Achieving Diversity Within Unions

Mary K. O’Melveny
General Counsel
Communications Workers of America, AFL-CIO
© June, 2006

Introduction

Union membership has diversified dramatically over the past 35 years, due in large measure to the passage of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act which placed upon employers and unions the obligation to ensure that employment decisions are made in a non-discriminatory manner. However, during the same period, the percentage of workers who are represented by unions has declined dramatically. That decline has adversely impacted non-white and women workers in particular because unionized workers traditionally receive substantially better pay and benefits than their non-union-represented counterparts.¹

¹ Union-represented workers generally average higher wages than their non-union counterparts. In 2005, African-American unionized workers earned an average weekly wage of $656 as compared to $500 for those not represented by unions. For Asian workers, the differences were $809 compared to $744, and for Hispanic workers, the difference was $673 vs. $449. Union-represented women over age 16 earn an average weekly wage of $731, as compared to $559 for non-unionized workers. See BLS data, “Median weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers by union affiliation and selected characteristics.” This data can be found at http://www.bls.gov/news.release/union2.t02.htm.
According to a recent study released by the Center for Economic Policy and Research, African-American workers represented by unions declined from 31.7% in 1983 to 16.6% in 2004, while Latino workers with union representation dropped from 24.2% to 11.4% during the same period. In the same time frame, African-American workers working in the manufacturing industry dropped from 23.9% to 10.6% of all workers and Hispanic workers declined to 13.7% from 30.2%. From the mid-1990's on, black workers in particular have been under-represented in the manufacturing workforce relative to the rest of the economy. Women workers, by contrast, have increased their numbers in the workforce and in unions, making up at least 43% of union members and 55% of newly organized workers. Many of these gains, however, are at the low end of the wage scale.

These changes in the American economic picture have a negative impact on many of the important diversity gains for non-white and female workers that took place in the years immediately following passage of Title VII. They also have an impact on the diversity of union leadership positions since many top union officeholders achieve their positions after starting at the work holding positions such as union business agents and union stewards.

Union membership is viewed as an important benefit by workers of color. Studies indicate that African American workers represented by unions earn 29% more than their non-union counterparts. The “union advantage” for Latino workers is 59% and 11% for Asian Pacific American workers. These workers also have more favorable attitudes toward unions, according to a 2005 study by Peter Hart Research Associates, finding that 77% of African American and 71% of Latino non-managerial workers would be likely to vote for union representation, compared to 53% of the general non-management workforce. Such preferences are borne out by actual election results. According to a 2003 study of NLRB election results, proposed units composed of a majority of white men have a success rate of about 35% compared to 53% in units with a majority of

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2 John Schmitt and Ben Zipperer, “The Decline in African-American Representation in Unions and Auto Manufacturing, 1979-2004,” Center for Economic and Policy Research (January, 2006). The study also showed that black workers in the automotive industry declined during the period studied, while the percentage of Hispanic workers rose slightly.


workers of color and up to 82% where women workers of color in the units were at or above 75%. 5

According to findings from research commissioned by the AFL-CIO Executive Council’s Working Women’s Committee, women traditionally have had very positive views about unions for many years, though these favorable attitudes have declined somewhat more recently. Competing demands of work and family obligations have also deterred many women from joining unions or becoming actively involved within their unions, as have the lack of substantial numbers of visible women in high level leadership positions.6

Within the AFL-CIO, diversity initiatives began in earnest with the creation, beginning in the early 1970's, of “constituency groups” that advanced the interests of specific groups of workers and sought to develop their ability to exercise power within the labor movement. Among the first such groups created were the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU), the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), and the A. Phillip Randolph Institute (APRI). They were followed by the Labor Committee for Latin American Advancement (LCCLA), the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA) and, in 1997, Pride at Work (PAW), which represents the interests of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered workers. These groups have mobilized for broader EEO achievements and have provided significant training and networking opportunities for workers within these groups to advance within their unions and to become more active in political and community affairs. However, notwithstanding the important work carried out by these constituency groups, diversity has often been difficult to achieve at the highest levels of union leadership.

In 1995, the AFL-CIO Executive Council’s Committee on Full Participation, working with the federation’s Civil Rights Department, presented a report recommending specific proposals for leadership development, organizing activities and political action designed to increase the participation of women and minorities within their unions. These


6 Barriers I Report (Executive Summary).
suggestions included clear policies and model programs designed to foster not only a sense of inclusion but also concrete leadership opportunities. The report led to the adoption of an AFL-CIO resolution “Diversity and Full Participation” at the federation’s 1995 convention. (A copy is attached). Among the items included in that resolution was “work[ing] in cooperation with...affiliates and allied constituency organizations to increase the levels of participation of women, minority and younger members in all AFL-CIO-sponsored programs, events and activities.”

As noted above, many studies indicate that women and people of color are more likely to be receptive to joining unions than their white co-workers. In 2004, for example, the AFL-CIO’s Working Women’s Committee examined women’s attitudes toward unions, finding that women had been joining unions in far larger numbers than men for the past quarter century. As discussed more fully below, recommendations for action included recasting traditional bargaining issues as work and family issues; providing child care opportunities at union events and programs and developing family-friendly policies that allow women to participate in a broader range of union activities; increasing educational, mentoring and training opportunities and making structural changes to increase the number of women in leadership roles.

