

COMMUNICATIONS WORKERS OF AMERICA

Report of the CWA National Women's Committee

CWA 80th National Convention
August 11-12, 2025

CWA National Women's Committee

District 1

Elizabeth Mercado

CWA Local 1101

District 9

Esthela Hernandez

CWA Local 9586

District 2-13

Ann Vogler

CWA Local 2006

AFA-CWA

Yan Yan Teague

AFA-CWA Local 27019

District 3

Yolanda Pearson, Chair

CWA Local 3204

IUE-CWA

Bridgette Jones

IUE-CWA Local 83701

District 4

Cindy Krebs

CWA Local 4502

PHEW-CWA

Desi Navarro

PHEW-CWA Local 7000

District 6

Shawanda Rankin

CWA Local 6143

District 7

Tayqwoiseceyon Akins

CWA Local 7050

Table of Contents

Project 2025 and its Impact on Human Rights and Labor unions: What do we have to look forward to and what are we fighting to save?

By Elizabeth Mercado, CWA Local 1101 and Shawanda Rankin, CWA Local 6143

4

Pay Disparities for Women: How Unions Level the Playing Field

By Ann Vogler, CWA Local 2006 and Yan Yan Teague, AFA-CWA Local 20719

8

Paid Family Leave: A Necessity, NOT a Luxury

By Cindy Krebbs, CWA Local 4502

10

Don't Let D.E.I, D.I.E: The Importance of Encouraging D.E.I. Initiatives

By Tayqwoiseceyon Akins, CWA Local 7050 and Desi Navarro, PHEW-CWA Local 7000

12

Women's Inequality in the Workforce

By Esthela Hernandez, CWA Local 9586 and Bridgette Jones, IUE-CWA Local 83701

14

The Importance of Protecting the Transgender Community

By Yolanda Pearson, Chair, CWA Local 3204

17

Project 2025 and its Impact on Human Rights and Labor unions: What do we have to look forward to and what are we fighting to save?

Elizabeth Mercado, CWA Local 1101 and Shawanda Rankin, CWA Local 6143

Project 2025 poses significant challenges for civil rights, minority groups, women's rights, healthcare access, and the labor movement. Its policies exacerbate inequality, undermining civil and reproductive rights and reducing essential public services. Labor unions are key advocates for workers' rights and are positioned to play a crucial role in opposing these changes aiming to overhaul key areas of governance. While its proponents for project 2025 argue that the reforms are necessary for economic growth and national security, many are concerned that the proposed policies could disproportionately harm vulnerable populations. This report outlines how specific policies within Project 2025 could affect these critical areas.

Project 2025 could have significant consequences for civil rights in the United States. If the proposed policies are enacted, the impact on civil rights protections could be detrimental. It would take America back in time by removing civil protections from anyone who its authors deem not worthy of protection. This initiative will undermine civil rights in the United States for minority groups, women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and other marginalized communities. The documents calls for the next president to delete terms such as sexual orientation; gender identity; diversity, equity, and inclusion; gender equity; reproductive health; and reproductive rights “out of every federal rule, agency regulation, contract, grant, regulation, and piece of legislation that exists,” pushing Americans in those categories outside of the scope of federal protection.

These threats will reverse decades of progress in social justice, including rolling back voting rights protections; promoting voter suppression tactics; weakening anti-discrimination protections and expanding religious exemptions; and undermining the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on color, race, religion, sex and national origin. The initiative could lead to the implementation of stricter voter ID laws, purging of voter rolls, and restrictions on early voting, all of which disproportionately affect Black, Latino, and low-income communities. Voter suppression tactics will also target college students and elderly voters who may not have easy access to the necessary identification. By creating barriers to the democratic process, these policies will reduce political representation and power among minority groups.

If Project 2025 seeks to roll back these protections, it could open the door to increased discrimination in housing, employment, and education, particularly for racial minorities and women. The agenda presents serious threats to the progress made in the fight for equality, equity and justice and to protect civil rights. It will be crucial for advocacy groups, legal experts, and individuals to challenge these policies through public pressure, legal action, and grassroots organizing.

