WorkingUSA
The Journal of Labor and Society

OUT FRONT AND STRONG: LOCAL WOMEN OF THE TENNESSEE COMMITTEE ON OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

Jessica Wilkerson

This article explores the history of the Tennessee Committee on Occupational Safety and Health (TNCOSH) as it formed in East Tennessee in 1979, specifically addressing how local women contributed to the organization at the grassroots. Based largely on oral history research, the article lays out the early goals of TNCOSH as a democratic, alternative labor organization and addresses how the organization's structure affected the roles of rank-and-file women who participated in it. Ultimately, the bottom-up structure of TNCOSH made it possible for women to participate in various roles, including leadership positions that have often been closed to women in traditional trade unions.

On the evening of November 15, 1984, workers and other residents of East Tennessee gathered in front of the Tennessee Legislature's Right-to-Know Study Committee to publicly demand their right to a safer workplace and environment. Speakers, many of whom worked in textile, coal, nuclear, steel, and rubber industries, hoped to convince their lawmakers that a community's right to health should precede a company's right to profit. Their testimonies poignantly brought forth the plight of workers and communities exposed to and permanently injured by hazardous chemicals.

Luvernal Clark, a lifelong resident of Knoxville, Tennessee, testified about her experiences in the seatbelt factory where she worked. She told of a woman who died of liver cancer after being exposed to a chemical in the plant. She declared that along with herself, workers in her factory developed emphysema while the company continued its unsafe production. Then Clark closed her statements:

> We see very little interest in protecting the common people from the onslaught of chemical poisoning. Nowhere is it more plain than the fact that we don't even have the right to know what kind of chemicals we work in, let alone what they can do to you. People are suffering irreparable harm and even dying because of government inaction. . . . Let's start thinking about the health of the new generation out there, and let's start right now by getting a strong Right to Know law passed for the people of Tennessee.[1]

WorkingUSA: The Journal of Labor and Society · 1089-7011 · Volume 11 · December 2008 · pp. 477–498

Clark would turn out to be one of a number of local women who joined the Tennessee Committee on Occupational Safety and Health (TNCOSH), the organization that fought for and eventually won the "Chemical Hazard Right-to-Know Law" in Tennessee. The law stated that companies dealing with hazardous chemicals have a legal responsibility to tell workers and community members what chemicals the companies use and how these chemicals affect exposed people. The passing of the law, known to activists as the "right-to-know" or RTK law, was a particular success because Tennessee was the first southern state to pass the legislation. And it did so with a cadre of local activist networks, many of which found their lifeblood in the leadership of rank-and-file women.

This article examines ways that local working women shaped the campaign at the grassroots, and in turn, what lessons they took with them. In *Crazy for Democracy: Women in Grassroots Movements*, Temma Kaplan examines how women often become the motors of grassroots campaigns—organizing, planning, and largely keeping organizations afloat—without much fanfare or visibility to the public's eye. Kaplan states, "What's more, the participants in grassroots movements are ordinary women attempting to accomplish necessary tasks, to provide services rather than to build power bases. Therefore, the work they do and gains they make hardly seem politically significant."[2] Kaplan shows that the aims and accomplishments of grassroots women are the driving forces in social improvement and the pursuit of democracy. Without women's commitment to local issues, larger social and political goals would rarely be realized. Their "invisible" work sets in motion broader, heavily funded, public campaigns.

While the women discussed here contributed largely to the "invisible" work of the labor movement, they also stretched boundaries and pushed their way into positions out front. They proved that, when they had support, they could add their own expertise to the labor movement, making it stronger along the way. The stories of TNCOSH women parallel the stories of other activist women in immigrant, poor, and ethnic communities who have successfully organized on the margins of the labor movement.[3] This article adds to those histories by examining how women negotiate roles in the labor movement, and how an organization on the margins of the labor movement can give women more flexibility in their roles.

Specifically, by illuminating the roles of women in TNCOSH, we can continue a discussion about how women and other marginalized groups participate in the labor movement, how their roles have been defined, and how we may begin to revise those definitions for a more complex understanding of who "runs" social movements. This article builds on Karen Brodkin's account of women's roles in an organizing drive at Duke Medical Center in the 1970s.[4] In that study, Brodkin identifies women as "centerwomen," or the people who work behind the scenes and organize within their workplace networks. "Centerwomen" contrast the more prominent and public "spokesmen" roles that are held traditionally by men. Ultimately, Brodkin describes a framework that accounts for a broader range of leadership positions in organizing work and that more fully captures the participation of women.

While women in TNCOSH often performed the centerperson roles described by Brodkin, their stories also reveal how women's positions can be flexible within a democratic and worker-centered organization. Furthermore, their flexibility enhanced their effectiveness as local labor leaders. The network of women in TNCOSH believed that, to create change, you must first imagine it.[5] And, while the first step was imagining improvements in worker and community safety and health, these women had the drive and support to build a movement that centered on social justice and worker empowerment. At the grassroots level women both laid the foundations for a successful organization and contributed significantly to winning the RTK campaign, learning invaluable skills along the way. The outcome of TNCOSH's most notable campaign is certainly worthy of attention, but beyond a legislative victory, the skill and knowledge that local women contributed and gained is the long-lasting legacy.

Methodology

I achieved the bulk of my research through oral history. While I also used papers from the TNCOSH collection at the Archives of Appalachia to fill in gaps, oral history provided my best chance to understand both people's roles in the organization and how they perceived the campaign. I spoke with former TNCOSH participants from all levels of the campaign: members of supporting union locals, regional labor leaders, and people formerly affiliated with TNCOSH as directors, organizers, and board members. The participants' various perspectives and how they express them bring forth the multiple layers of TNCOSH.[6]

Five women emerged as key players in TNCOSH: Jamie Cohen, June Rostan, Luvernal Clark, Marian Groover, and Norma Jennings.[7] Jamie Cohen helped start TNCOSH and was its first director. June Rostan met Jamie Cohen at the Highlander Research and Education Center, where they worked together to plan and carry out the first training workshops for TNCOSH. Their stories shed light on TNCOSH's formation and its early goals. Luvernal Clark, Marian Groover, and Norma Jennings became involved with TNCOSH as rank-and-file activists. Specifically, their stories show how TNCOSH unfolded at the local level. Clark, Groover, and Jennings all worked in local factories and got involved in the organization to learn how to fight hazards in their own workplaces. Eventually, each of the women became an influential member and leader in the organization.

