American Workers, American Unions*. 58.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid. 51.

<sup>152</sup> Nehls. 35.

<sup>153</sup> Robert W. Cherny. “Anticommunist Networks and Labor: The Pacific Coast in the 1930s” in *Labor’s Cold War*. Ed. by Shelton Stromquist. Urbana: University of Illinois Press. 2008. 19.

energize the dismantling of New Deal-era progress: “Throughout the late 1930s, employers, right-wing newspapers, and conservative legislators assailed the NLRB. The new agency, they charged, stacked the deck in favor of unions. Communists dominated its staff, they asserted.”<sup>154</sup> Conservative barrage of New Deal labor policy paved the way for the 1947 seismic post-war shift in labor relations that accompanied the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act.

The end of Second World War and the Cold War configuration allowed conservative, anti-Communist voices to assert a new level of dominance in political discourse, just as the American labor movement was reaching its height. Like in the aftermath of WWI, strike figures ballooned in the immediate post-war landscape, and union membership hit an all time high of 14 million people in 1946, comprising 35% of non-agricultural workers.<sup>155</sup> Due to the recognition of moderate organizing forces like the AFL and CIO by the NLRB, much of this organizing force was relatively moderate and cooperative with authority, as organizing shifted further from old popular methods of conventional striking. Still, this was unacceptable to conservative voices, and, as early as the midterm elections of 1946, the revived threat of the “Red menace” which first presented itself in 1917 became a central issue for many Republican candidates across the nation.<sup>156</sup> Attacking ascendant labor federations like the Congress of Industrial Organizations, candidates “...had begun to ‘use ‘CIO’ and ‘PAC’ as near-synonyms for ‘Communist.’”<sup>157</sup> When the Taft-Hartley Act passed in 1947 as a proposed course-corrective to the 1935 Wagner Act, it put restrictions on labor organizing, including provisions restricting strike activity and enhancing employers’ rights to intimidate and repress strikes, as well as a requirement for labor leaders to

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<sup>154</sup> Zieger. *American Workers, American Unions*. 153.

<sup>155</sup> Robert W. Cherny, William Issel, and Kieran Walsh Taylor. *American Labor and the Cold War*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. 2004. 1.

<sup>156</sup> Lisa Kannenberg. “Putting the ‘I’ before ‘UE’: Labor’s Cold War in Schenectady-GE” in *Labor’s Cold War*. Ed. by Shelton Stromquist. Urbana: University of Illinois Press. 2008. 145.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid. 145.

sign anti-Communist affidavits.<sup>158</sup> With this, conservative voices tightened their hold on the narrative surrounding American labor organizing.

The major American labor federations that wanted to remain relevant succumbed to the pressure of Taft-Hartley's most stringent supporters. Long the frequent rival of fringe groups like the IWW and the CPA, the major, federally-recognized American organizers in the AFL and CIO purged from their ranks the strain of leftist laborites and officially endorsed the Cold War zeitgeist. At the eleventh constitutional convention of the CIO in 1949, the organization under Walter Reuther's leadership purged left-wing unions in order to, in Reuther's words, "...cut out the cancer and save the body of the CIO."<sup>159</sup> The UE was officially expelled from the CIO, and replaced by a new union, the International Union of Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers (IUE); the Farm Equipment Workers were also expelled.<sup>160</sup> Following this, "...dismemberment of the UE became the centerpiece of the CIO strategy after the expulsion of the left-wing unions...the labor movement would give full support to the Democratic Party and the emerging anti-Soviet foreign policy."<sup>161</sup> Thereafter, a "...massive, sustained campaign of red-baiting," against the UE crippled their membership and destroyed the reputation of their organizers.<sup>162</sup> Major players like the AFL and CIO, who would merge just 7 years after the purge of the UE, yielded to McCarthy-era paranoia surrounding Communist infiltration of the American labor movement. In doing so, they solidified within the American labor infrastructure the deficit of advocates who would prioritize not only radical action, but also the promotion of a pro-labor historical narrative as a key part of their vision for the future.

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<sup>158</sup> Zieger. *American Workers, American Unions*. 155.

<sup>159</sup> Ronald L. Filippelli and Mark D. McCulloch. *Cold War in the Working Class: The Rise and Decline of the United Electrical Workers*. Albany: State University of New York Press. 1995. 139.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid. 140.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid. 141.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid. 152.

### CHAPTER THREE: THE LAWRENCE STRIKE, A CENTURY ON

*“But if history teaches right, we know this much—right and wrong are relative terms —and it all resolves into a question of Power. Cold, unsentimental Power.”*

-Joseph Ettor from Essex County Jail, Lawrence, MA.<sup>163</sup>

#### I. The Revival of the Pro-Strike Narrative

“I don't know where they get that poster ‘Bread and Roses.’”<sup>164</sup> This is what Lawrence native Lillian Donohoe had to say about the strike’s new name by the time the strike had been recast within public discourse in Lawrence in the 1980s. “To me the strikers were not looking for bread and roses,” she continued, “they were looking for the two hours pay that Billy Wood took away from them when they changed the state law.”<sup>165</sup>

The Great Lawrence Textile Strike of 1912 is now most commonly referred to as the “Bread and Roses Strike.” This new name is both historically erroneous and indicative of the aims and concerns of the parties that worked to revive the pro-strike narrative. The name is often attributed to the strikers’ use of the phrase, credited to Rose Schneiderman, “We march for bread, and roses, too,” and the James Oppenheim poem that it inspired written a year before the Lawrence strike.<sup>166</sup> However, there is no evidence that the slogan was used by the Lawrence strikers, and claims of women organizers brandishing the phrase on signs and banners is likely

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<sup>163</sup> Ettor. *Industrial Unionism: The Road to Freedom*. Essex County Jail, Lawrence, MA. June 1912. Accessed online through IWW website publication archives.