In 2005, a commissioned report on “Overcoming Barriers to People of Color in Union Leadership” was presented to the AFL-CIO Executive Council by its Civil and Human Rights Committee. These studies reported the results of extensive surveys of leaders within these groups, as well as of union members more generally. Not surprisingly, as discussed in more detail below, they indicated that organizing campaigns were more likely to succeed if the lead organizers looked like the workers being organized and if the issues they presented were of special relevance to the particular group. Recommendations for action included leadership development and training, as well as expanded mentoring opportunities. Such goals ensure that future union leaders reflect the current face of the workforce rather than an entrenched white male visage of the past.

Barriers I Report, pp. 5-6.
The AFL-CIO has taken additional steps to change the composition of its governing bodies to more closely resemble the racial and gender diversity of its membership. The federation’s Executive Council expanded to include elected representatives of the constituency groups as well as other elected union representatives. The federation strongly supported studies examining leadership paths within unions and recommending policy changes within affiliated unions, as well as the federation itself. Changes were made in 2005 to the AFL-CIO Executive Council to add additional seats to further diversify the composition of the federation’s governing body.8

The AFL-CIO constitution was also amended in 2005 to adopt a policy supporting racial and gender diversity among the governing bodies of unions affiliated with the federation, including a policy that required affiliated unions to ensure that their delegations to the convention “generally reflect the racial and gender diversity of its membership.” (See Constitutional Amendment 3: “Promoting Greater Gender and Racial Diversity in the Federation’s Governing Bodies.” A copy is attached to this paper). A report issued by the Labor Coalition for Community Action (LCCA), an umbrella organization of the constituency groups, called specifically for an increase in leadership diversity in a “Unity Statement” issued at a 2005 National Summit on Diversity. (A copy is attached).

Concrete Proposals to Promote and Achieve Diversity

I. Proposals to Increase and Activate Women

The 2004 “Barriers I” report utilized opinion polling over a seven year period and evaluated studies of union organizing efforts and women’s attitudes toward unions. Focus groups composed of working women of diverse occupations and racial

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8 AFL-CIO candidates for the Executive Council are elected at the federation’s annual convention. The AFL-CIO constitution provides, *inter alia*, that any slate of candidates presented to the convention during the process of nominating Board candidates “devote no fewer than 15 positions to carrying out the commitment to an Executive Council that is broadly representative of the diversity of the membership of the labor movement, including its women members and its members of color.” (See attached documents).
backgrounds were also used to determine how women view their workplaces and the role of unions. Additionally, women in elected and appointed union leadership positions at 18 international unions were asked to identify problems or barriers that impeded the integration of women into top positions.

Some of the survey and focus group data showed that women generally have positive attitudes about unions, though those views had declined in more recent years.\(^9\) In some cases, nonunion women had more favorable views of what unions could do for workers, though both represented and non-represented workers expressed concern about whether unions could deliver on many promises of better job benefits. Many non-union women believed that unions were only relevant or active in the manufacturing arena, rather than in professional and white-collar jobs.\(^10\) On the other hand, a majority of these women workers held attitudes that in general indicated that unions could make gains with these women if they adopted certain changes in policy and communication approaches.\(^11\)

\(^9\) In 2003, 53% of women polled believed that unions were not “effective,” compared to only 44% in 1999, and only 38% identified themselves as having “positive” views of union. Ironically, during the same period, white men’s “positive” views of unions increased by 12%. Barriers I Report, p. 5.

\(^10\) \textit{Id.} at pp. 5-6. Paid family leave and equal pay and work hours were cited by many non-union women as reasons they would join a union. \textit{Id.} at p. 6.

\(^11\) Overall, about two-thirds of the women surveyed saw unions as having a key role in society, while 71% of women agreed that employees were more successful in the workplace where their problems were addressed and solved as a group. Fifty one percent of women
Overall, the survey results suggested that substantial work needed to be done to attract growing numbers of women to the union movement.

Women union leaders tied diversity in leadership to long-term union survival, particularly in light of the impact that diversity has on organizing successes and increased visibility of unions to potential female members. Most of these leaders expressed a "sense of urgency" about the need to advance women and saw continuing barriers that prevented women from entering and remaining in top positions. The recommendations contained in the report are summarized below:

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believed that unions were "innovative" and "able to change with the times," as compared to only 31% of male workers. Moreover, a majority of women favor workers over management in workplace-based disputes. Finally, women stated that they believed the most important reason for joining a union was to "protect individual worker rights on the job so they cannot be taken advantage of or discriminated against," and they felt more strongly about this than male co-workers. Barriers I Report, pp. 24-27.
Commitment to Advancing Women as Leaders: The report strongly endorsed policy changes that would integrate women into core union activities such as politics and organizing, rather than relegating them to "women's departments" or "fair practices committees" that are often marginalized (or viewed as such). It also called for staffing and funding support that would enable these departments to grow and promote active, ongoing programs. Other recommended policy changes included making high-level appointments of women in top leadership positions and hiring more women staff members at the international union level. Several women union leaders noted approvingly that some unions have nearly doubled the size of their executive boards to increase diversity and have also issued mandates requiring locals to send diverse representatives to conferences and other union programs. Some pointed to practices in other countries where proportional representation is required at many trade unions.\textsuperscript{12}

Supporting Internal Structures To Activate Women: Despite concern that "women's departments" could marginalized women, most leaders and activists strongly supported such offices and programs because of their unique ability to communicate with female members on key issues and to educate and recommend actions to increase participation at the local and international level. As noted in the Report, these structures "generally are responsible for surveying women members to identify the key issues of concern; creating plans for addressing and integrating [such issues] into the union's agenda; tracking women's participation in core union activities, primarily organizing and political mobilizing; developing local women's structures; coordinating women's conferences and trainings; and mentoring women's participation in leadership at all levels."\textsuperscript{13} However, absent adequate funding and staffing, such programs cannot serve the needs of women members effectively.