Worker Empowerment

The COSH groups had at their center a philosophy similar to that of the historic Highlander Center: a principle of community empowerment.[8] Highlander was the site where local workers and union representatives came together and discussed the need for an occupational safety and health organization in Tennessee. Highlander staff people helped organize the early TNCOSH

meetings and training programs, laying the groundwork for a worker-led health and safety movement. Influenced by Highlander's emphasis on training and education, TNCOSH's goals centered on the notion that when workers are empowered by knowledge, they can effect change in their workplaces and communities and help guarantee their right to a safe and healthy environment.

Jamie Cohen, the first director of TNCOSH, took the initiative to organize the earliest TNCOSH meetings at Highlander. She found support in June Rostan, former Highlander staff person and long-time labor and community activist. Their early organizing techniques helped shape TNCOSH into an organization that stressed workers' right to knowledge.

Cohen and Rostan used an occupational health and safety training manual designed specifically with Highlander's philosophy in mind. The trainings this manual outlined were based on a participatory style of learning built on the belief that workers have the most expertise about the problems that they face. Cohen recalled:

> I learned that workers are the best experts about their workplace, and that has held true for *everything* I've done since then. . . . They're absolutely the best experts because they're working whatever shift—eight hour, ten hour, twelve hour—and know more about [workplace problems] than anybody else and are the best people to figure out what the solutions are going to be.[9]

The workshops also provided a safe place for workers to gather and talk about their concerns without feeling monitored or threatened.

TNCOSH workshops were an opportunity for workers to learn what steps to take to successfully address problems in their unions and factories. After participating in trainings, workers often became leaders of subsequent training meetings in their own workplaces, unions, and communities. As Rostan recounted:

> [The workshops were] designed for people to develop their own leadership skills as a part of the process with the idea that you don't lecture people, but you have discussions. And you structure things in a way that people bring their own experiences to the workplace, and you help them dig deeper and analyze what's going on and what they can do about it. . . .[10]

By implementing education and leadership training, the workshops addressed workers' issues as well as giving workers the opportunity to participate actively in problem solving. Workers left the sessions equipped with knowledge about their rights to chemical data sheets, how to attain information on chemicals and other hazards, and how to make companies address health and safety issues.

Once workers attended a TNCOSH training session, they had the knowledge, skills, and confidence to collectively confront industry and government. They had the foundation from which to demand their right to a safe and healthy workplace. With the help of teachers and organizers like Jamie Cohen and June

Rostan, TNCOSH became a place where workers had the most powerful voices to address the issues that they faced on their jobs.

When discussing the work of TNCOSH, Rostan pointed out that learning to confront and organize around issues is the most important skill that workers took away from the meetings. Rostan confided that when she sees that an organization is not going to last, she keeps in her "heart and mind" that the people working in and with the organization have gained invaluable skills:

> Once people learn [to organize] and have that experience you can't take it away from them. They'll circle back to it. They'll circle back to it sometime, and then it's something that they can build on. I think that's what much of the work of TNCOSH or any other organizing, labor organizing, community organizing is. It's helping people realize that they have the wherewithal—the guts, the intelligence, the ability—to change things in their community. And as a part of that, change the balance of power and to do it themselves and to be in control of their organizations. And I think in many respects TNCOSH was a good example of that.[11]

Even if government authorities continued to ignore workers' issues, if industries denied workers' right to health, or if companies shut down and moved when forced to recognize their rights, workers had developed permanent skills.

Women at the Grassroots

Under the democratic structure of TNCOSH, local women strengthened the leadership skills that they had managed to build on their own. It became one of the few spaces where rank-and-file women learned to organize, gained organizational backing for their protests and concerns, and created alliances with other men and women dealing with similar issues. As Jamie Cohen described it: "I think TNCOSH was a place where it felt like everybody came to the table kind of equally around bringing their expertise about health and safety problems. So it wasn't like, you know, [about] men dominating it, but I think everybody had a voice at the table."[12]

Luvernal Clark, Norma Jennings, and Marian Groover are three women who contributed deeply to TNCOSH. Each of these women became a leader in her community and workplace, and each brought her expert voice to TNCOSH. Without these three, the organization would have undoubtedly taken a different shape. And without TNCOSH, the three women may not have found the organizational structure that they needed. As Jamie Cohen noted:

> [Many women] had been involved on some of these [health and safety] issues. So I think in some cases they had been kind of setting up their own ways of assessing [and] monitoring problems. . . . They had a very deep sense of what was going on that could be extremely dangerous. And now here was a venue where they could take all of that knowledge and try to, you know, back up what they had been seeing everyday with some information that could help them build their case.[13]

Grassroots leaders like Clark, Jennings, and Groover expanded the knowledge and skills that they had developed in their own work experiences and proved that, with support, they had the ability to redefine what it meant to be a worker in East Tennessee.

Finding a Place to Speak: Luvernal Clark's Story

Born and raised in Knoxville, Tennessee, Luvernal Clark began working at the age of eighteen at a local seatbelt factory. She remembered her first night on a job, in 1971, when she was working on a machine that looked dangerous: "It had springs on it, and they were popping everywhere." While Clark was working on the machine, a woman older than her came up and told her to sign a card. Clark recalled, "I signed it and didn't even have a clue about what I was signing. And the next thing I know, there was the boss that came over and took me off this machine' cause he was afraid that I was going to get hurt."[14] That first interaction—signing a union card when she did not yet know what it was and seeing the protection it afforded her—planted a seed for Clark. Although she did not get involved in union leadership until later, her interest in the role of the union was piqued. She would go on to become the first Black woman president of her local, Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU) 1742.

For Clark, involvement in the union became a necessity. She recognized, as an African-American woman in a factory job, that she was not going to find support easily from the factory or the union. Clark had a watershed moment when she realized that being active in labor organizing was a way for her to protect her job:

> We had a big lay-off at the plant, and I'd gotten laid off. I had two small kids, living alone, trying to make it on my own at that particular time, and [the factory] had made us a bunch of promises. And then when the recalls started coming back, I kept hearing rumors about people getting recalled back, and I kept thinking, "Well, I had more time than them." So when I did get back, there was a grievance filed, and I got paid for it. And then I thought to myself, "If anybody is going to speak up for me, being black"—there wasn't very much minority leadership. There wasn't a whole lot of people *I* felt like was going to speak up for me. And that's when I made the decision that, "anybody's going to speak up for me, it's gonna be me." And from the '80s on, 'til I retired, I was very happy.[15]

By the time the RTK campaign began, Clark was actively involved in her ACTWU local as a union steward and member of the health and safety committee.

