Stephanie's Union Media Rec List

*means I haven't read it yet but am planning to

Organizing:

- *No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age* by Jane McAlevey
    - An important read from the late veteran union organizer, *No Shortcuts* examines several organizing campaigns across the US, and what those campaigns needed to succeed over the bosses and other forces stacked against them. From nursing homes to meatpacking plants, overcoming racial prejudice and a variety of union-busting tactics, this is a great case study of how workers have organized and stood together to win big gains.
- *A Collective Bargain: Unions, Organizing, and the Fight for Democracy* by Jane McAlevey
    - Jane McAlevey, who recently passed away from cancer, was a passionate veteran union organizer who helped drive unionization efforts across the country. *A Collective Bargain* examines the way that the skills of union organizing, which require deep engagement and personal connection, are lacking in many left-leaning political organizations. She argues that building communities the way unions do is necessary to provide the left with a built-in power structure equivalent to the unofficial Republican powerhouses of the evangelical church and the NRA. Featuring case studies of different organizing efforts across the country, from meat-packing plants to hospitals, the book shows how building a strong union in a single workplace can push whole communities in a more progressive direction.
- *Practical Radicals: Seven Strategies to Change the World* by Deepak Bhargava and Stephanie Luce*
- *Solidarity: The Past, Present, and Future of a World-Changing Idea* by Leah Hunt-Hendrix and Astra Taylor*
- *Imagine! Living in a Socialist USA, edited by Frances Goldin, Debby Smith, and Michael Steven Smith**
- *Loving Corrections* by adrienne maree smith
- *We Will Not Cancel Us* by adrienne maree smith

Fiction:

- *Hunger Makes the Wolf* and *Blood Binds the Pack* by Alex Wells
    - This thrilling sci-fi/western duology is inspired by the Colorado Coal Wars. Set in a distant future where massive corporations own entire planets, a group of miners and outlaws must band together against the company that would rather see them dead than cede them any power. Chock full of badass psychics who

run motorcycle gangs, queer union organizers, and terrifying, uncanny-valley company men, this is a fantastic read to take your mind out of our current mess and into one that has a guaranteed happy ending.

- *The Factory Witches of Lowell* by C. S. Malerich
    - This wonderful novella retells the real Lowell strike as a queer and magical event, where young women use a dying brand of magic to ensure none of their fellow workers will leave the picket line once their strike has been called.
- *Audacity* by Melanie Crowder
    - This YA historical-in-verse is a thrilling retelling of the early life of Clara Lemlich, a Russian Jewish immigrant who, as a teenager, helped organize other girls and women into garment workers' unions and led the Uprising of the 20,000, a huge strike in 1909 that won better pay and working conditions as well as shorter hours.
- *For the Win* by Cory Doctorow*
    - In this near-future novel, MMORPG "gold farmers" in electronic sweatshops, bound to their work by abusive contracts and physical threats, harvest virtual treasure for their employers to sell to First World gamers. But when a mysterious young woman begins to organize the workers to fight for better conditions, the farmers come together to build a movement that can challenge the exploitative status quo. A thrilling story that's both escapist and timely.
- *Bea is for Blended* by Lindsey Stoddard
    - A middle grade novel about a girl whose sexist soccer coach leads her to band together with her teammates to demand better treatment.
- *Uprising* by Margaret Petersen Haddix (YA) *
- *Meet Me at the Picket Line* by Jasper Sanchez
    - A charming rom-com about a group of teens who decide to unionize their workplace when their summer jobs at the museum for a Star Trek-esque cult-classic TV show don't live up to their expectations.
- *Compound Fracture* by Andrew Joseph White (YA)
    - A visceral and thrilling YA horror novel about a trans boy in rural Appalachia facing ghosts, bigots, and cops and finding solidarity in unlikely places. Rooted deeply in West Virginian worker activism and modern leftist movements in Appalachia. Do read the trigger warnings.

History:

- *There is Power in a Union: The Epic Story of Labor in America* by Philip Dray
    - A dense and thorough history of union organizing in America, from New England textile mills to modern labor campaigns. Especially interesting and relevant even today is the push and pull between centrist and progressive wings of the labor movement, and the conflict between respectability politics and real change.
- *A History of America in Ten Strikes* by Erik Loomis
    - An accessible and fascinating nonfiction account of ten work stoppages that made an incredible difference to the history of our nation, from mill girls' strikes in

the 1830s to auto workers' strikes in the 1930s, from enslaved people laying down their tools in the 1860s to modern movements like Justice for Janitors. A great look at the way collective action gets things done in a way nothing else can.

