

# LABOR ARTS

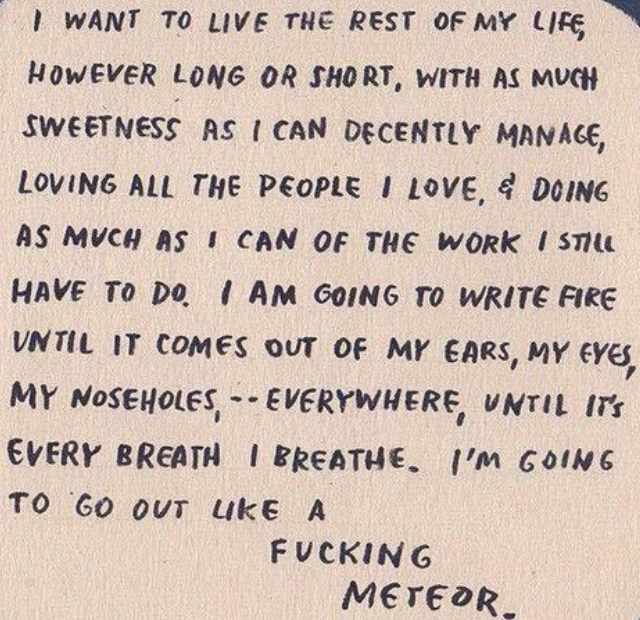
## Thirteenth Annual Clara Lemlich Awards



May 19, 2023 4:00 – 5:30pm  
Puffin Gallery for Social Activism  
Museum of the City of New York  
Fifth Avenue at 103<sup>rd</sup> Street

Honoring those who  
*jump into work head first*  
*without dallying in the shadows...*  
*who do what has to be done, again and again.*

-- Marge Piercy



I WANT TO LIVE THE REST OF MY LIFE,  
HOWEVER LONG OR SHORT, WITH AS MUCH  
SWEETNESS AS I CAN DECENTLY MANAGE,  
LOVING ALL THE PEOPLE I LOVE, & DOING  
AS MUCH AS I CAN OF THE WORK I STILL  
HAVE TO DO. I AM GOING TO WRITE FIRE  
UNTIL IT COMES OUT OF MY EARS, MY EYES,  
MY NOSEHOLES, -- EVERYWHERE, UNTIL IT'S  
EVERY BREATH I BREATHE. I'M GOING  
TO GO OUT LIKE A  
FUCKING  
METEOR.

- Audre Lorde

Audre Lorde, *A Burst of Light* (1988)

## 2023 PROGRAM

*Rockin' Solidarity, Bread and Roses, Ode To Workers (Ode To Joy revisited)* New York City Labor Chorus

Welcome Sarah Henry, Director, MCNY

Welcome Rachel Bernstein and Esther Cohen

Poem Audre Lorde, read by Breena Clarke

***In memorium: Honoree Anita Weisbord and Rita Margules***  
(Adam Schaffer, Clara Lemlich's great grandson)

**Honoree Barbara Martinsons** (Cheryl Wilkins)

**Honoree Velma Hill** (Janella Hinds)

Puffin Social Activism Gallery Gladys Rosenstein

*Make them Hear You* (from Ragtime) Jameel McKanstry

**Honoree Alice Ip** (Joy Mao)

**Honoree Angela Fontanez** (Marta Moreno Vega)

Report from the HarperCollins strike Rachel Kambury

**Honoree Olive Freud** (Gale Brewer)

Triangle Fire Memorial Edgar Romney

LaborArts Rose Imperato

*Rise Up* (Andra Day) Jameel McKanstry

## The Clara Lemlich Awards

The Clara Lemlich 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 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 twelve years later we are proud to celebrate her legacy and honor those who follow proudly in her footsteps.

## 2023 LEMLICH AWARD HONOREES



**Barbara Martinsons** *prison reform organizer* - Barbara was studying sociology in a graduate program when she was asked to teach the subject in a new college program at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility in upstate New York, through Marymount Manhattan College.

She learned a great deal from the students as she helped them navigate the challenges of life after prison, and particularly of getting a college education. These experiences led her to found the College & Community Fellowship. Having grown up believing that the court system was an avenue to justice, when she was a witness to mass incarceration, she realized this wasn't always true and wanted her students to be able to have their stories and voices heard.



**Velma Hill** *civil rights and union activist* - Former vice president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), Velma is also the former civil and human rights director for the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). With husband Norman Hill, she was a youth leader of the

NAACP chapter in Chicago, and in 1960, the Hills led a "wade-in" protest at a segregated White-only beach. Velma was badly injured by a group of beach-goers who hurled rocks and bricks at the Hills and the other Black people who had peacefully gathered

to enjoy the beach. The Hills went on to become active leaders of the labor movement. In 1969, Velma Hill founded the New York City school district paraprofessionals' chapter of United Federation Teachers/AFT Local 2, facing down racism and anti-union bigotry in the process. Her advocacy continues to this day. *Climbing the Rough Side of the Mountain*, a memoir by Velma and her husband Norman Hill, will be published by Regalo Press in October 2023.



