

CLUW Convention News

Brought to you by the Media-Communications Committee

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CLUW Designing Our Own Future

As the opening ceremonies for CLUW=s 11th Biennial Convention B and the dedication to the victims and heroes of the September 11th attack B were winding down, CLUW President Gloria T. Johnson read a poem by an unknown author.

The poem which touched each and every delegate included these words: *“On Monday, we thought that we were secure; on Tuesday, we learned better. On Monday, we were talking about heroes as being athletes; on Tuesday, we relearned who our heroes are. On Monday, we were irritated that our rebate checks had not arrived; on Tuesday, we gave money away to people we had never met. On Monday, people argued with their kids about cleaning up their room; on Tuesday, the same people, could not get home fast enough to hug their kids.”* The entire poem can be read on www.CLUW.org.

Johnson paid special tribute to all the union members who perished in the attack. Including those from Firefighters, Police, Operating Engineers, Communications Workers, Flight Attendants, Pilots, Hotel and Restaurant Employees and many others.

Johnson explained that when Congress gets back to business on domestic issues, CLUW will be working even harder to preserve Social Security, win Pay Equity, add a prescription drug benefit to Medicare and address many inequities in contracts including CONTRACEPTIVE COVERAGE.

Johnson pledged CLUW=s political and legislative involvement on a number of fronts and stressed the need to fight prejudice. She welcomed new chapters and described a number of initiatives CLUW has undertaken over the past two years. Recognizing the continued activism of CLUW=s members, Johnson announced the establishment of two new awards: the **“Clara Day Award”** (honoring CLUW=s executive vice president emerita), and the **“Mary Harris Mother Jones Award”**. *“We stand tall,”* she said. *“CLUW is strong and growing.”*

A message of inspiration and power was brought home by one of our own. **Nevada State Senator Maggie Carlton** said, *“Your theme is Designing Our Own Future, I want you to know you are already doing it. Every new task you take on, you are*

designing your future. All the things I have done throughout my whole life brought me where I am today.”

Carlton is also a waitress and member of HERE Local 226. She is proud to be *“the first labor activist elected to the Nevada Senate. “We didn=t do it with money,”* said Carlton, describing her election. *“We did it with people, because people are what it=s all about. You do not know the power you have.”*

Organizing the Unorganized

Getting the Work Done. On Thursday afternoon, CLUW delegates and guests learned first hand about the use of new technology in organizing campaigns. **Bill Meyer, UFCW**, walked us through the use of media and technology and its application in the campaign to organize Wal-Mart workers in Las Vegas. The Union has provided the necessary resources to create a video as well as a website, www.walmartworkerslv.com. The video clearly spelled out the strengths of working together collectively.

Personal experiences of Wal-Mart workers were interspersed with a history of the company and its founder, Sam Walton. Walton=s philosophy of mega-stores meeting the needs of customers and ensuring good conditions for employees was contrasted in the video with current marketing practices and poor working conditions. Copies of the video are available by contacting the UFCW at 800-551-4010. Meyer stressed that the use of email messages can be effective for large groups, especially those hard to reach because of erratic schedules. However, as he pointed out, nothing can replace one-on-one visits, which develop relationships between workers and extol the benefits of collective bargaining.

Meyer=s presentation was followed by nuts and bolts workshops on website development and the use of on-line resources. **Donna Georgallas, Websteward for IAM and Kim Caldwell, AFSCME** teamed up to illustrate website development. Donna gave an overview of the IAM=s website while Kim drew on her own experience using AOL templates for the less sophisticated.

Claire Grenewald, SEIU used a Power Point presentation to illustrate the Internet as a research tool for union activists. The group surfed a wide variety of sites yielding information related to politics, education, communication, organizing and collective bargaining. A

list of the web addresses is available by contacting Claire

HIV/AIDS AWARENESS & PREVENTION.

The continuing impact of HIV/AIDS nationally and internationally was the subject of the Friday afternoon plenary session. The panel participants discussed two different dimensions of the epidemic on women and labor unions. **Jesse Milan, Director of the CDC Business and Labor Resource Service** presented the traumatic statistics regarding AIDS from a global perspective. A person living with HIV for 19 years, Nulan described the challenges faced by the 36 million people around the world living with AIDS including 16 million women. Particular emphasis was given to the growing epidemic in Africa where women are being infected at an alarming rate, and where 13 million orphans from AIDS already exist.

Karen McMillan, Director of CLUW=s HIV/AIDS Education and Prevention Initiative discussed the HIV/AIDS impact on women, particularly women of color, at the domestic level. Ms McMillan also talked about CLUW=s Initiative and the importance of getting the support of labor leaders, developing collaborative programs and building relationships with community-based organizations. The Initiative=s goal is to reenergize, refocus and broaden labor=s response to this serious epidemic.

Karen Nussbaum, Director of the AFL-CIO Working Women=s Department has developed a program whereby women monitor political policy and develop community outreach programs. She prepared and sponsored the AFL-CIO Working Women=s Conference in Chicago and conducted the Working Women=s Survey. Her role includes promoting leadership in women.

Since the creation of the AFL-CIO Working Women Department, 12 states have started women=s committees or similar programs. Even though we have made progress in the advancement of women in the workforce, the percentage of women in top leadership positions is shamefully low. Only 1% of these positions are women, 1% are people of color. Union jobs account for 15% of the workforce, 13% of the public sector and but 10% of the private sector.

“Organize for power in the labor movement=s core industries, and build political power in our communities to build union power,” Nussbaum said.

Noting that the number of women in union leadership positions trails far behind the number of women union members, Nussbaum asserted, “This should be our time. We must act to demand our rightful place. We must make ourselves heard, and we must make ourselves strong.”

She also underscored the importance of understanding the role of women in the global economy,

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stating that it is essential to unite women=s rights with global labor rights.

Luisa Blue, President of the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance said, “Designing Our Own Future is a fitting theme as the labor movement enters the new century. As labor women we have made many gains—more women taking leadership positions in unions and central labor councils. All are leading fights for the right to organize groups to work together on common issues. Women have played a role in electing more union friendly candidates to public office. We are beginning to make our voices heard. But as you=ve heard from speakers before me, there is still much to be done—affordable and accessible childcare, equal worth for equal pay, stronger laws on domestic violence, more health education on illnesses affecting women like HIV/AIDS and stronger health and safety laws and enforcement.

On the issue of domestic violence, I=ve had the personal experience of dealing with this issue on organizing campaigns. We have had to work with members of organizing committees dealing with abusive spouses who resented the fact that their wives took a stand at work and began taking a stand on how they were being treated at home. Childcare, better salaries and benefits are common issues in every organizer=s work.

We must organize the millions of unorganized workers who do not have a voice at work and who struggle every day to make ends meet. They struggle every day dealing with ruthless bosses who have the upper hand and have no compassion whatsoever. They have to make decisions to pay this bill or that bill in order to have food for their children.

We all know the numbers—less than 10% of the private sector workforce is union, 13% overall. To maintain our percentage, organized labor must organize 1 million workers a year. For APALA, organizing has always been a priority. We decided that if labor was going to make an impact on the Asian Pacific community we better do our part in changing the face of labor by recruiting and training more Asian Pacific Americans to become labor organizers.

The September 11th tragedy has had a great impact on the country, but it will also have an impact on the organizing of immigrant workers.