



CLUWnews

July/August 2000, Volume 26, No. 4

Coalition of Labor Union Women

Make Your Voice Heard in Election 2000

When CLUW members demonstrated this summer, politicians listened. CLUW women joined thousands of concerned union members who let both the Democratic and Republican parties know that working Americans demand a change in priorities.

As the news media covered the political conventions in Philadelphia and Los Angeles, union women joined protests and rallies to raise public awareness of the issues that matter most. From a women's rally in Los Angeles to a Unity 2000 demonstration in Philadelphia, special events and union activities helped influence attitudes of politicians and voters alike.

In Philadelphia, CLUW joined a huge Unity 2000 protest. Unity 2000 is an organization of about 200 groups concerned about corporate greed and the exploitation and oppression of people and the environment. Since Unity 2000 partners



left to right: Katherine Magee, Helen Magee (SEIU), Carol Rosenblatt, Carol Rogers (AFSCME)

share many of the same goals as CLUW, this demonstration was a vehicle for CLUW to drive home messages from working women.

Philadelphia CLUW President **Kathy Black**, who helped organize labor's involvement in the Unity 2000 event said, "Union women stood up in Philadelphia to let politicians know that working women count. We deserve equal pay, promotional opportunities, safe places to work, a clean environment and healthy and secure retirements."

CLUW President **Gloria Johnson** said, "The upcoming elections are a top priority for CLUW. If we want those running for office to address the needs of working women, we must make our voices heard on issues that matter the most. CLUW



Denise Jago (AFSCME) and Jenny Mitchell (AFSCME) at the Democratic National Convention

Don't Forget

October is:

- Domestic Violence Awareness Month
- Breast Cancer Awareness Month
- National Disability Awareness Month
- Hispanic Heritage Month (Sept. 15-Oct. 15)

Other Important Dates:

- October 3
National Work to End Domestic Violence Day
- October 15, Washington, DC
World March of Women 2000
www.worldmarch.org
- October 7, Washington, DC
AIDS Walk 2000 to benefit the Whitman-Walker Clinic
202-332-WALK or
www.aidswalkwashington.org

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CLUW Point

Before you vote, learn where the candidates stand on issues that matter the most.

When working women vote, families win. That's because women vote on issues that really matter to families like health care, economic security and education. An article about voting patterns published in the *New York Times* said, "Women care about issues; men care about person-

alities." In other words, women base their votes more on substance than soundbites.

CLUW's Election 2000 Conference in New Orleans, sponsored by the Family Issues and Legislative Committees, focused on several key issues in the Presidential election. CLUW members studied how proposed tax cuts would affect prescription drug coverage for seniors and the future solvency of Social Security and Medicare. Women discussed proposals for school construction and looked at the dangers of school vouchers. Together, we examined the family issues that will make a difference to women voters.

What are some of those issues? The AFL-CIO's Ask a Working Woman survey, which polled thousands of women at work, found that 87 percent of those who responded want stronger equal pay laws. More than 80 percent named paid family leave as a priority. Eight-in-ten cited improving pensions and protecting Social Security as priorities and over 75 percent listed better health benefits as a serious concern

It's easy to see why women care so much about these issues. The wage gaps costs working women's families about \$4,000 a year and the cost of child care can be nearly that amount. Only 28 percent of older women receive pensions and for those that do, half pay less than \$3,700 a year. Although family and medical leave has helped thousands of working families, 64 percent of the AFL-CIO survey respondents who needed family leave, couldn't sacrifice the loss of pay that would result. And health care remains a serious concern for the 44 million Americans who are uninsured and for the millions of HMO patients who have a hard time managing their managed care.

Working women have done a good job expressing our needs and the candidates are responding. It's easy for someone running for public office to say, "I support prescription drug coverage for seniors." That's all most voters really hear. But it's our job as women who care about our future to point out, that the specifics of the candidates' proposals are very different.

A publicly run prescription drug benefit in Medicare is vastly different than one that is run by private companies. Saving Social Security by restoring this important benefit is different than risky privatization schemes. Providing more funds for public education is vastly different than providing funds for school vouchers. Yes, the devil is in the details, and voters need to know the details of major proposals.

CLUW is non-partisan and does not support or contribute to political parties or candidates. It doesn't tell its members how to vote, but it encourages them to vote. Before you vote in November, make sure you become an informed voter. Learn about where the candidates stand on the issues most important to you. With women's votes to equal or exceed men's, we are working to make a difference in Election 2000. So make sure your vote works for you.