- *Common Sense and A Little Fire: Women and Working-Class Politics in the United States 1900-1965* by Annelise Orleck
    - While dense at times (it is an academic text), this is a fascinating and thorough deep dive into the lives of the women organizers who led the charge of the labor movement throughout the first half of the 20th century. Young immigrants all, Rose Schneidermann, Clara Lemlich Shavelson, Fannia Cohn, and Pauline Newman played major roles in protests, strikes, the suffrage movement, and other activist turning points. (Also worth noting that, excepting Shavelson, they were all queer or speculated to be so.) Additionally, it juxtaposes the fights of these historical figures with the ongoing fights of garment workers abroad today—a struggle that continues to disproportionately affect young women.
- *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* by Robin D. G. Kelley*
    - This book tells the story of how Black sharecroppers, poor laborers, and some white industrial workers formed a Communist coalition not rooted in Euro-American ideas of Communism to fight against the racist poverty and deep social inequality of the 1930s and 1940s rural South. Kelley wrote a new preface for the 25th anniversary edition that frames the Communists' struggle within the context of modern antiracist and social justice movements.
- *Radium Girls: The Dark Story of America's Shining Women* by Kate Moore
    - A tragic but fascinating story of science, medical investigation, sexism, and workers' rights within the watch-painting workforce of young women in the early 1900s. After being instructed to help point their paintbrushes with their lips, women using the radium-based glowing paint used by their employers developed horrible cancers that were first dismissed as STDs. Their fight to prove that their work had been what made them sick, and to prove that the employers knew the risks and were downplaying or lying about them, lasted years and outlasted the lives of some of the sick women. However, their brave and determined efforts eventually led to the creation of worker's compensation programs and OSHA.
- *A Renegade Union: Interracial Organizing and Labor Radicalism* by Lisa Ann Wunderlich Phillips
    - A detailed academic look at the history of District 65, the predecessor union to the current UAW Local 2110 in NYC, founded by Jewish organizers who wanted to organize people in wholesaling and other small industries who typically wouldn't have unions in the early 1900s.
- *The Hammer: Power, Inequality, and the Struggle for the Soul of Labor* by Hamilton Nolan*
- *Fight Like Hell: The Untold History of American Labor* by Kim Kelly*

Picture Book

- *Brave Girl: Clara and the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909* by Michelle Markel, illustrated by Melissa Sweet
    - It's never too early to learn about organizing! This charming picture book—published by Harper—documents the story of teen organizer Clara Lemlich, who helped organize over 20,000 primarily female garment workers to strike against unfair and inhumane conditions and showed that even a young girl can push through massive change in our country through direct action.
- *The Golden Thread,* written by Colin Meloy and illustrated by Nikki McClure*
    - This book is about the life of folk singer, communist, and union activist Pete Seeger. (The title comes from "Oh, Had I A Golden Thread," a song he wrote while visiting some Marxist friends in Colorado.) He was a cofounder of the Weavers, a popular folk group that was blacklisted during the McCarthy years; Seeger avoided jail time on a technicality when he refused to testify to HUAC on his personal, political, and spiritual beliefs, believing it violated his First Amendment rights. He co-wrote "If I Had a Hammer," helped popularize "We Shall Overcome" as a civil rights anthem, was active in the anti-war movement, taught children how to sing, inspired generations of musicians across the world, and founded the Hudson River Sloop Clearwater with his wife, Toshi, a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting the Hudson River watershed.

YA:

- *Shift Happens: The History of Labor in the United States* by J. Albert Mann (I edited this!)
    - Long before the first labor unions were formed, workers still knew what exploitation looked like. It looked like the enslavement of Black people. It looked like generations of children dying in dangerous jobs. It looked like wealthy people hiring private militaries to attack their employees. But workers have always found a way to fight back. Lokono tribespeople resisted Columbus and his colonizers. Enslaved people led walkouts and rebellions. Textile workers demanded a wage that would let them have fun, not just survive. Miners died for the right to unionize. From 30,000 young seamstresses striking in the early 1900s to Uber drivers organizing for change today, people have learned we're stronger when we are united. *Shift Happens* is a smart, funny, and engaging look at the history of the worker actions that brought us weekends, pay equality, desegregation, an end to child labor, and so much more.

Memoir:

- *On the Books: A Graphic Tale of Working Woes at NYC's Strand Bookstore* by Greg Farrell

