

# LABOR ARTS

## Third Annual Clara Lemlich Awards



April 3, 2013 6 – 8pm

Puffin Gallery for Social Activism  
Museum of the City of New York  
Fifth Avenue at 103<sup>rd</sup> Street

Love the earth  
And the sun and the animals  
    Give alms to everyone  
    That asks  
Stand up  
For the stupid and the crazy  
    Devote your income and labor  
    To others  
Hate tyrants  
    Argue not  
    Concerning God  
Have patience and Indulgence  
Toward the people  
    Take off your hat  
    To nothing  
    Known or unknown  
    Or to any man or number of men  
Go freely  
With powerful uneducated persons  
And with the young and with mothers or families  
    Read these leaves  
    In the open air every season  
    Of every year of your life  
Reexamine all you have been told  
At school or church  
Or in any book  
    Dismiss whatever insults  
    Your own soul  
And your very flesh  
Shall be a great poem

*“I’ve Got Something to Say”*

## **CLARA LEMLICH AWARDS 2013 PROGRAM**

**Welcome** and MC Esther Cohen

**Social Activism Gallery** Perry Rosenstein

**Poem** Chesray Dolpha

### **Presentation of Honorees**

**Molly Klopot** Vinie Burrows

**Natalie Gordon** Rita Margules

**Lois Gray** Evelyn Jones Rich, Donald Rubin

**Glendora Folsom Buell** Victoria Kereszi

**Julia Rosario Jorge** Kathy Andrade

**Marian Thom** May Chen

**Conclusion** Rachel Bernstein

Henry Foner

Joel Sosinsky

**Solidarity Forever** Laine Cooke 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.

We honor -- in the words of the poet Marge Piercy -- people who  
*jump into work head first / without dallying in the shadows....*  
*who do what has to be done, again and again.*

“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, 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 did not 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 two years later we are proud to honor her legacy and to honor those who follow proudly in her footsteps.

## 2013 LEMLICH AWARD HONOREES

### **Molly Klopot**



is literally a lifelong activist. Until three years ago (when she was 90), she was chair of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom’s New York Chapter. She initiated the very active NYC “gaggle” of the Raging Grannies, making national headlines when eighteen of them were arrested supporting the Arizona gaggle’s action asking military recruiters to accept them instead of their kids.

Molly’s immersion in the international Peace movement goes back to the beginning of the Cold War – she served in East Berlin with the Women’s International Democratic Federation, helping develop international meetings on women’s issues.

Before that, as a teen in Detroit during the Depression, she learned from her progressive family that, in unity, there is strength. The UAW sit-down strikes, Unemployed Councils, and mass demonstrations for food and jobs (four of her teen-age friends were murdered in the Ford Hunger March) shaped her life. She first worked in the newly-created Social Security Administration, where she and a friend organized the first State, County and Municipal Workers of America union. When war broke out she took a job as a “Rosie” in an assembly plant, and was elected the first woman to be a union rep. To force Ford to hire black women (who had taken special qualifying courses), Molly organized informational picket lines – and it worked!

At Columbia University’s School of Social Work, she gave classes to union members on family problems, and as a practicing social worker she helped unmarried pregnant teens to gain the right to schooling within the public school system and to obtain City

funding for a community childcare center. Molly's deepest conviction is that being involved with the broader world, including people of all ages and abilities, and working for something bigger than yourself, will keep you forever vibrantly alive.

**Natalie Gordon** Trained as a social worker, Dr. Gordon's activities



focus on the links between older people, housing, long-term care and mental health. She served for many years at the Jewish Home and Hospital directing community programs and social services, and while there she expanded the role of the Nursing Home in delivering health programs to aging seniors – both rehabilitative and long-term

care.

Gordon was part of the team which created the first Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) program at the ILGWU Penn South cooperative in the early 1960s. She pioneered the NORC model that brings together a social worker, the housing management, and resident senior citizens to produce a wide array of programs and support services for those over 60 years old. There are now 34 such NORC programs in New York City.

As the NORC program took off, Natalie trained a cadre of competent, caring social workers who fanned out across the city. As president of B'Nai B'rith Housing in Flushing, Queens she expanded the idea of residential housing that supports seniors' independent lifestyle but provides assistance close at hand.

Gordon served on the national board of AARP and then worked in the international community at the United Nations where she

introduced issues of aging and women to the agenda. She is a Fellow in the Social Work section of the New York Academy of Medicine. She remains an “old lefty,” still savoring her role in the Women’s Strike for Peace and a host of other progressive activities over the years.

**Lois Spier Gray** Labor scholar, labor educator, labor activist – Lois



is a pioneer in many realms. She was one of the first women hired as a field examiner for the National Labor Relations Board under the Wagner Act (1945), director of the first extension office of Cornell's School of Industrial and Labor Relations (in Buffalo in 1947), and then of their New York City office starting in

1956. Her involvement in the March on Washington led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1963), and subsequent Civil Rights actions, her labor activism, and her early involvement in the women’s movement all shape her research and teaching.