Supreme Court Ruling May Improve Civil Rights Enforcement

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act was enacted to put an end to racial discrimination in the workplace. But 35 years after its passage, we still read newspaper stories about hangman's nooses in the workplace and other blatant acts of racism directed toward workers of color.

Chairwoman of the Equal Opportunity Employment Commission **Ida Castro** recently reported a disturbing national trend of increased racial harassment cases. Government statistics show that racial harassment charges have grown five-fold over the past decade. So why aren't the courts punishing the offenders?

Frustrated by employment cases, many conservative judges are blaming their clogged court dockets on employees who file law suits on discrimination. Not a single discrimination suit was won in some federal courts last year.

Courts have made it harder for plaintiffs to win discrimination cases unless they have "smoking gun" evidence of intentional discrimination. Even when African-American employees find nooses hanging in their offices, they still find it hard to prove that an employer was responsible for the act, or allowed a racially hostile atmosphere to prevail.

When it comes to hiring and firing, discrimination victims must rely on "circumstantial evidence," often using statistical data or other evidence to "infer" discrimination. If the employer cannot come up with a legitimate reason for its actions, or if the reasons it gives are false, the employee is supposed to be able to ask a jury to decide if she or he was a victim of unlawful discrimination.

However, in recent years, many

courts were dismissing discrimination claims before they ever got to a jury unless the plaintiffs could show more direct evidence of bias. But a unanimous Supreme Court decision in *Reeves v. Sanderson Plumbing Products* should make the rules of evidence a bit fairer. Mr. Reeves, fired at age 57, was replaced by a younger employee. He testified that his managers had made many age-based comments to him, including telling him that he was "so old he must have come over on the Mayflower."

In the lower courts, the company argued that it fired Reeves because his attendance records weren't accurate. The jury disagreed and found in favor of Reeves. But an appeals court threw out the case because Reeves did not have "additional" evidence that age was the basis for the termination.

Luckily, the Supreme Court rejected this added burden, holding that discrimination can be found where there is some evidence that the employer's explanation of its actions is not believable. Why is this Supreme Court case significant? Rules of evidence are not just "technicalities." Instead, such rules determine whether or not we can ever hope to end discrimination in the workplace. If plaintiffs can only win with "direct" proof of intentional discrimination, they will rarely do so.

Employers do not admit to discrimination. Key decision-makers generally leave no paper trails. Although racist remarks by top management at Texaco came to light a few years ago after they were secretly tape-recorded, such evidence is unusual. Employees fear retaliation if they complain or cooperate. Few employees are brave enough to file a

lawsuit or rich enough to pay the legal fees. Employers rely on these realities.

Juries were intended to decide discrimination claims, without the limiting rules enforced by conservative judges. If these unlawful acts never get punished, there is little incentive to stop. The Supreme Court did the right thing in the Reeves case. Keep in mind, the next President will make more than one Supreme Court appointee which could tip the scales of justice. Think of the Reeves case as yet one more reason to make your voice heard on Election Day.

Make Your Voice Heard (continued)

will educate Americans and ask them to vote."

In Los Angeles, CLUW members gathered at an AFL-CIO women's rally attended by Tipper Gore, Hadassah Leiberman and Linda Chavez-Thompson. The rally helped place the women worker issues on the Democratic party's agenda.

"The needs of women aren't partisan needs," Johnson explained. They are needs that must be addressed by both Republicans and Democrats who will work together to help raise, not lower, world standards on human rights, labor and the environment."

The national conventions were a great opportunity for CLUW members to get face-to-face with those involved in American politics and help put a face on some problems that need serious fixing. Johnson said, "Women of CLUW will continue to be there throughout the campaigns to let those running for office know working women count and we will not be ignored."



CHICAGO

A TRUE TRAILBLAZER

American Legacy Magazine in its Spring 2000 feature, "Black Women Making History," published *Blessings Given, Blessings Received*, a tribute to founding CLUW member **Reverend Addie Wyatt**. Wyatt was named by American Legacy and American Family Insurance as the recipient of its second annual Trailblazer Award for being a pioneer in union leadership, women's rights, civil rights and outreach to ministries.

ALWAYS BRING A CROWD

Chicago CLUW member **Bea Lumpkin** is receiving acclaim for her book *Always Bring a Crowd*, the story of her husband, steelworker Frank Lumpkin.

Steelworkers were left without jobs, pay, earned benefits and their union when Wisconsin Steel of Chicago closed without warning. Frank Lumpkin fought back. With the help of USWA and other unions, the workers were able to win \$19 million from the company in a fight that took over 17 years.

