

## [Correction on International Labor History Association Book of the Year Award Post](#)

Discussion published by Caroline Waldron on Monday, February 6, 2023

The International Labor History Association (ILHA) is pleased to announce its “Book of the Year Award” for 2022. The award this year is presented to two separate labor history volumes that the ILHA Board agreed deserved recognition for outstanding labor history: Chad E. Pearson, *Capital’s Terrorists. Klansmen, Lawmen, and Employers in the Long Nineteenth Century* (University of North Carolina Press, 2022), and Ahmed White, *Under the Iron Heel: The Wobblies and the Capitalist War on Radical Workers* (University of California Press, 2022). The ILHA offers the following brief reviews for interested readers and the public.

### Chad E. Pearson

In his book *Capital’s Terrorists*, Pearson seeks to elaborate the scope of labor exploitation at the hands of Klansmen, vigilantes, regional employer terror groups, and the official enablers of such labor repression in the United States during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. By unearthing the records of the Klansmen as well as the Law and Order Leagues, Pearson reveals the use of torture, murder, and vigilante violence throughout the post-Civil War South to repress union members of the Knights of Labor and other organizations in a drive to make the U.S. labor force compliant and docile while suppressing Black labor in particular.

Pearson’s work covers at least 17 different states and regions where organizations actively sought to eliminate, destroy, or otherwise terrorize labor supporters. By deploying tactics of management militarization, illegal kidnapping, incarceration, and brutality, leading figures of labor suppression are shown to be allied with employer groups such as the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM). Pearson documents the anti-labor roles played by judges, police, city and state politicians in anti-labor violence and strike-breaking, while pointing to anti-union organizations across the United States that engaged in confrontations and anti-strike actions, such as Citizens’ Alliance. U.S. ‘popular literature’ was even utilized by anti-union, anti-socialist, and pro-terrorist advocates and practitioners. One such writer, Owen Wister, produced novels and writings in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century that extolled vigilante violence against any movement that challenged corporate power, thereby

influencing public opinion in a way to justify extra-judicial murder and repression. Teaching history as Lecturer at the University of North Texas (Denton), Pearson provides abundant evidence to underscore his argument. He documents in detail the scope of illegal employer techniques such as whippings, kidnapping, arson, hangings, shootings, blacklisting, book burnings, and imprisonment to suppress labor organizing, to intimidate African American workers and any others fighting for worker rights, with an ultimate aim to increase employer profitability and control. The historical aftermath of such anti-union activities echoes down to our own time in U.S. culture that still too often tolerates anti-union campaigns, the firing of union organizers, and the victimization of those who seek union protections on the job. The ILHA is honored to recognize Pearson's solid and diligent research in his work, *Capital's Terrorists*.

#### Ahmed White

The Industrial Workers of the World, as Ahmed White's deeply important *Under the Iron Heel: The Wobblies and the Capitalist War on Radical Workers* (University of California Press, 2022) shows, mounted impressive efforts to educate rank-and-file workers across languages and skills. The organization's songs, cartoons, pamphlets, and stickers, as well as its flexible tactics and plain heroism, terrified employers and governments from the local to the local to the national level.

The drama begins with the activities of the workers themselves, showing how brutalities against them resulted in significant measure from an appreciation of the power, unity, and creativity they achieved. The movement's agitational materials showed a great awareness of the role of the state in, as White puts it, "protecting the business people," by suppressing speech, terrorizing organizers, dominating the courts, fostering deportations, and filling the jails and prisons. World War One and the subsequent "red scare" served, White's study demonstrates, both context and pretext to such attacks. *Under the Heel* thus gives readers a great drama and deep tragedy, in which union militants understood that they were in a contest with capital over power, in both the workplace and the society, but could not overcome sustained and combined assaults from capital, the state, and sometimes vigilantes as well. White writes as a legal scholar, teaching at University of Colorado's School of Law, but masterfully captures dramas well beyond the courtroom as well. The research for *Under the Heel* is multi-sited and prodigious, unearthing especially new materials on Kansas, a place of both conflict and repression. The International Labor History Association is proud to honor this riveting work, one that is critically important in showing that our own profoundly anti-labor system is one shaped not simply by

weakness of unions, but rather by the successful collaboration of capital and the state to, as the late historian and lawyer Staughton Lynd put it, outlaw solidarity.

