

Keynote speaker:

Ruth Milkman

Ruth Milkman is Distinguished Professor of Sociology at the City University of New York Graduate Center and Research Director at the Joseph S. Murphy Institute for Worker Education and Labor Studies.



Ruth Milkman is one of America's foremost labour historians. She has written extensively on the struggles of workers of the world in the United States.

Her 2006 book, *L.A. Story: Immigrant Workers and the Future of the U.S. Labor Movement*, was a pathbreaking study that documented the role immigrant workers played in transforming the Los Angeles labour movement from a relative backwater into a centre of labour organising.

She has edited two further books looking at immigrant worker organising in Los Angeles: *Organizing Immigrants: The Challenge for Unions in Contemporary California* (2000) and *Working for Justice: The L.A. Model of Organizing and Advocacy* (2010, edited with Joshua Bloom and Victor Narro).

She has also written path-breaking studies of Japanese labour relations in the United States, gender at work, women workers and their struggles, the modern New York labour movement and strategies for rebuilding the labour movement, and done so as a labour movement activist as well as a respected academic.

She helped lead a multi-city team that produced a widely publicized 2009 study documenting the prevalence of wage theft and violations of other workplace laws in Los Angeles, Chicago and New York, and co-authored a study of California's paid family leave program, focusing on its impact on employers and workers.

In 2015, Ruth was elected President of the American Sociological Association.

15th BIENNIAL LABOUR HISTORY CONFERENCE
BRISBANE ■ 23-25 SEPTEMBER 2017

THEME

Workers of the world



Australians are workers of the world.

What has mass immigration meant for the labour movement?

How have our unions and working class parties organised immigrants in the past?

Globalisation

Employers are using it to break down solidarity and intensify exploitation.

How are workers of the world resisting this? What are the lessons from earlier periods of globalisation?

Internationalism

100 years after the Russian revolution: What impact did it have on the Australian labour movement?

These are some of the issues we'll be discussing at the 2017 Labour History conference.

Why get involved with labour history?

The labour movement needs to constantly develop and replenish its intellectual resources.

We need to inspire new activists and organisers with the achievements of the past; and equip them to deal with new challenges.

The Labour History conference is a chance to discuss the history of our movement, and its lessons for today.



Call for papers

The Call for papers outlines the issues we would like speakers to focus on and discuss in their presentations.

A society shaped by immigration

Today, the Australian working class are workers of the world: in the sense that we are a predominantly immigrant working class (or the descendants of relatively recent immigrants); and in the sense that workers from so many nations, languages and cultures have made our homes here.

How did we become workers of the world? How has the labour movement dealt with immigration and the politics around immigration? How has it created a movement of immigrants and locally born? How have immigrants experienced and changed the labour movement? What challenges did we face in the process?

These are compelling questions in the era of Donald Trump and Brexit.

The British colonial conquest of Australia forcibly incorporated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples into a world of commerce, exploitation and racial oppression. Their resistance to this led many to involve themselves in the predominantly white trade unions and political left.

Globalisation

Australians are workers of the world in a second sense, as globalisation and the liberalisation of international trade and commerce has made more of our daily work part of an international division of labour. A large number of Australian citizens now work overseas, some temporarily, some permanently; making us both an immigrant and an emigrant people.

What challenges has globalisation posed for workers and the labour movement? How can our unions and political organisations deal with this challenge? What can we learn from the history of earlier periods, such as the first wave of globalisation in the decades before the First World War?

Internationalism and the Russian revolution

The year 2017 also marks the centenary of the Russian Revolution, and we invite papers that reflect on the massive impact it had on the Australian labour movement.

We would like to invite papers that address the politicised internationalism that the Russian Revolution stimulated in the labour movement, where many now identified as "workers of the world", people whose fate was inextricably linked with others. How did that internationalism shape the Australian labour movement?

Other issues

Others may choose to address controversies over whether we are now, or have long been, part of a global class? Or what is happening in other labour movements? How are workers of the world fighting for their rights? To what extent is our history a transnational history?

We also invite presentations, formal papers and proposals for panels on the traditional concerns of labour history.

Presentations by trade union, labour and social movement activists are particularly invited. Labour History has always benefitted from interaction between the academy and movement.

We also seek the input from scholars in related fields, such as Indigenous history, migration studies, politics, international political economy, sociology, geography, area studies etc.

We also invite people to propose panels to address debates within Labour History or any related field, including the future of Labour History as a coherent field of study.

All inquiries, please email 2017conference@blha.com.au

To get regular news about the conference, please add your details to the [Conference mailing list](#), at our website: www.blha.com.au

The BLHA actively promotes the study of labour history.



We publish the *Queensland Journal of Labour History* twice a year, in April and October.

We run regular seminars, including the annual Alex McDonald lecture. In June 2016, Bob Carnegie (MUA) spoke on *What went wrong? Changing experiences of working class militancy*.

To join the BLHA and support our work, visit our website or write: PO Box 5299, West End, Qld 4101.

www.blha.com.au