<sup>164</sup> Lillian Donohoe. Interview by Yilderay Erderner. Oral History Interview. Lawrence, MA. April 18, 1989.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Sider. 65.

the result of ahistorical mythologizing.<sup>167</sup> However, by 1916, Upton Sinclair had coined the phrase “Bread and Roses Strike” as a pseudonym for events of Lawrence 1912,<sup>168</sup> and the makers of the new narrative revived the phrase half a century later as a memorable and thematically resonant counter to “God and Country.”

The contemporary “Bread and Roses” narrative, as presented in public memorials and historical texts that deal with the subject, is starkly different from the “God and Country” veneration of 1962, infusing a positive reconstruction of the strikers’ actions, often with particular emphasis on both international unity and local community pride. The reclaiming of the 1912 Lawrence Textile Strike by pro-labor activists and thinkers was not a simple process. Heralded by the watershed civil rights and progressive movements of the 1960s, the “New Left” school attempted to restructure much of America’s cultural and academic framework surrounding the history of race, labor, and women in the nation. Labor’s more radical history was not only recovered in the halls of academe, however, as much of it was kept and salvaged among the nation’s more radical labor unions. Through this, the contemporary narrative on Lawrence resulted from the interwoven efforts of progressive historians, reporters, labor organizers, Lawrence community leaders, and the participation of average citizens.

#### **a. The New Labor History and Class-Conscious Organizing**

The new labor historians sought to reanimate their craft and pull historical accounts away from the potter’s field of “industrial relations”, which amounted to little more than “...a policy-oriented research enterprise that sought to fine-tune a depoliticized system of labor-management accommodation and conflict... [which] blocked efforts to reconfigure a twentieth-century history

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid. 65.

<sup>168</sup> Robert E. Weir. *Workers in America: A Historical Encyclopedia, Volume 1*. ABC-CLIO. 2013. 419.

of class relations”<sup>169</sup> They began writing about previously underappreciated labor organizers, including various accounts on the tumultuous lifespan of the Wobblies, and flooded their corner of the academic world with paeans to the American worker.

In 1955, Journalist Richard Boyer and historian Dr. Herbert Morais, the former subpoenaed as a Communist in 1956 during the height of the McCarthy era<sup>170</sup> and the latter pushed out of Brooklyn College for Communist political affiliations,<sup>171</sup> provided one of the first sympathetic historical accounts of the IWW, and told the story of Lawrence in *Labor's Untold Story*. A decade afterwards, historian Philip Foner provided a comprehensive history of the IWW in the fourth volume of his *History of the Labor Movement in the United States*, which he dedicated to the memory of IWW organizer Elizabeth Gurley Flynn.<sup>172</sup> For his radical viewpoint, Foner was blacklisted in 1941 and purged from teaching at City College in New York, and after more than a decade settled at Lincoln University, one of the nation's historically black colleges.<sup>173</sup> Foner's work in his *History of the Labor Movement in the United States* was primarily written in opposition to the “Wisconsin School” of scholarship, represented by the work of John R. Commons, which asserted that “...labor organizations did not challenge the fundamental values of industrial capitalism... [but] used unions to improve their position within the existing order.”<sup>174</sup> Foner's focus on organizing within marginalized groups, such as women and African-American workers, made him highly influential among a young generation of labor

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<sup>169</sup> Nelson Lichtenstein. *A Contest of Ideas*. University of Illinois Press: Urbana. 16-17.

<sup>170</sup> “Richard Boyer, 70, Biographer And New Yorker Writer, Dies.,” in *The New York Times*. August 9, 1973.

<sup>171</sup> “Historical / Biographical Note,” in *Guide to the Herbert M. Morais Papers*. Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive. March 2015. Accessed online March 15th, 2018.

<sup>172</sup> Philip S. Foner. *History of the Labor Movement in the United States. Volume IV: The Industrial Workers of the World, 1905-1917*. New York: International Publishers. 1965. 4.

<sup>173</sup> Catherine Clinton. “Philip Foner's Fond Farewell.” *The New Yorker*. March 6, 1995.

<sup>174</sup> Scott McLemee. “Seeing Red.” in *The Chronicle*. June 27th, 2003.

scholars, including Nelson Lichtenstein, who credited Foner with moving labor history “...out of the economics department.”<sup>175</sup>

In *Labor's Untold Story*, Boyer and Morais attack repression tradition plaguing American labor history. With their scholarship keenly focused on the many “untold” portions of Labor’s story in America, Boyer and Morais set out on a dual mission of compiling existing labor scholarship and combining it with recovered elements from labor’s “radical past” that serve to counter the dominant historical construction. The Great Lawrence Textile Strike, of course, presents a key opportunity at this crossroads, as both a watershed American labor battle and a decisive demonstration of the repression of such narratives. Thus, in their reflections on the “miracle of” the Lawrence strike Boyer and Morais present a narrative of the event that venerates the strike’s organizers, and reveres the strikers for their “vibrant triumphant spirit, like something alive and palpable, unweakened it seemed as February dragged into March while hunger and killings and frame-ups steadily continued.”<sup>176</sup>

In his presentation of the Lawrence strike, Foner echoes Boyer and Morais’ analysis when he states that the most impressive element of the strike in Lawrence was the sustained devotion to the strike, along with the organizing of disparate ethnic groups into one unified force. Foner refers, like his predecessors, to the “miracle of Lawrence” when he asserts the strike disproved the notion of conservative laborites that “...foreign-born workers were unorganizable and could not be welded into an effective fighting machine.”<sup>177</sup> Organized across “...clashing religions, varied tongues, and differing customs, in unbreakable unity,”<sup>178</sup> the Lawrence strikers represented for Foner not only the potential for cross-cultural solidarity, but a sort of

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Richard O. Boyer. Herbert M. Morais. *Labor's Untold Story*. Pittsburgh: United Electrical, Radio & Machine Workers of America. 1955. 175.

