



UALE LIFETIME ACHEIVEMENT AWARD

LOIS S. GRAY

Introduction by Paul F. Clark

It is my distinct honor to present this year's United Association for Labor Education (UALE) Lifetime Achievement Award to Lois S. Gray. Lois is the Jean McKelvey-Alice Grant Professor Emerita of Labor-Management Relations at Cornell's School of Industrial and Labor Relations. She is one of the founders of the field of labor education and she has been a leader in, and contributor to, the field for 68 years. A 68 year career. Stop and think about that for a minute! And she continues to be active as a labor educator and scholar today.

Lois began her career working for the National Labor Relations Board in Buffalo in the 1940s. She got her start in labor education in 1947 as the first Director of the Buffalo Office of Cornell's new School of Industrial and Labor Relations. She was one of the first faculty members hired by the School and she remains today its longest serving faculty member.

Lois rose through the ranks at Cornell to become the Director of the ILR School's New York City Office in 1956 and in 1976 Associate Dean for Extension. And she was one of the first faculty members to hold simultaneous membership in both the extension and resident faculty at Cornell.

Lois also had an impact through her service to state government. She was appointed by three different governors to chair the NY State Apprenticeship and

Training Council and served on the NY State Manpower Training Council for many years.

But we honor Lois today for her contributions to the field of labor education. Whether we work for a university or a union we are all labor educators. And anyone who does labor education today owes a debt to the pioneers who established the modern field of labor education. In the late 1950s, at a time when only a small number of university labor education programs had been established around the country, a handful of visionaries came together to organize the University and College Labor Education Association (UCLEA), the organization that preceded UALE. At this initial meeting were several men, including Fred Hoehler from Michigan State, Harvey Friedman from the University of Massachusetts, and Herb Levine from Rutgers, and one woman—Lois Gray. The founding of a formal organization had much to do with labor education being recognized as a legitimate field. In 1965, Lois became the first woman to serve as UCLEA president.

Lois was not only a founder of our field, she was also an innovator. She played a very significant role in developing the “train the trainer” approach to labor education. She also was instrumental in establishing labor studies as an academic field with degree programs. And she helped to start the UALE Women’s Summer Schools that have touched so many lives over the years. Lois’ leadership was also critical in the founding of Cornell’s Institute for Women and Work and the Latino Leadership Center and in the initiation of international workers exchanges and off campus credit and certificate courses at the ILR School.

Somehow, in the midst of all of this, Lois found time to earn a Ph.D. in economics from Columbia. Since top economics programs were almost exclusively male at the time this itself was an extraordinary accomplishment.

Throughout her career Lois has also been a scholar. And she continues to have an active program of research. Early on Lois published numerous articles on the emerging fields of labor education and labor studies. She has also regularly published research on union structure, government, and administration; women in union leadership; and labor relations in the entertainment industry.

I have been privileged to work with Lois on a number of research projects over the last 20 years. We actually have a couple articles in the writing stage right now. I have been a little slow in doing my part and I fully expect to get a phone call on Monday prompting me to get moving (Lois, of course will do this with grace). Those of us who are fortunate to work with her always know who the smartest, most insightful person in the room is when we get together with her. And it's not us!

I mentioned earlier that this morning Lois made a presentation on her most recent study, a report on Women's Committees in Worker Organizations. I attended that session and, despite a cold, she did a masterful job.

I should note here that Lois isn't just known to the labor and labor education communities in the United States. She is known around the world. In the course of her career Lois has helped numerous countries start their own labor education programs. Among them are Chile, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, and Barbados.

Lois has also been the recipient of many honors and awards from academic and civic organizations over the years, including the New York Hispanic Labor Committee, the New York State Labor History Association, the New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health, and the New York State AFL-CIO. She also received the Alice H. Cook and Constance F. Cook Award for efforts on behalf of women at Cornell. And fourteen years ago, our brothers and sisters at the Labor and Employment Relations Association awarded Lois their Lifetime Achievement Award. We have made Lois work an extra 14 years to receive our lifetime award. I guess LERA only requires a person to contribute for a little over 50 years; at UALE we require close to seventy years before we honor you!

Throughout her career Lois has been a confidant and advisor to city, state, and national union leaders. At one time Lois was on a first name basis with such historic figures as Walter Reuther, Al Shankar, George Meany, and Francis Perkins.

One of the most important roles she has played over the years is the role of mentor. Lois has been a mentor for several generations of labor educators, labor researchers, and labor practitioners. And her influence in this regard has grown

geometrically over the years as her mentees have become mentors, and THEIR mentees have become mentors.

Lois' commitment to the labor movement is so deep that she even married union. Many of you will remember her longtime husband Ed Gray who was a UAW regional director and member of the International Executive Board. I am not sure the New York State labor movement will ever see a more dynamic and committed couple than Lois and Ed Gray.

Throughout her long career Lois has worked to improve the lives of union members and their families in a myriad of ways. She has done everything I have noted here and much, much more. And, perhaps most remarkably, she has done all of this with unmatched grace, humor, and humility.

The bottom line is that Lois Gray's influence is everywhere in our field. She is an educator, a scholar, a pioneer, a force of nature. She is eminently deserving of UALE's Lifetime Achievement Award.