

# CLUW NEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE COALITION  
OF LABOR UNION WOMEN

july-sept 2005

Convention Summary Issue

## CLUW HELPS WOMEN BUILD THE LABOR MOVEMENT

### NEW OFFICERS LEAD CHARGE TO RAISE AWARENESS OF WORKING WOMEN'S NEEDS

**H**undreds of union women from across America came together at CLUW's 13th Biennial Convention, September 14-17 in Detroit, vowing to take the initiative in creating a stronger and more inclusive labor movement. Addressing delegates in advance of her election as national CLUW president, Marsha Zakowski (USW) encouraged the throng to "embrace the day and embrace each other" in the effort "to make organized labor and the public more sensitive to the needs of working women and their families."

In speeches and workshops, participants learned strategies that will help them advance the convention theme, *Union Women Building the Movement*. Yet the guidance and solidarity came with a warning. "I don't think we have ever faced the challenges that stand before us now," cautioned President Zakowski, who called the Bush Administration "an organized movement against organized labor."

In addition to the election of Marsha Zakowski as National CLUW President, delegates at the 13th Biennial Convention also voted in the following



Among the many convention speakers were Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm (l), Michigan Congresswoman Carolyn Kilpatrick (r) and UAW President Ron Gettelfinger, shown with CLUW President Marsha Zakowski. Below, delegates escort AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson into the hall.



officers: Jean Hervey (UNITE HERE) as Executive Vice President, Judy Beard (APWU) as Treasurer, Royetta Sanford (IBEW) as Recording Secretary, and Cheryl Eastburn (IAM) as Corresponding Secretary, as well as the following Vice Presidents: Janis Borchardt (ATU), Bennie Bridges (AFGE), Gloria Brimm (UAW), Lorraine Darrington (CWA), Dolores Gorczyca (IFPTE), Cheryl Johnson (UAN), Theresa Kandt (OPEIU), Maria Neira (AFT), Janet E. Nelson (AFSCME), Kerry Newkirk (SEIU) and Marti Rodriguez-Harris (UWUA). All national officers were elected by acclamation.

AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson compared the attitude of government leaders toward



working families to the response to Hurricane Katrina, which had devastated the Gulf Coast barely two weeks before the convention got underway.

"We believe that, just as the community of New Orleans needed the government to step in and make sure the levees were strong," she said, "we need the government to take up its responsibilities and build levees for working women and our community—levees like good jobs, education, equal pay,

*(continued on page 6)*

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[www.cluw.org](http://www.cluw.org)



Convention photos by Steve Hahn



# CLUW NEWS

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## Fighting for the right to unionize

Marsha Zakowski, CLUW National President



**A**t the 13th Biennial Convention, I had the honor of being elected national president of our organization. I will make every effort with your help to continue and advance our work on behalf of union women and workers. I want to thank everyone involved in the convention for its success. I thank, as well, every member who continues to promote our goals and programs in our chapters and in their unions.

We passed several important resolutions and reaffirmed commitments that we must implement and act upon. One hits at the heart of our existence—the Employee Free Choice Act.

On October 19, 2005, for the second time this year, Senate Republicans voted against a proposal by Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) to raise the minimum wage, which has not been increased since 1997. Yet, they are considering giving themselves their 8th pay raise since the last minimum wage increase. Another proposal by Sen. Michael Enzi (R-WY) that would have raised the minimum wage, but would have exempted millions of workers, cut overtime pay and weakened job safety and health protections, was successfully defeated by Senate Democrats. The federal minimum wage remains frozen.

Women are disproportionately represented in low paying jobs and would benefit the most from a minimum wage increase. Women not only earn less, but have fewer opportunities to build economic security. By joining a union, women earn about 34 percent more and have an advantage of pension and medical health benefits. Unions also narrow the existing gender gap in wages and benefits.

The breakdown in labor laws that protect workers' right to organize and the growing number of anti-union tactics is a threat to workers who seek to organize and a threat to the growth of the labor movement. The Employee Free Choice Act (SB 842 and HR 1696) will restore workers' freedom to form unions and bargain collectively. CLUW is committed to lobby for and participate in activities towards its passage.