<sup>177</sup> Foner. 346.

<sup>178</sup> Foner. 347.

manifestation of the American promise to build, *out of many, one* society unified in purpose and tolerance; “...theirs was the true Americanism,”<sup>179</sup> he argues. Boyer and Morais also assert an inviolable link between the history of the working class and questions of American identity, when they write that, “Fundamentally, labor’s story is the story of the American people.”<sup>180</sup> The new labor historians who followed Boyer, Morais, and Foner were similarly committed to reattaching labor history to greater American culture. Nelson Lichtenstein suggests that the concern of he and his contemporaries in reviving labor’s untold story became maintaining and strengthening “...the linkages with the larger themes in U.S. history, the attention to the subjective values and ideas which shape the world of both workers and managers, and the contest for control of the icons of American nationality.”<sup>181</sup>

Left-leaning organizers who deemed a cultural element and knowledge of history to be crucial to unionizing also preserved and rehabilitated the labor history which was unpalatable to mainstream American academics in the mid-twentieth century. Moe Foner, brother to historian Philip Foner, was one such organizer, who headed the 1199 local in New York City. As part of his myriad efforts, Foner founded a cultural initiative through 1199 entitled the Bread and Roses Cultural Project, paying homage to the popular organizing phrase which had, by that point, become bonded to retellings of the 1912 Lawrence strike. The phrase “Bread and Roses”, asserting that workers should have the right not only of basic survival, but also to lead a meaningful and fulfilling life outside of work, lent itself perfectly to Foner’s mission “to add dimension and artistic outlets to workers’ lives.”<sup>182</sup> Foner was quoted as saying that he

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid. 346.

<sup>180</sup> Boyer and Morais. 11.

<sup>181</sup> Nelson Lichtenstein. “David Brody: Heir to the Wisconsin School.” *Labor History* 34.4. 1993. Web. 500.

<sup>182</sup> David Marc, “Foner, Morris Moe”, in *American National Biography*, September 2010. Accessed online March 8th, 2018.

"...operated under the theory that a good union doesn't have to be dull,"<sup>183</sup> and he "...never lost sight of his dedication to cultural programming, providing 1199 members with a constant flow of opportunities for self-expression, art appreciation, and educational advancement."<sup>184</sup> Part of this educational advancement meant the opportunity to study seminal events in American labor history, like the Lawrence Strike. Foner deemed it necessary that events like these be publicly commemorated, and was present at the first annual Bread and Roses Heritage Festival in 1980 in Lawrence, where the city made its first community-wide attempt to venerate the actions of the 1912 strikers.<sup>185</sup>

#### **b. Efforts in Lawrence**

The road to the first Bread and Roses Heritage Festival was circuitous. The city, which just two decades before was swept up in the allure of God and Country, remained hushed and reluctant in its minimal discussion of the strike. 1978, the year Moe Foner founded the Bread and Roses Cultural Project, also proved a watershed year for moving Lawrence towards commemoration. As positive incarnations of the Lawrence strike were at that point revived in the study of labor history, and celebrated in organizing, efforts to commemorate the event reemerged in the city itself. Newly elected mayor Lawrence Lefebvre urged older citizens and former strikers who were alive in 1912 to speak about their experiences, and the city founded a new historical society, the Immigrant City Archives, taken from the nickname that Lawrence had received as an early industrial melting pot. The "cloud of collective amnesia" began to clear as former strikers

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<sup>183</sup> Steven Greenhouse. "Moe Foner, Labor Official and Movement's Unofficial Cultural Impresario, Dies at 86" in *The New York Times*. January 11, 2002.

<sup>184</sup> Marc. "Foner, Morris Moe."

<sup>185</sup> Paul A. Cowan. "Lawrence, MA: A City Comes Alive." in *The Village Voice*. Vol. XXV No. 28, July 9-15, 1980.

came forward or were located through a community-wide effort to participate in a new oral history project.<sup>186</sup>

The renewed interest in the strike in 1978 did not come from within Lawrence alone, and was prompted, in many ways, by the actions of two different men from New York City. Former union organizer and folk artist Ralph Fasanella, noted for his colorful portrayals of working class life, presented his paintings of the strike at the Lawrence Public Library in 1978.<sup>187</sup> Born to Italian immigrant parents, Fasanella had been a vocal union organizer in the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers,<sup>188</sup> before he threw himself into painting full-time. His union history and focus on the plight of working peoples saw him blacklisted during the McCarthy era.<sup>189</sup> Fasanella's preoccupation with the Lawrence strike, and with aestheticizing labor in general, saw him balance the two worlds of left-leaning labor organizing and art. By presenting his sweeping, mural-like depictions of the strike, Fasanella helped reanimate discussion of the strike among historians and local officials in Lawrence.

