

# PEOPLE'S WORLD

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## Your vote - it's your right - not a privilege!



By Connie Leak

**T**his Labor Day, your vote is critical to your future as never before. And for working women the results of the November 2014 election will determine much about your life on and off the job. If you have been disillusioned with this Congress (and who has not) and are thinking of sitting this election out - read on to find out why you must not.

The Coalition of Labor Union Women since 1974 has been on the forefront in advocating for equal pay and work/family benefits on the job, and many union contracts now include those provisions. One of our top priorities is to help organize women in to unions, as that is the best way for women to achieve equality.

However the numbers of people in unions in the U.S. is dismal. In 2013, the union membership rate - the percentage of wage and salary workers who were union members - was 11.3 percent, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The number of workers belonging to unions is at 14.5 million. So we know we have much to do to increase those numbers and must look beyond bargaining contracts to secure a better life for most Americans. Much of CLUW's work centers on advancing legislative priorities with our allies in the labor and women's community that will benefit women who may not be fortunate enough

to have the benefit of a union contract, Let's start with equal pay: Last summer we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Equal Pay Act, but we all know that law has brought us only so far...

In 1963 women made 59 cents for every man's dollar. Today that number has grown to 77 cents. That translates into \$11,608 less per year in median earnings, leaving women and their families shortchanged. The wage gap for women of color is even more alarming: African American

### T H I S   W E E K :

- **Your vote - it's your right - not a privilege!**
- **Outrage over plea bargain in death of lab worker**
- **Nightmare begins as GOP takes over Senate**
- **Africa: ébola pone en peligro campañas de vacunación**
- **Labor adds voice on Michael Brown killing**

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women make 64 cents, and Latina/Hispanic women make 54 cents for every dollar earned by their white, non-Hispanic counterparts.

Mothers are paid less than fathers. Mothers who work full time, year-round make \$38,000, compared to \$55,000 for full-time year-round

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employed fathers, meaning mothers only make 69 cents for every dollar paid to fathers. Unions have been successful in helping to close the wage gap. In 2013, union women earned 33 percent more than nonunion women. We, therefore, continue to actively promote and support the Paycheck Fairness Act (PFA), which gives the Equal Pay Act of 1963 teeth. PFA will update and strengthens that law to ensure that it will provide effective protection against sex-based pay discrimination.

We also support the Healthy Families Act, to allow workers to earn up to seven paid sick days a year to recover from short-term illnesses like the flu, access preventive care, care for a sick family member or seek assistance related to domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking. Many workers who are not represented by a union do not have paid sick days and are forced to make impossible choices when illness strikes: Stay home, lose pay and risk their jobs, or go to work sick, risk their health and spread disease to co-workers and communities. Income inequality is on the rise in the

U.S. One small step in the right direction is passage of the Fair Minimum Wage Act, which we strongly support, but failed in the current Congress. It calls for: Increasing the minimum wage over three years from \$7.25/hour to \$10.10/ hour. Indexing future annual increases to inflation thereafter. Raising the tipped minimum wage from \$2.13/hour to \$7.07/hour.

A few weeks ago our Supreme Court delivered a decision that is especially detrimental to women workers and their families. When that decision, called Hobby Lobby - the company that sued - was announced, CLUW immediately issued a statement, saying CLUW "views this ruling as a dangerous precedent, as it permits for the first time for-profit corporations with nothing to do with religion to refuse to follow the law on religious grounds."



**Connie Leak is President of CLUW**

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## **Outrage over plea bargain in death of lab worker**

By PAI

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**A** plea-bargained small settlement in the six-year-old case of a worker - a Communications Workers member - who burned to death in an unsafe college chemical laboratory has outraged both her family and her union. But the 2008 death of 23-year-old Sheharbano "Sheri" Sangji, a research assistant and CWA Local 9119 member, has had one positive development: It led the federal National Research Council, which awards grants to many U.S. colleges and universities, to warn them last month that they must obey job safety and health laws and protect their workers.

While working in the UCLA chemical lab in December 2008, Sangji was transferring t-butyl lithium - a solution that catches on fire on contact with air - from one container to another, when her plastic syringe came apart, Local 9119 reported. It spilled onto Sangji and instantly set her afire. She wasn't wearing a lab coat because no one - including lab supervisor Dr. Patrick Harran - instructed

her to do so. Her rubber gloves didn't protect her, either. Sangji suffered severe burns and died 18 days later.

Los Angeles officials sued UCLA on three felony counts and indicted Harran on four criminal counts of breaking state job safety and health laws. UCLA settled in 2012 by agreeing to fix the lab and establishing a \$500,000 Sangji memorial scholarship.

On August 21, Harran accepted a "deferred prosecution" plea bargain of three months of community service and a \$5,000 fine, sent to the burn center that treated Sangji. The local judge was upset enough with what he heard in court to double both penalties.

So were the union and Sangji's family. Local 9119 said the L.A. District Attorney should have taken the case against Harran to trial, as a deterrent to other erring labs. Naveen Sangji, Sheri Sangji's sister, called Harran's plea bargain "barely a slap on the wrist."

# Nightmare begins as GOP takes over Senate

By PW Editorial



**T**hat is not the headline we want to see the day after Election Day, Nov. 4. If that nightmare scenario unfolds, Mitch McConnell, the GOP senator from Kentucky, or some other Republican, will replace Harry Reid, the Democratic senator from Utah, as leader of the Senate. “So what?” some may ask. “You’re just replacing one career politician with another.”