Doug Gamble and Norma Jennings, TNCOSH staff persons, introduced Clark to the RTK campaign. Gamble and Jennings met with Clark and explained to her what they hoped to accomplish in RTK. Clark recalled, "Norma Jennings and Doug worked on [RTK] a lot, and I would meet them at a little office, sometimes in the evening time, and we'd go late into the night talking about [the

campaign]. They were educating me."[16] Clark remembered that the campaign caught her attention because she knew of and worked in some of the chemicals that Gamble and Jennings said were hazardous. "And that really caught me as a grip," Clark stated. "To get involved in [RTK] because I need to know what I'm working in."[17]

Clark went on to become an important grassroots leader for the RTK campaign. The campaign suited her well because, as she shared, "I have always had a passion for safety, safety and organizing work."[18] Once a part of RTK organizing, Clark became a spokesperson for the campaign. She participated in workshops both locally and within the ACTWU international. Clark also attended public hearings in Tennessee that were set up to publicize the need for RTK.

At the Knoxville regional public hearing, Clark was one of the speakers. In her testimony, one senses why Clark was an effective and admired labor leader. Her stories are compelling, with a glint of humor, and she is direct in confronting hazardous industry. Clark painted a picture of her workplace for the audience:

> Although the manufacturing of seat belts does not sound like a particularly dangerous industry, let me tell you that workers are exposed to various chemicals. Some of these chemicals are worse than others. . . . When we work with chemicals in the dacramet machine, it is very noticeable that we get a burning feeling on our face and eyes. It will dry your lips and give you a strange feeling, especially in the summertime. You have to be right down there in it to feel the full effect. I lose my voice when I work in the dacramet. Considering that I am vice president of my local union, the foreman thinks that it's just fine when I lose my voice.[19]

As well as describing her own workplace, Clark emphasized that unsafe working conditions are not unique to one company. She reminded her audience, "Remember that I am not telling you this because I am trying to expose just my place of work. It is important that you understand this. . . . Worker exposure to hazardous chemicals is widespread and occurring in hundreds of industries across Tennessee."[20] Clark then addressed the sly practices of companies who subcontract their most dangerous work to nonunion factories: "Our union began to organize to get rid of [a] dangerous part of the production, and we finally won. But you know the company just turned around and has the same operation done by a subcontracting job in a non-union plant, where the workers aren't protected by a union!" Just before ending her testimony, Clark declared, "I think about my kids growing up in this environment. That bothers me a whole lot. They claim they aren't going to do factory work, but who knows."[21]

In her testimony, Clark presented a deep commitment to social justice. Her arguments extended beyond both her own situation and her own generation. In moments like the public hearing, Clark proved her ability to speak from the bottom up. She demonstrated her dedication to making long-term changes to benefit a broad community of union and nonunion workers as well as future generations of workers.

Clark expressed that one of her most important roles during RTK "was coming back to educate people about [the campaign]. I had fun doing that," she continued, "because I wanted everybody to know what I knew."[22] Once workers won the RTK legislation, Clark "educated" company managers on changes they needed to make and monitored the company to make sure they abided by the new law. Through the campaign, Clark learned how to challenge the company and protect her job at the same time. When I asked Clark how the company responded to her, she stated:

> Well, they didn't really know what to do, and they'd say, "Well, it's not true." [safety violations charged to the factory] And I'd say, "Yes it is." But then I would come back with documentation, and when you come back with documentation in your face, what can you say? So they gave me a rough time at first, but then on the implementation of [the legislation] after it was passed, they had to come to me for help with it. To get the employees, my co-workers, to cooperate and listen. . . . This just wasn't another fly-by-night thing.[23]

After working and educating herself in TNCOSH, Clark was able to go back to her company and pressure the plant managers to make changes. TNCOSH gave Clark the skills that her bosses least wanted her to have: the knowledge to challenge the decisions that the company was making. Clark confronted the company further by spreading her newfound skills to fellow workers.

The knowledge and confidence that Clark gained as RTK spokesperson aided her in later years when she became a spokesperson for the Tennessee Industrial Renewal Network (TIRN).[24] In 1992, Clark was among the first group of workers, sponsored by TIRN, that participated in a worker exchange program in the *maquiladora* zone—a free-trade area of industry just across the U.S. border in Mexico where several Tennessee industries relocated to find cheaper labor.[25] The exchange program gave Clark the opportunity to observe the U.S. economy on a global scale, and she came back to her community to educate people on the practices of U.S. corporations. Clark recalled:

> [The program] was an opportunity for me because I used to think that—you know, I saw a lot of jobs leave, especially from my plant where I worked—so I used to think that the Mexican people were stealing our jobs. But after I learned and went down there, I was able to come back and teach people what the real purpose of [factory relocation] was. That it's not the people. It's the corporations that [are leaving] for cheap labor.[26]

Like TNCOSH, TIRN was another outlet through which Clark could address social justice issues affecting her community. She understood that blaming Mexican people for U.S. job loss was not empowering and was not going to bring jobs back; rather, it was embedding racism in East Tennessee workers who feared losing jobs. Clark went on to make four trips to the *maquiladora* zone and continued to expose policies of the U.S. government and corporations that undermine worker rights.

Clark's role as educator and spokesperson spanned her career in labor organizing. It was during the RTK campaign that she established herself as a voice for her workplace. While Clark declared that she did not want to take "credit for something" she did as part of a group, she did maintain that it was important for her to "be out there as a person [representing her workplace], going to the meetings . . . , signing the petition, trying to help get [RTK] passed."[27] To each organization in which she participated, Clark brought her concern for social justice issues. She simply was not going to limit her outlook to her own union, workplace, or community. She worked consistently to better the conditions for workers at the bottom, whether they were workers in a nonunion plant or Mexican workers in the *maquiladora*.

Out There in Front: Norma Jennings's Story

Known to her peers as "Corky," Norma Jennings has made a lasting impression on people with whom she worked and organized. Because of her commitment to workers in East Tennessee, Jennings became a much-needed leader for many. But her commitment was probably most profound to the female networks she represented.

