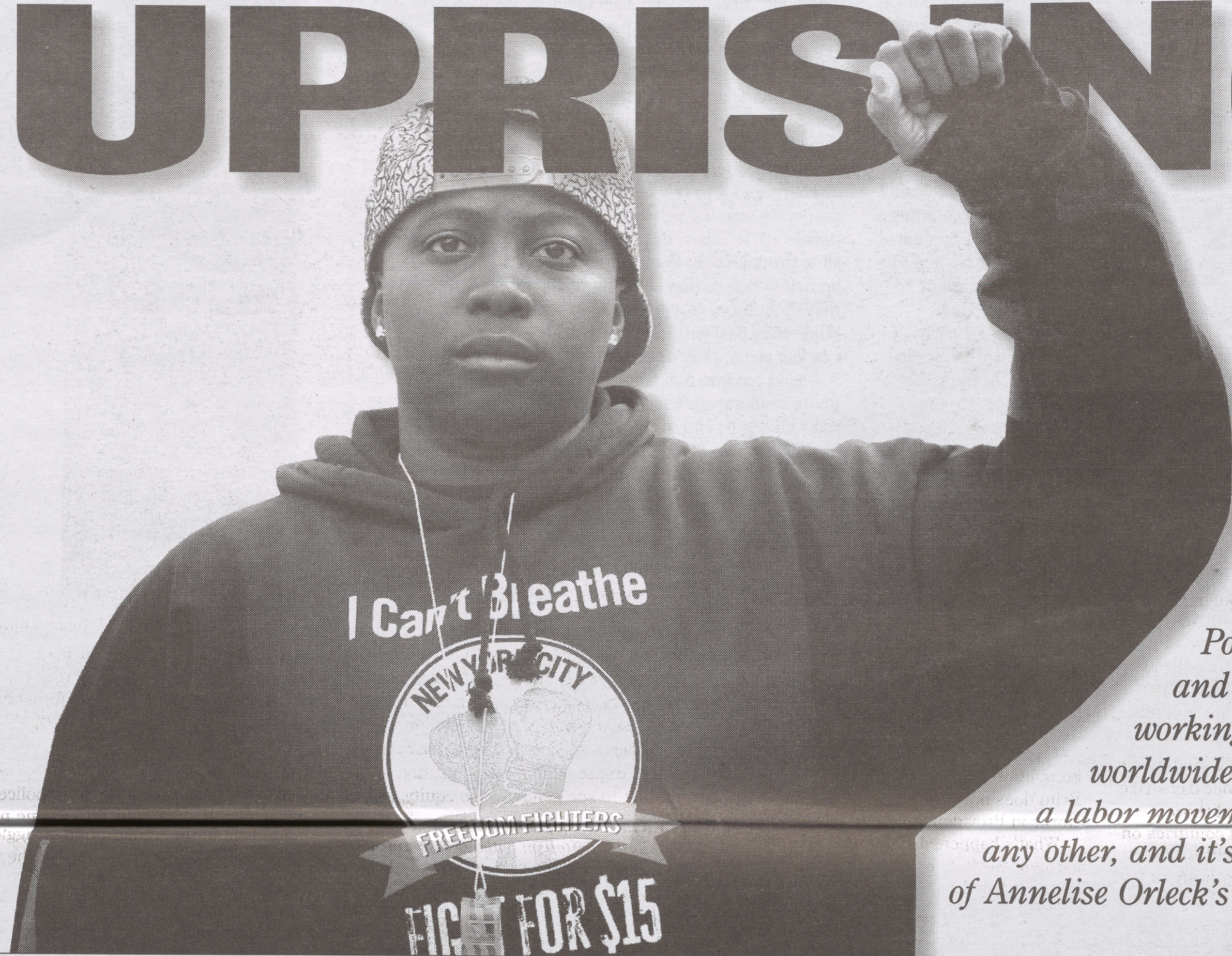


worker UPRISING



Poverty wages and unsafe working conditions worldwide have sparked a labor movement unlike any other, and it's the topic of Annelise Orleck's new book

McDonald's worker Bleu Rainer, a Fight for 15 activist in Tampa, Fla., said the movement is linked to the fight against police brutality.