**Alice Ip** *Chinatown union leader* - Born and raised in Hong Kong, Alice married very young, followed her husband to Holland in 1970 and then immigrated to New York City in 1976. She immediately got work in garment factories in Manhattan's Chinatown and became an active union member with Local 23-25 of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (today's Workers United). In 1982 during tough contract negotiations, the union hired Alice to mobilize and organize the workers. Known in the community as "Sister Ho" (好姐), Alice was a leader and rally speaker in Columbus Park during the 1982 Chinatown strike. She went on to become a Union Business Agent, handling more than 70 shops, and Local 23-25's Community Outreach Director. She was the Founding Chairperson of the Chinese Committee of CLUW (NY Chapter). Retired for more than 20 years, Alice remains active in community issues in Chinatown today with the Better Chinatown Society, W.O.W. Project, and the union's retirees' group.



**Angela Fontanez** *Black and Latino cultural correspondent* – Angela's thirty-year film and television career brought attention to black and Latino subjects, leaders and organizations. Starting with "Black Journal," a publicly funded series begun as a direct response to the 1967 Kerner Commission finding that there were few people of color in the

broadcasting industry, she went on to work on the multi-ethnic television series "Vegetable Soup." She also worked from early on with the Caribbean Cultural Center, using, exhibitions, conferences, panel discussions, and performances to promote awareness of people of African descent to communities throughout the world. Her children's book for the Center, *Folktales of the Yoruba People*, is used in New York City classrooms. In her early fifties she left the broadcasting industry and became a high school teacher, serving predominantly Latino and African American students in the Bronx. Over a decade later she is still in touch with many former students who are now teachers, professionals in the medical field, productive members of their community, and sending their own children to college.



**Olive Freud** *urban environmentalist* - With a career as a math teacher under her belt, Olive began a second career fighting for an improved quality of life in her community, taking on corporations and government entities by organizing the Committee for Environmentally Sound Development,

a nonprofit group fighting for quality of life issues on Manhattan's Upper West Side. Organizing rallies, lobbying politicians and raising funds for lawyers and experts are only some of the strategies she still uses working with this group that she helped found more than three decades ago.



*In memorium*

**Anita Weisbord**  
*Holocaust educator*  
and **Rita Margules**  
*Clara Lemlich's*  
*daughter*



In November 2022  
Rita called to say

she had a lifelong friend who deserved a Lemlich Award – but she didn't realize it until attending her memorial service. She asked if we could make an exception and grant an award posthumously? Anita grew up in a Jewish family in pre-war Austria, and her recollection of Adolf Hitler's rise to power, her experience being deported to England during the Kindertransport, and her immigration to America are experiences she tirelessly shared with students of all ages throughout the tri-state area as part of education about the Holocaust. Her friend Rita Margules died in March of this year. A Lemlich honoree in the inaugural year of 2011, Rita had been an enthusiastic participant ever since. As a child, she recalled her parents saying "eat your food – miners' children are starving". She kept that sense of responsibility for the greater good throughout her 98 years, including her decades working with a housing program for seniors of limited income sponsored by B'nai B'rith and HUD.

## **2022 LEMLICH AWARD HONOREES**

Dorothy Burnham *107 year old civil rights activist and educator*

Maria Mazziotto Gillan *people's poet*

Dolores Huerta *labor pioneer*

Jeannette Phillips *community health leader*

Kathie Sarachild *feminist and abortion rights advocate*

## **2021 LEMLICH AWARD HONOREES**

Barbara Dane *activist singer*

Suleika Cabrera Drinane *advocate for the elderly*

Debby King *union fighter*

Wilhelmina Perry *LGBT convener*

Muriel Tillinghast *movement organizer*

## **2020 LEMLICH AWARD HONOREES**

Madeline Anderson *pioneering filmmaker*

Arlene Goldsmith *social worker to the neediest*

Kitty Weiss Krupat *defender of immigrants*

Sister Mary Lanning\* *supporter of community members in need*

Gloria Miguel *Spiderwoman theater founder*

## **2019 LEMLICH AWARD HONOREES**

Elba Cabrera *legendary supporter of Latino artists*

Philoine Fried\* *behind the scenes activist*

Doris Diether\* *Greenwich Village housing activist*

Ronnie Eldridge *activist and feminist politician*

Melissa Freeman *Harlem physician, addiction treatment pioneer*

## **2018 LEMLICH AWARD HONOREES**

Anne Cunningham *women's rights and affordable housing*

Mirene Ghossein *advocate for Arab-American culture and poetry*

Evelyn Jones Rich *educational and social justice advocate*

Alix Kates Shulman *feminism, literature civil rights*

Doreen Wohl *fighter 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 *Chinatown community and labor 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 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 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**

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.

