

### **Leeds Prize**

SUNTA's Leeds Prize is awarded each year for the outstanding book in urban, national and/or transnational anthropology in honor of the late Anthony Leeds, a distinguished pioneer in urban anthropology. The Prize Committee is chaired by Robert Rotenberg and includes Xiang Biao (2008 prize for "Global Body Shopping," Princeton University Press), Bob White (2009 prize for "Rumba Rules," Duke University Press) and Philippe Bourgois (2010 prize for "Righteous Dopefiend," UC Press). Hard deadline for submission is June 15, 2012. A nomination letter (from an author, colleague, or publisher) and \*four\* copies of the book should be sent to:

Robert Rotenberg  
Leeds Prize Committee  
Department of Anthropology  
DePaul University  
2343 N. Racine Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60614-3107

Please ensure books are clearly marked "Leeds Prize Committee."

Books must be relevant to urban, national or transnational anthropology, and have a publication date of 2011. Textbooks and anthologies will not be considered, but books of original scholarship by more than one author may be submitted. Authors must be willing to serve on the prize committee for three years if their book is chosen, and have prize acceptance remarks published in *\*City and Society\**, SUNTA's journal. Please address all questions to Robert Rotenberg.

### **CORI UPDATE by Lisa Maya Knauer**

March 6, 2012 marks the fifth anniversary of the 2007 Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) highly militarized raid on the Michael Bianco garment factory in New Bedford, Massachusetts. As a result, 361 undocumented workers, primarily Guatemalan Maya K'iche' women, were shipped to detention facilities, where some languished for months. The raid sent shock waves through the Central American migrant community as families scrambled to learn where loved ones were. Some migrants stayed home from work, kept children home and avoided going out. Eventually, over 100 workers were deported.

The raid reverberated beyond the local community, marking a new phase in the treatment of immigrants with workplace raids, detention and deportation. Deportations skyrocketed—over 400,000 in 2011. Some suggest that since deporting all of the 12-15 million undocumented migrants is not feasible, unstated goals of stepped-up enforcement is suppression of wages and activism.

Ironically, the raid catalyzed openly militant activism focused on workplace rights.

In 2008, Guatemalan, Salvadoran and other immigrants founded the Centro Comunitario de Trabajadores (Workers Community Center), and have waged successful campaigns at local and regional workplaces. The CCT has gone to bat on behalf of an individual employee, like D.S., a 16-year old Guatemalan who received no pay for the 8 weeks he worked at Tents-4-

Rent. In other cases, groups of workers have approached the organization. Abuses are common to all immigrant workers: women are especially vulnerable to sexual harassment, and the Guatemalan Maya are frequently subjected to racist commentary from supervisors (often non-indigenous Guatemalans who have transposed Guatemala's racial ideologies into a new setting). CCT's tactics are straightforward: with help from English-speaking collaborators like me, they write letters detailing the violations to companies and request remediation. They also seek face-to-face meetings with managers or owners. If this does not produce results, they move into direct action, usually picketing in front of owners' homes.

Since the government is pushing the E-verify program, obliging employers to verify migration status of employees, local companies use temporary employment agencies to create a legal smokescreen. Temporary agencies are notoriously lax about enforcing wage and labor laws, blacklisting workers who report abuses. CCT has joined other workers' centers and unions in Massachusetts to push for passage of HB 1393, the Reform Employment Agency Law (REAL), and their efforts have started to bear fruit. CCT signed an agreement in January 2012 with one of the largest temporary agencies in Massachusetts, guaranteeing immigrant employees would receive minimum wage, overtime, vacation, and sick leave, and that health and safety requirements would be met.

Meanwhile, immigrants are making claims on their home country governments. The Guatemalan Consul in Providence now regularly invites Maya from New Bedford to activities. I helped craft an invitation to Guatemala's Foreign Ministry to send a representative to the commemoration of the fifth anniversary of the raid.

However, workplace abuses continue, and during the last year, CCT's main organizers were assaulted. Were these attacks a result of anti-immigrant sentiment, or directly connected with their advocacy? Unlike many immigrant crime victims, both went to the police. And, as transnational media-savvy activists, they ensured that newspapers in Massachusetts and Guatemala reported the assaults.