

Courage My Friends Podcast Series IV – Episode 1
Labour Education: Film, Fair and Organizing

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ANNOUNCER: You're listening to *Needs No Introduction*.
Needs No Introduction is a rabble podcast network show that serves up a series of speeches, interviews and lectures from the finest minds of our time

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COURAGE MY FRIENDS ANNOUNCER: COVID. Capitalism. Climate. Three storms have converged and we're all caught in the vortex.

STREET VOICE 1: When I graduate, will there be such a thing as job security? Will I still have access to healthcare?

STREET VOICE 2: We're not seeing the same increase in wages as we are in inflation and cost of living. And I'm worried about what that's gonna mean as far as having a future, having a family and being able to grow.

STREET VOICE 1 Everything is more expensive. I don't know if it's because of the climate crisis or all of this conflict but I have kids and I need to believe their future is going to be better and brighter.

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COURAGE MY FRIENDS ANNOUNCER: What brought us to this point? Can we go back to normal? Do we even want to?

Welcome back to this special podcast series by rabble.ca and the Tommy Douglas Institute (at George Brown College) and with the support of the Douglas-Coldwell-Layton Foundation. In the words of the great Tommy Douglas...

VOICE 4: Courage my friends; 'tis not too late to build a better world.

COURAGE MY FRIENDS ANNOUNCER: This is the *Courage My Friends* podcast.

RESH: How important is labor education in these times? What role does film play in labor education and organizing? And why must we continue to forge a connection between post-secondary students and the union movement?

I'm your host Resh Budhu.

Welcome back to *The Courage My Friends* podcast.

We launch our fourth series and spring season with *Labour Education: Film, Fair and Organizing*. And in fact, episodes throughout March and April will continue to focus on labor education, activism, and organizing as we bring you discussions on and from the 31st annual Labour Fair at George Brown College in Toronto.

For this episode, we are pleased to welcome filmmaker and human rights worker, Lorene Oikawa, and labor organizer and activist Derek Blackadder, both board members of the Canadian Labour International Film Festival, or CLiFF. And School of Labor faculty and organizer with the Labour Fair at George Brown College, Kathryn Payne, as we discuss the connection between the labor movement art, and education.

Lorene, Derek and Kathryn welcome. Thanks so much for joining us.

Kathryn, could you start us off by telling us about the Labour Fair?

KATHRYN: The Labour Fair is a one of a kind event in Canada as far as we know.

The Student Union at the University of Regina has just started doing one. And there used to be one at Mohawk. But since 1992, George Brown's School of Labour has organized an annual Labour Fair.

We've had to take a couple years off. We had to cancel two weeks, after the lockdown began. So we had to cancel the 2019 one. I think we had to take one year off because we were out on strike, etc. But it started out, the Labour Fair, being a forum at one George Brown campus.

The School of Labour invited representatives from a number of unions to come into the college. And it was a day long event in a public space in the college, with tables and the union folks would sit at the tables and the students would go around and talk to the union folks.

But after a few years of that, and of the union folks basically saying that they weren't talking to as many students as they would like - they weren't feeling like it was a really great use of staff time- we decided to shift the way we ran the Labour Fair.

I actually tried to look up this morning what year we shifted and I couldn't find the information.

But what we've done since then is we've brought union speakers and social justice speakers and Indigenous speakers into George Brown classrooms. Sometimes we open up the classroom, especially if it's a keynote speaker, and folks from outside George Brown could come in. But most of the talks have been union folks coming in to talk to a class about a topic that the teacher has identified as pertinent to the students. So the Labour Fair that we last used that model for was just before the pandemic. And when we had to cancel in 2019, we had about a hundred speakers and a hundred classrooms organized. So it was really sad to have to cancel that year.

But now we're sort of shifting as everything has to. We've pivoted into a more digital format, which has meant we've sort of shrunk the Labour Fair down again a bit.

Basically one event every day. And some of those events are CLiFF screenings and some of them are speakers.

RESH: And this year I do have to mention that the Tommy Douglas Institute that produces this podcast, is also a partner on the planning of the George Brown College Labour Fair. And as you said, Kathryn, this year's Labour Fair will also include a number of films from the Canadian Labour International Film Festival or CLiFF.