There may also be policies proposed to expand religious exemptions, allowing businesses or individuals to deny services to people based on their religious beliefs. In addition, there is concern that Project 2025 may take steps to undermine LGBTQ+ rights by curtailing legal

protections and allowing for more discrimination under the guise of religious freedom. This could lead to setbacks in the fight for equality and recognition for LGBTQ+ individuals, particularly in areas like employment, healthcare, and marriage.

The disproportionate impact Project 2025 could have on minority groups, including Black, Latino, Indigenous, and immigrant populations will be devastating. Some of these policies may exacerbate existing inequalities by reducing access to critical resources, limiting opportunities, and potentially rolling back affirmative action making it harder for minority communities to thrive. The dismantling of affirmative action would hinder progress in closing racial disparities in education, employment, and wealth. The attempt to roll back affirmative action programs will eradicate Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives which protect those who are underrepresented in areas of education, employment, housing and more. This is exactly what the authors of Project 2025 are looking for. They also want the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to stop collecting employment data based on race and ethnicity.

Policies under Project 2025 may seek to strengthen immigration controls and reduce support for immigrants, including restricting pathways to citizenship or residency for undocumented immigrants and increasing enforcement of deportations. These actions could disrupt immigrant communities, particularly those who are already marginalized, and contribute to fear and instability within these populations and enable mass deportations. This could lead to the expansion of policies that encourage racial profiling and harsher policing of minority communities, resulting in increased incarceration rates among racial minorities, and further perpetuates the cycle of racial inequality in the justice system.

Women have often had their rights compromised throughout history. Issues like unequal access to education, gender pay gap, political representation and healthcare persist. One of the most immediate and controversial impacts of Project 2025 would be the rollback of reproductive rights, particularly access to abortion and contraception. Under Project 2025, policies may include efforts to defund reproductive health organizations like Planned Parenthood or limit access to abortion services by allowing states to impose restrictions or even bans. These policies would disproportionately affect low-income women and women of color who may not have the financial resources to travel to states where abortion is still accessible.

In addition to reproductive health, the initiative may fail to fully address the gender pay gap, leaving women in economically vulnerable positions. Without strong enforcement of equal pay for equal work, women could continue to experience wage disparities that prevent them from achieving financial independence and security, ultimately leading to the erosion of policies that protect women from workplace discrimination and sexual harassment. If regulations designed to safeguard women's rights in the workplace are weakened or not fully enforced, women could face greater levels of workplace inequality, exploitation, and harassment.

These are among the many challenges Americans will face with Project 2025, with each one being more devastating than the next. However, one of the most damaging aspects of this plan could be proposed cuts to healthcare. Medicaid and Medicare are programs that provide essential healthcare services to low-income individuals, seniors, and people with disabilities. These programs serve as essential lifelines for millions of Americans. If the initiative leads to reduced funding or greater privatization of the healthcare system, vulnerable populations may face limited access to critical healthcare services. Doing so would exacerbate existing health disparities among all. Certain policy changes may also push for greater privatization of healthcare services, undermining public health programs in favor of profit-driven models. This could increase healthcare costs for individuals and families, leaving those without adequate insurance coverage at greater risk of being priced out of necessary medical care, leading to worsened health outcomes for low-income and minority communities. Finally, there is potential for Project 2025 to seek the rollback of key provisions of the Affordable Care Act, which has significantly expanded access to healthcare for millions of Americans, which include protections for pre-existing conditions. Weakening or dismantling the ACA would again, harm low-income individuals and people with chronic conditions, many of whom are from minority communities.

Labor unions have long been a key player in advocating for workers' rights, pushing for fair wages, better working conditions, and secure benefits. Project 2025 could pose significant challenges to labor unions. It includes policies that undermine union power, such as restrictions on collective bargaining or curbing labor protections. There is concern that these initiatives will prioritize corporate interests over workers' rights, leading to a weakening of union influence and potentially reducing job security and wages for workers. Restricting collective bargaining rights makes it harder for unions to negotiate fair wages and working conditions on behalf of their members. This would disproportionately affect workers in industries across the country like education, healthcare, and public services, where unions have traditionally been strong advocates for workers' rights.

