

Labor & Civil Rights

Celebrating and Restoring the Historic and Powerful Alliance of Labor and Civil Rights for Racial Justice and Economic Opportunity



In America today there is a pervasive and politically destructive myth that economic progress and social justice for African Americans will inevitably lead to losses for already stressed white workers, their families, and the middle-class communities in which many live and send their children to school.

This dangerous myth, which our history of postwar, middle-class expansion has proven false¹, is often as much perpetuated by the liberal left as the conservative right. Unless and until it is effectively challenged and discredited, it will continue to be a prevailing narrative driving much of our polarized political discourse. And it will remain a major obstacle to building the multiracial power needed to combat debilitating racial segregation in housing and schools; enduring discrimination in work and wages; rising economic inequality and shirking middle-class opportunity experienced by people of all colors and backgrounds.

This proposal looks to the successful strategies, leaders and heroes of our recent past and the stark and shameful disparities of today to make a case for a new narrative and renewed effort to strengthen our organizations, broaden our alliances and further our ability to reverse the dangerous and destabilizing trends harming all Americans.

Building One America and its allies in labor and civil rights propose a joint program of organizing, education, training, and action around policies to reduce economic inequality and advance racial justice in housing, schools and jobs, and to build power for our common mission of creating a society of inclusive middle-class opportunity.



The recent attention to both economic inequality and racial injustice should not be another excuse for divisive identity politics among middle and working-class Americans. Instead, it is an opportunity to be seized upon to build more, not less, solidarity among working people of all colors by addressing both racial justice and economic opportunity as labor and civil rights leaders did so powerfully a half century ago. No two groups have been more damaged by the rightward backlash in American politics than the institutions of labor and civil rights. Their once powerful alliance has fractured under sustained assault from the wealthiest and most reactionary forces in the land, resulting in diminished power and harmful reversals of some of the most important social, political and economic advances of the past 75 years.

This proposal argues that for our organizing to be powerful enough it must be deliberately multiracial and go beyond the urban activists and self identified progressives to include working-class African Americans and residents of increasingly diverse, middle-class suburbs, where many union members live today. While outrage around racial injustice and frustration over economic inequality has spawned tremendous new energy, the established institutions of labor and civil rights must not cede their responsibility to nascent movements and emerging leaders, no matter how dynamic or promising. Despite significant challenges and set backs, it is labor and civil rights, and much of the faith community, that have the history, organizational infrastructure, self-interest and values that make them as relevant and as essential today as ever.

¹ The wage gap for black and white workers narrowed between 1947 and 1973 as African American employment, unionization, and incomes increased. But white workers wages rose steadily during this same period and only stagnated then fell as unions declined, black workers lost ground and the wage gap again widened.

Seizing the ‘moment’

Restoring the Historic and Powerful Alliance of Labor and Civil Rights for Racial Justice and Economic Opportunity

Introduction

In a recent Century Foundation report, Professor Paul Jargowsky observes: *Over the past year, scenes of civil unrest have played out in the deteriorating inner-ring suburb of Ferguson and the traditional urban ghetto of inner-city Baltimore... The riots and protests have sparked a national conversation about race, violence, and policing that is long overdue. Something important, however, is being left out of this conversation: namely, that we are witnessing a nationwide return of concentrated poverty that is racial in nature, and that this expansion and continued existence of high-poverty ghettos and barrios is no accident.*

The report, titled: *Civil Unrest, Architecture of Segregation the Concentration of Poverty, and Public Policy*, goes on to document that the number of persons living in high-poverty neighborhoods climbed 91% since 2000 (a trend well underway before the 2008 recession) and that African Americans - and especially African American children - have been and continue to be disproportionately represented in these ghettos with enormous, destructive and long-lasting consequences for individuals, families, communities, and the nation.

Building One America argues that the continued existence and acceleration of racial segregation and the concentration of poverty have played a major role in driving economic inequality for all Americans and fueling racial polarization, while strengthening a reactionary, anti-worker political agenda that benefits Wall Street investors and anti-union corporations.

