

The cover features a white background with large, overlapping circular shapes in orange and teal. The text is centered and reads:

AFL-CIO LABOR COMMISSION
ON RACIAL AND ECONOMIC
JUSTICE REPORT

2017

AFL-CIO

RACIAL-JUSTICE.AFLCIO.ORG

Sisters and Brothers,

United we stand. Divided we beg. This fundamental principle was the catalyst behind the formation of our AFL-CIO Labor Commission on Racial and Economic Justice. In 2014, in the aftermath of the shooting in Ferguson, Missouri, in which “our brother killed our sister’s son,” we watched a community explode in pain, anger and division.

What happened in Ferguson sparked a national conversation about race, policing and civil rights. Other events in Charlotte, North Carolina; Tulsa, Oklahoma; Dallas; Baton Rouge, Louisiana; and St. Paul, Minnesota; and the election rhetoric of Donald Trump’s campaign further inflamed race relations in our country. Many of our African American, Latino and Asian Pacific Islander union members feel a vote for Trump was a vote for racial exclusion, while many of our white members who voted for Trump say it was a vote for economic policies that will help working people. We are a nation divided, and our labor movement is divided, too.

Yet we know that more unites us than divides us—even if it may not feel like it right now. We all believe in the rule of law, and we believe in our constitutional right to peacefully assemble. We all want police officers who will both protect our safety and treat us with respect, and we all agree that officers who abuse their power should be held accountable. We can all agree that every working person—regardless of how much schooling they have, where they live, how they look, where they come from or who they love—deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. We all want the opportunity to build a better life for ourselves and our children. This is what it means to be an American.

Politicians and corporations have used race and ethnicity, cultural differences and geography to divide us for decades. It is simple: If we are fighting each other, then we are not fighting together for better jobs, better schools, more affordable health care, good housing, strong communities and a more secure retirement for all. Eradicating bigotry is not just the moral thing to do. It is the only way we will win these things for all working families and leave a better future for our children.

As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but in times of challenge and controversy.” Talking about race is challenging, and sometimes it is controversial. The entire subject makes many Americans uncomfortable. But the labor movement no longer can afford to sit by and hope these issues will resolve themselves. We cannot outsource this work to others. We have to ask ourselves tough questions, and listen to each other with empathy. We must build bridges across the racial divide and find solutions that serve all of us.

During the hearings we held across the country, we listened to women, immigrants and all the diverse members of our union family. We witnessed the pain of black union members who feel their lives are not valued. We listened to white union members who feel they are unfairly blamed for the racism of others. Each hearing had its share of disagreements, but the process strengthened our resolve to move forward together.

Our modern labor movement was founded on the belief that every person has dignity and value. Working people come in every shape and color, age and talent, sexual orientation and religion. Our diversity can enrich us, make us more resilient and help grow our movement. Or it can tear us apart.

The work of the AFL-CIO Labor Commission on Racial and Economic Justice offers a path forward. Let us use the conversations we held, the stories we heard and the insight we gained to build a labor movement that is more responsive, more inclusive, more united and stronger than ever.

Richard L. Trumka
President, AFL-CIO



Dear Union Leaders,

Today, our nation is deeply divided—by economic and social inequality, persistent poverty, benign and deliberate neglect, overt and subtle racism, sexism, homophobia and by acts of violence by those in positions of authority against those they have sworn to protect. These problems not only destroy lives, but also destroy the hopes and dreams of millions who are losing faith in the legitimacy of our political and economic system.

As leaders of the labor movement, we face a choice: Do we choose to engage with our members to right these wrongs, or do we choose to turn away?

We choose to engage.

In that spirit, we established the AFL-CIO Labor Commission on Racial and Economic Justice during the spring of 2015. Over the ensuing year, we met with union and community leaders in six places: Alameda County, California; Birmingham, Alabama; Boston; Cleveland; Minneapolis; and St. Louis. Our mission was to listen to our members' concerns about public safety, the criminal justice system and economic and political exclusion. We wanted to hear from them about the changes in the labor movement they want to see, and the role they want labor to play in their lives and in their communities.

What we heard was sobering. Our members of color talked about continuing discrimination on the job, harassment and blocked promotions. They love and appreciate their unions, and are grateful for the protections their unions give them. But they want their unions to demand more action on the black jobs crisis, racial profiling, mass incarceration and employment opportunities for the formerly incarcerated. They want more access to union-provided training and apprenticeships that lead to higher-skilled, better-paying jobs. And they want more opportunities to move into leadership roles within their unions.

While our union members reflect the current workforce (a quarter are people of color, and 45% are women), we neither reflect the diversity of the people who want full-time work nor do we reflect the diversity of workers younger than 35. Women are likely to become half the labor force in a decade, and in less than two decades, people of color will be a majority of the working class in the United States.

Our union leadership needs to change more rapidly if we want to grow a labor movement that reflects the multiethnic, multicultural country we are becoming. For the labor movement to survive, thrive and fulfill its progressive promise, we must expand our outreach and organize people of color. And we must mentor and empower a new generation of labor leaders who reflect the diversity and strength of America. We must nurture their talent and provide them with opportunities to grow and lead.

In the larger progressive movement and in local communities across the country, we must reach out and develop stronger and more resilient partnerships with progressive partners. We must shift from short-term, "transactional" relationships to long-term movement building. To do so, we must speak up and speak out on issues beyond the economic needs of our members and would-be members. We must challenge the political and economic rules that have generated inequality, poverty and violence, and call out and condemn racism and discrimination every time we see it.

None of us, whether we are inside the labor movement or out of it, can sit by and watch as the forces of ignorance and hate tear our nation apart.

We must begin the hard work of making our labor institutions and our communities safer and more welcoming for all our people.

For the sake of our democracy, our labor movement and all those we love, there is no time to waste.

Sincerely,

The Co-Chairs of the Labor Commission on Racial and Economic Justice

Marc Perrone

International President, United Food and Commercial Workers

Fred Redmond

International Vice President, United Steelworkers

Bhairavi Desai

Executive Director, National Taxi Workers Alliance

Roster of Commissioners

The commission consists of AFL-CIO Executive Council members who have been appointed by AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, and Trumka himself. Commission members include:



Executive Director
Bhairavi Desai
NTWA, Co-Chair



International President
Marc Perrone
UFCW, Co-Chair



International Vice President
Fred Redmond
USW, Co-Chair



President
James Boland
Bricklayers



International President
Tom Buffenbarger
IAM (retired)



National President
J. David Cox Sr.
AFGE



Executive Director
RoseAnn DeMoro
NNU



Vice President
Cindy Estrada
UAW



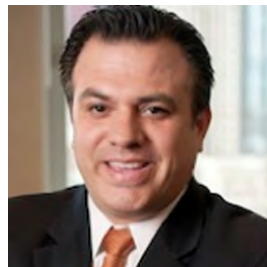
Executive Vice President
Tefere Gebre
AFL-CIO



Secretary-Treasurer
Lorretta Johnson
AFT



President
Lori Pelletier
Connecticut AFL-CIO



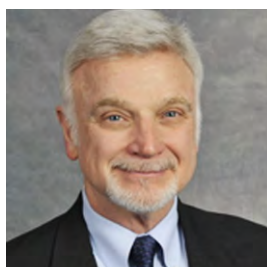
President
Jorge Ramirez
Chicago Federation of Labor,
AFL-CIO



Secretary-Treasurer
Laura Reyes
AFSCME



General President
Kenneth Rigmaiden
IUPAT



President
Cecil Roberts
UMWA



Secretary-Treasurer
Liz Shuler
AFL-CIO



President
Richard Trumka
AFL-CIO

The Advisory Council

The Advisory Council is a body of academics, labor experts and leaders of progressive organizations to assist the commissioners with income inequality analysis, research, training and testimony to strengthen the outcomes of the commission. Advisory Council members were appointed by President Richard Trumka. Advisory Council members include:



Ana Avendaño
Vice President of
Labor Participation
United Way, Co-Chair



Ian Haney López
Professor of Law
University of California, Berkeley
Co-Chair



Dorian Warren
Roosevelt Institute Fellow
and MSNBC Host
Co-Chair



Judith Browne Dianis
Co-Director
Advancement Project



Gregory Cendana
Executive Director
APALA



Bill Fletcher
Labor Scholar
and Consultant



Jack Hayn
Assistant to General President
IUPAT



Courtney Jenkins
Young Worker
Advisory Council
APWU



Lisa Jordan
Director of Education &
Membership Development
USW



Terry Melvin
Secretary-Treasurer of
New York State AFL-CIO,
President of CBTU,
Chair of Labor Commission
for Community Action



Steven Pitts
Associate Chair
University of California, Berkeley
Labor Center



Hector Sanchez
Executive Director
LCLAA



Petee Talley
Secretary-Treasurer
Ohio AFL-CIO
Ohio Coalition on
Black Civic Participation



Robin Williams
International Vice President
and Director of the Civil
Rights and Community
Action Department
UFCW, Adviser

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A close-up portrait of Barack Obama, looking slightly to the left with a thoughtful expression. He is wearing a dark suit jacket, a white shirt, and a red tie. The background is a plain, light color.

BUT LAWS ALONE
WON'T BE ENOUGH.
HEARTS MUST CHANGE.

BARACK OBAMA
PRESIDENT

AFL-CIO LABOR COMMISSION
ON RACIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

BARACK OBAMA

“It won’t change overnight. Social attitudes oftentimes take generations to change. But if our democracy is to work the way it should in this increasingly diverse nation, then each one of us needs to try to heed the advice of a great character in American fiction, Atticus Finch, who said ‘You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view, until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.’”



So if we're going to be serious about race going forward, we need to uphold laws against discrimination—in hiring, and in housing, and in education, and in the criminal justice system.”
—Barack Obama

On a Saturday afternoon in August 2014, 18-year-old Michael Brown Jr. was fatally shot and killed by 28-year-old police officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson, Missouri. This was the third killing of an unarmed black man by police officers in as many weeks. Eric Garner suffocated in an illegal chokehold in New York City. John Crawford, a new father, was killed in an Ohio Walmart while waiting to purchase a pellet gun. Each incident was captured on video and virally shared on social media. During a weekend of protests in Ferguson, emails and calls from our affiliates, central labor councils and constituency groups poured into our Civil, Human and Women's Rights Department asking, "What do we do? How do we respond?"

As the national federation of labor representing 55 diverse unions, we stand for economic and racial justice. That means we have a responsibility to speak out on issues related to racial and economic inequities, including police-on-black violence. We soon found that the officer who did the shooting and the young man who lay dead were both part of the labor community. How were we to negotiate these conflicts between members of our affiliated unions, and between the different communities from which they came?

At AFL-CIO headquarters, we talked about the economic circumstances behind the violence in Ferguson, a small suburb of St. Louis. In the 1980s, Ferguson was three-quarters white and had an unemployment rate of 5%. The combination of affordable housing and retail and construction work brought African Americans to settle in this inner-ring suburb, but the jobs soon disappeared. As black families moved into the suburban town for opportunities, white families moved out. As a result, its population is now two-thirds black and its unemployment rate is more than 12%.

Yet the mayor, the police chief, five of the six city council members, most judges and 94% of the police force in 2014 were white. In off-year municipal elections, whites vote at three times the rate of black residents. Ferguson has a limited tax base and few funds for services or investments. Financial resources and decision-making power lies at the county level, where whites significantly outnumber blacks.

Political structures in the St. Louis region, where the labor movement still is strong, have disempowered many African Americans and left them feeling disengaged. Ferguson is an extreme, but not uncommon, example of the way race continues to define education, housing and job opportunities in America. This is not acceptable in modern America. The labor movement must play a constructive role in reducing racial as well as economic inequality in our nation.

AFL-CIO President Rich Trumka laid out our position in a speech to the Missouri labor convention on Sept. 15, 2014:

“...a young man named Michael Brown died just a short distance from us in Ferguson, from gunshot wounds from a police officer. Other young men of color have died and will die in similar circumstances, in communities all across this country. It happened here but it could have happened—and does happen—anywhere in America. Because the reality is we still have racism in America.

Now, some people might ask me why our labor movement should be involved in all that has happened since the tragic death of Michael Brown. I want to answer that question directly.

Lesley McSpadden, Michael Brown’s mother who works in a grocery store, is our sister, an AFL-CIO union member. And Darren Wilson, the officer who killed Michael Brown, is a union member, too, and he is our brother.

Our brother killed our sister’s son and we do not have to wait for the judgment of prosecutors or courts to tell us how terrible this is...

I have a son. I have a suspicion that, like many of you, he may not always obey the nation’s traffic laws. So I worry he might wrap himself around a tree. But I never worry when he goes for a cross-country road trip, or a night on the town, that he may be stopped and shot to death by a police officer. But for millions of mothers and fathers of young African American men and boys, it is a constant fear. Think about what it would be like to watch your kid walk out the door and wonder, with good reason, if it’s the last time you’ll see him alive...

This is not somebody else’s problem. This is the reality of life for millions of our brothers and sisters. And so it is our problem. That is what solidarity means.

Brothers and sisters, I know there are no easy answers here. But we must use the occasion of the tragic death of Michael Brown and its aftermath here in St. Louis to begin a serious and open-ended conversation about what we can do....

We’ve got to talk to each other, not past each other....I’m not saying this is easy. If I knew how to fix the hurt in our communities, I would tell you.

But I know how to start, and that’s by listening. I’m going to be doing a lot of listening today, here at this convention and then at a meeting in Ferguson with the leaders of that working-class community, because we as a labor movement have to be part of the communities our members live in.”

INTRODUCTION: THE ORIGINS OF THE COMMISSION

After President Trumka's discussions with labor leaders in Missouri and further discussions with the leaders of our affiliate unions, we developed the idea of a series of public hearings or listening sessions with community and labor leaders.

In the fall, Ferguson erupted again after a grand jury failed to indict the police officer who killed Michael Brown. Then in Ohio, 12-year-old Tamir Rice was shot and killed by police officers while he was playing alone in a park with a BB gun. Once again, we were inundated with calls from local labor leaders asking how to respond. Some of our members wanted us to formally support the Black Lives Matter movement, while other members wanted us to walk away. And some local leaders and activists wanted to know "how to begin a conversation" with members and nonmembers.

In February 2015, the AFL-CIO Executive Council called for the creation of a Labor Commission on Racial and Economic Justice, noting that:

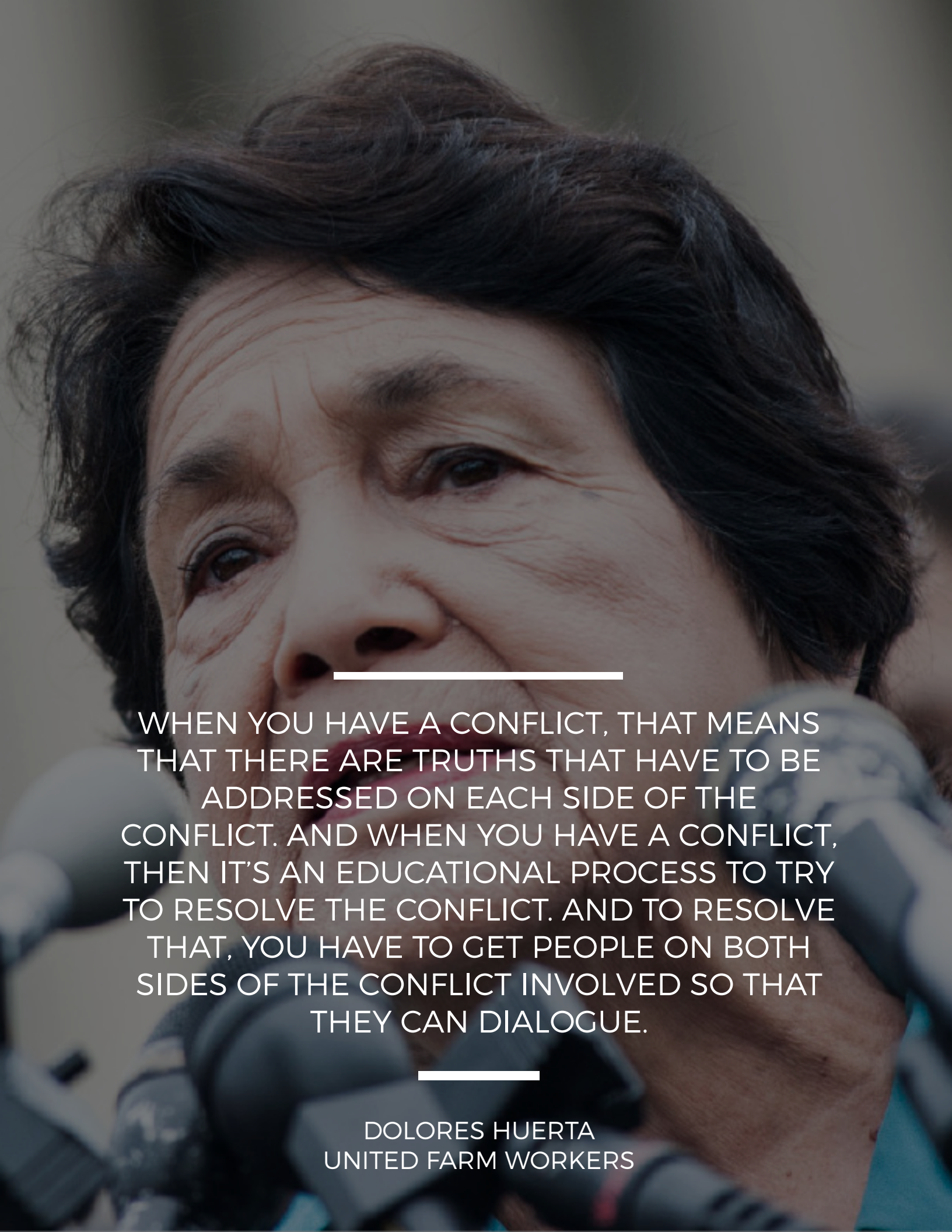
"[O]ur different experiences organized around race, gender identity, ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation often challenge and complicate" our ability to lift up our shared interest in achieving economic justice.

