

# Introduction to US Labor History

Fall 2024, ILRGL 1100  
Tuesdays/Thursdays 3:35—4:25  
Ives Hall 115  
Professor Paul Ortiz  
ILR School, Cornell University  
[portiz@cornell.edu](mailto:portiz@cornell.edu)

TA: Adolfo Romero  
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Sections: Friday, 10:10; 11:15  
2:30pm

"Who put this great gulf between the American captain and the American sailor? Or is the captain a creature of like passions with ourselves? Or is he an infallible archangel, incapable of the shadow of error? Or has a sailor no mark of humanity, no attribute of manhood, that, bound hand and foot, he is cast into an American frigate shorn of all rights and defenses, while the notorious lawlessness of the commander has passed into a proverb familiar to [sailors]: *The Law was not made for the captain!*"

—Herman Melville, White Jacket, (1850)

*The worldwide unrest among the wage class is the most hopeful sign of the times. Labor is learning that its most powerful and effective weapon is in its muscles and its brains. Let it withdraw these and the capitalist system is paralyzed. What labor wants is land for the landless, produce to the producer, tools to the toiler and death to wage-slavery.*

--Lucy E. Parsons, *Industrial Worker*, May 1, 1912

**Course Description:** We will explore working class cultures and struggles for dignity in the development of the US from the colonial period to the present. Emphasis is placed upon the diverse experiences and ideologies of working people as well as their efforts to create free and independent organizations and their aspirations to democratize a society marked by deep divisions between what early political theorists termed “the Many and the Few.”

**Course Objectives/Student Learning Outcomes:** Students will investigate major problems of labor, economy, and working-class history in the United States including struggles for economic security, democracy in workplaces, and grassroots efforts to reform American politics. We will explore the development of slavery, indentured servitude, free labor, emancipation, Jim Crow/Juan Crow, debt peonage, deindustrialization the “Gig Economy,” and other drivers of US development and institutions.

Class sessions will often feature music and discussions of contemporary labor issues using historical materials to base our dialogs on. We will study the centrality of working-class experiences in the creation of what we now refer to as “American culture,” including literature, poetry, song, and other genres. What does “US history” look like with working people at the center of the narrative?

Students will learn how to become more effective writers through careful reading, applied research and sound argumentation rooted in a strong evidentiary base. These skills are critical to success in the workplaces of the 21<sup>st</sup> century!

## ***COURSE FORMAT***

**Contemporary Thought Pieces (CTP):** Each week, we will weave *contemporary thought pieces* into our historical readings to learn how to understand current issues in the workplace and society through historical lenses. The idea behind the CTP readings is to connect the past with the present and to gain a greater understanding of how historical processes impact the workplaces of today and the future. Be prepared to bring your thoughts on the CTP readings to lectures and especially to our discussion sections.

**Office Hours:** I will be holding office hours this semester on Thursdays, 1-3 pm at 288 Ives Hall. I am also available for phone meetings via appointment. 831-334-0131. Adolfo's office hours will be Mondays, 1:30 to 3:00 pm.

**Synthesis Essays:** Students will write 4 synthesis essays this semester that draw upon readings and other course materials to make a sound historical argument. Essays will be 4-5 pages in length. Your 1<sup>st</sup> essay will focus on Rediker's, *The Slave Ship: A Human History*, and will examine the impact of slavery on the lives of working people and the development of work. I am looking for serious engagement with the major themes and will give explicit instructions on each paper. Synthesis Essay due dates: September 23; October 28; November 26; and December 18.

**Participation:** Participation in our class will count for 20% of your final grade. This will be based on the quality of your demonstrated participation in activities such as:

- ✓ Contributions to discussions during Friday sections
- ✓ The 10 highest scores (out of 13 total) received on discussion session "quizzes"
- ✓ Attending class sessions
- ✓ Doing the assigned readings

All of these various forms of class participation will help you succeed on the written assignments for the class and enable you to achieve the learning goals for the class.

**Discussion Sections:** Discussion sections give us the opportunity to discuss our readings, lectures and thoughts on labor history in small-group settings. To promote vibrant discussions, we will begin each discussion section with a brief quiz on a major topic found in the readings.

**Grading:** Class participation, including discussion section quiz scores (20%); Synthesis Essays (80%)

**Health & Wellness:** In accordance with **COVID-19** conditions, please do NOT come to class if you have any symptoms of illness. DO let the instructors know if you will not be able to attend class so that we can help you "make up" the materials you miss.