\textsuperscript{12} Barriers I Report, pp. 13-17. According to the Report, many unions outside the United States require that 30 to 50 percent of union leaders be women, with incremental increases over several years. Many international labor federations also insist on proportional representation requirements. \textit{Id.} p.17.

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Id.} p. 17.
Training and educational programs were deemed “highly effective” in developing women leaders and in recognizing the skill and involvement of those women who are active. It was strongly recommended that opportunities be greatly expanded to allow more women to participate in these programs, including annual conferences for women members and staff. Finally, union leaders were encouraged to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of training and other leadership development programs. Women union members were encouraged to demand accountability and transparency of the results.14

**Develop and Support Policies that Allow Work-Family Balance:**

Women surveyed cited work and family demands as a crucial obstacle to taking on increased union responsibilities.15 Not only were work and family issues of primary importance as potential organizing issues, but they were cited as barriers to more active union involvement. They strongly supported the creation of family-friendly policies to enable women leaders to develop or be able to increase their union involvement without sacrificing family obligations. Many unions do have such policies – such as family care leave, child care and other support systems – as do some employers, but there are clearly not enough of them in place across a wide spectrum of employment settings.16 Unions have taken strong pro-family leave positions in many bargaining and contract enforcement settings; however, a greater need for such policies clearly exists. Finally, it was pointed out that key union positions – such as organizers – often involve hectic and demanding travel schedules or out-of-town assignments that are simply not possible for many women with family responsibilities. Some women reported on innovative union approaches to this problem such as assigning organizers by region or in shifts or merging units or job responsibilities so that more women could share in these duties.

**II. Proposals to Increase and Activate Workers of Color**

14 *Id.* p. 17-19, 21.


16 Pregnancy leave options in apprenticeship programs was another suggested improvement that would benefit working women. *Barriers* I, p. 20.
The 2005 “Barriers II” report included survey results from elected or appointed union leaders of color from all industries, genders, ethnicities and sexual orientation. It also sought out the views of professionals working at labor education centers around the country. The union leaders (representing a nearly 50% response rate) talked about their own paths to leadership positions, their views on continuing obstacles faced by union members of color and their recommendations for continued improvement to the overall diversity picture. Learning center professionals added their own experiences from running training and educational programs over many years. These concerns and recommendations are summarized below:

**Mentoring and Leadership Training Programs:** Sixty percent of the union leaders surveyed reported that their path to leadership positions was supported and enhanced by mentoring programs, either formal ones or one-on-one relationships with union officers or other leaders. Clearly, such mentoring opportunities must be ongoing, not simply limited to initial union activities. Only a small percentage of these union leaders identified a formal or informal mentoring program currently being implemented by their unions. Thus, many leaders noted that even after achieving some type of leadership position, information about policies or administrative structures was not always equally disseminated to them or their colleagues in the group. On the other hand, 71% indicated that they had received information about leadership training opportunities, albeit not always in the most uniform manner. Financial assistance to attend training programs and other internal leadership development events was also identified as crucial to the success of such endeavors; 67% of those surveyed said that their unions did provide such support.  

17 Barriers II Report, pp. 5-6.

**Networking Opportunities:** Most unions now have officially recognized caucuses or other groups that permit people of color and women to discuss issues of concern within their union as well as in the larger workplace and community. These groups receive financial support from both the local and international unions. Ninety percent of the union leaders surveyed were active in such caucuses and 89% believed that they were essential to support and develop leaders from within these communities. Most unions with such caucuses hold annual or biannual meetings with varied conferences or workshops that focus on increased roles within their unions. Participation in the AFL-CIO constituency groups was also cited with great approval. Nearly 90% of those surveyed were actively involved in these groups and 74% held elected office, with financial support and active encouragement from their respective unions. All of these
groups also hold annual meetings and other education and training programs.

The final areas identified as vehicles for increased participation and leadership development were the various state labor federations and central labor organizations, although the percentage of leaders of color was substantially lower within those bodies. The AFL-CIO’s 1995 diversity resolution included a plan to encourage state and local labor groups to affiliate with the constituency groups to increase their participation. Ten years later, at least 25 state federations and 30 central labor bodies had enacted changes to their constitutions to accomplish these objectives. At its 2005 convention, the AFL-CIO adopted rules changes that made constituency group affiliation with these state and local labor organizations automatic, an action designed to further encourage leadership diversity.

**Overall union policies:** While a majority of surveyed leaders (58%) said that people of color within their respective unions were encouraged to seek office or apply for advancement, 64% complained that about the lack of a cohesive, ongoing national plan to achieve diversity and 67% expressed concern that they were not sufficiently involved in high level policy-making within their unions. Even though many leaders said that their unions had adopted a plan to increase diversity at all levels of the union, approximately half were not convinced it was currently a high priority. Many (75%) expressed the view that the AFL-CIO, as well as individual union affiliates, should adopt specific numerical requirements that promote diversity in delegates attending national conventions.