"To build a different, better economy, we need power that can only come from unity, and unity has to begin with having all our voices be heard, on all sides of those color lines. We have to start by acknowledging our own shortcomings and...find a way to see with each other's eyes..."

Over the next two months, the leaders of 12 international unions, the three executive officers of the AFL-CIO, the president of the Connecticut AFL-CIO and the president of the Chicago Federation of Labor volunteered to be part of this commission. An Advisory Council of 14 union educators, academics and independent experts was formed to develop the format and content of the hearings planned.

Between July 2015 and March 2016, six labor commission hearings were held in Alameda County, California; Birmingham, Alabama; Boston; Cleveland; Minneapolis; and St. Louis; planned and facilitated by the Advisory Committee and staff of the Civil, Human and Women's Rights Department, Campaigns Department and Communications Department at the AFL-CIO.

This report tells the story of what we heard at the commission events and the recommendations the hearings generated.



WHEN YOU HAVE A CONFLICT, THAT MEANS THAT THERE ARE TRUTHS THAT HAVE TO BE ADDRESSED ON EACH SIDE OF THE CONFLICT. AND WHEN YOU HAVE A CONFLICT, THEN IT'S AN EDUCATIONAL PROCESS TO TRY TO RESOLVE THE CONFLICT. AND TO RESOLVE THAT, YOU HAVE TO GET PEOPLE ON BOTH SIDES OF THE CONFLICT INVOLVED SO THAT THEY CAN DIALOGUE.

DOLORES HUERTA
UNITED FARM WORKERS

The Labor Commission on Race and Economic Justice was set up to:

- Provide a forum for local labor leaders and activists to participate in a national conversation on racial violence and racial justice, and to explore the way continuing racial inequities affect union members of color and the communities in which they live.
- Build a shared understanding among local labor leaders about how issues of racial justice are linked to economic justice, a more inclusive society and a more effective democracy. Anything that undermines worker solidarity and injures working people imperils the labor movement itself.
- Examine the role local labor organizations can and should play to address issues of concern to union members of color and all working people of color.

The Sites: Alameda County, California; Birmingham, Alabama; Boston; Cleveland; Minneapolis; and St. Louis

The cities were chosen because each had faced recent racial incidents. Each hearing was unique because each city had a different story about the nature of its racial tensions and the nature of its unions. Initially, our commission created a long list of cities to visit, but our central labor council leadership cautioned us to target places where labor leadership could help us handle issues that might arise. We prioritized places where (a) recent police shootings had generated mainstream concern; (b) local labor leadership wanted to embrace change; and (c) a belief that facilitating a discussion around race with national leaders could help local leaders move a conversation and create change in the city.

The commission chose St. Louis, Cleveland and Alameda County because high-profile police killings in those cities generated protests and racial tension. In St. Louis, the death of Michael Brown Jr. sparked the ongoing movement for black lives and protests around the country amid tense and strained relations between local unions. Cleveland was chosen because of the police-involved shooting of Tamir Rice. Alameda County was chosen after the death of Mario Martinez, who died from an asthma attack while in police custody after his requests for medical attention from staff at the Santa Rita Jail were ignored.

Birmingham was chosen because it was the site of a devastating plant shutdown that resulted in the Steelworkers and Mine Workers losing three-quarters of their members. They also are fighting to protect retiree benefits.



Brown kids will represent a larger and larger share of America's workforce."

Boston and Minneapolis were chosen because the Greater Boston Labor Council and the Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation were working hard to integrate racial justice and community concerns into their institutions, and needed support facilitating tough conversations on the issues of race and class. In Minneapolis, we were invited to facilitate a discussion between local labor leaders and a new organization, the People of Color Union Members (POCUM). The Greater Boston Labor Council had community representation on the executive board, but the leaders struggled to connect union issues with, the activities of the building trades, the concerns of workers of color and local groups like Black Lives Matter.

The Structure of the Hearings

The Advisory Council to the labor commission, working with AFL-CIO staff, developed a day-and-a-half format designed to:

- facilitate a constructive conversation about the racially polarized political environment we find ourselves in;
- challenge all workers to better understand the perspectives of others;
- educate people about the impact of racism on working people, worker solidarity and union power; and
- encourage participants to find creative solutions to address these issues in their union movement and in their communities.

The hearings were designed to create a forum for national labor leaders (the commissioners) to hear from and have a conversation with local leaders. The formal program had three core pieces:

- 1.** A session titled "Membership Voices" in which rank-and-file members, constituency groups and labor leaders discussed racial tensions, disparities, concerns and areas suggested for improvement. Commissioners presided over these sessions.
- 2.** A session titled "Leadership Voices," with local labor leaders from executive committees of unions, central labor councils or state federations and constituency groups meeting with commissioners in a closed session to have a candid discussion about local issues and practices.
- 3.** A presentation on "Dog Whistle Politics" was included in the "Leadership Voices" session, followed by small group exercises facilitated by AFL-CIO staff and Advisory Council members.

Six to 10 commissioners and 75 to 130 rank-and-file members typically attended the sessions. The number of local labor leaders who met privately with commissioners ranged from 30 to 50. Commissioners rotated their responsibilities at every hearing, from facilitating small-group discussions on race to chairing the Membership Voices meeting with rank-and-file members.

Local constituency group leaders, Advisory Council members, commissioners and staff of the Civil, Human and Women's Rights Department and Campaigns Department at the AFL-CIO identified the local leaders at each site who were invited to participate in the closed discussion. Local leaders primarily were responsible for inviting rank-and-file members to participate, but members sometimes reached out directly to AFL-CIO staff to request to participate. AFL-CIO constituency groups helped expand participation and, in some sites, organized parallel events.

We generally found local labor leaders hungry to talk about race, particularly leaders of color. They wanted their white brothers and sisters to understand how they felt about the tragedies in their communities and the ongoing discrimination and race-related inequities they faced. Many white leaders wanted to listen—even when what they heard was hard to hear.

In the sessions in which members gave testimony to the commissioners, AFL-CIO and local staff selected the witnesses and worked with them to help them tell their stories effectively and be solution-oriented. In some cases, labor leaders were reluctant to talk about internal labor problems. While they readily acknowledged issues or concerns, no one wanted to critique the local labor movement or embarrass certain leaders or colleagues. So while we cannot say that those who gave testimony were fully representative of the larger labor community, their testimonies were illustrative of issues that were surfaced to local or national AFL-CIO staff.

Union members and leaders were assured their private conversations with the commissioners would remain confidential. Given these assurances, our descriptions of the conversations below paraphrase actual remarks as accurately and objectively as possible. No specific remarks are attributed to any particular individual or bodies.

Commissioners started the meeting by introducing themselves, talking about their goals and asking the following questions in both the members' testimony and local leaders-commissioners discussions:

- What practices within the labor movement undermine or obstruct solidarity and constructive relationships with communities of color?
- What labor-led campaigns are building solidarity and power across racial lines for all working people in this community?
- What issues related to racial justice should the labor movement address, and how?
- What upcoming issues (organizing, political or legislative) is the labor movement in your community facing that will require the support of communities of color in order to win?

After the rank-and-file members gave testimony and remarks, the commissioners and local leaders transitioned to a private room to summarize what they heard.

Advisory Council co-chairs (Dr. Ian Haney López, Dr. Dorian Warren or Ana Avendaño) presented on the various ways race impacts the lives of people of color, distinguishing between individual prejudice and bias, and institutional and systemic racism. After the presentation, local leaders broke out for small-group activities.

Within the small groups, local leaders were presented with different scenarios replicating real-life events that a local labor leader might face and were asked to brainstorm how they could or should respond. Participants described the conversations elicited by the scenarios as useful but challenging; they were not always able to link the conversation about institutional racism to the decisions and actions they might face. They admitted they had rarely held formal conversations about an event's implications for the labor movement or about labor's obligation to engage when actual events similar to the small-group scenarios had taken place in their communities. They leaders felt unsure whether community issues were part of labor's agenda, or felt they were ill-equipped to facilitate a conversation on race-related issues.

Town Halls and Public Forums

The AFL-CIO family supports the six participating national constituency group organizations: the A. Philip Randolph Institute, the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, the Coalition of Labor Union Women, the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement and Pride At Work. They were created to promote the full participation of women and minorities in the union movement. The constituency groups used their local networks to recruit rank-and-file union members and community activists to town hall meetings in Alameda County, Boston, Minneapolis and St. Louis. Each of the four town halls brought union and community groups together for a two-hour session to discuss community priorities and community-labor relations. The town halls took place before the formal hearings.

What We Heard

Cleveland, September 2015

The first hearing of the Labor Commission on Racial and Economic Justice was held on Sept. 21, 2015, at the North Shore AFL-CIO Labor Federation in Cleveland. Seven commissioners and six Advisory Council members attended. Commission Co-Chairs UFCW International President Marc Perrone and USW International Vice President Fred Redmond presided over both the Membership Voices and Leadership Voices sections of the meetings.

At the Membership Voices session, five black and five white rank-and-file members testified for five minutes each about discrimination on the job and the responsive of their unions to assist their redress efforts. A young white male union member recounted the bias and disrespectful behavior he had witnessed against his black female co-workers in the private sector and admitted he did not know how to stop it or what to do to help. Other public-sector workers talked about the lack of African Americans in management structures in their government agencies, and a similar lack of people of color in positions of authority in their unions. One public employee noted, “The majority of people are uncomfortable discussing race with someone of a different race. The labor movement’s survival depends on confronting this discomfort.”

In the closed session that followed, 34 local labor leaders from 23 unions participated, as well as individuals from the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and the A. Philip Randolph Institute. Local leaders from the building and construction trades talked about their efforts to intentionally recruit people of color into their apprenticeship programs.

But leaders from other unions and the constituency groups reported that people in communities of color say they do not hear about trade apprenticeship opportunities.

A transformative discussion occurred during the small-group scenario exercise. The case scenario described a situation where police shot and killed an unarmed black man. Some white union members said the police officer deserved “due process” and should not be fired or indicted before a fair trial. Black members asked: “Where was the ‘due process’ for the young black man?” and referred to the police shooting of 12-year-old Tamir Rice in November 2014. This prompted a tough discussion about discrimination among the larger group, with some union leaders arguing that “due process” for police should not take precedence over solidarity with communities of color. The conversation was both rich and intense, and ran well over the time allotted. All of the participants noted they had never before had this kind of conversation inside the union.

Leaders from both the state federation and the CLC reaffirmed their commitment to discussing race issues with their union members, especially when local public elections are occurring.

Alameda County, California, October 2015

The second labor commission hearing was held in Alameda County, California, on Oct. 21, 2015, at the Allen Temple Baptist Church. The church, established in 1919, serves as a safe haven for all people to converse on issues of social and economic justice. Commission Co-Chair Bhairavi Desai, executive director of the National Taxi Workers Alliance, and Commissioner and AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Liz Shuler presided over the Membership Voices and Leadership Voices sessions of this labor commission hearing. Six commissioners, eight Advisory Council members, 67 rank-and-file members and local leaders from 21 unions attended the commission meeting.

At the Membership Voices session, five union workers gave prepared statements, which focused on the impacts of mass incarceration, immigration and low-wage jobs on working families in Alameda County. Mario Martinez’s mother testified. Her son died in a private prison because of an asthma attack, in spite of three court orders to provide him with asthma medicine that were ignored. Commission Co-Chair Fred Redmond told her that United Steelworkers had been trying to stop the private company that managed that jail from securing any more public contracts. He said the company, in charge of correctional institutions in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and Rikers Island, New York, has a record of providing inadequate health care to inmates.

Labor leaders who work with community organizations like the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights and PICO National Network talked about the way long sentences for nonviolent offenses has decimated communities—first, by taking away men from their families, and then by making it harder for them to find decent jobs after being released from prison. Community members talked about the general difficulty of finding well-paid jobs. A home care worker praised a new culinary training academy that is being piloted for former prisoners. A local AFSCME member said older workers, especially black union members, are not doing enough to educate younger activists about the history of the labor and civil rights movements, or to support the events that young activists hold. He pledged to be more active in his local. A fast food worker preparing to strike for higher wages at a McDonald’s talked about how hard it is for immigrant workers to make ends meet. She said she had to decide whether to pay rent or buy food for her child some days. She pays \$500 for a one-bedroom place for herself and her daughter, and her monthly income is only \$550. She said that promotions are few and far between.

At the Leadership Voices meeting that followed, 31 local labor leaders from 21 unions in the Alameda Labor Council participated in the discussions. After the presentations on hidden bias and coded racist appeals, the group broke into small groups for scenario exercises and then debriefed together. AFGE leaders who represent border patrol and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement workers in Southern California shared a constructive conversation about their work with the Interfaith Coalition for Worker Justice, which brings together labor, border patrol officials, faith groups and immigrants to talk about workplace issues and inequities built into the current immigration system and practices.

Local leaders from majority-white unions like the California Federation of Teachers worried that “a large portion of our leadership does not feel personally affected by race” and wanted to bring the “dog whistle politics” training to their rank-and-file members. Others talked about how damaging anti-immigrant attitudes are and said they heard that some construction workers were supporting Trump’s call for a border wall if it would bring them work at prevailing wages. Leaders suggested alternative projects like building public transit also could create union jobs. Others said more union members need to run for local office and warned that union polling suggests we need to invest more effort in turning out young workers of color.

After the hearing, a town hall meeting was held on “Racial Justice and Mass Incarceration,” including about 400 community leaders, elected officials and labor leaders.

The town hall was organized and hosted by the central labor council and AFL-CIO constituency groups, led by the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance. The central issue of the discussion was the impact of mass incarceration on black and brown neighborhoods in Oakland. The discussion covered problems with stop-and-frisk racial profiling by police, and police who are too quick to arrest, as well as the scarcity of good jobs, the high costs of health care and the exclusion of people of color from well-paid union construction jobs. California labor leaders committed themselves to continue the conversation and integrate racial justice, mass incarceration and immigrant rights into labor's policy goals. They also committed to providing organizing and financial support to community groups.

Boston, December 2015

On Dec. 11, 2015, the night before the Boston labor commission hearing, the Greater Boston Labor Council and the Brazilian Worker Center hosted "And Still I Rise," a town hall meeting featuring black women labor leaders who have long championed labor issues, from organizing to politics to policy. The town hall featured more than 50 attendees, and brought together six commissioners, the black women featured in the "Still I Rise" report, members of the local labor movement, and women of the building trades who had participated in special apprenticeship programs designed to provide opportunities for women and people of color to enter into the trades.

The third labor commission hearing was held on Dec. 12, 2015, in Boston at the IBEW Local 103 union hall. Commissioner and President of the Connecticut AFL-CIO Lori Pelletier presided over both the Membership Voices and Leadership Voices meetings, and Commission Co-Chair Fred Redmond closed it. Eight commissioners, seven Advisory Council members, 19 rank-and-file members and 38 local leaders from 19 unions attended the hearing.