Among the innovations introduced under her leadership were "training the trainers" for industry and unions, the Institute for Women and Work, the Latino Leadership Center, international worker exchange, off-campus credit and certificate courses, and Programs for Employment and Workplace Systems.

Gray was appointed by three governors to chair the New York State Apprenticeship and Training Council and served on the New York State Manpower Training Council and Displaced Homemakers Taskforce. Her publications deal with labor market trends, women and minorities, training and adult education, labor management relations, and the governance and administration of labor unions.

## **Glendora Folsom Buell**



Philosopher, judicial activist, vegan, and self-made television personality, she continues to create weekly public access television programs at age 84. With degrees in psychology and English from American International College, and graduate classes in physics from SUNY Buffalo in the 1970s, she is author of the three volume "Physics and Love," and "The Glendora Happy Book".

She worked at NBC in Hollywood in the early 1950s, returning to Massachusetts in 1953 to begin her own television career as a children's show host, first in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, then at WMUR-TV in Manchester NH. Her program, *The SS Glendora*, ran five days a week – she played the captain, children played the sailors. Milton Bradley was interested in sponsoring the SS Glendora, but decided to sponsor Captain Kangaroo instead.

When public access cable entered the television industry in the early 1970s Glendora took to the streets of her community with her Sony Portapack and documented local stories for "A Chat with Glendora". Aired on Valley Cable TV in Bridgeport CT, it focused on ordinary people from the local community who were doing extraordinary things.

In 1993 she documented a personal lawsuit on her TV program, and Cablevision in Long Island cancelled her show. After visiting the library and tirelessly studying the law, Glendora sued Cablevision for their violation of the public access law that states that no cable access station may have editorial control over PEG programs. Glendora took on Cablevision single handedly and won. This case was the beginning of a string of *Pro Se* lawsuits challenging the

violation of freedom of speech in the cable system and later in the court system. Glendora spread her knowledge of the law to her neighbors and led local efforts to teach others in her community to fight for their rights.

Glendora's life work has added to the preservation and the legacy of community television. In her six (going on 7) decade career Glendora has inspired her community of neighbors and viewers to find the power within themselves - whether it is to tell their own story on their own TV programs or fight against an injustice against them.

**Julia Rosario Jorge**



has been a labor activist for nearly half a century. Born in the Bronx to a Dutch West Indies Merchant Seaman father and a Puerto Rican mother, raised in East Harlem, educated at Julia Richmond High School, Bronx Community College, and Cornell Labor College, she earned her BA degree from Empire State Labor College. Married in 1958

to the late Efren E.Jorge, she has two children, seven grandchildren and six great grand-children.

Ms Jorge obtained a certificate in obstetrics from Albert Einstein College of Medicine in 1965 and worked at Lincoln Hospital for three and a half years, belonging to Local SEIU Local 1199. She moved to the NYC Community Development Agency in 1969, and soon became an activist member and then an officer of Social Service Employees Union Local 371, DC 37, AFSCME. Elected Vice President of Local 371 in May 1974, she was consecutively re-elected until February 1989.

Julia Jorge was appointed Commissioner of the New York State Workers Compensation Board by Governor Cuomo and confirmed by the New York State Senate in February 1989 and reconfirmed in July 1994. She is the first (and only, to date) member of Latin descent to serve NYS on the 13 member board. Jorge retired on in 1999.

Active in the DC 37 Retiree Association, Ms Jorge was elected in 2003 and continues to serve as the group's VP for Inter-union Relations; she also co-chairs the Hispanic/Solidarity Committee; and represents the Retiree Association in the New York Central Chapter of Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, the Alliance of Retired Americans, the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, the Council of Municipal Retiree Organizations, the MTA Elderly Advisory Board, the State Wide Institute of Puerto Rican & Hispanic Elderly, and the New York City Chapter of the National Conference of Puerto Rican Women. Ms Jorge is a dedicated active member of Cathedral Baptist Church since 1986.

**Marian Thom** is an early Chinatown union activist, and a bilingual paraprofessional (para) who worked on reading and other programs in NYC public schools in Chinatown for 36 years. She has motivated and defended students and fellow employees alike during a long career devoted to her community. She helped to organize the paras into the United Federation of Teachers, and has been active in the union since 1970.



Her influence in both the schools and in the labor movement is wide ranging: in 1990 she helped to found the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, serving as a national officer and national

board member for some years. She was the NY Chapter President of APALA for years, and was also active in the Coalition of Labor Union Women.

As a school para, she showed those (often rambunctious) middle school kids a lot of "tough love," making sure they did not skip school and behaved properly in class, and worked closely with their families. She served the local Boy Scout/Cub Scout troop for 41 years (starting with her two sons), and was on the Board of Directors of Confucius Plaza housing for 15 years. She continues to chair the UFT's Asian American Heritage Committee, as she has for 24 years.

## **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*  
Sukie 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*

## **PRESENTERS**

**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.

**Perry Rosenstein** is president and co-founder (with his wife Gladys Rosenstein) 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.

**Chesray Dolpha**, from Capetown, South Africa, was the Oprah Winfrey scholar at the Wagner School at NYU. She is a community theater activist, international public policy scholar, and cultural organizer.

