

Labor & Civil Rights

Celebrating and restoring the powerful alliance of labor and Civil Rights for racial justice and economic opportunity

Ohio Labor Civil Rights Forum, May 6, 2016



The Labor Civil Rights Forum at Cleveland State University was a powerful demonstration

of the passion and commitment to build and strengthen a revitalized and unified labor and Civil Rights movement in Ohio.

The conference, attended by over 120 prominent labor and Civil Rights leaders from building trade, manufacturing, public sector, and service unions across the state, was ably moderated by Pierrette “Petee” Talley, Secretary-Treasurer of the Ohio State AFL-CIO and Professor Rob Kleidman of CSU.



The conference was framed as a conversation to explore the overlapping themes of racial injustice and economic inequality in an effort to create a unifying narrative around issues that impact *all* working people, families, and communities.



It began with a reminder from A. Philip Randolph Institute President, Clayola Brown of how the historic relationship between organized labor and Civil Rights produced some of the nation’s most important advancements for working people of all colors.

David Rusk, of Building One America showed how, despite gains since the March on Washington, dangerous civil and labor rights reversals have harmed many Americans and weakened both movements.

Using demographic and fiscal data, Rusk revealed how deepening segregation by race and class was at the heart of many of the most pressing issues impacting working families of all colors in cities and in suburbs, and how these same trends are used to weaken and attack organized labor in both the public and private sectors.

Marc Bayard, director of the Institute for Policy Studies’ Black Worker Initiative, highlighted the important role of African American workers and leaders in the labor movement historically and how

black workers, especially women, are key to a revitalized Labor Movement today.

Two panels of local leaders powerfully illustrated the relevance and validity of all three presentations and the urgency for a new narrative that unifies all three themes.



A powerful example of that unity was the recognition of Robert E. Richardson Sr., a national Vice President of LIUNA and President of the Cincinnati branch of the NAACP with the *E.D. Nixon Crossroads of Leadership Award*.

Edgar D. Nixon was the powerful NAACP leader in Montgomery, Alabama who recruited Rosa Parks and helped recruit the young Dr. King to lead the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Less well known was his leadership of A. Philip Randolph’s Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters Union in that city.



Like Robert Richardson, E. D. Nixon stood at the powerful intersection of labor and Civil Rights and when the time was right helped light the spark that transformed America.



Building One American and Building One Ohio want to thank the generous sponsors who

made this forum possible: Cleveland State University, The Laborers’ International Union of North America, Laborers’ Local 860, Ohio Education Association, Communications Workers of America District 4, The Laborers’ Local 265, The Ohio Laborers’ District Council, Ohio AFL-CIO, Ohio



Federation of Teachers, United Steel Workers of America District 1, Greater Cincinnati Building and Construction Trades Council, North Shore AFL-CIO Federation of Labor, Cincinnati Labor Council, A. Philip Randolph Institute, Municipal Foremen & Laborers Union Local 1099, Urban League of Greater Cleveland, Coalition of Black Trade Unionist.