

LABOR ARTS

Seventh Annual Clara Lemlich Awards



May 1, 2017 6:30 – 8:30pm
Puffin Gallery for Social Activism
Museum of the City of New York
Fifth Avenue at 103rd Street

Honoring those who, in the words of the poet Marge Piercy,
jump into work head first
without dallying in the shadows...
who do what has to be done, again and again.

“The World Has Need Of You”

by Ellen Bass

*everything here
seems to need us*

—Rainer Maria Rilke

I can hardly imagine it
as I walk to the lighthouse, feeling the ancient
prayer of my arms swinging
in counterpoint to my feet.
Here I am, suspended
between the sidewalk and twilight,
the sky dimming so fast it seems alive.
What if you felt the invisible
tug between you and everything?
A boy on a bicycle rides by,
his white shirt open, flaring
behind him like wings.
It’s a hard time to be human. We know too much
and too little. Does the breeze need us?
The cliffs? The gulls?
If you’ve managed to do one good thing,
the ocean doesn’t care.
But when Newton’s apple fell toward the earth,
the earth, ever so slightly, fell
toward the apple.

“I’ve Got Something to Say” 2017 PROGRAM

Welcome Whitney W. Donhauser, MCNY Director

Welcome Esther Cohen and Rachel Bernstein

Poem Breena Clarke

Song Annie DiRusso

Honoree Aisha al-Adawiya introduced by Sarah Sayeed

Honoree Ingrid Frank introduced by Sasha Matthews

Honoree Lidia Correa introduced by Edgar Romney

Greetings Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President

Honoree Vinie Burrows introduced by Kalie Kamara

Honoree Mary Douglas introduced by Arlene Allende

Honoree Lubow Wolynetz introduced by Amanda Dargan

Puffin Gallery for Social Activism Perry and Gladys Rosenstein

Triangle Fire Rose Imperato

Bread and Roses and Solidarity Forever

New York City Labor Chorus and audience

The Clara Lemlich Awards

The Awards honor women who have been working for the larger good their entire lives, in the tradition of those who sparked so many reforms in the aftermath of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire over one hundred years ago.

“I’VE GOT SOMETHING TO SAY” shouted the 23-year old Clara Lemlich in her native Yiddish during a tense, crowded meeting of garment workers in Cooper Union’s Great Hall in 1909. Rising from the audience, she interrupted Samuel Gompers and the other union leaders on stage. Her speech inspired the crowd, leading to an unexpected vote to strike, and to what would become known as the Uprising of 20,000.

Born to a Jewish family in the Ukraine (then part of the Russian Empire), Lemlich migrated to the U.S. in 1903, found work in the garment industry, and soon became active in the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union. The 1909 strike led to reforms, but the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory was a hold-out, and refused to implement safety improvements.

The fire that took 146 lives on March 25, 1911 was seen across the country as a tragedy that could have been avoided, and it sparked a movement that pushed politicians to accept a new notion about the responsibilities of government. Lemlich continued to be active in the labor movement until she was pushed out for her leftist politics. She continued to work for women’s suffrage, led a boycott of butcher shops to protest meat prices, campaigned for unemployment relief, and fought for tenants’ rights.

One hundred and six years later we are proud to honor her legacy and to honor those who follow proudly in her footsteps.

2016 LEMLICH AWARD HONOREES

Aisha al-Adawiya has been a force in interfaith-based activism in



New York City and the world for nearly four decades. She founded Women In Islam in 1992 as a direct response to atrocities perpetrated against Muslim women in the refugee camps in Bosnia. The educational and

advocacy group focuses on human rights and social justice by strengthening the role and voice of women in Islam. Ms. al-Adawiya organizes and participates in conferences and other forums on Islam, gender equity, conflict resolution, cross-cultural understanding and peace building, and represents Muslim women's non-governmental organizations at United Nations forums. She coordinates Islamic input for the Preservation of the Black Religious Heritage Documentation Project of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, and serves as a consultant to numerous interfaith organizations and documentary projects on the Muslim American experience. Serving on the boards of organizations related to the interests of the global Islamic community, al-Adawiya has also been very active in defending Muslims against Islamophobia and promoting interfaith unity in New York City.

