

The Debs Foundation Newsletter

P.O. BOX 9454, TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA 47808-9454



FALL 2013

Medina to Recieve Debs Award

The recipient of this year's Debs Award is one of a goodly number of labor leaders whose efforts have typified a Debsian commitment to workers' rights and a host of human rights issues. Eliseo Medina is described by the Los Angeles Times as "one of the most successful labor organizers in the country" and Poder Magazine named him one of the "Top 50 Most Powerful Latino Leaders" in America.

Medina is the International Secretary-Treasurer of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). He also leads the union's efforts to achieve comprehensive immigration reform that would rebuild the nation's economy, secure equal labor and civil rights protections for workers to improve their wages and work conditions, and provide legal channels and a path to citizenship.

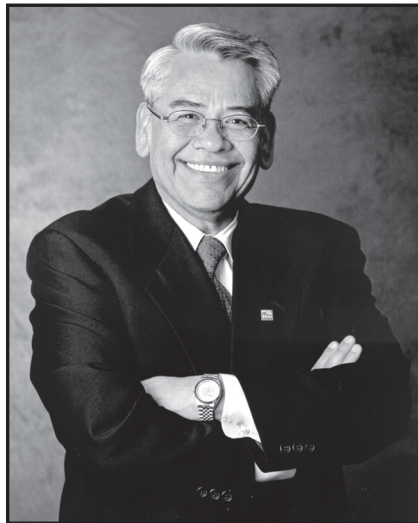
The issue of immigration reform is personal to Medina. When he was ten years old, he came to the U.S. from Mexico with his mother and siblings to join their father, who was an immigrant farm worker. Medina's career as a labor activist began in 1965 when, as a 19-year-old grape picker, he participated in the historic United Farm Workers' strike in Delano, California.

Over the next thirteen years, Medina worked along-side labor leader and civil rights activist Cesar Chavez and honed his skills as a union organizer and political strategist; eventually rising through the ranks to serve as the UFW national vice president.

Medina's interest in strategic organizing brought him to SEIU in 1986, where he helped revive a local union in San Diego—building its membership from 1,700 to over 10,000 in five years. He was a key strategist in the Los Angeles strike by SEIU Local 1877's building services workers, who in April 2000 won the largest wage increase in the 15-year history of SEIU's "justice for janitors campaign."

Medina made history by becoming the first Mexican American elected to a top post at the 2.1 million-member SEIU, this when in 1996 he was elected to serve as international executive vice president. He has helped make SEIU the fastest-growing union on the West Coast and largest union in California. Since 1996, more than 1.7 million workers across the country have united with SEIU, the nation's largest union of healthcare workers and the union with the largest membership of immigrant workers.

In 2010, Medina, not surprisingly was unanimously elected to serve as International Secretary-Treasurer of the 2.1 million-member union. He presently lives in Washington, D.C., married and the proud father of four children and one grandchild. Join us October 19 in Terre Haute to honor Medina with the Debs Award.



Eliseo Medina

Banquet Day October 19, 2013

Of course the Debs Award banquet is the highlight of the year for the foundation, but that is not all happening that day. First of all, it should be mentioned that this year the banquet will be held in the new banquet hall in the student union center. This state of the art facility has been constructed in the space formally used for the Barnes and Noble book and gift store. It is a perfect setting for events of 200 to 400, which is precisely the size we need.

Parking is free and conveniently located. It is the lot (on Chestnut Street) south of the School of HIPER. Looking down on a map, the lot is between 4th and 5th Streets, and the banquet hall is on 5th Street, cater-cornered from the parking. However, the entrance to the banquet hall is on the northeast corner of the hall, at the main entrance to the student union building. It will be easy to find, no elevator or stairs, and the area is well-lighted. There is a lot of glass on the exterior wall of the banquet hall, so you can see in your left side before you reach the entrance. See you there.

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Help the Brainstorming Effort

Banquet day offers you another opportunity to get involved in helping the foundation plan its future. There is a concern that our membership is hardly growing, but is growing older. There is a felt need to find ways to attract new, especially younger members. There will be a meeting Saturday afternoon to test ideas about what can be done. This is not a decision making meeting. The idea is to develop ideas to present at the Sunday morning board meeting.

