**Join UAW Local 1268 Women's Committee in**

# CELEBRATING WOMEN'S UAW LABOR HISTORY

Women have worked for ages in industrial, clerical, and service work and the professions in the United States, laboring under harsh conditions. The reality for many working women in the early 20th century was confinement to jobs where they were routinely exploited – especially those who worked in factories and mills up to 70 hours a week for three dollars or less.

In 1911, 154 workers, mostly young women, died in the notorious Triangle Shirtwaist Company Fire in New York City's garment district – leading Rose Schneiderman, a seamstress, to proclaim, *"Too much blood has been spilled. I know from my experience it is up to the working people to save themselves."* Schneiderman had helped to establish the International Ladies Garment Workers Union.

The history of America's working women is a history of advocating for the abolition of slavery, the right to vote, the right to unionize, the welfare of children and the extension of human rights to all. Despite the obstacles, despite the stereotypes imposed by society, America's working women have persevered. Theirs is a revolution still in the making.

*www.cluw.org*

## AN OPEN TIME CAPSULE

The women of the UAW are still chipping away at that glass ceiling, we are not quite there yet. We only have 2 seats out of 14 filled by women on the UAW International Executive Board: Vice-President, Cindi Estrada and Region 9A Director, Julie Kushner. Even on our own UAW Region 4 staff there are only 2 women out of 19 Servicing Representatives, Auditors, and Coordinators. Angela Wright, Auditor (As displayed on uaw.org and region4.uaw.org at time of printing) and newly appointed Kelly Harrison, CAP Coordinator.

I'm NOT sharing these numbers to be critical. When the future Women's Committee is writing our history in 2036 I want everyone to see how far we have come and by then I'm sure the ceiling will have a large gaping hole.

The roles of family has also evolved. When searching for poster propaganda from the '40s on "to get women to work" I viewed posters reminding women to do their daily duty of sewing, baking and recycling. So we have moved forward since then. In today's world there are few women that have a choice of whether they work or not, it's a must, and men are sharing those responsibilities that once were considered only a women's job. Men have replaced *I'm "babysitting" the kids* with *I have the kids.*

At Local levels throughout the UAW more women have been elected to leadership roles by their membership, especially in the position of president.

So twenty years from now, I do believe our International and Regional staff will be more gender diversified as it is becoming on the local levels.

So please take a moment and honor the women who to chipped at the glass ceiling for us and get involved. YOU may be the one climbing through the hole.

In Solidarity,
Mary Bingenheimer
UAW 1268 Union Sister

March was Women's History Month. UAW.org showcased women throughout the UAW's history. From the sit-down strikes of 1936-37 through the war years of Rosie the Riveter, from the postwar fight for jobs to today's campaigns for pay equity and safe workplaces, women have played a key role in UAW history. Side by side, women and men are building a stronger union every day. We salute UAW women everywhere. Here are the women that were highlighted:

**Millie Jeffrey** was a long time union and political activist who became the first director of the UAW Women's Bureau in the mid-1940s.

Jeffrey worked as an organizer for the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America in the 1930s. She went undercover into garment factories and helped organize formal groups that demanded better wages and safer workplaces from owners and management. Her work in the labor movement brought her to Washington during World War II, when she served as a consultant to the War Labor Board. It was there that she met Walter and Victor Reuther who appointed her to head the newly formed UAW Women's Bureau, the precursor of the UAW Women's Department.

She organized the first women's conference of the UAW to deal with the flood of returning veterans that forced postwar layoffs of women from factory jobs. In the early 1970s, she helped found the National Women's Political Caucus, a group that would go on to help dozens of women achieve political office. In 1975, she chaired a Democratic National Committee task force that rewrote national convention rules to ensure that half the number of delegates in attendance in 1980 would be women.

**Caroline Davis** was president of Local 764 in Indiana, and the second director of the Women's Department from the late 1940s to the early 1970s.