Jennings was born in Blount County, Tennessee, in 1939, and has spent most of her life there. After moving around for seven years with her husband and three children, Jennings got a divorce, and she and her sons returned home. In 1963, Jennings began work at the Levi Strauss textile plant in Maryville, Tennessee. There she became active in the United Garment Workers of America, Local 402, where she was elected president in 1979. Early on, Jennings's fellow workers recognized her assertiveness, as did the boss. Jennings recalled, "The plant manager told me that the first time after I was elected that he'd be damned if I would run that plant. And that he had me pegged for a troublemaker and I probably wouldn't be there long. Now, any other way he would have handled me, I probably would have been terrified of him. I wasn't anything but damn mad after that."[28]

As the union began making changes at the factory, Jennings and her local slowly gained a following. Jennings noted, "People began to see if you *will* open your mouth, you can get it done—and so what if people say you're a troublemaker? If your paycheck's right and your machine's fixed, what difference does it make what *they* think of you?"[29] Jennings's assertiveness eventually permeated the majority of the workforce, and in 1979, Jennings and 800 Levi Strauss employees—90 percent women—staged two walkouts. Spawned by the company's intimidation and harassment of workers, the walkouts led to a five-week wildcat strike. Although the workers partially won—the plant supervisors and managers behind the harassment were transferred—the company's intimidation tactics did not end. On July 11, 1979, Jennings was arrested after she refused to obey an order to take down the picket line. When the strike ended, Levi Strauss discharged Jennings and disciplined eight other workers. Jennings did not even want to bother with arbitration to get her job back, but the union persisted.

Despite the union's attempt to salvage Jennings's job, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) upheld the firing.

Yet the workers at Levi's disregarded the messages that the company and the NLRB were sending, that Jennings was wrong in her actions and her leadership. Signs lining the factory fences stated phrases like, "On with Corky! Down with Management!" The day after the NLRB ruling, the union met and decided to keep Jennings as president and pay her what she had made at Levi's.

Jennings believed that the best part of the strike was "women sticking together" when the company attempted to create rifts. For the women at Levi's and even the people in her broader community, Jennings became an inspiring leader who showed that it is possible to aggressively challenge the company and still maintain support from the people who count—the workers. As one 63-year-old worker stated, "I'm so glad we did this before I retired. Now I can sit home and remember when we stood up to them."[30]

In Jennings's next major role she was director of TNCOSH. She became active in the organization in its early years, when Jamie Cohen was offering training workshops throughout East Tennessee. As president of a union local, Jennings was influential in drawing workers' attention to TNCOSH and its aims. As Richard Henighan, a former board member remembered, ". . . her unions were a lot of women because they were in sewing factories . . . and that sort of workplace, and she worked very hard to publicize the campaign among that constituency and also to bring locals out for meetings and testimonies."[31]

For many, Jennings became a local hero. In nearly every interview I conducted with her peers, there was a mention of the wildcat strike of 1979 and of Jennings's arrest. Ted McKee, former president of ACTWU Local 1933, spoke of Jennings's leadership: "Corky was real aggressive. You can't be wrong if you're going to get that aggressive, and that's what makes a strong leader. Just like Martin Luther King or some other people that's strong leaders, and people knew it . . . Corky . . . Corky did a good job."[32] Luvernal Clark also recognized Jennings's unwavering leadership for working people in East Tennessee. She stated, "Corky was a woman, and she was out there in front. She was a strong-willed woman. I admired her very much because I'm not sure of everything that she had to go through to get where we got. Because she done a lot of the work. Actually, she done most of the work."[33] For people in her community, Jennings was a testament to the idea that working women could make extraordinary change in their daily lives.

When Jamie Cohen decided to move on to work with the United Furniture Workers, TNCOSH needed to fill a staff position. Because the organization had only a few paid staff people, the job was a big one—it involved writing grants, garnering support, organizing and running workshops, and planning meetings. At first, some board members were not sure if Jennings could handle the position, but those who knew her vouched for her abilities. As Marian Groover recalled, "There was a period of time between Jamie leaving and Corky coming on where we were kind of hanging. Because even though we all wanted to do [the organizing work], we didn't have time to do it the best we thought."[34] Jennings

came aboard the organization and helped to get it back in order, helping lead it to its most successful campaign.

As an integral part of TNCOSH, Jennings helped build the support and funding that the organization needed to attempt the RTK campaign. Jennings became a driving force in the organization and was able to perform many of the roles that were needed for a successful campaign. Not only was she able to take on administrative work of the organization, but she was also able to maintain her base as a grassroots leader and spokesperson for the labor community in Maryville and Knoxville.

Even after TNCOSH achieved its campaign goals and many of its leaders moved on to new, better-funded projects, Jennings stayed with the organization until its end. She continued to work for stronger health and safety rights for workers, and she continued to provide a public voice for working people. In 1990, Jennings went before the Tennessee Legislature Special Joint Committee on Health Care Costs and presented testimony on behalf of working people. Her talk focused on the health-care burdens of workers who suffer from work-related illness and injury as well as workers who are displaced by plant closings. Again, Jennings proved resolute in her belief that workers deserve full health and safety rights. She argued that companies place profits before worker health, and until the government is on the side of the workers, people will continue to suffer the abuses of industry and insurance companies. Jennings demanded fair treatment for sick and injured workers by their employees, insurance companies, and the government, and she laid out a plan for achieving such goals. Health and safety rights were a priority throughout Jennings's organizing career.[35]

From its first ignition, Jennings's passion for worker rights never waned. In an interview about the wildcat strike of 1979, Jennings pinned down her political ideology:

> I don't think you can straddle the fence. You're either union or you're company. I've had friends in management, we grew up together, we had our children together. I no longer go to their homes and they're not welcome in mine. That was the line I drew when I made my stand and they chose management.
>
> I think one of labor's biggest problems is that they've sold themselves out to management just by getting a little closer and a little closer and a little closer. You can't be that close to people and not make concessions. . . . You get to where you're dividing your loyalties.[36]

As a working woman, as the leader of an unsanctioned strike, and as a leader of an alternative labor organization, Jennings exemplified grassroots leadership. She was both the legend who gave people hope in their ability to make change and the organizer working hard to maintain the TNCOSH structure. Step by step and year by year Jennings imagined and argued for the betterment of working people's lives.