So Lorene, I'm going to turn to you. You have been with CLiFF for a number of years and are currently a board member. So could you tell us about CLiFF and how it came to be.

LORENE: Thank you Resh.

Very exciting. It's our 15th year of CLiFF. And I started volunteering for CLiFF in its inaugural year, was part of that founding committee, so very excited to celebrate 15! It's in our logo too.

And what we do is every year we put out a call for films around the world. We want stories of workers and because we're putting that call - it's a very open call - we're getting stories of diverse workers and about their work and their issues. And this is a part of communities around the world.

And of course there's some interesting situations that might be a little bit different, but actually it's really amazing sometimes about the challenges that workers face around the world that are very common to the issues that we face here in Canada.

And so these film screenings are free because of the agreement we have with the filmmakers. We pay them a fee for the screenings.

And then with the volunteer work of the Board and our other volunteer supporters and donations solicited by the Board, we make this also very open- access so that people can do screenings free as well. Because we really want people to see these stories. And some of these stories are stories that you're not gonna see in your local shopping mall at the film theater there.

So we're quite excited about it. Yeah, amazing films. And we also get a lot of films from Canada, so across Canada. And we've had films from different persons of color communities, Indigenous communities.

So yeah, it is very exciting.

RESH: And just to continue with you for a bit, you're also coming to this as a filmmaker. What does CLiFF mean to you from that perspective?

LORENE: I think it's really amazing because I think one of the things when you're creative... You do it of course for your passion and the story that you want to share, but if you don't have an audience, it's kind of like within your own realm.

You want people to hear the stories. And in some cases, it's important stories. It's part of the education.

So I can speak personally. I'm a fourth generation Canadian of Japanese ancestry. And so sometimes the history of Japanese-Canadians or Japanese-Americans is not well known.

I think it was 2017, we had a story about a Japanese American worker in 1942. And so for those that know your history, both in the US and Canada, there was a fear-mongering and racist action, which meant the forced uprooting of all Japanese-Americans. Over a hundred thousand in the US and about 22,000 in Canada were forcibly uprooted from their homes. And they were dispossessed, meaning everything was taken away from them. Property, vehicles, personal possessions, homes, businesses. Everything. And then exiled. And then there's some differences between the Canadian experience and American experience. But this film, which was part of the open call, was sent to CLiFF and we had an opportunity to share this story.

And so it also brought up conversations, which is the other exciting part of it. We sometimes bring in speakers when we do film screenings, sometimes the hosts do this, and then also it just triggers something for people to say, "Hey, I never knew that." And so they seek out more information.

So to me, as a filmmaker, that is also something that's very exciting to have people enjoy your work, but also, have them inspired to want to learn more.

RESH: Also sort of a people's history of labor and many people's histories.

Derek, you are also on the board of Cliff now, as someone who has long been involved in the labor movement in Canada, how did you make this connection to the film festival? What does the medium of film and CLiF bring to you as a labor organizer?

DEREK: I should say that what really got me involved in CLiFF to begin with was Frank Saptel.

RESH: And that's Frank Saptel, who is the founder of the Canadian Labor International Film Festival.

DEREK: Frank's impossible to say no to if only because he does so much in so many different places wearing so many hats that you feel incredibly guilty if you ever were to turn down an opportunity to work with Frank on a project like this.

For me, it's partly just an expansion or continuation of my union or trade union nerdiness, I guess. And so the chance to do something new and interesting, something I'd never done before, wasn't something that I was expecting to have handed to me you know, at the point of retirement.

I'd been a fan of CLiFF ever since it started. I'm a bit of a film enthusiast and so it was an opportunity for me personally to combine two lifelong interests. But also, it's an opportunity through my work on the Board - and I think this is true of everybody on the Board - to just continue our union, our working class organizing efforts in a new and different way.

These films that we put together, that we select and that we package every year, they're entertaining for sure. They're informative. They're educational and all of that good stuff. But they are also organizing efforts, I think in some way, shape or form. Just in the same way that a steward goes out and organizes the workers in their workplace. Well that's what we are doing with our films in a slightly different way

RESH: It sounds like a really effective collaboration between entertainment because films are an entertaining medium, but also education and organizing as well. Do you find that you have been able to bring in more people into labor organizing through this medium of film?