**“Affirmative Action” Efforts:** Labor educators participating in the survey also believed that lack of union affirmative action programs presented a significant barrier to people of color seeking union leadership positions. These concerns are particularly relevant as unions consolidate, and as jobs are lost, because potential candidates may “disappear” or be less able to achieve visible positions due to downsizing and/or reduced staff funding. It was argued that such programs could, if successfully implemented, reduce the influence of the “old boy’s networks” that still exist, as well as create visible role models for aspiring union leaders who are women or people of color. Even on less systemic levels, those surveyed suggested various steps to ensure successful leadership development, including (a) using instructors at workshops and training programs who are women and people of color; (b) involving community leaders in such programs and other

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18 *Id.* p. 10.
19 *Id.* p. 6.
20 *Id.* p. 9.
union outreach efforts; e) ensuring that training and mentoring opportunities are located in areas with substantial women and minority workers, offered at times when they might reasonably participate and provided at reasonable cost; (d) engaging in outreach that specifically targets these groups of workers and (e) reaching out to other unions to broaden access to potential leaders.

At the 2005 Diversity Summit sponsored by LCCA, participants identified best practices to improve diversity in union leadership, which echoed those made in the Barriers II Report. This group also urged a change to the composition of elected governance structures at every level. They strongly endorsed inclusion of women and minorities in "real union decision-making and actively pursuing a civil rights agenda." 21

**Legal Concerns Affecting the Composition of Elected Officers**

Unions must obviously comply with the nation’s civil rights laws, both in their capacity as employers and as worker representatives. Compliance with these laws has significantly increased over the past 40 years, and the number of unions accused of discriminatory practices has significantly declined. The push to diversify union governing structures, however, faces some hurdles not specifically addressed by civil rights statutes. These hurdles arise because elections to union office are generally governed by the Labor Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LMRDA), 29 U.S.C. §401, *et. seq.*, which was enacted to ensure democratic union elections.

Title IV of the LMRDA permits the establishment of “reasonable qualifications uniformly imposed” on union member eligibility to vote and to run for and hold office. 29 U.S.C. §481(e). 22 Regulations adopted by the Department of Labor (DOL) indicate that these terms are to be narrowly construed, citing *Wirtz v. Hotel, Motel and Club Employees Union, Local 6*, 391 U.S. 492, 499 (1968). 29 C.F.R. §452.36(a). Any restriction limiting the ability of union members to hold office must meet this requirement. In addition, DOL regulations specifically state that a union

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22 Section 401(e) of the statute provides: “In any election required by this section which is to be held by secret ballot a reasonable opportunity shall be given for the nomination of candidates and every member in good standing shall be eligible to be a candidate and to hold office (subject to section 504 of this title and to reasonable qualifications uniformly imposed) and shall have the right to vote for or otherwise support the candidate or candidates of his choice, without being subject to penalty, discipline, or improper interference or reprisal of any kind by such organization or any member thereof.” 29 U.S.C. §481(e).
may establish certain restrictions on the right to be a candidate on the basis of personal characteristics which have a direct bearing on fitness for union office.... However, a union may not establish such rules if they would be inconsistent with any other Federal law.

Thus, a union “ordinarily may not limit eligibility for office to persons of a particular race, color, religion, sex or national origin since this would be inconsistent with the Civil Rights Act of 1964.” 29 C.F.R. §452.46.

The DOL regulation cites Schultz v. Local 1291, International Longshoreman’s Assn., 338 F. Supp. 1204 (E.D. Pa. 1972), which held that union by-laws allocating positions along racial lines was an “unreasonable” limitation on the right of union members to be candidates for office and ruled that the language should be construed to ensure that such barriers do not exist. See also Donovan v. Illinois Education Assn., 667 F.2d 638 (7th Cir. 1982)(striking down union by-laws calling for 8% set-aside of seats in governing assembly for minority members). Cf. Dole v. AFSCME, 715 F. Supp. 1119 (D.D.C. 1989)(rejecting union by-law limiting eligibility for nomination to elective office to persons under age 65 as violative of the regulations which were required to be read “in harmony” with the ADEA).

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23 The author found no cases involving such a scenario. It can be argued that the DOL regulations would permit set-asides if they were properly justified as serving legitimate union interests, fostering broad participation in union affairs and providing a temporary process for elimination of present racial or gender imbalance. See, e.g., United Steelworkers v. Weber, 443 U.S. 193, 208-09 (1979)(upholding temporary voluntary affirmative action plan reserving 50% of training program openings for minorities to integrate an “almost exclusively white” workforce).
The Donovan court's concern was said not to be with racial discrimination but rather with the impact such a set-aside would have on the ability of union members to run for office under the LMRDA. In the court's view, there were no facts presented that would justify limiting the eligibility of some members to hold office because of the set-aside. Absent the presentation of concrete facts demonstrating systematic discrimination and/or longstanding and pervasive under-representation of minority group members, or some other evidence showing that the set-asides benefitted all members, the court was not willing to endorse restrictive eligibility requirements. 667 F.2d at 641-42. These court rulings effectively undercut numerous union affirmative action efforts directed at changing the face of elected leadership positions and have been viewed in the ensuing years as prohibiting set-aside efforts.

**Conclusion**

Notwithstanding the legal obstacles to elected officer set-asides, it is clear that the labor movement can pursue many other successful strategies to increase diversity in leadership. Indeed, it has a proud history of adopting many such approaches in recent years. It is important to note that the efforts undertaken by unions to foster diversity have, in fact, resulted in real and visible changes at all levels of leadership. The remaining task is to make those changes bigger and more permanent.