Nineteen union members testified at the Membership Voices session. Five union workers gave prepared statements regarding labor's advances to open apprenticeship programs in the building and construction trades. Members of the A. Philip Randolph Institute, Community Labor United, the Brazilian Worker Center, Boston Workers Alliance and Interfaith Worker Justice ensured an adequate showing of people of color at the event.

This session highlighted the diversity of Boston and how people of color see their unions. An immigrant worker in the building trades and APALA member talked about coming to the United States for work. He said that he saw labor as his protection against companies and


corporations that exploit workers, and expressed his appreciation for apprenticeship programs for people of color and women like Building Pathways. However, he also said more recruitment in communities of color is necessary to make sure every slot is filled. A Brazilian former domestic worker said that while she is dedicated to the labor movement, she detected a great deal of anti-immigrant feeling that hurts her advancement in the union.

The Leadership Voices session had the highest percentage of local white male leaders and featured a strong showing from the UFCW local. Tensions arose during the Dog Whistle Politics presentation between white and black members around the discussion of historical racism; this edged into a conversation about whether or not black union members are respected by their brothers.

When participants broke into small groups for the scenario discussion, one white leader said any black man shot by police “must have done something wrong,” which upset the black leaders in the room. Another white male union leader offered his explanation of structural racism: He had never been stopped by police, but a black colleague driving through the same affluent white neighborhood to work was pulled over constantly. The group talked about how difficult it is to let people who make racially insensitive statements know they have offended people in a constructive way. Participants struggled with the conversation, but said they found it useful and would be open to future conversations on race issues. The state federation, Boston Workers Alliance and constituency groups said they would open up the conversation to more union members and find ways to work more closely with each other in local politics.

St. Louis, January–February 2016

On Jan. 31, 2016, the St. Louis chapters of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, Coalition of Labor Union Women, A. Philip Randolph Institute, Pride At Work, Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, Jobs with Justice and HandsUp United hosted a town hall meeting at Greater St. Mark Family Church, a highly respected faith body in St. Louis led by Pastor Tommie L. Pierson. The event brought together more than 200 labor leaders, politicians, community organizers, six labor commissioners, seven Advisory Council members and 10 AFL-CIO staff. These important stakeholders in the region discussed the deep tensions between the unions (especially the building trades) and African American community members, including some members of the Congressional Black Caucus of Missouri.



NEVER BE DECEIVED
THAT THE RICH WILL PERMIT YOU TO
VOTE AWAY THEIR WEALTH.

LUCY PARSONS
LABOR ORGANIZER

Community members and leaders talked about the black jobs crisis in St. Louis. Black unemployment rates across the city are extremely high and public transportation to carry black people from where they live to where the jobs are located is scarce. Black leaders want labor leaders to commit themselves to reducing unemployment in black communities. One black local elected official said he had filed a right to work bill just to get the attention of the labor movement, and the building trades in particular. Commissioner Lori Pelletier and Commissioner and AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Tefere Gebre argued that a right to work law only would worsen the situation for black workers, and offered to advise or assist any community groups seeking to engage with the labor movement on these or any other topics. The conversation was intense and honest, and led to a follow-up meeting between the Missouri Congressional Black Caucus and unions to further reconcile the issues raised and accusations made.

On Feb. 1, 2016, commissioners, Advisory Council members, staff of the Greater St. Louis Labor Council and 31 local labor leaders from 16 unions and local labor bodies listened to testimony from some of the 83 members and constituency groups who attended the Membership Voices session. Commission Co-Chair Fred Redmond and Commissioner and Bricklayers President James Boland presided over the Membership Voices session, while Commissioner and AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka assisted Redmond with the Leadership Voices session. The session was held at UFCW Local 655.

Participants were concerned about how the day would unfold after the contentious meeting from the night before. But President Trumka set a clear tone for the conversation by acknowledging the different views on Mike Brown's death and reiterating the need for the labor movement to defend brutalized communities and bring divided constituencies together to prevent further harm. Local leaders agreed that these are difficult, but necessary, conversations to have. They also noted that in Missouri, labor is under attack via right to work and paycheck deception legislation, and that if labor is not united, it will die.

At the Membership Voices session, testimony focused on the issues that have divided under-represented union members from their white male leaders, and labor from communities of color and their elected representatives. Members of color were concerned that labor in Missouri has a well-funded campaign to stop right to work because it would hurt private-sector unions, but that labor has not responded to right-wing attacks on the public sector, which employs more people of color. They

charged that the building trade unions in St. Louis had ignored the jobs crisis in the African American community and had not provided apprenticeship opportunities in devastated areas. The building trades maintained that they had been recruiting more people of color into their programs, but said they had difficulty providing more opportunities for careers in the trades because they could not find qualified candidates for their apprenticeships, and cited the lack of construction work to employ even existing tradesmen. It was noted that hiring goals for people of color in the trades had not been updated since 1979.

Members of color pointed out that the population of St. Louis is more than half black, but union membership and leadership still predominantly is white. They pointed out, however, that labor should see this as an opportunity. People of color want to join unions, and recruiting more people of color into an industry's workforce is an opportunity to grow the labor movement in Missouri. They thanked the International Painters and Allied Trades Union for its leadership in St. Louis, especially for the apprentice program it created and the black worker center it supports.

But union members of color also said that racial inequities in the St. Louis area created the context for deadly policing and over-incarceration, and said they were disappointed that so few labor leaders have spoken out about police violence. They also expressed frustration that local labor leaders supported white candidates for elected political office—even in black districts—and failed to give campaign funds to candidates of color. They said some unions even had supported white GOP candidates that supported “paycheck deception.” They believed this happened because the public-sector union members affected by paycheck deception are teachers and social workers who are disproportionately women and people of color. They also felt labor should have supported Tommie Pierson for lieutenant governor—the pastor whose church hosted the previous evening's town hall meeting.

Members of color and women want labor leaders who reflect their membership. They said the Executive Council should have more than one person of color. One member said the location of the union hall is a problem—it takes her two hours by bus to get there. Others worry that the alliance the A. Philip Randolph Institute and the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists built between labor and the civil rights community is fraying. More has to be done to ensure everyone in the region has access to middle-class jobs, they said.

In the Leadership Voices session in the afternoon, the commissioners and 31 local leaders talked about the attacks on labor in Missouri and the need for solidarity to defend our unions and labor rights. One speaker

said: “If labor shows apathy to diversity, then the community won’t show empathy to labor’s adversity.”

Most participants felt this meeting began to heal the rift between the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and the building trades. Each side was able to recognize that the lack of communication—whether intentional or not—about apprenticeship opportunities in the building trades unions was a problem. They committed to work together to expand a program designed to feed communities of color into the trades in St. Louis. They also pledged to work to repair the relationship between the labor movement and black elected officials.

Minneapolis, February 2016

The People of Color Union Member (POCUM) caucus of the Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation played a large role in shaping and recruiting participants for events in Minneapolis on Feb. 11 and 12, 2016. POCUM planned and hosted a town hall the evening before the labor commission hearing. About 150 community activists and union members attended—the majority of them people of color—along with five of the Advisory Council members. Union members and community leaders advised labor to work more closely with the NAACP in Minneapolis, particularly on school funding. Members also said that people of color are excluded from the building trades; the few people of color within construction said they faced comments and harassment from colleagues on their worksites. They said that local union leadership was unresponsive to the problems of women and people of color.

The fifth labor commission hearing was held on Feb. 12, 2016, at the Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation (MRLF) United Labor Center. Co-Chair Fred Redmond and Commissioner and NNU Executive Director RoseAnn DeMoro presided over the Membership Voices section, while Commissioner and AFSCME Secretary-Treasurer Laura Reyes presided over the Leadership Voices session. In attendance were seven commissioners and five Advisory Council members.

About 80 rank-and-file members attended the Membership Voices session. They described instances of sexual harassment and discrimination on the job. A Muslim immigrant nurse spoke about being treated rudely by patients, management and fellow workers. A Latino school custodian testified about being sexually harassed and passed over for promotion. One black construction worker said he had to “wake up an hour before I leave for work to mentally prepare for the racism I will receive when I enter the jobsite.” He said he routinely was called various degrading names. Many members of the audience were upset with his testimony. Despite their painful stories, all the witnesses talked about their

commitment to their unions and hoped that their unions would step up and commit to their members of color.

Twenty-five local leaders attended the Leadership Voices session with commissioners, along with 12 members of the People of Color Union Membership caucus. After the presentations on racial bias and dog whistle politics, POCUM members talked about the need for members of color to have a separate space to talk about common issues, to network and to build a supportive community. While the other cities leaned on the AFL-CIO constituency groups for this, members in Minneapolis did not know about these groups, and so created POCUM as a separate body. POCUM demanded to have rank-and-file members of color be a part of the private labor leader discussion. As a result, the local white union leaders seemed to restrain their comments and questions, saying it was hard for them to have a frank conversation with commission members because they worried that the workers of color present might respond negatively to what they had to say.

The president of the MRLF committed to work with POCUM and local labor leaders to create a citywide race commission. This body would consist of the president of the MRLF, local labor leaders and POCUM members. POCUM was asked to identify structural practices within the union that disadvantage people of color and to propose solutions to those practices.

Birmingham, Alabama, March 2016

The final commission hearing took place on March 4, 2016, in Birmingham, Alabama, at the USW Local 1013 hall. Seven commissioners and six Advisory Council members attended the hearing. Commission Co-Chair Fred Redmond, Commissioner and AFT Secretary-Treasurer Lorretta Johnson and Commissioner and AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka presided over the Leadership Voices and Membership Voices sections of the meetings. About 100 members and local leaders attended, but a couple of uninvited local organizers showed up and tried to inject their agenda into the meeting. The United Steelworkers and Mine Workers lost more than 3,000 members in Alabama over the previous year due to plant closings that had disproportionately hurt black members and retirees. More layoffs are scheduled. The Central Alabama Labor Federation established a food bank for its members because many families couldn't afford food after the layoffs.

About 32 local labor leaders participated in the closed-door Leadership Voices session with commissioners, where racial fault lines and tensions became more evident. Local white labor leaders were uncomfortable with the phrase "black lives matter," insisting "all lives matter" and noting that some (white) people feel that phrase is an attack on first responders.

Black leaders tried to explain that it is black lives that are being devalued, that “things are happening to the black community that are not happening to others.... The police are targeting us. This is what they do to black people.” Another African American leader said: “I have four sons and grandsons, and when they reach a certain age we have to tell them how to walk, act, how to wear their pants.... I want them to be proud of their blackness, but when they reach a certain age they need to be careful about how they deal with cops. Nobody is treated the way young black males are treated in this United States.”

A black leader and former police officer talked about the need for the black community in Birmingham to exert its full voting strength to change the laws. Another said changes in policy require a change in personnel. He talked about building a coalition to start to change the composition of the judiciary: “First we got judges on the bench who were union friendly, and then we got the first African American woman on the bench, the second black man on the bench, and first Latino on the bench.... this affects how police treat blacks and Latinos.”

A commissioner asked local leaders to look inward: What kind of practices and internal structures do we have in the labor movement that divide us, and allow racism and bigotry to flourish and grow?

One white leader acknowledged that “the labor movement needs to look more like the people we represent.... I am an old white guy...racism is just as bad today as it was back in the fifties; it’s just underground. You go into a chicken plant [and] you got a black man making \$10 and a white guy making \$10 an hour. We are all getting our asses handed to us. Why is it that the white person thinks they are better?” A retired labor leader said very few plants today have black or Hispanic workers. In Birmingham, all the plants except one have only white workers—and the plants with more people of color were closed first.

A local leader noted that we need more young people in the union and the union needed to train community members, not just union members, about right to work laws, and get union members more involved in the community. Another said that we should get community groups like Work Together Alabama and Black Lives Matter into the central labor council even if they do not pay a per capita fee. Overall, the Birmingham hearing showed the need for a deeper investment in organizing in the South, both because of the numbers of working people of color there and because union wages give people economic freedom.

Common Themes

Although economic conditions and the sources of racial tension varied across the six commission sites, several common themes emerged. In the Membership Voices sessions, people of color talked about the difficulty of finding good jobs that paid family-supporting wages. They recognize how critical unions are in negotiating decent wages and protecting benefits. People of color appreciate their unions and are grateful for the role they play in improving their standard of living, but life is not just economics. Many people of color still experience discrimination on the job, and do not always feel that their union will support them in confronting it. The lack of access to pre-apprenticeship programs and training that can lead to higher skills and union jobs was a consistent complaint. In places where black unemployment was particularly high, members of color and community leaders complained that the labor movement and the politicians they support are not focusing enough attention on the “black jobs crisis.”

When talking about their unions, members of color testified that they felt leadership positions were not always open to them and they felt that the local labor movement often ignored issues of importance to their communities—particularly the racial profiling of black men, arrests and incarceration for nonviolent crimes, and police violence against young men of color. In a couple of sites, members talked about the need for the black, Latino and Asian communities to organize their votes for political power. In other hearings, members urged the labor movement to use its political clout to fight for racial justice locally and at the state level.

In the evaluations collected after the hearings, members expressed their gratitude and excitement that national labor leaders spent so much of their personal time to hold these conversations. Local leaders said they had not seen international union officers invest so much time on an issue like this. Nor had they seen international leaders spend so much time with rank-and-file workers, local leaders and community groups to have a serious conversation on race. It was a powerful experience for them to watch commissioners take time to lift up and highlight issues of concern to union members of color. They felt it set an example for local leaders: If national leadership takes this seriously, then local leaders should, too. This commission is positioning the labor movement to be a partner in the national fight for dignity and justice for all workers.

In four out of the six hearing sites—Alameda County, Boston, Cleveland and Minneapolis—union women and women of color were key to organizing the meetings and town halls.


Petee Talley and Harriet Applegate in Cleveland, Josie Camacho in Alameda County, Darlene Lombos in Boston and Chelsie Glaubitz in Minneapolis are deeply committed to eradicating racial and gender bias from their unions. But they feel their peers too often see this work as peripheral to labor’s “real” work. It is not. Fighting for racial and gender equity is essential to the health and growth of the labor movement.

Finally, and not surprisingly, we found that white and black union members often saw the issue of racial bias in policing, arrests, sentencing and violence very differently. These are not easy conversations, but many participants said they had a new perspective on racial bias, coded political appeals and institutional racism after the sessions. Many also asked about how to ensure trainings and conversations of this kind reach a broader audience of labor leaders and members. “What will the follow-up be?” and “What comes next?” were asked consistently.



These campaigns reflect the hope of organizing in this country, the fight for justice and dignity on the job, and they speak to the necessity of building a new labor movement for a new labor class. The challenge moving forward is to link the fight for economic justice, the fight for racial justice, and the fight for immigrant justice [together] and to embrace the hopes and aspirations of the vast majority of people in this country.”

—Kent Wong, UCLA Labor Center



I KNEW THAT I WANTED TO HELP OTHER WORKERS
AND I FOUND OUT THAT I COULD HELP THEM
BY JOINING WITH THEM AND MAKING THE
UNION STRONG AND POWERFUL ENOUGH
TO BRING ABOUT CHANGE.

REV. ADDIE L. WYATT
UFCW



AFL-CIO

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE LABOR COMMISSION ON RACIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

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America's legacy of racism and racial injustice has been and continues to be a fundamental obstacle to workers' efforts to act together to build better lives for all of us.... To that end, it is time for a frank and thoughtful discussion on racial inequality and its economic impact—starting first in the house of labor.”

The workplace is the most diverse part of American life—more people share a workplace with a person of another race than live in an integrated neighborhood or worship in an integrated church. Today, 35% of all working people are people of color, but more than 40% of younger workers are (workers 20–34 years old); and these proportions will grow over time. Given this fact of working life, the labor movement must lead a conversation about the critical role racial equity plays to reduce economic inequality and improve the lives and livelihoods of all working people. If we continue to avoid this responsibility, others will step into the void to undermine working-class solidarity.

Polling consistently shows that African American, Hispanic and millennial workers are more likely than whites to see the value of unions and would join one if given the opportunity. African Americans have the highest rate of union membership; 3 million union members are people of color. Our brothers and sisters of color value unions because the wage and benefit premiums from union membership are greatest for people of color and women. Our unions will survive and thrive when they intentionally recruit people of color as members and address their concerns in the workplace and in their lives more broadly. To grow our labor movement, we must be vibrant, diverse and stand for justice for all of us.

