



Frank Zeidler's famous hat was passed among the Bay View Tragedy crowd May 2 by daughter Anita. See Page 4.



LEFT: In a May 1 celebration of his arrival, new MPS Supt. Gregory Thornton receives gifts from children at Fratney school as dozens of other schools showed off their artistic talents. RIGHT: Representing Gwen Moore, aide Khalif Rainey speaks April 28 at Workers Memorial Day. Listening at Zeidler Park was Sheila Cochran, chief operating officer of MALC. FAR RIGHT: SEIU locals were among the unions supporting immigration reform and criticizing Arizona's new law aimed at people of color at an enormous rally May 1. Stories Page 2 and 6-8.



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In May, we found the values America has been seeking

By Dominique Paul Noth, Editor, Labor Press

This is not a lecture. It isn't about left or right, union versus none, or the usual gridlock that rules our news coverage. It's recognition of what actually dominated Milwaukee as late April and May unfolded. -- caring, mutual help, bravery facing a difficult future, balance, all the virtues that so many lament are absent from American society.

Maybe the media didn't devote coverage, sidetracked again by loud fear over bright lights. Maybe those watching TV news -- or the cable talking heads that pass for news these days -- maybe if you were taken in by the repulsive blogs or extreme comments following news stories on Internet sites or fooled by the derisive tone that drives so much talk-radio, maybe you didn't notice.

Our stories and photos did.

At event after event, many scheduled against each other (not the same old subset that shows up in those staged-for-TV anger rallies), there were crowds of a few dozen in some cases, several hundreds in others, thousands in yet more. They were young, old, poor, rich (even the immigration march had more white collar businessmen than commentators noticed), all ethnic groups and political parties, joined in common causes and core values. They didn't intend to demonstrate how working together makes a difference, but they did.

They shared themes -- mainly the importance of children. You didn't have to embrace the system that chose the new Milwaukee public schools superintendent, Gregory Thornton, to recognize the truth May 1 when he called the community to arms at Marshall High School by noting that "a society that doesn't put educating its children first is already lost." But at other events it was adolescents from troubled homes and court proceedings who emerged as much more than worth salvaging, perhaps the very people who will lead the rest of us out of the wilderness. Or it was the young adults refused college scholarships because their parents carried them into this country as toddlers.

Putting care for others first also meant honoring the pioneers of change and the contemporary co-workers who lost their lives because we failed to protect them. It was also a month of recognizing important projects and even laws that make a difference, both seeded by volunteers. It was also a time to point out sources of help that exist alongside and often in spite of frayed public safety nets.

This is the America we need back -- and this, you will discover as you wake up, is actually the America we have.

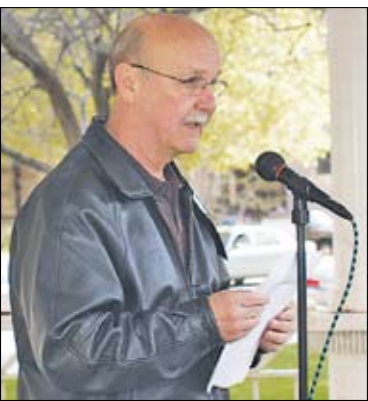


Keynote speaker Rep. Barbara Toles (top) addresses the gathering April 28 at Workers Memorial Day ceremonies at Zeidler Park. Laborers union workers and their families gather at the start of the May 1 immigration rally (middle) and a crowd of union workers, public officials and citizens who remember gather to sing Solidarity Forever May 2 (below) at the conclusion of the Bay View Tragedy. Stories and photos on these spring events and more can be found inside.



Must we keep mourning?

There is no such thing as an upbeat moment to remember those who died on the job or in the military. And there almost couldn't have been a more troubling time than April 28.



The names of the Wisconsin military who died in 2009 were read by AFL-CIO Community Services' Mike Balistreri, who is organizing the first all-union Veterans Unit for the Memorial Day Parade through downtown Milwaukee, Monday, May 31. Call him at (414) 771-9829 or email mikeafclcio@sbcglobal.net.

Twenty-nine coal miners died at a non-union mine operated by Massey, a company notorious for violating safety rules (amid ongoing investigations of illegal shortcuts and potential bribery).

Eleven oil rig workers died in the Gulf Coast as ugly tar and oil continued to float onto America's beaches from an off-shore rig touted as key to America's petroleum future. It was a BP enterprise, the British company also infamous in OSHA circles for refinery disasters -- and also under investigation.

This was the background at the workers' own Milwaukee park, decorated with miniature gravestones for the occasion, as well as the permanent tools décor of Zeidler Union Square Park.

Before American Federation of Musicians Local 8 delivered an echoing taps, the speakers couldn't help conjuring up the national circumstances.



Speaker Barbara Toles

Deaths on the jobs, particularly so often caused by corporate bottom-line evasions, are a clear cause of moral outrage for more than just unions. Yet they are a particular moral dilemma in a country devoted to capitalistic enterprise and to how making money is the foundation of creating more and better jobs in a tough economy.

Yes, management and labor disagree often across the bargaining table about wages and benefits. But unions, whose members have suffered terribly in the economic turndown, want companies to succeed and convert gains into more jobs and family supporting careers.

Except too often that money means more to management than basic empathy and caring for your fellow man.

That's the rub. What if the companies for profit undercut family supporting wages? What if, to save money, companies cut corners on materials and techniques and so jeopardize workers? What if that greed leads to death?



Reverberating taps by Gerry Keene (left) and Tom Schlueter

Workers Memorial Day recalls how often that corporate behavior translates into injury and death. One cannot read reports from the Gulf waters or the ground of West Virginia and not know this has been happening.

Yet it is curious that unions are leading these remembrances across the county, just as it is unions who channel the anger at Wall Street firms more concerned about getting rich than playing fair with customers, leading marches right to the doors of the exchange and organizing stockholder protests.

