

New officers, board sworn in

Rodrigues: All must pull together in 'difficult times'

The new officers and board members of SEIU Local 888 pledged to “defend the principles of trade unionism” during an inauguration held as the union prepares for the anti-union ruling likely to come from the U.S. Supreme Court.

“I believe in empowering members and helping raise their voices on the issues that concern them,” said newly elected President **Brenda Rodrigues** in her inauguration speech. Rodrigues, who ran on the Leadership for Changing Times slate, said, “I want to make it clear that without all of you stepping up as a team and helping us achieve success, I would be nothing more than a person with a dream.

“To fulfill my dream of serving our members we must work hard together - as a powerful team – in these difficult times and focus on our members’ needs and the changing environment for unions,” added Rodrigues, who worked for the Brockton Public Library for 42 years.

After the ceremony, new Executive Board member **Kevin Nascimento**, said that “Brenda is kind of my mentor, so when she asked me to be on her slate, I gladly accepted this new adventure.” Nascimento, a Brockton library worker with a 2-month-old son, is particularly interested in family and medical leave issues.

Damali Simmonds, a Boston Water & Sewer Commission worker, said, “I saw a great opportunity when I was recruited by Brenda, because she believes in change.” Simmonds has spoken out in favor of family and parental leave for the average Boston worker, not just for management.



CELEBRATION TIME: After being sworn in, Local 888 President **Brenda Rodrigues** relaxes with **Christopher**, left, and **Jace Soto**.



ABLORDEPPEY



NASCIMENTO



SIMMONDS

Kwesi Ablordeppey, who has been on the Executive Board for six years, said he supported.

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Emerson staff rallies against merit pay

The Emerson Staff Union's mobilization of workers and the wider school community culminated with a raucous May Day rally along Tremont Street in downtown Boston. At the rally, Local 888 members presented the college's president with a petition demanding the school give the staff a fair contract.

Emerson President **Lee Pelton** came down from his 14th floor office to meet and hear from the demonstrators.

"We're only looking for fairness, job security, a livable wage and a decent contract," Emerson graduate studies program coordinator **Shaylin Hogan** told the crowd.



MOSELEY

Emerson sophomore **Denis Yudin** called on the college to provide equal pay for women and a fair wage for the school's staff. "They deserve better." He thanked demonstrators, noting that "May 1 is a day honored in history as a day of action."

At the end of the rally, media arts program coordinator **John-Albert Moseley** presented Pelton with the petition, emphasizing that "many of the signatures are from your own alumni." In turn, Pelton promised to be there at the bargaining table, for the first time, at the next session.

In an interview, copy editor **Nancy Howell** called the rally a success. "We had excellent support from faculty, students and union members."

Costume shop supervisor **Richelle Murray** said, "I was really surprised that the president came down to meet us." While it was an encouraging sign, the bargaining committee member said that so-called "merit pay" is the main sticking point. "They want to be able to decide who gets raises out of a special pool of money."

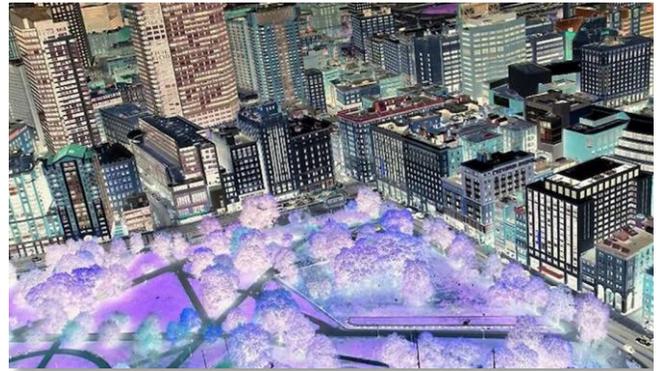


Illustration courtesy DigBoston

Weekly paper Digs activist

An opinion piece by Local 888 activist **Anna Feder** was featured on the front page of the weekly DigBoston. Feder highlighted the Emerson Staff Union's drive to secure a first contract and to right some of the wrongs at the college.

She noted that Emerson College's "merit pay" practices have led to a situation in which, "on average, women at Emerson earn 91 cents for every man's dollar. Emerson's workforce is 60 percent female, yet among the 15 employees in the highest pay grade, all but three are men. The lowest pay grade is 80 percent women."

With her op-ed, Feder, who directs the Bright Lights Film Series, put the concerns of Emerson workers on the front burner. The 140 members of the Emerson Staff Union provide essential administrative services and support to students and faculty.

SEIU Local 888 encourages members to speak out as unionized workers. If you or another member would like help with writing or editing an opinion piece, contact rwilson@seiu888.org.

Union members, however, point out that merit pay is an unfair system that has resulted in women being paid less than men. And this unequal pay is at odds with the image Emerson likes to project, said Local 888 field **See page 4 for more on Emerson**



SOMETHING TO SAY: SEIU locals were on hand for the special Raise Up Congress at the State House.