The city's history of decisive repression and collective amnesia, had also been catapulted back into local consciousness by journalist Paul Cowan of the *Village Voice*, who came to Lawrence in 1976 "...researching an 'article about the legacy of 1912.'"<sup>190</sup> Cowan, fascinated by the phenomenon of the "city that tried to forget its history," traveled to Lawrence to stir up memories long forgotten and long suppressed, and met the daughter of Camella Teoli. Teoli was a former child laborer who had been fourteen at the time of the 1912 strike, and who had been scalped in an industrial accident in the mills and testified before Congress in their 1912

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<sup>186</sup> Bruce Watson. *Bread and Roses: Mills, Migrants, and the Struggle for the American Dream*. Penguin Books, 2006. 255.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid. 255.

<sup>188</sup> William Serrin. "Artist's 'Urban Visions' Inspire a Look at Labor" *The New York Times Archives*. 1986. Accessed Online.

<sup>189</sup> Benjamin Genocchio. "Bold, Colorful, and Detailed." *The New York Times*. May 18, 2008. Accessed Online.

<sup>190</sup> David William Cohen. *The Combining of History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 8.

investigation into Lawrence mill conditions.<sup>191</sup> What Cowan discovered in his discussions with Teoli's daughter and other Lawrence community members was how completely they had "...succumbed to a climate of economic and psychological repression in Lawrence which made it an act of courage simply to remember [the strike]."<sup>192</sup> Over the next few years, as the city opened up about the strike and recovered accounts from various citizens, Cowan found himself reporting on the process to commemorate the strike, which coalesced into the first annual Bread and Roses Heritage Festival in 1980 which he attended. When he published the first of three pieces on Lawrence in *The Village Voice* in April of 1979, entitled "Whose America is This?" the ensuing national spotlight amplified the burgeoning efforts of commemoration, and pressured the Lawrence community like never before to reexamine its past.<sup>193</sup>

According to historian Gerald Sider, a more insidious motivation may have partially contributed to the revival of the strike's memory in the late 1970s. As Lawrence was witnessing another rapidly growing, non-white, immigrant population, Sider suggests that the history of the Lawrence Textile Strike was revived and celebrated, for some, as "...the history of the white ethnics in Lawrence - especially the Irish, Italian, and French Canadians - who had [once] been in a far-ranging and often hostile competition with each other for the better mill jobs, housing, control over parish churches, and parochial and public schools."<sup>194</sup> Sider argues this small white reactionary community within Lawrence was able to latch on to a perceived ethnic connection with the strike, and overlook the event's progressive implications. Despite the horrors of child labor, high infant mortality rates, abysmal tenement conditions, and draconian work practices,

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<sup>191</sup> Paul A. Cowan. "The City That Tried to Forget Its Past." in *Attenzione*. 1980. Photocopy from Lawrence History Center.

<sup>192</sup> Paul A. Cowan. "Lawrence, MA: A City Comes Alive." in *The Village Voice*. Vol. XXV No. 28, July 9-15, 1980.

<sup>193</sup> Cohen. 8.

<sup>194</sup> Sider, Gerald M. "Cleansing History: Lawrence, Massachusetts, the Strike for Four Loaves of Bread and No Roses, and the Anthropology of Working-class Consciousness". *Radical History Review*, Volume 1996, Number 65. 70-71.

one citizen interviewed in the Immigrant City Archives oral history project still lamented that Lawrence “...used to be a beautiful, beautiful city,” and that, anticipating it will one day be “run” by the “Puerto Ricans, the Dominicans, Santo Dominicans,” he sees “...no future in it.”<sup>195</sup> In this reactionary construction, a perceived lack of future welcomes, and perhaps necessitates, a reevaluation of the past. Ironically, by claiming lineage with the immigrant characters of a now-revered history, some conservative citizens felt they could assert nativist superiority over a new generation of immigrants who lacked this connection.

Efforts for memorialization of the Lawrence strike rapidly developed in the aftermath of the first Bread and Roses Heritage Festival. In advance of the 75th anniversary of the event coming in 1987, the Bread & Roses Heritage Committee put forward an ambitious proposal for commemoration. They wanted to declare 1987 the “Year of the Worker,” enlist the creation of historical accounts of the event in film, TV, music, public memorials, the American Textile History Museum, and “...a new historical novel written on life in Lawrence before, during and after the Strike.”<sup>196</sup> This ambitious project included as its centerpiece the creation of a public Worker’s Monument honoring the event, which would ensure “...the countries from which people emigrated to Lawrence could be incorporated into the design.”<sup>197</sup> When 1987 came and passed, the real 75th anniversary commemoration paled in comparison to this sweeping, year-long celebration, and the proposal of the Worker’s Monument began a campaign for a public memorial that would not come to fruition until the strike’s centennial celebration in 2012.

## **II. “Bread and Roses”**

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<sup>195</sup> Santore, Saverio. Interviewed by Yilderay Erdener. Oral History Interview. Lawrence, MA. April 19, 1989.

<sup>196</sup> John M. Corliss, Jr. “Proposal for the Commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the Bread and Roses Strike of 1912”. Advisory Council Reception. Jan 13th, 1986. Accessed at the Lawrence History Center, Lawrence, MA. 8.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid. 8.