Lumpkin said her book is not only a tribute to her husband but also a way to highlight the importance of working families fighting together for their rights. "Their key to victory was unity," Lumpkin said. She also noted women, minorities and CLUW supported the workers every step of the way.

Always Bring a Crowd is available for \$12.95 from International Publishers at 212-366-9816.

SAN ANTONIO

CLUW welcomes its newest chapter from the Lone Star state. In the style of the Southwest, the newly chartered San Antonio Chapter held a "Union Women Vote" fiesta with special guests AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson and Rosa Walker from the Texas AFL-CIO.

Top: AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson (2nd row, 2nd from right) celebrates with San Antonio CLUW members at the "Union Women Vote" fiesta.

Middle: Carol Rosenblatt pictured in second row with Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA) members on August 11th in Chicago. Also pictured in the front row is Silvia Garcia, City Controller, Houston, Texas.

VIRGINIA

Left: CLUW sisters at the Virginia statewide meeting in Williamsburg are (left to right) Carol Rosenblatt, Margie Brotherton (APWU), Tracy Wilson (CWA), Katie Sanders (APWU), and Evy Dubrow (Unite!)



Coalition of Labor Union Women
Membership Application

I want to help empower women through the labor movement by becoming a member of the Coalition of Labor Union Women.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, ZIP _____

Phone _____

Enclosed are my CLUW dues for one year.

\$25 \$10 (retiree)

I am a member of a bona fide collective bargaining organization.

Signature _____

Date _____

MAIL TO:
Lela Foreman, CLUW Treasurer
c/o CLUW
1126 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036

CLUW Yourself In!

New CLUW membership brochures will be available soon to help women understand how they count at work, in unions, at the ballot box and in CLUW. For more information on CLUW membership, call the National Office at (202) 466-4610 or visit www.cluw.org

Remembering the Amistad

For those of you who did not see the Steven Spielberg movie "Amistad," you may not have learned about the revolt which began in 1839 as a shipboard uprising of slaves off the coast of Cuba. The battle eventually and fatefully landed in the Unites States where the Amistad captives set off an intense legal, political and popular debate over slavery, race, Africa and America itself. On July 15, 2000 in New Haven, CT, **Gloria Johnson** received one of several awards presented by the Amistad Memorial Program commemorating this important chapter in history. Presenting the award is Amistad Memorial designer Ed Hamilton.



election 2000

Threats to a Woman's Right to Choose

Reproductive Rights is another campaign issue of great concern to pro-choice women. According to the pro-choice organization NARAL, the biggest threat to a woman's right to choose is the election of anti-choice candidates.

A NARAL voter brochure says, "A woman's right to choose hangs in the balance this presidential election. The Supreme Court is closely divided on *Roe v. Wade*, the decision that legalized abortion. Presidential appointments to the Supreme Court could tip the balance. The next President could end a woman's right to choose safe and legal abortions."

The power of the next President includes: the appointment of 2 to 3 new Justices to the nine-member Supreme Court, which is now spilt on *Roe v. Wade*; sign or veto proposed anti-choice constitutional amendments; sign executive orders abolishing access to reproductive services; preventing nurses, counselors and other providers from discussing the full range of reproductive options with patients.

NARAL is asking women who care about reproductive freedom and choice to help protect a woman's right to choose by voting pro-choice. For more information about NARAL's Choice 2000 Campaign, call 1-887-YOU-DECIDE or visit youdecide@naral.org

Thank You

CLUW wishes to thank the following for their generous support as contributing, supporting and sustaining members:

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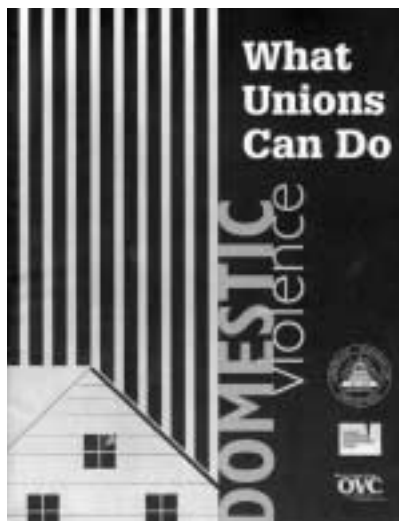
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Your contributions support CLUW's efforts to empower women through the labor movement.

Domestic Violence is a Union Issue



With nearly 4 million women victimized by domestic violence every year, violence affects unions members. The labor movement and other social movements in the U.S. share responsibility in the struggle for human dignity, including freedom from violence. AFSCME, the Family Violence Prevention Fund and the Office for Victims of Crime have a publication that can help unions respond to this problem. *Domestic Violence: What Unions Can Do*, is available by contacting The Women's Rights Dept. of AFSCME at 1625 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036, 202-429-5090.

