Ninth Annual

Clara Lemlich Awards

May 6, 2019 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.*
If you are the child of a refugee, you do not sleep easily when they are crossing the sea on small rafts and you know they can’t swim. My father couldn’t swim either. He swam through sorrow, though, and made it to the other side on a ship, pitching his old clothes overboard at landing, then tried to be happy, make a new life. But something inside him was always paddling home, clinging to anything that floated – a story, a food or face. They are the bravest people on earth right now, don’t dare look down on them. Each mind a universe swirling as many details as yours, as much love for a humble place. Now the shirt is torn, the sea too wide for comfort, and nowhere to receive a letter for a very long time.

And if we can reach out a hand, we better.
“I’ve Got Something to Say” 2019 PROGRAM

Songs New York City Labor Chorus

Welcome Whitney Donhauser, Director, MCNY

Welcome Rachel Bernstein and Esther Cohen

Song Aiyana Smash, Dorothy Manor Singers

Honoree Elba Cabrera introduced by Christina Jiminez
Jacqueline Ebanks, Mayor’s Commission on Gender Equity

Honoree Philoine Fried introduced by Joe Doyle

Poem Isaiah Rivera
Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President

Honoree Melissa Freeman introduced by Breena Clarke

Honoree Doris Deither introduced by Katie Goldstein

ILGWU 20th Century Heritage Fund Muzaffar Chishti

Honoree Ronnie Eldridge introduced by Sasha Matthews

Puffin Gallery for Social Activism Perry and Gladys Rosenstein and Neal Rosenstein

Triangle Fire Memorial Rose Imperato

Song Aiyana Smash
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 eight years later we are proud to honor her legacy and to honor those who follow proudly in her footsteps.
Elba Cabrera, legendary supporter of Latino artists, is one of three sisters who changed the cultural landscape of New York, particularly the Bronx, through literature, literacy, the visual and performing arts, and political advocacy. Her personal relationships with artists and musicians and writers helps expand her service to the Association of Hispanic Arts, the Lehman Center for the Performing Arts, the Hostos Center for Arts and Culture and other cultural institutions.

Philoiné Fried is the daughter of two iconic labor leaders, Bessie Abramowitz and Sydney Hillman, and she supported her parents' work in many ways throughout her lifetime. Her efforts have been extremely effective - but almost always behind the scenes. She worked for decades with the Jewish Labor Committee, and is a founding member of the New York Labor History Association, where she served as a superbly effective treasurer until only a couple of years before her 100th birthday.
Dr. Melissa Freeman granddaughter of a slave and graduate of Hunter College, studied medicine at Howard University, and has been practicing medicine since 1961. She was on the front lines of opioid addiction treatment nearly half a century ago, pioneering the use of methadone maintenance programs for women, and continues to this day devoting part of her time to an addiction clinic affiliated with Beth Israel. She opened a private practice in Harlem in 1981, where she continues to see patients.

Doris Deither, Greenwich Village housing activist, is the longest-serving community board member in Manhattan, and has been standing up on behalf of affordable housing since 1960. Her many successes defending her community against developers and politicians haven't all been limited to the village, or to historic buildings; she started her activism with a protest against the powerful Robert Moses over a plan to do away with Shakespeare in the Park.
Ronnie Eldridge is an activist, feminist politician and talk show host. She advocated for women from within as a Special Assistant to New York City's Mayor John Lindsay, and as the only female member of the cabinet of New York Governor Mario Cuomo, heading the Division for Women. After a stint spearheading Special Projects for *Ms. Magazine*, she went on to represent the Upper West Side on New York's City Council from 1989 to 2001. Her weekly television talk show "Eldridge & Co." appears on CUNY TV.

HONOREES FROM PREVIOUS YEARS
We miss these honorees who died since we last gathered.

Lois Spier Gray  *labor scholar, labor educator, labor activist.*
Marie Runyon  *lifetime tenant advocate*
Mary Sansone  *activist and community organizer*
Jackie Steiner  *singer songwriter, organizing with music*
Eleanor Tilson  *labor leader, benefit fund innovator*
Joan Wile  *songwriter and granny militant*
2018 LEMLICH AWARD HONOREES
Anne Cunningham  women’s rights and affordable housing
Mirene Ghossein  Arab-American culture and poetry
Evelyn Jones Rich  educational advocacy and social justice
Alix Kates Shulman  feminism, literature civil rights
Doreen Wohl  fight against hunger

2017 LEMLICH AWARD HONOREES
Aisha al-Adawiya  strengthening the voice of women in Islam
Vinie Burrows  actor working for civil rights and peace
Lidia Correa  community activist and garment union organizer
Mary Douglas  hospital and hospice volunteer
Ingrid Frank  human rights and peace organizer
Lubow Wolynetz  preserving Ukrainian cultural traditions

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 for peace and justice
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 paraaprofessional

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 resister
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
SPEAKERS

**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 every year since.

**The New York City Labor Chorus**, with 75 members representing over 20 labor unions, 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.