Lastly, Project 2025 could encourage the expansion of "right-to-work" laws, which weaken the power of labor unions. These laws allow workers to benefit from union contracts without paying union dues, ultimately reducing unions' financial strength and bargaining power. As a result, workers may lose the protections and benefits that unions typically secure, such as the right to be free from discrimination and retaliation, better wages, safer working conditions, overtime protections, and benefits like healthcare and pensions. All this ultimately leads to the dismantling or reduction of labor protections, particularly harming low-income workers and workers from marginalized communities, who often rely on unions to ensure fair treatment and to fight against exploitation in the workplace.

In conclusion, the specific policies outlined in Project 2025 present significant risks to civil rights, minority groups, women's rights, healthcare access, and labor unions amongst the many. From voter suppression to the rollback of reproductive rights, healthcare cuts, and restrictions on union power, Project 2025 could undermine decades of progress in these critical areas.

Advocacy, legal challenges, and grassroots organizing will be essential to protect vulnerable communities and ensure that these rights are not diminished under the proposed framework. It's important that we educate our membership and workers, bringing awareness to the threats this project poses. We can mobilize around this topic by establishing online petitions for people to sign at conventions, build broader coalitions with other unions and advocacy organizations, such as the NAACP, LCLAA, and more. Creating a webinar training to share with the committees nationwide would help educate our membership. We must continue to unite, strengthen and equip our members with the tools and knowledge to advocate for protective labor laws and maintain the integrity and interest of their fellow union siblings, families and communities.

Sources and Additional Reading Materials

Center for American Progress: Project 2025's Distortion of Civil Rights Law Threatens Americans With Legalized Discrimination

<https://www.americanprogress.org/article/project-2025s-distortion-of-civil-rights-law-threatens-americans-with-legalized-discrimination>

Common Cause: Project 2025 Aims to Strip Away Our Civil Rights

<https://www.commoncause.org/articles/project-2025-aims-to-strip-away-our-civil-rights/>

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights: Project 2025: What's At Stake for Civil Rights

<https://civilrights.org/project2025/>

National Women's Law Center: Project 2025: What it Means for Women, Families, and Gender Justice

<https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Project-2025-One-pager.pdf>

AFL-CIO: Project 2025 and Unions

<https://betterinaunion.org/project-2025>

Pay Disparities for Women: How Unions Level the Playing Field

Ann Vogler, CWA Local 2006 and Yan Yan Teague, AFA-CWA Local 20719

Feminism started as a movement to address and abolish gender inequalities and win suffrage for women. However, history has shown us that the feminist movement has in truth overlooked the critical issues of racial, gender, and class discrimination and how they intersect, jointly impacting women's experiences. This specifically was seen when suffragists Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton pushed for women's right to vote. They pushed for the right to vote for white women over obtaining the right for ALL women. This is just one example of how the fight for equality failed to be intersectional.

The concept of intersectionality was first introduced in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw, an American law professor and civil rights activist. According to the Howard University Law Library's website, she "provided a framework that must be applied to all situations women face, recognizing that all the aspects of identity enrich women's lived experiences, and compound and complicate the various oppressions women face. It means that women cannot separate out numerous injustices because women experience them intersectionally." Using an intersectional lens allows us to give a bigger voice to those experiencing overlapping concurrent forms of oppression, and thus, an understanding of the depths of inequalities facing all women. Writing in the Beacon, University of Portland student Lulu Heffernan notes, "Overall, this can lead to people in the feminist movement having a better understanding of compounding issues, such as how being Black, in poverty, and identifying as a woman can all intersect and create an experience that would be very different than a white, middle-class woman's experience." To quote Crenshaw, "We might have to broaden our scope of how we think about where women are vulnerable, because different things make different women vulnerable." It is important to recognize that inequalities are not equal.

Using the concept of intersectionality in the fight for equality is important because CWA recognizes that we can no longer afford to allow systems of oppression to create division. Human rights, and most recently, women's rights have been under attack by political leaders who have been successful in rolling back the clock on decades of social progress. It is time to tear down walls of division in society and build a bridge of commonality and shared goals. Intersectionality is often used in relation to feminism. Intersectional feminism acknowledges that while all women face oppression, all women are not equally oppressed. Not all women face the same challenges. Bringing attention to the effects of social struggles against injustices through solidarity between different marginalized groups is an effective way of improving the chances of overcoming these injustices. Intersectionality increases possibilities for social activism, thereby increasing the chances of bringing about social change.