Ingrid Frank



arrived in the United States at age 12, a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany who escaped via the Childrens' Transport program which took her to Holland and then England before arriving in New York City. She wakened quickly to America's racial injustice, which reminded her of Germany's

treatment of Jews. Marching on a "Free the Scottsboro Boys"

picket line at 14 was the start of a lifetime of civil rights activism, of organizing and marching and protesting for fair and integrated housing, for Dr. King’s Poor People’s Campaign, and much more. She met George Richardson, her husband, at a 1963 demonstration to integrate the construction industry – he was the only black member of the New Jersey Legislature. They have worked on human rights struggles and protested together ever since. Her book *Get Up, You’re Not Dead!* is the story of Richardson’s youth in Newark and his struggle against heroin addiction. Their collaborations include a 1968 tribute to comedian Dick Gregory, who was being barred from stages because of his vocal opposition to the Vietnam War, and the first Black Rodeo ever seen in the east (at a time when no one here believed there were black cowboys). Ever timely, in 2003, when President Bush vilified France for refusing to join his war in Iraq, they launched “Vive la Harlem,” to celebrate the long friendship between Harlem and France. In 2007 they spearheaded the “Hip Hop Heals” campaign encouraging rappers to “spit” more positive messages in their music – including support for President Barack Obama.

Lidia Correa



spent much of her life as a sample maker and was very active in the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union. Coming to New York City from Puerto Rico in her teens, she followed her mother into the garment industry. As a young seamstress, Lidia participated in the 1958 Dressmakers strike all

along the east coast, where she learned a lot about the union and worker solidarity. She studied at the Fashion Institute of

Technology, worked in other fields, but soon went back to garment industry, where as a unionized sample maker, she made a good salary. Over the years, Lidia worked as a sample maker for several major design houses including Liz Claiborne, and became very active in the union. She worked as an organizer, in the education department and later with retirees, leading trips and planning political actions, all the while staying involved with community groups in her neighborhood in the Bronx. Now long retired, Lidia continues to show up on picket lines and protests, and currently works helping new retirees navigate applications for pensions and other services from the current garment workers' union, Workers United.

Vinie Burrows



is an actor, author, radio host, teacher and fighter against war, violence and racism. She started her acting career on Broadway as a teenager with Helen Hayes in *The Wisteria Trees*. In rapid succession came six other Broadway plays and more off-Broadway productions, including the original production of Jean Genet's *The Blacks*. Frustrated by the quality and quantity of roles offered the actor of color, Burrows took control, ultimately developing eight original one-woman shows. She has toured four continents and has performed over 6000 times in theatres and college campuses around the world. One recent theatrical accomplishment is a one woman play - *Rose McClendon: Black on the Great White Way*, which she wrote as a tribute to the leading African American actress of the Harlem Renaissance. While the major thrust of her life has been to carry the message of peace, justice and reconciliation through theatre art, Ms. Burrows

expanded her political and social effectiveness, having served as Permanent Representative at the United Nations for the Women's International Democratic Federation, a non-governmental organization with members in 160 countries. Ninety two years young, she is currently appearing in the SohoRep production of Samara at the A.R.T./New York Theatres on West 53rd Street.

Mary Albritton Douglas came to New York City from rural North



Carolina in her teens. She always knew she wanted to teach, but each of her teachers thought she should specialize in their subject; the principal suggested she be an elementary school teacher, in order to teach a bit of everything. After an inspiring career as a

beloved elementary school teacher in the Bronx, she retired. She used her months of deferred leave (she had never taken a day off!) to attend medical aide training. She has been working as a volunteer at St. Barnabas Hospital ever since, for more than thirty years a cherished and dependable presence for patients and staff alike. She has mentored hundreds of volunteers, and never stops learning. In 2011 she commuted to a training course for hospice volunteers in Long Island City, in order to expand on her work at St. Barnabas. She also volunteers at the elementary school where she used to teach, sings in her church choir, and is a Eucharistic minister at St. Anthony of Padua R.C. Church. Elizabeth City State University (where she got her teaching degree) named an auditorium in her honor in 2009, and just last year granted her an honorary doctorate degree of public service.

Lubow Wolynetz



preserves cultural traditions of her native Ukraine at the Ukrainian museum on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, and fosters appreciation of those traditions by teaching embroidery and other arts and crafts to NYC students of all ages and cultures from all over the world. “For Ukrainians,” Lubow

says, folk art “is the creativity of self-taught people who have no professional background. It is important because folk art, traditions, and language are what kept our identity and helped people preserve themselves as a distinct ethnic group.” It was in a displaced persons camp in Germany after World War II that she learned some of these skills, from her mother, and also from a teacher in the camp’s elementary school. “The teacher had a suitcase filled with embroidery samples, and my dream was to have a suitcase like that.” After the war, Lubow and her family came to New York City, where she continued her education, earning a B.A. in Slavic languages and history from Hunter College and an M.S. in library science from Columbia University. After working for nine years as a researcher in the New York Public Library’s Slavic Division, and taking time off to marry and raise two sons, she began working at the Ukrainian Museum when it was founded, where she started educational courses in traditional baking, embroidery, Pysanky (the Ukrainian decorated Easter eggs) and other traditions. Named curator of folk art at the museum in 1989, she continues to curate exhibits and remains the beloved teacher of embroidery and festive Ukrainian baking.

