

‘Women of the World Unite’



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The theme of the Coalition of Labor Union Women’s (CLUW) 23rd biennial convention, “Women of the World Unite,” acknowledged that the challenges women face in the labor movement are not unique to the United States. The convention was held Sunday, Nov. 9 through Tuesday, Nov. 11, and I was honored to attend the convention and represent NALC as the national vice president on the CLUW National Officers Council. During the

three days of general session, guest speakers and delegates highlighted the struggles of working women not only in the United States, but across the globe.

On Saturday, prior to the official start of the convention, CLUW offered the delegates a day of educational workshops covering a variety of topics including Organizing 101, Chapter Elections and Financial Responsibility, and Roberts Rules of Order. My favorite workshop was titled “Women Workers’ Rights,” which offered a comprehensive overview of essential federal employment laws that protect women’s rights in the workplace. Participants learned about key legislation including those enacted in recent years, the Equal Pay Act, the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, and the Providing Urgent Maternal Protections (PUMP) for Nursing Mothers Act.

Sunday, the first day of the convention, opened with a welcome video from AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler, who expressed her regrets at not being able to attend in person. Then CLUW President Elise Bryant welcomed the delegates and began the day with a celebration of several recent political victories for women. The delegates cheered for Democrats Abigail Spanberger and Mikie Sherrill, who won gubernatorial races in Virginia and New Jersey, respectively. These ladies campaigned hard on economic issues and led a sweep for their party in both states. Also celebrated were several of our own CLUW delegates who had recently been elected to positions in their local governments as council members, commissioners and school board members.

The convention delegation welcomed Communication Workers of America President Claude Cummings Jr. President Cummings, a longtime champion of women in the workplace, expressed his unrelenting support of women’s rights and commitment to CLUW.

Next, the delegation had the pleasure of hearing from Lorena Gonzalez-Fletcher, the president of the California Federation of Labor, an umbrella organization for unions representing more than 2 million workers in California. She is the first woman and person of color to lead the organization. Later in the afternoon, the delegates were joined by Yvonne Wheeler, the first African American woman to serve as president of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor. Both of these dynamic speakers inspired the convention attendees with stories of their organization’s recent endeavors in California, including their successful efforts in passage of Proposition 50, a measure that asks the U.S. Congress to change federal law and propose an amendment to the U.S. Constitution to require redistricting be done by “fair, independent, and nonpartisan redistricting commissions nationwide.”

On Monday morning, the delegates were honored to hear from the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) national secretary-treasurer, Liz Powell. Secretary-Treasurer Powell, along with CLUW National Treasurer Judy Beard, were original members of a group of more than 3,000 union women from across the country who gathered together to form an organization to address the critical needs of millions of unorganized working women and make unions more responsive to the needs of all working women. These women convened in Chicago, IL, in March of 1974, and CLUW was born. Both of these women have attended every CLUW convention since its inception.

In the afternoon, Assemblymember Dr. LaShae Sharp-Collins, representing California’s 79th District, greeted the convention and passionately discussed her efforts to address the challenges of the unhoused population to attain affordable housing that’s actually affordable, to protect reproductive freedom and a woman’s right to make her own health care decisions, and to prioritize an equal education for all children.

Tuesday morning was dedicated in part to the ongoing struggles of federal and government workers across the country. The convention opened business with videos of support from Elissa McBride, secretary-treasurer of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, and Dr. Everett Kelley, president of the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE). These videos highlighted the unfair dismissal of more than 200,000 federal employees and the ongoing plight of the workers who were furloughed as part of the government shutdown. A panel discussion with several AFGE members empha-

sized that the shutdown didn't just affect the workers, but everyone who uses any federal or government agency. From the most vulnerable people relying on food and health care assistance to travelers affected by air traffic control and TSA shortages. The panel discussion reminded us that every American is affected by the loss of government employees.

And, of course, we completed the business of the convention. Convention delegates passed resolutions, voted on constitutional amendments, elected new national officers, and, in true CLUW fashion, debated all of it heatedly. Delegates passed 15 resolutions on topics including support and aid for the people in Gaza; ending military occupation in Washington, DC, and other cities; support for the union garment workers in Asia who have been denied a living wage; and denouncing attacks on diversity, equity and inclusion efforts and work solidarity.

Another celebratory and also somewhat poignant moment occurred when the convention body bid farewell to our retiring executive officers. Elise Bryant has passionately served as CLUW president for the last eight years. Elise has dedicated many, many years fighting for the labor movement and women's issues. She has been a great friend and mentor. Also retiring were Joanne Sanders (International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees), executive vice president; Judy

Beard (APWU), treasurer; and Jennifer Grigsby (AFGE), recording secretary. All these dedicated ladies have given countless hours to serve not only their respective unions, but also CLUW. They will be dearly missed.

With many national officers retiring, many new members were elected to the National Officers Council. I was fortunate to be reelected by the delegation and am very grateful to continue serving as a vice president representing NALC. My sincerest thanks go to the NALC membership and the CLUW delegates who put their faith and trust in me.

However, not all of the convention was a celebration. Despite growing public support for the labor movement, delegates from many different unions shared a collective concern that the overall political climate was not favorable and achieving our goals was going to be particularly challenging in the coming years. In the coming months, CLUW will continue to focus on the midterm elections and get-out-the-vote initiatives.

The convention left us inspired to seek fresh perspectives and to advocate for women in the workplace. We encourage all of our NALC sisters and siblings to look into CLUW chapters in your area and get involved. For more information on CLUW, its mission and how to join, visit cluw.org.

Contract Talk

by the Contract Administration Unit

Route inspections (continued)

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nents of route inspections leading up to the actual process of adjusting routes after the week of count and inspection. Future articles will discuss the adjustment process, as outlined in Section 243, and Special Route Inspections conducted in accordance with Sections 271 and 272 of *Handbook M-39*.

Rank-and-file letter carriers and union representatives should familiarize themselves with Chapter 2 of *Handbook M-39* and Chapter 9 of *Handbook M-41* to gain a better understanding of the route count and inspection process. These handbooks as well as additional resources are available on the NALC website.

They include the *2018 NALC Guide to Route Inspections* and the NALC Route Protection Program available at nalc.org/workplace-issues/city-delivery/route-adjustments. National-level settlements, Step 4 settlements and MOUs can be found in the Materials Reference System at nalc.org/mrs. Past "Contract Talk" articles pertaining to these issues are available at nalc.org/workplace-issues/resources/nalc-publications. An overview of route inspections is also available in the Members Only portal at nalc.org. Log in to Members Only>Members Menu>Shop Steward's Guide>Forms>Route Inspections 2024 Convention Presentation.