As Audre Lorde once said, "There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single issue lives."

Given the diversity in the experiences of women, how can we build a strong feminist movement? We must first gain a better understanding of how important intersectionality is in the fight for true equality. CWA can specifically do this by adding definitions, exercises, and more conversation to the existing Anti-Racist and Gender Justice training programs. Leadership and activists should encourage diversity both on district and local human rights committees to help facilitate personal discussion and better understanding regarding areas of oppression and the idea of privilege and power. Coordinating women's and CR&E activities and goals also would allow us to embrace all issues whether it is a women's, race, or LGBTQ issue. Networking outside of our local union is also paramount to creating more power in the fight for equality. In an internet world dominated by social media, women can build solidarity through shared experiences and stories. Seek other points of view and keep in mind that often when you have a diverse group of people in an activist space, it falls on others to educate about the oppressions they face.

This idea was powerfully expressed in an article on the Feminism in India website. "What we need to do now is to make as much use of this networking-based feminism as possible, to discuss our agenda together and even seek political power mobilizing on feminist ideals. It is because political power will enable this movement to bring about the change that it wishes to bring forth. We need to occupy and rightfully claim public positions as much as possible. Whether they are bureaucratic positions, judicial positions or legislative positions, our call for egalitarianism and other women's issues needs to be said, heard and adhered to in the halls of power itself."

The term union means uniting through strength and power. To truly bring about meaningful change, we must combat all forms of discrimination and give everyone an equal voice at the table.

Sources and Additional Reading Materials

HUSL Library at Howard University School of Law: Feminism and Intersectionality - A Brief History of Civil Rights in the United States

<https://library.law.howard.edu/civilrightshistory/women/intersectionality>

The Beacon: Feminism needs to emphasize intersectionality

<https://www.upbeacon.com/article/2021/03/staffopinion-laura-emphasize-intersectional-feminism>

"What is Intersectionality? Why All Social Movements are Racial Justice Movements."

<https://aligningwithin.com/2021/01/23/what-is-intersectionality-why-all-social-movements-a-re-racial-justice-movements/>

Global Citizen: "What is intersectionality and why is it important?"

<https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/what-is-intersectionality-explained/>

Why Networking Is A Step In The Direction Of Intersectional Feminism,

<https://feminisminindia.com/2020/08/26/networking-digital-intersectional-feminism>

Paid Family Leave: A Necessity, NOT a Luxury

Cindy Krebbs CWA Local 4502

Life is full of the unexpected. One moment, you're focused on work, and the next, you're faced with the urgent need to care for a loved one, whether it's a child, spouse, or aging parent. When that moment arrives, what will you choose? Will you be forced to choose between your job and the health of someone you love?

According to AARP, one in five adults, over 53 million people, step up to care for family members, often while juggling full-time jobs. But without paid family leave, millions are left to make impossible decisions between earning a paycheck and providing care.

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993 provides unpaid, job-protected leave for workers at businesses with 50 or more employees. While this law is a step forward, it leaves millions of workers vulnerable. Many simply can't afford to take time off without pay, forcing them to either drain savings, pile on debt, or leave their jobs altogether.

This is where Paid Family Leave (PFL) becomes essential. Paid leave allows workers to care for a loved one without fearing losing their income or job. It provides economic security during difficult times, preventing families from making heartbreaking choices between financial stability and caregiving.

Why Paid Family Leave Matters:

1. **Economic Security:** PFL gives caregivers the financial cushion they need to take time off without losing their livelihoods. Without it, many families are pushed into financial crises, often resorting to credit cards, emptying savings accounts, or even leaving the workforce entirely.
2. **Improved Health Outcomes:** Research shows that workers with paid leave experience less stress, improved mental health, and are more likely to return to work in a stable condition. This, in turn, reduces turnover and boosts overall workplace productivity.
3. **Fairness and Equality:** Paid family leave is about more than economics; it's about fairness. Women, especially women of color, are more likely to take on the burden of caregiving, yet they are also more likely to work in jobs that don't offer paid leave. This discrepancy exacerbates existing cycles of economic insecurity and inequality. Paid leave can level the playing field, ensuring that all workers, regardless of gender, income, or race—have the support they need during times of family crisis.