**Students with Disabilities:** Your access in this course is important. Please send Prof. Ortiz your Student Disability Services (SDS) accommodation letter early in the semester so that we have adequate time to arrange your approved academic accommodations. If you need an immediate accommodation for equal access, please speak to me ASAP or send an email message to me and/or SDS at [sds\\_cu@cornell.edu](mailto:sds_cu@cornell.edu). If the need arises for additional accommodations during the semester, please contact SDS.

**Required Texts: (Available @ Catherwood Library & Campus bookstore):** Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History*; Paul Krause, *The Battle for Homestead, 1880-1892: Politics, Culture, and Steel*; Thomas Bell, *Out of this Furnace: A Novel of Immigrant Labor in America*; Blair LM Kelley, *Black Folk: The Roots of the Black Working Class*; *Fight in the Fields: Cesar Chavez and the Farmworkers*; Barbara Kingsolver, *Holding the Line: Women in the Great Arizona Mine Strike of 1983*. Lucy Parsons: *Freedom, Equality & Solidarity Writings & Speeches, 1878-1937*, is available in our course Canvas site.

## Syllabus & Reading List

### AUGUST 27: WORKING CLASS NATION: INTRODUCTION TO CLASS

**Tuesday:** Introduction to themes; *What is labor? What role does labor play in a liberal polity?* Syllabus review

**Thursday:** Syllabus review; *Introduction to US Labor History, cont.*

Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History*, Introduction and Chapter 1

Screen: *The Twilight Zone*, [The Brain Center At Whipple's - YouTube](#), May 15, 1964

Abraham Lincoln, [On Labor and Capital](#): A *Civil War* Message to the U.S. Congress, December 3 1861

Free write exercise: Abraham Lincoln on labor's role in the republic.

[The Statute of Laborers](#) (1351) *Yale Law School Lillian Goldman Law Library*

[The English Peasants' Revolt \[of 1381\]](#) Gave Birth to a Revolutionary Tradition, [Jacobin](#), 4/20/2023

[Combination Acts](#) (1799-1800), *Britannica Money*

**Contemporary Thought Piece (CTP)** [Revealed: 6,500 migrant workers have died in Qatar since World Cup awarded](#), *The Guardian*, February 2021

**Friday:** *Discussion Sections*

Suggested Reading: Amazing Grace Play Student Guide (**CANVAS=CAN**)

### SEPTEMBER 3: SLAVERY, FORCED LABOR, AND THE MAKING OF THE AMERICAS

**Tuesday:** Lecture: Transatlantic Slavery and the Making of the Americas

Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History*, chapters 2-6

**Contemporary Thought Piece (CTP):** Caitlin Rosenthal, "[Plantations Practiced Modern Management](#)," *Harvard Business Review*, Sept. 2013

Screen: "Weighing Cotton," [Twelve Years a Slave](#) excerpt

**Thursday:** Lecture: North America as a "Plantation" and a Prison: Parallel Systems of Forced Labor

Paul Ortiz, "Bound Labor, Indentured Servitude and "Concerted Action Among Workers" in Richard B. Morris's *Colonial America*" (**CANVAS=CAN**)

**CTP:** Coalition of Immokalee Workers, South Florida, "[Anti-Slavery Program](#)," (2012)

Gustavus Myers, *History of the Supreme Court of the United States* (1912) (**CANVAS=CAN**)

Suggested Reading: Gustavus Myers *History of the Great American Fortunes* (1909), 9-42 (**CANVAS=CAN**)

**Friday:** Discussion Sections

**SEPT 10: BATTLES AGAINST SLAVERY, IMPRESSMENT & THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION**

**Tuesday:** Lecture: *The Many-Headed Hydra: Cultures of Resistance*

Paul Ortiz, "The Haitian Revolution and the Birth of Emancipatory Internationalism," in *An African American and Latinx History of the United States (CAN)*

Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History*, chapters 7-8

CTP: "[Life and Death in Apple's Forbidden City](#)," *The Guardian*, June 18, 2017.

CTP: Griselda Nevarez, "[Latino Workers Helped Rebuild New Orleans](#), But Many Weren't Paid," *NBC News*, August 28, 2015,

**Thursday:** Lecture: *The Making of a Revolutionary Proletariat: Struggles on Sea and on the Land*

Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History*, finish book.