December 10 is International Human Rights Day and CLUW joins the labor movement in a national day of action with activities across the country to bring attention to the "daily attack on workers' freedom to form unions and bargain collectively." I urge every chapter and member to participate in actions planned for this day and visibly demonstrate CLUW's commitment to closing the wage gap and organizing women workers by strengthening the labor movement. This day is another opportunity to show our unity and build our membership across the country. Please contact the CLUW office or visit [www.cluw.org](http://www.cluw.org) and [www.affcio.org](http://www.affcio.org) for updated information.

Thank you for your dedication, commitment and activism.

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**December 10 is International Human Rights Day and CLUW joins the labor movement in a national day of action.**

## MEET YOUR NEW OFFICERS

The convention thanked outgoing vice presidents Kathleen Kinnick (OPEIU), Connie Cordovilla (AFT) and Mary Frances Hills (IBT) for their dedication and service and elected four new vice presidents to the CLUW National Executive Board:

### Janis Borchardt

VP Janis M. Borchardt (ATU) brings a lifetime of union activism to CLUW. She joined the Amalgamated Transit Union after taking a job as a Greyhound operator in 1979 in San Francisco.



By 1987 she was her local's first female vice president—and played a central role a few years later coordinating activities during a grueling 39-month Greyhound strike. Thereafter, she spent much of the 1990s as an ATU Special Representative charged with organizing new locals. She was appointed International Representative in 2003 and last year became an ATU International Vice President.

### Cheryl Johnson

CLUW Vice President Cheryl Johnson is uniquely qualified to respond to the many threats facing the labor movement. Not only

is she a union president, she also works as a critical care nurse back home in Michigan.

Johnson played a vital role in the 1999 creation of the United American Nurses, the national labor arm of the American Nurses Association. She was elected president and chair of the organization in the first year after its formation, guiding the UAN to a historic affiliation with the AFL-CIO. She was soon elected to the AFL-CIO Executive Council, where she is currently one of just eight women. She has led the fight for greater respect and safer working conditions for all staff nurses.



### Theresa Kandt

Elected International Vice President of OPEIU in 1998, CLUW Vice President Theresa Kandt began her involvement with OPEIU in 1983 when she became the first person to sign a union card at her UAW Legal Service Plan office in Detroit. She developed as a leader on her local union Executive Board—where she has



held a number of positions through the years, including President, Vice President, Recording Secretary and Trustee.

Kandt has been a Business Agent for OPEIU Local 42 since 1987 and she now also serves as the local's Secretary Treasurer.

### Maria Neira

Education and outreach have been the hallmarks of the career of Maria Neira (AFT). She is now putting those skills to work as a CLUW vice president. Neira is an elementary school bilingual teacher and a nationally recognized expert on educational issues. During her nearly three decades in teaching, she has risen through the ranks of union leadership to become a vice president of the American Federation of Teachers.

Regionally, she was elected first vice president of New York State United Teachers. Locally, she served for many years as assistant to the president of New York City's United Federation of Teachers, where she helped develop strategic plans for education reform.

Among her other roles, she is co-chair of the UFT Hispanic Affairs Committee.



Resolutions in full on [www.cluw.org](http://www.cluw.org)

## DELEGATES VOTE TO RAISE DUES, DEBATE RESOLUTIONS ON CRUCIAL ISSUES

In addition to approving a resolution raising regular renewing member dues to \$50 annually effective January 1, 2006 (new members will pay \$35 their first year), convention delegates passed a number of resolutions to guide CLUW's policies. The approved resolutions covered a wide array of political issues affecting working women, including protecting Social Security, expanding the Family and Medical Leave Act, working toward universal health care coverage and a prescription drug plan, and correcting the flaws of the No Child Left Behind Act.

One approved resolution called upon Congress to rescind the Bush Administration tax breaks granted to the wealthy and use tax revenues to provide services that benefit workers and their families. Another commended unions for their quick response in providing aid to Hurricane Katrina victims and urged CLUW members and chapters to write to Congress demanding that the minimum wage be increased immediately so that no worker has to live in substandard conditions.

In response to United Airlines terminating employee pensions, delegates expressed support for HR 2327, a bill that would impose a six-month moratorium on pension plan terminations, and the Senate companion bill S 1158, "Stop Terminating Our Pensions Act."

Two resolutions dealt with future Supreme Court nominees—one calling on the Senate to review carefully the qualifications of Supreme Court nominees to assure American women have continued access to safe and legal abortion services, and another demanding that all documents pertaining to nominees' records be released to the Senate and the public.