The American electorate is changing, too. Today, 31% of voters are people of color, and an even larger percentage of millennial voters are voters of color. The labor movement must win elections to create a new set of political and economic rules to empower working people and expand opportunity. This means fighting hard for the priorities of our coalition partners, and making racial justice a central part of our economic agenda. Too many of the labor laws and structures that shape economic opportunity today are the result of past political compromises that deliberately excluded black and brown workers, such as minimum wage standards that do not apply to all workers. And in recent years, mandatory sentencing for nonviolent offenses, state and local restrictions on voting and gerrymandering have made it harder for some people to exert their right to vote. To change the laws that suppress unions, we need a big tent political coalition that protects voting rights, civil rights and labor rights.

The recommendations that follow reflect the conversations of the commissioners and Advisory Council members who participated in the six hearings held by the Labor Commission on Racial and Economic Justice in 2015 and 2016. Each “basket” of recommendations grows out of what we learned in the course of the commission’s hearings, and is an effort to address the following questions:

- How can we help our affiliates and local labor leaders as they seek to understand and better respond to the concerns, needs and aspirations of union members of color?
- How can we more effectively integrate racial justice issues into our ongoing political and policy work at the state and local levels, and in our long-term strategies for achieving a fairer and more inclusive America?
- What more can we do to ensure we have a diverse set of labor leaders who are forward-looking and inclusive, and who reflect the working class of the future?

The recommendations below reflect the concerns we heard from local leaders and rank-and-file union members at the commission hearings. We recognize that every union and every community faces unique challenges. Many AFL-CIO affiliates are working to make their unions more inclusive, responsive and welcoming. We have highlighted examples of best practices to show that change not only is possible, but also is under way. Our goal must be to spread these changes across our entire labor movement. We can all do more.

Recommendations

1. Build solidarity and understanding among union leaders and members on how race has been used to weaken labor unity, limit the growth of the labor movement and damage our efforts to advance economic reforms that benefit all working people.

Talking about racial bias and the impact of racial politics can be challenging, but it lies at the core of strengthening solidarity, growing labor’s membership and allies, and creating a movement that lifts all working people. Without an understanding of the intersection between class and race, we are vulnerable to the divisive tactics of corporations and unscrupulous politicians. When we ignore the conditions of particular racial or ethnic groups, those groups become vulnerable to be used as a wedge that employers use to tear down the wages and benefits of current employees. Labor protections only provide a “floor” for working people when all working people enjoy those protections.

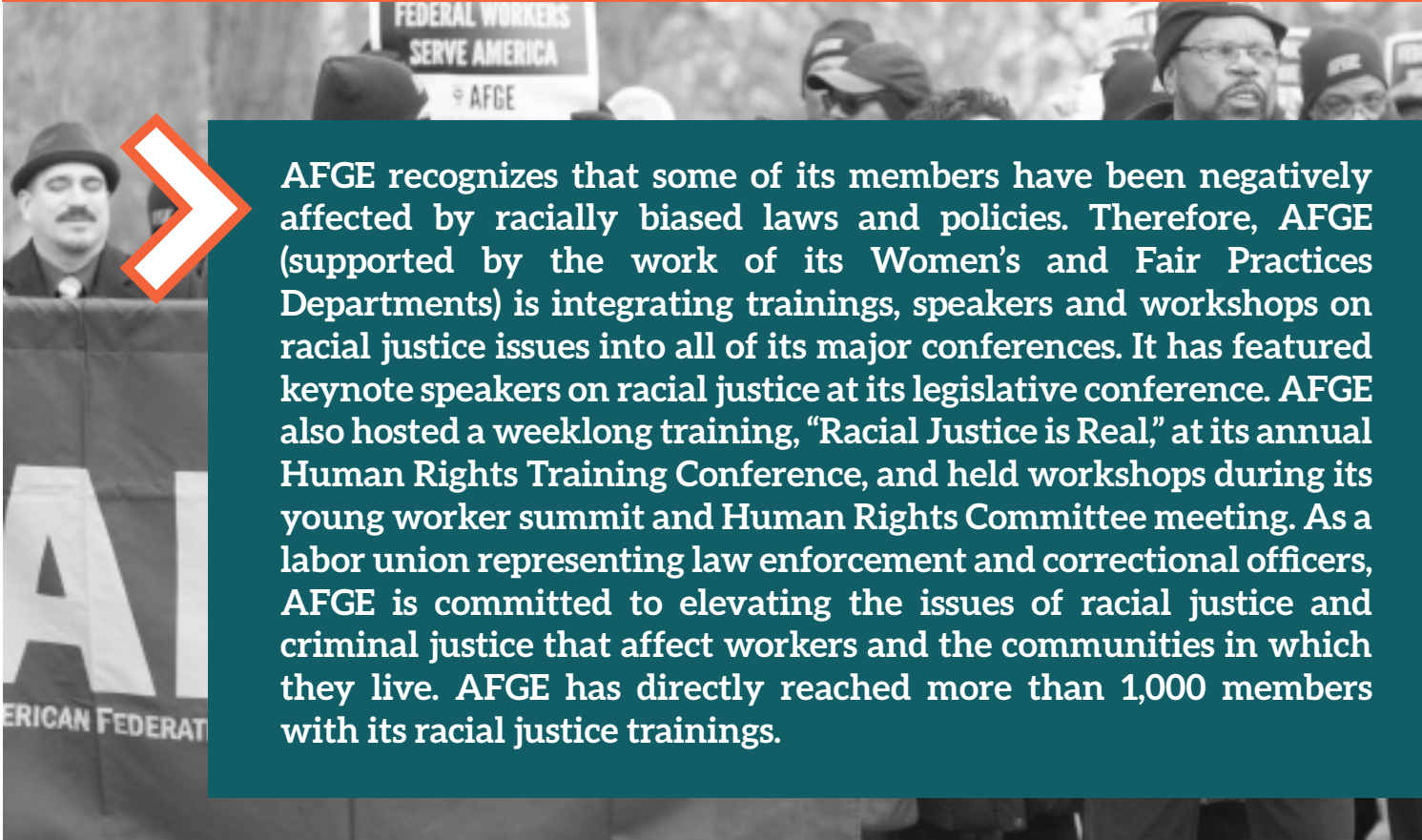
1.a. The commission recommends that all AFL-CIO affiliates incorporate race training courses such as those described below in their ongoing internal training programs, if they have not done so already. We recognize that larger affiliates may have their own training and education departments and some have developed their own training. Most unions have a civil or human rights and women's committee/department tasked with promoting greater racial equity within the union and more racial justice in the larger society. Some unions already have engaged in tough conversations about criminal justice reforms, internal practices that support racial inequities and whether or how to support the Black Lives Matter movement. We believe that having tough and facilitated conversations about race within our respective union families will help build empathy, and bridge gaps in lived experiences across race and ethnicity that will make our unions stronger and more unified.

1.b. All state federations and central labor councils (CLCs) in large metropolitan areas will be required to conduct trainings like those described below by the end of 2017. To help members better understand race and racial bias and its impact on the labor movement, we recommend training that explains:

- How racial bias leads to and/or reinforces discrimination and exclusion. The toolkit of training modules developed by the AFL-CIO helped labor leaders think through how to better integrate members of color into our union structures, listen to their priorities and talk openly about how we can all support each other most effectively. It helps members and leaders discuss internal union politics and how to manage conversations about the movement for black lives, immigration, discrimination between members and other forms of racial bias. It also challenges labor leaders to see labor's agenda as a broader community and movement agenda.
- How race and ethnicity have been used to divide and weaken working-class solidarity. Commission Advisory Council Co-Chair Dr. Ian Haney López created an executive summary and guide designed to help labor leaders and members confront the effect of racial appeals on our politics. This guide exposes the intentional and manipulative ways politicians use stereotypes to divide workers. It helps people become more critical consumers of the media and political messaging that is aimed at them. The objective is for white members to better understand how racial appeals are used to undermine labor solidarity, and for all members to see how their unions can inoculate members from some of these appeals. It gives union members a common language and analysis through which to assess political campaigns.

1.c. The commission recommends that affiliates, state federations and large CLCs schedule popular education trainings on three topics: rewriting the economic rules, criminal justice reform and immigration. These courses include facilitated discussions of how institutional and racial bias have shaped policy choices that harm working people and undermine labor solidarity.

These three courses are appropriate for meetings of unionists, and for joint trainings with community partners. The first course shows how neoliberal economic policies changed the economic rules over the past 40 years—making all working families weaker and more vulnerable—and outlines policies to rectify the situation. The second course focuses on the disproportionate impact that changes in criminal justice laws and practices have had on African American families and communities of color over the past 30 years, and labor’s role in reversing them. The third course focuses on our nation’s broken immigration system and labor’s role to fix it. The three trainings together reinforce the racial bias trainings and show why labor solidarity is required to change the rules to create an economy and government that works for working people.



AFGE recognizes that some of its members have been negatively affected by racially biased laws and policies. Therefore, AFGE (supported by the work of its Women’s and Fair Practices Departments) is integrating trainings, speakers and workshops on racial justice issues into all of its major conferences. It has featured keynote speakers on racial justice at its legislative conference. AFGE also hosted a weeklong training, “Racial Justice is Real,” at its annual Human Rights Training Conference, and held workshops during its young worker summit and Human Rights Committee meeting. As a labor union representing law enforcement and correctional officers, AFGE is committed to elevating the issues of racial justice and criminal justice that affect workers and the communities in which they live. AFGE has directly reached more than 1,000 members with its racial justice trainings.



AFT began its racial equity work in 2011 by undertaking a thorough and honest examination of its ideologies and shared actions of individual members, their thought systems and their internalized values and standards. Through a series of painful but courageous conversations, AFT brought out a thoughtful, brutally frank and sometimes embarrassing reality, seen by many participants for the first time. Seizing this “teachable moment,” these groups forged ahead to:

- improve education opportunities for out-of-school, suspended and troubled youth;
- promote restorative justice and fairer enforcement of current discipline rules;
- recruit and retain black men as teachers and school staff;
- train school staff in cultural competencies that help them recognize their own biases;
- institute review policies that will promote fair evaluations of black male students;
- develop a funding program to encourage and sustain black males to obtain college degrees;
- open the pathway to skilled trades through revamped apprenticeship recruitment and placement in trade careers; and
- expand work with the Conference of Chief Justices to increase public trust and engagement between minority communities and court leadership, leading to better understood adjudication outcomes.

AFT is committed to continuing the difficult but necessary steps to make equality a lived value among its members and the communities in which they work.

To read the report, visit:

www.aft.org/sites/default/files/racial_equity_taskforce_10-8-15.pdf



AFSCME's 1.6 million working and retired public employees include nurses, child care providers, emergency medical technicians and sanitation workers, as well as corrections, parole and police officers. Following a discussion with the International Executive Board in January 2016, President Lee Saunders appointed a Racial Justice and Public Safety Work Group and charged it with drafting a resolution for AFSCME's 42nd convention.

The work group included a cross-section of union members and leaders representing social service workers, law enforcement and parole and corrections officers, supplemented by the participation of the former executive director of the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE) and deputy commissioner of training for the New York City Police Department and a professor from the UC-Berkeley Labor Center.

An external facilitator provided training on implicit bias and helped members talk about the difficult issues of race, class and problems in the criminal justice system. The participants were moved by the training, and recommended the training program for use within AFSCME and with community partners.

The work group unanimously passed a resolution recommending that AFSCME engage in, create and promote tools for conducting implicit bias training throughout the union; use legislative and political power to advocate for key systemic criminal justice reforms; and work with community partners to bring together public safety and other public-sector union members with residents in a local discussion that focuses on criminal and racial justice issues to develop local solutions.

www.afscme.org/members/conventions/resolutions-and-amendments/2016/resolutions/racial-justice-and-public-safety



CWA included a racial and economic justice component in its highly successful political boot camp trainings. More than 1,500 rank-and-file members have participated in this training during the last two election cycles. In 2016 alone, CWA trained more than 330 rank-and-file members in 12 states across the country. CWA has seen an increase in volunteer participation and contributions to its political action fund, all of which can be attributed to implementing these trainings as part of the political boot camp program.

In addition, CWA developed the “Runaway Inequality” activist training centered on economic justice and corporate reform strategies; it includes a component on racial divisions and how these divisions distract from our shared economic interests.

1.d. The commission recommends that state federations and large CLCs create local dialogues on race and/or a local version of the Labor Commission on Racial and Economic Justice. However, to have a constructive conversation, the commission recommends that local leaders hire external professional facilitators and talk with AFL-CIO staff to understand the kind of preparation required. Sensitive racial conversations require experienced facilitators who are perceived by every participant as neutral mediators.


2. To build a more “diverse and inclusive labor movement,” we must integrate the issues and concerns of members and workers of color into labor’s political and policy work at every level. (Resolution 20, 2013 Convention.)

Labor is the largest self-funded, membership-based organization in the United States, with a democratically elected leadership that champions an independent progressive economic agenda for the nation. As we build “a broader, stronger labor movement for the future,” it is imperative that our goals include racial equity demands.


2.a. The commission urges AFL-CIO affiliates, state federations and CLCs to build and deepen long-term partnerships with independent people of color groups to maximize our collective power in state and local politics.

Working with independent organizations anchored in communities of color is a critical part of labor's efforts to build political power at the state and local levels. These organizations are likely to share our progressive economic values and develop strategies informed by an explicit race, gender and class analysis.

Our ability to move a winning agenda for working people requires that we align and coordinate with our allies to capitalize on immediate opportunities and shape shared long-term power-building strategies together. Many of our affiliates have been involved in an active conversation about how to build and maintain ongoing labor-community coalitions between elections. The "Orange County model," described below, has expanded to a larger group of cities with strong CLCs with assistance from the AFL-CIO. Other affiliates, following Resolution 5, have developed relationships with worker centers to build power.



The Communications Workers of America have made continuous integrated voter engagement the linchpin of its political work. The union is part of an ongoing partnership with community organizations to push for state-level criminal justice reform and against voter suppression rules.



Local union leaders and community activists transformed the political environment in the Republican stronghold of Orange County, California, by investing in organizing to grow the membership base of individual unions and by partnering with diverse grassroots community and faith groups. Over the past decade, the Orange County Labor Federation has run strategic organizing drives, year-round voter registration, a candidate academy, leadership trainings and political campaigns to build the power of working people in the county.

The OCLF is now a hub for progressive and immigrant organizing and is one of the highest-performing labor bodies in the country,



[CONT.] as measured by activating volunteers and establishing voter contact programs. Most recently, OCLF won a referendum to eliminate at-large elections, changing a political structure that had prevented people of color in Anaheim from electing a progressive city council member. Through strategic litigation and organizing, OCLF won a change to district representation, expanding the number of city council members and electing a progressive majority on the city council for the first time in memory. Without putting the time into building deep partnerships between labor and community groups, and investing resources into ongoing organizing and year-round political work, this shift would not have occurred.

2.b. The commission recommends that programs that encourage and train union members of color, women and community allies to run for public office be made available in more places, that issues of concern to workers of color are included on COPE and other political surveys, and that all potential candidates understand the union endorsement process.

The commissioners heard complaints from members of color about the candidate endorsement process. Elected candidates of color sometimes have a difficult time getting labor endorsements, but often are courted heavily by corporations with large campaign contributions. We cannot compete with the amount of money corporations can provide candidates, but labor is well situated to provide volunteers and voter education to our members and allies.

2.c. The commission recommends that AFL-CIO constituency groups are fully integrated into all the activities in Section 2, and that each state federation and CLC includes a designated slot on its executive board for a representative of a constituency group.