On Labor Day, 2012, the American flag was raised on the flagpole on the Lawrence Common, the base of which still bore the inscription from the wealthy man who donated it: “...to the people of LAWRENCE as a perpetual reminder of October 12, 1912, when 32,000 men, women, and children of the city marched under the flag for GOD and COUNTRY.”<sup>198</sup> On this day, however, the city gathered to dedicate a new monument to the men, women, and children who marched for higher wages and better living and working conditions in the winter of 1912. The dedication was a symbolic resolution of sorts for the Lawrence community - the largest single donation of \$10,000 towards the monument was an act of goodwill and atonement, made in the name of Cornelius Ayer Wood, Jr., grandson of American Woolen President William Wood, by his widow Rosalyn.<sup>199</sup> One hundred years onward, a fixture of the new Lawrence narrative, featuring the strikers as community heroes and torchbearers of the American promise, was now etched into bronze and affixed across from the city hall. One century and some yards apart on the city green now sat two stone emblems of a city’s history, a history that was lived, repressed, and recovered.

The dominant contemporary account of the Lawrence strike, formulated by the aforementioned process of historical revision and community organizing, and found in historical texts, exhibits, and public memorials, carries a number of common elements through its various presentations. First, it is imperative to discuss the modes in which this historical narrative is relayed, and how it can be accessed, by outlining the major commemorative projects which exemplify the recent pro-labor narrative. In addition to the Strikers’ Monument which now sits on the city common, these include the annual Bread and Roses Heritage Festival, the organization of the 2012 Centennial celebration and the accompanying exhibits, events, and

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<sup>198</sup> “The Flag Pole,” in *My City is a Museum*. Lawrence HStory Center Website. Accessed March 8th 2018.

<sup>199</sup> *Striker’s Monument Dedication* Pamphlet. September 3rd, 2012. Lawrence History Center, Lawrence, MA.

performances, as well as curriculum that teaches the Lawrence strike and popular representations in literature, paintings, and songs.

For the commemorative projects in the city of Lawrence itself, there is a common focus on local *community pride*; a century onward, the city honors itself as the site of one of America's most important and most violent labor struggles. More generally, the contemporary pro-strike narrative is also often imbued with a certain sense of *national pride*, a sort of progressive patriotism which employs symbols of the American nation in effort to adopt the ideological framework of the new labor historians who argued that the American identity is not averse to or separate from labor struggle, but in fact defined and enriched by it. The third recurrent piece of the contemporary narrative - what, for so many, makes the strike so uniquely American - is the *unity of a diverse populace marching under a shared purpose*, and this is perhaps the most principal element shared among the various incarnations of the strike's contemporary account. According to the new dominant narrative on Lawrence, it is this unity which most sets the strike apart, and can be presented as both a subdued and indeterminate reflection on American egalitarianism, and more urgent proof that cross-cultural organizing has worked and must work again. The fourth and final element is the *continued relevance of the strike's narrative*, a concern which is of varied urgency depending on the various commemorative projects.

At the first annual Bread and Roses Heritage Festival in 1980, there was a groundswell of local community support, including the presence of all the city's aldermen, the district's congressman, and the co-sponsorship of various church groups. Apparently, Mayor Lefebvre was aware that the "Bread and Roses" title was most likely ahistorical, but he pressed forward because "...it sounded like a nice name, and he was trying to bring all the people together to

celebrate Lawrence's past."<sup>200</sup> Dignitaries came from across the country, including representatives from the White House and the Department of Labor, artist Ralph Fasanella, and folk idols Peter, Paul, and Mary.<sup>201</sup> Festivities prioritized bringing people together and highlighting the strength of the Lawrence community; this included the call for artwork from over 300 Lawrence students "...of the strike, the mills, the turn-of-the-century tenements,"<sup>202</sup> along with a keynote address by the city's mayor. Symbols of national pride also flooded the festival, as most of the patrons held American flags. The new narrative's focus on the cross-cultural heritage of the city and diversity of the strike's participants was also on full display at the 1980 event, featuring "...hand-lettered signs which bore the lovely strike slogan Bread and Roses, Too in 45 languages."<sup>203</sup> Mayor Lefebvre wanted the city's rich immigrant heritage represented at the event, and, having participated in the God and Country 50th anniversary commemoration march as a teenager, "...he longed for a different Lawrence, a place where every group could preserve its own language and culture."<sup>204</sup> In his address to the festival, Mayor Lefebvre reiterated the urgency of the strike's inclusive, cross-cultural message, and encouraged his citizens to look to the 1912 strike as exemplary of the potential unity among people across ethnic boundaries; "'Nowadays,' he said, 'when America is becoming increasingly divided by race and by ethnic groups, the 1912 strike shows that people can overcome age-old differences if they fight for a common goal... economic justice.'"<sup>205</sup>

Over three decades later, for the 2012 centennial of the strike, a year-long slate of community events allowed community members of wide-ranging backgrounds and interests to

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<sup>200</sup> Sider. 70-71.

<sup>201</sup> Cowan. "A City Comes Alive."

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Cowan. "The City That Tried to Forget Its Past." 54.