**Friday:** Discussion Sections

**WEEK OF SEPT 17: THE CRISIS OF THE "MANY AND THE FEW" IN ANTEBELLUM AMERICA**

*And, whereas, we believe that those who have preceded us have been, we know that ourselves are, and that our successors are liable to be, assailed in various ways by the wicked and unprincipled, and cheated out of just, legal and constitutional dues, by ungenerous, illiberal and avaricious capitalists,—and convinced that "union is power," and that as the unprincipled consult and advise, that they may the more easily decoy and seduce—and the capitalists that they may the more effectually defraud—we (being the weaker,) claim it to be our undeniable right, to associate and concentrate our power, that we may the more successfully repel their equally base and iniquitous aggressions.*

***--Lowell Factory Girls Association Constitution (1836)***

**Tuesday:** Lecture: Early Labor Parties, Women's Organizing, and Struggles for the Ten-Hour Day

Blair LM Kelley, *Black Folk: The Roots of the Black Working Class* (Introduction to pp 62.)

[Northern Society and the Growth of Wage Labor, 1790-1837](#) in *Who Built America? Working People and the Nation's History*

[Voice of Industry](#), Women Textile Workers' Website (Focus on "The Ten Hour Movement," "Rights of Women," and "War and Peace.")

[Working Men's Declaration of Independence](#) (1829)

[Constitution of the Lowell Factory Girls Association](#) text (1837)

“[Grievances](#),” of Lowell Factory Girls Association (1836) and “[Organized Resistance](#),” of [Mill Girls in Nineteenth-Century Print](#).

[The Movement for a Ten-Hour Day](#), *Digital History*

CTP, “[Bangladesh Factory Collapse Toll Passes 1,000](#),” *BBC News*, May 10, 2013 and [Bangladesh Accord Gets a Lifeline While Workers Organize Wildcat Strikes](#), *Labor Notes*, August 6, 2019

**Thursday:** Guest Lecturers: Marcie Suzanne Farwell ([msf252@cornell.edu](mailto:msf252@cornell.edu)) and Steven Calco ([sc2899@cornell.edu](mailto:sc2899@cornell.edu)), Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation & Archives

Frederick Douglass on [Chinese immigrant workers](#), “Composite Nation,” (1869)

Paul Ortiz, review of Karren Orren, *Labor, the Law, and Liberal Development in the United States*. (CAN)

CTP: Zoe West and Sanjay Pinto, [Sweeping Change](#): *Building Survivor and Worker Leadership to Confront Sexual Harassment in the Janitorial Industry*, ILR Worker Institute, 1-13.

**Friday: Discussion Sections**

### **WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 24: GILDED AGE/PROGRESSIVE ERA STRUGGLES**

*Without the blacks the [Civil War] would not have been won. What I want to emphasize is that it was not only that the blacks brought their forces into the Northern army and gave labour. It was that the policies that they followed instinctively were the policies ultimately that Abraham Lincoln and his cabinet had to use in order to win the war. That is something entirely new in historical writing. I wonder if you understand it? I doubt it! You will in time, if you work hard at it.*

—C.L.R. James on W.E.B. Du Bois’s *Black Reconstruction*

**Monday:**, September 23: 1st Synthesis Essay Due: *Slavery, Forced Labor and the Making of the Americas*

**Tuesday:**

[The Civil War: America’s Second Revolution](#), 1861-1865 and [Reconstructing the Nation, 1865-1877](#), in [Who Built America? Working People and the Nation’s History](#) (4<sup>th</sup> Edition)

“August Spies [Defends the Eight-Hour Movement](#), 1886,”

*Massacre of Workers: 1887 Thibodaux Massacre* (CAN)

Paul Krause, [The Battle for Homestead](#), 1880-1892: *Politics, Culture, and Steel* (preface: introduction; chapters 1-3)

CTP: “Justice in the factory: how [Black Lives Matter](#) breathed new life into unions,” *The Guardian*, 2018

**Thursday:** Paul Krause, *The Battle for Homestead* (chapters 4-7)

Eugene V. Debs, “The Negro in the Class Struggle,” 1903) (CAN)

