Building a Working-Class Archaeology: The Colorado Coal Field War Project

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INTRODUCTION

The problem with archaeology is that too often we are speaking only to ourselves or to a small audience of aficionados who share our sometimes-arcane interests. This is a problem in part because public monies, primarily in the context of heritage preservation, largely fund archaeology in modern industrial states. Many archaeologists have pointed this fact out and challenged archaeologists to reach out to a general public. Most of these calls assume that archaeologists as the experts should define what is of interest in the past and that the problem of reaching a general public is simply one of popularising what the archaeologists know.

In the Colorado Coal Field War Project we have adopted a different philosophy and taken a different approach to broadening the audience for archaeology. We see archaeology as a craft that can be put to the uses of many different communities. In this approach the questions and what is important about the past is decided through a dialogue between the archaeologist and the communities that we serve.

The Colorado Coal Field War of 1913–14 was one of the most significant events in US labour history. On the morning of 20 April 1914, Colorado National Guard troops engaged in a pitched battle with armed strikers at a tent colony of 1,200 striking families at Ludlow, Colorado. The shooting continued until late afternoon, and then the troops swept through the camp looting it and setting it afame. When the smoke cleared, 20 of the camp’s inhabitants were dead including two women, and 12 children. The Ludlow massacre is the most violent and the best-known incidents of the 1913–14 Colorado Coal Field War, but its significance goes far beyond this struggle. The killing of women and children at Ludlow outraged the American public and popular opinion soon turned against violent confrontations with strikers. It marks a pivotal point in US history when labour relations began to move from class warfare to corporate and government policies of negotiation, co-option, and regulated strikes. Today the United Mine Workers of America maintain the site of the massacre as a shrine and descendants of the strikers and union members make regular pilgrimages to the site.

The Colorado Coal Field War project consists of faculty and students from the University of Denver in Colorado, and Binghamton University in New York, and has included students from several other institutions, including the University of Manchester. The Colorado Historical Society has funded our work using public monies that were generated from taxes on casino gambling (The Colorado State Historical Fund). We begin with the assumption that our work should and does serve multiple communities. These communities include the scholarly community of archaeologists and historians, as well as the traditional, middle-class, public audience for archaeology. But the primary community that we wish to address is unionised labour in the United States. We are building an archaeology of the American working class that speaks to a working-class audience about working-class history and experience.

We are doing this through an ongoing dialogue with both the descendants of the participants in the Colorado Coal Field War and with unionised workers in southern Colorado.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE PUBLIC

The relationship of archaeology and the public is usually framed in terms of an opposition between conveying finding within the discipline and communicating with a general public. A consumerist model lies at the heart of most of our efforts to communicate with the public. In this model the archaeologist produces a product, usually a dumbed-down version of the academic edition and sells it to a ‘general public’. This approach assumes that archaeologists as the experts have the authority, the knowledge, the skill, and the right to determine what questions we should ask about the past and what the answer to those questions should be. The problem then becomes one of how to communicate or sell our agenda and interpretation to the ‘general public’. Or put another way, how do we convince them to see the world our way?

We have taken a different approach to the problem. We begin with the assumption that archaeology is a craft that can be used to serve the interests of multiple communities.
We also recognise that society is made up of varied social groups with distinct and often conflicting interests, and that the undifferentiated general public is a myth. Craft archaeology enters into a dialogue with specific communities in order to define what pasts to study, what questions to ask about those pasts, and what conclusions to draw from those questions. We have entered into a dialogue with the academic community of archaeology through articles like this one and through papers presented at meetings. We have also entered into a dialogue with the traditional middle-class public audience for archaeology through education and interpretive programmes. However, the primary community that the Colorado Coal Field War Project seeks to serve is unionised labour in Colorado and beyond.