2016 LEMLICH AWARD HONOREES

Teresa Chan *Chinatown community organizer*

Etta Dixon *Brooklyn community organizer, dancer, wellness guru*

Bea Klier *climatologist, science educator, women's leadership*

Naomi Replansky and Eva Kollisch *literary and cultural creators*

2015 LEMLICH AWARD HONOREES

Winifred Armstrong *environmental and economic policy activist*

Julie Azuma *advocate for Japanese Americans and autistic children*

Sylvia Gutierrez Grant *hospital workers 1199 union organizer*

Lillian Lifflander *peace activist*

L. Ann Rocker *environmentalist*

Gloria Sukenick *feminist and tenants' rights organizer*

Mimi Stern-Wolfe *organizing with music*

2014 LEMLICH AWARD HONOREES

Barbara Bailey *NYC Labor Chorus co-founder*

Marilyn Frankenstein *social justice through mathematics*

Jane Kalmus *voter registration*

Judy Lerner *peace and women's rights activist*

Joan Levine and Sarah Martin *environmental community
organizing in West Harlem*

Agnes Wong *garment worker organizer and Chinatown
community activist*

2013 LEMLICH AWARD HONOREES

Molly Klopot *lifelong activist*

Natalie Gordon *social worker, NORC advocate*

Lois Gray *labor scholar, educator and activist*

Glendora Folsom Buell *philosopher, judicial activist*

Julia Rosario Jorge *labor activist*

Marian Thom *labor activist, bilingual paraprofessional*

2012 LEMLICH AWARD HONOREES

Judy West *jazz singer/tenant organizer*
Jackie Steiner *musician/anti-fascist activist*
Betty Reardon *feminist peace educator*
Juanita Nelson* *war tax resistor*
Connie Ling *garment worker organizer*
Connie Hogarth *agitator for civil rights and the environment*

2011 LEMLICH AWARD HONOREES

Kathy Andrade *pioneer immigrant activist*
Virginia Baron *still fighting for peace and for women*
Dorothy Burnham *grass roots civic leader*
Monnie Callan *lifelong union organizer*
Dorothy DeVouse *defender of parents*
Frances Goldin *tireless literary agent*
Kathy Goldman *empowering the poor, feeding the hungry*
Shui Mak Ka *Chinatown garment worker organizer*
Elaine Katz *keeping Yiddishkeit alive*
Lillian Kimura *advocate for WWII internees*
Rebecca Lepkoff* *humanitarian photographer*
Rita Margules *Clara Lemlich's daughter, housing organizer*
Annie B. Martin* *pioneer chemist, unionist, and activist*
Louise Meriwether *dedicated peacenik, powerful writer*
Charlene Mitchell *peace movement agitator*
Shirley Novick * *centenarian troublemaker*
Ethel Paley *created patient advocacy organization*
Lillian Pollak *novelist of radical politics*
Suki Terada Ports *professional AIDS agitator*
Lillie Pope *educator and activist*
Maria Portalatin *educator/activist for Latin American rights*
Wendy Rodriguez *parishioner activist*
Marie Runyon *intrepid tenant leader*

Mary Sansone *lifelong activist and community organizer*

Maddy Simon *music and culture orchestrator*

Jessie Taft Smith* *union campaigner*

Sylvia Thompson* *community rabble rouser*

Eleanor Tilson *feminist healthcare expert*

Ida Torres* *labor stalwart*

Joan Wile *songwriter and granny militant*

* deceased

PRESENTERS

Whitney W. Donhauser joined the Museum of the City of New York as President and Ronay Menschel Director in January 2016 following a 23-year career in museum management at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. At MCNY Donhauser has overseen the final phases of New York at Its Core, a permanent exhibition, that opened in November, on the four-century history of New York City with a Future City Lab that explores the city's ongoing challenges. Historic highs in museum and education program attendance and online followers were recorded in 2016, and the first ever multi-lingual advertising campaign aims to draw even more and more diverse visitors.

Lemlich Family Clara Lemlich's daughter **Rita Margules** received a Lemlich Award in 2011, and she and other family members have enriched the "I've Got Something to Say" ceremony in each year since.

Esther Cohen writes, teaches, raises money, curates, art directs, and works hard to secure roses for every struggle. She is the former executive director of Bread and Roses 1199/SEIU, a co-founder of Labor Arts, and author of five books. She writes a poem a day at esthercohen.com.

Rachel Bernstein, a founder of LaborArts, taught in the graduate program in public history at NYU for decades, and works on public history projects with the Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives at NYU and the Brooklyn College Graduate Center for Worker Education in lower Manhattan. She is author, with the late Debra E. Bernhardt, of *Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives: A Pictorial History of Working People in NYC*.

Breena Clarke is an author and activist whose prize winning fiction and dramas about the experiences of African American women include the novel *River, Cross My Heart*, an Oprah Book Club selection in 1999. She

is an advisor to the board of A Room Of Her Own Foundation, co-organizer of the Hobart Book Village Festival of Women Writers and on the faculty of Stonecoast MFA University of Southern Maine.