You would think that the businesses that operate with intelligence and heart would be leading the charge against their serial shortcut brethren.

Milwaukee's keynote speaker, state Rep. Barbara Toles, is occasionally criticized for her laser-like focus on bills that provide more and better jobs, rather than the more esoteric concoctions of headlines.

Her talk was simple and largely apolitical. It dealt with the human tragedy behind every death, a family left behind, the suffering relatives, the laws either



unpassed or unenforced. She called on the assembled to help their governments do better to end an attitude and system that let people down out of selfishness or neglect.

"Lest We Forget." -- D.P.N.



Wisconsin workers who died on the job in 2009 were read by Annie Wacker, Community Services organizer of the 21st annual Health & Hygiene Drive, which ends June 10, 771-9830 or annieafclcio@sbcglobal.net.

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Strike of '69 reshaped city, union and MATC

The first thing demonstrated by the 26 veterans of Wisconsin's first teacher strike at a lavish reception and dinner at the Potawatomi Casino was they haven't lost their sense of humor or the insistence on basic facts that mark quality teaching.

As a selling point to help gather more than 300 people to the April 30, 2010 occasion, with its thoroughly researched chronicle of the local's fight and even a video history, Local 212 of the American Federation of Teachers promoted the 40 day walkout in the dead of winter by the faculty of the Milwaukee Area Technical College as a "40 Year Anniversary Celebration."

"Dummies," scoffed one strike veteran, and yes, he did teach math. "It was 1969! That's 41 years." Of course, Local President Michael Rosen knew that and acknowledged it in his remarks and so did executive VP Charlie Dee who helped Adam Brihan research the history and



They froze for 40 unpaid days on the picket line, so the least their admiring teacher colleagues could do was let the strike veterans hit the sumptuous buffet line first at the dinner in their honor.

also narrates the video. But they would have been amused at how simply rounding off the year as a promotional device galvanized discussions among the strike veterans at the dinner in their honor in the Woodland Dreams Ballroom.

Accuracy is important to these teachers, because it was a troubling time of half-truths. The public didn't understand then but the strike clearly formed a union with an important voice in the MATC classrooms today and a professional relationship with deans and administration that once tried to dismiss teachers as hall monitors and hired student restrainers.

The union's feistiness occurred in the boiling 1960s when, among other things, Father Groppi led open housing marches in Milwaukee and students fought against war. Though charted in 1930, Local 212 did

not earn bargaining rights under the law until 1964, but their efforts to share in classroom issues seemed to cause the community board to balk and resist talking to them. Five years of fighting the MATC board for such shared governance came in an era of social change and tremendous growth for the school. The response at MATC was to try to control the teachers more by limiting their role. The school insisted on teachers punching time clocks, monitoring lunches and rebuffed any efforts at professional input. They made "absolutely final offers" and said all the teachers cared about was money, ignoring how the teachers kept turning down raises for more respect.

That resulted in the 1969 strike in the dead of winter. It caused great physical suffering as well as emotional devastation to the families of the core 300

who walked the picket lines, soon to be joined by student protesters and some unions such as the UAW. The Milwaukee labor council also was a strong supporter, but some union leaders who sat on the MATC board thought the strikers were dead wrong. So did an opposing group of teachers. So did both newspapers which demeaned the teachers and reported the untruth that the school continued to thrive.

But clearly the strike was working. In the end, the board gave in on key issues and approved significant input on curriculum, the end of time clocks and hall duties, professional treatment, grievance procedures, and a future road to professional development. It also provided strong wages, particularly after researchers uncovered money the school had long claimed it didn't have.

The teachers of today know they wouldn't have the voice of the administration and frankly

the admiration of the students without these pioneers. The surviving group, many of whom taught into the 1980s and have stayed close to current faculty, were applauded several times during the event. A strike without pay for 40 days in the dead of Milwaukee winter was not something expected from the teaching profession. Nor did other unions expect such solidarity in the face of hoots and derision.

Several AFT members of today said these pioneers have made bargaining much easier for them and respect far more basic. Several of those strike veterans and their families were touched by how many of their colleagues still remember and value their service.

"Forty Days That Forged a Union" as a 35-minute video full of images of the era is online at video.matc.edu/mulvenna/strike.asx

-- Dominique Paul Noth



Poster memories of their time on the picket line greeted such strike veterans as (top to bottom below) Carston Koeller, Al Krahn and Jim Hall.



More than 300 guests applauded the stories and the attending survivors of the teachers strike.



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We goofed, Newby reminds Bay View crowd



At first it seemed that David Newby would simply remember the sacrifice and struggle 125 years ago that led to the eight-hour day. Success of the national effort, he recalled, included thousands who marched in Milwaukee, seven of whom died at the hands of the state militia in

what is known and remembered each year as the Bay View Tragedy.

It was a fight for simple worker rights that the newspapers of the time regarded as subversive and un-American. Of course, that extreme media view led to a complete changing of the power structure in Milwaukee and the state within 30 years.

And then in his keynote speech May 2 in front of the flowering peach trees and state marker at Superior and Russell in Bay View, the long-time president of the state AFL-CIO seemed to liken the success of the eight-hour fight to the euphoria unions felt in 2008 when they swept a new president and Congress into power.

But then Newby apologized to the activists of today and the pioneers of yesteryear.

"We had great - and justified - expectations!" he recalled of 2008. "But stupidly (in hindsight -- certainly for me) we thought that once we won these crucial elections, those we elected would, on their own initiative and without significant opposi-



Larry Penn, whose songs are a staple of the event, moved the crowd before keynote speaker David Newby (left) fired them up with a call for tougher mobilization.

tion or obstruction, enact the reforms and institute the programs that we elected them to carry out.