**Friday:** *Discussion Sections*

## **WEEK OF OCTOBER 1: A REVOLUTION IN STEEL AND AMERICAN POLITICS**

**Tuesday:** *The Battle for Homestead (chapters 8-11)*

*Free-write exercise: J.L. Hibbard, Santa Fe Railroad Superintendent on Workers and Race 1907-1910*

**CTP:** “As Our Jobs Are Automated, Some Say We’ll Need a Guaranteed Basic Income,” National Public Radio, September 24, 2016, <http://www.npr.org/2016/09/24/495186758/as-our-jobs-are-automated-some-say-we-need-a-guaranteed-basic-income> (Radio program)

**Thursday** *The Battle for Homestead (chapters, 12-13)*

**CTP:** “[\*Hellfire from Above, Tampa Electric\*](#),” *Tampa Bay Times*, August 17, 2017 (Worker Safety)

**Friday:** *Discussion Sections*

## **WEEK OF OCTOBER 8: VOTER SUPPRESSION & THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF LABOR**

**Tuesday:** *The Battle for Homestead (Wrap up book)*

**Thursday:** Blair LM Kelley, *Black Folk: The Roots of the Black Working Class*, 65-113.

Paul Ortiz, [\*Segregation and Black Labor Before the CIO\*](#), *Against the Current* (2009)

*Free-Write Exercise*, Mother Jones’s [\*Speech\*](#) to the United Mine Workers’ Convention, 7/19/1902

Luisa Capetillo, “To My Daughter, Manuela Ledesma Capetillo,” *Mi opinion acerca de las libertades, derechos y deberes de la mujer* (CAN)

Richard L. Davis, United Mine Workers’ leader, excerpts of letters to the *National Labor Tribune*

Eugene V. Debs., “The Homestead Horrors,” *Locomotive Fireman’s Magazine*, (1892) (CAN)

**CTP:** [\*Treating Migrants As the Enemy Provides No Vision for the Future\*](#) *Foreign Policy in Focus* (2024)

**Friday:** *Discussion sections*

## **WEEK OF OCTOBER 15: DYNAMITE! THE ERA OF “GOVERNMENT BY INJUNCTION”**

**Tuesday:** NO CLASS!

**Thursday:** Lucy Parsons: *Freedom, Equality & Solidarity Writings & Speeches, 1878-1937*;

Gilbert E. Roe, “Our Judicial Oligarchy,” Introduction by Robert M. La Follette, V-X and, 106-171. (CAN)

Thomas Bell, *Out of This Furnace: A Novel of Immigrant Labor in America* (Kracha’s story)

[Remembering the 1911 Triangle Factory Fire](#), Cornell University, ILR School, 2018.

[“On Labor Day, Remembering the 1914 Ludlow Massacre.”](#)

CTP: “In Historic Vote, [St. Paul Starbucks is Minnesota’s First to Unionize](#),” *Twin Cities Eater*, April 27, 2022

CTP: “[Elon Musk’s Takeover Through the Eyes of Twitter’s Janitors](#),” *In These Times*, December 12, 2022

**Friday:** *Discussion Sections*

### **WEEK OF OCTOBER 22: WHOSE PROGRESSIVE ERA?**

**Tuesday:** Thomas Bell, *Out of this Furnace: A Novel of Immigrant Labor in America* (Mike Dobrejcek’s story)

Hubert Harrison, *The Nation and the Negro* (1917) [CAN]

Sonia Hernandez, “A Profile of [Two Radical Women Anarchists](#) in the making of Revolutionary Mexico,” LAWCHA, July 21, 2022

Julia Wright and Paul Ortiz, How [The Elaine Massacre of 1919](#) Influenced Richard Wright, Acclaimed Author of “Black Boy” & “Native Son” *Democracy Now*, October 04, 2022

**Film:** [“Matewan”](#) West Virginia Coal Miners’ Unionism,

**Thursday:** Thomas Bell, *Out of this Furnace* (Mary’s Story)

A. Phillip Randolph, Chandler Owen, et. al., *The Messenger* (January, 1918), 1-24

Devra Weber, Keeping Community, Challenging Boundaries: Indigenous Migrants, Internationalist Workers, and Mexican Revolutionaries, 1900-1920,” (CAN)

Eugene Victor Debs, “[Statement to the Court](#) Upon Being Convicted of Violating the Sedition Act”

CTP Nick Hanauer, “A [report that analyzed every minimum-wage hike](#) since 1938 should put a bunch of nonsense ideas to rest,” *Business Insider: Markets*, May 6, 2016.

