

PROPOSAL TO HOST A REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON LABOR'S ROLE AT THE GRASSROOTS AT CSU EAST BAY

The Southwest Labor Studies Association (SWLSA) is an organization of academics, labor unionists, and community activists. The purpose of the SWLSA is to explore and promote public understanding of both the labor movement's heritage and current undertakings, and of workers' experiences on the job and in the community.

Each year the SWLSA organizes a conference, the 34th Annual Conference was held in April 2008, at Cal Poly Pomona. As a board member of SWLSA, Professor Kim Geron has been asked to host the 35th conference. A planning committee of faculty and students has begun meeting to plan for a conference on May 14-15, 2009 at CSU East Bay.

The Working Theme for the Conference is Labor's role at the Grassroots. The basic idea of the conference is to involve and educate the campus community, particularly students, in how unions and community based organizations, in conjunction with local governments and leaders, are working to address issues of concern for working families and new immigrants. A special focus will be on the East Bay region to highlight local issues affecting working people and how they are being addressed. In addition, another goal is to involve students and the campus community in organizing the conference, incorporating the rich talent pool we have available on this campus to highlight the theme of work.

While the exact format has not been finalized, the basic format is to have a welcome and brief overview at the beginning of the day, followed up concurrent morning workshops, lunch and lunch speaker, afternoon workshops, a late afternoon plenary for all conference participants, and a dinner and cultural program. If possible we will have a film showing the evening before with a contemporary film around the theme of labor with the director of the film. Suggested ideas for workshops include: a student panel based on readings focused on labor; a workshop on community based efforts to address health, environmental, and workplace violations; immigrant workers, and other possible topics to be determined. Faculty members in the Dance and Theater programs are also interested involving their students in the program. We also anticipate at least two classes with 60+ students that will devote a major portion of their courses to working on and planning the conference: POSC 3419 Labor Policy and Law, and a Sociology course on Inequality.

This conference will also be an opportunity to highlight our campus to working people and others in the East Bay community. We anticipate the attendance of unions and members of the SWLSA from Bay Area and beyond. We also hope to make it a job fair for students seeking jobs and internships in unions and community based organizations who deal directly with workers.

We are looking for co-sponsors and financial support to provide food (breakfast, lunch and dinner) and rooms for workshops in the university union for the conference.

Thanks,

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