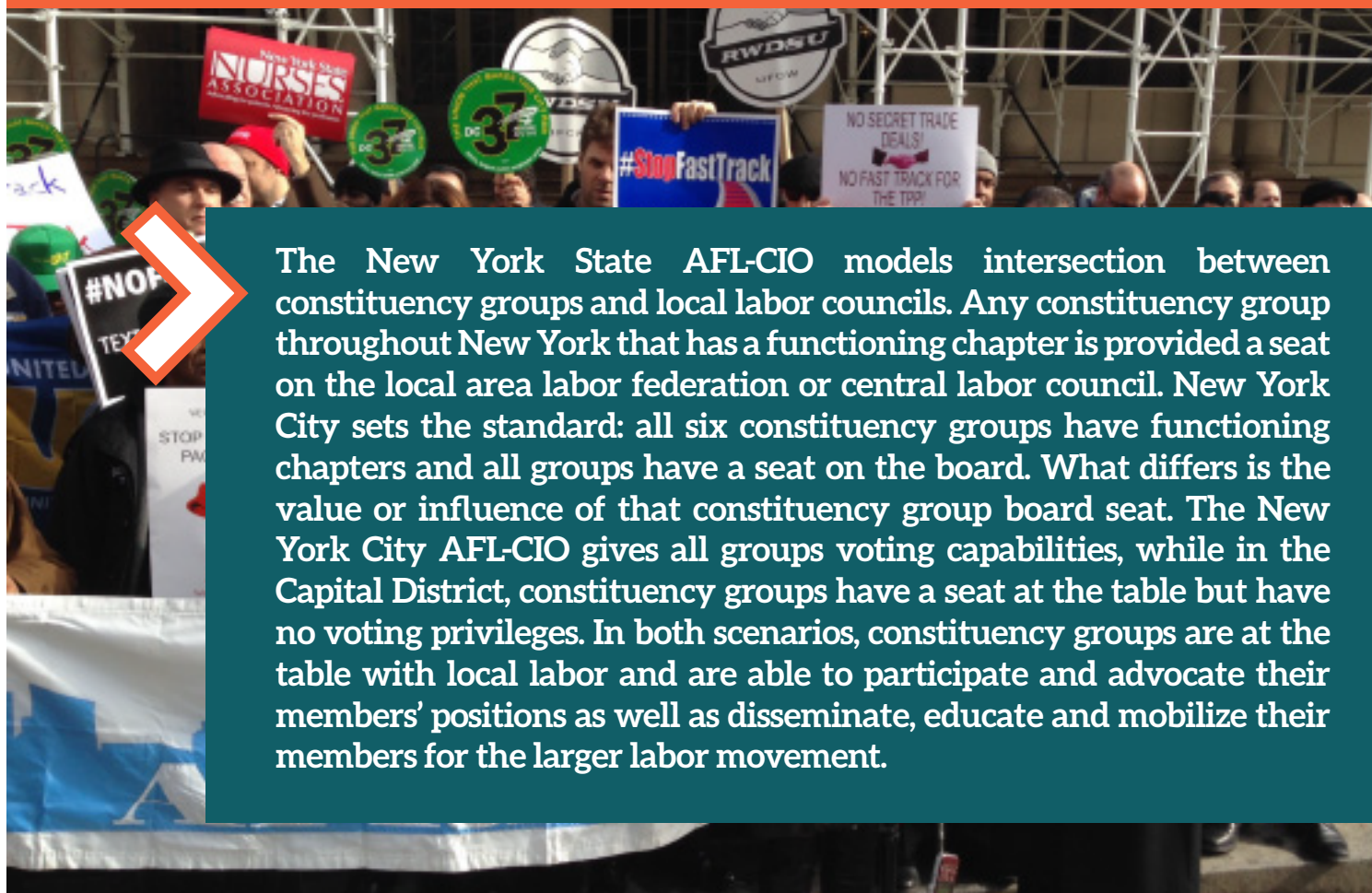
Constituency groups are integral in planning and executing community celebrations, including Black History Month (APRI/CBTU), Pride Month (P@W), Asian Pacific American Heritage Month (APALA), Women's History Month (CLUW), Native American Heritage Month (Council FIRE/IAM) and Hispanic Heritage Month (LCLAA). These opportunities highlight the particular issues faced by people of color, women and LGBT individuals in the workplace and the diverse leaders we have in our unions, organizations and in the broader labor movement.

Constituency groups can play leadership roles to combat wage theft, advance criminal justice and comprehensive immigration reform issues, and elect progressive candidates to office. The Alameda Labor Council (California) represents this synergy with the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance. APALA has a delegate seat and ongoing engagement with community activists. For example, the Alameda Labor Council co-hosted "AAPIs Behind Bars—Exposing the School to Prison to Deportation Pipeline," a first-of-its-kind convening with the Asian American and Pacific Islander community regarding mass incarceration.

Constituency groups represent not only their members, but also the unions from which their members are a part. CBTU has a long-standing practice (shared by all constituency groups) of joining and advancing campaigns of the larger labor movement. From getting arrested with the Mine Workers to holding rallies to support the Communications Workers of America to issuing public statements to support labor campaigns, constituency groups actively seek to find the connection between their members and the fights in the field. Traditionally, both provide an avenue to greatly expand allies and connect different labor industries.

The AFL-CIO's six participating constituency groups—the A. Philip Randolph Institute, Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, Coalition of Labor Union Women, Labor Council for Latin American Advancement and Pride At Work—were created to represent union members, to be an external bridge to these larger communities, to give voice to and encourage the full participation of all our members in the labor movement, and to ensure unions respond to the specific concerns of the communities they represent.

AFL-CIO Resolution 7 should be fully implemented—each state federation and central labor council should have a designated slot on its executive board for a representative of a constituency group. At their best, constituency groups provide a way to bring the concerns of people of color, women and LGBTQI people into the labor movement. They, in turn, help promote labor's key priorities with constituents. We must work to ensure full reciprocity in these relationships.



The New York State AFL-CIO models intersection between constituency groups and local labor councils. Any constituency group throughout New York that has a functioning chapter is provided a seat on the local area labor federation or central labor council. New York City sets the standard: all six constituency groups have functioning chapters and all groups have a seat on the board. What differs is the value or influence of that constituency group board seat. The New York City AFL-CIO gives all groups voting capabilities, while in the Capital District, constituency groups have a seat at the table but have no voting privileges. In both scenarios, constituency groups are at the table with local labor and are able to participate and advocate their members' positions as well as disseminate, educate and mobilize their members for the larger labor movement.

2.d. The commission recognizes that our affiliates use collective bargaining to address the interests and concerns of the members of their bargaining units, and recommends that more affiliates explore ways to simultaneously advance members' interests and community interests through "bargaining for the common good" and labor-management relations.

At the commission hearings, members told us the individuals who are chosen or elected to bargain for a union contract shape what items are put on the table and negotiated. More representation by people of color and women of color might put new issues on the collective bargaining agenda—like removing the felony conviction box on job application forms, pushing for tuition assistance and bargaining for paid sick days, family leave and child care.

Bargaining collectively for better wages and working conditions and enforcing the contract that is negotiated are the central representational tasks of unions today; they are not inconsistent with having a broader agenda. Our affiliates should encourage their local unions' bargaining teams to reflect the diversity of their membership. They also should look for issues the union shares with other residents of the communities where union members work and live, and take community concerns into account in formulating the union's bargaining priorities.

AFT and several other unions have been promoting a "bargaining for the common good" model and developing strategies that can transcend the traditional collective bargaining framework (such as wages, hours, terms and conditions of employment) written into law. In Chicago, New York and St. Paul, Minnesota, AFT is developing a set of collective bargaining issues that will serve the joint interests of the union's members and their community partners. AFSCME and National Nurses United also are embracing this model.



In 2012, the Chicago Teachers Union worked with an alliance of community groups to develop a set of demands that included smaller class sizes, facility improvements and increased funding—and won.

In 2013, the Saint Paul Federation of Teachers (Minnesota), working with community allies, developed a list of 29 demands for its contract fights and won most of them. AFT is encouraging this strategy.

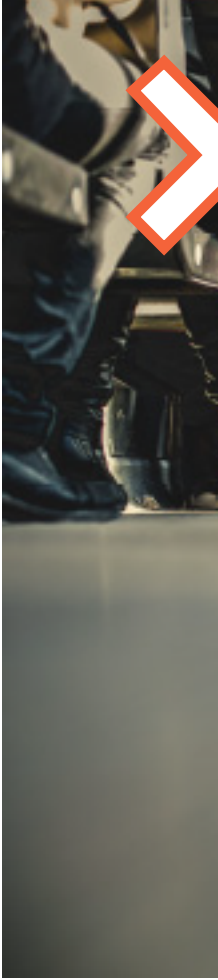
In 2014, the municipal unions in Los Angeles—AFSCME and others—joined with community and faith-based groups in the Fix LA Coalition. After research reports, rallies and direct actions, the city agreed to hire 5,000 new workers, raise wages and benefits, and restore city services to pre-Great Recession levels.

2.e. The commission strongly encourages AFL-CIO affiliates, state federations and CLCs to work with public officials and community leaders to encourage public investments in job creation, policies to improve job quality and reforms that ensure people of color have access to the jobs, including expanding access to training programs.

Slow job growth and declining wages have become the norm in too many communities across the country. We must unite behind a set of policies that bring good jobs back to our communities. We heard about the effects of job loss and poor job quality at our hearings. Communities of color often suffer disproportionately from poor economic conditions, and typically have unemployment rates that are twice as high as in white communities, but an increasing number of white communities are discovering that poor job growth and poor-quality jobs has social impacts, including increased drug use, more crime and more people dropping out of the labor force.

At each of our hearings, we heard complaints that there just are not enough “good jobs” for the people who want them. The economy now is growing, and employment rates and wages finally are rising in the black community, too (the last few months have seen the largest drops in black unemployment since the Great Recession), but pockets of severe unemployment and underemployment still exist, and in those places, many people have simply given up looking for jobs.

We urgently need public investments in infrastructure projects in communities across the country: public schools, bridges, roads and water and waste systems all need to be repaired and improved. These infrastructure projects could create millions of jobs for union members and people of color. To effectively push for job creation and skill training for new jobs, unions and communities need to work together at the federal, state and local levels.



Jobs to Move America (JMA) is an innovative national partnership dedicated to ensuring the billions of public dollars spent by public transit agencies for the purchase of passenger railcars and buses create good jobs; use cleaner, made-in-America equipment; and provide more employment opportunities for disadvantaged communities, including those in low-income neighborhoods and the formerly incarcerated. A coalition of more than 30 labor, faith, community, civil rights, philanthropic, academic and environmental groups, JMA's goal is to create competition upward, incentivizing high-road employers to ensure the \$5.4 billion that transit agencies spend annually on buses and rail cars creates permanent, good-paying manufacturing jobs in the United States, and provides training and employment opportunities. It is a win for unions and disadvantaged communities. Atlanta, Chicago, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Minneapolis/St. Paul, New York City, Salt Lake City, San Diego, Seattle and Washington, D.C., are planning large public transportation projects that will create hundreds of new transit lines over the next decade. CWA, IAM, IBEW, SMART, TTD, TWU and USW are leading this project, with support from the national AFL-CIO and its affiliated state and local bodies.

To ensure unions and community groups are fully aligned, we need to confirm that training, pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeship opportunities are expanded to include more people of color, the formerly incarcerated, immigrants and low-income workers who want good union jobs. Some affiliates have created innovative apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs that recruit people of color, formerly incarcerated citizens, immigrants, women and veterans, providing a pathway into secure, middle-class jobs.

But at the commission hearings, few people of color were aware of such opportunities, and many felt apprenticeship opportunities were reserved for the friends and family of union members, and/or deliberately located in places inconvenient to communities of color.

Union leaders at the hearings talked about the deep decline in construction work after the Great Recession. About 300,000 fewer people are employed in construction today than in 2006. They pointed out that when there are no jobs, there are no apprenticeship opportunities, because apprentices learn on the job. They felt community members did not understand the constraints they faced when jobs are scarce.

The good news is that more states and metro areas have infrastructure work coming on line now. During the 2014 election, ballot initiatives to increase funding for \$150 billion in new public transit projects passed, thus demonstrating that local communities do not have to wait for federal funds to seek necessary public investments in infrastructure. In these places, unions are stepping up and diversifying the pool of skilled construction workers in their region.



Marcus Shepherd served three years for a felony conviction, and was released in 2001. In 2004, he entered a three-year Painters and Allied Trades program to become a drywall finisher. He quickly acquired journeyman status, making \$27 an hour. Shepherd became an enthusiastic union activist and was elected president of Local 781 in Wisconsin in 2011. Last year, IUPAT President Kenneth Rigmaiden hired him as an organizer. He, along with the other IUPAT organizers, works on community relations and outreach. Shepherd is a leader on criminal justice reform and is helping other formerly incarcerated people turn their lives around by earning good union jobs. His leadership has been a win for his family, his union and his community.

Today, UNITE HERE is working with employers to develop registered apprenticeship programs for hotel and hospitality workers in several cities. The Boston Education Skills & Training Corp. program and the Los Angeles Hospitality Training Academy are helping workers develop the skills and resources they need to advance, and learn about the role their union and collective bargaining play in ensuring they receive decent wages and benefits. They are funded by a \$1.3 million contract from the U.S. Department of Labor, administered by the AFL-CIO Working for America Institute (WAI).

The training providers that WAI uses in Boston, Hawaii, Los Angeles, Miami and Washington, D.C., have worked extensively on modifying existing culinary apprenticeship programs to suit the needs of the hospitality industry. While previous culinary apprenticeships required at least 4,000 hours of instruction, today's culinary apprenticeships are 2,000-hour programs that fit the needs of an entry-level cook in hotels, restaurants, cafeterias or in airports.



Changes in the hospitality industry have made success dependent on team building, executive decision making, the ability to work with diverse staff and other skills. These programs allow workers to thrive and enable employers to keep down retention costs. Ultimately, the goal of a quality apprenticeship program is to successfully transition workers from low-wage work to high-skilled, well-paid work that provides them the opportunity for economic stability and mobility. In the unionized part of the hospitality industry, immigrants who lack English proficiency and others who have high school degrees or less can start at wages of \$15 or more an hour, with benefits and vacation time.

Trades Related Apprenticeship Coaching is a 16-week pre-apprenticeship program at a Washington State correctional facility that allows female inmates to earn entry into a paid union apprenticeship with the Carpenters, Laborers or Ironworkers upon their release. Inmates can participate in GED preparation, communications skills training, and time and money management, as well as hands-on vocational training. The women who participate in the program, many of whom have children, earn a family-supporting union wage. In the spring of 2016, singer and criminal justice reform advocate John Legend and two dozen union representatives visited with program participants. Since the visit, Gov. Jay Inslee (D) passed an executive order to ban the box, and the TRAC program has expanded to five states.

The Edward J. Malloy Initiative for Construction Skills Pre-Apprenticeship program has successfully placed young people of color in construction careers in New York City since 2011. Established as a partnership of the Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater New York, Building Trades Employers Association, career and technical education high schools in New York City, Consortium for Worker Education, the New York City Department of Education, the New York City Construction Authority and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, it



[CONT.] is one of the most successful pre-apprenticeship programs in the country. Over 12 years, it has placed 1,443 graduates into paid union apprenticeship programs, where they have an 80% likelihood of completion—a rate that is significantly higher than most programs. Graduates enter union construction jobs with an average salary of \$67,110. About 90% of the graduates are black, Hispanic or Asian. The program is changing the composition of the New York City construction workforce.

The AFL-CIO Working for America Institute (WAI), in partnership with the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership/BIG STEP and Jobs for the Future, developed the Industrial Manufacturing Technician Apprenticeship with funds from the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. A second grant expands the IMT apprenticeship to Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

A broad coalition of industrial labor unions and manufacturing employers specified the job tasks, skills and performance standards of the certification program and designed the curriculum. The WAI and IMT program staff work closely with AFL-CIO affiliates (including IAM, IBEW, IUPAT, LIUNA and UAW), state federations and CLCs to implement the 18-month or 3,000-hour apprenticeship in advanced manufacturing. It trains entry-level and frontline manufacturing workers to:

- set up, operate, monitor and control production equipment;
- help improve manufacturing processes and schedules to meet customer requirements;
- understand manufacturing as a business system that integrates multiple disciplines, processes and stakeholders; and
- manage time and materials efficiently and safely.



[CONT.] While still new and a small portion of overall apprenticeships, data from Wisconsin show participation rates for women and people of color are much higher than for other apprenticeship programs. In Wisconsin, women represent 5.9% of all active apprenticeships, but 16.9% of IMT apprentices. People of color in Wisconsin represent 10.4% of all active apprenticeships, but 36.6% of IMT apprentices.

2.f. The commission recommends that the AFL-CIO, state federations, CLCs and affiliates actively support criminal justice reforms: community policing, sentencing reform, removal of employment obstacles for the formerly incarcerated, restrictions on for-profit prisons and voting rights restoration.

The United States has the highest incarceration rate in the industrialized world. People of color are disproportionately harmed by racial profiling and mandatory sentencing. From police stops to arrests, to charges pressed and conviction, our justice system treats people of color more harshly than whites.

We believe labor has a responsibility to help the formerly incarcerated re-integrate into the economy. The 600,000 people released from prison each year face huge hurdles to rebuild their lives and livelihoods. Various state and local policies prevent them from voting, obtaining student loans, and receiving public benefits and other services. They have few opportunities for advanced education, job training or good jobs. They desperately need labor protections and are eager to join unions.

Some of the most powerful testimony during the hearings came from young men and women who talked about how the labor movement changed their lives. They told stories about how their union involvement moved them toward a more productive life.