Annie DiRusso is a seventeen year old singer songwriter from the Hudson Valley. She has been singing her whole life but she taught herself the guitar at the age of twelve and has been writing songs ever since. She has played shows at The Bitter End, The Towne Crier, The Iguana Club, The Purple Crayon and other venues around the Hudson Valley and Manhattan.

Sarah Sayeed is a Community Affairs Senior Advisor to Mayor de Blasio, working with the Muslim community in New York. She previously fostered interfaith dialogue, and civic engagement with the Interfaith Center of New York, and taught communications and cultural competency in health care at the School of Public Affairs at Baruch College.

Sasha Matthews is a 12-year-old cartoonist who attends 7th grade at a New York City public school. Local bookstores started selling her first self-published comic when she was in 5th grade. After the recent presidential election she launched the “Everyday Superheroes Project” to raise both her spirits and money for the American Civil Liberties Union. The latest superhero: Clara Lemlich.

Edgar Romney is an organizer and activist with a distinguished career in the ILGWU, its successor organizations UNITE and UNITE/HERE and now Workers United/SEIU. He was the longtime manager of Local 23-25, and now serves as the Secretary-Treasurer of Workers United and as a Board member of the Amalgamated Bank.

Gale Brewer is the 27th Borough President of Manhattan, elected in November 2013. She represented the Upper West Side in the NY City council for over a decade, working to pass legislation helping domestic workers, requiring NYC publications to be made available via the Internet, and much more.

Kalie Kamara is a Queens-based rapper, half of the rap duo Exiled Dynamic, who is reading the dictionary to improve his rap. A 2013 graduate of Marlboro College in Vermont, he is featured in the documentary film *In Search of Finah Misa Kule*. Kamara is currently the

director of volunteer services and outreach at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

Arlene Allende (or Arlene Ortiz-Allende) is the Senior Vice President – Community & Government Affairs and Chief Diversity Officer at St. Barnabas Hospital and Health System in the Bronx.

Amanda Dargan education program director at City Lore for 25 years, manages national outreach education programs and New York City arts, science, and history programs, coordinates professional development program for teachers and teaching artists, and co-edits the CARTS magazine. She co-authored the book, *City Play*, and teaches courses in folklore at many universities.

Perry and Gladys Rosenstein are co-founders of the Puffin Foundation, dedicated to “...continuing the dialogue between art and lives of ordinary people.” The Puffin Gallery for Social Activism at MCNY hosts the Lemlich Awards tonight; find out more about their programs at puffinfoundation.org.

Rose Imperato has been a guiding light and driving force with the Triangle Fire Coalition since its founding in anticipation of the 2011 centennial. She currently works as an administrator at CUNY’s Murphy Institute.

The **New York City Labor Chorus**, with 75 members representing over 20 labor unions and District Councils, was founded in 1991. The Chorus promotes union solidarity by expressing through song the history and ongoing struggles of workers for economic and social justice. Its dynamic repertoire combines the power and culture of union music with the great gospel, jazz, classical and folk traditions.



Find out about today’s issues and help build the memorial at rememberthetrianglefire.org

We invite you to visit the Puffin Gallery for Social Activism upstairs in this Museum, and to visit LaborArts.org for video of previous honorees and online exhibits, including *Defending the Social Safety Net* and “*Play it Again, Sam,*” *Songs of the Labor and Progressive Movements of the 1940s.*



May is Labor History Month - celebrate at the Workers Unite! Film Festival

May 5 – 25

WorkersUniteFilmFestival.org

LaborArts needs your support to continue programs like these, and our online exhibits. Please consider donating at LaborArts.org.



The seventh annual Clara Lemlich Awards are generously funded by The Puffin Foundation and The Shelley and Donald Rubin Foundation. They are hosted by LaborArts, the Puffin Gallery for Social Activism at the Museum of the City of New York, and the Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition, and were organized by Rachel Bernstein, Esther Cohen, Evelyn Jones Rich, Sherry Kane, Rose Imperato and May Chen. Many thanks to Neal Rosenstein, Anne Newman Bacal, Kuji Lezama-Banks, Larry Bush, Kathleen Horan, Rachel Horowitz, Deanna Reeves, Terry Schwadron, Ruth Sergel, Laura Tolkow, Rachel Yood, the NY Labor History Association, and *Jewish Currents*. We are grateful for the continued expert support of MCNY staff, particularly Sarah Seidman, Samantha Fleck, Francesca Bertolini and Jacob Tugendrajch.



Prints of Clara Lemlich as an Everyday Superhero – drawn by twelve year old cartoonist Sasha Matthews – will be presented to this year's Lemlich Award honorees.