It further submits that the labor movement must restore its historic commitment to a multiracial working and middle-class struggle that is against segregation and poverty and for full inclusion for all working people – including low income African American’s - in all industries, trades and leadership positions.

And it must do this in coalition with likeminded groups that can mobilize multiracial grassroots community leaders from congregations, local government, civil rights organizations, and local unions to defend workers in the public sector while fighting for a massive expansion of inclusive middle-class jobs, especially in the building and construction trades.

Building One America

For the past 6 years, Building One America has struggled to build a powerbase strong enough and sustainable enough to challenge some of the most intractable and chronic problems plaguing America: rising inequality, economic disparities and diminishing opportunities for poor, middle and working class Americans.

At the center of this crisis has been the shifting but enduring legacy of ghetto poverty in our urban centers, racial segregation in housing and schools and the deep and growing gap in economic mobility and life outcomes effecting education, income, incarceration, and even mortality rates - all too often pre-determined by place, race and class and exacerbated by urban abandonment, suburban sprawl and regional fragmentation.

While African American families trapped in our most distressed communities are the hardest hit, working people of all races and backgrounds (including working class whites and many recent immigrant groups) in both cities and middleclass suburbs are all weakened by the growing spatial and social divisions of our society.

BOA has effectively and successfully expanded this conversation and broadened support for this struggle by engaging a larger swath of Americans, including middle and working class whites and other ethnic groups who have been deeply harmed by these same forces of inequality along with African Americans who are still disproportionately and adversely impacted by segregation, discrimination and poverty.

Much of BOA's work has focused on increasingly diverse middle and working class suburbs where regional disparities and increased economic stress motivate middle-class people of all colors to find common ground around place-based issues impacting their families and communities like the quality of schools, local tax rates, public safety, basic services, infrastructure improvements and jobs.

While BOA's constituency has historically been from congregations, towns, and school districts led by clergy, local elected and civic leaders, BOA's work has included powerful relationships with labor unions mostly at the regional and state level. Our relationships with organized labor have been practical, political and based on our shared values.² We have drawn on them for funding and as allies for their influence and political muscle. But we have not fully explored or fully developed this relationship and the potential for far greater power, support and strategic coordination that could come from a more formal and ongoing relationship based on shared goals, intersecting interest, history and power.

With the relationships built over the years with labor unions at the local and national level, and with the increased attention being paid to the issues of economic inequality and racial justice, it seems that we have an opportunity to seize the 'moment' and bring these forces together for a breakthrough.

² There's been a convergence of interest between BOA and labor unions around issues and politics. BOA advocates for vastly increased infrastructure investment, BOA fights for school funding that rewards diverse but struggling school districts and BOA defends the public sector and local government. BOA takes a deliberately bipartisan approach to dealing with federal and state policy makers. A growing number of unions take a similar view as: a) labor leaders become increasingly frustrated with the anti-labor positions of many Democrats who take labor support for granted; b) Republicans dominate many state legislatures and Congress; and because c) the political polarization and hard ideological lines we see at the national and state level tend to be much less in local communities - especially in middle and working class suburbs where many union members live and are less rigid about partisan politics. And Building One America's vision for a fully inclusive society and expanding middle-class opportunity for all people is consistent with the American labor movement's history and values.

A moment about the 'moment'

America may very well be reaching a critical 'moment' – an historical juncture where cultural, political, and historical forces seem to be intersecting to create a rare opening where Building One America's core issues of combating segregation and expanding economic opportunity are back on the table and in the public realm. But history shows us that these 'moments' can be deceiving and even dangerously misleading.

Even if these powerful cultural and political forces constitute a true 'moment' in America, they in no way guarantee any real action or meaningful progress. In fact, all these positive signs and increased attention from those in power might have the unintended effect of lulling us into inaction and infecting us with the hope and faith that someone else will do something. We have seen 'moments' before – after Katrina, Rodney King and the Kerner Report...or the election of first Black President.