**Vinie Burrows** is an actor, writer and producer. Frustrated by the quality and quantity of roles for the actor of color, she has created and produced a repertoire of eight one-woman shows, performed them over six thousand times and gained an international following. Vinie has appeared on *As The World Turns*, *The Today Show*, *Good Morning America*, *CBS Presents*, and *The Hallmark Hall of Fame*. She is an active member of The Dramatists Guild.

**Rita Margules**, daughter of Clara Lemlich, received a Lemlich Award in 2011. She was raised in a labor oriented, socially conscious family – her father was a printer and a member of the Big Six local of the printers union. At the dinner table her parents would tell the children "eat your food – miners' children are starving." She has worked for decades with the housing program for seniors of limited income sponsored by B'nai B'rith and HUD.

**Evelyn Jones Rich**, a former NYC teacher and high school principal, retired as Associate Dean, Division of Programs in Education, Hunter College (CUNY). She is the former executive director of the Shelley and Donald Rubin Foundation. Evie is co-founder and director of LaborArts and a lifelong activist in the on-going struggle for civil rights, quality public schools and healthy aging.

**Donald Rubin** is co-founder of the Rubin Museum of Art and co-chair of the Board of Trustees. Shelley and Donald Rubin started collecting Himalayan art in the early 1970s and amassed a significant collection, a major portion of which was given to the museum to seed its nascent

collection. He was the founder of MultiPlan, Inc., a major general service PPO health provider. He serves on the board of The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation and is a member of the Global Philanthropists Circle.

**Victoria Kereszi** is a filmmaker, community television activist, and cultural coordinator for the Workforce Development Institute. She's a graduate of the Gallatin School at New York University.

**Kathy Andrade** received a Lemlich Award in 2011. She worked as a garment worker and organizer in Miami and New York after arriving from El Salvador in the 1950s, and later for Local 23-25 (ILGWU), developing educational and cultural programs in many languages for the mostly immigrant membership. Throughout she has been an active participant and officer in the Hispanic Labor Committee and the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement.

**May Y. Chen** has been a lifelong advocate for workers, immigrants and women. She has been teaching part-time at CUNY's Murphy Institute for Worker Education since 2009; before that she served as the International Union Vice President of UNITE HERE (1999 to 2009), having joined the union's staff in 1984 (ILGWU). She is a Founding Member of the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance and continues to serve on its New York Chapter Board. She currently serves as Board President of the New York State Immigrant Action Fund.

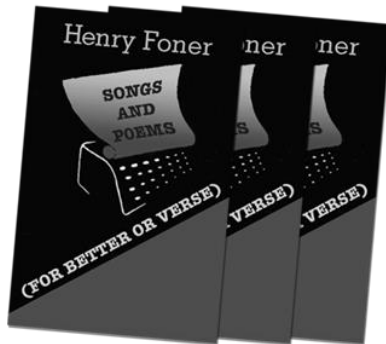
**Rachel Bernstein** is a public historian, co-founder and co-director of LaborArts, taught in the graduate program in public history at NYU for decades, and works on public history projects with the Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives at NYU and elsewhere. She is author, with the late Debra E. Bernhardt, of *Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives: A Pictorial History of Working People in New York City* (2000).

**Henry Foner** is a retired labor leader, historian, songwriter and activist. He retired as president of the Fur, Leather and Machine Workers Union in 1988 after 27 years in that position. He has worked as co-founder and co-historian of the website "Labor Arts" since its founding in 2000. Past president of the Paul Robeson Foundation, he also serves on the editorial board of Jewish Currents magazine and the board of the New York Labor History Association. Foner is an accomplished songwriter, and continues to write and perform songs. LaborArts just published *For Better or Verse*, covering 75 years of Henry's songs and poems.

**Joel Sosinsky** is a founding board member and currently Secretary of the Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition. He is an attorney, retired from the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development, and from the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, where he was Counsel to the President of New York City's Local 237, and led the Teamster's Public Services Division in Washington DC.

**Laine Cooke** is a jazz singer and recording artist on Harlemwood Records. She is a SAG-AFTRA National Board member.

Find out how to purchase copies of LaborArts' new publication – seventy five years of irreverent, unexpected songs and poems – of fighting the status quo – from our own Henry Foner.  
See [www.LaborArts.org/fonerbook](http://www.LaborArts.org/fonerbook).





The third annual Clara Lemlich Awards are generously funded by The Puffin Foundation. They are hosted by LaborArts, the Puffin Foundation Gallery for Social Activism at the Museum of the City of New York, The Shelley and Donald Rubin Foundation, and the Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition, and were organized by Evelyn Jones Rich, Sherry Kane, Rose Imperato, Henry Foner, Esther Cohen and Rachel Bernstein.

Many thanks to all who helped, including Anne Newman Bacal, Patch Schwadron, Anna Shelkin, Inga Moren, Gena D'Ambrosio; the New York Labor History Association, and *Jewish Currents*.

We invite you to visit the Puffin Gallery for Social Activism at this museum, and to visit online exhibits from LaborArts, including

*Women Firefighters in the FDNY*