DEREK: I don't know that we can quantify or find some objective measurement of the success of the film festival in the sense that we normally talk about organizing in the labor movement. But what it does do is it exposes people, both union members and non-members, to the fact of their shared interests with people, workers around the world. Doing the same kind of work that they do or simply that shared experience of getting up in the morning or getting up in the evening, going to work and having to live with all the things that happen and that develop in any workplace, anywhere in the world.

So for example, this year one of my favorite films in the festival was a two minute, I think maybe three minute short film that's nothing but a recording on film of a conversation between two room attendants at a Spanish hotel. It's an absolutely lovely film, and anybody I'm sure who's ever worked as a room attendant in a hotel will immediately recognize themselves in those two women. But also the way they talk about their lives and the challenges that they face in dealing with their jobs and with their employer in the workplace every day.

That's something that any worker, anyone who goes to work for a living, anywhere in the world can identify with.

I don't wanna be too romantic about this. Though, I think that there's definitely a romantic angle to it, but it helps build a sense of all of us as workers with shared experiences and shared aspirations. It's not the kind of organizing where you can say, oh, we got 12 cards as a result of showing a movie today. People signed up. ..They were so enthusiastic after the film that they signed up on their way out the door; that doesn't happen. But that broader, somewhat shallower form of organizing

is definitely something that I see anyway as a big part of the impact that the film festival has.

RESH: What is the name of that film that you're talking about?

DEREK: *Kelly's*. K E L L Y S.

RESH: And if people wanted to access that film, can they access it now? How do people see those films? Or are they just at the film festival?

DEREK: They normally will be only available at the film festival, which is to say during the month of November. We've shifted as a result of the pandemic to online events, to digital forms of delivering the films.

But we've still limited in order to create a bit of excitement about the fact that we have the festival and that it is available to people now, right across the country in small and large communities.

We restrict their viewings normally to the month of November. If someone has a special event coming up at some other time of the year, we'd certainly look at being able to facilitate them streaming some of the films that were in this year's festival.

But generally speaking, it all happens in November.

LORENE: It's a way to help promote the story, but also the filmmaker. So for example, I'm based in Vancouver and some of the filmmakers have been in the area where when I also host screenings. And sometimes I get them to be a speaker and do like a question answer with the film. And then the other thing, as Derek said we sometimes look at special events under CLiFF. But our film festival is during the month of November. But what we can do is we can put people in touch with the filmmaker as well if they want more information about, for example, purchasing the film. So that's another opportunity for folks and it also promotes the filmmakers.

RESH: And we'll put the website for CLiFF in the show notes to this episode. And again, CLiFF films can also be invaluable contributions to non-November labour education events like George Brown College's Labour Fair.

KATHRYN: I just wanna say that in 20 some years of teaching labor studies, one of the things that I think makes CLiFF and other things like CLiFF so incredibly important, like Mayworks, etc, is that a lot of the culture that my students ingest is really corporate culture, right? It's filtered through social media, television, etc. And there's a real lack of workers' stories and there's a real lack of genuine information about unions. And so I think that things like CLiFF and Mayworks are absolutely pivotal in terms of creating culture and giving foras for culture that does address actual workers' lives. That does address the importance of organizing and of unions in improving life for unions, etc.

Like I actually think in some ways the cultural elements of those things are just as important as a card-signing drive, in terms of educating folks, but also giving folks a place where they can see themselves and their concerns at work reflected back.

RESH: Thanks for that, Kathryn, because I wanted to come back to you on this question of labour education, but within educational spaces. And as you say, the George Brown Labour Fair has been running for a number of decades. And it is a fairly unique event. What was the motivation for this? To bring labor education to students within the learning community of the post-secondary system.

KATHRYN: So the School of Labour itself is a partnership with the Toronto and York Region Labour Council. And when the School of Labour was born, one of the things that the School of Labour did was labour adjustment, right? It was that time when there were a lot of layoffs, there was a recession. And the School of Labour worked within the college to mobilize college resources to help retrain workers whose jobs were just non-existent now, right.

The School of Labour's role in the college has changed, but our partnership with Labour Council has continued to be really important.

So we also used to work with the Labour Education Committee of Labour Council and one of the things that we discovered with them was that a lot of the folks who were workers, didn't have great access to the college. And a lot of folks in the college didn't have great access to unions.