'Moments' don't cause action; they only create opportunities for action and action requires hard work and political power.

Building One America has some important and powerful assets and resources that make it uniquely situated to take advantage of the 'moment'. We have on our board and among our allies some of the most dynamic and highly respected civil rights leaders, academics, litigators, historians and advocates who are 'torchbearers' for the vision of Dr. Martin Luther King. We have a base of grass roots and grass tops leaders including those in increasingly diverse

suburbs. We have capacity and experience in effective leadership training and organizing and we have an analysis that is compelling, unifying and fact based.

However, this 'moment' will flame out unless we apply the lessons of all successful social movements. Being right is not enough. The convergence of political and historical forces is not enough, no matter how well aligned they may seem, without: 1) a compelling vision and a moral cause; 2) credible, trained leadership 3) well-financed and independent political power; and 4) sustained, controversial and provocative actions that 5) targets key public policy decision makers.



Labor and Civil Rights - a mutually reinforcing power relationship

A recent book by William P. Jones - *The March on Washington: Jobs, Freedom, and the Forgotten History of Civil Rights* highlights the pivotal role of organized labor in providing the political, financial and institutional power of the American civil rights movement and the central role of A. Philip Randolph in sustaining and organizing the movement over the course of three decades.

In examining this all but forgotten history it becomes clear that it was not only labor that provided much of the political and people power for one of America's most transformational social movements. Civil rights and black led labor organizations

(particularly the National Negro Congress, NAACP, the Sleeping Car Porters Union, the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and later the Negro American Labor Council) provided the critical support for a greatly expanded, multiracial industrial labor movement.

Despite internal resistance, friction, and tensions within labor and the civil rights communities, a mutually reinforcing power relationship emerged, thanks largely to Randolph and his allies. It peaked sometime between 1955 and 1964 when both were at the apex of their unity and national influence. But shortly after the passage of 1964 Civil Rights Act a backlash began that continues to this day, a backlash that has eroded the gains and the power of *both* movements.



After the march and toward the end of his life, Randolph became increasingly concerned with two related problems - problems that weakened African Americans' power in unions and helped create the conditions for the current backlash. First, new forms of automation and labor-saving technologies increasingly threatened many of the gains of organized labor for African Americans. These changes had already begun to shrink the manufacturing base that grew during and immediately after World War II. Blacks, who had not yet broken through the racial

barriers in many of the trades, were now rapidly losing ground in the manufacturing industries that had created middle-class opportunities and unionized millions of black workers.

The sudden and precipitous economic displacement of these last hired first fired workers would lead to new forms of Jim Crow, the political and economic isolation of black families, *and* a corresponding decline of a powerful labor movement.

Randolph prophetically warned: *"Negroes may wind up not only as unskilled and unemployed, if not unemployable, but as the forgotten slum proletariat in the black ghettos of the great metropolitan centers of the country, existing within the grey shadows of a hopeless hope."*

Second, a growing ideological and strategic drift toward black nationalism and away from multiracial coalitions among many in the civil rights leadership bolstered anti-civil rights forces within the labor movement and weakened ties between organized labor and the African American struggle.³

Randolph understood that to liberate black people from the chains of Jim Crow and lift *all* working people to a middle-class life would require a powerful, unified and racially integrated labor movement - a labor movement that fully included African Americans in all levels of leadership and membership in all crafts and industries. The closer the American labor movement got to that ideal, the more powerful it became and the more successful it

³ The un-tethering of this "grand coalition" is most clearly reflected in the popular rewriting of civil rights history an alliance of northern liberal whites supporting southern black clergy and church members.

became at defending rights and expanding middle-class opportunity for *all* working men and women. And this *included the fight against segregation, inequality, and racial oppression.*

Segregation and the anti-union agenda

Dr. Martin Luther King, in reflecting upon the fierce resistance to desegregation during the Montgomery Bus boycott wrote that, *“the underlying purpose of segregation was to oppress and exploit the segregated, not simply to keep them apart.”* This powerful insight is no less true today than it was in 1955.

