

NextUp Summit AFLCIO Conference for Young Workers –
Coalition of Labor Union Women Young Women’s Committee Reflection

On March 19th, 2015, the Coalition of Labor Union Women Philly’s Young Women’s Committee joined countless unions and constituency groups from across the country to the AFL-CIO’s NextUp 3rd Young Workers Summit. Local CLUW funded a delegation of four young workers including Melanie Drayton (SEIU 668) (also funded thru the AFL-CIO), Sandra Lane (HPAE), Dina Yarmus (UNITEHERE Local 274). Our delegation joined over 1000 strong from across the country to meet in Chicago, IL where we participated in workshops, attended plenaries, and marched in actions with young working class organizers, union members, and workers. Through out the conference, we discussed what it means to be the next generation of leaders in the labor movement. We challenged ourselves to imagine the labor movement we want to build for future generations while starting with the day-to-day realities we face in our workplaces and communities.

We joined our CLUW sister, Erica Guerrido, from TWU 100 and CBTU in New York City, who spoke on a

constituency panel (speaking in picture), “Think Globally, Act Locally: The Power of Constituency Groups.” Erica was joined by other young leaders: William Chiang, APALA (not in picture); Monica Thammarath, APALA; Fareed Michelen, CBTU; Victor Baten, LCLAA; and Kristina Pace, Pride at Work who spoke about the unique and



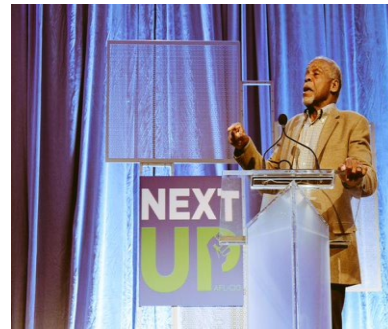
important work that constituency groups play within the labor movement and within our communities. In this conversation they talked about how CLUW and other constituency groups introduce the importance of cultural competency as well as highlighting the important role we play expanding the consciousness about unions and the labor movement within our communities. Many exciting questions were posed about how we continue to grow our work and learn from each other in collaborative and dynamic ways.

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Dina Yarmus, chair of our Young Women’s Committee from Philadelphia CLUW, joined Randi Pearson from Toledo, Ohio a member of United Steelworkers and Women of Steel to lead a workshop on organizing around gender discrimination in the workplace. In this workshop they encouraged participants to think about how gender shaped their lives from a young age and impacts their day-to-day work experiences and industries. They also discussed concrete examples that participants were grappling with in their organizing. This was part of an overall initiative in the AFLCIO to push participants to address challenges and barriers to leadership development of women in the labor movement and the challenges to organizing around sexism in the workplace.



Throughout the conference, race and gender were central to our fight for economic justice. From the very first plenary where Danny Glover spoke of the battle of workers and community members at the Nissan factory in Mississippi to the community organizing around Black Lives Matter movement. There were multiple panels and workshops dedicated to thinking more vigorously about these issues with speakers from organizations like St.



Louis, Organization for Black Struggle, Black Youth Project 100 and Million Hoodies Movement for Justice. Additionally, Carmen Berkley, Director of AFL-CIO Civil, Human and Women Rights Department (featured in picture), facilitated a discussion about why these issues matter for our labor movement. Not only were those within



our movement and community organizing thinking about engaging these issues but also academics and MSNBC contributor, Dorian Warren. Warren, who plays a part in new initiatives like the Labor Commission on Racial and Economic Justice within AFL-CIO, gave a speech on the racial and economic history of Chicago in particular

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and helped us think about the broader scope, across the US, in the opening plenary of the conference.

Fundamentally, we wrestled questions at the root of our power as a labor movement. Where do we draw our strength? What resonated with many was our ability to draw strength and strategy from effective organizing, strategic campaigns and growing winning movements. So on Saturday we joined those doing that



important work in Chicago. We joined the Chicago Teachers Union to canvas for pro-labor candidates, actions for Fast Food Workers and Service Sector Workers at the Food For Less, Zara, and Guitar Center, a solidarity action at the Nissan Dealership with workers organizing in Mississippi, and Cab Drivers fighting for the right to unionize. We joined these struggles and committed to doing the same in our cities. We recognize that our ability to wage effective campaigns, learn from those fights and move forward is what will allow us to better ourselves as leaders of the labor movement and better the conditions for millions of working class people across the country.



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An additional theme of the conference was building political power. How are we building our influence, our sophistication in navigating and our ability to exercise our democratic rights? How are we organizing to make our political system work in the interests of working people across our communities and across our country? Our progressive ally Representative Keith Ellison (D-MN) spoke powerfully about the need to continue the work of collaborative and creative strategies to influence and build our political power in government to serve the interest of millions of working people. In our regional and state breakouts, we talked about strategies for broad legislative policies that complement our organizing, and grappled with the slow patient work of developing leadership from the ground up within our membership that can become a political force capable of working for our interests as our labor movement grows.



This conference, with the support of the top leadership of the labor movement, and local Central Labor Council leadership, was inspiring because it demonstrated an investment as well as a belief that young people are important in key ways. There



was a vibrancy to the conference and a historic impact as well. The 1000 participants in the conference made up the most diverse in terms of gender, racial and sexual orientation including participants who identified as transgender of any labor conference of the AFLCIO in recent memory!

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Stay tuned we will be doing a presentation on what we learned for our chapter and live streaming it for other CLUW members and friends to hear from us.