So the School of Labour was formed to sort of be a bridge between those two things. Trying to give room for workers to get credits, while they were working, in post-secondary education. But also to be a union voice in the college because we found that a lot of programs didn't teach the students anything about the unions in their sector. Right? And they didn't really address the question of students workers' rights. They were getting people co-ops and placements and jobs, and good connections in the industries. But they weren't necessarily making room for those folks to plug in to the trade unions in those areas.

So the Labour Fair initially was meant to make sure that working class students could find the unions in their sectors. And had some knowledge of the unions in their sectors so that when they were working full-time, they could find folks who could help them out and who could represent them. And also to sort of teach them the basics of organizing. Right? I mean, the main thing that we are always teaching is that we are stronger as a collective. .

RESH: And as you said, this is important for all students across post-secondaries, universities and colleges.

You started to talk about sort of the working class, so do you wanna say a bit more about that? Because again, unique event, but happening in a college, which is also really interesting. When we think of post-secondaries, we're thinking of degrees and universities, but we don't often think about what's happening at the colleges.

And maybe this is also showing my bias as well, because I also teach within the college system. But as someone who has been teaching in the School of Labour in the college system, in this case George Brown College, could you speak to the particular connection to colleges.

KATHRYN: In the college most of our students are working class folks, right? Many of my students are the first person in their family to go to post-secondary education. And so these are the folks for whom unions are probably the most important in a lot of ways.

And the other thing about the colleges, is that there is a sort of classism built into the education system. So in Ontario, last I checked - this could be a slightly dated statistic- but colleges got less funding from the government per student than high schools or universities. Right. And so we're dealing with a population that's often kind of overlooked by decision-makers and policy-makers. And so the tools of being able to mobilize ourselves are incredibly important for those of us who are not the ruling class, are not the elite, right? So for our students in particular, many of them are working as they go through school, in order to pay for school.

Many of the international students are working as they go through school in order to pay for school.

I think our students are the students who require the education about unions the most. I think unions can benefit just about everyone. But I think in terms of direct improvements in our lives, it is working class folks who need that knowledge.

RESH: And certainly you have working class folks who are also going to be coming out of universities, and you have college students who are going into universities and university grads going to colleges. But there's still those old elitist or classist ideas and attitudes that do continue to exist. That universities produce the brains, whereas colleges produce the brawn, or as you say, the working class with perhaps more value placed on one than the other.

Now, given that CLiFF films as well as filmmakers are featured in the college Labour Fair this year, and I'll just name three of them, *The Unmaking of Medical Inadmissibility Opera Ttrans*formed: Teiya Kasahara* and *A More Radiant Sphere*, exploring subjects from the early Left in Canada to barriers facing new immigrants to Trans inclusion in the arts.

Lorene, could you speak of the appeal and importance of such films to learner and student populations?

LORENE: Just as we're speaking about all workers, but particularly new workers, younger workers that maybe don't know about their rights. They don't know about the fights before them, the workers that fought to obtain rights, like the right to vacation, safety, etc. And it was always hard, like how do we get them to know this information?

And yeah, you could pass 'em a 30 page document, but like most people, even with good intentions, we'd never read that document. And so Frank - Frank Saptel, the brains behind this, CLiFF Film Festival - was the one that inspired me when he said, what if we had an opportunity to have films? Because of the power of films. And as a labor activist, a human rights activist that really appealed to me. So that drew me in.

And that's the power of CLiFF is to reach out to different folks from a wide range backgrounds, but particularly say students and younger folks that maybe think, "Why do I need to know about history? That's like years ago. It's got nothing to do with me," right?

This is a way to sort of capture them with, "Oh, how about seeing a film?"

"Oh, okay. I'll see a film."

So you can reach a lot of people and be inclusive so people feel like they're being included with their stories. But also help people who maybe have no idea to understand a bit better of some of the challenges that - and it could be their family or a colleague, a coworker - could be facing.

RESH: We're very happy to have these CLiFF films and many of them are from last year's film festival coming to the Labour Fair. But as was mentioned, the actual film festival for this year is taking place later on in November. So just to continue with you Lorene, is there a theme for this year?

