

## **Drexel Writing Festival Event**

### ***Fight Like Hell: the Untold Story of American Labor* — A reading and discussion of the history of unions with author Kim Kelly**

5/10/2023 @ the Stern Room on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the library

Lixiao Yang

Today I attended a session featuring Kim Kelly, the author of “Fight Like Hell: The Untold History of American Labor.” Kelly shared her personal journey from a music journalist to becoming a labor activist. Coming from a union family, Kelly emphasized the importance of fighting and winning in labor activism.

One of the reasons I was excited about this session is the relevance of labor history to the current situation. As Kelly pointed out, there is a lot to learn from labor history, especially with the current uprisings in labor and the fight against the crisis in higher education and labor.

During the session, Kelly emphasized the importance of fighting and winning, and how her book focuses on the stories of people who were ignored in the past. She highlighted two particular pieces from the book, including a strike in Alabama's coal mining industry and the story of a black woman who was the first woman in the mining industry.

Kelly also discussed the story of a Yemeni immigrant in California who became an organizer for UFW and was ultimately murdered. This highlights the continued struggles faced by those fighting for labor rights and the intersectionality of labor issues with issues of race and immigration.

At the end of the session, Kelly also points out that the history of the working class is an essential part of our country's history, but unfortunately, it often gets overlooked in favor of the history of elites and wars. Politicians can sometimes try to slide us back, and the system is often set up to privilege the armed forces in states, with police being used as strikebreakers. However, by educating ourselves about labor history and supporting the current labor movement, we can continue to fight for a more just and equitable future for all.

Generally, I found the session to be very interesting and insightful. Kelly's passion for labor history and her ability to bring the stories of forgotten individuals to light was truly inspiring. It is important for us to remember the sacrifices made by the former activists and continue to fight for labor rights for all. As Kelly mentioned, everyone can align in the labor field, regardless of their identity, and it is through collective action that progress can be made.