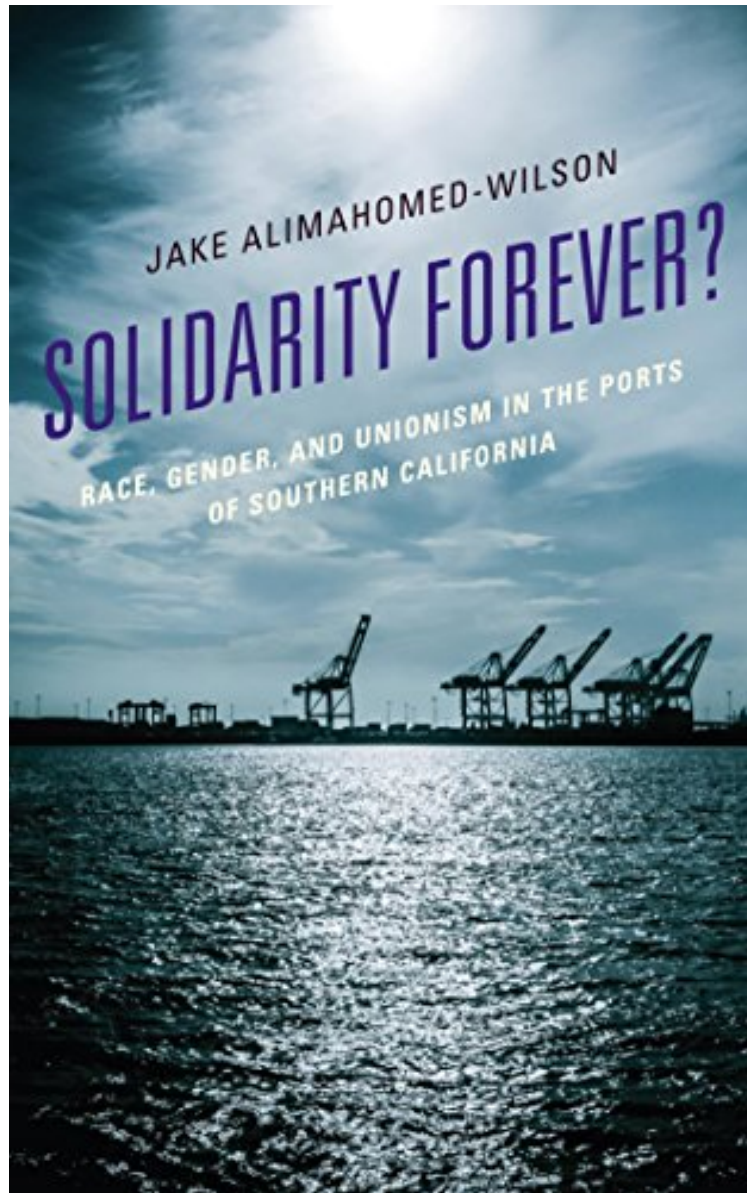


Solidarity Forever?: Race, Gender, and Unionism in the Ports of Southern California

Jake Alimahomed-Wilson

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Jake Alimahomed-Wilson : Solidarity Forever?: Race, Gender, and Unionism in the Ports of Southern California before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Solidarity Forever?: Race, Gender, and Unionism in the Ports of Southern California:

The International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) remains one of the best examples of a labor union that traces its origins to radical anti-racist principles. Today, very few mainstream unions remain that were founded on militant, radical, and “anti-racist” principles. The ILWU remains the strongest port union in the United States, and its members are among the highest paid blue-collar union workers in the world. Drawing on in-depth interviews, archival oral histories research, and ethnographic observation, *Solidarity Forever?* highlights the struggle of a key group of Black and women leaders who fought for racial and gender equality in the ports of Southern California. The book argues that institutional and cultural forms of racial and gender inequality are embedded within US trade union locals leading to the following deleterious consequences for unions: (1) a proliferation of internal discrimination lawsuits within unions, which can cost the union International, or union local, potentially millions of dollars in legal fees and financial settlements thereby redistributing precious financial resources that could be spent on key activities related to making unions stronger from outside attacks; (2) an erosion of trust and solidarity among workers, the key values of any successful union, which ultimately undermines the radical democratic potential of unions and rank-and-file participation in union politics; and (3) the undermining of workers of color and women workers as full and equal participants in the labor movement. The future of organized labor in the United States could very well be determined by the ability of the labor movement, and labor unions in particular, to listen to those workers who have been relegated to the margins of the global economy—workers of color, immigrant workers, women workers, and all workers in the Global South.

Individual chapters draw extensively from oral histories and provide useful background biographical profiles for the longshore workers. . . .The individual stories and recollections are important. (The Northern Mariner/Le Marin du nord)In examining racism and sexism within the labor movement, instead of selecting the obvious suspects, such as the construction trades, Jake Alimahomed-Wilson has brilliantly chosen to look at a union that is generally viewed as one of the most progressive in the country. Combining historical testimony that was collected years ago with contemporary interviews, he tells the story from the point of view of the people who have suffered from this form of discrimination, letting them speak—as they do, vividly—for themselves. The author points out that grappling with racism and sexism in the union requires more than a “color-blind” approach, where each individual is treated as if their race and gender is irrelevant. This issue makes the book of great contemporary relevance, as students on today’s university campuses are grappling for stronger answers to their experiences of exclusion and marginalization. (Edna Bonacich, University of California, Riverside)Combining archival data, interviews and oral histories, and ethnographic observations, *Solidarity Forever?* provides a definitive study of how racism and sexism has been both reproduced and challenged within the International Longshore Workers Union in Southern California. It provides important lessons for the U.S. labor movement and is “must read” for scholars of labor, race, and gender. (Ellen Reese, University of California, Riverside)About the AuthorJake Alimahomed-Wilson is associate professor of sociology at California State University, Long Beach.