We recommend that:

- State federations and CLCs urge policy makers to require police officers be properly trained in community policing and de-escalation tactics.

- Most research shows that our police force is no more racist than our population as a whole, while the consequences of their bias are more deadly. Local jurisdictions should participate in the Quality Policing Initiative, which promotes reciprocal, professional, accountable and cooperative policing and addresses recruitment, training, community deployment, accountability and advancement issues.
- The AFL-CIO, state federations and CLCs support efforts to reduce mandatory minimum sentencing laws, to support “ban the box” legislation and to restore the rights of the formerly incarcerated. For example, the California state federation provided critical support to passing a statewide “ban the box” ballot initiative in 2014 that will help as many as 7 million residents with felony convictions enter employment. Labor provided funds, political clout and people power for the effort. Labor supported a similar and successful initiative in Minnesota in 2014.
- The AFL-CIO, its affiliates and state federations promote federal, state and local legislation, policies and practices that end the for-profit pipeline of correctional facilities or services. Detention and imprisonment are “inherently governmental functions,” and contracting out these functions creates an incentive for private prison companies to push for mandatory minimums and harsh practices to ensure a large prison population. This makes damaging impacts on society and undermines the legitimacy of the law.
- Labor unions support efforts to alleviate prison overcrowding by advocating for adequate staffing for correctional institutions. Correctional officers have been working for many years under very difficult circumstances, including severe overcrowding of facilities, inadequate staff-inmate ratios, inadequate training and pay, and insufficient resources for rehabilitation. This makes their work dangerous. Reducing the inflow of prisoners would protect the safety of correctional officers and potential inmates.
- The Executive Council and its Committee on Civil and Human Rights will establish a subcommittee on criminal justice reform to gather and disseminate the work affiliates have been doing on criminal justice.
- The commission recommends that AFL-CIO affiliate unions become active partners in the My Brother’s Keeper Initiative (MBK), a coordinated philanthropic partnership established by President Obama to address persistent opportunity gaps faced by boys and young men of color to ensure they can reach their full potential.

In response to the president's call to action, nearly 300 communities in all 50 states have accepted the My Brother's Keeper Community Challenge. More than \$600 million in private-sector and philanthropic grants and in-kind resources and \$1 billion in low-interest financing have been committed for this initiative.

- The commission recommends that, where appropriate, CLCs attempt to facilitate constructive communication between local law enforcement and community members.

During the hearings, local leaders asked the commissioners for guidance on how to deal with local incidents of excessive force being used against people of color and immigrants by law enforcement officers. They know that their silence is disappointing to African American and Latino union members and alienating to local community leaders. But police unions resent when outsiders question their judgment or actions in the line of duty. Local leaders feel ill-equipped in deciding when and how to act.

If relationships are established among union leaders, the police and community stakeholders before an event occurs, existing lines of communication will be in place to help de-escalate conflicts when they arise.

3. Work to ensure labor's leadership and decision-making structures reflect the diversity of our members, and all working people.

All unions want to expand their membership and activist base. Our ability to do so depends on our capacity to bring more people of color and women to the labor movement. This, in turn, depends on having organizers and leaders who look like the people we want to bring into the labor movement.

This recommendation will require us to diversify the overall composition of union staff; bring more people of color into our organizing and political departments and promote them into positions of authority; and ensure elected union leadership reflects its membership by developing leadership pipelines, mentoring programs and succession plans.

Members of color must be integrated into decision-making structures and leadership roles, both elected and appointed. Changes in recruitment, hiring and promotion practices and/or the creation of new mentoring and development opportunities may be required. Our members of color want to understand the pipelines to leadership, and to know that their input, participation and hard work will be respected and rewarded. Below are strategies that can be employed to build more staff and leadership diversity.

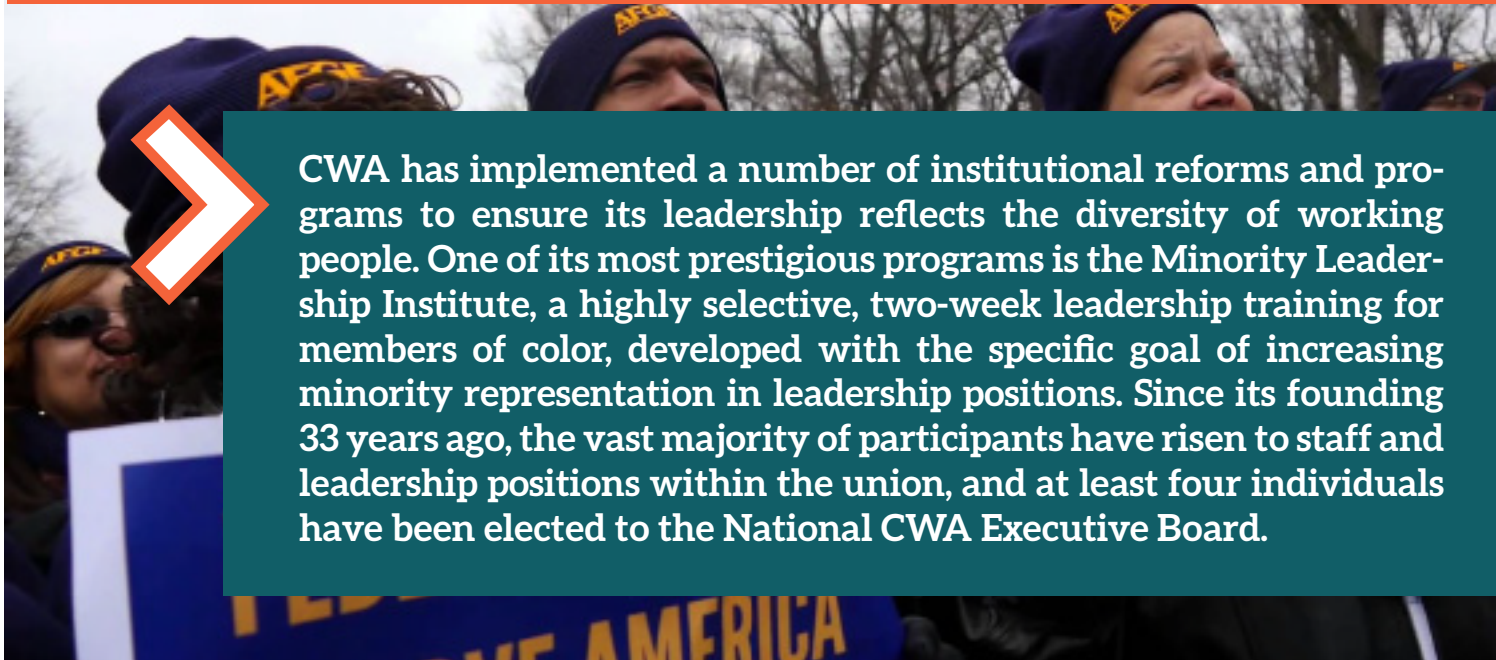
The commission recommends the following actions:

3.a. Unions should carefully examine the demographics of working people in each sector in which the affiliate works, and make every effort to hire organizers and staff who reflect prospective members. We tend to think that the members we have now will look like the members we will have in 10 years. More and more, this is a false assumption. Cities, where we have our greatest strength, are increasingly diverse. We need to examine metropolitan demographic projections as well as labor market trends in thinking about hiring organizing and political staff.

3.b. Review and reform internal decision-making structures and governance practices that limit the access people of color have to leadership opportunities. Obviously, the biggest obstacle to leadership opportunities for people of color is the decline of union members. When membership falls, so do leadership opportunities. More openings for people of color to slot into are available when unions are growing. Instead of the perception of a zero-sum situation, we can increase the size of the pie. Best practices include the following:

- Develop an internal leadership pipeline within the union to identify promising candidates, and then provide them with leadership training and mentoring.

ENCOURAGING TALENTED PEOPLE OF COLOR AND WOMEN



CWA has implemented a number of institutional reforms and programs to ensure its leadership reflects the diversity of working people. One of its most prestigious programs is the Minority Leadership Institute, a highly selective, two-week leadership training for members of color, developed with the specific goal of increasing minority representation in leadership positions. Since its founding 33 years ago, the vast majority of participants have risen to staff and leadership positions within the union, and at least four individuals have been elected to the National CWA Executive Board.



[CONT.] In 2007, the CWA executive board added four at-large diversity positions to the board and created the Diversity Committee to create a union leadership that is more reflective of its membership. These four at-large positions are filled by rank-and-file members, which also serves to bridge the gap between the lived reality of rank-and-file members and the ideology of national leadership.

At its inception nine years ago, the diversity committee consisted of three African American men, three African American women, one Latino man and one LGBTQI female member. They were charged with ensuring union programming that reflected members' demographics and concerns. Today, the diversity committee consists of two African American men, four African American women and one Latino man.

- Ensure a diverse pool of candidates for every staff position—especially those with decision-making authority.

Ensuring a diverse pool of candidates likely will require advertising in a broader array of places, and reaching out to partner organizations to expand the applicant pool. AFL-CIO constituency groups, the Organizing Institute and Working America may be able to identify promising candidates of color and women for unions to recruit, develop and mentor. Providing emerging candidates with the opportunity to participate in leadership development programs offered by affiliate unions, the AFL-CIO or university-based labor programs allows them to grow as leaders and to network with other emerging labor leaders.

Unions also may find qualified leaders in community organizations working with communities of color. The United States Student Association has proven to be a good source for recruiting young leaders. Worker centers, immigrant rights groups and activist groups like Moral Mondays, The Dream Defenders, Organization for Black Struggle, CASA de Maryland, National Day Laborer Organizing Network, the National Domestic Workers Alliance, the NAACP, National Black Worker Center Project, National Council of Asian Pacific Americans and the AFL-CIO's own constituency groups also may provide qualified candidates.

(Women's organizations and LGBTQI groups also have members of color. Reaching out to them encourages intersectionality among movements.)

Encouraging talented people of color and women to develop careers in which they move back and forth between labor movement and social movement organizations can build a cadre of people who are able to translate and bridge the values, issues and norms of both.



In 2012, the AFL-CIO began collecting detailed diversity data to ensure we had a representative number of qualified women and people of color in the candidate pool for every position posted.

Different benchmarks were set for their six categories of employees. For executive, managerial and professional staff, national benchmarks were used, comparing the overall demographics of these occupations, as well as the demographics within other nonprofits and unions. Office and clerical positions, craft, operative and technical staff and service workers were compared with the national and metropolitan demographics for these occupations.

This extra work resulted in more hires of women and people of color, and improved the racial diversity of our managers and professional staff. This data also helped to identify retention problems.

- Expand the number of elected leadership positions.

Union governing bodies and decision-making structures can be expanded and changed to provide more opportunities for workers of color to participate in executive bodies, boards and steward positions. Some unions have created additional executive officers and governing board positions to expand the potential for more diversity, to give real voice to underrepresented members and prepare unions for future growth.



The United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) International Union's executive board now includes one Asian woman; three Latinas, one of whom is the secretary-treasurer; two African American women; and a woman from Canada, which better reflects the union's membership. The board is involved actively in setting the union's priorities. For example, the union is seeking restorative voting rights work in six states at the board's urging. UFCW members helped set up clinics in union halls to help would-be workers expunge their records, making it easier for them to successfully apply for work, housing, education loans and other services. UFCW also has opened up its union halls for citizenship fairs, where volunteers help immigrants apply for citizenship.

The AFL-CIO changed its constitution in 1995, creating the office of Executive Vice President to expand its leadership team and require that the Executive Council be broadly representative of the diversity of the labor movement. In 2005, further changes were made to create more diversity among delegates to the convention.

- Develop young worker programs to provide opportunities for younger union members of color and women to serve in leadership roles and gain experience and visibility to increase our pool of candidates for elected and appointed leadership.

The labor movement is aging and needs to recruit young workers. Investing in younger leaders both will help us be more attractive to millennials and will give us a more diverse group of leaders.



The NextUp Young Worker Program brings active union members, progressive allies, students, and community and youth groups together to build a stronger labor movement. Young union activists work in partnership with an AFL-CIO state/area labor federation or CLC to advance issues affecting young people in the labor movement and the communities from which they come. NextUp provides young working people with leadership development and activism opportunities through skills training in political and legislative mobilization, education classes and hands-on organizing experience. NextUp strives to advance the issues young people most care about, including a stable future with good jobs, racial and gender justice, as well as access to affordable and quality higher education.

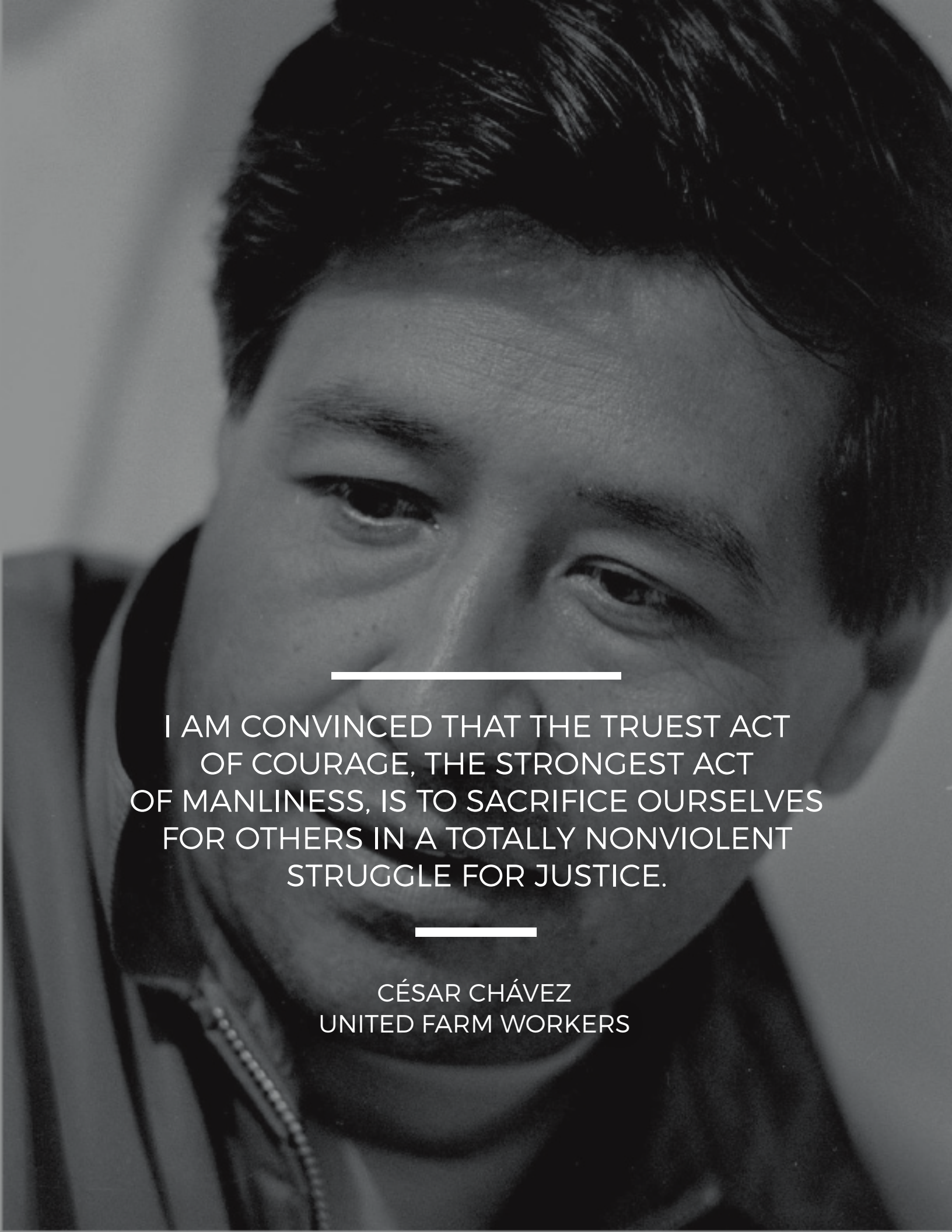
- Engage in intentional succession planning. Union leaders have enormous influence to recommend candidates for staff positions and governing boards. We encourage leaders to be mindful of diversity when they use their authority and influence to open the doors and expand leadership opportunities for the next generation.
- Develop clear diversity goals and collect data to measure progress. Management and staff at all levels of the labor movement are responsible for diversity. The work can neither be tasked to people of color nor housed in civil rights or women's programs. Making diversity an organizational goal means developing more diverse teams and more equitable professional development programs, and integrating diversity into our all of our programmatic work.