The Women's Department was formally established at the UAW's 15th Constitutional Convention in 1955. The Women's Department addressed the specific problems that women faced in the workplace: equal pay, ending discrimination in hiring, promotion and training of women, as well as equal seniority protection. Through conferences, legislation, education, women's auxiliaries and committees, the UAW Women's Department sought to improve working conditions for women.

As head of the Women's Department, Caroline Davis testified before Congress in favor of the Equal Pay Act. In her testimony, she called unequal pay "immoral" and rebutted EPA's critics who claimed that women were more expensive to employ than men. President John F. Kennedy signed the Equal Pay Act into law in 1963, marking the entrance of the federal government into the field of safeguarding the right of women to hold employment on the same basis as men. She also sought to eliminate the separate male and female seniority lists, which led to either men getting all the highest-paying jobs or women losing their jobs to men who had less seniority.

**May Wolf** was working as a teacher when she met Walter Reuther in Detroit in 1936. While Walter Reuther was trying to organize autoworkers, she was trying to organize teachers. They married soon after they met but right before the wedding Reuther was fired from his job for being a UAW member. It was then that Walter Reuther dedicated himself to organizing autoworkers full time and rented an office in Detroit that became Local 174. From the very beginning, May Reuther was an integral part of the UAW. It wasn't just that a substantial portion of the rent and other expenses came from her salary as a school teacher in the first several months, it was that she held Local 174 together. She put in long hours and worked sometimes until after midnight organizing workers because it was a cause she believed in. When school let out the following summer, May went on break and never returned to her teaching job. She was as committed to the labor movement as her husband and shared in his beliefs throughout their lives.

Dottie is one of UAW 1268 Women's Committees favorite mentors at the Women's Conferences at Blacklake

**Dottie Jones** began her career in the labor movement in 1966 when she became a member of Local 630 and served as chief steward. She developed training programs for minority and female union members at the University of Michigan's Institute for Labor and Industrial Relations. She went on to become assistant director of the UAW Women's Department and the assistant director of the UAW Retired and Older Workers' Department. In 1996, President Steve Yokich appointed Jones to serve as an administrative assistant in the President's Office – a first for an African-American woman. She continued to hold this position under President Ron Gettelfinger until she retired in 2003.

Jones served on several boards and commissions, including the Michigan Women's Commission; the National Association of Commissions for Women, and the Michigan Task Force Against Sexual Harassment whose work resulted in the amendment of Michigan's Elliott-Larson Civil Rights Act to include sexual harassment as illegal behavior. She was named one of 25 Outstanding Black Women in Michigan in 1985 received the Feminist Achievement Award, and the Walter Reuther Distinguished Service Award. Jones currently serves on the Council 1 Board for Blue Cross/Blue Shield and she serves her union as a member of UAW Region 1A's Women's Council and UAW Local 372.

***Read more about May, Millie, Caroline and Dottie who helped build a strong UAW in the March-April edition of Solidarity Magazine. You can visit uaw.org to view Solidarity magazines.***

**Olga Marie Madar** was the first woman to serve on the United Auto Workers (UAW) International Executive Board.

Madar moved to Detroit with her family during the Depression. After graduating from Northeastern High School in 1933, she began to spend her summers working on the assembly line at Chrysler's Kercheval plant and the Bower Rolling Bearing plant in order to fund her college education. In 1938, Madar graduated from Michigan Normal School (now Eastern Michigan University), having earned a degree in physical education.

In 1941, Madar left her teaching position to aid the war effort, taking a job at the Ford Willow Run bomber plant. It is at this time that she joined the newly formed UAW Local 50. Madar was hired by the local to serve as director of recreation, social services and women's activities. In 1947, Madar was appointed director of the International Union's Recreation Department. Madar was first elected to the International Executive Board as a member-at-large in 1966, becoming the first woman to occupy this office. Four years later, Madar achieved another "first" when she was elected as a vice president, serving two terms.

Through Madar's efforts, the UAW became the first national union to endorse constitutional ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in 1970. In that effort, Madar established various coalitions including the Michigan Women's Political Caucus and the Network for Economic Rights to make the ERA a political priority beginning in 1971.