Archaeology as a discipline serves class interests and those interests are frequently contrary to the interest of the working class in the United States. In the United States both scholars and the general public frequently confuse class with economic status and they define class in terms of income levels. This focus on income obscures the structural realities of class in the United States.³ The class structure of the modern United States minimally includes three positions: 1) a bourgeoisie that owns or controls the means of production, 2) a working class that labours for wages, and 3) a middle class of administrators, professionals and small business owners who mediate between these two classes. These classes do not form uniform masses and we can define class fractions rooted in regional, racial, and cultural differences.

Archaeology has typically served middle-class interests. It is part of the intellectual apparatus (things such as schools, books, magazines, organisations, and arts) that produces the symbolic capital (things such as esoteric knowledge, shared experience, certification, and social skills) that individuals need to be part of the middle classes. This apparatus, including archaeology, developed as part of the historical struggles that created the Capitalist middle classes. Because it is set in the middle class, archaeology attracts primarily a middle-class following, and often does not appeal to working-class audiences.

We feel that archaeology can be mobilised to address the interests of more than just the middle classes. We seek to fuse our scholarly labour with working-class interests. We have entered into the developing dialogue between organised labour and scholars in the United States. The election of John Sweeney as president of the AFL-CIO in 1995 has lead to a revitalisation of the organisation as a broad-based social interest movement. As part of this movement a joint labour/academic teach-in was held at Columbia University on 3-4 October 1996 with over 2,500 people in attendance. This alliance has more recently manifested
itself in broad based anti-corporate-led-globalisation actions such as in Seattle in 2000 and in the recent adoption, by many labour unions, of statements opposing US military action against Iraq. We are contributing to these efforts by studying a history that has meaning for working people and addressing their interests in this history. The Colorado Coal Field War of 1913–14 is not exotic or ancient history. It is familiar, close to home, relevant, and concerns issues that still confront workers today.

**The 1913–14 Colorado Coal Field War**

In 1913 Colorado was the eighth largest coal-producing state in the United States. Most of this production centered on the bituminous coal fields in Huerfano and Las Animas counties north of Trinidad, Colorado. These mines primarily produced coke for the steel mills at Pueblo, Colorado. The largest company mining coal in this region was the Rockefeller-controlled Colorado Fuel and Iron Company (CF&I). This company employed approximately 14,000 miners in 1913, 70% of whom were immigrants. Most of these immigrants came from Southern Europe (principally Italy and Greece) and Eastern Europe (primarily Austria-Hungary, Poland and Russia) with some Welsh, Irish, African-Americans, Mexicans, and Japanese. Union organisers estimated that the miners spoke at least 24 different languages.

The isolated mining communities were uniformly made up of working-class families with a handful of managers and professionals. The members of the working class did not all experience day-to-day life in the Southern Colorado mining community the same. The lives of men and women were quite different and power relations and exploitation existed within working-class households. Each ethnic group also formed its own community, both in terms of patterns of residence and through social institutions such as churches, ethnic associations, and fraternal organisations. Racial discrimination existed, with Euro-American workers discriminating against African-American and Chicano workers, and with the handful of Japanese in the camps being totally excluded from union activities. The Anglo-Americans of local rural agricultural communities regarded the miners as inferior foreigners, and many of the mining companies’ private guards were hired from the ranks of the rural working class. The rural bourgeois by and large sided with management against the strikers with the exception of a small, primarily ethnic-based, petty bourgeois of shop owners and trades people who identified with the miners who were their customers.

The conditions of the mines, and of miners’ lives, were appalling. In 1912 the accident rate for Colorado mines was triple the national average. The mines in southern Colorado operated in flagrant violation of several state laws that regulated safety and the fair compensation of miners. The miners lived in rude, isolated coal camps owned by the companies. Companies controlled the housing, the store, the medical facilities, the town saloon, and all recreational facilities. Company guards acted as police and regulated who could enter or leave the communities. The companies also dominated most of the local political structure and instructed their employees on how to vote. Contemporary accounts described the situation as feudal.