King saw that where there was segregation there was a powerful profit motive both in keeping working people divided and disorganized and in the many ways, often unseen, that racial segregation creates opportunities for the economic exploitation of workers, voters, renters, homebuyers, commuters and consumers.



Today, there are countless insidious ways in which our increasingly divided society produces new and creative opportunities for the exploitation of working people and their communities. There are millions of dollars made in the ghetto's for-profit poverty housing market. There are billions being made in the privatization of public sector institutions and government services, including the charter school industry, private prisons, and private for-profit colleges. ⁴

White flight, sprawl, and suburban fragmentation in many regions fostered a destructive race to the bottom for tax-base and jobs, resulting in non-union commercial development with tax giveaways and the proliferation of a low wage, anti-union big-box retail industry.

Rather than cause a backlash against a system that perpetuates concentrated poverty, deepens segregation, increases debt and lowers middle-class wages, corporate-backed media and political leaders have done an amazing job at using the inevitable failure of segregated schools and deep cuts in local government to further demonize public sector workers, school teachers and those local political leaders who are not anti-union or anti-government.

Most of our regions today are divided into three types of communities: 1) deeply distressed and racially segregated ghettos both urban and suburban; 2) increasingly diverse working and middle-class communities that are largely residential or older industrial suburbs (where many union members live); and 3) 'hoarder' communities. Opportunity hoarders are the spectacularly affluent enclaves where there are no poor children, where the tax base is high and the tax rates are low. You will find no charter schools in these communities, you will find very few potholes, collapsing bridges or broken sidewalks. And you will not encounter brutal or unaccountable police officers preying on their citizens

⁴ And over a trillion in middle-class wealth lost to the subprime mortgage lending industry - disproportionately impacting black borrowers and families in segregated or racially diverse communities.

with impunity to generate municipal revenue. You will also not find many union members living in these communities and few people of color.

This deeply divided society we live in today has been a disaster for working people and for the labor movement. It has created innumerable ways to fleece the middle-class and oppress the poor, and the social and economic tensions created by these divisions have been turned against unionized workers, especially those in the public sector and building trades.

Programs for the urban poor like Section 8, deep subsidies for high poverty schools and urban revitalization stoke resentment and reinforce racial stereotypes among middle-class taxpayers while enriching out-of-town owners and Wall Street investors of the for-profit housing industry, charter schools, and development agencies while at the same time creating and sustaining a local class of often anti-union *not*-for-profit advocates.

Suburbs, and especially the newer exurbs where many of the region's jobs have migrated to, have become increasingly hostile to organized labor. Development patterns, municipal competition and political trends in newer suburbs fuel an acceptance of a non-union low wage workforce and a near complete surrender to an anti-union environment in most retail and commercial industries, as well as all residential and most commercial construction.

While public sector unions, and especially teachers, have been the butt of the attacks, building and construction trade unions are also punished and weakened as government spending for infrastructure is deliberately and severely restrained.⁵

The obstructionists who block funding for roads and bridges are the same ones who attack public sector unions and support the privatization of government.

By keeping public spending for badly needed infrastructure at near starvation levels, building trade unions are weakened politically and economically. Their defense against efforts to gut prevailing wage standards is eroded and other efforts to reduce their leverage in both the public and private sector markets are diminished. Moreover, by keeping what should actually be an expanding labor market so stifled, union members are often forced to compete with each other for a shrinking job market and with more and more non-union, low-wage workers.

⁵ Many building trade unions have made significant progress over the years in diversifying their workforce and leadership but the constraints in the job market, especially since the recession, make it very difficult for this industry and their unions to become as inclusive as they can and should be.