A lifelong advocate for equal rights, Madar strove to eliminate discrimination against women and minorities in the workplace and community. To grant working women a greater voice in their unions, Madar played a key role in developing the Coalition of Labor Union Women, CLUW, an AFL-CIO-affiliated group to which she was elected national president at its founding convention in 1974, the year she retired from a 30-year career with the International UAW Union.

## CLUW (Coalition of Labor Union Women) Celebrates 42 Years

CLUW Mission Statement: The primary mission of CLUW is to unify all union women in a viable organization to determine our common problems and concerns and to develop action programs within the framework of our unions to deal effectively with our objectives.

CLUW adopted four basic goals of action: to promote affirmative action in the workplace; to strengthen the role of women in unions; to organize the unorganized women; and to increase the involvement of women in the political and legislative process.

Members speak out for equal pay, child and elder care benefits, job security, safe workplaces, affordable health care, contraceptive equity, and protection from sexual harassment and violence at work.

Interested in joining CLUW? Go to cluw.org And print out Application. Please turn applications to UAW 1268 Recording Secretary Maria Medina at 1268 Union Hall so they may be submitted to UAW region 4.

# BEFORE ROSIE……

...came a group of women who need to be credited for displaying courage to stopping the violence that was being played out among the police and the sit-down strikers at Bull Run. They became a barrier between the two, and changing the course of the violence taking place, and contributing to victory for the sit-downers.

What was to be a well-planned UAW-CIO sponsored strike in January of 1937, instead became a spontaneous but major strike, starting in December of 1936, and lasting forty-four days. This sudden worker-originated strike not only surprised the national leadership of the UAW and the CIO, but radio broadcasts announcing it brought the news into homes where many of the worker's wives and families were equally surprised. For some women however, it was not a night for celebrating.

Genora Johnson recalls women shouting to their husbands and sweethearts to leave the plant immediately, and in some cases threatening them with divorce. Some men did leave the plant, despite the embarrassing boos from their co-workers. That night Genora Johnson realized that women were an essential component to the success of the strike, if women could break the union, they could also make it. That night the first Women's Auxiliary of the developing UAW was born.

Such uncharacteristic accomplishments were possible only due to an opportune historical moment; Genora Johnson, then a young and talented socialist leader, took advantage of a window of opportunity, (the immature UAW had no protocol for organizing a women's support organization), and formed the independent Women's Auxiliary and Women's Emergency Brigade. These new groups influenced the outcome of the strike, and they profoundly affected the women who participated in them. That window of opportunity was effectively closed following the Flint victory; the Women's Auxiliary and the Women's Emergency Brigade became an anomaly of the labor movement.

At the very beginning of the strike Genora Johnson, described by the Detroit Evening Times as a "... slender, dark haired, 23-year-old mother of two young sons" arrived at the union headquarters to volunteer her services. Ignorant of her talents in organizing and public speaking, strike leaders at first relegated Johnson to the strike kitchen. Genora Johnson would have none of that, she declared, "look, you've got a lot of little skinny thin men that aren't capable of going out and standing, marching around the picket lines, and they can peel potatoes just as well as we can."

The Battle of Bulls Run erupted with squads of police firing tear gas at the outside picketers, all of whom were male, and at the strikers inside the plant. The sound car, which directed the actions of strikers and picketers, ordered the strikers to use fire hoses, door hinges from yet-to-be assembled automobiles, bottles, stones, and other objects which would act as missiles to repel the police. Gunshot wounds, overturned cars, flying door hinges, beaten journalists, 3,000 spectators, all added to the chaos resulting from the melee of the evening.

Well into the Battle of Bull Run, the voice of a woman boomed from the sound car's audio system. Genora Johnson, wife of striker Kermit Johnson, vice president of the Auxiliary, had asked Victor Reuther for a chance on the sound car. Knowing that women could turn the tide of this battle, she appealed to the women in the crowd of spectators to "... break through those police lines and come down here and stand with your husbands, and your brothers, your sons and your sweethearts." She challenged the police to fire into the "... mothers of children.... " the women responded, marched in between the police and the strikers, and, "... wound up the battle that night." "... that was the victory, that was the reason for the victory that night.... When history was written by men, they didn't remember that.... So from that point on, we decided women could play a helluva lot more important role in the actual fighting then they had up to that time just walking a picket line with signs.