In 1913 the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) launched a massive organising campaign in southern Colorado and called a strike in the fall of that year. The strikers demanded the right to unionise, higher pay, and that existing Colorado mining laws be enforced. Simultaneously the companies brought in the Baldwin Feltz detective agency violently to suppress the organising efforts and later the strike. On 23 September 1913, over 90% of the miners left the shafts to begin the strike. The companies forced people out of their company-owned housing and several thousand people moved into tent camps set up by the UMWA. Ludlow, with approximately 150 tents and about 1,200 residents, was the largest of these camps and the UMWA’s strike headquarters for Las Animas County. Each of these camps contained a mix of nationalities including Italians, Greeks, Eastern Europeans, Mexicans, African Americans, and Welsh.

Violence characterised the strike from the very beginning, with both sides committing assaults, shootings, and murders. In October the governor of Colorado called out the National Guard. Over the winter of 1913–14 relations between the strikers and the guard deteriorated, especially in April when the governor removed the regular troops and the mining companies replaced them with their own employees under the command of Colorado National Guard officers. In Ludlow the strikers dug cellars under their tents as refuges for women and children.

On 20 April 1914 the guard attacked the tent camp at Ludlow. At about 9:00 that morning the guard commander ordered Louis Tikas, the leader of the colony, to meet him at Ludlow Station. Fearing that this might be a pretext for an attack, armed strikers took up a position in a railroad cut...
Figure 2. The tent colony after the Massacre (Photo courtesy of the Denver Public Library).

overlooking the station. The National Guard had positioned a machine gun on a hill one mile to the south of the tent colony. Someone fired and the guardsmen began firing the machine-gun into the tent camp. As the day progressed up to 200 guardsmen joined the fight and a second machine-gun was added to the first. After a few hours of firing the tents were so full of holes that they looked like lace. The armed strikers engaged the guard and tried to draw their fire away from the camp.

In the camp there was pandemonium. Some people sought refuge in a large walk-in well, and many people huddled in the cellars under their tents. The camp’s leaders worked all day trying to get people to a dry creek bed north of the camp. In the early afternoon a 12-year-old named William Snyder came up out of a cellar to get some food and was shot dead.

As dusk gathered, a train stopped in front of the machine-guns and blocked their line of fire. With a brief respite from the machine-gun fire, the majority of the strikers who had been pinned down in the colony were able to flee, along with the armed strikers struggling to hold off the National Guard. The guardsmen swept through the camp, looting and burning the tents. Four women and 11 children in a cellar below tent 58 huddled in fear while the flames consumed the tent above them. The guardsmen seized Louis Tikas and two other camp leaders and summarily executed them. When morning dawned the camp was a smoking ruin and in the dark hole below tent 58, two of the women and all 11 children were dead.

Following the attack, strikers throughout southern Colorado took up arms and took control of the mining district. The strikers destroyed several company towns and killed company employees. Finally, after ten days of open war, President Wilson sent federal troops to Trinidad to restore order. The strike continued until December of 1914 when a bankrupt UMWA had to call it off.

The killing of women and children at Ludlow shocked the nation. Prominent progressives such as Upton Sinclair and John Reed used the events to demonise John D. Rockefeller, jr. The United States Commission on Industrial Relations investigated the events of the strike, and issued a 1,200-page report. In response to this national attention Rockefeller hired the first corporate public relations firm and instituted a series of reforms in the mines of southern Colorado. It is not clear what practical impacts these reforms had on the lives of miners and their families, but throughout the 1920s the district was embroiled in strikes. Union recognition in
southern Colorado only came with the New Deal reforms of the 1930s.16

**How Can Archaeology Enhance Understandings of the Colorado Coal Field War?**

The documentary record of primary texts, photographs, and oral histories for the Colorado Coal Field War is incredibly robust and leaves few major issues unexamined. As archaeologists, we bring to the table a craft that allows us to glimpse the material conditions of day-to-day lives in the coal camps and tent colonies of southern Colorado. These conditions shaped the lives of miners and their families and the course of the 1913-14 strike, but it is precisely these mundane aspects of life that, in the documentary record, are obscured by a focus on large-scale, high-profile political responses to the conflict.