All of those surveyed for both “Barriers” reports agreed that women and people of color need to be visible at every level of union activity, not just marginalized in the civil rights department or specific caucuses. Often the most visible work of the union occurs in organizing and political action activities, and more women and workers of color need to be actively engaged in such work – assignments that are likely to directly affect the success of future union organizing drives. Specific outreach efforts must also be provided to ensure that these workers are in the “loop” about all union programs, activities and leadership opportunities. Increases in training opportunities and the

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24 Ironically, the minority set-aside rules did result in real changes to the Illinois Education Association’s leadership composition. When the rule was adopted, the IEA had no minority officers and none served on the union’s 50-member board of directors. By the time the rule was invalidated, the IEA looked very different – one of its top officers was black, the composition of the board was 15% minority and 8% of the union’s representative assembly was non-white. See Goldberg, “Affirmative Action in Union Government: The Landrum-Griffin Act Implications,” 44 Ohio State LJ 649, 649-650, 667-674 (1983). National Education Association (of which the IEA is a state affiliate) by-laws were changed after the Donovan ruling to require affiliates “to take steps as are legally permissible to achieve ethnic-minority representation...at least proportionate to its ethnic-minority membership.” Id. at 651, n.22.
commitment of sufficient funds and staff to ensure broad dissemination of information about them -- as well as support to take advantage of them -- are a matter of financial and political will.

Requiring AFL-CIO-affiliated unions to encourage diversity at every level, including delegations to annual meetings and conventions, will also have concrete benefits. Adoption of diversity principles (under development by the AFL-CIO’s Civil Rights and Working Women’s Committees) may also provide additional incentive to broaden the paths to leadership within unions. In the final analysis, decision-making that puts women and people of color at the forefront of organizing drives, political and community campaigns and other efforts to increase membership, as well as highlight the issues of concern to all workers, will create true diversity within the union movement.

The labor movement has much to be proud of in working to improve opportunities for all workers to prosper and achieve important economic and political gains. The fact that there is more to do does not mean there is failure; it simply means reinforcing longstanding labor movement commitments to dignity, justice and equal opportunity for all working people.

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Adopted by the AFL-CIO
Twenty-first Constitutional Convention
October 1995, New York, NY

Diversity and Full Participation

In keeping with the instructions of the 1993 Convention, the AFL-CIO through the work of the Executive Council's Full Participation Committee, has listened to the interests and concerns of union leaders and members in order to expand the discussion within the labor movement about the need to achieve greater participation and inclusion of women, minority and young union members at all levels.

As the labor movement changes in keeping with the evolving workforce, it is essential that these workers continue to see unions as organizations that provide the best opportunity for them to have a powerful voice in the workplace and in the community and that their unions welcome their participation and activism.

Consistently, members' own words have supported the federation's studies showing that minorities, women and younger members—who make up the fastest growing numbers of new entrants in the workforce—are substantially more likely to see unions in a positive light and to vote for a union in an organizing drive.

Union members have spoken about the importance of more active recruitment and training of leaders, the significance of greater visibility for minority, women and young members in union activities and as representatives of their organizations, the importance of recognizing and overcoming the barriers to participation and the value of stimulating and encouraging change throughout the ranks of the labor movement with the strong support of clear policies and dedicated leadership.

The AFL-CIO Executive Council in its policy statements has established plans for action by the federation to review its structures and programs at the national, state and local level and to work with its affiliates in efforts to achieve full participation.

The national AFL-CIO will work with its state federations and local central labor bodies and its constitutionally established trade and industrial departments to assist them in taking every appropriate action to broaden the opportunities for women and minorities to take part in their structures, activities and programs and to rise to leadership at every level.

The federation will also assist the state and local central bodies in developing greater opportunities for participation by the AFL-CIO-supported constituency groups that represent women and minority workers in the labor movement.

Drawing on the experience and knowledge of its affiliates, the AFL-CIO will frame programs to assist and advise unions and state and local central bodies in their efforts to recruit and train leaders from among historically under-represented groups of workers and to encourage
more women, minorities and younger members to step forward to take an active role and voice in their own organizations.

The AFL-CIO will continue to encourage and assist affiliates as they pursue their own affirmative action programs to hire, train and promote qualified women, minority and younger workers for all positions in their organizations.

The AFL-CIO will work in cooperation with its affiliates and allied constituency organizations to increase the levels of participation of women, minority and younger members in all AFL-CIO sponsored programs, events and activities.
Diversity Principles
Submitted by the Working Women’s Committee and the
Civil and Human Rights Committee
03/02/05

1. **Diversity in Convention Delegations**

   The Executive Council should request that all delegations to the AFL-CIO Convention in July 2005 reflect the composition of the affiliated organization on the basis of race, ethnicity and gender. Delegations to future AFL-CIO Conventions shall include representation by people of color and women at least in proportion to their representation in the membership of the affiliated union. Affiliates are urged to include delegates under the age of 35 in the delegation.

2. **Diversity on AFL-CIO Governing Body**

   The composition of the AFL-CIO governing body with regard to representation of women and people of color, shall be no less than its current level and shall achieve a higher level of diversity by the 2009 AFL-CIO Convention.

3. **State and Local Labor Bodies**

   State Federations and Central Labor Councils shall immediately develop a plan to achieve an increased level of diversity and submit a progress report on an annual basis to the National AFL-CIO.

4. **Leadership Development**

   The AFL-CIO shall direct the National Labor College to develop and offer courses for the purpose of leadership and skill development for women and people of color and shall facilitate the sharing of best practices in training programs among affiliates. Affiliates are urged to provide leadership and skill development training to women and people of color and are encouraged to open training programs to members of other affiliates.

