



MINORITY LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

THE FOUNDATION

During the 1973 CWA Convention, extensive discussions were held on the methods by which CWA handled and resolved the problems of women and people of color in the union. While these groups of members represented a large percentage of our union membership, top leaders were predominantly white males.



**Claude Cummings, District 6
Vice President**

The National Executive Board held meetings to determine how CWA could begin to address this disparity and move forward as an inclusive union while embracing the diversity of all members. After discussions with rank and file members, in 1974 the National Executive Board adopted resolutions to establish the “Committee on Equity” (COE) and the “Concerned Women’s Advancement Committee” (CWAC). These committees were charged with determining how the National union could promote

diversity and identify ways to increase the involvement of women and members of color in CWA's leadership.

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CWA inched closer to its goal of fostering inclusion when a recommendation from the COE suggested the union create a training program devoted to educating women and members of color. After acceptance of the proposal, CWA founded the Minority Leadership Institute (MLI) in 1983 as a training and leadership development program dedicated to increasing and promoting the involvement of women and members of color at every level of our union.

Since 1983, over 100 men and women of CWA have completed the MLI training. Participants have sharpened their leadership skills, strengthened their commitment to trade unionism and shared unforgettable moments.

Graduates of the program can be found at all levels of the union as local activists and officers, National staff, and members of the National Executive Board. Thanks to MLI, the number of women and people of color in leadership roles has come closer to mirroring the demographics of our membership.

THE MLI PROGRAM

Training material for MLI is prepared by CWA's Human Rights Department and the Education Department. During MLI, participants receive rigorous training in leadership development, legislative and political advocacy, mobilization, grievance handling, labor economics, labor law, and communications. Members also learn how to analyze systems of economic, racial, and gender-based oppression and how to build



**Jenelle Blackmon, Class of
2014**

collective power through transformative organizing. At the end of the program, participants develop an action plan to incorporate their training into ongoing work at the local level.

MLI CURRICULUM

Effective Writing and Speaking Skills

Develop effective written and verbal storytelling techniques

Internal Organizing

Learn how to lead new hire orientation, the benefits of charting, hold organizing conversations, and build committees

Examining Systemic Barriers to Equality

Reexamine the current power and class structure by analyzing systems and forms of oppression

Leadership Development

Learn how to build collective power through transformative organizing and grassroots activism

Building Political Power



**Linda Hinton, District 4
Vice President**

The course provides pertinent skills, knowledge, and tools to effectively engage in legislative and political advocacy and build CWA's Political Action Fund

Representation

Gain an in-depth understanding of collective bargaining, advanced grievance handling, and arbitration

Social Media Tools

Learn how to use communication and social media advocacy tools to build a powerful movement

Time Management

Discover tools to manage your workload while maintaining a healthy work-life balance

NOMINATIONS

MLI is offered once a year to women and people of color who exhibit leadership qualities and a dedication to building a broader movement for social and economic justice. Eligible participants must be recommended by their District/ Sector Vice President.

TESTIMONIALS

“Being a member of the MLI class of 2018 is one of the highlights of my union experience. I loved learning how legislation and politics affect us on a local level as a union member and as a member of my community. One of the main things I want to bring back to my local is being able to have an authentic conversation with the membership as a whole about diversity.”

Kwami Barnes, CWA Local 4603



Kwami Barnes, Class of 2017

“MLI was by far the most exciting and enriching experience I have had during my journey as a CWA member. The instructors and my fellow participants were all brilliant Unionists and I learned so much from being among them all. I will cherish my MLI experience forever!”

Kelvin Banks, CWA Staff Representative, District 3

The long days of learning and interaction with my fellow union leaders and our instructors helped solidify my resolve as a union activist. In addition to gaining a wealth of knowledge and new perspectives, I gained friendships that will last a lifetime.”



Kendall Bell, Class of 2018

Kendall Bell, IUE-CWA President, Local 81381

“I found MLI to be the best training I’ve ever had in more than 30 years as a CWA member. The classes were designed to be intensive, and they really were.”

Linda Hinton, CWA Vice President, District 4

“MLI gave me the knowledge and skills I need to fight for labor, equality, and civil rights on a broader level. The bonds and relationships I formed with my brothers and sisters will never be forgotten.”

Eric Jones, CWA Local 6215

“The knowledge, skills, and experience I gained at MLI paved the way for me to be where I am today. I will always be thankful I was selected to be a member of such an elite group of leaders.”

Carl Kennebrew, IUE-CWA Vice President



**Carl Kennebrew, IUE-CWA
Sector Vice President**

“The highlight for me was learning new social media skills. Being part of a huge telecom company, taking that back and being able to use that information to reach out to our members and to keep them involved and educated is really useful.”

Jim Vang, CWA Local 9408

“MLI was created to provide minority members with the opportunity to become leaders in our union. As a graduate myself, I know the impact MLI can have on your life and in your career.”

Claude Cummings, CWA Vice President, District 6



**Dante Harris, At-Large
Executive Board Member**

“MLI was life changing for me. This program helped me grow as a leader, steered me toward my purpose, and sharpened skills I never knew I had. It unlocked my greatest potential. Most importantly, the relationships built from MLI created a brotherhood/sisterhood like no other. I left with lifetime family/friends.”

Dante Harris, AFA-CWA President, Local 29012

“No other union has a program focused on increasing minority leadership. That’s what makes CWA and the MLI program so special to me. I am proud to be a member of a union that values my contributions.”

Ameenah Salaam, CWA Assistant to the President

“My experience at MLI was nothing less than amazing! I am so thankful I was given the opportunity to develop my leadership skills and build long-lasting relationships with local and national leaders. I endeavor to pay it forward by offering myself as a resource to train and develop stewards throughout my District.”

Jenelle Blackmon, CWA Staff Representative, District 1

“We learned many things - from public speaking to internal organizing - but what affected me the most was hearing serious personal stories of how people were and continue to be mistreated; it was one of the most personal experiences I have ever had. MLI has helped me become a better leader and changed the person I am today.”

Amber Brooks, IUE-CWA Staff Representative

GRADUATES



We saved a spot for YOU!

**HUMAN
RIGHTS
CWA**



To learn more about Minority Leadership Institute, click here:
[Celebrating Minority Leadership Institute](#)