Several major historical works on the strike have mined the rich archival record of documents and photos related to the Colorado Coal Field War.17 These studies have focused on the events, the strike leaders, and the organisational work of the UMWA. They have tended to emphasise the male miner and the commonalities of the work experience as the source of the social consciousness that united ethnically and racially diverse miners. The histories usually imply, and sometimes assert, that the miners shared a common lived experience at work but then returned to ethnically different home lives. In this way they accept a very traditional hypothesis of labour action that emphasises the agency of men and downplays the role of women. This hypothesis tends to equate class and class struggle with active men in the workplace, and ethnicity and tradition with passive women in the home.

We, and many others, are sceptical of this traditional view.18 We agree that ethnic identities cross-cut class in southern Colorado and that they hindered the formation of class consciousness, but we question the equation of class = workplace = male, and ethnicity = home = female. Alternatively we would propose that class and ethnicity cross-cut both workplace and home, male and female. We would thus expect to find that working-class men in the mines and working-class women in the homes shared a common day-to-day lived experience that resulted from their class position and that ethnic differences divided them in both contexts.

We can demonstrate from existing analyses that ethnic divisions existed in the workplace. In southern Colorado the miners worked as independent contractors and formed their own work gangs. These work gangs were routinely ethnically based.19 Historical and industrial archaeologists have also demonstrated in many other cases that 19th- and early 20th-century workplaces were ethnically structured.20 In the traditional hypothesis it is the commonality of the work experience that overcomes these ethnic divisions in the workplace and in an ethnically-based home life to create a class-consciousness.

The idea that there existed a commonality of lived experience in the home that also aided in the formation of a common class-consciousness is harder to demonstrate from existing analyses. The histories all agree that the day-to-day lives of miners' families were hard, but they provide little more than anecdotal evidence of the reality of these conditions. The historian Priscilla Long,21 in an analysis that supports our alternative hypothesis, has demonstrated that women in the Colorado coalfields shared a common experience of sexual exploitation, but she
also lacks detailed data on the realities of day-to-day lived experience in the home.

Our alternative hypothesis stresses the importance of the home in the creation of class-consciousness. We seek to prove that the day-to-day material conditions of home life cross-cut ethnic divisions, before, during, and after the strike. If this is the case, then we will argue that women and children were active agents, with male miners, in formulating a social consciousness to unify for the strike. Alternatively, if our analyses show that each ethnic group had distinctive day-to-day material conditions of home life, then we will accept the traditional notion that families followed the lead of male miners who acquired a common class identity in the shafts.

Historical archaeology offers a very productive arena for archaeologists to examine the relationship between social consciousness, lived experience, and material conditions to cultural change.\(^\text{22}\) In historic periods the archaeologist can integrate documents and material culture to capture both the consciousness and material conditions that form lived experience.\(^\text{23}\) In the documents, people speak to us about their consciousness, their interests, and their struggles, but not all peoples speak in the documents with the same force or presence. Also, they rarely speak to us in detail about their day-to-day lives. People, however, create the archaeological record from the accumulation of the small actions that make up their lived experience. Thus the archaeological record consists primarily of the remains of people’s mundane lives and all people leave traces in this material record.

Archaeological research provides one means to gain a richer, more detailed, and more systematic understanding of the everyday experience of Colorado mining families. These families unknowingly left a record of that experience in the ground. Archaeologists can recapture it in the burned remains of their tents, in the layout of camps, in the contents of their latrines, and by shifting through the garbage that they left behind. Linking this information with documentary and photographic sources gives us a useful way to reconstruct that experience. By applying these methods to company towns occupied before the strike, the strikers’ tent camps, and to the company camps reopened after the strike we can test our propositions.