The very next day, fifty women signed up to be members of the Emergency Brigade, the first paramilitary organization of union women to deliberately declare their intention to stand between guns and strikers. Membership in the Emergency Brigade was restricted to only those women "... who could be ready in a moment's notice, and who could stand the sight of blood without falling to pieces." By the end of the strike over three hundred women, mostly wives of strikers, but also a significant number of women workers who were not allowed in the striking factories, were members of the Brigade.

It was not a feminist action, and it was not a women's movement-it was a labor and class dominated phenomenon, but the events of 1936-1937 did show the nation, and the women themselves that they were not just what they had been taught to be, that they were capable of concerted, orchestrated, and sometimes even heroic behavior. There is reason to believe that none of them was ever again, "JUST A WOMAN."

*SOURCE; Never Again Just A Woman: Women of the Auxiliary and Emergency Brigade in the General Motors Sit-Down Strike of 1937*

# BEING UNION HELPS WOMEN

Unions fought for many of the benefits workers now have such as the 40-hour work week, overtime pay, and improved health and safety standards, which have improved the lives of all workers. It is only through a strong union and worker voice that these benefits will remain intact.

Worker's wages have been stagnant and the rich have gotten richer. "A recent study showed the wealth gap is widening faster than anyone anticipated and that just 62 people own as much wealth as the poorest half of the entire world population -that's 3.6 billion people," said UAW Vice President Cindy Estrada, who directs the union's Women's Department. "This rising wealth disparity disproportionally affects women, leaves our children hungry, and keeps our elderly from living in the dignity they deserve."

Union membership improves the lives of women and their families, both economically and by giving them a voice in their workplace. For example, a recent report on women in unions by the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) shows that unions raise wages and improve benefits for workers at the middle and bottom of the wage scale at a workplace where workers are disproportionately women. In fact, women who are represented by a union earn an average of $217 more per week than women in nonunion jobs.

While wages are important, the advantages for union women go beyond higher wages. Union membership brings wages into the open and ensures that employers will pay workers based on the job they do. The wage transparency in a unionized workplace helps close the gender wage gap and prevents gender bias. Unions also typically provide women better access to benefits such as pensions and health care.

According to the IWPR report, 3 in 4 unionized women have some type of pension plan compared with 4 in 10 nonunion women, and are also more likely to get health benefits, paid sick days, and maternity or family leave. Additionally, through the collective bargaining process, unions are more likely to provide greater security from harassment, discrimination and arbitrary disciplinary actions. Unions have been a major voice in the advancement of national policies that are important to women, like fighting for equal pay and fair work schedules, for equality in the workplace, women's health concerns, and paid leave so they can take care of family issues, like a sick child. However, there is still plenty of work to be done in order for women to achieve equality in the workforce. While the gender wage gap of union members is lower than for nonunion workers, it does not disappear. There are still factors that contribute to the current wage gap such as discrimination, work defined as "women's work," and "family" work that typically falls to the women who are required to take time off to care for sick family members.

The U.S is the only developed nation in the world that doesn't have a national policy requiring access to paid sick days and paid maternity leave. Women need affordable and quality child care, paid family and medical leave, and paid sick days. This lack of policy forces many women to choose between their economic security and their health. Policymakers and unions are addressing these challenges and advocating for national policies that will improve the lives of working women. Making it easier, not harder, for workers to form a union is a good start to this advocacy for women.

Women in the labor movement have a proud history of championing women's rights through political action, fighting for racial equality and organizing the unorganized. Unions must strive to continue that history by developing women to be strong union leaders and activists through effective mentoring programs, training on effective ways to mobilize women, and by encouraging more women to step into leadership and elected positions.