It is an excellent opportunity for you to be heard. So plan to be there. The time is 1:30 to possibly 4:00 p.m., the place is a meeting room, second floor of Hilton Garden Inn, corner of 7th and Wabash. Noel Beasley will preside. See you there!

Debs 100 Years Ago

Interesting things were happening to Debs in 1913. Ray Ginger (pp. 317 ff.) refers to subtle changes taking place in Debs' approach to issues. Especially the harsh feelings between Kate Debs and Theodore Debs "should" have drawn his attention but did not. An important thing on his mind in 1913 was the May 1913 coal strike in the Cabin Creek district of West Virginia. This incident was following the long-established pattern of anti-labor violence. Even Mother Jones, the almost legendary 80-year-old organizer for the United Mine Workers, had been jailed without benefit of trial. All segments of the labor movement protested against this wanton viciousness. The Socialist Party sent an investigating committee to the strike zone. Debs served with Victor Berger and Adolph Gomer. Debs spent several weeks hurling himself around West Virginia, exhorting the miners to stand firm. By the middle of June all union men had been released from jail. Debs, in his customary state of exhaustion, returned to Terre Haute.

But there was no rest. Another incident occurred just as the coal miners' strike was ending. In Terre Haute, the daughter of an old friend of Debs had been arrested for immorality and taken to the county jail. Debs thought, correctly or not, that the girl was merely unhappy due to her recent divorce. Remember that as City Clerk, Debs had refused to levy fines against streetwalkers, so it is no surprise that he had acted as he did in this case. He persuaded the authorities to appoint him as temporary probation officer, and he then took the girl to his home. It is known that Kate Debs was supportive of this action.

DEBS FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

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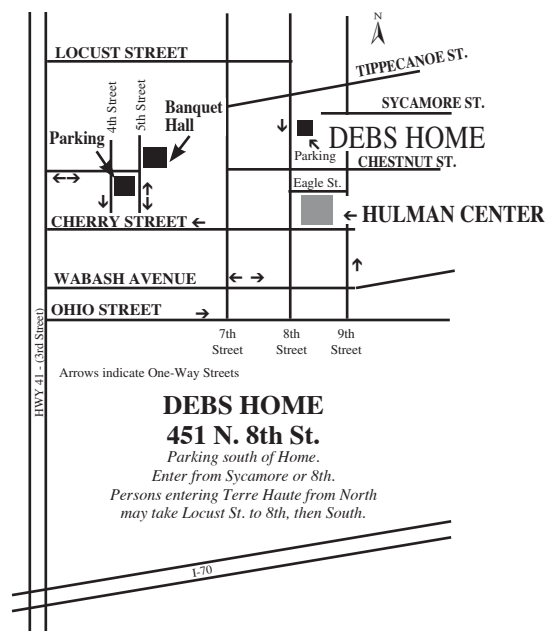
The *Debs Foundation Newsletter* is published twice yearly for distribution to members and friends of the Foundation. The Eugene V. Debs Foundation is a non-profit, private organization which maintains the home of Eugene and Kate Debs as a museum and shrine to labor, and carries on educational and informational programs which aim to honor and promote the goals for which Debs struggled: industrial unionism, social justice, and peace. For those wishing to become members, an application form is provided elsewhere in this issue.

Debs' action drew nationwide attention and much support, much of it coming from persons not generally supportive of Debs' radical actions.

Debs felt the need for rest, so he took a vacation of over two months in Estes Park, Colorado. While on this vacation he made an important decision. It was time to retire. He was still writing two or three articles each week for the Appeal to Reason. He had just finished paying off the \$22 thousand debt of the American Railway Union—it had taken eighteen years—so he was freed from that self-imposed financial burden. And Kate wanted him to give up the lecture platform and stay in Terre Haute. The idea was reasonable; they were coming into the twilight of their lives.