LORENE: Our theme is it's the 15th year of CLiFF. We make it fairly open. We want to be very open, so we have an open call for films right now, so we won't know the films for this year's film festival.

It's in the month of November, but November ends on the 30th, ends on a Thursday, so we're expanding it to go through to that weekend. So December 3rd. And that'll cover the screenings. And so we have the open call for the films, we'll make the film selection. And then we'll get folks to then put in for wanting to host the films and hosting the films can be in theaters, union halls. We've had it in isolated northern areas where there are no film theaters or halls, where people have hosted in their own homes. So there is a wide range of screenings available.

We post the screenings that are open to the public on our website, so you could check to see which film screening are available in your area.

As Derek said, we switched now to make it very accessible and now we have a online system so you can join through your computer. And then some folks will be doing In-person screening. So that could be at a theater or union hall. I know my union in British Columbia, they do an in-person one.

So there's a variety of methods of how you can access the film screening. So we'll have that all listed on our website.

RESH: And again, I will post that website link in the show notes to this episode.

Derek, could you speak to the continual relevance of CLiFF in these times and what it brings to the wider conversation about labor struggles and rights in this moment?

DEREK: It not only I think continues to be relevant, but in some ways I think it's become more relevant over the past three years.

It's ongoing relevance is that it shows working people a mirror. It holds up these films which are made as accessible as possible to as many people as possible. And it allows people to look at a film - it might be two minutes long, it might be a couple of hours long - but it lets them look at a film that represents them in some way, shape or form.

It may be that the workers in the film are speaking a different language than the viewer is. But they're gonna see and hear things that will be absolutely familiar to them. That will allow them to make the connection not only to the people in the film and the filmmakers, but also make that connection that in that bigger world, workers have a great deal more in common, than they do those things that divide us.

And what has also happened over the past three years is, if anything, the pandemic has made us more relevant. We are starting to see, and we're not the only labour film festival out there - and I think this experience is shared by most of them, possibly even all of them. But we're seeing an expansion of our audience.

We're much more accessible than we used to be. In the case of the small town in Ontario where I live, we used to have our in-person viewings at our local library. We may return to doing that, but the Labour Council out here has stuck with the online streaming format. And there are people who are able to attend our film festival here in Northumberland County, who in the past, because of mobility problems, because of the way their shift, work is scheduled, for all kinds of reasons, or because they might just have to drive a fair distance to get to the physical location. And that can be a considerable barrier in a whole bunch of different ways. Suddenly those people are able to pull out their phone, even, not even sit at a computer or at a smart tv, but just pull out their phone and suddenly they've got a labor film festival in their pocket.

And so we've taken advantage of the shift in the way in which a lot of entertainment is being delivered to hopefully broaden our audience and bring more people in to see some really spectacular films about work and workers.

RESH: I was having a conversation in an earlier podcast when we were talking about organizing during these times, mental health in the workplace. It's actually come up a couple of times. And one of the points that was brought up within the last three years of this pandemic and you know, this shift to remote working is that there are advantages, but also the disadvantage is that people are less able now and less encouraged to organize, because we're literally in separate spaces.

And so Derek as somebody who's in the labor movement, do you find that labor organizing is growing because of what's been happening in the last three years? Or is it diminishing?

DEREK: At the micro level, at the very practical level, I'm seeing things like isolated local unions suddenly feeling like they have much easier access to the grievance arbitration process because they're not having to pay an arbitrator to fly into Sioux Lookout and spend three days there on the local union's dime, because they needed the arbitrator there for a three or four hour mediation session on the day of the hearing. For them the shift to some kind of digital trade unionism is a good thing in a very mechanical sense.

I share the concerns you were relaying about the political impact of isolation, of everything from working at home to the drop-in/drop-out office model a kind of hybrid work model. Thinking about myself and the jobs that I've had over the years; being able to wander down the hall and talk to somebody, somebody with some more experience in a particular area than you do, that's been lost.

And along with those conversations about work, were conversations about the workplace, which inevitably will lead people to talking about either their existing union or about the potential for a union in their workplace. And I worry that some of that's been lost.

On the other hand I'm also hearing from the people that I used to work with who are still out there organizing new local unions. I'm hearing that workers' familiarity now with tools like Zoom and Skype, are actually making it easier to connect with workers in the greenfield organizing sense. And so employers aren't quite as easily able to draw a line, build a wall between workers and a union where they're interested in organizing.