"How wrong and short-sighted we have been! We should have realized that electoral victory is just the beginning. We should have been in the streets the day after elections demanding rapid action on our agenda. The day after the inauguration we should have been in the streets in numbers never before seen in this country!"

"If we had had the foresight to do that, we could have changed American politics for many decades to come. Because that would have demonstrated that we understood that while institutional victory through elections is necessary -- it is massive and impassioned movements that are even greater threats to the status quo.

"Both institutional electoral victory and massive movement mobilization are necessary to give birth to fundamental change and to neutralize (even if temporarily) the power of capital and the brutalizing arrogance of the rich and powerful."

It is still not too late if we believe, Newby also pointed out. "Despite the fact that their primary party is out of power, their money and influence still control the political process," he warned. "Their ability to obstruct, to delay, to distort, to weaken, and even to prevent significant change not only leaves their power intact --

but it also demoralizes those of us whose values and goals are in direct conflict with theirs.

"But if we do become demoralized, demobilized, immobilized -- **it's our own fault.** It is based in our own collective shortsightedness-- our lack of understanding of the power of our adversaries."

Our forbearers did not make the same mistake, Newby pointed out.

"It took over 50 years before the 8-hour day actually became law. We are the inheritors, the beneficiaries, of those who struggled, fought, and died before us. So what we do today, the struggles we wage, while the needs are immediate -- the victories may not come for many years.

"But it is also true that there is a special urgency today," Newby added, and the numbers suggest victory is within our grasp. "The urgency today is rooted in the incredible and

growing power of capital, capital which is determined to protect its privilege and to set in stone its ability to control our destiny."

Newby's grim warning and call to action were a necessary counterpoint to a lovely tranquilizing afternoon.

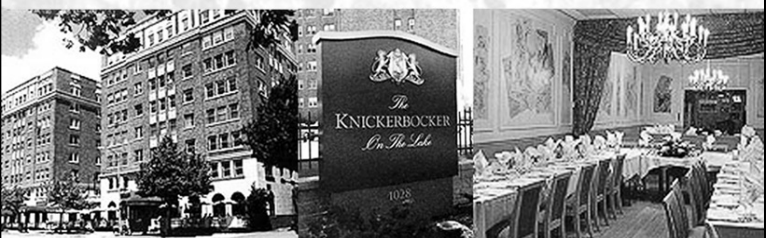
A larger than usual crowd lolled on the ground at the small park, or stood in close attention, basking and participating in the familiar ballads and call to solidarity of folksinger Larry Penn. They applauded the public officials and pioneer leaders of social progress on the scene, along with many newcomers.

Frank Zeidler, the Socialist mayor who helped guide these proceedings, passed away in 2006. His widow, Agnes, left us last year. But daughters Mary and Anita were there to lay the wreath, read the names of the Bay View victims and pass the hat for donations as Frank so often did.



Longtime organizer and Frank Zeidler colleague Ken Germanson welcomes the larger than usual crowd, recalling Mays when the weather was not so pleasant.

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In the crowd (with Supervisor Marina Dimitrijevic behind them) were Mary (left) and Anita Zeidler, while Judge Joan and Assembly member Fred Kessler listened from the grass.



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How funding steps up to lead and restore us

By **Dominique Paul Noth**
Editor, Labor Press

A favorite coalition of the union community and a successful project to reclaim troubled youth were both honored by Wisconsin leaders in an organization that knows quite a bit about leadership.

The occasion at the beautifully arrayed top floor of the Milwaukee Public Market April 29 was also an unintended reminder of how the market's financial fortunes have improved since it largely abandoned unprepared food to become a moderately high-scale vendor for prepared food -- and rents out and caters the top floor for special events, as it did for the Wisconsin Community Fund.

The Fund is a long-term effort the citizenry needs to know more about. With little self-promotion it dispenses real money and influential publicity for small resourceful agents of community change. Looking over the organizations that have benefited from its largesse, there is big truth in its slogan: "27 Years of Change Not Charity."

April 29 brought well-earned recognition to the Good Jobs and Livable Neighborhoods Coalition, Grantee of the Year (it received \$7,000 earlier from the fund), and to an individual, David Lerman, who reflects a lifetime commitment to social justice through a unique Milwaukee public schools project.

Several hundred people attended this event., among them union leaders, artists, educators, lawyers, community activists, retirees, public officials and civic leaders committed to progress in our community. In the vast crowd you could spot such diversity as Democratic bigwig Martha Love and Debbie Davis, now head of Riverwest's new Time Exchange (bartering service) but best known to the labor community as Rosie the Riveter, the stiltwalker for Laborfest Parades.

Robert Kraig was handed the mike by emcee Paul Nannis, former city health commissioner, to provide a succinct history of just how innovative the Good Jobs coalition had been (one reason it is now part of his Wisconsin Citizen Action's umbrella) under former leader Pam Fendt, who now heads the Green Jobs initiatives for the Wisconsin Laborers union.

In 2003, Kraig noted, few in America realized how vital the government role could be in economic stimulus. "Hard to realize that now," he laughed, but it wasn't even on the radar then -- except to innovators like Good Jobs and Fendt, a UWM research expert who realized how focused government resources and well-placed ideas could revitalize so much of the community. One way was to look at the govern-



ment tax incentives to businesses and how they could be leveraged to encourage residential employment, decent wages and basic benefits.

From this was born two lasting changes. One is the Park East covenant. While the economy even today has shown slow development in this vital downtown region, perhaps further delayed by conflicts between city officials who resisted community benefits and county officials who owned most of the eland, Good Jobs persevered.