Corporate America and the nonprofit sector are far ahead of the labor movement in diversifying top leadership. This is troubling, given labor's social justice values. We should examine some of their best practices and integrate them into our own work. Three basic insights may be helpful. First, it is important to develop a mission statement regarding diversity that explains why it is important to our goals and describe who the type of people are that we hope to hire. Second, we must understand that informality is the enemy of diversity. Human beings are creatures of habit, and leaders are busy, so trust and affinity come with familiarity. Without a formal process of diversifying a candidate pool and measuring candidates against a set of criteria,

leaders are likely to continue to hire people like themselves. Third, an individual, department or committee must be made responsible to ensure diversity goals are met. Some organizations have appointed diversity ombudspersons to review progress, advocate for rising benchmarks and push for more action. Other organizations house this task in the Human Resources Department. The key is that an individual or group of people be made accountable for implementing diversity goals.

3.c. The commission recommends that affiliates, state federations and CLCs fully integrate diversity priorities into decisions about resource allocation, political initiatives, legislative proposals and conference planning over multiple budget cycles. How we allocate our time and money reflect what we value. It is time to move from lip service to action.

3.d. We will measure our progress on all three of the recommendations above in an annual report issued by the AFL-CIO president's office. The president's office will issue a report that outlines participation in racial justice training among members, union leaders and federation staff; advances setting and meeting diversity and leadership goals; and measures progress to develop deep partnerships and strategic campaigns with communities of color. Doing so will allow us to build a stronger, more inclusive labor movement and to win power in municipal, state and national politics.

A black and white close-up portrait of César Chávez, looking slightly to the right with a thoughtful expression. The lighting is soft, highlighting his features. Two horizontal white lines are positioned above and below the main text block.

I AM CONVINCED THAT THE TRUEST ACT
OF COURAGE, THE STRONGEST ACT
OF MANLINESS, IS TO SACRIFICE OURSELVES
FOR OTHERS IN A TOTALLY NONVIOLENT
STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE.

CÉSAR CHÁVEZ
UNITED FARM WORKERS



If we're unwilling to invest in the children of immigrants, just because they don't look like us, we will diminish the prospects of our own children—because those brown kids will represent a larger and larger share of America's workforce.”
—Barack Obama

Over the months since this project began, our world has changed. We have seen incidents of unspeakable horror and episodes of astonishing grace and forbearance.

In June 2015, a 21-year-old white supremacist quietly joined a worship service at Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina, then rose and killed nine black church members who had welcomed him to their prayer group. He said he chose the church deliberately, hoping to spark a race war. Days later, the families of the victims forgave him.

In July 2016, a young black Afghan war veteran shot 12 Dallas police officers who were watching over a protest march against police shootings in other parts of the country. Five police officers died. Within hours, the chief of police held a press conference defending the rights of all Americans to peacefully assemble, his voice breaking as he expressed his pride in the officers who died defending that right.

In August 2016, the Movement for Black Lives released a comprehensive national policy agenda strongly aligned with labor's values. Many of its activists are union members, and the common ground identified was intentional and clear.

In November 2016, Donald Trump won the electoral vote and the presidency after running the most racially divisive campaign in modern history. In the weeks that followed, schools around the country reported an alarming increase in hate incidents. Demonstrations and protest marches against the president-elect erupted in major cities, as white supremacists and others celebrated the victory.

We are more racially divided as a country and as a labor movement today than when we began this project, making the need for the actions described in this report ever more urgent. The economic and racial anxieties that fueled the election were not confined to white families. All working-class people in America are concerned about wage stagnation, the offshoring of jobs, the undue influence of Wall Street, the cost of health care, retirement security and the future their children will face. Election coverage notwithstanding, the working class in America is multiracial today and will become moreso in the future. By 2032, no racial group will be a majority.

Throughout American history, race-baiting has been used to undermine demands for higher wages, a shorter workweek and more power on the job. And through every economic crisis, through wars and episodes of ethnic scapegoating, we've learned that building the power required to improve the lives of working people can only happen when the working class is united and strong. This unity is built in the workplace, on the job-site and in the union hall. Real solidarity requires honest conversations, hard listening and the willingness to stand together to fight for each other. Let us begin.

United we rise. Divided we beg.

Our members want action. Our country needs us to look to the future, not the past. We must be brave enough to share our challenges and generous enough to share our successes. We need a culture of experimentation and boldness as we create a labor movement for the 21st century.



For blacks and other minority groups, that means tying our own very real struggles for justice to the challenges that a lot of people in this country face. Not only the refugee or the immigrant or the rural poor or the transgender American, but also the middle-aged white guy who from the outside may seem like he's got all the advantages, but has seen his world upended by economic, and cultural, and technological change."

—Barack Obama

Labor, Race and Solidarity

“Racism is part of our inheritance as Americans. Every city, every state and every region of this country has its own deep history with racism. And so does the labor movement.”

—Richard Trumka, Sept. 15, 2014, Missouri AFL-CIO Convention

America’s Declaration of Independence asserts that “all men are created equal” and “that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights ... Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Yet our founding fathers, some of whom were slave owners, incorporated slavery into our political institutions and defended it for almost a century. And after race-based slavery was finally outlawed, a new generation of political elites allowed a new race-based system of coerced labor to become law and remain in place for another hundred years. The legacy of prejudice that was produced and reinforced by slavery and Jim Crow continues to shape American political institutions and thinking in profound ways.

Yet throughout our history, ordinary women and men fought and died for a racially inclusive vision of economic justice. Abolitionists, textile workers, train porters, Knights of Labor, tenant farmers, miners, auto workers and sanitation workers lived their commitment to racial equality and joined together to demand a better, more just America.

Progressive race leaders like Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. Du Bois, A. Philip Randolph and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. saw unions as essential to the ability of black workers to rise and achieve equality. And progressive labor leaders like John Lewis and Walter Reuther knew the labor movement could not be whole without the participation of black workers.

Both union and civil rights activists understood that labor rights are human rights, and that to constrain a person’s liberty—to choose one’s work, to earn enough to support a family, to marry, to travel—is a deliberate act of coercion. This kind of violence is easier for the slaver to rationalize if the enslaved is viewed as less than human.

The story of race and labor in America starts with the treatment of black workers in the South. The region’s cultural isolation from, but continuing political and economic influence on, the rest of the country continues to this day. When African Americans moved north in the 20th century, over the course of two world wars and the Great Depression, they found more personal freedom, but they also found ongoing discrimination and unequal access to economic opportunities.

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In the decades between the two wars, business interests deliberately used race and ethnic differences to undermine labor unity. Some unions responded by embracing integration, while others resisted.

Even after civil rights legislation finally made racial discrimination illegal in the 1960s, conservative politicians used racial stereotypes and white fear and anxieties to divide working people. They continue to do so today. The labor movement can and must be at the forefront of efforts to push back against the politics of division. We owe it to our members, our children and our country.

The South

Relatively early in colonial America, Southern landowners recognized that they could maximize their profits by using African slaves to work the land, and a body of law was implemented to rationalize permanent race-based enslavement. Over the years, after every real or imagined slave uprising, these laws were made harsher, and slaves were further stigmatized and dehumanized. Slave rebellions terrified the political authorities, not only because of physical danger they represented to a minority white elite, but also because they exposed the violence required to maintain slavery as a system.

It took almost 100 years of agitation, resistance, political organizing and the bloodiest war of our nation's history to end that "most peculiar institution." But the Confederacy's defeat did not permanently destroy the power of Southern landowners or their ideology of racial superiority.

When the Civil War ended, Confederate officers returned to their plantations and immediately established "black codes" that limited a black person's right to hold property, teach, preach or travel. In other words, the new laws snatched back the liberty of newly freed slaves, and punished those who refused to bend. Thousands of freed people who tried to leave plantations or refused to work at the terms offered were murdered in the first years after emancipation.

The "Reconstruction" of the South only began when federal troops occupied former Confederate states in 1867 and demanded former Confederates pledge loyalty to the union or lose their political rights. With the protection of federal troops and the help of the Freedman's Bureau, black freedmen voted and participated in government for the first time. In their first experiment with self-government, they established public schools, established aid societies, rebuilt roads and raised taxes to pay for it.

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Had the integrated state legislatures they voted in been allowed to continue, some of our most progressive social and labor legislation might have come from the South. But after the human and financial cost of the Civil War, the federal government was unable or unwilling to keep enough federal troops in the South to suppress white-on-black violence. As whites won back their voting rights and suppressed black voting, congressional support for Reconstruction shrank. After 10 years, Congress voted to withdraw troops from the region and let the old caste system reassert itself.

The planter class established a new system of sharecropping and debt peonage (backed up by the very real threat of the chain gang) to keep black workers on the land. Jim Crow laws guaranteed social and physical segregation from whites and prevented most black people from acquiring a decent education, competing for jobs or building wealth. Lynching became a tool of social control and economic domination, spiking during the season property owners and sharecroppers settled accounts. By 1910, the South once again had become a powerful conservative voting bloc in Congress, one that consistently blocked labor rights and social reforms.

Industrialization and Unions

In the rest of the country, the Civil War economy increased the pace of industrialization and unleashed a new spirit of acquisition and accumulation. Under unregulated capitalism, the ruthless reaped the greatest rewards. Carnegie, Vanderbilt, Morgan and Rockefeller monopolized whole industries—steel, railroads, finance and oil. They built large industrial works that reached across the continent. Using force, fraud and unscrupulous business practices, they crushed competitors. They then colluded with each other to control the costs of production and the prices charged to consumers. Openly buying politicians to ensure they could write the economic rules and stack the deck in their favor, they accumulated unimaginable wealth. And they then fought fiercely to keep it.

In the second half of the 19th century, immigrants from Ireland, Italy and Eastern Europe crowded into tenements in Boston, Chicago, New York and Philadelphia, while Chinese immigrants were herded into “Chinatowns” in San Francisco. Immigrants were consigned to large, dangerous factories and paid wages that fluctuated with regular recessions, making them ripe for union organizing and all manner of radical ideas, like a 40-hour workweek and rising wages.

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The new industries, larger factories and denser population centers created fertile ground for rapid union growth. A greater concentration of skilled workers in one place allowed traditional craft unions to grow, and large factories put multiple trades under one roof, enhancing the potential for federated structures like the one that would become the American Federation of Labor. The skilled trades still were overwhelmingly native-born white Protestant males in the 19th century, and because they earned relatively higher wages, they were able to pay dues for strike funds, sick pay, unemployment assistance and burial insurance.¹ They were reluctant to organize unskilled Irish and Italian Catholic immigrants.

Other unions did so enthusiastically. The Knights of Labor, founded in 1869, wanted to organize all workers—skilled and unskilled, men and women, white and black—within an industry. They taught immigrants their rights as citizens, built cooperatives, provided economic education and promoted political reform. A railroad strike the Knights of Labor organized became a turning point in industrial conflict.

A Knights' wildcat strike in 1877 eventually embraced 100,000 workers, but ended in riots, property damage, and state militia and federal troops being called out in seven states. After the Pittsburgh militia fired into a crowd and killed several people, workers retaliated by destroying 39 buildings, 104 locomotives and 1,245 train cars. At the strike's end, 100 to 200 people were dead, and many hundreds more were injured or imprisoned.²

Before this event, strikers rarely faced more than light fines and brief jail terms. But industrialists were irate at the destruction of their property. They reorganized state militias, built local armories, developed ties with the army and built their own private security forces, complete with spies and strikebreakers. This marked the beginning of a very violent fight over the right of workers to a union and to demand higher wages and shorter work days.

1. The American Federation of Labor (AFL) officially was established in 1886. During its first years, it admitted skilled, semiskilled and unskilled women, African Americans and immigrants. But by the 1890s, the AFL was targeting skilled craftsmen. It formally supported racial equality, but sanctioned segregated locals within its affiliate unions.

2. Another Knights-organized three-week strike of 10,000 predominantly black sugar cane plantation workers in Thibodaux, Louisiana, in 1887 had even deadlier results. The state militia brought in replacement workers, evicted strikers and left; then a group of white vigilantes began murdering black workers and their families. At least 50 black workers were killed, as well as Knights organizers. By 1890, the Knights of Labor had dissolved. No more labor organizing occurred in the sugar industry until 1940.

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In the last two decades of the 19th century, more than 6 million workers were involved in 23,000 strikes. Militia, police, federal troops and Pinkerton detectives often beat and shot strikers, who responded with sabotage, pickets, boycotts and attacks on scabs or strikebreakers. Violent battles were a regular occurrence in the coal fields of Colorado, Pennsylvania and West Virginia between 1900 and 1925; in street car strikes between 1895 and 1929; and in major steel strikes in 1909 and 1910. The Triangle Shirt Waist factory fire killed 146 girls and women in New York City in 1911, and 30,000 women marched for Bread and Roses in 1912 in Massachusetts. The scale and scope of industrial action was huge. Outside of California, the army of industrial workers striking and fighting in the early 20th century was predominantly white, although ethnically, religiously and politically diverse. This soon would change.

Black Workers Move North

In 1910, 90% of African Americans lived in the South and the vast majority were sharecroppers in rural areas. But hostilities in Europe had almost stopped the flow of white workers to northern factories, while increasing the demand for product from munitions and weapons manufacturers. This gave unions more negotiating power, and wages rose. Employers started recruiting black workers from the South as strikebreakers and replacement workers. About a half-million black workers moved to Chicago, Detroit, Ohio, Philadelphia and St. Louis between 1910 and 1920.

The worst recorded incident of labor-related racial violence occurred in St. Louis in 1917. When the Aluminum Ore Co. brought in African American workers to break a strike, 3,000 white union members marched in protest. The marchers morphed into a mob, attacking random black residents on the street. The following day, shots were exchanged between whites and black in the black part of town; two plainclothes police officers were killed. When the news got out, roving white mobs rampaged through black East St. Louis, burning homes and businesses, and assaulting men, women and children. Between 100 and 200 black working people died and 6,000 were left homeless. It foreshadowed things to come.³

3. The newly formed NAACP organized a silent march of 10,000 people in New York City to protest the riot. In a public appearance shortly after, AFL President Samuel Gompers blamed "employers enticing Negroes from the south to the city 'to break the back of labor.'" Theodore Roosevelt, also at the event, shouted, "There should be no apology for the infamous brutalities committed on the colored people of East St. Louis."

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A year later, 4 million soldiers returned from World War I. With no plan for absorbing them into the economy, unemployment rose rapidly. Both white and black veterans felt betrayed. In the “Red Summer” of 1919, 38 separate race riots occurred, all of them white mobs attacking black people. The worst riot occurred in Chicago. After a black youth was stoned for swimming into the “white” part of the lake, Irish and black gangs battled each other for 13 days. When it was over, 23 blacks and 15 whites were dead, 537 were injured and 1,000 black families were homeless. Across the country, more than 100 people died that summer, while scores of black homes and businesses were destroyed.

The attorney general responded by initiating a series of raids against (immigrant) “anarchists, Bolsheviks and radicals,” arresting thousands and deporting more than 500. Historical records show federal law enforcement officials were terrified of a Bolshevik revolution in the United States and feared black Americans would be attracted to Communism’s radical egalitarianism.

With World War I over, the business community closed ranks and honed its anti-union tactics. When the AFL struck U.S. Steel in the fall of 1919, shutting down half the steel mills in the country, management used every dirty tactic available to it. It smeared the union leaders in the press by calling them Reds and Bolsheviks, derided the striking workers because they were immigrants, and encouraged local and state militia to intimidate and harass the strikers. The original race card players, they brought in 30,000 to 40,000 African Americans and Mexican-Americans as strikebreakers, and taunted the locked-out strikers for losing their good “white” jobs. This would be the Big Business playbook for decades.

New Deal Advances, Race-Based Exemptions and the End of Jim Crow

In October 1929, the stock market crashed and \$30 million in stock value disappeared. Within 10 months, 744 banks had failed. At the depth of the Great Depression, one of every four workers was jobless.

Under popular pressure, Republicans passed two important pieces of legislation. The first, the Davis-Bacon Act of 1931, required federal contractors to pay their workers the wages and benefits that “prevail” in a locality. The Norris-LaGuardia Act of 1932, the second piece of legislation, made it illegal for companies to require workers to sign “yellow dog” contracts promising not to join a union. It also prohibited courts from issuing injunctions against strikes.

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In 1932, Roosevelt won resoundingly with a coalition that relied on the support of white ethnic union members, African American workers and conservative Southern Democrats. His New Deal established the legal foundation for our current labor laws, employment standards and social insurance programs, but due to Southern Democrats, this legal edifice was deeply flawed.

