

CULTURE

Class struggle takes the stage at 2020 SAG Awards

By Don McIntosh

Unionism—and a film about class struggle—got some of the biggest applause at the 2020 Screen Actors Guild (SAG) Awards. The event, which aired Jan. 19 on TNT, is a chance for film and television actors in the union known as SAG-AFTRA to honor the best in their profession.

This year, the union's highest award for Outstanding Performance by a Cast in a Motion Picture went to the cast of *Parasite*, the runaway hit dark comedy that depicts a working class family that connives to escape dire poverty by getting jobs as servants for a rich family.

"It depicts a class struggle taking place, all under one roof, where some aren't even aware a struggle exists," said actor Park So Dam, speaking in Korean. *Parasite* was the first foreign-language film ever to win SAG-AFTRA's top award.

SAG-AFTRA also presented a lifetime achievement award to actor Robert DeNiro.

"I thank SAG-AFTRA for tirelessly fighting on our behalf for workplace and economic gains and respect," DeNiro said in his acceptance speech. "And that especially bears remembering these days when there's so much hostility towards unions."

In Portland, SAG-AFTRA members gathered at the Lake Theater in Lake Oswego to watch the show, and to honor



Todd A. Robinson, board member of the Portland Screen Actors Guild local, spoke of the kindness and integrity of fellow SAG-AFTRA activist Robert Blanche.

Robert Blanche, former local president, who died Jan. 3. Blanche, who acted alongside DeNiro in the 2000 film *Men of Honor*, was among those acknowledged in the part of the Los Angeles award ceremony acknowledging actors in SAG-AFTRA who had died in the previous year. After the national event ended, officers of the Portland local presented Blanche's widow Christine with a new annual service award named in Blanche's honor.

Portland Public Schools ratifies union contracts with DCU, custodians, food service workers

Portland Public Schools (PPS) has ratified new union contracts with maintenance employees of the multi-union District Council of Unions (DCU), and with custodians and nutrition services staff represented by Service Employees Local 503.

The school district employs 78 maintenance workers who are members of 13 craft unions. That entire workforce will receive a 12% wage increase over the next four years, plus a nearly 12% increase in district contributions to their health insurance premiums. The first wage hike of 3% is effective July 1, 2020, followed by 3% hikes on July 1 in each of the subsequent three years to 2023. Effective Jan. 1, 2020, PPS pays \$1,355 a month for health insurance premiums. That will increase 5% in 2021 and top out Jan. 1, 2023 at \$1,524 a month.

Additionally, a wage comparison study conducted by the school district and DCU resulted in further hourly wage adjustments for several crafts. Starting July 1, 2020, plumbers will get an additional 60 cents an hour, mechanics will get 90 cents, laborers will get 25 cents, and electricians and carpenters will get \$1.25. In July 2021, plumbers will get another 50

cents an hour, mechanics will get 80 cents, laborers will get 15 cents, and electricians and carpenters will get another \$1.

Hourly wages at PPS currently range from \$24.80 to \$37.93, depending on the craft. Leads, forepersons, and other specialty workers are paid an additional 3 to 10%.

The last two contracts at PPS were one-year extensions, the second of which expired on Dec. 31, 2019.

"This was the least contentious bargaining we've had in decades," said DCU President Pat Christensen, a business rep for Plumbers and Fitters Local 290. "There was a respectful tone and real professionalism in the room."

DCU members ratified the pact by a large margin in December, and the PPS School Board confirmed the deal with a unanimous vote on Jan. 7.

Unions affiliated with DCU are Local 290, Bricklayers Local 1, Carpenters, Cement Masons Local 555, IBEW Local 48, Glaziers Local 740, Laborers Local 737, Floor Coverers Local 1236, Machinists District Lodge W24, Painters & Dry-wall Finishers Local 10, Plasterers Local 82, Sheet Metal Workers Local 16, and Team-

sters Local 206.

SEIU Local 503's new agreement provides both custodians and nutrition service workers with large cost of living adjustments (COLAs) to bring their wages up to a rate that is more commensurate with neighboring districts. And long-term staff will receive bonuses.

Wage adjustments for custodians will result in around a 5% increase retroactive to July 1, 2019, followed by a 3% increase on July 1, 2020.

"It's the best we've ever gotten. It's the most money we've gotten for these employees in years," said Tim Curtin, a custodian at Grant High School and a member of the bargaining team.

Nutrition services assistants got a 5% increase retroactive to July 1, 2019, plus increases in 2020 and 2021. Some high school leads will get one-time \$1,000 bonuses, and all leads will see a 4% wage hike on July 1, 2020, and 5% on July 1, 2021.

The union represents 509 custodians and nutrition service workers at the school district.

The School Board ratified the contract on a unanimous vote held Jan. 21.



THOMAS, COON, NEWTON & FROST

PORTLAND LAW FIRM SINCE 1980

- Workers' Compensation
- Construction Injuries
- Death Claims
- Personal Injury & Product Liability
- Medical Malpractice
- Social Security Disability

Mesothelioma
www.tcnf.legal
 503-228-5222
 Straight answers.
 No cost for consultation.

If your employer forces you to work in dangerous work conditions you can make a CONFIDENTIAL report to OSHA by calling (800) 922-2689.



820 SW Second Ave., Suite 200, Portland, OR 97204

Proud Partners
 Teamsters Local 223 & 58

"Saving Lives Together"

(In emergencies, please dial 911)