Now the coalition looks pretty darn smart. Insisting on high standards and local employment sent some questionable companies away but was hardly a negative, as the area is attracting better companies willing to put their own skin into the game. Leaving aside the rewards for businesses, Fendt has long insisted on quicker rewards for the community, which should benefit from such TIFs (tax incremental financing) not just in future property tax but also in ongoing employment.

Good Jobs turned quickly to working with religious and union groups and sympathetic aldermen to develop the MORE

Ordinance, a series of commitments to family-supporting wages and basic community benefits beyond the Park East, wherever the city invests a million dollars or more in taxpayer money to private enterprise. There is a potential echo impact of that approach in even smaller TIFs but all TIFs obviously require groups like Good Jobs to keep a careful watch on the games the city plays in its own business relationships. The ordinance gives the community the teeth to bite in.

What Fendt did -- along with departed activists such as Jennifer Epps (now studying in Madison for her law degree) and Todd Sprewer who attended -- was galvanize residential support and community and political action around the goal.. It was quite a change in public policy that could provide even longer-range benefits, as Kraig recounted. Fendt modestly accepted the award on behalf of her co-workers and urged the community to continue meaningful progress.

Kraig mentioned something else in his introduction of Fendt that inadvertently tied in to the honor being given to Lerman, a leader in the MPS Restorative

Justice project and also an assistant Milwaukee district attorney of considerable eloquence and personal inspiration. His commitment to troubled youth has helped improve circumstances that also troubled the Good Jobs people when they started.



Justice project and also an assistant Milwaukee district attorney of considerable eloquence and personal inspiration. His commitment to troubled youth has helped improve circumstances that also troubled the Good Jobs people when they started.

Economic distress may be new to many in the US given the white collar bubbles of disaster in housing and on Wall Street in 2008, and the required bailouts of banks and auto companies, but it has hardly been new to Milwaukee's central city, Kraig noted, where manufacturing has evaporated, opportunities crumbled, white flight weakened the economic basis, drugs abounded, and joblessness and despair became entrenched for decades.

The poverty, broken homes and everyday violence obviously did more to cause failing schools that anything happening in the schools, but it became up to those schools to rescue young people from anger and communi-

ty loathing. While many in Wisconsin gave up, washed their hands of young people or even blamed them, enter Lerman and the commitment to the power of restoration and healing, which he has taught in classes and workshops extending even to foreign shores.

Some beneficiaries of his devotion and faith in them -- students from Custer and Vincent high schools, Jabash and Sylvanus -- shared their personal experiences with Lerman and a bit of his practical tools, a demonstration unexpected by the honoree. Suddenly the guests were turned into guinea pigs as the students made people stand up, pick some other guests they didn't know, share details of their lives and concerns and simply start a dialog. It was a taste of how Lerman opens people up, noted MPS teacher Michael Hoffman who discussed how Lerman could get students to explore anger and problems as they had never done before.



MPS students lead guests in a restorative justice exercise.

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Gala recharges MPS

Divisiveness was banished from the halls of the Marshall Academic Campus, as it is now known. Calls for desperately-needed cooperation took center stage at the auditorium May 1 for a three hour celebration of the importance of children and a welcome to the new superintendent of Milwaukee public schools, Gregory Thornton.

Several speakers conjured up as informal slogan the remark that had been a constant refrain of Rep. Gwen Moore (D-Wis.) at every turn of the ongoing debate about how to run the Milwaukee public schools and where the power should lie. That refrain: "All hands on deck!"

And May 1 was about the need for such a promise to the future among sometime warring politicians, educators, parents, children and the community at large. Now all hands were being told to show up and pull together. They were told largely in music and dance by impressive children and school staffs.

Still, several ironies should not escape attention, though only one of the moderators spoke openly and comfortably about the past disputes (citing past existence to try to make them stay buried). That moderator was Joel McNally, the outspoken columnist and radio commentator who,

along with his co-emcee, Cassandra, had been unceremoniously dumped by WMCS 1290, a loss of responsible community forum that many in the auditorium openly regretted and said again and again they want to reverse.

Without much detail, McNally mentioned the MPS dustups, which included Gov. Doyle and Mayor (now maybe future Gov.) Barrett pushing for the mayor to take charge of MPS, relegating the elected school board to a minor role. Neither the state legislature nor the involved public went along with the concept, and while there may be some openness to change the way and times of year the school board's nine members are elected,



Moderator Joel McNally served as truth-teller.

the Doyle tactic went down in disarray within his own party, though several Milwaukee legislators offered desperate compromises.

Recently, still looking to help and give the state superintendent more clout with schools that are deemed failing based on still questionable test results and other measuring sticks, the Democratic controlled legislature did throw Doyle a lame-duck bone.

It's a fairly benign bone emphasizing the state schools superintendent as a gateway to pressuring change, but it contains one provision still likely to engender controversy. The legislature simply mandated the end to tenure for principals, something the teachers would have howled had it been done to them. Another irony was that such tenure was on its way out in any case, given any version of who controls the future of MPS. The new bill needlessly upset several unions other than the teachers since it gave the legislature control of what has traditionally been a bargaining issue.

The principals have a union, so do the teachers, and each side is judged by different standards and seeks separate authority. So they are sometimes in conflict over contractual controls and who should run a troubled school



Vel Phillips, Gwen Moore and Barbara Toles (with school board member Terry Falk visible behind them) applauded the student performers and the new superintendent.

and how. But step back for a moment What the Marshall event surely demonstrated again and again was how well most principals and teachers, along with parents and students, do work together.

The new superintendent couldn't have found such a first class presentation if they didn't. It reminds all sides, one teacher told me, "Why local school staffs should be cautious about any power given to Madison."

What the MPS really needs from the state, many at the Marshall gathering suggested, was the money long promised to run an urban school system correctly.

Obviously, some disputes still continue in the background. Out front, though, the big one has clearly diminished. The MPS board gets to choose its CEO.