**UAW Local 1268 Women in Leadership Roles**

**Executive Board:**

Recording Secretary
Maria Medina

Trustees
Marilyn Spradling
Mary Bingenheimer

Guide
Patricia Bonner

**Unit Representatives**

**Unit 1- FCA**
Patti Willard- Trim Chief Steward

**Unit 2- Johnson Controls**
Melody Good- Chief Steward

**Unit 4- Android**
Crystal Alonzo- Shop Chairperson
Shelly Booker- Committeewoman
Henrietta Washington- Committeewoman

**Unit 6- Android II**
Patti Williams- Chief Steward

**Unit 9- TRI-DIM**
Jacquelyn Robinson- Committeeperson

**Unit 10- IAC**
Latissa Spears- Committeeperson
Debbie Kenner- Committeeperson
Elizabeth Gooding- Crew Steward
Jennifer Lopez- Crew Steward
Jannie Buchstaber- Crew Steward

**Unit 12- Boone County Clerks**
Brenda Trimble:-Shop Chairwoman
Kris Pearson: Steward

**Unit 1/FCA Appointed Representatives:**

Benefit Reps- Charrise Staten
Valerie Hanserd
Safety Reps - Darla Franklin

Local Training Coordinator
Mary Scalzitti

Team Leader Selection Committee
Marilyn Spradling

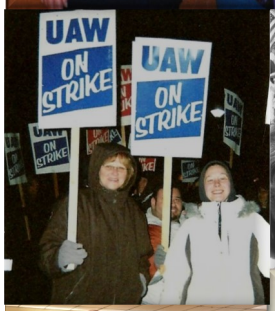
UAW WCM Facilitators
Sharon Weldy
Nichelle Cooper
Wanda Salvatelli
Etta Clayton

UAW LOCAL 1268 UAW BELVIDERE, IL

**UAW Local 1268**
**Women in Leadership Roles**

**Standing Committees Chairpersons:**
Appointed by
President George Welitschinsky
By-Laws: Wanda Salvatelli
Community Service: Gaby Guetterman
Education: Monica Sago
Women's: Dawn Rogers

**Elected Committee**
Elected by the Membership
Election: Dawn Simms



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"We Can Do It!" by J. Howard Miller

**Rosie had it all:** beauty, sex appeal, and attitude. With her sleeves rolled up, hair in a kerchief, and with determination set in her jaw and eyes. Rosie the Riveter became one of the most widely known personas of the 1940s.

But Rosie the Riveter was not a real person. Many posed to be Rosie, but she was an icon. When more fighter jets and artillery were needed, car manufacturers were asked to turn their buildings into munitions factories for producing the weapons of war. However, the men who could build them were in short supply. Women were the answer, but first they had to be convinced.

In the 1940s women preferred to stay home with their children. It was considered vulgar for a woman to take on a man's work. Back then, women were generally viewed as weak creatures, highly prone to fainting at any hint of alarm or crudeness.

So Rosie was created as an advertising campaign by the Ad Council, at the government's request. They tried a few propaganda campaigns before, but Rosie became a icon, and many women flocked to the factories to do their part for the war. They entered the workforce in unprecedented numbers during World War II.

By 1945 nearly one out of every four married women worked outside the home. And when the war ended, the men returned to their jobs forcing women back to their homes. What the government wasn't expecting was some women enjoyed working outside the home, becoming independent and contributing to the house's income. And then some women's husband did not return from the war and they became the provider to their households.

Rosie the Riveter and her can-do attitude has become a feminist icon.
Her images are as strong today as they were over 70 years ago.

**Norman Rockwell's Saturday Evening Post cover featuring Rosie the Riveter became a top selling issue in 1943.**

## OTHER U.S. POSTERS ENCOURAGING WOMEN TO DO THEIR PART DURING THE WAR

**1. Answer:** It isn't a question of pride! Millions more women must take jobs or our war efforts will bog down!
It means winning the war—saving the lives of our boys! It's up to each husband to help his wife get a job.