And I'm also speaking to friends still at work who talk about union meetings suddenly becoming much more accessible. Particularly for parents. The responsible parent often for when children are involved is very often the female parent in the relationship.

And so suddenly, especially in small local unions, we're seeing much more participation by women who otherwise would've been required to go home and do childcare duties.

There are also I think significant improvements in the level of participation by people with mobility issues, for whom attending a physical union meeting in a high school gym or in the basement of their local legion would normally be an incredible challenge for them. Suddenly all they have to do is roll up to a desk, sit at a desk and log in and they're there. They're able to participate and they're able maybe for the first time to bring their issues to the floor at a union meeting.

RESH: Basically those same trends that are also bringing the film festival during this pandemic to those populations as well.

And just continuing on this conversation about you know, some of the current trends and issues . I mean, the attacks on workers and on unions have been mounting over the last few decades. And given so much of the recent turmoil, from the pandemic as well as other crises. We're in a climate crisis. We have conflict. We have a crisis in capitalism. More and more issues are really coming to the fore in this really unique moment. And Lorene, as a member of CLiFF, as a filmmaker, as somebody who is a human rights worker and a labor worker as well, what are some of the critical issues that you would like to see spotlighted at this time?

LORENE: There's still that issue about workers' rights, workers' safety, having fair wages, safe workplaces for workers - ongoing, still needs scrutiny. Environmental issues.

That's the brilliance of CLiFF. A number of issues will continue to be reflected in the films that we show at our labor Film Festival, but have been shown as well. Because I remember working with the Canadian Labour Congress on a project to provide more information for migrant workers.

For example, a Filipino worker not being told anything about where she was going to, arrives in Toronto in the middle of winter with not the appropriate attire because nobody told her about whether, workers, not just migrant workers, but workers here not knowing about their rights and issues.

But one of the films, that was shown early on in CLiFF was about migrant workers, for example. About the issue of workers coming from the Philippines. And it's kind of echoing right now, what we're going through. The health crisis of wealthy western countries scooping up healthcare workers from other countries like the Philippines.

So the Philippines, who provide the education, develop these workers. scooping them away from their country, depriving their country, and then bringing them into our country. Unfortunately, then when they get to our country, credentials aren't recognized. So they're not even working as nurses as they've been trained. Right? So working as home support workers, etc.

And that was a film that was at CLiFF years ago that we talked about. One of the unions, with those workers brought them in as special speakers at one of the screenings. So to my mind, the films are echoing the different issues.

The racism, discrimination, anti-Asian hate, we've had that through different films through CLiFF. And again, another issue that, continues.

The thing about racism, sometimes we reach a pivotal point and think, oh, okay, we've done it, we're all good. But it just keeps rearing its ugly head, if you will.

I was just telling someone it's horrifying because that trope you hear about, "well, it was in the past, had nothing to do with me. Why do we need to know this?" And then yet, I've heard some really ugly statements that could have been pulled from 1942.

The fearmongering, the horrible rumors, false information that was spreading in 1942 against Japanese-Americans and Japanese-Canadians. Except just change the ethnicity, right? Change the group of people you're attacking. And that same rhetoric, "Those people are taking our jobs", that kind of rhetoric. And I hear it repeated over and over again, and that's when we don't know our history.

So there is still a need. There's never a point where, "oh, we're done. We don't need to know our history." We have to continue to know our history.

And for workers too, that things weren't just given to them. Benefits weren't just given to them. Maternity leave, paternity leave, vacation, medical benefits, things like that weren't just given to them. It was because of the fight of people before us who won those benefits.

I think Derek said it, there's even probably a greater need now that we see, because there's more and more attacks, there's division between workers. So all of that needs to continue.

RESH: Absolutely. And Kathryn from labor education, as a labor educator, what are some of the critical issues for you right now?

KATHRYN: I think migration is a major issue, migration and immigration, right?

So, huge percentages of my students are international students right now, because the government is desperately underfunding the college system. And so the college is making up the shortfall with international student tuitions, which are not subsidized like students in Ontario or Canada's tuitions are. And so these students are paying very, very high tuitions. And many of them are working in order to be able to afford to be here.

