

# Paper about Minnesota iron miners wins first place national award for Macalester alumna

St. Paul, Minn. – The Mesabi Iron Range in Northeastern Minnesota is a long way from Rose Friedman’s hometown of Newton, Mass., but the 2010 Macalester graduate felt passionately about the area and its early miners. So much so that her essay, "The IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) and the Mesabi Miners, 1916-1917," won the 2010 Barbara Wertheimer Prize for the best paper by an undergraduate student on a topic in labor or work history. Her paper was written for the History senior seminar in the fall of 2009. The prize carries a cash award of \$250.00.

“I was delighted to receive the Barbara Wertheimer Prize for my paper,” said Friedman.

Her paper explored the ways that corporate managers of the iron mines had used race and ethnicity to divide the workers, but that they, in turn, had used the collective values of their ethnic cultures to build solidarity, not only within groups but also across the boundaries between groups.

“When I visited Macalester as a high school senior I noticed an exhibit of art relating to the IWW. I immediately knew it was the school for me,” said Friedman. "I feel so lucky that I was able to use my capstone to explore this union." The purpose of Macalester’s capstone experience is for students to demonstrate their proficiency in the methods and modes of communication of the discipline or interdiscipline in which they’ve majored.

The New York State Labor History Association announced the award saying they were “very impressed by Ms. Friedman’s sophisticated handling of the idea of “race management” and her thoughtful analysis of the divergent forces at work in the IWW and the Mesabi mines.”

Friedman is the second Macalester student to receive this award, the first being Ryan Murphy in 1997 for a paper on the impact of deregulation on interstate transportation. Murphy, coincidentally, has just received his PhD in American Studies from the University of Minnesota. Both he and Friedman were labor history students of Macalester History Professor Peter Rachleff.

“I’m very proud of Rose’s work on her paper,” said Rachleff. “She combined diligent research into primary sources with a sophisticated analytical framework based in critical race theory.”

Friedman lives in Washington, D.C., and works for National Public Radio on All Things Considered's Opinion page.

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