"I Would Just Fight": Marian Groover's Story

Marian Groover is a bright-eyed woman who grew up on the hilly farmland of East Tennessee. Because her father was always a union man, her labor education began early. She recalled that her father, an asbestos worker, was always honest with her and her siblings about his work—when he had it and when he did not. When the family was struggling economically, he was up front about the reasons. But, foremost, he directed his children to be a part of unions. Groover recounted:

> My dad told me, "If you don't participate in it, don't knock it. If you pay your dues, go vote. If you don't, well. . . ." But I wouldn't pay my dues to anything I didn't participate in. . . . That's how he had always been, and he said you had to be in what was making things change to get them to change.[37]

Groover has lived up to her father's expectation again and again as she has not only joined the labor movement, but made her presence known in it.

After Groover spent a year at college, her mother became ill. Groover had to leave school and begin work so that she could help support her family. From her very first job, she was the fiery, defiant spirit that plant managers did not know whether to love or loathe. If they were not firing her, they were trying to promote her to get her out of their hair.

Groover started her first job during the Vietnam War in a plant that manufactured walkie-talkies for the army. The workers were mostly young women, and the plant was run by a paternalistic male boss. When he heard that union men were coming to organize the plant, he called a meeting with the workers. He showed them an anti-union film and attempted to persuade them that unions are full of communists and not worth their time. Groover remembered looking around the room and realizing that at least two other workers, besides herself, had union fathers, and she was sure that many of the other women knew people in unions. So she went out on a limb, stood up, and stated, "Are you saying my daddy's a communist?" The boss tried to assure her that he was not saying that, and she retorted, "Well, what exactly are you saying?" By that time, his point was moot because he had indirectly attacked the women's families. After the incident, she was offered the foreman's position, but she refused. The plant managers wanted Groover's strong presence on their side, but she was going to stay with the workers.

In 1972, Groover was working at an air-conditioning plant located in Clinton, Tennessee. When she was pregnant with her first child, she demanded that management take her off jobs that involved heavy lifting. They refused until she argued the unexpected—she would have her deformed child sue them. The company promptly gave her lighter work. Other women learned of Groover's achievement and began requesting job changes during their own pregnancies. As the practice caught on, however, company managers decided they would rather fire the women than give them safer jobs. Groover knew that the company could afford to be more flexible, so she led 280 women out on a wildcat strike. Even

after their union local refused to support them, the women remained on strike until the company conceded. They refused to sacrifice either their jobs or the health of their children. As Groover stated, "I would just fight. And I had been fortunate that I hadn't ever got fired looking back on it now, but then I didn't figure I had anything to lose is a lot of it."[38]

Groover understood that she was on the bottom rung as it was. She understood that asking a woman to choose between the health of her unborn child or keeping her job gives her no choice at all. Thus, she challenged company managers to stand behind their demands on her and the other women, and they could not. Groover had an innate sense that management thrived on workers' fears, and she was ready to put the bullies on trial. Throughout her career, Groover has proved that, when put to the test, plant management often falters.

In 1980, Groover began working at Aluminum Company of America (ALCOA). When she started at the local plant, she was excited to get involved with the United Steel Workers, the largest union in the region. Her excitement quickly dissipated when she realized that her union was not ready to make room for a woman with a strong will and opinions. Groover stated:

> They took my union dues out of my first check.[39] Well, all the other unions I belonged to, you went and you stood up and you swore in and everything. So the next union meeting, I show up, and some guy asked me, he said, "Are you having a problem at work?" And I said no. He said, "Well what are you doing here?" I said, "I came to get sworn in." He said, "Oh, it's automatic. You're in. You don't have to get sworn in." I said, "Okay." He said, "Are you going to stay for the meeting?" I said yeah. So there was. . . . Almost everybody was there came and asked me if I was having a problem with work.[40]

Added to the fact that the union local did not welcome Groover was that only a handful of several thousand members showed up to the meetings, and just two of the handful were women.

Despite the obstacles facing her, Groover became active in the union. She filed grievances when no one else would, she spoke out about unfair treatment of other workers, and she demanded rights for herself. The advice she had received from her father along with a keen sense of how far she could push boundaries enabled her to get away with actions that seemed outrageous to other workers. In one incident, Groover challenged the segregation of bathrooms and water fountains at the plant. When she started working at ALCOA in 1978, she noticed that, while there were not signs delineating them as such, the plant's bathrooms were segregated.

First, Groover approached black fellow workers about the segregation, but they did not feel they had a say in the matter. As a white woman, Groover felt safer than black workers in broaching the subject with the union. When she raised the issue, she was assured that there really was no problem; so Groover, who worked the third shift as a forklift driver, decided to protest segregation herself and tore commodes out of one of the bathrooms. As she recalled:

> [Segregation is] wrong. 1978! I mean, I had worked some places that were real bad that weren't union, but I'd been fortunate enough to work four years at a Textile Workers plant. And I'd worked six years at the Sheet Metal Workers plant and had been in those unions. And I didn't see [segregation] there, and then I go to this plant that's supposed to be the best place to work for everybody. And I saw [segregation], and I couldn't take it. And I worked midnight shift. That helped a lot. . . . And so I went to the union, and they said there's no reason to say anything about this. And at that time we had a civil rights committee which was ten men. Biggest committee we had. Ten white men. And I said why don't we have any people who are Black on the committee? And they said none of them wants to be on it, and I said, "Well, who'd you ask?" "Well, we didn't ask anybody but don't say anything about this." So, I was in this place that was a real rough department anyway—dirty, bad—and [equipment] got hit all the time, and I got rid of all [signs of segregation] in my department. . . . I tore the commodes out.[41]

Groover effectively dealt with a company and a union that had facades of equality. After she took direct action against their policies on segregation, she filed a complaint with the company. Groover recalled, "[T]he next thing we knew all signs of [segregation] were gone in the plant I was in."[42] She remembered that, following the incident, a black worker from another ALCOA plant asked her how she made the company correct its policies. She was then able to tell him about the complaint she filed with the company, and he made sure that the company ceased segregation in his plant as well. Groover's protest practices at her own plant helped empower workers to fight for justice in other plants.

Through much of her early activist work at ALCOA, and at the air-conditioning plant before that, Groover was on her own. By the time she learned about TNCOSH, she was ready to become a part of an organization that embraced her. She recalled, "When I got started with TNCOSH, I was real hungry for education for myself and also a tool to help people because I still knew a lot of people in a lot of places who had nothing to help them. And the more I talked to Jamie Cohen, the more I knew that I wanted to be a part of this."[43]

Groover met Jamie Cohen and other TNCOSH staff at a health and safety workshop in Maryville, Tennessee. When she showed interest in the organization, TNCOSH staff invited Groover to one of their meetings, and as she remembered, "I think I asked them, begged to be on the board, and they agreed for me to be on. . . ."[44] It was the first time that Groover had been freely accepted into a labor organization.