Between 2013 and 2023, the number of private-sector workers with paid family leave increased from 12% to 27%. While this is an improvement, it is still far from sufficient.

Currently, 13 states and the District of Columbia have implemented their own paid family leave programs. At the federal level, The Family Act, a proposed bill, would create a nationwide paid leave program, funded by a small payroll deduction. This program would offer workers up to 85% of their normal wages for up to 12–16 weeks, allowing them to care for a newborn, recover from illness, or provide for a loved one in need. Some states offer even more time, with up to 26 weeks available.

While paid family leave undeniably benefits employees, its impact extends beyond individual workers. It leads to higher job satisfaction, increased retention, and improved productivity across the workforce. Happy, healthy employees are more likely to stay with their employers, work harder, and contribute to a more stable economy.

Taking Action:

To ensure all workers have access to this critical benefit, unions, advocacy groups, and businesses must unite to push for federal and state-level paid family leave legislation. CWA must build partnerships with organizations that support work-family balance. This can help create the momentum needed to make paid family leave a reality for all Americans.

Paid Family Leave is not a luxury; it is a necessity. It's time we made it as American as apple pie.

Sources and Additional Reading Materials

AARP: Caregiving in the U.S.

<https://www.aarp.org/pri/topics/ltss/family-caregiving/caregiving-in-the-united-states/>

U.S. Department of Labor: Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/fmla>

National Partnership for Women & Families: Paid Leave Fact Sheets.

<https://nationalpartnership.org/economic-justice/paid-leave-fact-sheets/>

Center for American Progress: Making the Case for Paid Family and Medical Leave.

<https://www.americanprogress.org/series/making-the-case-for-paid-family-and-medical-leave>

Bureau of Labor Statistics: Employee Benefits in the United States – March 2023.

<https://www.bls.gov/ebs/publications/employee-benefits-in-the-united-states-march-2023.htm>

National Conference of State Legislatures: State Family and Medical Leave Laws.

<https://www.ncsl.org/labor-and-employment/state-family-and-medical-leave-laws>

Don't Let D.E.I. D.I.E: The Importance of Encouraging D.E.I. Initiatives
Tayqwoiseceyon Akins CWA Local 7050 and Desi Navarro PHEW-CWA Local 7000

For those who do not know, D.E.I. stands for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (which will be short-referenced as DEI in this report). According to an article on the Notre Dame de Namur University website, the concept of DEI in the workplace has been around since the mid-1960s as the corporate world adapted to new social norms. As we continued to make progress chipping away at social stigmas based on our perceived “differences,” the business world continued to adapt to attract workers; the impact of DEI programs in the work environment led to an expansion of the idea of diversity in the 1980s and 1990s. Diversity started to go beyond the initial focuses of DEI, which were race and gender.

DEI programs have led to positive changes in workplace cultures. The corporate world learned to evolve in times of social progress. Unions, in the true spirit of solidarity, must lead the way in eliminating social barriers between all workers. Specifically at this time in history, we need to step in and ensure we support DEI Initiatives internally and when negotiating our labor agreements. DEI's current era of successfully broadening the idea of who should be accepted as valid human beings is causing the oft-repeated conservative backlash.

Now, workers find themselves in an era of betrayal as the same corporate world that used DEI to recruit talented, diverse labor is eliminating these programs to put their employees in their “place.” McDonalds, Walmart, John Deere, Harley Davidson, and Lowes are just a handful of corporations breaking faith with their workforce to appease the perceived worst impulses of their customer bases. When high-profile companies take steps away from advocating social progress, other employers are emboldened to follow suit. The loss of progress will have a direct, negative impact on our members and communities.