And here's another irony: While it is too early to know what sort of a superintendent Thornton will be, on paper by every measure of accomplishment, intellect and concern he actually fits like a glove with what Doyle, Barrett and even the Obama administration would clearly want. So it was notable that while cooperation filled Marshall, absent were prominent representatives from the three leading candidates for governor. One of them will have to work closely with Thornton and the MPS board and its unanimously re-elected president, Michael Bonds. At least if you agree with Moore that all hands should be on deck for the children.

None of that should distract from the unity theme and the enthusiasm of those in attendance, including state legislators who had been in occasional disagreement, by high level aides of the state superintendent, by a majority of the MPS board, and administrators, parents and teachers -- even many whose children weren't performing.

Departing superintendent, William Andrekopoulos offered a warm welcome to his July replacement. Even the term "mayoral" had departed from the name of the sponsoring group, now simply the Coalition to Stop the MPS Takeover.

Called to the stage, Moore slyly introduced the real concern in providing the sufficient funding and sufficient insight into achievement.

"If you want to see a failed school," she reminded the crowd, "it's one without an arts program." And it is such training that's under the knife as the MPS cuts teachers and special programs to protect the math, science and reading the legislature is fixated on.

You might wonder if we continue to fail our children by taking away the arts and extra-curriculars because they are not central to America's mission in the world. Aren't they? The Custer High Drum Line included several members who are college bound on academic ability. The championship Vincent High School girls' basketball team introduced on the stage included top academics and college careers beyond athletic scholarships. The impish youngsters of the 35th St. School Choir and the Vieau School dancers are also the best classroom workers.

The same academic realities underlay performances by the MPS citywide African drum and dance ensemble, the Morse concert band positioned in front of the stage, the Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra jazz ensemble, the High School of the Arts soul dancers, and the Hmong American Peace Academy dancers. Will cutting such training make better thinkers and citizens?

Adults also got into the entertainment act with a rousing gospel-tinged invocation by the Majestic Community Choir.

Asking in all this was Thornton, who was also welcomed by adult speeches and by gifts from children. Even after several hours, he was facing a crowd hanging on his first public talk, even if it was only five minutes.

This was not a place to detail policy, but Thornton still touched on the frantic need to do much better in reading and he worried about the troubled neighborhoods "where too many kids are in charge of running the households."

But it was largely a warm, hands-open pep talk, filled with humor, compassion, strong family roots and mastery or language and ideas that will serve him well.

It was also a raw plea to the entire community:

"Help me save our babies."

--D.P.N.

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Clearly these kids should be seen AND heard

By **Dominique Paul Noth**
Editor, Labor Press

As student after student displayed their dancing, drumming and musical talents at the Marshall Academic Campus welcome to new MPS Superintendent Gregory Thornton, one enthusiastic presenter gushed, "If we could take these kids on the road, we could solve our money problems overnight."

I'm not sure. These students are talented and disciplined and well motivated by extraordinary teachers, but I've put 10 students through the MPS system (nine of them my own) and I understand full well the politics of school assembly programs, which are always too long, always two extended numbers when one short one would do.

This event was perfect for a new superintendent but in an era of "American Idol," overly held high notes, heightened electronic cacophony and acrobatic extremity on the dance floor, I suspect these kids who get an under-served gong. Nor was that the real purpose of what is always to me an eye-opening experience -- joy in watching such dedication from children we take for granted in our community.

As a teacher, I can also see the future Beyonce in the 12-year-old Hmong dancer, the next Wynton Marsalis in the jazz ensemble, even the next Flip Wilson cutting up in the back row of the chorus and the future Gene Krupa in the drum line. But what I also see is the involved audience member for all such performers in the future and the rounded citizens to bring cultural insight and understanding to a range of social issues.

You will find me in full agreement with those who believe you can't really teach math, science and reading without also teaching drawing, acting, dancing, singing, orchestration or whatever lights their fires. We are cutting our own throats by cutting so-called "peripheral" programs that not only give students the heart to go to school but make them infinitely better at all these subjects. If you don't believe me, go into any school and look at the grades and test scores of those engaged in the arts versus those who aren't. Look fast, because the arts programs are disappearing and probably taking the true students with them.

The business community itself is slowly beginning to realize some long-term limitations in programs that teach specific skills for a specific job rather than a rounded knowledge, what we used to call a liberal education. The price of all the for-profit private schools, claiming to be vocational or engineering but focused on a tight skill set degree, is not just the danger of siphoning off taxpayer money

Comment

Caught backstage: The children of 35 St. Choir and the dancers from Vieau School.



but encouraging ever narrower citizens who lack flexible lives and pretend to be educated. Until the chosen career abandons them.

We need to appreciate children as instruments of their own potential rather than future instruments of industry. That, more than anything else, should loom large wherever you encounter the kids, and it wasn't just at Marshall where they were the correct center of attention.

At the Wisconsin Community Fund event April 29, the entertainment was also provided by MPS students, spoken word artists (read poets) representing a number of schools. They were introduced by their first names -- Shakia, Alexi, Niko, Armando, Coco - and ranged from the well prepared to the impromptu. There were minds and emotions at work here. Even casual observers would have been struck with the folly of dismissing such young people with all the clichés of thoughtless, careless, untrustworthy, the full non-sensical litany.

Granted, several were on their best behavior, granted that the young have irrepressible emotions (thank heavens) and are not always controlled onstage or in front of a camera, but the level of articulation, thought, care, casual ability, expression and belief in themselves remained heart-stopping.

The kids didn't have to be

performing to have this impact. At other events, they could be fascinating, riding their bikes and imitating the speakers behind the stage at the immigration rally.

