

FSW Function Report

Name and Title: LaSonia Simmons, Member

Name and nature of event/function: Coalition of Black Trade Unionist, Region 1 Conference: "Honoring Our Past, Strengthen Our Future"

Location and Date(s) attended: Rochester, NY August 15-18, 2013

What was the purpose/goal of the function?

The conference purpose was to gather all of Region 1 delegates to examine our past to prepare us for the road to our future. It was also a time to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the March on Washington . This year the issues were around voter suppression, Justice and Jobs.

What new things did you learn at the function?

There were 5 workshops or session that I attended besides three key note speeches and a Townhall meeting. At the " Moving Our agenda Forward", each participant was given a Community Organizing Toolkit from the National Latino Council. We learned about reframing a problem as an issue and who has the power to influence change. During the " You Look So Good" health workshop, we discovered that out of 57 new HIV cases in Monroe County, 7 were between the ages of 13-18. There was also discussion about hypertension in women.

There was a presentation from representatives of Region 1 CARAT(Community Action and Response Against Toxics) team. There was discussion around how-to survive during a natural or man made disaster. It also was some enlightenment around environmental racism. Another workshop was " Making Meetings Meaningful". We reviewed Robert's Rules and other elements of conducting a successful meeting.

The Session on "It takes a Village" was very powerful. It spoke upon the importance of mentoring our youth and no being afraid of them when we see them out in the community.

How can you apply what you learned to your union role(s)?

As a member, I can see how knowing proper meeting etiquette and rules are important for it to be effective and timely. The tool kit can be useful in building bridges and getting out our agenda as unions continue to be under attack.

How does your attendance at the function benefit members?

It benefits members because participants are able to bring back new information and perspectives that we are not aware of. It also gives attendees a chance to rejuvenate their fighting spirit to look out for the disenfranchised and disadvantage. It reminded everyone

that our issues on the whole are global and that we have to join together to push forward our cause for jobs, justices and equality.

If applicable, what action steps could be put in place to ensure continued benefit from the function (for instance, is there a program we could start, training we could do “in-house” for stewards, etc)?

It depends how radical we as a union want to be. Do we want to tackle voter suppression and Stand your Ground to build coalitions. We have to get our members to feel uncomfortable with he status quo.

What networking/contact value did this function have?

There were numerous local, national and international union presidents and executive board members in attendance at many of the workshops, sessions and at the Townhall meeting. Being that Rochester, NY hosted the event , Our members that volunteered and attended the Conference was able to put our Union out in the forefront.

Would you recommend FSW attendance at this function in the future? Why or why not?

Yes, I believe that anyone who can attend , should attend. The diversity was awesome. The ideal exchanged was at times challenging but good for getting a concise message out about the heart and soul of union workers.

For completion by Ginnie:

Cost of function: \$_____