Accepting a diverse workforce and supporting DEI is the key to the labor movement's future. It is up to us, Communications Workers of America members, and all our union siblings to be the equal and opposite reaction to that pressure. The Dennis Serrette Minority Leadership Institute's internal success in developing diverse leadership proves the importance and value of DEI.

Diverse workers of all ethnicities, abilities, and varied gender expressions exist, and all are potential siblings in our struggle to spread the message of consolidated worker power. Current union members are getting the message that solidarity only works when inclusive. Studies show that DEI initiatives lead to an increase in union participation as well as LGBTQIA+ protections.

DEI has built the success of the modern corporate world, and CWA will not stand idly by while it is being dismantled. While these corporations promote the “sunset” of DEI, we must remind them that the “sun” will always rise again. We ask that in all current and future dealings as a union, internally and within our labor contracts, CWA stands firmly in support of DEI initiatives and continues to provide enthusiastic support for diverse caucuses, such as the Minority Caucus and the Pride Caucus. We ask that CWA continue to develop leaders in our union of all races,

abilities and gender expressions, and that leadership also promote inclusive contract language that can be implemented to show support for DEI in our workplaces. Maybe, most significantly, we can ask CWA to collect the relevant internal data by surveying our membership to get a clearer picture of who we are as a union and provide appropriate support to our members. We ask that CWA lead by example and continue to operate with the spirit of DEI in mind so all workers who wish to join us know there is a place for them in our family. We cannot let DEI die!

Sources and Additional Reading Materials

PBS News Hour: How Some Companies Are Scaling Back Dei Initiatives after Conservative Backlash.

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/how-some-companies-are-scaling-back-dei-initiatives-after-conservative-backlash>.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics: Current Population Survey

https://www.bls.gov/cex/cecomparison/cps_profile.htm

UCLA School of Law Williams Institute: Adult LGBT Population in the United States

<https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/adult-lgbt-pop-us/>

Notre Dame de Namur University: History of Dei: The Evolution of Diversity Training Programs

<https://web.archive.org/web/20250104221632/https://www.ndnu.edu/history-of-dei-the-evolution-of-diversity-training-programs>

UCLA Labor Center: Union Values and LGBTQ+ Worker Experiences: A Survey of UFCW Workers in the United States and Canada

<https://labor.ucla.edu/publications/lgbtqworkers>

Women's Inequality in the Workforce

Esthela Hernandez CWA Local 9586 and Bridgette Jones IUE-CWA Local 83701

The United States, a country that prides itself on freedom and equality, has made slow progress in advancing women to the highest positions of power. While many consider the United States a country ahead of its time, they have not elected a woman to the highest office; other countries have already elected women as Prime Ministers and Presidents. American Women have taken a back seat to men since the government was formed. Since 1789, 45 different men have held the presidency position. It wasn't until 2009 that we, the people, elected the first black man to the highest position in the country, which, when you think about it, was just 16 years ago.

In 1872, 83 years after the first president of the United States was elected, the first woman from Homer, OH, would make a run for the United States Presidency; her name was Victoria Claflin Woodhull. But it was not until 148 years after her that the United States of America would elect its first-ever female Vice President. To simplify the math, there have been 48 vice presidents in the United States before Vice President Harris was elected, making her the 49th vice president of the United States.

We tell our daughters, and women in general, they can be whatever and whoever they want to be if they work hard and follow their dreams. Yet, this patriarchal country still has its doubts about letting a woman sit in the highest position. Yes, we have broken boundaries on becoming doctors, teachers, business owners, and more, but when it comes to being elected as the Commander in Chief, America's biases come to light.

Nonunion workers, especially women, have been affected by workplace discrimination. The Gender wage gap has negatively affected women's earnings and opportunities and is attributed to the lack of women in leadership. Gender-based workplace discrimination has contributed to women's lower socio-economic status. However, union membership for women is at its highest. Today, 6.5 million women are represented by labor unions, the largest organization for working women.