Questions about the ILHA and its previous &gt;Book of the Year&lt; awards, may be directed to Ronald C. Kent, Editor, ILHA, 6802 Raymond Road Unit 206, Madison, WI 53719; [rckent121548@gmail.com](mailto:rckent121548@gmail.com).

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International Labor History Association

Ronald C. Kent, Editor

"The Cause of Labor is the Hope of the World" -- Walter Crane

### **The ILHA Book of the Year Award -- Listing of Awardees by Year:**

#### **1988**

- Beinen, Joel, with Zachary Lockman, *Workers on the Nile. Nationalism, Communism, Islam, and the Egyptian Working Class, 1882-1954* (Princeton University Press, 1988).

#### **1992**

- Holter, Daryl, *The Battle for Coal. Miners and the Politics of Nationalization in France, 1940-1950* (University of Northern Illinois Press, 1992).

#### **1993**

- Perry, Elizabeth J., *Shanghai on Strike: The Politics of Chinese Labor* (Princeton University Press, 1993).

#### **1996**

- Beik, Mildred Allen, *The Miners of Windber: The Struggles of New Immigrants for Unionization, 1890s-1930s* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996).

#### **1997**

- Hunter, Tera W., *To 'Joy My Freedom. Southern Black Women's Lives and Labor After the Civil War* (Harvard University Press, 1997).

#### **1999**

- Frank, Dana, *Buy American. The Untold Story of Economic Nationalism* (Beacon Press, 1999).

**2000**

- Rediker, Marcus, with Peter Linebaugh, *The Many-Headed Hydra. Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Beacon Press, 2000).

**2001**

- Green, Venus, *Race on the Line. Gender, Labor, and Technology in the Bell System, 1880-1980* (Duke University Press, 2001).

**2003**

- Brown, Carolyn A., *We Were All Slaves. African Miners, Culture, and Resistance at the Enugu Government Colliery* (Heinemann, 2003).

**2006**

- Green, James, *Death in the Haymarket* (Pantheon, 2006).

**2010**

- Beckman, Bjorn, with Sakhela Buhlungu and Lloyd Sachikonye, eds., *Trade Unions and Party Politics. Labour Movements in Africa* (HSRC Press: Cape Town, South Africa, 2010).

**2012**

- Esch, Elizabeth D., with David R. Roediger, *The Production of Difference* (Oxford University Press, 2012).

**2014**

- Sangster, Joan, with Leon Fink and Joseph McCartin, eds., *Workers in Hard Times* (University of Illinois Press, 2014).

**2015**

- Heron, Craig, *Lunch-Bucket Lives, Remaking the Workers' City* (Between the Lines Press, 2015).

**2016**

- Meyer, Stephen, *Manhood on the Line* (University of Illinois Press, 2016).

**2020**

- Gilpin, Toni, *The Long Deep Grudge. A Story of Big Capital, Radical Labor, and Class War in the American Heartland* (Haymarket Books, 2020).

## 2022

- Pearson, Chad E., *Capital's Terrorists. Klansmen, Lawmen, and Employers in the Long Nineteenth Century* (University of North Carolina Press, 2022).
- White, Amed, *Under the Heel: The Wobblies and the Capitalist War on Radical Workers* (University of California Press, 2022).

[No award was presented for 2021; 2018; 2017; 2013; 2011; 2009; 2008; 2007; 2005; 2004; 2002; 1998; 1995; 1994; 1991; 1990; 1989.]

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