For the first year that Groover was on the board, she took in all that she could. She remembered that she "would just go to wherever they were holding a training just to see, help, talk to people." Groover was soon elected chairperson of the board and remained in the position for ten years. She helped in the planning of RTK and became an influential voice in support of the legislation. She became a part of an effective networking team and found an aspect of the labor movement unknown to her before. Groover recalled her transformation from lone labor warrior to team organizer:

> We tried to turn out as many people as we could [at public hearings]. And so I by then had gotten better about not being such a pusher, being more of a diplomat. . . . But I went to unions, like my dad's union, to the Labor Council; I went to the building trades. I went to everybody I knew. If I hadn't seen them in fifteen years, I'd call them and say, "Can I come to your union? Can I talk to your people?"[45]

While Groover recognized that unions provided a vehicle for the campaign, she also became very passionate about how TNCOSH and RTK were crucial for nonunion workers. She understood that her work could affect the workers at the bottom:

> I had three children at home, working all the time, being crazy with the job I had, [filing grievances against] the company. But I felt like I was doing something for people who didn't have a union, who didn't have a voice, and it was a way to try to make things better for everybody. Because they had no avenue. I at least had an avenue and a voice, whether even the people at the union didn't want to hear it, but I had a way to speak. And TNCOSH addressed the issues. . . . It wasn't always safety and health. It was the things that would come up sometimes. . . . It would just blow your mind about the things that could happen to these people at work. There was places where they wouldn't let them go to the bathroom. . . . [The workers] were able to be hot-headed in front of us and say the things they couldn't say when they were at work. And so I learned to give them the information, give them direction.[46]

TNCOSH provided the space and support for Groover to do the sort of justice-oriented work that she had always attempted in her own workplaces. The organization gave her the chance to further explore instruments of change and to meet people who shared her passion for social justice and labor issues.

Groover recalled the invaluable relationships that she developed with the other women of TNCOSH. Women in this network exchanged ideas about organizing and, in the process, became more effective grassroots leaders. About June Rostan, Jamie Cohen, and Clare Sullivan (a TNCOSH organizer in Nashville), Groover stated:

> I think Clare, Jamie, and June, and all of them really tried to take a lot of the edge off of what I did because I was too abrasive a lot of the time for the people, and I was too. . . . I wanted [non-union workers] to be more aggressive, and they couldn't. So I think [the women] really, they did a good job with me. They worked with me without hitting me over the head and telling me that I couldn't do it. They were telling me I had to try to do it so that the people could handle it. . . .[47]

The women with whom Groover worked understood that her voice, ideas, and activism were precious to East Tennessee workers. They helped foster Groover's confidence and gave her support that she may not have found elsewhere.

As with the other women, TNCOSH was a place where Groover cultivated her organizing skills. Throughout her time at TNCOSH as well as afterward, Groover continued to do work in her own union, the United Steel Workers. Her activity in TNCOSH gave her the confidence to confront her union and empowered her as a local labor leader. Groover stated how important

TNCOSH was to her career: "I know that it helped me grow in ways that I probably wouldn't ever been able to grow because right after they. . . . Well right after we just quit, disbanded, whatever we want to call it, I started doing some organizing for our union. And I had to do it without getting paid. And I did it because I was going to do it."[48]

Their Legacies

The most obvious legacy of TNCOSH is that East Tennessee workers won protective legislation. For the first time they had the right to protect themselves from hazards in the workplace. Underlying the public success of the campaign, however, are the legacies that individuals carried into their own lives.

Workers were able to go into their workplaces and institute what they learned through the process of RTK. For many workers, this meant that they had the tools to confront plant managers and make them enforce the new legislation. As Jamie Cohen stated, the "real legacy" of winning legislation like RTK is "not just how a law gets written, but how it gets used."[49] The legislation's success was grounded in workers' understanding of their rights and how to implement those rights. For TNCOSH, the key to a successful campaign was based solidly in worker empowerment.

Yet it is on the stories of rank-and-file women that I center because it is for them that the organization—as a thriving entity—had the most value. TNCOSH created a united front with workers, unions, community organizations, lawyers, and health technicians, all adding to the sustainability of the local women activists. And not only was there a united front, but TNCOSH also maintained a democratic platform that rested on the workers' own initiatives.[50] In this supportive, flexible network, grassroots women had the opportunity—denied to them in their workplaces and unions—to map their own labor movement.

Luvernal Clark, Norma Jennings, and Marian Groover did not need an organizational structure to convince them that workers in their community, and even they themselves, were being exploited by industries. Long before TNCOSH and RTK, these women were leading strikes and organizing union locals and demanding rights in their workplaces. Yet they were often doing so without sufficient funding, resources, and support. For them, TNCOSH was a space that affirmed their leadership capabilities. It provided them the tools to do the work that they were so committed to in the first place, but that they were kept from because of sexist, racist, or classist barriers.

Women Organizers, Women Leaders

> Most of my life I had been kind of a quiet person and didn't do much. I went to work everyday and didn't say nothing. Raised my family. But then I became [an activist], and this person on the inside decided to come out and speak.
>
> Luvernal Clark

The experiences of Luvernal Clark, Norma Jennings, and Marian Groover not only uncover the local history of the TNCOSH; their ideas also shed light on how activists at the grassroots have encountered and shaped the labor movement. Their histories fit into and add to a broader discussion of how grassroots workers on the margins have challenged the labor movement to address more than bread-and-butter issues. In recent years, this discussion has taken on new weight as the mainstream labor movement has steadily dwindled. Researchers and historians have begun to scratch the surface of alternative labor organizations and how a revived labor movement can draw from and build on them.

TNCOSH's commitment to rank-and-file control, its roots in social justice organizing, and its position as an alternative labor organization provided an environment in which women were able to explore various roles. While most other unions and labor councils in the area were controlled by white men, TNCOSH left the doors open for a wider variety of leaders. TNCOSH's democratic foundations are evident in the positions that women, working-class white and black, fulfilled in the organization. Furthermore, women in the organization were not pushed in or out of particular positions, but played multiple roles—sometimes simultaneously. For the rank-and-file women in TNCOSH, early roles in the workplace and in unions tended to be along the lines of "centerwomen," but they showed that given a supportive climate, they had the skills to move into spokesperson roles, too. The women could go from networking with other female workers to proposing legislation in front of a Senate panel. TNCOSH's flexible structure differed from bureaucratic trade unions as it did not confine or push women into particular positions.