**Archaeological Fieldwork**

With the help of our fieldschool students, we have completed five years of excavations both at Ludlow and at the CF&I-owned company town of Berwind. The massacre site itself represents a near perfect archaeological context. It was occupied for a very short period and was destroyed by fire. Subsequent use of the area has had little impact on the archaeological remains. In Berwind, the streets, foundations, latrines, and trash pits remain visible on the surface.

At Ludlow we have conducted controlled surface collections in order to get a sense of the extent and general layout of the camp. The distribution of surface material seems to correspond quite closely with the plan of the camp shown in contemporary photographs. Several features associated with the strike camp have been located and excavated, providing greater insight into the daily lives of the strikers. The majority of features are quite shallow, appearing at depths of 10 to 20cm. We have found and excavated one complete and several partial tent platforms, as well as several shallow, unidentified pit features. We have also located a number of deep features, among them a possible privy and seven structures that are almost certainly subterranean shelter/storage cells constructed by the some of the colony’s residents.

Photographs have proven a great aid in our excavations and a rich source of information. Several hundred photographs exist of the strike, including dozens of the Ludlow tent colony. One photo taken from nearby a railroad water tower shows the camp a few days before the massacre. We used a technique pioneered by Gene Prince and James Deetz\(^\text{24}\) to define the position of the tents and other features in the colony. We had a transparency of the pre-massacre photo and mounted it on the ground glass of a camera similar to the one we believe was used to take the photo. The point, from which the photo was taken, a water tower on the railroad line near the colony, was relocated and the camera was elevated on a hydraulic lift. With the camera in position we were able to look through the viewfinder and see the image of the camp superimposed over the existing landscape. Using stable landscape features to guide us, we were able to locate over a quarter of the tents in the colony. These locations have been the focus of fieldwork from 2000 to 2002.

From photos we know that the tents were constructed by first digging a shallow basin, then laying wooden joists directly on the ground to support a wooden platform and frame. Once covered with canvas the strikers piled a ridge of dirt around the base of the tent. In 1998 we excavated one tent platform and we were able to define it based on soil stains and shallow trenches (probably drip lines caused by runoff from the tent’s roof) and rows of nails that followed the joists. Large numbers of small artefacts,
Figure 5.
Map of an excavated tent platform at Ludlow.
likely to have been lost by residents, were associated with the tent floor. These included a suspender part bearing the inscription (in Italian) of the 'Society of Tyrolean Alpinists' and a collection of Catholic religious medals, suggesting that the occupants of the tent were Italian Catholics. Excavation of a second tent location revealed extensive soil oxidation resulting from the intense heat of the burning tent, and metal tent and furniture hardware that survived the conflagration.

Work on a deep feature on the margins of the colony (possibly a privy) has revealed evidence of early acts of memorialisation at the site. Atop a series of artefact-rich deposits, a metal tripod and wire wreath frame were found. Material from the lower strata of the feature consists of several sizes of steel cans, including a multitude of 'Pet' brand condensed milk cans, medicinal and sauce bottles, tobacco tins, fragments of furniture and a miner's lamp.

We have located and tested seven deep features believed to be earthen cellars, whose existence is well documented in sources on the Ludlow colony. We chose two cellars for full excavation, and the stratigraphy and contents clearly reflect the story of the attack on the colony. Fire-damaged family possessions sit on the floor. To reach them we dig through a level of burned wood charred canvas, and rusted grommets from the burned tents. On top of all of this is a layer of charcoal, coal clinker, rusted metal and charred possessions that the miners used to fill in the holes after the massacre. Such contexts provide us with invaluable insight into household life in the Ludlow colony - an aspect of the strike that can only be glimpsed indistinctly through period documents, but one that is crucial in order to understand strikers' day-to-day experiences.

Another deep feature was excavated during the 2000 season, and turned out to be almost entirely free of artefacts. While its function remains uncertain, its form is suggestive of one of the defensive rifle pits built by the miners to protect the colony from attack.