Union work in construction and the building trades are some of the best jobs for opening a path to the middle-class for low-income workers of all colors. A much greater expansion of work in these fields to meet the real challenges of the country's infrastructure needs would greatly expand middle-class diversity and reduce poverty among all people. A 2013 study from the Economic Policy Institute by Algernon Austin showed that despite the perceptions and history of racial exclusion in many building trade industries, investments in infrastructure still disproportionately benefit African American and Latino workers either through direct employment or through indirect but related economic activity.

A strengthening of federal and state rules such as executive order 11246 and the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs would go a long way toward addressing racial justice and income inequity in America. And it would help to create a much broader and more diverse base of support for organized labor and for addressing the massive pent-up demand for publicly financed infrastructure.

Today's modern yet amazingly invisible apartheid state

In these same communities, each with their own self-reinforcing, corporate funded version of an anti-collective-bargaining ethos, there is perhaps an even more mystifying and stunning collective delusion going on: an almost complete acceptance of shocking levels of racial segregation and poverty concentration in schools and housing across metropolitan regions. In many regions the number of high poverty neighborhoods is growing, as are the numbers of poor people living in high poverty neighborhoods, disproportionately African Americans and children. Municipalities, neighborhoods, and school districts are often completely separate, and still very much unequal, 61 years after the *Brown* decision and 47 years after the Fair Housing Act banned residential discrimination based on race.

Perhaps most stunning to some is the particular brand of blindness and denial, not of the far right conservatives or the Republican establishment, but of the liberals and progressives whose concern for the poor and support for failed, politically unpopular and very expensive social programs seems only to reinforce the status quo. They are complicit either through their inability or unwillingness to name it or their collusion in supporting the discredited and repudiated dream that separate can someday be equal.

This baffling refusal to recognize and name what Thurgood Marshal, King, Randolph and the Supreme Court all recognized, that separate will never be equal, is perhaps the main reason the labor movement has been unable to effectively fight back. Without directly addressing racial segregation and the impact on children who have been relegated to communities with deep levels of generational poverty, we leave ourselves with no real answer to the dysfunction, pathology, violence, and inevitable



patterns of failure that folks living in ghettos are all too well aware of.

By pretending segregation is not happening or that it is somehow 'voluntary' we erode our own credibility with those who know better, and worse, we send a message that it is the isolated's fault, further reinforcing a reactionary analysis and the racist stereotypes that feed the current political climate.

Moreover, our unwillingness to name and challenge this morally repugnant system puts us at an unnecessary and dangerous moral disadvantage. Taking and holding the moral high ground is not telling our opponents that everything is all right in the ghetto. Nor does it mean to mimic their rhetoric about standards and accountability. Accusing our opponents of being 'union-busters' or not caring about teachers and firefighters doesn't embarrass them, doesn't make them feel bad and it doesn't attract allies or broaden our base of support among struggling middle-class property tax payers.

Taking the moral high ground is calling opponents what they are: enemies of working people and perpetrators of lethal apartheid in America. That would get people's attention, put our enemies on the defensive, and send their allies running for cover.

Some people might think that such a racialized approach would be too polarizing and too divisive. Dr. King never minced words when it came to describing the immorality and deadliness of Jim Crow segregation. His tactics named and exposed those who defended and perpetuated it and blamed those who had the power to dismantle it but chose not to. This did not pit the Civil Rights movement against all of white America, it pit the segregationist against the United States of America - and the segregationists lost.



How BOA can play a role in restoring these ties while building support for our work

While labor's enormous role in the civil rights struggle has been purged or diminished in popular culture and even scholarly history, unions themselves have not forgotten. They take great pride in their role in the March on Washington, in the supplies they sent to Selma and the checks they wrote to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. This is especially true of most public sectors unions: Teachers, Municipal, Transportation, and Postal Workers. But it is also true of Teamsters, Garment Workers, Hotel Workers, Retail Workers, Communication Workers, Food and Commercial Workers and the Auto, Steel and Mineworkers. The Building Trades have had a more problematic past with civil rights although few unions have an unblemished history when it comes to race. But there has been progress as African Americans at the local and even national level lead more building trades unions. However, all these unions have one thing in common today, which is they are losing power and are under attack.