<sup>205</sup> Cowan. "A City Comes Alive."

get involve themselves in commemorative efforts. These included local art showcases, a multi-media fashion show examining the legacy of Jewish immigration in the city, a poetry jam “on the themes of the Bread & Roses Strike,” a Teatro del Loto production of Stefano Sabelli’s play on the testimony of Arturo Giovannitti, and many others. Various historical exhibits were prepared for the event’s centennial and presented free and open to the public, such as the *Short Pay! All Out!* exhibit presented by the Lawrence History Center, *The Lewis Hine Project: Stories of the Lawrence Children* by Joe Manning, and Stephen Lewis’ exhibit *Remembering Ralph Fasanella*. As part of the campaign to educate people on the events and aftermath of the strike, the Digital Public Library of America archived a free and accessible online version of the collaborative exhibit between the Lawrence History Center and the University of Massachusetts, Lowell History Department, entitled *Bread and Roses Strike of 1912: Two Months in Lawrence, Massachusetts, that Changed Labor History*. This exhibit presents a collection of interactive resources and materials from the time of the strike, as well as a concise and comprehensible version of the contemporary historical narrative. This includes analysis of the city’s industrial history, the background on the strike, as well as its legacy. In presenting the legacy of the strike, the DPLA exhibit includes quotes attributed, respectively, to I.W.W. leader Bill Haywood and American Railway Union Founder Eugene Debs, honoring the victory at Lawrence as a demonstration of the “common interest in the working class that can bring all its members together,” and the “...power and invincibility of industrial unity backed by political solidarity.”<sup>206</sup> The DPLA exhibit is yet another contemporary account that highlights the diverse, immigrant workforce that made up the Lawrence strike, citing statistics that 65% of the working population

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<sup>206</sup> Lawrence History Center, University of Massachusetts Lowell History Department. *Bread and Roses Strike of 1912: Two Months in Lawrence, Massachusetts, that Changed Labor History*. Digital Public Library of America. “The Strike Ends, A Legacy is Born: Introduction”.

of the city had only lived there for ten years or fewer.<sup>207</sup> This account also emphasizes the crucial role that women workers and young girls, as a substantial part of the textile workforce, played in the organization of the strike, and the resistance to police repression.<sup>208</sup>

History curricula on the Bread and Roses Strike focus primarily on the historical context of the event insofar as it “...illustrates many of the social, economic, and political issues faced by the US during the period of industrialization in the late 1800s - early 1900s.”<sup>209</sup> The sample curriculum found at the Lawrence History Center, prepared for the nearby Haverhill school system, is not a commemorative project but an academic work, and is thus largely detached from prideful recollections of the event, both locally or nationally charged. The curriculum does emphasize the leadership of the strike by various immigrant groups, as well as the integral role played by women organizers like Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and Mary K. O’Sullivan.<sup>210</sup> Most concerned with elucidating the context and influence of events within larger sequential trends of American history, the Haverhill curriculum relegates the issue of the strike’s continued relevance to a single class discussion question which asks to name “...parallels between this event and other events (now or in the past).”<sup>211</sup> The history of the strike’s repression by “God and Country” advocates is largely absent from the lesson plan; this recovered history, once reviled, now does not emphasize the process of forced forgetting which threatened to bring about its erasure.

The online exhibit on the strike provides brief exposition on the cycle of repression and revival undergone by the pro-strike narrative. which includes some analysis of what the contemporary narrative looks like in comparison to the original account by the IWW. The

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid. “Provocations.”

<sup>208</sup> Ibid. “The Workers.”

<sup>209</sup> Amy Shine Jones. *The Bread & Roses Strike: A Curriculum Guide for US History II (Grades 9-12)* Haverhill Public Schools. June 7, 2010. 2.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid. 2, 12.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid. 14.

exhibits assert that, through the combined efforts of local historical organizations, the artwork of Ralph Fasanella and the reporting of Paul Cowan, the community was able to, at long last, accept “...a new, more favorable interpretation of the strike, which celebrated the strikers’ struggle and achievement, and downplayed the IWW’s radical politics.”<sup>212</sup> The key fixture of the centennial commemoration, and example of this more favorable interpretation, was the 2012 Strikers’ Monument, which carries each of the major components of the contemporary narrative on the Lawrence Strike. The organizers of the centennial committee saw a crucial need for a permanent, physical testimonial to the strike which had been, for so long, repressed. They ascribed to the theory that “...teaching Americans that labor history played a key role in a shared national history is vital, and perhaps the best way to impart this education is through the places of this past.”<sup>213</sup> Campagnone Common, the central park in Lawrence named for three Lawrence brothers who died in the Second World War,<sup>214</sup> was determined to be the ideal spot for such a monument. The park’s central location within the city allows a certain level of accessibility to the public, and, across the street from the city hall, its proximity to the seat of local government suggests community endorsement of the new narrative.

Physical memorializations, as the centennial organizers knew, provide an opportunity “...to create a strong sense of connectedness with the past among visiting audiences—a past even with which visitors may have no direct ties.”<sup>215</sup> The final version of the monument, dedicated on Labor Day, 2012, was a large basalt boulder which featured, on one side, a hand-sculpted bronze relief, and, on the back, an inscription underneath the town’s insignia. The principal image

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<sup>212</sup> Lawrence History Center, University of Massachusetts Lowell History Department. *Bread and Roses Strike of 1912: Two Months in Lawrence, Massachusetts, that Changed Labor History*. Digital Public Library of America.

“For God and Country.”

<sup>213</sup> Donaldson, Rachel. “Placing and Preserving Labor History.” *The Public Historian*, vol. 39, no. 1, 2017. 62-63.

<sup>214</sup> “Campagnone Common.” City of Lawrence, Massachusetts Website. Accessed March 10th 2018.

<sup>215</sup> Donaldson. 62-63.

carved into the relief is of a man waving an American flag as he leads strikers out of mills and into the strike. The plaque next to the monument serves as a key to some of the most important images woven into the sculpted relief, providing background on how the monument is imbued with a sense of local community pride, identification with the American nation, reverence for the cross-cultural organizing of the strikers, and a concern for the continued relevance of the strike narrative.