**Sarah Henry** is the Robert A. and Elizabeth Rohn Jeffe Chief Curator and Interim Director at the Museum of the City of New York, where she has served since 2001. Dr. Henry oversees all Museum exhibitions (over 200 to date), including the award-winning exhibition *New York at Its Core*.

**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](http://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.*

**Breana 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.

**Adam Schafer** is Clara Lemlich's great grandson and the grandson of Rita's sister, Martha. He works on homelessness and eviction prevention for the Massachusetts state government.

**Cheryl Wilkins** is co-founder and co-director of Columbia University's Center for Justice, where her work is committed to ending the nation's reliance on incarceration and developing new approaches to safety and justice.

**Janella Hinds** serves as vice president for academic high schools at the United Federation of Teachers and as secretary-treasurer of the New York City Central Labor Council, and is an activist in several social justice organizations.

**Gladys Rosenstein** is executive director of the Puffin Foundation, providing grants to artists and art organizations who are often excluded from mainstream opportunities due to their race, gender, or social philosophy.

**Jameel McKanstry** is a singer/songwriter and author, he teaches in the New York City public school system and is the songwriting lead for the music publishing company Music Unlimited Entertainment.

**Joy Mao** is a Chinese American artist and fashion designer based in Brooklyn, using clothing as a medium for illuminating the bonds between self and society. She asks "how can clothing support and sustain life, rather than exploit it?"

**Marta Moreno Vega** is a cultural worker, founder of the Creative Justice Initiative and founder and former director of the Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute. She was the second director of New York's El Museo del Barrio, and founded the Network of Centers of Color and the Roundtable of Institutions of Colors.

**Rachel Kambury** is an editor of non-fiction with HarperCollins and a leader in the HarperCollins union. She started her publishing career at Twelve Books in 2016.

**Gale Brewer** represents NYC's 6th Council District, encompassing most of the Upper West Side. As Manhattan Borough President from 2014 to 2021, she helped pass legislation to reform the deed restriction process, add "caregivers" to the City's anti-discrimination law, and remove criminal history questions from initial employment applications (the "Fair Chance Act").

**Edgar Romney** is secretary-treasurer of Workers United, and is on the board of directors at Amalgamated Bank and the Consortium for Worker Education. He has spent his career fighting for workers rights in the labor movement. After joining the former International Ladies Garment Workers Union in 1962, he quickly became an organizer and a union leader and social justice activist.

**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 academic scholarship and awards coordinator at the CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies.

Posters about the honorees are by students from **The Imagine Society**, where young leaders work with adult mentors to help make the world a better place.

**Angela Fontanez** Ella, Hensley, Elisa Nelson

**Olive Freud** Sofia Corsico-Sanchez

**Velma Hill** Shelby & Hannah Fenton

**Alice Ip** Olympia & Zuzu Hall

**Barbara Martinsons** Students at Green Hill Max Security Juvenile  
Detention Center

**Anita Weisbord** Michael & Patrick Gaffigan

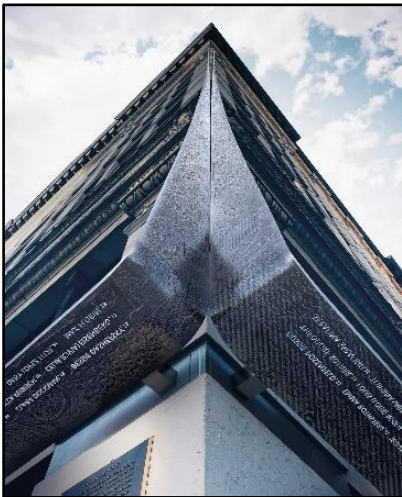


Clara Lemlich as an Everyday Superhero – part of a series created by Sasha Mathews when she was in ninth grade.

We invite you to visit the Puffin Gallery for Social Activism upstairs in this museum



The Puffin Foundation, Ltd.



**SAVE THE DATE**

Wednesday October 11, 2023  
11:30am

The Dedication of the Triangle Fire  
Memorial

Washington Place & Greene Street



The thirteenth annual Clara Lemlich Awards are generously funded by the 21<sup>st</sup> Century ILGWU Heritage Fund and the Puffin Foundation, with contributions from NYU's Tamiment Library and numerous individuals. 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. We are thrilled to be partnering with the Imagine Society youth leaders, and thank Danielle Blumstein for her terrific coordination. Many thanks to Ruth Sergel, filmmaker extraordinaire; Gary Schoichet, Khanyi Ndaba and Peter Odabashian, photographers; Anthony Wong, videographer; Drew Durniak, LaborArts webmaster; Leah Marks, LaborArts intern; and the New York Labor History Association. We are grateful for the continued expert support of MCNY and its skilled staff, particularly Cherisse Challenger.

Remember the  
Triangle Fire  
Coalition