Berwind was a CF&I town located in Berwind canyon near Ludlow, occupied before and after the strike. Many of the strikers at Ludlow originated from there. CF&I built the town in 1892 and abandoned it in 1931. In 1998 we made a detailed map of the community and we were able to define numerous discrete residential neighborhoods. Test excavations revealed stratified deposits of up to 50cm deep in the yards associated with houses. Here we have excavated in trash dumps, latrines, and yards. We have sorted these deposits into ones dating before, during, and after the strike. Our preliminary examination of artefacts from the tests, of photos of the community at different points in time, and of company records indicates that some of the neighborhoods date to before the strike, while others were constructed as part of the programme of town improvements that followed the strike. We also contacted and started collecting oral histories from former Berwind residents.

Excavations in what appears to have been a town dump have unearthed a stunning array of objects, from household furnishings to domestic rubbish to fragments of footwear, clothing and other personal effects. We also hope to learn more about how trash was transported to the dumpsite and how the dump itself was operated through fine-grained stratigraphic analysis. A large privy associated with a residential area occupied prior to the strike was also located and sampled. The various filling episodes and the artefacts contained within reflect the regular use and maintenance of the privy and the eventual capping of the pit, sometime during the 1910s, with debris from the destruction of the neighborhood. Combined with oral histories and census data, the material from this pre-strike section of Berwind provides a window into the material conditions of life that in part motivated the collective struggle of 1912-13.

Margaret Wood's study of the Berwind remains shows how working-class women in the company towns were able to raise families on miners' wages that would not feed two people. In trash dating before the strike she found lots of tin cans, large cooking pots, and big serving vessels. Families took in single male miners as boarders to make the extra income, and women used canned foods to make stews and soups to feed them. After the strike the companies discouraged boarders, but miners' wages remained too low to support a family. The tin cans and big pots disappear from the trash, to be replaced by canning jars and lids, and the bones of rabbits, and chickens. Women and children who could no longer earn money from boarders instead produced food at home to feed the family.

The United Mine Workers maintain the site of Ludlow as a shrine to the workers who died there. There is presently a monument at the site but little or no interpretative information. In this context our archaeological work also becomes a powerful form of memory and action.

**Archaeology as Memory**

The highly charged nature of the historical events surrounding the Coal War clashes
with most accepted narratives of class relations in the US, and particularly the West.26 We feel that the submerged history of Ludlow represents a watershed event in American history that demands to be recouped for a broad range of constituencies. Many middle-class visitors to the memorial site are unaware of what happened there, and are made uncomfortable by the implications of the story. Others see the story of Ludlow as a matter of an unfortunate past that has now been left behind - the underlying notion being that we are all middle class in the US and thus class conflict has been banished to history. We need not re-examine the ideological power of this line of thought. On the other hand, after hearing a proposal for archaeological field work at the Ludlow Memorial, one coal miner suggested that 'all you need to know about Ludlow can be summed up in three words: they got fucked'.27 The deep alienation and even hostility apparent in this statement was a wake-up call concerning the realities of working-class life and thought, and it also threw into question the wider social value of a pursuit like archaeology - an issue we will return to below.

The story of the 1913-14 Coal Field War and the Ludlow is a history that has been hidden, lost, or at best selectively remembered outside of union circles. Within the union movement Ludlow is a shrine and a powerful symbol used to raise class-consciousness and to mobilise union members. The new signs on the interstate identifying the exit to the Ludlow Massacre Memorial draw a small but steady stream of summer tourists to the site. Most of these individuals arrive expecting to find a monument to an Indian Massacre. In this context our excavations become a form of memory, recalling for these visitors what happened at Ludlow, the sacrifices of the strikers, and that the rights of working people were won through terrible struggle. Memory leads to action as working people see their contemporary struggles as a continuation of the struggle at Ludlow.

The story of Ludlow has great popular appeal. The violence of the events and the death of women and children make the history a compelling story. It is also not a tale of distant or exotic past. Descendants of the strikers still regularly visit the site and the United Mine Workers hold an annual memorial service at the monument.