Though women make up close to half of union workers, women only make up 19.1 percent of the members of the AFL-CIO Executive Council. CWA's commitment to cultivating diverse leadership through programs such as the Dennis Serrette Minority Leadership Institute has been effective. Today, 45% of the members of CWA's Executive Board are women. Despite the challenges, women have gained ground in achieving top positions in some of the biggest unions in the United States. In the AFL-CIO we have President Liz Shuler. In CWA we have Secretary-Treasurer Ameenah Salaam, Chief of Staff Sylvia J. Ramos, District 4 Vice President Linda Hinton, District 7 Vice President Susie McAllister, PHEW Vice President Margaret Cook, T&T Vice President Lisa Bolton, AFA-CWA President Sara Nelson, Director of CWA-SCA Canada Carmel Smyth, Southeast Region At-Large Diversity Member Vera Mikell,

Northeast Region At-Large Diversity Member Gloria Middleton, and Director of Human Rights, Education, and Health and Safety Angie Wells. We thank you for paving the way.

That has translated into wins at the bargaining table, where more attention is focused on family-friendly benefits like parental leave, health care coverage, and protections against sexual harassment.

To break these barriers, unions must take deliberate steps to mobilize around the issue. Encouraging women to step into leadership roles is essential, and this can be achieved through leadership training programs like those offered by the IUE-CWA mentorship program, the CWA Next Gen program, the Dennis Serrette Minority Leadership Institute, CLUW and the AFL-CIO Women's Global Leadership Initiative.

Raising awareness about the importance of women's voices in union leadership can also help dismantle biases and promote equality. Advocacy for inclusive practices, such as transparent promotion processes, gender quotas, and equitable access to opportunities, is necessary to create sustainable pathways for women in leadership.

We must all actively encourage and empower women to take on leadership roles by creating supportive environments where they can thrive. Achieving equality requires collective effort. All union members benefit from dismantling barriers and enjoying a future where every voice is valued. Women's place is not only in their unions but also at the decision-making table. By championing women's equality in leadership, unions can fulfill their mission of representing all workers and creating a fairer, stronger labor movement. The time to act is now.

Sources and Additional Reading Materials

Center for America Women and Politics: Women Presidential and Vice Presidential Candidates: A Selected List

<https://cawp.rutgers.edu/facts/levels-office/federal-executive/women-presidential-and-vice-presidential-candidates-selected>

National Women's History Museum: Victoria Woodhull

<https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/victoria-woodhull>

Frontiers in Psychology: Gender inequalities in the workplace: the effects of organizational structures, processes, practices, and decision makers' sexism

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4584998/>

Politico: How women are changing labor unions

<https://www.politico.com/newsletters/women-rule/2024/05/24/how-women-are-changing-labor-unions-00159882>

Associated Press: More Black and Latina women are leading unions — and transforming how they work

<https://apnews.com/article/labor-union-diversity-black-latina-women-leaders-0c186ea63ae8eebeaadb15e131b77a61>

The Importance of Protecting the Transgender Community

Yolanda Pearson, Chair, CWA Local 3204

The transgender community has faced significant challenges throughout history, with discrimination, violence, and a lack of recognition being part of daily life for many transgender individuals. Yet, over the decades, there has been a growing fight for rights and visibility. Transgender people remain one of the most marginalized groups in society, facing disparities in healthcare, employment, legal protections, and overall safety. It is essential that we not only advocate for their rights but also highlight the importance of transgender visibility and the ongoing struggles within their fight for equality. In this report, we will explore the history of transgender activism, the importance of trans visibility, the challenges they face as the most marginalized group, and how recent executive orders by the Trump administration threaten their rights. Finally, we will discuss how organizations like CWA and the National Human Rights Department can combat these setbacks.

Transgender individuals have been part of the fight for human rights since the early 20th century. One of the earliest known transgender activists was Christine Jorgensen, who, in 1952, became one of the first Americans to undergo sex reassignment surgery, bringing public attention to transgender issues. Her transition sparked both controversy and support, shedding light on the need for medical and social recognition of transgender people.

In the late 20th century, transgender individuals began to organize more effectively. The 1993 march on Washington for Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Rights, although primarily focused on the LGBTQ+ community, marked a significant moment in visibility for transgender rights as well.

Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR), first held in 1999, has been a critical moment in honoring transgender individuals who have died as a result of violence and discrimination. It is a reminder of the persistent danger faced by transgender people and the need for societal change.