And sometimes their uncensored insights spoke volume about the disappointment of adult public policy. Waiting in Mitchell Park for the immigration rally to start, I met a young student, perhaps 12, whose mother he told me was afraid to come because "she didn't have papers." Moments later I saw him sidle up in comfort to a young adult wearing one of the simple white T-shirts with the



word "UNDOCUMENTED" proudly stenciled in black.

Another student wearing that shirt discussed how his younger siblings, born in this country, had full rights as citizens but because he was a toddler when his parents fled repression in South America, he may have the grades to go to college but is denied the special financial aid of his fellow graduates from a Milwaukee high school, many with poorer grades and no skills in more than one language.

At the same immigration rally, I met a redheaded, freckled-faced Marquette student who wondered aloud if Arizona would even have passed a law forcing local police to act

against illegal immigrants "if all the immigrants looked like me."

Listen to the kids. Look past their anger. Restore their hope.

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Among the Hmong dancers.



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Indignation fuels May 1 rally



It seemed disruptive mischief when a trash bin parked against Voces de la Frontera became a fireball May 1 just as speakers kicked off the annual immigration reform event.

On the blotter it remained unexplained even 10 days later. The impact was limited when a brave police officer pulled the flaming bin away from the wall. The smoke, however, eliminated some introductory speakers at a nearby stage on S. 5th St -- but curtailing those speeches may have speeded the event, laughed one of the bumped speakers, MALC's Sheila Cochran.

So the marchers took off with high spirits, this year not wending through Downtown Milwaukee but taking a clear shot down National Ave. to Mitchell Park, where food stands, American flags, music and microphones were waiting.

Passion and turmoil tend to inflate numbers as well as confusion. At one point the marchers were in tight rows sidewalk to sidewalk, covering nine blocks, leading Voces to estimate 65,000 but other experienced crowd mavens estimated about half that.

Difficulty of count increased as many folks joined and left along the way, thousand dispersing just before thousands more streamed over the hills to the stage at Mitchell Park.

But two national issues were boiling up the feelings on this May 1. One was the changing fortunes of immigration legislation in D.C. The other was, simply, Arizona.

Immigration reform would establish a legal path to citizenship for many long in the country who are willing to accept penalties and end a shadow existence. It recognizes that most undocumented in America work hard at jobs others seldom want, or provide entrepreneurial opportunities that others don't have the skills to do, actually do pay taxes far more than they cost taxpayers (by every respected survey) and pay a high price in reduced wages to keep their families together.

There are bipartisan bills in the works and surprising agreement that the current laws are contradictory and unworkable. There is also political impotence and fear -- at one time even

John McCain supported reform before he became threatened on the extreme right.

President Obama was pushing other legislation to go first, but Latino voters are pushing right back, anxious to convince him by an outpouring of national support for reform. Obama said out loud a month ago that he feared Congress had "no appetite" to try because of that partisanship.

But Arizona and other events may have created the appetite, since in May Obama said he wanted to do immigration reform this year.

There's a growing recognition that goon enforcement measures don't work, Not as America sends more guns south that it gets immigrants, not when walls designed to stop immigrants have simply shifted children to drown in border reservoirs ("60 Minutes" did a depressing expose). American trade policy has devastated farm work in South America causing more to emigrate -- and let's confess, America's thirst for illicit drugs has confounded the legal remedies.

Into this melee stepped Arizona with a law that even many conservatives concede is bad and probably more illegal than the immigrants it attacks. It clearly was the underpinning for many speeches at the May 1 rally here -- anger at Arizona's decision to turn local police into immigration agents unable to work with local communities. The language of the bill puts every darker-skinned passerby in danger of local police attention. In Arizona, 30% of the population is Latino, many legal.

Even as Constitutional lawyers gathered to attack this

A suspicious fire smoked away planned speakers such as Sheila Cochran but she paused to help lead Catholic priest Bill Brennan to his wheelchair and safety after he gave the invocation.

LEFT: Cat Reed was among the speakers who invigorated thousands of marchers at the Mitchell Park stage.



strange law and the US Justice Department is investigating taking action, Arizona tried to escape with an oops, modifying the law ineffectually and confirming that it knew it had gone too far.

Bypassing any pretense of balance in state and federal coordination, the bill would give each Arizona law enforcement office and public official the duty to determine and enforce immigration law, even transforming civil violations into Arizona criminal offenses where none exist under federal law. Local Arizona police are neither trained or want to be in racial profiling and immigration herding. Even the Phoenix Suns protested by donning Cinco de Mayo shirts in their playoff game.

Mexico and other US states and even cities such as Milwaukee have urged conventions and organizations to avoid Arizona as a destination. There are calls for a boycott of Arizona.

The gaps in national immigration rules and the clearly racial tone of Arizona's laws are yet another case of attacking children and families, noted Cat Reed, one of the speakers at Mitchell Park and the union leader of the Midwest Airlines

flight attendants, who were among the 800 local workers the company let go when it was taken over by Republic/Frontier. Reed is now working on stronger union representation for the Frontier flight attendants, and she pulled no punches in her distaste for a law the "defies justice and pulls families and communities apart."

Many other speakers championed reform, including Rep. Gwen Moore, the new head of the MATC, President Michael Burke, and state legislators Pedro Color and Josh Zepnick.

Absent public officials drew hisses and jeers. One was no surprise, Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner, the Waukesha Republican who back in 2005 offered a bill to jail or deport some 12 million immigrants. The crowd clearly labeled him as the, er, illegitimate father of the Arizona bill.

But boos also greeted every reference to a local Democratic state senator, Tim Carpenter, regarded as a turncoat after he announced and then reversed support for such issues as limited Driver IDs for foreign nationals -- at a time when Latinos make up 42% of the state's dairy workforce.

-- D.P.N.