Warning about the dangers the Wal-Mart business model poses to workers around the world, delegates approved a resolution urging members to participate in the Wake Up Wal-Mart campaign by signing up activists at [www.wakeupwalmart.org](http://www.wakeupwalmart.org). They also voiced support for a national holiday for Mexican American labor leader Cesar Chavez on his birthday, March 31.

A number of resolutions were referred to the National Executive Board for action.

## CONVENTION AMENDS CLUW CONSTITUTION

Among the business of the Convention was consideration of proposed Constitutional amendments. Delegates voted to adopt changes to two sections:

A new section was added to Article VI, National Officers, which states: "The Presidents Emeritae shall be the past retired presidents of the Coalition of Labor Union Women elected at large by the Convention." Related language was updated, including references to the "Founding President Emerita."

The following language was added to Article XV, Standing Committees: "In order for greater participation of members and functioning of Committees, the Committees with similar goals may be combined at the request of the Committees, and with the approval of the National Officers Council."





Above, officers for 2005-2009 take the oath of office, administered by Past Presidents Gloria Johnson and Joyce Miller (not pictured).



Exec. VP Emerita (UFCW) Addie Wyatt delivered the closing invocation. Below, officers on dias during convention include Treasurer Judy Beard (APWU) and VP Kerry Newkirk (SEIU).

From left, Sandra Coffee of Chicago CLUW, Jearlean Fleming (OPEIU) and Brenda Cohen (AFSCME) await turn to address delegates. Below, Robbie Sparks (IBEW) makes a point during convention debate.



Corresponding Sec. Cheryl Eastburn (IAM) and Recording Sec. Royetta Sanford (IBEW), right, cheer at Gloria T. Johnson tribute.



The Navajo Jewelry & Craft booth in the CLUW Convention Exhibit Hall. photo: Yvonne Cohen

## Thank you, Gloria!



At the reception honoring Gloria T. Johnson (r), officers read from a book of remembrance. Pictured from left are Connie Cordovilla (AFT), Jean Hervey (UNITE HERE) and Gloria Brimm (UAW).

**O**n the closing night of the convention, delegates rose to honor Gloria T. Johnson, one of CLUW's founding members and most valued leaders, for her many years of service to CLUW and to labor. Johnson, who served as president of CLUW from 1993 until 2004 and its treasurer for the 17 years before that, said she was "overwhelmed by the love and support you've given me over the years." She thanked the convention for the tribute and for dedicating the Convention Souvenir Book to her. Delegates named her President Emerita and approved a resolution to create a Gloria T. Johnson Scholarship Fund. Johnson was a bookkeeper when she joined the International Union of Electronic, Electrical, Salaried, Machine and Furniture Workers in 1954. The ledger shows an ever-expanding leadership role—from chair of the IUE Women's Council to Women's Activities Coordinator for the merged IUE-CWA to her current position as president of the Labor Coalition for Community Action, where she continues to work closely with CLUW, a LCCA constituency group. In 1993, she was elected vice president of the AFL-CIO, the second African American woman to hold that position.



Sandra Hastings (IFPTE) and Chicago Chapter President Katie Jordan (r) celebrate Johnson tribute. Right, Exec. VP Linda Chavez (c) and delegates serenade President Emerita with

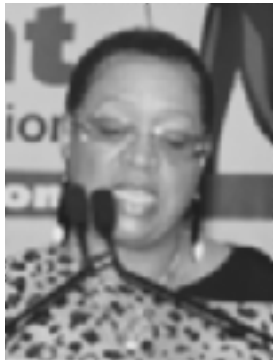
## AWARDS

Among the highlights of each CLUW Convention is presentation of awards to members for their valuable contributions to the labor movement. This year's awards went to AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson (AFSCME), Annie Graham (UAW), Mary Finger (UFCW) and Kathy Black (AFSCME).

Chavez-Thompson received the prestigious Mother Jones Award for her lifetime commitment to the labor movement. The daughter of Mexican-American sharecroppers, she worked as an agricultural laborer before joining the union, eventually rising through the ranks to become the first person of color, and the first woman, elected to a top office of the AFL-CIO.



Delegates opened the convention with a festive parade of banners, including one from CLUW's Chinese Committee (above).



President Millie Hall (OPEIU) of Detroit, the host chapter. Metro Detroit members worked tirelessly to make the convention a success.