**Friday:** *Discussion Sections*

### **WEEK OF OCTOBER 29: FASCISM OR DEMOCRACY?**

Monday, October 28: Synthesis Essay 2 Due: Gilded Age, Progressive Era Struggles

**Tuesday:** Thomas Bell, *Out of this Furnace*, (Dobie’s Story)  
[Labor Democratizes America, 1935-1939](#), in *Who Built America*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition

[Sue Ko Lee, Chinese American Garment Worker and Labor Organizer](#) (1938)



Patricia M. Fong, *The 1938 National Dollar Store Strike*, Asian American Review, Vol. 2 (1975), 183-200. (CAN)

["We Are Americans!"](#) *The 1936 Steelworkers Declaration of Independence*: (CAN)

C.L.R. James, "With the Sharecroppers," (1941) (CAN)

*The Unemployed Councils and the New Deal* (Handout)

Rose Chernin Explains How the Unemployed Movement of 1930 was built (Handout)

**Thursday**, Thomas Bell, *Out of This Furnace*, concluded

James Green, "Democracy Comes to Little Siberia: Steel Worker Organizing in Aliquippa, Pennsylvania, 1933-1937," *Labor's Heritage*. 5:3 (August 1993). (CAN)

Film: ["With Babies and Banners"](#) (Women and the Organization of the CIO)

CTP: ["How to Crush a Movement](#) for Racial Justice," *The Nation*, November 1, 2022

**Friday**: *Discussion Sections*

### **Suggested Readings:**

Staughton Lynd, Introduction, in Staughton Lynd, *We are All Leaders, The Alternative Unionism of the early 1930s*, 1-26 (CAN)

Peter Rachleff, "Organizing 'Wall to Wall': The Independent Union of All Workers, 1933-37," in Staughton Lynd, *We are All Leaders, The Alternative Unionism of the early 1930s*. 51-71 (CAN)

## **WEEK OF NOVEMBER 5: WORKERS MAKE A NEW DEAL**

**Tuesday**: Blair LM Kelley, *Roots of the Black Working Class*, 115-224

Paul Ortiz, *Black Workers, The Birmingham Spring and the Making of the New Deal* (CAN)

Dana Frank, [No Money, No Milk: Black Wet Nurses Made a Show of Militance in 1937](#)

"Longshore Union Leader Thomas Watkins Escapes Assassination, Memphis, 1939 (CAN)

**Thursday**: Martin Glaberman, "Reported Work Stoppages in Automobile Plants, WWII," in Wartime Strikes, (CAN)

Film: "They Couldn't Break Our Line": [Salt of the Earth](#) (*Building of Mine, Mill, Smelter Workers' Union*)

CTP Michael Pierce, ["The Origins of Right to Work: Vance Muse, Anti-Semitism, and the Maintenance of Jim Crow Labor Relations,"](#)

**Friday**: *Discussion sections*



## **WEEK OF NOVEMBER 12: SOCIAL MOVEMENT UNIONISM**

**Tuesday:** *Fight in the Fields: Cesar Chavez and the Farmworkers* (Reading, TBD)

Blair LM Kelley, *Roots of the Black Working Class*, 227-281

Cesar Chavez, “Huelga: [The Organizer’s Tale](#),” *Ramparts* (July 1966) (CAN)

**Film:** “[At the River I Stand](#)” Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the 1968 Memphis Sanitation Workers Strike

Suggested Film: [Fight in the Fields](#) (Catherwood Library)

**Thursday:** Philip F. Rubio, “Organizing a Wildcat: Organizing the United States Postal Strike of 1970,” (CAN)

**CTP:** [The State of Gig Work in 2021](#), *The Pew Research Center*, December 2021 (First two pages)

**Friday:** *Discussion Sections*

## **WEEK OF NOVEMBER 19: THE GREAT ARIZONA MINE STRIKE OF 1983**

**Tuesday:** Barbara Kingsolver, *Holding the Line: Women in the Great Arizona Mine Strike of 1983*, 1996 author’s forward through first half of the book

[We Are One: Honoring Immigrant Garment Workers](#) Labor Arts Exhibit

**Film:** [Celebrating Our Roots: 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 1982 Chinatown Garment Worker Rallies](#)