When the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) provided federal money to fund local public relief project employment, predominantly black agriculture and domestic workers were excluded from getting NIRA public relief work. The Fair Labor Standards Act also excluded agricultural, domestic and tipped workers from wage and hour laws, covering only 20% of all workers in the end. The Social Security Act established unemployment insurance, pensions and support for those with disabilities, widows and orphans. Social Security has uniform rules administered by the federal government, but the rules and benefit levels of the other social safety net programs are set by state governments and administered by state employees. Southern states could and did create rules that excluded African Americans from participating.

By contrast, the 1935 National Labor Relations Act (Wagner Act) guaranteed all workers the right to join a union and bargain collectively, and created an oversight board to approve union elections and define fair labor practices. With fair referees, union density tripled in a decade to 35.4% of all wage-and-hour workers. But the National Labor Relations Board was only effective when the members believed in labor rights; when anti-union members were appointed to the NLRB, it stopped working for working people.

By 1940, America again was gearing up for war. A. Philip Randolph, head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the largest and most powerful black union in the country, was determined that African American workers would benefit from the expansion of the defense industry. In 1941, after he threatened to march 50,000 black men to Washington to protest their exclusion from production jobs, Roosevelt banned discrimination in defense factories and even established a Fair Employment Commission to enforce his executive order.

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But in June 1943, when managers at the Packard Co. in Detroit actually promoted a few black workers, 25,000 white workers went on strike.⁴ Similar racial conflicts erupted in mass transit unions in Philadelphia, in steel plants in Baltimore and in the shipyards of Alabama when black workers gained access to production jobs. This time, labor leaders, especially Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) leaders, worked hard to suppress “hate” strikes and were fairly successful.

Soon after, W.E.B. Du Bois, documenting the ability of union solidarity to overcome racial animus, noted that “[union] men...in steel and automotive industries have been thrown together, black and white, as fellow workers striving for the same objects. There has been on this account an astonishing spread of interracial tolerance and understanding. Probably no movement in the last 30 years has been so successful in softening race prejudice.” The NAACP worked closely with the UAW to integrate Ford and supported the sit-down strike at its River Rouge plant in 1941.

As defense and production jobs opened up to African Americans, the second half of the Great Migration of black workers from the South to the North exploded. And CIO unions went South.

The CIO broke away from the AFL in 1935 because the industrial unions were committed to a broader, more inclusive vision of organizing—white and black, skilled and unskilled. The CIO recognized the regressive influence the South had on national politics and launched “Operation Dixie,” a massive union drive in 12 Southern states in 1946 to try to break the conservative culture of the region. They hoped to protect wage gains in the North by raising wages in the South. (Some companies were moving South to avoid unionization.) Despite bringing in hundreds of experienced organizers, Operation Dixie failed—due to Jim Crow laws, white prejudice, the coercive tactics of local authorities and new anti-labor legislation passed by a Republican Congress.

The Labor-Management Act of 1947 (Taft-Hartley) outlawed wildcat strikes, mass picketing and secondary boycotts—tactics used to win union recognition. The act gave managers the right to force employees

4. By this time, 200,000 African Americans were in the Detroit area and they had been working at auto plants for some time. However, twice as many Southern whites from Appalachia also had migrated to Detroit, bringing their prejudices and Klan membership with them. While jobs were plentiful, competition for housing was intense. A conflict over government-built housing resulted in a racial conflict in 1942 that set the stage for the Belle Isle race riot of 1943. It resulted in the deaths of 25 blacks and nine whites; 75% of the 600 injured were black and 85% of those arrested were black, although observers said blacks were outnumbered and set upon by whites.

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to attend anti-union meetings, and approved laws in 11 states that allowed employees to opt out of paying union dues. Union organizing stagnated.

In the meantime, the civil rights movement gained momentum. A. Philip Randolph and other black leaders pressured President Truman to desegregate the armed forces, and he did so in 1948. In 1954, the Supreme Court declared “separate but equal” unconstitutional—finally. Local activists began pushing for equal treatment in the Deep South, starting with Rosa Parks refusing to give up her seat to a white man, thus setting off a two-year bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, which nearly bankrupted public transportation in the city until it finally agreed to equal seating.

When the AFL and CIO merged in 1955, hundreds of thousands of black trade unionists became part of an integrated labor movement. George Meany became its first president and A. Philip Randolph became its first vice president. The Sleeping Car Porters and UAW were among the first supporters of the new Southern Christian Leadership Conference led by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. They also supported the Woolworth counter sit-ins by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and Freedom Rides organized by the Congress of Racial Equality in the summer of 1961. Randolph and other black trade unionists helped plan, organize and fund King’s 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom where he delivered his “I Have a Dream” speech. In their commitments and vision, these black trade unionists linked the priorities and interests of the labor movement with demands for racial equality.

The 1960s: Advances and Disruptions

John Kennedy recognized that labor had been crucial to his winning the presidency in 1960, and created a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) that would be true to its original mission. His NLRB restricted anti-union propaganda at the workplace, allowed picketing, increased the penalties for violating labor law and banned employer lockouts as an “unfair labor practice.” Most importantly, it ruled that if a majority of workers signed a card saying they wanted to join a union, then the union would be recognized.

Kennedy also established collective bargaining rights for federal employees in 1962. Although limited in scope, it spurred state and municipal public-sector union organizing just as anti-discrimination rules were opening up public-sector jobs to African Americans and Great Society programs were expanding public-sector jobs. In 1960, only 2% of state and local public employees had the right to bargain

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collectively; by 1990, more than two-thirds did. The rapid expansion of public-sector unions has been a boon to both the labor movement and the growth of the black middle class.

After Kennedy's assassination, Lyndon Johnson won the 1964 election with the largest vote advantage since 1824 and a veto-proof majority in both chambers of Congress. He did not waste his opportunity. His administration was responsible for outlawing employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin:

- desegregating public accommodations;
- prohibiting poll taxes and other tools Southern states used to restrict voting;
- requiring federal contractors to “affirmatively act” to hire more African Americans;
- prohibiting discrimination in rental housing and mortgages;
- establishing Medicare for the elderly, Medicaid for the poor, food stamps, Head Start, the Jobs Corp, and federal aid to poor primary and secondary schools and farm families;
- investing in public universities, urban mass transit, job training, urban renewal programs and housing subsidies;
- abolishing national-origin quotas in immigration law; and
- establishing clean air and water quality standards, safety standards on cars, fair labeling, food safety standards and consumer lending regulations.

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For labor, Johnson extended labor standards to cover 9 million more workers, improved Davis-Bacon and increased the federal minimum wage. But labor density did not grow.

The 1960s were a time of conflict and division. Many white people were not comfortable with the anti-war protests or the pace of racial change. And many African Americans in the North were not, either. They celebrated the end of de jure segregation in the South, but were increasingly frustrated with the de facto housing and school segregation, job discrimination and police brutality in their own lives.

With the rise of new social movements, anti-war activism, Black Liberation, Black Nationalism and the women's movement, the country was deeply divided—and still reeling from President Kennedy's assassination. Many suspected government involvement when Malcolm X was assassinated in 1965. Later that year, a riot in Watts broke out after an incident with the police; 34 died, most of them black.

During the “long hot summer” of 1967, more than 159 urban disturbances occurred in black neighborhoods, most of them related to violent encounters between white police and black residents of inner city neighborhoods with high rates of unemployment. The worst riots occurred in Cleveland, Detroit and Newark, New Jersey. More than 100 people died, and thousands were injured—the great majority of those killed or injured were black.

Dr. King recognized that the end of legal segregation was just a battle in the struggle for full equality, and that good jobs were the key to black advancement. He strongly believed in unions as a mechanism for higher wages and economic opportunity. He was speaking in support of the “I Am a Man” strike of black Memphis sanitation workers—AFSCME members—when he was assassinated in 1968.

In the immediate hours after Dr. King's killing, rioting erupted in 130 cities. Dozens of people died, but the 65,000 federal and National Guard troops called out to quell the violence were told not to shoot looters, so the death toll was less than it might have been. Two months later, Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated. In August, the nation watched four days of fighting between protesters and police at the Democratic convention in Chicago; more than 1,000 were injured and 600 arrested.

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In October, 100,000 white students marched against the war in Vietnam. Some protesters and police tussled, and more than 650 people were arrested.

In the Kennedy-Johnson years, labor and civil rights leaders fought together for racial justice, labor rights, public investments in infrastructure and training, better retirement security, better access to college and health care, and anti-poverty initiatives. Both black and white poverty rates were cut by half (from 55% to 27%, and from 20% to 10%, respectively), but union density continued to fall.

The nation went to the polls in 1968 deeply disturbed and divided. George Wallace, a white supremacist, ran as a third-party candidate and won almost 10 million votes (12% and five states. Only 500,000 votes divided Nixon from Humphrey, but Nixon won an electoral landslide and declared a mandate.

The Long Backlash

Starting with Richard Nixon and extending to Donald Trump, conservative politicians wrote a new playbook: activate racial fears while lifting up white people as “the silent majority,” “real” Americans, and “people who play by the rules.” While publicly displaying empathy for “the middle class” or “working people,” instruct your political appointees to dismantle labor protections, restrict union activities and undermine civil rights protections.

Nixon’s campaign call for “law and order” was an unsubtle promise to crack down on black demands for full equality. He spent his first two years increasing federal funds to police departments for anti-riot equipment, and then cut funds for small businesses, education and job training. By 1971, Nixon’s NLRB had undone all of the progressive labor reforms that had been established under Kennedy’s NLRB.

Jimmy Carter won 48% of the white vote and 62% of the union vote in the presidential election in 1976, but instead of recasting the NLRB or reforming Taft-Hartley, he deregulated the highly unionized trucking, airlines and communications industries. By 1980, private-sector union density had dropped to 20%.

When Ronald Reagan ran a campaign openly promoting racial stereotypes in 1980, he won 56% of the white vote but only 45% of the union household vote. In 1981, he fired 11,000 air traffic controllers—who had endorsed him—and banned them for life from federal employment.

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Reagan's NLRB ruled employers could hire permanent replacement workers and created a long list of prohibited labor practices. He cut anti-poverty programs, gutted the Civil Rights Commission and appointed conservative Supreme Court judges. In 1984, 66% of whites voted to re-elect him, but only 46% of union households did so. George H.W. Bush, upon attaining the presidency, opened up immigration and negotiated a North American Free Trade Agreement with no labor protections.

Bill Clinton won the presidency in 1992 with only 39% of the white vote (thanks to third-party candidate Ross Perot) but he won 55% of union households. Clinton won 44% of the white vote and 60% of union households in his 1996 re-election. His NLRB allowed teaching assistants and temp workers to be able to unionize, and protected union rights when businesses merge. But he ended the guarantee of income assistance for poor families, passed stiff new mandatory drug laws that are responsible for the mass incarceration crisis we now face, implemented NAFTA and deregulated the financial industry.

George W. Bush won 55% of the white vote and just 37% of union households in 2000. He appointed a union-busting lawyer to chair the NLRB and an anti-labor secretary of labor. In his 2004 re-election, he won 58% of the white vote and 40% of the union vote. The Bush response to the Katrina disaster in New Orleans demonstrated what many African Americans felt his attitude was on racial justice: Black lives in New Orleans did not matter.

Only 39% of whites voted for Obama in 2008, but 59% of union households did—and more white union members voted for Obama in 2008 than voted for Gore or Kerry. This represented a significant show of solidarity by union members that was repeated in his 2012 re-election.

And labor was rewarded with the most pro-labor administration since the Kennedy-Johnson years. Although unable to move the Employee Free Choice Act, other important legislation passed: The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, the Affordable Care Act (which improved coverage but needs improvements), the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and financial reform. The Federal Aviation Authority bargained with air traffic controllers, and 40,000 TSA airport screeners won bargaining rights. The Obama administration encouraged insourcing of federal work and gave new funds to worker protection agencies to bolster enforcement.

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Obama's NLRB was staffed with experienced labor lawyers committed to its mission who were able to streamline the election process, reduce opportunities for employer delay and adopt a new standard for joint employer status.

With the election of Donald Trump, all these advances are at risk.

In Closing

In the past 100 years, labor was able to turn its voting power into a union-supporting political environment in just three administrations—Roosevelt's New Deal, the Kennedy-Johnson administration and the Obama administration. Each time, labor and African Americans together elected a president committed to both economic fairness and racial justice. Each president had a Democratic Congress for at least part of his term, and a Supreme Court that did not block progressive laws and regulations.

To elect politicians who will establish and enforce rules that make organizing easier, strengthen labor standards, and make our economy fairer and more inclusive, we need strong, honest electoral coalitions. In 1976, a quarter of the votes cast in a presidential election came from a union household; today, only one in five does. About two-thirds of union members have voted for Democratic presidents (including 60% of white union voters) over the last 50 years, but 85% of African Americans did. Communities of color have been our strongest allies. And if we want them to support our issues, we need to support theirs.

Creating a legal environment that protects union rights and prevents discrimination does not mean the absence of conflicts to negotiate. The world is complicated, and some widely held principles of fairness require reconciliation. A particularly thorny example involves the principle of equal opportunity (every person should have the chance to prove himself or herself capable and committed) vs. the principle of seniority (people who have demonstrated their competence in and commitment to a job should be rewarded). This potential conflict can play itself out through a racial, gender or simple "new worker" filter.

In an industry or occupation traditionally staffed by white men, management has a deliberate or unconscious bias to recruit individuals who look like themselves. New factory workers often are recruited through the informal and personal networks of the existing staff. This is how implicit (unconscious) bias operates. To recruit more people of color, management must change its recruitment practices and no longer give preference to the friends or relatives of current employees.

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To the existing workforce, this change could feel like a lost benefit (giving first option in hiring to friends and family). To a worker of color, this would look like favoritism and blocked opportunities.

Today, union workers with the most seniority in many companies are still more likely to be white and male than of-color and female. In this situation, what happens when layoffs occur? According to the seniority principle, those longest on the job stay. But what if their tenure is longer because others were systematically excluded from the hiring process? Those who were not allowed to compete for work are penalized for not getting into the job earlier. “Last hired, first fired” means people will be penalized because of society’s past history of racial discrimination.

In the difficult period after the Great Recession, when many businesses were failing, management demanded benefit and wage give-backs in contract negotiations; some pushed a “two-tiered” system: the employees with the longest tenure were allowed to retain their previously negotiated wages and benefits, but new workers would have to work for less. These arrangements undermine labor solidarity and the wage-raising impacts that collectively bargained contracts that cover everyone equally can have across a factory, an industry and a local labor market. The good news is that as the labor market has tightened and new contracts have been negotiated, unions have worked hard to return to equal wage and benefit packages.

Promoting equal opportunity and ensuring that working people can join a union to represent them on their jobs to enforce labor laws and standards are not magic cure-alls for deep-seated racial prejudice. When the number of good union jobs declines, the competition for those jobs increases and can play out across racial lines.

Better training of police officers, community policing and body cameras will not prevent racial profiling and the too-quick resort to violence by every police officer. Police violence against black people has been a problem in America since the first Africans were brought here. (It is important to remember that a century ago, state violence was a problem for striking union members, too. And some made familiar-sounding claims about the strikers, saying that if the workers had not been striking, they would not have been shot.) The solutions to these thorny issues will be found as we talk to each other, practice radical empathy and share our fears and aspirations at work, in our union halls and in our neighborhoods.

Every successful social reform movement in American history—including the labor movement—began when Americans stood up and fought together for a better future. The activism of young African Americans that started in 2012 with the killing of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin was inspired by the same sentiments that motivated early unionists: “This is wrong. We won’t accept this anymore. Our lives matter, and we have a right to expect more.”

AFL-CIO

A black and white close-up portrait of Bayard Rustin. He has short, curly hair and is wearing thick-rimmed glasses. He is dressed in a dark suit jacket, a white collared shirt, and a dark tie. His expression is thoughtful, with his hand partially visible near his chin. The background is dark and out of focus.

WE ARE ALL ONE—AND IF
WE DON'T KNOW IT, WE WILL
LEARN IT THE HARD WAY.

BAYARD RUSTIN
A. PHILIP RANDOLPH INSTITUTE

A circular badge is visible in the bottom right corner of the image. It contains the text "MARCH" at the top and "JOB" at the bottom, likely referring to the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

AFL-CIO

RICHARD L. TRUMKA
President

ELIZABETH H. SHULER
Secretary-Treasurer

TEFERE GEBRE
Executive Vice President