Surrounded by Michigan sisters, Michigan State Vice President Annie Graham (UAW) receives the Clara Day Award. Named in honor of a founding member from IBT, the Clara Day Award was established in 2001 and is given at each convention to that CLUW State Vice President who implements the responsibilities of office in an exemplary manner.



Mary Finger (c), retired director of the Civil Rights and Community Relations Department of the UFCW International Union, received the Mary McLeod Bethune Award for her contributions to civil rights. The award invites recipients to designate a young person to receive a scholarship from CLUW toward labor studies. Flanking her are UFCW members Cassandra Berrocal (l) and Angela Johnson.



National Officers presented a CLUW quilt to Gloria Johnson (r). Pictured are Gloria Brimm (UAW) and Bennie Bridges (AFGE).



(l), center, President Linda Chavez-Thompson (AFSCME) at Gloria Thompson's Motown hit.



The Joyce D. Miller Chapter Recruitment Award went to the Philadelphia Chapter for having the greatest membership increase. President Kathy Black (r) celebrates with her chapter members.

# BUILDING THE LABOR MOVEMENT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

health care [and] retirement security. Our leaders believe the opposite.”

While speakers also noted divisions within labor itself, past national president Joyce D. Miller told delegates, “regardless of whether you are affili-



Joyce D. Miller

ated with the AFL-CIO or the Change to Win coalition, our goal is to organize unorganized women workers and to follow up by getting them to join CLUW.” She called CLUW “the

one place in the labor movement where jurisdiction doesn’t matter.” Recent studies indicate that American women are more receptive than American men to the idea of joining a union—making female workers a prime target of organizing drives.

Telling the delegates “if women are not healthy, our society will not be healthy,” Michigan State Senator

Martha G. Scott urged labor women to press government officials to ensure universal access to contraception, abortion services and an insurance



MI Sen. Martha Scott

system “that allows women to control their own health care.” In a spirited endorsement of health care equity, Scott noted that women, on average, have significantly higher medical bills, yet many insurance plans fail to cover basic services for women—from birth control to gynecologist visits.

## Workshops and roundtables

To begin the dialogue on the convention theme, union leaders conducted panel discussions on such topics as *The Future of Women in Labor: Does*

## *Labor Have a CLUW? and Organizing Programs Involving Women.*

Delegates then met together in smaller groups to share their own experiences in organizing, lobbying and developing leadership skills. These workshops and roundtables—coordinated by Carolyn Jacobson—had a wide focus that ranged from teaching essential information labor activists should know to discussing more personal concerns.

Some of the workshops targeted individual groups within the labor movement. For example, one of the roundtables explained strategies for reaching out to younger workers. Another, dealing with empowering minority women, was described by one participant as “good for a woman’s soul.” Other workshops dealt with the basics—even making an understanding of parliamentary procedure simple and interesting.

Many of the delegates responded most strongly to the discussions that touched on their lives beyond the union movement. With effective visual demonstrations, a Michigan State Trooper provided important personal safety tips for women. Other presenters offered valuable advice about safe sex, avoiding health problems as you age, and developing an effective financial plan.

## Issues of global concern

The union women who gathered in Detroit also examined today’s global economy and the way it links them with their sister workers around the world. Delegates attended a pre-convention conference titled *Forging a Global Link for Change: Women’s Role in Effecting Change in the World Economy* (see story on page 8).

During the closing session, delegates heard from Stefani Barner of Military Families Speak Out. Barner,



Paula Little, Texas AFL-CIO, taught a workshop on leadership skills. Below, Bobbi Betonti (IAM), left, and Nancy Lee Waters (IAM) led a session on parliamentary procedure.



the wife of an Iraqi War veteran, thanked CLUW for its stand against the war in Iraq and noted that being anti-war is not the same as being against the military.

“I believe that the greatest way that we can support our military is to make sure that they are never again asked to fight and often die for an unverified reason or an unjust cause,” she said.

Calling the labor movement “a coming together of individual voices to cry out for justice, protection and accountability,” Barner said, “It is my fervent hope that you will join your voice with mine in calling for an end to the war in Iraq and a deeper understanding of the debt we owe to our Armed Forces.”

Nancy Wohlforth, co-president of Pride At Work and secretary-treasurer of OPEIU, made the connection between the war in Iraq and the devastation in the wake of Hurricane Katrina due to FEMA’s negligence.