To build solidarity, both Randolph and King repeatedly pointed out to their respective members and allies that *the same politicians who attacked unions were the same ones who opposed civil rights*.

It's no different today. Political leaders and their financial backers who are the enemies of integration are also the enemies of labor. The attack on public schools and teachers is only the most recent and obvious example. And the attack on public sector workers has had racial overtones for decades. The recent assault on unions in Wisconsin and the desperate response from labor is a glaring example of how anti-union attacks have further isolated unions from their historically broad base⁶ and their baffling inability to cast their cause as a moral one connected to civil rights and the middle-class.

⁶ On March 9, 2015 nearly 1,500 mostly black *Black Lives Matter* protesters demonstrated inside the Wisconsin state capitol over the shooting of an unarmed biracial teenager by a white police officer. The same day Governor Walker made Wisconsin the 25th state to adopt a "right-to-work" law despite protest from thousands of union members and their mostly white activist supporters who showed up only days before. Contrast that with Ohio, where AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Pierrette Talley engaged African American and

Building One America's experience over the past 6 years is that our own base of churches, universities, civil rights experts and advocates and local elected leaders is just not powerful enough on its own. It is in BOA's interest to be more closely aligned with powerful labor unions and their leaders and we believe it is in the labor movement's interest to work with BOA to fight for racial justice and economic opportunity.

Building One America is proposing to launch a strategic and coordinated campaign aimed at restoring the ties between labor and civil rights, training a significant number of new leaders to be effective in the public arena and move people into sustained and coordinated action around a campaign for racial justice and economic opportunity for all Americans.

This would be directed and coordinated by Building One America and its partners and allies in the labor and civil rights movement, working with local clergy, local elected leaders, and local union leaders in states and regions. Nationally, it would need support from national labor unions and some foundation and seek to coordinate with civil rights organizations especially members of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, the A. Philip Randolph Institute and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Leaders of these groups are direct outgrowths of the Civil Rights/Labor alliance and they occupy powerful positions in major unions across the country. They too are 'torchbearers.'

To do this BOA is proposing the following program

In 2016, BOA will host a series of regional forums aimed at celebrating and restoring the historic relationship between labor and civil rights.

These events will be used to:

1. Recruit and consolidate - consolidate our member congregations, organizations and elected leaders and attract new members. It will emphasize recruiting local unions who have been allies to become members and recruit new allies from the labor movement and other people based institutions.

2. Educate and agitate - it will have guest speakers including civil rights leaders, labor leaders and historians who can tell the story of America's labor and civil rights alliance as well as speakers and organizers who can provide a unifying analysis of what working people of all races face today, who is behind it and what they can and must do about it.

3. Raise money - BOA will use these events to secure dues from its own current and new members and secure contributions and membership fees from unions and other allies.

4. Recruit and train leaders - One of BOA's most valuable assets is its leadership-training program. These forums will be used to promote that program, recruit potential trainees, and secure their commitment to a five-day program in the spring.

5. Seek input and get buy-in to a policy agenda - Each forum will present the most salient and relevant policy agenda for that state and region. This will likely include:

civil rights leaders in the successful fight against Governor Kasich's anti union attack, reframing the fight as a racial justice as well as an economic struggle.

- Support for state level school and municipal funding formulas that promote diverse and inclusive schools, and neighborhoods and protect middle-class jobs.
- Federal and state housing policies and practices that promote mobility and regional opportunity and reduce segregation and poverty concentration.
- Support for a massive expansion of infrastructure investment at the state and federal level to promote inclusive jobs and incentivize inclusive communities.
- Fair and progressive revenue generation and allocation to reduce regional and economic disparities, support diverse communities and schools, and to save and create inclusive middle-class jobs.
- Increase in the minimum wage and fight back against efforts to weaken (and advance efforts to strengthen) collective bargaining rights.