Raising voices together

Raise Up Massachusetts supporters gathered on May 8 for a massive rally inside the State House. SEIU Local 888 was represented, along with other labor unions, community groups and religious organizations.

Organizers of the special Raise Up Congress said the goal was to “let our legislators know that honoring and protecting workers builds strong families and communities.”

Raise Up Massachusetts is pushing for the passage of measures guaranteeing a \$15 minimum wage along with paid family and medical leave. The coalition has collected over 174,000 signatures to put both questions on the 2018 ballot.

Already on the ballot for November is the Fair Share Amendment, which would create an additional tax of 4 percent on annual incomes above \$1 million. The new revenue generated by this tax would be targeted to education, including public colleges and universities, and for repair and maintenance of roads, bridges, and public transportation.

Success in Quincy, Medford

Quincy Housing Authority Middle Managers have ratified a new contract. A 6 percent across-the-board increase settled this three-year contract, which included raises retroactive to June 30 of last year. The Quincy unit, with about 12 people, covers such jobs as the superintendent of

maintenance and property managers. The workers also won a provision that allows Local 888 members to request an additional week of vacation annually, with the money to cover this deducted from paychecks over the course of the year. Along with that, the contract has new language removing disciplinary material from personnel files within one year.

Medford Clerical Workers ratified a long-awaited contract that included a six percent increase spread over three years and a \$50 across-the-board longevity increase.

In addition, the city’s clerical workers gained the language they had sought for a sick bank. The new program will provide additional paid leave for an employee who may have used up their sick time and vacation leave benefits.

Workers’ deaths honored

Local 888 leaders were out in force for the Workers’ Memorial Day in front of the State House that spotlighted on-the-job deaths in Massachusetts – 74 last year alone.

The Boston event, sponsored by the Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health, featured speakers from labor unions and community groups and a moment of silence for those who died.

“We mourn for the workers lost this year, every workplace death is one too many,” said state AFL-CIO President **Steven A. Tolman**.

“However, Massachusetts continues to be a beacon of hope this year, passing legislation extending OSHA safety to the public sector, which improves protection for hundreds of thousands of workers.”

Al Vega, MassCOSH director of policy and programs, called for action on health and safety issues, including problems with the “gig economy” - which often misclassifies employees as “independent contractors.”

Members interested in getting training on the new state OSHA standards should contact their union rep. or myunion@seiu888.org.



GETTING AN EARFUL: Emerson President **Lee Pelton**, left, and staff member **Anna Feder**, with sign, listen as staffer **Pierre Huberson** talks to a luncheon rally for equal pay and a fair wage.

Fight against merit pay

Continued from page 2

representative **Ronald Patenaude**. “Sadly, Emerson has behaved more like a corporate behemoth with only a façade of being liberal and progressive.”

As part of its contract campaign, Emerson staffers had organized several recent rallies, including actions targeting prospective students as they visited this spring. The “Picture Yourself Working at Emerson College” campaign featured photos of dedicated staffers airing their grievances over low pay and gender inequalities in compensation.

Inauguration

Continued from page 1

Rodrigues because, “I like the way she listens. She takes advice when people tell her that something needs to be done.” Ablordeppey who works at the Holyoke Soldiers Home, said, “My biggest goal is to make sure members are treated with respect.”

Rodrigues added that, in the recent election, “the voices of the membership said it all. They wanted change.”

Public defenders keep up fight

A Massachusetts public defender was featured on WGBH Radio’s “Jim & Margery Show” as the May Day program looked at International Workers Day and discontent in the workplace.

Rachel Scott called the talk show to say, “I love my job, I love my work and I feel challenged. My boss is great. All of those things. But, I don’t feel appreciated.” She added that the state’s public defenders have been fighting for the same collective bargaining rights that other state employees already have. The law currently leaves them out.

Meanwhile, the prosecutors she works across the aisle from are in a union.

That’s why lawyers at her agency, the state Committee for Public Counsel Services, are seeking to change the law – which would allow them to bargain collectively. Public defenders have rallied all over the state to demand justice.

Coming Attractions

Preparing for Janus: An Internal Organizing Training for Public Sector Local Leaders and Staff

Thurs, May 17, 9:30a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Training designed to advance your union’s strategy as we prepare for a decision in the Janus vs. AFSCME case. Coffee and



lunch provided.

Palmer Public Library, 1455 N Main St.

For more information, contact Noah Schoen: nschoen@massafcio.org, 412-728-3777.

SEIU 7th Congressional District candidate forum with Michael Capuano and Ayanna Pressley

Wed, May 30, 6:00 – 8:30 p.m. SEIU 1199 headquarters, 108 Myrtle St., North Quincy.

Moments of Silence

In memory of Local 888 members, see seiu888.org.