Luvernal Clark, Norma Jennings, and Marian Groover have many characteristics of the "centerwomen" that Brodkin describes. Within their own communities, the women deftly mobilized their coworkers, relatives, and friends. Following the wildcat strike of 1979, Norma Jennings stated that the best part of the campaign was "women sticking together."[51] In both the wildcat strikes that Groover and Jennings led, female networks were the foundation. The strikes were made up mostly, if not fully, of women workers. When the women joined TNCOSH, they continued to base much of their work on networks, both female and kinship. For instance, Marian Groover recalled that her central organizing tactic was to speak in the workplaces or unions of "everybody [she] knew." Networks that the women belonged to were the crux of their early organizing efforts; it was within those networks that they found both the need and the support to organize. As the women became more prominent community leaders, they continued to rely on female and kinship groups as inspiring forces.

In the case of Luvernal Clark, who was recruited to TNCOSH, it very well could have been her influential voice within her own workplace and community networks that appealed to TNCOSH staff. People like Clark provided TNCOSH's lifeblood. She rallied support for the organization and disseminated information to workers and management once legislation was won. She was able to learn information through TNCOSH and pass it along to her coworkers in a way that was meaningful to them. TNCOSH's success was built on the fact that

workers cared about the information that the organization could provide them, and grassroots women helped build that relationship.

Clark's organizing abilities were especially valuable to TNCOSH because she was one of the only representatives of black workers in East Tennessee. Her experiences particularly show the overlap of spokesperson and centerperson roles. While TNCOSH recruited Clark as a grassroots organizer, or centerperson, her success in the position depended on her role as spokesperson in and for her community. This overlap further complicates the split between centerperson and spokesperson, and it exhibits the dual roles of workers on the margins who live and work in the communities for whom they are campaigning. Clark blended the roles of spokesperson and centerperson, showing the effectiveness of labor leaders who do not create boundaries between their community networks and their workplaces. In fact, Clark, Jennings, and Groover largely depended on the erasure of those boundaries as they built local movements around female and kinship networks.

In her research on workers' centers in immigrant communities and communities of color, Vanessa Tait observes continuity between the community and workplace that parallels the relationship between spokesperson and centerperson roles. Workers' centers are local organizations that address the multiple oppressions facing a specific community, not just those in the workplace. Vanessa Tait addresses the internal philosophy of workers' centers and concludes that the centers "embody a holistic approach to organizing, combining workers' everyday life struggles with the fight for workplace justice."[52] They give workers long-term skills, in education and training, which will aid them in maintaining control of their lives.[53]

In workers' centers, political action takes place in both the community and workplace arenas, blurring the boundaries between the two. Like activists in workers' centers, women in TNCOSH organized on a continuum that included their kinship and female networks, as well as their workplaces. According to where they were or with whom they were speaking, the women acted both as spokespersons and centerpersons. In combining their roles in the community, the women also helped to level the organization's structure.

TNCOSH further parallels workers' centers because it provided a space, outside the workplace and the mainstream labor movement, where workers confronted a broad range of issues. In immigrant communities, workers' centers have addressed racism, class hierarchy, and sexism that immigrant workers face on a daily basis. Often, these issues have taken a backseat in the labor movement, making workers' centers the place where workers can most successfully confront workplace oppression. Tait's stories and analyses of workers' centers challenge the mainstream labor movement to confront who has traditionally been left out and how those left out have created their own movements. Furthermore, these stories reveal the possibilities for a renewed labor movement in alternative poor workers' unions, immigrant communities, and workers' centers.

A similar story is present in the TNCOSH history. TNCOSH began addressing issues on the margins of the labor movement early on, when Jamie

Cohen and June Rostan conducted a training workshop for women from the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers' locals in the area. In the workshop, women felt comfortable enough to address issues specific to them and were able to meet other women dealing with similar workplace issues. While "sexism" or "women's issues" were never discussed as such, TNCOSH organizers sent a message that the organization was a safe haven for all workers, even if local unions were not. That message spread as local participants of TNCOSH addressed women's issues, as well as health-care issues for poor people and the impact of plant closings on communities, both in TNCOSH and in the other organizations that they joined.

For Marian Groover and Norma Jennings, TNCOSH had added significance because it adopted them as respected labor leaders. Both women were essentially barred from traditional leadership roles in their own unions and thus undermined any goals that they would bring to the table. In TNCOSH the women found greater freedom and support in their drive toward workplace justice.

Although Luvernal Clark, Norma Jennings, and Marian Groover became leaders in their communities and workplaces, they did not adopt the controlling or exclusive leadership style that defined the local labor council and trade unions. Their leadership was grounded in grassroots experiences and the realities that they had always lived. They knew that they could not fight for rights on their own, but that they needed the support of personal networks and formal organizations. The local formation of the TNCOSH provided a support system for these women, who had always been activists, to become more prominent voices in their labor communities. These women's experiences illuminate how justice-based organizations, built on the combined organizing skills and leadership abilities of local people, have great potential to change the lives of working people.

As Miriam Ching Yoon Louie notes in her analysis of immigrant women activists in sweatshop industries, alternative labor organizations provide workers the "props" to organize social justice movements.[54] While TNCOSH gave workers the "props"—in skills, funding, and technical support—to confront hazardous industries, it also gave women the tools and the space to develop their leadership skills. It offered them a chance to push the boundaries of the labor movement, demonstrating that rank-and-file women have the versatility to organize inside the movement *as well as* leading out front.

Jessica Wilkerson received an MA in Women's History at Sarah Lawrence College in 2006. Before returning to graduate school, she taught U.S. History at a Tennessee community college and served on the board of Jobs with Justice of East Tennessee. Jessica is now working toward the PhD in History at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill.

Notes

1. Tennessee Legislature Right-to-Know Study Committee. Testimony presented by Luvernal Clark.
2. Temma Kaplan, *Crazy for Democracy: Women in Grassroots Movements* (New York: Routledge, Inc., 1997), 6.