    - A funny and informative recounting of the 2012 contract negotiations between Strand Bookstore management and its union, which is part of UAW Local 2179. The book provides an accessible and entertaining look at the difficulties that can arise during negotiations and the strategies union members can use to fight back--and readers familiar with longtime Strand booksellers may recognize some familiar faces.
- *Neon Girls: A Stripper's Education in Protest and Power* by Jennifer Worley
    - A compelling and quick read, *Neon Girls* chronicles the struggles of one young queer woman in San Francisco who quits book publishing (ha!) to work at a peep show that pays twice as much for half the time. But her new job has its own problems, and she realizes that the best way to fix it is to band together with the other women she works with to form the world's first strippers' union. An inspiring and sex-work positive story about workers realizing their collective power.
- *Raising Expectations (and Raising Hell): My Decade Fighting for the Labor Movement* by Jane McAlevey
    - A great read/case study about McAlevey's time organizing hospital workers in Las Vegas, chock full of organizing wisdom and interesting history about organizing in the Bush years and the ways personal relationships and big personalities can affect unions.
- *On the Line: A Story of Class, Solidarity, and Two Women's Epic Fight to Build a Union* by Daisy Pitkin:
    - A close history of the fight to build a laundry workers' union among an underserved population - Latinx workers in the southwest US. This one I recommend with a grain of salt because I feel like the (white, non-Spanish-speaking) author's decision to write in second person, addressing the Latinx woman she worked with during the campaign, felt a little white guilt-y? But it's an interesting read nevertheless.

PODCAST RECS:

- *Behind the Bastards*: History of Northern Policing; The Hawk Nest Tunnel Disaster
- *Sawbones*: Black Lung
- *Unobscured* Season 3: While ostensibly a deep dive into the case of Jack the Ripper, this well-researched historical podcast widens its lens to paint a picture of the larger state of London at the time, including massive labor unrest spearheaded by women workers. For a specific look at just the circumstances of women on strike, check out the bonus episode "INTERVIEW: Louise Raw" to hear Dr. Raw discuss her investigations into the forgotten history of London's matchwomen.
- *Criminal*: Ep 163, about labor spies and the Pacific longshoremans' union
- Stuff You Missed in History Class: The Flint Sit-Down Strike; 1946 Oakland General Strike

Jen Mann's Recommendations:

**Not available at Queens Public Library

Further Reading, Learning, Following Suggestions:

BOOKS:

Children's:

A Long Time Coming by Ray Anthony Shepard -Young Adult NF includes Harriet Tubman
Before She Was Harriet by Lesa Cline-Ransome
Audacity by Melanie Crowder - Fiction of Clara Lemlich's life
Brave Girl by Michelle Markel - Picture Book NF about Clara Lemlich
Clara Lemlich by Deborah Heiligman - Picture Book
The Woman Who Demanded Justice, Dolores Huerta Stands Strong by Marlene Targ Brill

Adult:

Harriet Tubman: The Road to Freedom by Catherine Clinton
**Dolores Huerta: A Life in American History by April Tellez

Labor, History, and Economics:

Wage-Labor and Capital: Value, Price, and Profit by Karl Marx
Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880 by W.E.B. Du Bois
**Cry From the Cotton: The Southern Tenant Farmers' Union and the New Deal by Donald H. Grubs
**The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America by Lawrence Goldwyn
A People's History of the United States by Howard Zinn
Women, Race, & Class by Angela Davis
The Haymarket Tragedy by Paul Avrich
**Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry by Vicki L. Ruiz
**Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists during the Great Depression by Robin D. G. Kelley
**Inventing the Feeble Mind: A History of Intellectual Disability in the United States by James W. Trent
**Common Sense and a Little Fire: Women and the Working Class Politics in the United States by Annalise Orleck
**A Rhetoric of Remnants, Idiots, and Half-Wits, and Other State-Sponsored Inventions by Zosha Stuckey
**The Girl Who Dared to Defy: Jane Street and the Rebel Maids of Denver by Jane Botkin Little

**Radicals in the Barrio: Magonistas, Socialists, Wobblies, and Communists in the
**Mexican-American Working Class by Justin Akers Chacón
**Capitalism and Disability by Marta Russell
Keep the Wretches in Order: American's Biggest Mass Trial, the Rise of the Justice Department, and the Fall of the IWW by Dean Strang
**The Cost of Free Shipping: Amazon in the Global Economy by Jake Alimahomed-Wilson and Ellen Reese
Fight Like Hell: The Untold History of American Labor by Kim Kelly
On the Line: A Story of Class, Solidarity, and Two Women's Epic Fight to Build a Union by Daisy Pitkin

ALTERNATIVE JOURNALISM/SOCIAL MEDIA/PEOPLE:

More Perfect Union - an independent newsroom with a goal of building power for working people

Democracy Now - an independent news organization focusing on giving activists and citizens a voice

The Grio - an independent organization reporting on Black news and culture

ICT (Indian Country Today) - an independent news and culture organization serving Indigenous communities

The 19th - an independent newsroom reporting on gender, politics, and policy

Colorlines News - independent news working toward multiracial democracy

Middle East Eye - independent news reporting on the Middle East and North Africa

Al Jazeera - news organization reporting on the Middle East

PBS - non-profit educational and informative media organization

Working Class History - an independent organization giving voice to the international working class community

Labor Notes - news and media giving a voice to labor activists