The Strikers' Monument expresses the local character of the strike, and celebrates Lawrence community history by the presence of "coiled yarn and shuttles" surrounding the bronze relief, which are meant to "...symbolize our city's textile heritage."<sup>216</sup> The plaque that sits on the other side of the basalt boulder also features the "Industria" insignia from the city seal of Lawrence, drawn to represent the three intersecting rivers which initially powered city industry.<sup>217</sup> The workers marching on the bronze relief also demonstrate a sense of regard for the American nation. They are pictured "proudly carrying American flags," which the centennial committee suggests is meant to "...illustrate the solidarity and determination of the men, women and children in the 1912 strike."<sup>218</sup> In the presentation of the Strikers' Monument, the American flag becomes the unifying iconography which allows the coalescence of "...17 ethnic groups in the city into one coherent force."<sup>219</sup> In this construction of the strike's history, sentiments of national pride are mixed with the reverence for cross-cultural organizing, and the diversity implicitly promoted by the strike is celebrated as a fulfillment of the American ideal. On the back side of the monument, underneath the city's Industria insignia, there also features an inscription by the Co-Chairs of the monument committee, David Meehan and Jonas Stundzia,

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<sup>216</sup> "1912 Strikers' Monument" plaque. Campagnone Common, Lawrence, MA.

<sup>217</sup> Strikers' Monument. Campagnone Common, Lawrence, MA.

<sup>218</sup> "1912 Strikers' Monument" plaque.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

who urge the continued relevance of the Lawrence strike. The inscription reads: *Let the gains of the workers past, be recognized by those who labor today, and preserved for those who toil tomorrow,*<sup>220</sup> suggesting the necessity to not only preserve, but study and understand the history of the American labor struggle to triumph on behalf of workers today who yearn for inspiration and solidarity in the face of similar obstacles.

The process of planning and fundraising for the construction of the centennial Strikers' Monument, correspondence from which is compiled in the Lawrence History Center, illustrates the concerns of those leading the effort for commemoration. With general agreement on the pro-labor revisioning of the strike, and the necessity for emphasis on the unity between disparate groups, the primary debate among commemoration organizers was the level to which the story of God and Country would be included in the new narrative. A message sent from Jim Beauchesne, the Park Supervisor at Lawrence Heritage State Park, to organizers on the centennial committee highlights both the new primacy of the pro-strike narrative, as well as the concern over forgetting an ever-present threat of history's repression. He asserted that "the hegemony of the 'God & Country' story is in some ways as important as the story of the strike itself."<sup>221</sup> Beauchesne told the organizers that, at a meeting of the centennial committee, he was struck by the fact that "...a couple people professed to have *no knowledge* of the God and Country parade or the years of suppression!"<sup>222</sup> He cited this as indicative of "...how successful the reinterpretation has been....if you're under a certain age, you only know the positive [Bread & Roses] story."<sup>223</sup> While the positive narrative is rightfully the ascendant interpretation of the event, he argued,

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<sup>220</sup> Strikers' Monument.

<sup>221</sup> Jim Beauchesne. "Re: B&R and God & Country, and Festival history." Email sent to centennial committee members concerning the memorialization of God and Country narrative. May 27th, 2009. Printed in Lawrence History Center, Lawrence, MA.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

purging the story of God and Country presented its own danger, by minimizing “...how our history can be suppressed or manipulated by the powerful for their political purposes, and of how our progressive/radical history has been marginalized.”<sup>224</sup> Jonas Stundza, Co-Chair of the Strikers’ Monument committee, however, urged this minimization of God and Country’s presence in the centennial celebrations, counseling others to “...snip it in the bud before the monster resurfaces.”<sup>225</sup> Fearing the prospect that “history can slide backwards especially amongst the ignorant,” Stundzia did not want the community to be “...condemned to have to repeat this re-education process all over again just because of some naive nostalgia about a 50 year [anniversary] in Lawrence in 1962.”<sup>226</sup>

For all that it resists the God and Country account of the strike, the contemporary narrative of Lawrence 1912, as presented in public history projects, sheds the more radical political elements of the Industrial Workers of the World. With the IWW’s presence as an organizing force having long been quashed, gone are any ambitions for “imminent revolution,” and the formation of “one big union.” The “Bread and Roses” narrative, instead, leans far more heavily into identification with the American nation, echoing Boyer and Morais in their assessment of labor’s history as integral to the overall American story. Of course, public historical monuments are also made more palatable to a general audience through American iconography, the kind of concession not required in artistic commemorations of the event. In Ralph Fasanella’s paintings, for example, American flags held by marching strikers feature as very small among the vast and intricately-detailed canvas; instead the most prominent elements of his *Lawrence, 1912: The Bread and Roses Strike* painting are a golden eagle atop a building

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<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Jonas Stundzia. “God & Country PFE” Email sent to other centennial committee members concerning the memorialization of the God and Country narrative. April 24th, 2009. Printed in Lawrence History Center, Lawrence, MA.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

and a textile worker crucified in threaded wool high above the mills. Similar to works like Pietro di Donato's *Christ in Concrete*, Fasanella's paintings employed these symbols, that have obvious national and religious connotations, respectively, as firmly grounded within the identity of the *worker*, and not in the American or the Christian: "...to the Lawrence workers, the eagle represented...currency or payday. He said he painted the worker on the cross because that is how he sees many workers. 'He's caught on the job, he's caught on the cross.'"<sup>227</sup>

