

CLUW convention highlights

The Coalition of Labor Union Women's (CLUW) 20th biennial convention was held in Las Vegas, NV, from Oct. 16-18. We attended as delegates representing NALC along with Myra Warren, NALC's former director of life insurance. Warren is a national vice president for CLUW and has been an active member of the organization for many years.

CLUW, first formed in 1974, is an organization made up primarily of women who are like-minded in promoting solidarity, strength and education within the labor movement, as indicated in its mission statement: "The primary mission of CLUW is to unify all union women in a viable organization to determine our common problems and concerns and to develop action programs within the framework of our unions to deal effectively with our objectives."

The theme of the convention was "Sisters Not Afraid of Power: Coming Together to Change the World." The women's movement and the labor movement are facing some of the biggest challenges in our history. This convention sought to engage the labor movement to form strong coalitions and develop strategies to fight against the forces trying to diminish our power and eliminate the gains we struggled to achieve—both as women and as union members. The majority of the attendees were union members from various labor organizations. Among the professions represented were steel workers, flight attendants, teachers, mine workers, bricklayers, stage and television production workers, and transportation workers.

The convention began with a day dedicated to a variety of day-long workshops. Workshop topics included constitution and finance rules, the history of the labor and women's movements, meeting management and sexual harassment. McQuality attended the workshop "None of Us Are Free: The Impact of Race, Class, and Gender Bias." This workshop explained how labor history has intersected with other social movements and included exercises designed to challenge participants to take a self-inventory and recognize their own biases. The workshop revealed how these biases can potentially affect interaction with union sisters and brothers.

Feldman-Wiencek attended the workshop "Healthy Lives/Healthy Sisters." This training encouraged women in the labor movement to pay attention to the effect our work has on our personal well-being and taught us techniques to address negative effects on our well-being so we can be better advocates.

The convention, as with NALC conventions, included the debate and passage of resolutions and constitutional amendments. CLUW delegates approved 25 resolutions on topics including climate change, gun violence, supporting home



Holly Feldman-Wiencek, Myra Warren and Michelle McQuality (l to r) attend the 20th biennial convention for the Coalition of Labor Union Women.

healthcare workers, protection for immigrant children, sexual harassment and collective-bargaining rights for public sector employees.

The convention also included a number of guest speakers and several panel discussions with union members and activists. Liz Shuler, secretary-treasurer of the AFL-CIO, spoke about the importance of women in the labor movement; Linda Chavez-Thompson, executive vice-president emerita of the AFL-CIO, spoke about the importance of women getting involved in politics—both as voters and as politicians; Sara Nelson, international president of the Association of Flight Attendants, spoke about fighting sexual harassment in the

workplace; and Dolores Huerta, co-founder of the United Farm Workers and founder and president of the Dolores Huerta Foundation, spoke about her six decades lobbying passionately on behalf of farm workers for fair wages, equal treatment and better working conditions.

Panel discussions were offered on a variety of topics, including "Sisters of the Next Generation" (young women aged 17-22 sharing their ongoing efforts in addressing injustice on multiple fronts), "Teacher Power Rising" (a wave of teachers strikes that began in 2017 and the women who lead them), and "In Our Hands We Hold the Power" (women instrumental in spreading awareness related to women's voting rights 100 years after the 19th Amendment). All of the guest speakers and panelists were awe-inspiring women. The young women on the "Sisters of the Next Generation" panel were particularly impressive and made us hopeful for future generations of female leaders.

The week concluded Friday evening with a "SNAP with Hattitude" gala reception. Convention organizers encouraged participants to wear hats of all kinds to represent the many different hats women wear in their lives.

Overall, the convention was empowering, promoting growth in the labor movement as well as encouraging women to address societal issues like oppression and injustice. We were inspired by the variety of labor unions and diversity of the delegates who participated in the convention. All of the organizations were well-represented by strong, assertive and knowledgeable women and we were honored to be considered a part of this very special group. We returned from the convention full of ideas we hope to implement in our work with NALC. For more information on CLUW, its mission, and how to join, visit cluw.org.

Submitted by Research Assistant Holly Feldman-Wiencek and Assistant to the President for City Delivery Michelle McQuality