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BELOW: Few lives are as inspirational as Minnie Joy's, a felon who pulled herself out of a druggie life through construction training and now is a leading team player in Laborers Local 113. Spread the word, she told the audience, that unions are where "you get a second chance - we don't tell folks that enough." And join her in deliberate sojourns back out into the streets, because her joy is in finding people in despair "and just talking to them so they see life can be different and people do care."



Her story was one of several examples and informational talks that dominated the African American Leadership and Community Summit April 17 at Laborers Local 113 where an attentive crowd (bottom right) also heard how hard work and lucky contacts led Eyon Biddle (below left) into ever larger roles in unions and political action. Carrie Hersh of WRTP (below) also explained the new Triad program helping connect people to jobs while Arthur Wynn (bottom) expounded on the community health and good food involved in the ProStart Culinary Arts program.

A useful Summit of information



As moderator Anthony Rainey listened, AFL-CIO field liaison Jay Reinke detailed frightening and revealing data from a Community Services convention about how badly America's trade policies are hurting workers here and around the world.



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The guest lists came from all walks of life



Among the varied names found chatting at the Wisconsin Community Fund April 29: Retired DA E. Michael McCann with puppet troupe leader Max Samson and (right) ACLU's Chris Ahmuty.



Entertainment for this event was provided by a series of impressive spoken word poets from MPS (photos above).



Several sorts of diversity struck Labor Press in the face during a mammoth round of mainly positive events covered in this issue.

Look at the people! Of course, union activists know several of them, but some are new, some qualify as famous, others are unknown agents of change and promise.

So get the guests. And as you explore our stories, note how many places we found them in.



A former SEIU leader who has emerged as a leading expert on health care legislation, Wisconsin Citizen Action's Robert Kraig shared a table with longtime friend, political director Matt Brusky. **Below:** Current DA John Chisholm was looking forward to a private lunch with union leaders.



With leaders from Madison to his right, his own grown children around him, school board members and administrators at his back and (not visible) public officials and community leaders in the row in front, new MPS Supt. Gregory Thornton (brown suit) did not seem the least bit troubled at the celebration in his honor May 1.



Three veteran union leaders got together at the AFT reception honoring teacher strike veterans from 41 years ago. Left to right are SEIU's Bruce Coburn, Local 212 President Michael Rosen and Phil Neuenfeldt, state AFL-CIO secretary-treasurer.



At another table could be found: Linda Honold and her husband, Reynolds (she once chaired of the Wisconsin Democratic Party and now directs Wisconsin Voices, which advocates for progressive public policy with a number of emerging groups).

Women's undies expose US tariffs

Sarcasm and invective you'll find aplenty at partisan web sites, but what a pleasant surprise to find some hard research and a real sense of humor nestled at the Democratic Leadership Council's portal, www.dlc.org. Particularly when it uses female undies to explore tariffs.

The DLC web columnist quickly debunks that focusing on women's underwear is some sort of "sensational crowd-pleasing scandal." It actually makes a point about jumping to conclusions.

At first blush, tariffs on intimate apparel suggest a startling tilt against women and girls. The simple numbers reveal that women's silks and cottons get tariff tax rate 0.2% higher than men's, and the premium is 0.7% on women's polyesters. No such tilt appears in the tariff systems of Europe, India, Japan, China and Mexico.

This is no small profit deal. Lingerie tariffs brought in about \$400 million in 2009 in a \$21 billion tariff system, representing about two cents in each tariff dollar. Men's underwear? A limp \$40 million.

A closer look reveals a statistical anomaly rather than misogyny. Bathing suits reverse the tariffs -- higher for men and boys. Men's and women's shirts are taxed equally, as are leather jackets and pants. So there is no clear pro-man or pro-woman pattern.

But what the tariff pricing does reveal -- and women's undies draw attention to the reality -- is that the real tilt favors wealthy shoppers against low-income families. Tariffs quietly discriminate against the less well-off in how they are set up. The current system is especially regressive, since - in virtually all consumer goods, from plates and spoons to luggage, shirts and shoes -- rates are highest on cheap products like polyester and lowest on exotic luxuries like the silks.

Tariffs on cars raised \$1.2 billion, on oil and gasoline \$210 million, on jewelry \$182 million and on steel \$50 million. In contrast, total clothing tariffs raised \$8.3 billion in 2009 and shoes \$1.7 billion. And which of the five major tax groups is costing low-income families the most? More than income, payroll, excise and estate -- tariffs tax low-income families at higher rates than middle-class and wealthy families, a bial that has sharpened in the last 20 years.

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New rules do ride rails

This changes everything for air and rail workers. On May 10, after long deliberation and relentless resistance from transportation CEOs, the National Mediation Board (NMB) agreed that choosing a union would have rules in line with democratic principles.

For decades, the deck has been stacked against workers covered under the Rail Labor Act (RLA) because every worker who did not cast a vote in a representation election was automatically counted as a "No" vote. The new NMB rule says that an election's outcome will be decided by the majority of votes cast, just like every other election, from city council to the presidency.

Patricia Friend, the departing president of the Flight Attendants-CWA (AFA-CWA), promised fresh filings within 30 days (when the new rules become effective) on the newly merged Delta-Northwest where the company has used the old rules to block majority vote. Friend noted that for decades her flight attendants and other aviation and rail workers "have faced significant obstacles in their quest for collective bargaining rights."

Outdated voting procedures have fostered a unique culture of suppression as companies understand that impeding union organizing merely requires preventing employees from voting. Employers and their outside union-busting companies have been allowed to engage in the most undemocratic practices by openly encouraging workers to destroy ballots and to not vote, the AFL-CIO has pointed out.

Those days are now over. The change in rules guarantees only workers who cast a vote will be counted - which ensures greater fairness in union elections and requires those opposed to unions to work just as hard as those who want a union, out in the open and requiring real votes. Janette Rook, AFA-CWA Northwest president, simply said: "Democracy won today."