It turned out that his retirement near the end of 1913 lasted all of two months, although it could have worked. He could still sell his articles to the Socialist newspapers so money was no problem. But it was not in Debs' nature to enjoy a leisurely life. Besides, Debs broke retirement just as war in Europe in Europe seemed near, and an incident in Mexico including President Wilson sending U.S. marines to land at Vera Cruz elicited Debs' usual and sincere anti-war sentiment. That is the beginning of another story, but 1913 ended with Debs "officially" retired.

ANNUAL AWARDS BANQUET TERRE HAUTE October 19, 2013 Honoring ELISEO MEDINA
SCHEDULE OF EVENTS Afternoon 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.: Debs Home Open 1:30 p.m.: Brainstorming, Hilton Garden Inn Evening 6:00 p.m.: Social Hour and Reception (cash bar) 7:00 p.m.: Banquet Honoring Eliseo Medina
The fall business meeting will be Sunday, October 20, at 9:00 a.m. at the Debs Home



You have the opportunity to participate in sending greetings in either of two forms. For a listing of your name (one or two persons), send \$20. For a listing which includes your personal greeting not to exceed 20 words, send \$30. Indicate if not attending the banquet in order that a copy of the souvenir program can be mailed. This order must be received by September 10. Use space at bottom-right to provide name, \$20 or \$30 listing (include message) and if attending the banquet. Your greeting honors this year's Award Recipient and the Debs Foundation as well.

Dinner Ticket Order

\$40 per ticket, Table of 8 is \$280
Students K-College - 1/2 price

Name _____

_____ X \$40 = \$ _____

number of	amount
tickets	enclosed

Tickets must be paid in advance, checks payable to The Debs Foundation,
P.O. Box 9454, Terre Haute, IN 47808. Please check one of the following options.

☐ Hold tickets at the door, in the name of _____
(actually the preferred way)

☐ Mail my tickets to the following address:

Inquiries may be directed to Charles King, 812-237-3443, or,
charles.king@indstate.edu

NOTE

We offer a choice of entrees. Please **indicate your choice when you order tickets and again at the door.**

Chicken Dijonnaise _____
Number

Vegetable Marinara _____
Number

Program Listing \$20.00 _____
\$30.00 _____

Name or Names:

(If not attending banquet,
provide mailing address across left).

Problems! Problems!

For a couple of months my main concern has been the planned demolition of the Sycamore Towers just north of the Debs House. They should have had another meeting on this project by now. This is not happening. I sent an email to the Facilities Management lead man on this project which should prod them to some action.

In the meantime, another event has preoccupied our time. The sewer at the Debs Home was clogged. Two years ago we replaced the major portion of the line -- about two-thirds of the total length. We stopped that work when the placement reached the sidewalk six feet out from the house. Our reasoning was that if it were to clog up with roots again, the obstruction could be reached from the clean-out in the basement furnace room. It developed that the obstruction was just

outside the house -- albeit 7 feet down -- and when some of the old clay pipe had been cracked by roots, it all simply had to be replaced.

Now, pvc pipe replaces the clay pipe from the cast iron just outside the house, all the way to the pvc we installed two years ago. This should mean that our sewer problems are over for a hundred years. And the serious dent in our finances can be dealt with in time. Our costs in labor and material were approximately \$1,850. Something for you to keep in mind when you make your 2014 payments for dues and contributions!

EUGENE V. DEBS FOUNDATION

P.O. Box 9454

Terre Haute, Indiana 47808

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NEWSLETTER! PASS IT ON.**

NOTE: Please check here if this is a:

RENEWAL ☐

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Membership Dues: The Eugene V. Debs Foundation

NAME _____

STREET _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

_____ \$10.00 Student/Limited Income _____ \$100.00 Sustaining Member

_____ \$25.00 Regular Member _____ \$250.00 Life Members

_____ \$50.00 Supporting Member _____ Other

Enclose remittance. Make checks payable to the Debs Foundation.

The Debs Foundation • P.O. Box 9454 • Terre Haute, IN 47808-0843

We are a not-for-profit organization, so your dues and contributions are tax deductible. The Foundation owns and maintains the Debs Home and offers several educational and cultural programs.