3. For more examples of ways that alliances help to sustain the work of grassroots women, see Miriam Ching Yoon Louie, *Sweatshop Warriors: Immigrant Women Workers Take on the Global Factory* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2001); Temma Kaplan (1997), *Crazy for Democracy: Women in Grassroots Movements*; Vanessa Tait, *Poor Workers' Unions: Rebuilding Labor from Below* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2005).
4. Karen Brodkin, *Caring by the Hour: Women, Work, and Organizing at Duke Medical Center* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988).
5. Jamie Cohen, the first director of TNCOSH, referred to a quote that she learned at the Highlander Research and Education Center that influenced her way of thinking early in her career: "You can't create what you can't imagine," interview with the author, December 20, 2005.
6. Most of the interviews were conducted with former TNCOSH organizers from East Tennessee. It is important to note that TNCOSH, and particularly the RTK campaign, had multiple faces throughout the state, depending on the local unions and community groups that drove the project. By focusing solely on the campaign supporters from East Tennessee I have gained a better sense of how the local organization increased support at the grassroots level. It was such grassroots organization that gave life to the organization and produced wide support for RTK.
7. I was able to conduct taped interviews with Jamie Cohen, June Rostan, Luvernal Clark, and Marian Groover; however, I spoke only informally with Norma Jennings. Her story is told through a past oral history, conducted by Jamie Harris and Brenda Bell, and through oral histories of her fellow TNCOSH participants.
8. Highlander was founded under the direction of Myles Horton during the Great Depression as "a school for the poor of Appalachia." With interracial living, respect for culture, and educational leadership, Highlander became a school where oppressed peoples could learn the skills to challenge oppressive systems. The school, now known as the Highlander Research and Education Center, is located in New Market, Tennessee and continues to provide organizing training for oppressed people. Charles M. Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1995), 70–71. See also, *Highlander Research and Education Center: An Approach to Education Presented through a Collection of Writings, December, 1989* (New Market, TN: Highlander Research and Education Center, 1989), and Myles Horton, *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990).
9. Jamie Cohen, interview with the author, December 20, 2005.
10. June Rostan, interview with the author, December 21, 2005.
11. June Rostan.
12. Jamie Cohen.
13. Jamie Cohen.
14. Luvernal Clark, interviewed by the author, October 26, 2005.
15. Luvernal Clark.
16. Luvernal Clark.
17. Luvernal Clark.
18. Luvernal Clark.
19. Tennessee Legislature Right-to-Know Study Committee, Testimony presented by Luvernal Clark, November 15, 1984, "Tennessee Committee on Occupational Safety and Health."
20. Luvernal Clark.
21. Luvernal Clark.
22. Luvernal Clark.
23. Luvernal Clark.
24. The Tennessee Industrial Renewal Network (TIRN) was founded in 1989 and was a coalition of labor, community, and environmental groups that addressed statewide economic issues. TIRN has organized worker exchange programs, fought plant closings in Tennessee, and initiated a living-wage campaign in Tennessee. See Eve Weinbaum, *To Move a Mountain: Fighting the Global Economy in Appalachia* (New York: The New Press, 2004), 202, 256–57.

25. As R. Emmet Murray (1998) writes, "*Maquiladoras* are seen as a device to export or out-source jobs, undermine unions, and exploit cheap Mexican labor," *The Lexicon of Labor* (New York: The New Press, 1998), 112.
26. Luvernal Clark.
27. Luvernal Clark.
28. Norma Jennings, interviewed by Jamie Harris and Brenda Bell, "We Stood Up," *Southern Exposure* 8, no. 5 (1981): 25.
29. Norma Jennings, interviewed by Harris and Bell.
30. Norma Jennings, interviewed by Harris and Bell.
31. Richard Henighan, interviewed by the author, October 21, 2005.
32. Ted McKee, interviewed by the author, October 25, 2005.
33. Luvernal Clark.
34. Marian Groover, interviewed by the author, December 20, 2005.
35. Tennessee Legislature Special Joint Committee on Health Care Costs. Testimony presented by Norma Jennings, director of Tennessee Committee on Occupational Safety and Health (TNCOSH), November 7, 1990.
36. Norma Jennings, interviewed by Harris and Bell.
37. Marian Groover.
38. Marian Groover.
39. The union took the dues only after Groover said she wanted to be in the union. Tennessee is a right-to-work state, so it was not automatic that the union took dues from workers' checks or that new workers had to join the union.
40. Marian Groover.
41. Marian Groover.
42. Marian Groover.
43. Marian Groover.
44. Marian Groover.
45. Marian Groover.
46. Marian Groover.
47. Marian Groover.
48. Marian Groover.
49. Jamie Cohen.
50. Miriam Louie discusses the problems that often occur in alliances when white, middle-class groups "insert themselves" into movements, both lessening the empowerment of people at the grassroots and replicating a top-down approach. See Miriam Ching Yoon Louie, *Sweatshop Warriors: Immigrant Women Workers Take on the Global Factory* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2001), 232.
51. Harris and Bell, 25.
52. Vanessa Tait, *Poor Workers' Unions* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2005), 154.
53. For further discussion of how workers' centers have impacted immigrant communities, see Louie (2001), *Sweatshop Warriors*.
54. Louie (2001), *Sweatshop Warriors*, 218.

References

Brodkin (Sacks), K. 1988. *Caring by the hour: Women, work, and organizing at Duke Medical Center*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Highlander Research and Education Center 1989. *Highlander Research and Education Center: An approach to education presented through a collection of writings, December, 1989*. New Market, TN: Highlander Research and Education Center.

Horton, M. 1990. *We make the road by walking: Conversations on education and social change*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Kaplan, T. 1997. *Crazy for democracy: Women in grassroots movements*. New York: Routledge, Inc.

Louie, M. C. Y. 2001. *Sweatshop warriors: Immigrant women workers take on the global factory*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.

Murray, R. E. 1998. *The lexicon of labor*. New York: The New Press.

Payne, C. M. 1995. *I've got the light of freedom: The organizing tradition and the Mississippi freedom struggle*. Berkeley: The University of California Press.

Tait, V. 2005. *Poor Workers' Unions*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.

Tennessee Legislature Right to Know Study Committee. Testimony presented by Ted McKee, November 15, 1984. "Tennessee Committee on Occupational Safety and Health," Archives of Appalachia, Johnson City, Tennessee.

Tennessee Legislature Special Joint Committee on Health Care Costs. Testimony presented by Norma Jennings, director of Tennessee Committee on Occupational Safety and Health, November 7, 1990. "Tennessee Committee on Occupational Safety and Health," Archives of Appalachia, Johnson City, Tennessee.

Weinbaum, E. 2004. *To move a mountain: Fighting the global economy in Appalachia*. New York: The New Press.