Our focus on everyday life humanises the strikers because it talks about them in terms of relations and activities that our modern audiences also experience; for example, relations between husbands and wives, parents and children, and activities such as preparing food for a family, or how to get the laundry done. The parallel between the modern realities of these experiences and the miner's lives provides our modern audience with a comparison to understand the harshness of the striker's experience.

In the United States, archaeological excavations are considered newsworthy. Our first two seasons of excavation resulted in articles in every major newspaper in the state of Colorado. Eric Zorn, a columnist with the Chicago Tribune, picked up on our excavations for his Labour Day column in 1997. He titled the column 'Workers Rights Were Won With Blood'. Our excavations give the events of 1913-14 a modern reality; they live again and become news again.

We have also focused on developing interpretive programmes at the massacre site. The United Mine Workers have made Ludlow and the massacre a symbol of their ongoing struggle, but many of the tourists who regularly pull off the highway to visit the site need more explicit background information of the 1913-14 strike in order to understand Ludlow's significance in the present. During the summer of 1998 over 500 people visited our excavations and, through site tours provided by our staff and students, learned the story of what happened. At the Ludlow memorial service in June of 1999 we unveiled an interpretive kiosk. The kiosk includes three panels: one on the history of the strike and massacre, a second on our archaeological research, and a third on the relationship of Ludlow to current labour struggles. Over 700 working people viewed the kiosk and our travelling exhibit of artefacts, and listened enthusiastically to a short presentation on our work. In the next two years we will be installing a more detailed interpretive trail at the site.

Working people in southern Colorado still struggle for dignity and basic rights. Several hundred of the participants in the Ludlow memorial services over the past four years were striking steelworkers from Pueblo, Colorado. They have been on strike against CF&I to stop forced overtime and thus regain one of the basic rights that the Ludlow strikers died for, the eight-hour day. They have used the Ludlow massacre as a powerful symbol in their struggle. It is so powerful that the parent company (Oregon Steel) changed the name of their Pueblo subsidiary from CF&I to Rocky Mountain Steel to distance themselves from the events of 1914. The company now seems determined to break the union and to deprive the steelworkers of another of the basic rights that the Ludlow strikers struggled for, the right to collective bargaining. In June of 1999 we twice addressed the Pueblo steelworkers and afterwards several individuals insisted that we accept small
donations of money to further our research. It became immediately apparent that it was important to them that we accept this unsolicited support, and our counter-arguments that the money ought to go to the locals' strike relief fund were summarily dismissed.

### Descendants and Descendant Communities

In the last decade many historical archaeologists have advocated that we should work with the descendant communities of the historical sites that we study. An emphasis on individual agency in this context has led some of these researchers to confuse the descendants of historical communities with a descendant community. In the case of Ludlow we have tried to serve both groups (descendant and descendant community) but with the recognition that in this case only the descendant community is a community of struggle.

The descendants of the Ludlow colony who come to the memorial each year are principally Middle Class Anglos. Few of them are still miners, or even working class. Their parents and/or they participated in the great social mobility of the 1950s and 1960s and today they are teachers, lawyers, business people, managers, and administrators. They are now scattered across the United States. They share an identity as descendants of the massacre but they do not form a community, either in the sense that they live near each other or in forming any type of organisation or club. The descendants’ memorialisation is familial and personal. Their concerns are to establish a connection to this familial past and/or to see to it that their family’s role in this past is properly honoured. We have aided descendants in locating graves so that stones could be raised to family members who died in the massacre and by correcting errors in documentation or labels on photos in historical archives.

The descendant community of the 1913–14 Coal Strike is composed of the unionised working people of southern Colorado. They include many descendants of people who participated in the strike, but the vast majority of them have no familial connection to the events of 1913–14. A minority of them are ethnic Whites (Italians and Eastern Europeans) but the majority are Chicanos. It is they who maintain the monument, organise the memorial, and make the events of 1913–14 part of their active struggle.

When we planned the project in the mid-1990s an active, unionised coal mine was still operating near Trinidad. When we entered the field in 1997 we were very disappointed to hear that the mine had closed.