“The policies of this Administration are not simply an accident or mistakes. They are the direct result of the Republican theory that governments should not be involved in promoting general welfare,” she said.

Wohlforth stressed the need for “a return to the values that the labor movement has always fought for.”



# THANK YOU, CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS

CLUW wishes to thank the following contributing (\$50) members. (Supporting and sustaining members will be recognized in the next issue.) To become a special member of CLUW, please make your check payable to CLUW and mail to CLUW National Treasurer Judy Beard, 1925 K St. NW, #402, Washington, DC 20006. Your contribution will help empower women through the labor movement.

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## CLUW WANTS YOU

## MORE MEMBERS, MORE POWER, MORE PROGRESS

**Add three words to the CLUW convention theme.** Make it: *"We Need More Union Women Building the Movement."* Women are labor's future—we account for 55 percent of all newly organized workers—yet women remain underrepresented in union leadership positions. Meanwhile the Bush Administration attacks our basic rights—including our right to organize, our right to reproductive freedom, our right to retirement security, our right to protection against domestic violence and our right to adequate health insurance.

**Now is the time to amplify the voice of women in the workforce by strengthening CLUW, the only national organization for union women.**

By joining CLUW now you can make a difference in women's lives. **You also reap the benefit of joining before a dues increase goes into effect January 1.** If you are already a member, please reach out to others to join now.

Both nationally and through our chapters, CLUW has been busy lobbying the government, educating the public and rallying our sisters and brothers in the workforce over such issues as equal pay, Social Security protection and the Employee Free Choice Act. We have built partnerships with other constituency and community groups through town hall meetings held throughout the country. We have participated in GOTV activities. We have rallied for a peaceful solution in Iraq. We have worked to protect women's health through CLUW's HIV/AIDS and Cervical Cancer Protection Projects and have educated our union brothers and sisters about the need for contraceptive equity.

We will continue to fight for the original goals we established back in 1974: promoting affirmative action in the workplace, strengthening the role of women in unions, organizing unorganized women and increasing the involvement of women in the political and legislative process.

**Help us make a difference for working women. Sign up today or renew your CLUW membership.**

clip and send!

### CLUW Membership Application

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

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

\*Rates apply through Dec. 31, 2005



**13th Biennial Convention**  
Detroit • September 14-17, 2005

**Coalition of Labor Union Women**

# ■ PRE-CONVENTION CONFERENCE

## GLOBAL ECONOMY AFFECTS WORKING WOMEN HERE AND ABROAD

**M**any delegates to CLUW's 13th Convention arrived a day early to participate in a pre-convention conference on the subject of globalization. The forum—titled Forging a Global Link for Change: Women's Role in Effecting Change in the World Economy—gave union women insights into the day-to-day struggle faced by their sisters overseas who are buffeted by global economic trends even as they battle poverty and exploitation in their home countries. The conference also focused on the domestic challenges of globalization.

Much of the morning session highlighted the impact of Wal-Mart. Discussion leaders described how the world's largest retailer is setting a national and international standard of low wages, poor benefits and worker abuse. Paul Blank, director of the

UFCW campaign [wakeupwalmart.com](http://wakeupwalmart.com), cautioned delegates that every dollar they spend at Wal-Mart threatens their own jobs. He cited tax subsidies that go to Wal-Mart at the same time many of the chain's employees earn so little they are eligible for publicly funded health care. He spoke about violations of child labor laws and lower pay and fewer promotions for women.

"This is too big a fight for UFCW to wage alone," said Blank. "We need strong community education and involvement." A panel discussion followed, with concrete advice about educating the public on Wal-Mart's policies. Participants also dealt with the problem of outsourcing, as many U.S. employers export jobs overseas.

A second panel stressed the importance of educating workers in foreign countries about the labor movement.

Delegates learned how some corporations take advantage of poor people overseas—for instance, by excluding pregnant workers from jobs and forcing women to submit to sexual assault to stay employed.

Pamela Whitefield, assistant director of labor studies at Cornell University's School of Industrial and Labor Relations, led the afternoon conference session. Participants discussed how they have been affected by trends such as automation, outsourcing, the decreasing availability of full-time positions, the loss of health care and pension benefits, threats to Social Security, the demand for more work for the same or less pay, and basic job stress. Delegates adopted action plans to deal with these issues—including forming community coalitions and conducting lobbying and education campaigns.



### Coalition of Labor Union Women

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