

# Summer School Instructors

**Heather Blankenheim** is the Education Director for SEIU Local 503, and has been on staff there since June of 2006. She first worked as a field organizer and, more recently, as the coordinator of the union's member leader-development program. Prior to working for a union, Heather held leadership roles in her own graduate student union in Detroit, MI.



**Tony Cardwell** is the Vice Chairman At Large of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way division of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. He began as a member of Lodge 1054 chartered in Eugene Oregon in May 1999 and has 18 years of seniority working for Union Pacific Railroad in the engineering department. Tony has held elected positions in the Union since 2004, and was reelected in 2014 to the Vice Chairman At Large covering a territory from Denver Colorado West, including 8 states. He works with approximately 70 lodges and over 5600 members and is responsible for enforcing multiple agreements with several railroad carriers.



**Cooper Brinson** is a staff attorney at the Civil Liberties Defense Center (CLDC). The CLDC is a non-profit law firm based in Eugene, OR that specializes in the pro-bono defense of front-line activists and organizations against criminal charges, civil suits, and other forms of state and corporate repression. The CLDC also provides trainings to the public on how to exercise their

constitutional rights, maintain proper digital security, and how to set up legal support teams/committees.



**Phil Carrasco** is a son of immigrants and a fierce community advocate dedicated to ensuring that working people have access to spaces where racial and economic justice issues are discussed and can generate equitable policies and build political power. Phil is a Regional Field Coordinator for the Oregon AFL-CIO primarily in the Lane County, Mid-Willamette Valley and North Coast region. He runs the Oregon Strong

Voice Program in Lane County, connecting community groups to labor organizations and identifying uniting causes to fight for.

**Bob Busse** is LERC's Director and a professor of history at the University of Oregon. In recent years he has become deeply interested in issues affecting immigrant workers. He also is currently working on film projects documenting the history of organizing home care workers in Oregon. Before entering the university labor education field, Bob worked for the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union where he was assistant to the senior executive vice-president and coordinated the J.P. Stevens boycott in New Jersey and other campaigns. He holds a masters degree in labor education from Rutgers University and a Ph.D. in history from Cornell University.



**Barbara Diamond** is one of Oregon's most experienced labor attorneys and is a popular speaker on labor law and workplace rights. In addition to her law practice, she founded Diamond Law Training in 2012 and produced documentary films and accompanying curriculum about implicit bias. Barbara has presented anti-bias trainings to audiences ranging from university staff, professors, carpenters, labor unions, city workers, and nurses to judges, teachers, lawyers, and fire fighters.



**Barbara Byrd** spent 22 years on the faculty of LERC, and has continued after her retirement earlier this year to teach and coordinate educational programs for LERC. She also serves as the Secretary-Treasurer of the Oregon AFL-CIO, where she coordinates policy and education activities in the arenas of economic development, workforce training and green jobs/climate change. She has a master's degree in Labor Studies and a

Ph.D. in Adult Education, and is a member of United Academics of the University of Oregon/AFT-AAUP, Local 3209.



**Sherman Henry** is a member of the LERC faculty, based in LERC's Portland Center. He facilitates learning activities and assists in program development and training with unions and community-based organizations. Formerly a custodian and rank-and-file union activist at Miami-Dade Public Schools, he became president of AFSCME Local 1184 in 1995 where he led an internal organizing campaign that doubled the membership from 1600 to its peak of 4600. Sherman has a bachelor's degree from the National Labor College, and a master's in adult education from Florida International University and is currently pursuing his doctorate at Grand Canyon University.

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**Catherine Houston** is the Labor Representative/Rapid Response and Women of Steel coordinator for the United Steelworkers, District 12 for the Western U.S. Catherine is an educator, mobilization advocate and legislative activist for the USW who dedicates herself to educating workers, union members, youth groups and local communities about all aspects of advancing and protecting workers and their families.



**Sarah Laslett** has been a member of the LERC faculty since 2015. Prior to LERC, she was the Director of the Washington State Labor Center at South Seattle College for five years, and was the Director of the Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies at the University of Washington between 2003 and 2007. Sarah's labor education interests include strategic research and campaigns, leadership development and labor arts and culture.



**Janella James** is the Executive Director of AFT-Oregon. She has worked as an organizer for the past 14 years. She started with organizing classified workers at the University of Michigan and has since worked with locals in all levels of the education system. She is committed to building power within the labor movement through relationship building and organizational development.



**Elizabeth Pellerito** is an organizer with the United Academics of the University of Oregon. Prior to this position, she worked in Lansing, Michigan at the Union of Nontenure-Track Faculty at Michigan State University [www.untf.org]. She became active in the labor movement while completing her PhD on nineteenth-century theories of genetics and heredity.

**Debra Kidney** is the Field Education Coordinator for the American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees, Oregon/Washington/Alaska/Montana/Hawaii. In all of her careers, (four so far), she has been involved in training. Now in her dream job, she works with union members and staff to bring them what they need, when they need it, and in a way that makes it engaging and fun. Let our willingness to learn and grow never end!



**Alma Raya** is an organizer with the Oregon AFL-CIO, where she assists affiliates with internal and external organizing efforts. She was part of the Immigrant Organizing Project in Los Angeles, in which she helped organize carwash workers, grocery workers, construction workers, and taxi drivers. Alma grew up in Salinas, California where, surrounded by farm workers, she learned the importance of labor rights. Alma has a bachelor's degree in Political Science.



#### Faculty Coordinator



**Gordon Lafer** has been a faculty member at LERC since 1997 and is this year's AFL CIO Summer School faculty coordinator. As a Professor with LERC at the University of Oregon, his work focuses primarily on industrial and policy research. He has written widely on issues of economic and employment policy. Gordon teaches courses on internal and external organizing, contract campaigns, and labor policy. In 2009-10 he served as Senior Policy Advisor for the U.S. House of Representatives' Committee on Education and Labor. His most recent book is *The One Percent Solution: How Corporations Are Remaking America, One State at a Time* (Cornell University Press, 2017).



**Sara Ryan** is the Executive Director of Oregon Labor Candidate School, a nonprofit organization dedicated to training and supporting union members in Oregon who desire to serve in publicly elected office. She works with candidates, including our teachers, nurses, electricians and bus drivers. Prior to full-time parenting and running an organization, Sara worked in social work.

**Chelsea Watson** is the Researcher and Regional Field Coordinator for the Oregon AFL-CIO. She works closely with unions in all sectors and hopes to help prepare our state for potential challenges ahead, such as opposing "right-to-work." Prior to her current role, Chelsea spent five years with the AFL-CIO's community organization, Working America, organizing workers who do not have the benefit of a union in the work place. Chelsea has a Master's of Science in Advance Research Methods and recently completed a course in Strategic Corporate Research at Cornell University.



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