We feared that this event would transform the project from an active engagement with a union community to a post-industrial memory project, but that is not how it has worked out. Ludlow remains a sacred place for all of the UMW and the District office in Utah took over responsibility for the memorial service and it remains a national event for the union. Since the project began both the county workers in Las Animas and the hospital workers at the Trinidad Hospital have unionised. Both choose the union of their fathers and uncles, the United Mine Workers. Both also identify with the events at Ludlow. Finally, the striking steelworkers from Pueblo, Colorado have made the Ludlow Massacre a powerful symbol of their struggle. We participate in this struggle by joining them at the memorial and speaking in the union halls.

We also participate by using our knowledge of the world to critique the world and to teach other communities how labour's rights were won with blood. They were not freely given, but bought with the lives of working people like those who died at Ludlow.

### Teaching Labour and the Labour of Teaching

The powerful ideology of a classless US society, and the systemic silencing of the history of class struggle in popular narratives of American history make education an extraordinarily important part of the Coal War Archaeology Project. In addition to the types of outreach we engage in with the local labour community and visitors to the memorial site, we also endeavour to introduce our own fieldschool students to aspects of American labour, past and present, and to help other instructors incorporate labour issues into their curricula.

Not unsurprisingly, given the class makeup of most undergraduate Anthropology programmes in the US, many of the students who attend the Coal War Archaeology Project fieldschool come from 'solidly middle-class' backgrounds with very little direct connection to working-class experiences and institutions. Most of these students live in North America, and have acquired their knowldege of labour unions from mainstream educational and media institutions. While a few have been exposed to American labour history and the idea of class structures in US society, the majority have had few experiences that have caused them to become aware of class in general and, more specifically, their own class positions.

The nature of the Ludlow Massacre site brings the reality of class and class conflict
in American history into sharp relief for students. As mentioned above, however, the awareness of class in the past in no way precludes the denial of class in one's own present. Interactions with the local labour community challenge this latter notion. The annual UMWA memorial service at the Ludlow Monument confronts students with the phenomena of labour unionism and working-class solidarity in a powerful way. Every summer, staff and students of the Coal War Archaeology Project attended these gatherings along with 300 to 1,000 union people from all over the US and from many different fields of work. Striking steelworkers from Pueblo, Colorado, have played a large role in recent memorial services, tying their current struggle against Oregon Steel (formerly CF&I) to that of the 1913-14 strike. At these and other events, students have the opportunity to present their work on the archaeology of Ludlow and to discuss its meaning with working people.

The Coal War Archaeology project has also developed a relationship with the Denver area AFL-CIO Union Summer Programme, that brings interns (often, though not exclusively, college-aged activists) together to support workers' organising efforts in the metropolitan area. Union summer groups have made several visits to the Ludlow Memorial and fieldschool; students shared their emerging perspectives on labour history with people their own age who have committed to labour activism in the present. We believe that these social interactions are some of the most important experiences the fieldschool provides.

Another component of our education programme is the preparation of school programmes and educational packets for the public schools of Colorado. We are currently writing a curriculum for Middle School Students on the history of labour in Colorado with the 1913-14 strike as its central focus. During the summers of 1999
In the Colorado Coal War Archaeology Project we are building an archaeology that working people can relate to both emotionally and intellectually. It is one of the few archaeological projects devised in the United States that speaks to the struggles of working-class people, past and present. It speaks to their experience, in a language that they can understand, about events that interest them and that they feel directly connected to. While we feel that our work thus far has won considerable interest and approval from the people closest to the history of Ludlow, we have no illusions that we have overcome all boundaries—we believe that a degree of continued unease and distrust on their part is healthy. Equally important to our project, we also work to reach a broader audience that has never heard of the Ludlow Massacre and has missed, or misunderstood, the history of US labour conflict and the legacy it represents. In so doing, we attempt to create a space for praxis in our work—seeking to know the world, critique the world, and most importantly to take action in the world.

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