# We Are All Montgomery's Students

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David Montgomery was a man of so many parts that it is impossible for a brief tribute to do justice to his many-faceted life and career. I will limit myself to my personal experience with David and to his influence on my own work.

Many have underscored Montgomery's seminal contributions to US history. But it is important to remember that his influence on how labor history is written and taught transcended the borders of the United States and the boundaries of North American—or even Anglo-American—history. My own work on the struggles for workplace control in Allende's Chile owed much to his writings on that subject in US history, and his subsequent books on workers as citizens and the workplace and the state have continued to influence my approaches to Latin American labor history.

David showed us that workers can be the subjects, not just the objects, of history. He also demonstrated that workplace struggles matter and that what happens on the shop floor or in the local union meeting is legitimate history, with workers and their grassroots leaders the protagonists of that history. Moreover, Montgomery taught us that the view from the shop floor and the union hall is often very different from the view from the national union or party headquarters and that this history from below is the best way to capture and convey the lived experience of workers; indeed, it creates a new labor history. David Montgomery played a central role in shaping that "new" labor history that we now take for granted.

Montgomery was not only a model who inspired others, including myself, to emulate his example and apply his teachings to workers in other parts of the world. David himself exemplified an internationalism and support for workers' struggles and labor history around the world. This was clear in his time and teaching positions in Britain, the Netherlands, and Brazil. But it was also evident at *ILWCH*, which Montgomery shaped during his years as editor into a self-consciously international journal. Even later, when he was a member of the editorial board of a journal that was becoming less Anglo-American and more global, David was always supportive of opening up *ILWCH* to the world, even if it took *ILWCH* out of a US historian's comfort zone.

Lastly, on a more personal note: David always practiced the equality that he preached. When I taught at Yale as a visiting lecturer without a regular position, David treated me as if I were an endowed chair holder, with a welcome at once genuine and indifferent to academic hierarchies. Moreover, he gave the same respect to staff and students. And despite his travails of the 1950s as a

*International Labor and Working-Class History*
No. 82, Fall 2012, pp. 52–53
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doi:10.1017/S0147547912000282

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0147547912000282 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Communist in the McCarthy era, David remained optimistic about the world and not embittered by his experience.

At Yale, he seemed most excited about bridging the gap between the academy and the struggles of workers at Yale, in New Haven, and in Connecticut more generally.

At the Yale memorial celebration (January 28, 2012), David Montgomery's former students reflected on how privileged they were to have had the opportunity to study with him. I was not that fortunate, but I learned so much from his writings and our conversations that I feel that he *was* my teacher. Because of the influence of David's writings and ideas, we are *all* Montgomery's students.

As a teacher, writer, activist, and human being, David Montgomery was a model for us all. His writings, his vision and his memory will live on in the work of all his "students."

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0147547912000282 Published online by Cambridge University Press