6. Mobilize and Call to Action - The forums will prepare people to move into action around the issue agenda.

Late 2016 – leaders attend Building One America Leadership Training Institute

BOA's greatest tool for recruiting leaders, allies and members is also its most effective means for preparing them for organizing, fighting and winning - that tool is BOA's leadership training program. There is a demand for this training across the country and especially among emerging leaders in increasingly diverse communities and institutions such as congregations, labor unions and local governments where a wide power gap often exists between 'old guard' and new leaders who tend to be more reflective of changing demographics.

The training is designed to prepare individuals with strong leadership potential to be more powerful and effective advocates for themselves and their organizations. Moreover, it prepares them to work together in coordinated campaigns with Building One America and its allies in the labor and civil rights movements. The training itself focuses on the principles, tactics, strategies, and techniques of leadership and power in the public arena including topics such as organizing to build power, one on ones, listening for self-interest, analyzing and impacting power structures, and launching and winning strategic campaigns.

Several of BOA's national leaders are experienced and seasoned trainers and can call upon a network of colleagues to serve as additional faculty where needed. Moreover, the very training process itself helps develop new trainers and community organizers.

2016 -2017 – Local and regional actions

Leaders hold public meetings and conduct actions in key legislative and congressional districts to build support for a unified and coordinated campaign around infrastructure investment, good and inclusive jobs, fair housing, and fair school funding.

While these actions will leverage the political volatility and electoral competition in key districts and states they will be issue driven and not electoral or partisan political activity.

The scope and level of expectations of the issues campaign will depend largely on the success of the winter and spring fundraising and leadership and membership recruitment

efforts. Ideally, there will be at least one staff person per state and the number of states that participate beyond Pennsylvania, Ohio, and New Jersey will depend on national funding from labor unions and foundations.

☐ **Summer 2017 – National Labor / Civil Rights Summit**

BOA has held a national summit every two years in Washington, DC with participation from members of Congress and White House officials along with BOA policy experts, civil rights advocates and hundreds of local leaders including elected leaders from diverse suburbs and cities, clergy, civil rights leaders and labor leaders. These summits have focused on issues and policies to promote and support sustainable racial and economic inclusion in housing, schools, and jobs. BOA proposes that its next national summit be deliberately focused not only on the policies but the power needed to break through on the critical issues of social inclusion and middle-class expansion. The presidential elections will be behind us after a tumultuous political year in which rising income inequality and the parallel but intersecting issues of race will have been front, center, and just below the surface.

BOA proposes to leverage these powerful political and economic themes and engage some of the most important people's institutions in our country including labor, faith, civil rights, and local government from key regions around the country. The conference will launch a broad-based peoples movement aimed at building power, advancing a new and unifying civil rights narrative and taking action on an issue agenda that flows from that narrative to combat economic inequality, racial segregation and to promote inclusive communities and jobs.

Conclusion

Well-funded far-right politics continues to block efforts to fix our infrastructure, create jobs, or address our nation's most profound problems from racial segregation to climate change. Growing inequalities and persistent injustice have given rise to protests, media attention and electoral insurgencies, both progressive and reactionary. Without sustained organizing for a multiracial working and middle-class movement for justice, such 'moments' can produce more backlash than progress. Just as the labor and civil rights movements came together in the 1950s to act on the critical opportunities of their time we need to act together on the critical opportunities of *our* time to move toward greater inclusiveness, economic justice and power.



Building One America counts among its advisors, board members, and leaders some of the nation's top researchers, academics, advocates, litigators, authors, and speakers. It has some of the best organizers, experienced in the Alinsky tradition and skilled in the art of effective leadership training. And it has longstanding relationships with leaders of some of the most prominent and deeply rooted civil rights organizations.

Building One America has been able to take these relationships, skills, and resources and effectively bring them to bear organizing a multiracial and regional powerbase against the intractable issues of segregation, concentrated poverty, and economic inequality. With a deeper commitment and a stronger alliance with organized labor and civil rights groups we believe we can more successfully, meaningfully and enduringly take full advantage of the 'moment' we are in today in America.