5. **Accountability**

   The AFL-CIO, affiliates and state and local labor bodies shall report yearly to the AFL-CIO governing body on the representation of women and people of color as elected leaders and staff leadership at all levels of the organization.
UNITY STATEMENT

A. Philip Randolph Institute
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance
Coalition of Black Trade Unionists
Coalition of Labor Union Women
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement
Pride At Work

The six constituency organizations of the AFL-CIO met on January 15, 2005, in Los Angeles during the annual Martin Luther King Jr. conference. We are working with the AFL-CIO to convene a Full Participation Conference in July 2005 in Chicago, immediately before the AFL-CIO National Convention.

We wish to express our collective views about the future of the United States labor movement and to voice the concerns of organizations representing people of color, women and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) workers within the labor movement, the groups who represent the new majority within the American workforce.

We are united in our commitment to build a strong, democratic labor movement in the United States, one that represents the hopes and aspirations of all working people for social and economic justice. We believe that there is a crisis within the American labor movement. Declining union density, intensified government and corporate attacks on workers and on our standard of living, policies of free trade, outsourcing, privatization, attacks on social programs, and union busting threaten workers of all colors.

We reject the policies of discrimination, racism, sexism, and homophobia that are being perpetrated by the right wing and by conservative political leaders. We support multiracial unity, working-class solidarity, and the full democratic participation of all in the pursuit of progress and prosperity.

1. Full Participation

The leadership of the American labor movement at all levels must represent the rich diversity of the American workforce. While there has been some progress over the years, the leadership within most unions, especially at the highest decision-making levels, does not reflect the diversity of its membership. This presents a problem as unions attempt to represent the interests of all of their members. We are concerned about the continuing lack of diversity among various leadership bodies within the AFL-CIO, affiliated unions, state federations, central labor councils, and local unions. We are also concerned about the proposals to drastically reduce the size of the AFL-CIO executive council without a strong commitment to maintain and increase diversity. Representation of constituency groups must be ensured.
2. **Organizing**

The central challenge facing the American labor movement is to organize the unorganized. The vast majority of the most successful organizing campaigns in the country have involved people of color and women. Studies have shown that people of color and women are more likely to support union organizing campaigns than other workers.

Yet those responsible for organizing decisions and for leading organizing campaigns frequently do not include people of color and women. Also, the tremendous challenge to organize people of color in the South, in the Southwest, and in diverse urban areas lacks adequate support and resources. The labor movement should not assume that nonunion workers lack any organization. Indeed many workers of color and immigrant workers participate in their community through civic, religious, and other forms of "identity-based" organizations that are potential allies of the labor movement. Time and attention to cultivate labor and community alliances to support organizing are crucial. The constituency organizations are uniquely positioned to build strong, enduring bridges of solidarity between unions and civil rights, religious, women's, immigrant, minority and LGBT organizations.

We need to strengthen industrial targeting and multi-union organizing campaigns to maximize the strength of the labor movement. We must ensure the inclusion of people of color and women in all decision-making processes to organize the unorganized.

3. **Legislative and Political Action**

We support a strong, unified labor movement that works as one to elect politicians who are held accountable for aggressively advocating for and implementing a working people's agenda. Communities of color and women have traditionally maintained a much more progressive voting record than others. Unions should continue to invest resources to register, mobilize, and turn out voters in communities of color and in union households. People of color and women must be involved in all levels of decision making with regard to political action.

All efforts to block or dilute political participation among communities of color must be aggressively opposed by the U.S. labor movement. Efforts to demonize and/or scapegoat people of color, women, LGBT, and immigrants must be exposed and resisted. Unions must continue to work in coalition with allies to defend and expand voting rights for all Americans and demand greater access and protections for the basic right to vote.
4. **Civil, Human, and Women’s Rights**

The U.S. labor movement must defend and expand a comprehensive agenda for civil, human, and women’s rights. While we support the focus on organizing and political action, these cannot be separated from a strong civil, human, and women’s rights agenda. The civil, human, and women’s rights agenda must include:

- An end to all racial discrimination at the workplace and defense of affirmative action;
- An end to all gender discrimination at work, support for pay equity, and an end to violence against women;
- Full labor rights, legalization, and comprehensive immigration reform for all immigrants and a repeal of employer sanctions;
- Access to all rights and protections of civil society for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender workers.

5. **Globalization**

We demand an end to policies of free trade and corporate-dominated globalization. The policies of corporate domination have exacerbated economic inequality and promoted a race to the bottom. Economic inequality has had a particularly devastating impact on the developing world, especially in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. We oppose global exploitation and global racism. We support the expansion of global labor solidarity. We support freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of forced labor, the abolition of child labor, and the elimination of discrimination in the work place (the core principles of the International Labor Organization.)

In conclusion, we believe that “Full Participation” is more than a worthwhile slogan. In order to achieve the potential of a strong, unified labor movement, we must all fully participate in governance and the development of labor’s agenda. The constituency organizations of the AFL-CIO are eager to work side by side with union leaders to organize, educate, and empower all workers. Building a more powerful and more inclusive labor movement requires labor’s commitment to diversity, and active implementation of full participation.
Constitutional Amendment 1

Expanding the General Board

Article XI of the AFL-CIO Constitution establishes a General Board, comprised of all of the members of the Executive Council and the principal officer of each affiliated national or international union, the principal officer of each trade and industrial department and regional representatives of state central bodies. The General Board meets upon the call of the president or the Executive Council and decides all policy questions referred to it by the executive officers or the Executive Council.