**Thursday:** “Tofu Politics in Berkeley,” *The Nation*, 1991) (CAN)

**CTP:** [Economic Policy Institute](#), Wage Theft is a Much Bigger Problem Than Other Forms of Theft—but Workers remain unprotected,”

**CTP:** “[Testimony of Fatima Goss Graves](#) Vice President for Education and Employment National Women's Law Center,” *U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission* (Workplace Harassment) (2015),

Suggested: **Film:** “[Made in L.A.](#)” (Catherwood Library)

## **11/26: EL GRAN PARO ESTADOUNIDENSE: THE LARGEST GENERAL STRIKE IN US HISTORY**

**Monday: 11/26, 3<sup>rd</sup> Synthesis Essay Due: Workers Making a New Deal/Social Movement Unionism**

**Tuesday:** Barbara Kingsolver, *Holding the Line: Women in the Great Arizona Mine Strike of 1983*, finish book

Paul Ortiz, *An African American and Latinx History of the United States*, Chapter 8 (CAN)

**CTP:** UCLA Newsroom, “[Latinos in Labor Unions were Better Protected from Job Losses During Pandemic.](#)”

**Thursday & Friday** (No Class!)

## **WEEK OF DECEMBER 3: LABOR'S FUTURE IN THE PRESENT & PAST**

**Tuesday:** Paul Ortiz, "[\*To Continue the Work of Our Foreparents\*](#)," in, *Who Built America? Working People and the Nation's History*.

Gabriel Winant, "[\*The New Working Class\*](#)," *Dissent*, June 27, 2017,

Katie Wells, et. al., "[\*The Work Lives of Uber Drivers\*](#)," *Labor Online*, August 8, 2017,

Chris Zepeda-Millán, "[\*There's No Way to Teach About Labor Studies\*](#) without Dealing with Intersectional issues," *UCLA Newsroom*, October 5, 2022

**Thursday:** "[\*How Amazon's Immigrant Workers Organized\*](#) to Win a Union on Staten Island: An interview with Brima Sylla," *Jacobin*, April 4, 2022

**Friday:** *Discussion Sections* (Wrap-up discussion of Kingsolver book)

## **DECEMBER 13: FINAL EXAM WEEK**

Final essay due Wednesday, December 18

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**Academic Dishonesty:** Academic dishonesty is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, forgery, plagiarism, and collusion in dishonest acts. Engaging in this behavior undermines the college's education mission and students' personal and intellectual growth. Students are expected to be individually responsible for their own work and to use proper citations when referring to other's work. Failure to abide by academic honesty or attempts to compromise this honesty will be sanctioned and reported to the University.

**About the Instructor:** Paul Ortiz is a professor of labor history at Cornell University's ILR School. Paul is a PEN-award winning author. He is a consultant and featured narrator for John Leguizamo's *American Historia* docuseries on Latino history that will air on PBS in 2024. Paul was a consultant and narrator for Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s *The Black Church: This is Our Story. This Is Our Song*, which premiered on PBS in 2021. Ortiz came up through the ranks of the labor movement, from being a picket line captain during the 1990 Greyhound Strike, a boycott organizer during the United Farm Workers' successful eight-year Chateau Ste. Michelle Boycott, and an AFL-CIO union chapter president during the Global Pandemic in Florida.

Professor Ortiz earned his PhD at Duke University in 2000. Ortiz's book *An African American and Latinx History of the United States*, was identified by *Fortune Magazine* in 2020 as one of the "10 books on American history that actually reflect the United States." In 2013, Paul received the *César E. Chávez Action and Commitment Award*, from the Florida Education Association, AFL-CIO for "Outstanding leadership through engaging in activities which dignify workers and by making notable contributions to the labor movement & demonstrating resilience in organizing workers, especially those who have been traditionally disadvantaged."

Dr. Ortiz served as president of the United Faculty of Florida-UF (FEA-AFL-CIO) between 2020-2023. He is a former president of the Oral History Association. Ortiz is a first-generation college graduate and a third-generation US military veteran. He was in the 82nd Airborne Division and 7th Special Forces Group in Central America in the 1980s where he served in multiple combat zones. Ortiz lectures frequently for labor unions, community organizations, and corporations on comparative race and ethnic studies as well as the histories of labor and social movements, broadly understood.