The government just recently lifted the 20 hours a week cap on how much time those students could legally be working. Which is a good thing in a lot of ways, because it allows them to actually make a living and it makes it more difficult for unscrupulous employers to exploit them by offering them work that is off the books. Because students, a lot of students were taking work off the books because they needed more hours and they couldn't legally work more than 20. But a lot of my students are working. A lot of my students are far from home. A lot of my students don't have the kind of supports that they would have at home.

And a lot of my students tell me nightmare stories about things that are happening for them at work. They are being really seriously taken advantage of. They might know their rights, but have few ways to defend those rights.

Thinking about the places where immigration and work intersect, has been something that my students' concerns have been leading me to do.

I think other issues right now are partly about students' mental health. The pandemic had a really incredible toll on younger people.

I also think that something needs to happen to change the level of inequality in our society. I can see the impact of that inequality in my classrooms, virtual and real, every day that I'm teaching. And it's becoming more and more glaring and distressing. And I think it's a part of why people's mental health is a bit sketchy these days.

RESH: Absolutely. And many of these themes are also going to be highlighted within the Labour Fair. So, Kathryn, tell us about this year's Labour Fair. What is the theme and perhaps some of the coming highlights.

KATHRYN: Well, our theme this year is P3s, so Pandemic, Privatization, and Precarity. But in our conversations, both with teachers and amongst each other, we've also sort of added a fourth P, which is the Planet.

We have a panel in our hospitality area. Of course, restaurants and hospitality were hard hit during the pandemic. So we've got folks coming in to talk about where our food comes from. So that'll be around migrant workers and then about the hospitality industry and work in that as well.

We've got, as we often do, some folks coming in from the Workers' Action Center to talk to George Brown students about both the work that the Workers' Action Center does advocating for students and to educate students a bit about what their rights are, both under the Employment Standards Act and in terms of labour relations.

Senator Hassan Yussuff, who of course used to be the President of the Canadian Labour Congress, he's our keynote speaker this year. He'll be talking in a Community Worker class.

The Ontario Black Nurses Network coming in to talk in our nursing area.

And then we've got a panel on gig work. And we're really fortunate that the Gig Workers United, which is a sort of an up and coming union for folks, sometimes they talk about themselves as app-based workers. And the Najauwan Support Network, which is a brilliant example of worker organizing outside unions. So the Najauwan Support Network does direct action in order to basically embarrass and harass employers who have cheated their workers, committed wage theft, etc., in order to make those folks actually make good with their employees. So pay back the lost wages, etc.

And then finally we've got Blue Green Canada coming in to talk about green jobs and a Just Transition, which I think is an incredibly important topic these days.

RESH: Agreed, and thanks for that rundown, Kathryn. So *The Other P3s: Pandemic, Privatization, Precarity... and Planet!* Which is the theme of this year's Labour Fair at George Brown College in Toronto.

We will be airing recordings of some of those events on the *Courage My Friend's* podcast throughout March and April.

And the keynote address by Senator Hassan Yussuff will also be featured on rabbleTV.

Lorene, Derek and Kathryn, I want to thank you so much for joining us. It's been a pleasure.

DEREK: Thank you Resh and Kathryn. You guys are doing some spectacularly good work there.

KATHRYN: And thank you so much. Resh. This is awesome.

RESH: That was Lorene Oikawa and Derek Blackadder from the Board of CLiFF, the Canadian Labour International Film Festival, and Katherine Payne, faculty in the School of Labour at George Brown College and organizer with the annual George Brown College Labour Fair.

This is the *Courage My Friends* podcast. I'm your host, Resh Budhu.

Thanks for listening.

COURAGE MY FRIENDS ANNOUNCER: You've been listening to the Courage My Friends Podcast, a co-production between rabble.ca and the Tommy Douglas Institute at George Brown College and with the support of the Douglas Coldwell Layton Foundation.

Produced by Resh Budhu of the Tommy Douglas Institute, Breanne Doyle of rabble.ca and the TDI planning committee: Chandra Budhu and Ashley Booth. For more information about the Tommy Douglas Institute and this series, visit georgebrown.ca/TommyDouglasInstitute.

Please join us again for the next episode of the Courage My Friends podcast on rabble.ca