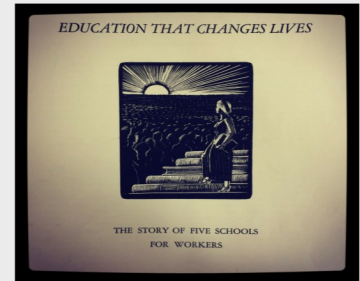


A ROADMAP: Women's Labor Leadership Education

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Women make up
**45.9% of union
membership**

YET....



Women are underrepresented in union leadership

18.2% - AFL-CIO, Executive Board
25.7% - AFSCME, Vice-Presidents
38.1% - CWA, Executive Board
42.9% - AFT, Vice Presidents
50.0% - SEIU, Leadership
60.0% - UNITE HERE, General Officers (1)

"...closing the gender gap is critical to union's futures." (2)

"understanding oneself as a person with power in an organizational setting" (3)

Are there "...re-emerging challenges to the legitimacy of women-only spaces and the diminishing room for women to come together to build skills, discuss issues, and develop strategies"? (4)

Women's labor education began in Chicago in the early 20th century.

The Bryn Mawr School for Women Workers is one of the most well-know programs running from 1921-1938 and then moved to the Hudson Valley.

The schools ran in the summer and offered classes in liberal arts as well as a respite from industrial labor in the city.



In 1976, the first UALE (then UCLEA) women's summer school was held at the University of Connecticut. There are now four regional summer schools affiliated with UALE as well as numerous regional women's schools. For example, since 1988 the Regina V. Polk Women's Labor Leadership Conference has been educating women workers in Illinois and beyond. The role of the union women's committee has evolved over time. Today, many United Steel Worker districts such as District 7 are building their Women of Steel program to include a 4 year WOS Leadership Certificate to increase women's representation in their union.

Current Research Project & Methodology

A book length project that examines women's labor leadership education from a transnational perspective. The main research question: What role does feminism play in women's labor leadership education? Is a feminist pedagogical approach critical to increasing the percentage of women in local, national, and international leadership roles within organized labor?

+ Longitudinal study of the USW District 7 Women of Steel Initiative through a electronic survey and series of oral interviews

+ Continuing survey of past, current, and future participants of The Polk School

+ Transnational study of the role and influence of explicitly feminist pedagogy in women's labor leadership education in the UK, Canada, and Australia

**'We cannot succeed
when half of us are
held back.'
Malala Yousafzai**

1/ IWPR, "Status of Women in the States," August 2015.

2/Hansen and Ledwith, "A Diverse Trade Union Leadership," Gendering and Diversifying Trade Union Leadership (Routledge, 2013).

3/ Kaminski and Yakura, "Union Women's Leadership," Working USA, 2008

4/ Briskin, "Victimisation and agency," Industrial Relations Journal 37:4