High or low, gotta cook!

Celebrations can't seem to exist without food, but that's only the start of the choice. High cuisine or down home? Sell the food or give it away? APRI went with home-made fund-raising April 30, selling 200 fish fry dinners by volunteers at Laborers Hall kitchen. The same day, Local 212 went with Potawatomi catering, replete with groaning dessert trays and simmering hot tables. Both were to die for. High cuisine ruled at the Milwaukee Public Market and other events. But home-made vegetable and chicken dishes (below right) greeted guests at WisCOSH's annual workers day meat at the Postal Workers Hall while , the immigration rally (below) sold tickets for home style Mexican.



Calendar

For updated master list of events, visit www.milwaukeealabor.org

Wednesday, June 2

Monthly Delegate Meeting
6:30 p.m., Serb Hall, 5101 W. Oklahoma Ave.

Saturday, June 5

First MALC Fund-Raiser
Keynote Gwen Moore, Emcee Eric Von
5 p.m., registration, dinner, awards, festivities
Crystal Ballroom, Hilton City Center, 509 W. Wisconsin

Monday, June 14

Laborfest Planning Meeting
5 p.m., 633 S. Hawley Rd.

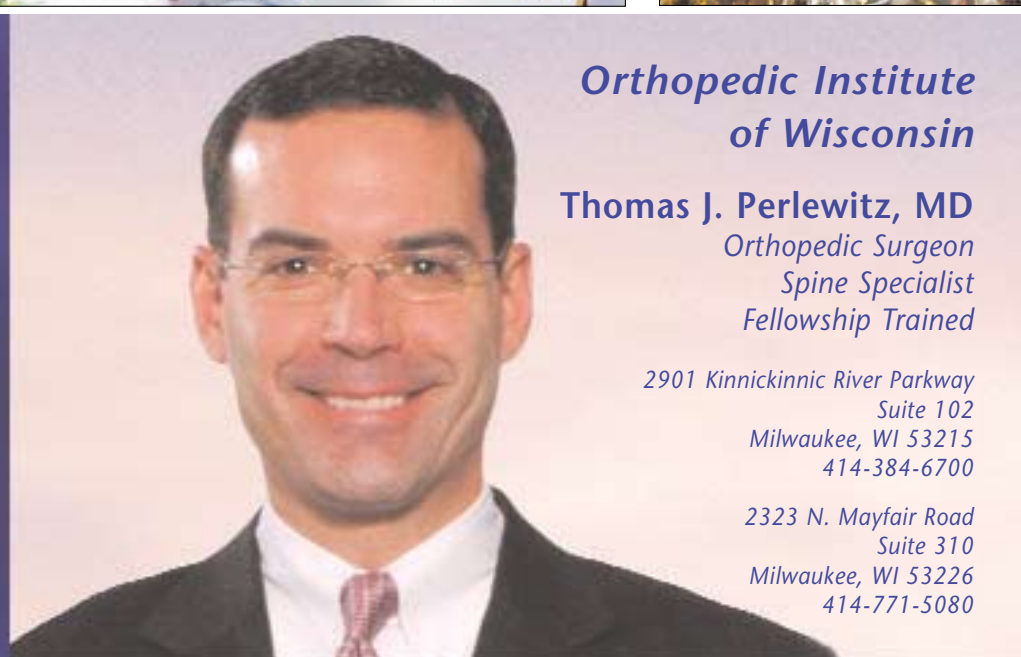
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TRAIN WE MUST
Union members, leaders and stewards from around the state (below) crowded into an all-day training session on political campaigning and worker organizing at Yatchak Hall near the Milwaukee labor council April 16. David Carpio, Sue Ledbetter (right) and other AFL-CIO specialists led the workshop, held here and in Green Bay.



Beware Walker trade-offs

One reason AFSCME District Council 48 has organized the "Doom and Gloom" rallies that precede County Executive Scott Walker's listening sessions on his budget proposals -- a recent group of protesters May 10 (photo above) bringing honks of empathy from cars speeding past the Elks Lodge at 55th and Good Hope Rd.-- is **LEFT:** You'll find Rick Kissell, noted activist, political candidate and former head of the AFL-CIO Translators' & Interpreters Guild, attending community events carrying a handsome framed artifact with a union label under his arm. It's a limited edition Socialist timeline available for \$106 (including area delivery) for union halls and other walls from Kissell, Box 110, Milwaukee, WI 53201 or rick@kissell.org. Framed one foot high and three feet wide, and soon available in Spanish, the photographic poster of "Milwaukee's Socialist Heritage" runs from the Haymarket/Bay View massacres of May, 1886 up to Frank Zeidler's mayoral retirement in 1960.

All Milwaukee events photos in this newspaper by Dominique Paul Noth of the Labor Press and Sue Ruggles of AFT Local 212.

Scott Walker's entire concept of "trade-offs." You remember "trade-offs"? That was the admission of Walker's mental health chief to explain why he continued to house male mental patients with violent tendencies with women inmates. His trade-off was the women had a calming effect that maybe sometimes resulted in sexual assaults on them, a lingering condition that alarmed both county supervisors and the union nurses at the center who have long lodged complaints about the safety issues. Another trade-off is dying busses. The main complaint of residents at Walker's sessions is the current cutback in service and the threat that without dedicated funding, a regional transit authority and federal aid -- all the solutions he has opposed -- the busses were headed for a disaster next year. Trying to sidetrack that, Walker announced just before the listening session that he would fund busses at their current (reduced and inefficient) level by accepting the federal money he long rejected. At least for a year, he says. This is the sort of trade-off -- some say politically convenient two-face -- that county workers hope to make the public see looming ahead yet another bad budget. -- D.P.N.

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