PHOTO BY ELIZABETH COOKE

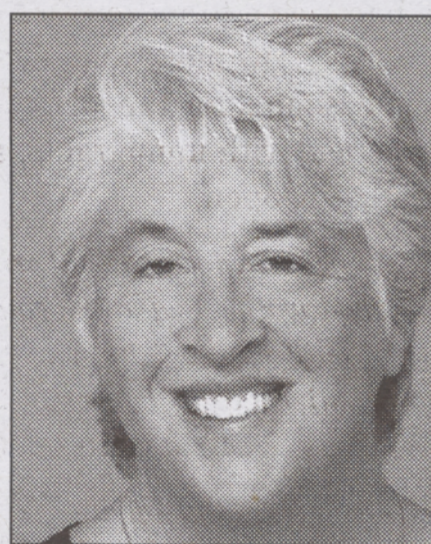
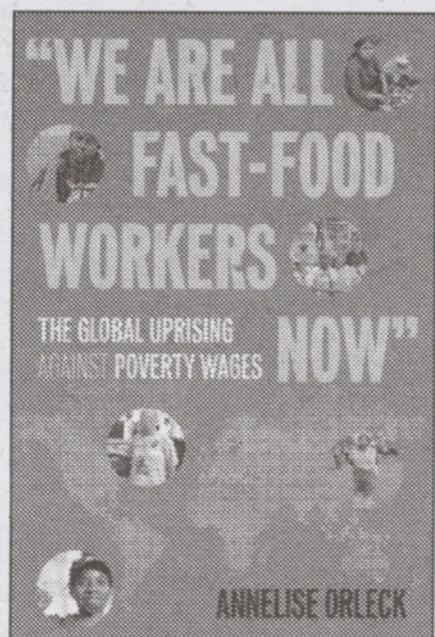


PHOTO BY JOEL BENJAMIN

Annelise Orleck



COURTESY OF BEACON PRESS BOSTON

BY EMILY GREEN
SENIOR STAFF REPORTER

Inside a crowded café in Tampa, Fla., Annelise Orleck first heard the words that would eventually become the title of the book she was there to research.

"We are all fast-food workers now," said Keegan Shepard, a graduate student at the University of South Florida.

Shepard was sitting among a diverse alliance of professors, students, fast-food workers and community activists who had all met at the café that day to talk about Florida's Fight for \$15 campaign.

His words reflected a globalization-spurred trend that's led to a world in which billions of people struggle to survive on poverty wages, often while working at unsafe jobs, without any security or benefits.

Tampa was just one of many stops on Orleck's journey around the globe as she researched what she says has become a massive, unified, global uprising of these workers.

Her book, "We Are All Fast-Food Workers Now: The Global Uprising Against Poverty Wages," took her to Bangladesh, Cambodia and the Philippines, where workers are fighting for safer working conditions in clothing factories and farmers are rising up after being displaced.

But much organizing and outcry is taking

place right here in the U.S., where Orleck says conditions for low-wage workers are not all that different from those in developing nations.

She traveled between Los Angeles and New York City, interviewing those with the courage to go up against the world's two largest private employers – Walmart and McDonald's – as well as farmworkers, hotel and home care workers, and even college professors, who have all reached their boiling point and have begun to demand living wages, safety and respect from their employers.

From Orleck's bird's-eye view of this burgeoning global labor movement, she shows readers that where there is despair, there is also hope, because when workers come together and rise up, positive change often follows.

Orleck will be at Powell's Books on Hawthorne at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, April 19, for a book signing and reading.

She has written five books on the history of women's issues, activism, immigration and politics, including "Storming Caesars Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty" and "Rethinking American Women's Activism." Orleck, who was born and raised in Brooklyn, resides in Vermont and is a professor of history at Dartmouth College.

Emily Green: *What conditions set the stage for this worker uprising?*

Annelise Orleck: I think there are a few: Workers started to be scheduled by computer algorithm in many places. Nobody had set schedules anymore. People could be called in at the last minute if the place was busy, but they could also be told as they were on their way to work and had already paid for a babysitter, "Sorry, you're not needed now." That complete erosion of any sense of stability for workers, I think, set the stage for an uprising and a feeling that people had nothing to lose.

Bleu Rainer, the fast-food worker I profiled in Tampa, Fla., showed me a paycheck for \$109. He said, "That was my paycheck for two weeks because the algorithm decided that it wasn't busy and they didn't need me."

Additionally, wages have been stagnant for 40 years. And by 2016, 70 percent of American workers were earning less than \$50,000 a year; 50 percent were earning less than \$30,000 a year. So you have 50 percent of employed Americans in poverty.

And we're seeing that: A recent study showed 10 percent of Disneyland workers are homeless; the study that came out very recently that showed 36 percent of college

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