The proposed amendment would expand the General Board to include a representative of each national constituency organization and allied retiree organization recognized by the AFL-CIO. Currently, there are six recognized constituency organizations: the A. Philip Randolph Institute, the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, the Coalition of Labor Union Women, the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement and Pride at Work. There is one recognized allied retiree organization: the Alliance for Retired Americans.

In addition, the amendment would expand the General Board by adding regional representatives of area and central labor councils, just as the General Board now includes regional representatives of state federations. These new representatives, like representatives of trade and industrial departments, would each be entitled to one vote.

Therefore, the Executive Council proposes the following amendments to Article XI, Sections 1 and 4:

Amend Article XI, Sections 1 and 4 to read as follows:

1. The General Board shall consist of all of the members of the Executive Council and the principal officer of each affiliated national or international union, the principal officer of each trade and industrial department, a representative of each national constituency organization and allied retiree organization recognized by the Federation and regional representatives of the state, area and local central bodies selected by the Executive Council pursuant to a system promulgated by the Council.

4. Questions shall be decided in accordance with the applicable provision of Article IV, Section 18 with the principal officer of each affiliated national or international union casting votes in the number of its members, the principal officer of each department casting one vote, the representative of each constituency organization and allied retiree organization casting one vote and the regional representatives of the state, area and local central bodies casting one vote each.

[The rest of the Section remains unchanged.]
require the affiliation of AFL-CIO constituency groups. These groups, under the umbrella of the Labor Coalition for Community Action, are vehicles for women, people of color and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender workers to make their voices heard;

■ Urge affiliated national unions to sign a set of diversity principles, to be developed by the Civil Rights and Working Women's committees and approved by the Executive Council, and provide for affiliated national unions to report annually on the representation of women and people of color in their membership as well as in staff and elected leadership positions at all levels. Require the AFL-CIO Executive Council and other governing bodies as well as state federations and central labor councils to develop targeted levels of leadership diversity and plans to reach them by the 2009 Convention;

■ To ensure diversity at the highest levels of the AFL-CIO, representatives of the six constituency groups should be added to the federation's General Board; measures to ensure and enhance gender and racial diversity on the Executive Council should be strengthened; and the Executive Committee should include representatives who ensure diversity by race and gender; and

■ Propose and actively support any amendments to the AFL-CIO Constitution that may be needed to implement these policies.

America's union movement must stand as a model of full inclusion. We cannot ask more of broader society than we are willing and able to do ourselves. We cannot build a better future for working families without the full strength brought by brothers and sisters of every description. In our hiring, organizing, representation, outreach and leadership, the union movement must embody our goal of equal welcome and equal opportunity for all.
A Diverse Movement Calls for Diverse Leadership

Submitted by the AFL-CIO Executive Council

At the merger of the AFL and CIO 50 years ago, America’s union movement recognized we are stronger when we are united and inclusive. In the tumultuous years that followed, the new labor federation became a close partner of the civil rights movement, and nine years after the merger we were key to passage of the landmark Civil Rights Act. We also were instrumental in passage of the Equal Pay Act of 1963 to protect working women from wage discrimination. Since then, the union movement has spoken out for equality for all people regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, faith, age, sexual orientation, disability or immigrant status.

But beneath the highlights of our fight for justice in the workplace and American society, the vestiges of a divided past remained. Throughout our history, the union movement has struggled to remove the remnants of our own “-isms” as well as those of the broader society.

That struggle continues today. Despite decades of progress, the union movement acknowledges we have not met our goals: that unions must reflect the diversity of our communities and union movement leadership must reflect the diversity of our members. In too many cases, women and people of color still are underrepresented among union leadership. It is understandable that many women and people of color—the workers who are among those with the most to gain from union membership and who are most actively organizing today—do not feel welcome.

It is incumbent upon the union movement to stand before employers and governments in every part of the world as a model of openness, fairness and opportunity. We will not allow women, people of color, gay or lesbian workers or brothers and sisters with disabilities to be denied the fruits of their labor in the workplace. We cannot be less vigilant and demanding of ourselves. Building a stronger union movement to improve the lives of working families will require all of us, working together. If we fail to hear every voice and to speak for every worker, we all are weakened.

In 1993, the AFL-CIO formed a Full Participation Committee, which in 1995 reported on the need for more active recruitment and training of leaders and the importance of greater inclusion of people of color, women and young members in union activities and as representatives of their organizations. It also highlighted the need to recognize and overcome barriers to participation and to support sound policy and dedicated leadership that would work toward achieving change. When the current executive officers were elected in 1995, they expanded the Executive Council to include more women and people of color at the very top ranks of America’s labor movement. The 1995 report of the Full Participation Conference recommended that unions develop leadership education and training programs for our diverse membership and that we develop policies and practices to foster diversity in staff hiring, appointments, program assignments and delegate status to achieve full participation.

Last year, the AFL-CIO’s Working Women’s Committee conducted research on the factors deterring women from joining unions and becoming more involved as leaders and activists. That
study, released in March 2004, found women had been joining unions in larger numbers than men for the past 25 years and union election campaigns were more likely to succeed among predominantly female workforces or if the lead organizer was a woman. Nonetheless, unions were losing ground with working women: Polling showed women's favorable attitudes toward unions declining. The Overcoming Barriers to Women in Organizing and Leadership report recommended investments in reaching out to working women; recruiting and training more women organizers; focusing on traditional economic issues for women such as equal pay, work hours and balancing work and family; and demonstrating that unions work effectively for working families. The study also found women perceived a lack of commitment among union leaders to advancing women and increasing the ranks of women labor leaders would require structural changes in union leadership, training, mentoring and accountability measures.