The leader sets the agenda and a GOP takeover would transform the Senate calendar to reflect the concerns of people who have nothing but scorn and contempt for working people, democracy or any type of good government. Whether it’s union organizing rights, the minimum wage, consumer protection, Social Security, Medicare, health care, regulation of Wall Street, voter rights, women or anything else, a Republican-controlled Senate will do all in its power to turn the clock back.

Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) put it this way: “If you want to know what a wholly Republican Congress would do, the thing to do is look at what they’ve done in state capitals. In Ohio, they’ve gone after voters’ rights, workers’ rights, women’s rights. They’d bring that to Washington.” The Republicans have already laid out their plans for the weeks after their hoped-for takeover.

Once they install Mitch McConnell they will propose and pass a federal law banning all abortions after 20 weeks. Next they will propose and pass a law to cut the funds the government needs to implement the Affordable Care Act. Then they will gut both the Environmental Protection Agency and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, both of which they hate so much. If there is a vacancy on the Supreme Court the Senate will stall until President Obama’s term is up, preventing the seating of a progressive judge who can rescue that court from the current right-wing pro-corporate grip.

And the GOP Senate leaders will crank out a steady barrage of right-wing measures, forcing President Obama to veto bill after bill. Any liberal or progressive legislation put forward by the president would go down to defeat in the Senate.

A GOP takeover of the Senate will guarantee that almost nothing in the interests of the people will get done. The Republicans will conclude that their obstructionism was a good strategy for them, that it helped them take over the Senate. In this warped view, it will make sense to continue hurting, rather than fixing the economy because that will improve the party’s presidential chances in 2016.

**Working people and all progressives must not allow themselves to be out-voted in this year’s elections.**

## Labor adds voice on Michael Brown killing

By Mike Hall

**A**FL-CIO President Richard Trumka joined a diverse group of organizations and leaders from all walks of life in signing on to a letter to President Barack Obama calling for real solutions after the killing of unarmed teenager Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo.

“As the nation’s largest labor federation,” said Trumka, “the AFL-CIO believes that our nation must address issues of racial injustice in order to realize economic prosperity for all.” Michael Brown, the coalition points out, is only the latest in a long list of black men and boys who have died under eerily similar circumstances. Investigations into the Ferguson shooting are ongoing, and many of the specific facts remain unclear for now. However, the pattern is too obvious to be a coincidence and too frequent to be a mistake. From policing to adjudication and incarceration, it is time for the country to counter the effects of systemic racial bias, which impairs the perceptions, judgment and behavior of too many of our law enforcement personnel and obstructs the ability of our police departments and criminal justice institutions to protect and serve all communities in a fair and just manner.

The letter calls on the Obama administration to address what it calls “systematic racial bias” and the “militarization of police departments around the country.”

## Africa: ébola pone en peligro campañas de vacunación

Prensa Latina

**L**as campañas regulares de vacunación y el seguimiento de enfermedades como la malaria o neumonía, se han descuidado en los países de África occidental afectados por el ébola, señaló hoy un experto de Unicef. En conferencia de prensa, Christoph Boulierac, portavoz del Fondo de Naciones Unidas para la Infancia (Unicef), alertó que también la diarrea y malnutrición grave, afecciones extremadamente peligrosas para los menores, han dejado de atenderse con regularidad en el curso del actual brote de ébola.

“El paludismo, los casos de diarrea o de complicaciones pulmonares no se tratan aunque son extremadamente peligrosas para los menores. Cabe la posibilidad de que se den casos de polio o de sarampión porque las campañas de vacunación están en punto muerto”, aseveró el experto. Estas naciones donde los sistemas de salud, muy frágiles, están saturados con la lucha contra el ébola, han dejado de lado la atención de enfermedades crónicas o el trabajo regular, manifestó Boulierac.

Explicó que el inicio del curso escolar de unos tres millones de infantes también se vería perturbado, ya que muchas aulas son utilizadas como centros sanitarios y en algunos lugares fue pospuesto.

En marzo pasado Guinea Conakry reportó los primeros casos de un brote de ébola, que rápidamente se extendió hacia otras naciones de África occidental. Desde entonces, más de tres mil personas enfermaron, cerca de mil 600 de las cuales fallecieron por esta causa.

Hasta la fecha, son cinco los países afectados, además de Guinea, la dolencia se extiende por Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leona y más recientemente, Senegal.

A su vez, la República Democrática del Congo reporta otro brote independiente, con 31 fallecidos de 51 casos registrados.

Investigadores de la Universidad de Nagasaki afirman que elaboraron un método sencillo y barato para detectar el virus del Ébola en 30 minutos.

El método puede ser usado en regiones que no disponen del equipamiento necesario, explicó Jiro Yasuda, responsable del departamento de enfermedades infecciosas de la Universidad de Nagasaki.

El procedimiento que más se utiliza en la actualidad dura casi dos horas, señaló Yasuda.

La nueva prueba utiliza una sustancia que desarrolla y amplifica los genes específicos del virus, y se puede hacer en un tubo de ensayo.

La enfermedad de ébola ocasionó ya la muerte a más de mil 550 personas en varios Estados de África occidental, de los más de tres mil casos diagnosticados. El azote del virus comenzó en marzo pasado en Guinea, y luego se extendió rápidamente a otras naciones vecinas de África occidental. La Organización Mundial de la Salud (OMS) teme que la enfermedad podría afectar a 20 mil personas en esa región.

Una reunión de la OMS analizará los días 4 y 5 de septiembre los posibles tratamientos contra ese mal.