

Dear Mr. Cole,

Hello, my name is Emma Roach-Barrette, and I am the National History Day recipient of the American Labor History Award! I would like to thank you for your generous support of NHD and this award that acknowledges students who are passionate about Labor History.

My documentary titled *Out of the Kitchen and Onto the Picket Line: the responsibility of women to protect miners' rights during the 1973 Harlan Coal Strike* explores the activism of local women during the Brookside strike. It describes the women's roles on the picket line to protect miners' rights to safer working conditions and choosing their own unions to negotiate their contract. The documentary also explores the cultural and familial responsibilities of the women to become actively involved in the strike.

I researched the topic for 11 months, and in the process increased my research and writing skills as well as my knowledge of labor rights in the United States. To understand the historic events during the strike, I reviewed secondary resources: articles, books, a dissertation, and documentaries. In fact, my bibliography was over forty pages long!

To provide authentic visual evidence I included the University of Kentucky's Special Archives' Appalachian Photo Collections of coal camps, miners, and their families, in the Harlan coal strikes. Three photographers who were present during the strike, Earl Dotter, Builder Levy, and Robert Gumpert, personally sent me photos of the families and women involved in the strike. Appalshop located rare footage of an original interview with the president of the mining company to provide multiple perspectives. I recorded interviews with historians who specialize in labor history in Appalachia, providing historical context on social and cultural causes and effects of the women's involvement and its significance.

Through this process, I discovered labor songs and gained knowledge on their impacts on movements in the 1930s and 1970s. To set the mood and pace for my documentary, I used some of the Appalachian occupational folksongs that played an important role throughout the history of resistance to coal companies, as recommended by the archivist for the Center for Traditional Music at Morehead State University.

I learned so much about labor history that did not even appear in my video such as the history of the UMWA, the reformation of the union during the 1960s and their work in Harlan County. I also learned about the history of the National Labor Relations Act, specifically Section 7, a right I highlighted in my video as well as mining safety regulations. This project also had a significant impact on how I view my Appalachian heritage. Before I started this research, I was ashamed to say I was from Eastern Kentucky due to the harsh stereotypes associated with my culture. I am now proud to say that I am an Appalachian because of the strong women who fought for workers' rights and the rights of their families.

My documentary was also selected by NHD to be shown to representatives of history and humanities organizations in Washington, D.C. and members of Congress during the

National Endowment for the Humanities Congressional Breakfast, an event that acknowledges and showcases the work on NHD students. I greatly enjoyed sharing the events and impact of the Brookside Strike with a wider audience!

Receiving this award is such an honor. Once again, thank you so much for supporting National History Day. This program has had a long-lasting, positive impact on my life! If I had not pursued this topic, I feel my knowledge of American History would have been lacking, now that I know the profound impact the labor movement has had on our country!

Sincerely,

Emma Roach-Barrette