The AFL-CIO's Civil Rights Committee recently commissioned a study by Silas Lee, Ph.D., of Dr. Silas Lee and Associates, on overcoming barriers to full participation by people of color in today’s labor movement. Preliminary results show the barriers identified by unionists of color are strikingly similar to those noted in the Overcoming Barriers to Women in Organizing and Leadership report:

- Many people of color perceive that union organizations lack the commitment to address their concerns and open paths to leadership. It is common to hear that people of color consider themselves taken for granted by the union movement, being seen as a reliable support base requiring little investment.

- Leadership is dominated by white males and often is seen as entrenched and closed to entry by people of color.

- There are limited means to identify, train, mentor and open doors to future leaders of color at all levels of the union movement. Although people of color are most likely to join unions and to report in surveys they would join a union tomorrow if given the choice, the increase in the numbers of African Americans, Asian American and Pacific Islanders, Latinos and other people of color among newly organized workers is not matched by an increase in representation at leadership levels.

To live up to the values that fuel our work for working families, to build a stronger union movement and to ensure that union solidarity embraces all brothers and sisters, we must act decisively to ensure diversity at every level and hold union organizations accountable to diversity standards. We must go beyond acknowledging where we fall short and move into full and committed action. Specifically, we will:

- Increase training and leadership development of state federation and central labor council leaders and staff to build capacity among a diverse group of leaders in our movement;

- Accelerate our efforts to attract and recruit a diverse pool of young people into the labor movement through Union Summer and targeted public outreach;

- Establish as federation policy that each national and international union and organizing committee's credentialed delegations to the AFL-CIO Convention shall generally reflect the racial and gender diversity of its membership and urge affiliates to include young workers as delegates;

- Require diversity in participation at AFL-CIO-sponsored and -supported conferences and trainings;

- Make the AFL-CIO itself a model of hiring and promotion practices for women and people of color;

- Expand the preliminary work done through the Union Cities and New Alliance processes to fully integrate the AFL-CIO constituency groups into state federation and central labor council programs and leadership. Amend the federation's rules governing these organizations as needed to
CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT 3

Promoting Greater Gender and Racial Diversity in the Federation’s Governing Bodies

The proposed amendment would make four changes to the federation’s governance structure to continue and build on our progress and better ensure the federation’s governing bodies reflect the gender and racial diversity of the membership of the labor movement.

First, the amendment would establish a policy that each national or international union’s delegation to an AFL-CIO Convention shall generally reflect the racial and gender diversity of that union’s membership. This policy would take effect at the federation’s next regularly scheduled convention (i.e., 2009 on the federation’s four-year Convention cycle). Unions would be expected to make every effort to ensure their AFL-CIO Convention delegations reflected the racial and gender diversity of their membership, recognizing that changes may be needed to their union’s approach for selecting or designating AFL-CIO Convention delegates in order to meet this requirement.

Second, the amendment seeks to build upon recent progress in diversifying the Executive Council by increasing by 50 percent the number of vice presidential positions that must be filled by women and people of color on any slate of vice presidential candidates presented to the Convention. Under the current language, adopted by the Convention in 1995, at least 10 seats on any slate must be filled by women and people of color; the proposed amendment would increase this requirement to 15 seats.

Third, the amendment would further express the federation’s commitment to an Executive Council that is broadly representative of the diversity of the labor movement, including women and people of color, by establishing this principle in the section of the Constitution authorizing the Executive Council to fill vacancies on the Council. The amendment directs the Executive Council to fill vacancies consistent with the federation’s goal of achieving racial and gender diversity on the Council.

Finally, the amendment would authorize the Executive Council to establish and fill up to three additional vice presidencies in order to increase the racial and gender diversity of the Executive Council. The vice presidencies established under this section would not be permanent seats, but would expire at the next regular Convention.

Therefore, the Executive Council proposes the following amendments to Articles IV and VI:

A. Amend Article IV, Section 4(a) by adding to the end the following: Each national or international union and organizing committee delegation shall generally reflect the racial and gender diversity of its membership.

B. Amend Article VI, Section 1(f) to read as follows: The Vice Presidents shall be elected by plurality vote, and the 51 candidates receiving the highest number of votes shall be elected. In the event of a tie vote, a second vote shall be taken only among the candidates whose tie prevented the election of 51 Vice Presidents. The candidates for Vice President shall be listed on the ballot in the order in which nominated. Any slate for vice presidential candidates
presented to the convention during the nomination process shall devote no fewer than 40 positions to carrying out the commitment to an Executive Council that is broadly representative of the diversity of the membership of the labor movement, including its women members and its members of color. Each ballot must, to be valid, be voted for 51 candidates for Vice President and must cast the full voting strength of the delegate or affiliate voting.

C. Amend Article VI, Section 4 to read: In the event of a vacancy in the office of Vice President by reason of death, resignation, or otherwise, the Executive Council shall have the power to fill the vacancy by majority vote of all its members for the remainder of the unexpired term, consistent with the Federation's goal of achieving an Executive Council that is broadly representative of the diversity of the membership of the labor movement, including its women members and its members of color.

D. Amend Article VI by adding at the end a new Section 5: In furtherance of the Federation's goal of achieving an Executive Council that is broadly representative of the diversity of the membership of the labor movement, including its women members and its members of color, the Executive Council may create up to three additional vice presidencies and fill these positions with individuals who will increase the racial and gender diversity of the Council. Such additional vice presidencies shall expire at the next regular Convention.