**Whitney Donhauser** is President and Ronay Menschel Director of the Museum of the City of New York. She came to MCNY in 2016 from a 23-year career in museum management at the Metropolitan Museum of Art including policy and Masterplan development, capital projects such as the Fifth Avenue Plaza and MET Breuer, and fundraising.

**Esther Cohen**  writes, teaches, raises money, curates, art directs, and works hard to secure roses for every struggle. She directed Bread and Roses 1199/SEIU for decades, is a co-founder of Labor Arts, the author of five books and active in the National Writers Union. She writes a poem a day at esthercohen.com.

**Rachel Bernstein**, a founder of LaborArts, teaches and writes about public history and is author, with the late Debra E. Bernhardt, of *Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives: A Pictorial History of Working People in NYC*.

**Aiyana Smash** is a 19 year-old singer, songwriter and musician from Mount Vernon, NY and an alumni of Harlem School of the Arts. She has performed at venues such as the world famous Apollo Theater, Steinway Hall, the Highline Ballroom and the Plaza Hotel.

**Christina Jimenez**  is a freshman at New York University's Tisch School Of Drama-New Studio On Broadway, and the first prize winner of a Mabel Mercer Foundation American Songbook competition in 2018.
Jacqueline Ebanks is the director of the NYC Commission on Gender Equity, and previously headed the Women’s City Club of New York, a hundred year old nonprofit activist organization.

Joe Doyle teaches history and is the UFT representative at Newtown H.S. in Elmhurst (Queens). He is a long-serving board member of the New York Labor History Association.

Gale Brewer has been Borough President of Manhattan since 2013. Previously she represented the Upper West Side in the NY City Council, working on legislation helping domestic workers, requiring NYC publications to be made available via the Internet, and more.

Breena Clarke is an award winning writer whose latest novel is Angels Make Their Hope Here, and she is co-founder of the Hobart Festival of Women Writers.

Katie Goldstein is a housing justice organizer who has been working for a more just housing system in New York and nationally for over 10 years at Tenants & Neighbors, and now at the Center for Popular Democracy.

Muzzafar Chishti, a lawyer, is Director of the Migration Policy Institute’s office at New York University School of Law, and executive director of the 21st Century ILGWU Heritage Fund.

Sasha Matthews is a cartoonist, activist, and 9th grader. Her Everyday Superheroes fundraiser collected over $11,000 for the ACLU. Her comic about migrant family separation was published by The Nation. For more info, including her conversation with Senator Kamala Harris, see rumblecomics.com - o r - @rumblecomics.

Perry and Gladys Rosenstein are directors 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.

Neal Rosenstein is the Vice President of the Puffin Foundation; find out more about itsr programs at puffinfoundation.org.
Rose Imperato has been a guiding light and driving force with the Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition since its founding in anticipation of the 2011 centennial. She currently works as an administrator at the CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies.

Isaiah Rivera is a Staten Island-based writer, activist, poet, and graduating senior of CUNY/Brooklyn College where he led the school’s Puerto Rican Alliance (est. 1968), dedicated to the advancement, education, and unity of Black and Latinx people across the diaspora; this fall he begins a master’s program at Columbia University.

Prints of Clara Lemlich as an Everyday Superhero – part of ninth grade cartoonist Sasha Matthews’ series – will be presented to this year’s Lemlich Award honorees.
Find out about today’s issues and help build the long-awaited memorial at rememberthetriangelfire.org

We invite you to visit the Puffin Gallery for Social Activism upstairs in this Museum, and to tour the Puffin sponsored exhibit

City of Workers, City of Struggle – How Labor Movements Changed New York

May 1, 2019 – January 5, 2020
May is Labor History Month - celebrate at the
Workers Unite! Film Festival
May 10 – 22
WorkersUniteFilmFestival.org
The ninth annual Clara Lemlich Awards are generously funded by The Puffin Foundation and 21st Century ILGWU Heritage Fund. 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, May Chen, Sherry Kane, and Rose Imperato. Many thanks to Judith Fitzgerald, videographer, Gary Schoichet and Peter Odabashian, photographers, and Anne Newman Bacal, Tanya Beltran, Larry Bush, Shanika Carlies, Charlene Carlies, Anuska Corbin, Alexis Perez, Erika Perez, Terry Schwadron, Ruth Sergel, Laura Tolkow, the NY Labor History Association, and *Jewish Currents*. We are grateful for the continued expert support of MCNY staff, particularly Samantha Fleck, Cherisse Challenger, Sarah Seidman, and Sarah Jackson.