With his colorful and expressly political style, Fasanella was able to imbue a sense of working-class solidarity and identification with the working life, and presented "...images of factory workers, shop owners, union meetings, strikes and street parades, all delivered in a clear, direct, naïve-realistic style that appealed to a broad range of viewers."<sup>228</sup> Fasanella juxtaposed the large scope of his paintings with the intricacies found in each corner, portraying a certain duality in the universality of the working life as contrasted with the individual life of the single worker, showing "... the clockwork machinery of the city and the private, psychological states of its residents."<sup>229</sup> Fasanella's "...artworks pay homage to blue-collar sacrifice while simultaneously implying criticism of the powerful," which ultimately present "...an effective evocation of a grand struggle."<sup>230</sup> Judy Collins' sung version of Oppenheim's "Bread and Roses," which, when released in 1976, served to further bind the "Bread and Roses" name to the strike commemorations,<sup>231</sup> carries a similarly universal tone as Fasanella's artwork. Oppenheim's lyrics do not refer to a specific city, nor to America, and so when Collins sings of

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<sup>227</sup> William Serrin. "Artist's 'Urban Visions' Inspire a Look at Labor" *The New York Times Archives*. 1986. Accessed Online.

<sup>228</sup> Benjamin Genocchio. "Bold, Colorful, and Detailed." *The New York Times*. May 18, 2008. Accessed Online.

<sup>229</sup> Michael O'Sullivan "Art review: 'Ralph Fasanella: Lest We Forget.'" *The Washington Post*. June 5, 2014.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Sider. 67.

“A million darkened kitchens / A thousand mill lofts grey,”<sup>232</sup> the specific group of Lawrence strikers can stand in for any workforce, anywhere.

### III. Can “One Big Union” Win Again?

Ultimately, notions of universal solidarity among a global working population remain largely absent from contemporary accounts of the Great Lawrence Textile Strike of 1912. Revolutionary ambitions of the strike’s original organizers, in the aftermath of one half-century of the event’s repression, have been replaced with a cautious jubilation that the event is even being commemorated. Memorialization efforts in the city of Lawrence, especially the dedication of the Strikers’ Monument, strayed from heavy emphasis on the “God and Country” phenomenon and the threat of historical repression. Instead, the focus has been put on crafting an uplifting narrative of the strikers’ unlikely triumph - and the city’s indomitable character - the very recounting of which represents a victory over the forces of historical repression.

In this contemporary age of rampant government corruption, wealth stratification, greed, and corporate political influence, it is not difficult to see a reflection of the world in 1912. More than a century onward, the corporatist power structures of the United States appear no less entrenched than they were in the time of Rockefeller, Carnegie and William Wood. In fact, American workers have, in some ways, grown more subdued through the beginning of the 21st century, due to what Zieger refers to as a “Southernization” of U.S. politics and labor relations in the wake of Walmart’s “consumer capitalist” approach.<sup>233</sup> Further troubling in this system, in which solidarity amongst working peoples is discarded in favor of middle class identification and reverence for corporate success, is the genesis of “...a right-wing redefinition of the (white)

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<sup>232</sup> Judy Collins. “Bread and Roses.” *Bread and Roses*. Elektra, 1976.

<sup>233</sup> Zieger, Robert H. “Walmart and the Broken Narrative of US Labor History.” *Labor History*, 52.4 (2011): 563–569. Web. 563-564.

working class.”<sup>234</sup> White nationalist renderings of the working class undermine the cause of solidarity by separating and venerating white working men and defining minority American workers as part of a “welfare” class. As toxic tribalism and overt racism once again define mainstream American political rhetoric, a renewed construction of the working class should be imbued with the character of universality that, in the view of the IWW, characterized the Lawrence Strike of 1912.

If the story of "Bread and Roses" demonstrates the prospective power of labor organizing across boundaries of gender, nationality, and religion, it perhaps even more clearly demonstrates the vulnerability of historical memory. Recognizing the legacy of repression endured by principal elements of America's history, particularly movements for progressive or radical change, is an essential step in understanding the nation's cultural construction. History is not solidified and obtained from a past age, but constantly shaped by modern context, and leading authority, into a tool which “helps to justify a preferred course for the present.”<sup>235</sup> In the immediate aftermath of an event, boundless narrative constructions spring up and compete for relevance, and the dominant narrative(s) that result can hold remarkable, myth-like potential. The leading authority of Lawrence a century ago seemed to understand this, or, at the very least, found the story of the strike so steeped in subversive implication as to warrant a sustained campaign towards its erasure.

There is perhaps no better acknowledgment of the strength intrinsic within historical events like Lawrence than the repressive paranoia with which the God and Country advocates responded. Thanks to persistent efforts to conserve and revive the story of the Lawrence Textile

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<sup>234</sup> Lichtenstein, Nelson. “CLASS UNCONSCIOUSNESS: Stop Using ‘Middle Class’ to Depict the Labor Movement.” *New Labor Forum*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2012, pp. 10–13. JSTOR. 12.

<sup>235</sup> Robert J. Norrell, “After Thirty Years of 'New' Labour History, There Is Still No Socialism in Reagan Country.” *The Historical Journal*, vol. 33, no. 1, 1990, pp. 227–238. JSTOR.

Strike, the complete erasure of the event's memory never came to pass, and contemporary organizers and students of history are now free to equip themselves with the strength that comes with memory of this event. They would be wise to do so. As labor continues to recover and rebuild its past, it looks ahead to an uncertain future. The struggle for "bread and roses, too" has persisted into a new century, and onto a new and unprecedentedly global stage.

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