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Gloria Johnson and Joyce Miller at the Democratic National Convention

How Financially Secure is Your Retirement?

SOCIAL SECURITY A TOP VOTER ISSUE

A major issue in Election 2000 is Social Security. Social Security isn't broken, but it could use some fixing. If nothing at all is done to preserve this program, it can still pay full benefits until the year 2036 and over 75 percent of its benefits afterwards. But women, who rely on the income security of this program, need to do better than that.

Social Security is women's security. Women rely most on Social Security because often it is their only source of retirement income. Although there has been a change in worker patterns, women still earn less and work less. Wage discrimination and labor force participation favors men. Women are responsible for caregiving and raising children so are more likely than men to spend time out of the workforce. Those that do work, earn only 74 cents to each dollar earned by men.

Benefits provided to women also vary greatly from men's. Only 30 percent of women receive pension benefits provided by an employer, compared to 48 percent of male workers.

With the candidates talking about Social Security in this election, Gloria Johnson said, "Women workers need to vote for those who will keep Social Security a guaranteed part of retirement. Ideas such as privatization carry a great risk."

Johnson said, "Although Social Security should not be your only source of retirement income, it is a guaranteed benefit and millions of retired workers rely on that guarantee. Its funds are safe from the roller coaster ride of Wall Street. Even if privatizing Social Security could pay off in times of economic growth, the downturns in the stock market could risk it all."

Some words of advice from Johnson, "Beware of some wolves in sheep's clothing." She explained, "All candidates say they are for 'saving Social Security.' But the specifics of their proposals could make or break your retirement

security. It's important to really learn where the candidates stand on this issue. Watch out for risky plans like privatization and relying entirely on individually directed accounts."

According to the National Council of Women's Organizations (NCWO), "If you don't vote to make sure Social Security is there for you, it may not be. NCWO reminds women voters that "the people you vote into office today will decide what happens to Social Security and your family's security for years to come."

NCWO has published this checklist of questions to ask your candidates:

- Do you support using part of the budget surplus to strengthen Social Security as opposed to cutting taxes?
- Do you oppose Social Security privatization—replacing in full or in part Social Security's guaranteed benefits with individual accounts?
- Do you oppose efforts to cut the annual cost-of-living adjustments?
- Do you oppose raising the retirement age higher than 67?
- Do you support measures to prevent poverty among elderly women by increasing and improving Social Security benefits?
- Do you support increasing opportunities to save through individual accounts as long as they are on top of, not in place of, Social Security?

CLUW Health News

Brought to you by the CLUW Women's Health Task Force

Reproductive Rights Summary

CLUW believes all women must have the right to decide for themselves whether and when to have children. Women must also have the right to a full range of reproductive health services that are safe, legal, accessible and affordable. Some of the current issues of major concern are the following:

Contraceptive Coverage

Legislation and collective bargaining agreements should require health insurance to provide coverage of prescribed contraceptives in addition to other medical prescriptions. Most insurance plans do not provide contraceptive coverage at this time.

Emergency Contraceptives

Sometimes called the "morning after pill" emergency contraceptives are ordinary birth control pills taken in a different dose and schedule. They are taken up to 72 hours after unprotected intercourse to prevent pregnancy. The pills are about 75 percent effective in reducing the chance of pregnancy. Some pharmacies, such as Wal-Mart, refuse to fill prescriptions for emergency contraceptives. Some religious hospitals will not provide it, even after sexual assault.

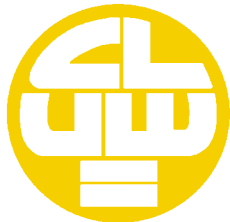
RU-486

This medication (mifepristone) is a pill that blocks the effects of the hormone progesterone and stops a pregnancy. It is taken in a doctor's office. Two days later, the woman returns to the doctor's office to receive prostaglandin, a drug that induces contractions. RU-486 is considered a safe, economical, medical alternative to a surgical abortion. It is used successfully in Europe but is not available in the U.S.

Hospital Mergers

When religiously-affiliated hospitals or health centers merge with other health care institutions, reproductive health services are often discontinued such as abortions, birth control, emergency contraceptives, in-vitro fertilization, tubal ligation, and vasectomies. Restrictive religious rules impact greatly on women of childbearing age.

It is critical that we continue to make our voices heard on these issues and do not allow the erosion of our rights to reproductive health care.



**Coalition of Labor
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