One of the most significant legal wins in recent transgender history occurred in 2015, when the U.S. Department of Education determined that Title IX protections against sex discrimination applied to transgender students, ensuring they could access facilities that align with their gender identity. Additionally, in 2020, the Supreme Court's *Bostock v. Clayton County* decision ruled that Title VII protections against employment discrimination based on sex extend to discrimination based on gender identity, marking a victory for the transgender community.

Visibility is crucial in the fight for transgender rights. Visibility allows transgender individuals to be seen as full and equal members of society. It helps dispel misconceptions and fosters understanding. The media, representation in politics, and visibility in social movements are essential for the transgender community to advocate for their rights and push back against harmful stereotypes.

Transgender visibility is important not only for advocacy but also for the well-being of the community. Studies show that visible role models positively impact transgender people's mental health and self-esteem, particularly when they are able to see others who share similar experiences. Transgender visibility in mainstream media—such as Laverne Cox's groundbreaking role in *Orange Is the New Black*—has contributed to a broader societal acceptance of transgender people and their experiences.

However, transgender individuals are still the most marginalized group within the LGBTQ+ community. They experience higher rates of violence, homelessness, unemployment, and discrimination. Transgender people, particularly transgender people of color, face significantly higher rates of fatal violence. According to the Human Rights Campaign, in 2020, at least 45 transgender or gender-nonconforming people were murdered in the United States, a majority of whom were Black transgender women.

Transgender people are disproportionately affected by discrimination and violence. The National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE) reports that one in three transgender people have experienced homelessness at some point in their lives, with more than 50% of Black transgender people experiencing homelessness. Additionally, transgender individuals are more likely to be unemployed and to face discrimination in the workplace. A 2011 survey by NCTE found that 90% of transgender people had experienced harassment or discrimination at work, leading to a disproportionately high unemployment rate among the community.

Transgender youth, in particular, are at risk, with studies showing that transgender students experience harassment at alarmingly high rates, leading to higher rates of depression and suicide attempts. Transgender people often find themselves caught in a cycle of social exclusion, lack of legal protections, and inadequate access to healthcare and support services.

The Trump administration's rollback of transgender rights has been a critical setback for the transgender community. Key actions, such as the 2017 ban on transgender people serving in the military, the revocation of protections for transgender students, and the denial of healthcare protections for transgender individuals, have left the community vulnerable to discrimination and exclusion.

In particular, the Trump administration's attempt to redefine gender as biologically determined, essentially erasing the concept of gender identity, had a devastating impact on transgender people's access to necessary services. The executive orders aimed to erase the rights of transgender individuals in healthcare, education, and military service, further marginalizing an already vulnerable group.

As advocates for justice and equality, the CWA and the National Human Rights Department play a critical role in combating these rollbacks on transgender rights. Here are several ways to help:

1. Including Gender Identity Protections in Contracts

With federal, state, and local protections under attack, collective bargaining agreements are one of the best ways to prevent employment discrimination against transgender workers and secure transgender-inclusive healthcare. CWA has long been a leader in bargaining protections for transgender workers and passed a Convention resolution in support of trans-inclusive health insurance coverage in 2013, one of the first unions to do so.

2. Advocacy and Public Policy

CWA and the National Human Rights Department should continue lobbying for strong protections for transgender individuals, particularly in the areas of healthcare, employment, and education. Advocacy efforts should include supporting legislative initiatives to reverse harmful executive orders and ensure the continued application of protections under Title IX and Title VII for transgender people.

3. Educational Campaigns and Public Engagement

CWA has already established a footprint through our Human Rights Gender Justice Training. This training is available to all CWA locals and constituency group partners. By utilizing this training we can immediately evoke change by educating our union siblings on the importance of transgender rights and visibility, CWA can foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for transgender individuals. Partnering with other advocacy groups, such as Human Rights Campaign and National Center for Transgender Equality, will strengthen efforts to create systemic change.

4. Support for Transgender Individuals and Resources

Offering support services, such as healthcare access, job training, and legal assistance for transgender individuals, can help reduce the discrimination and economic inequality they face. CWA can also help facilitate access to mental health resources for transgender people facing societal and personal challenges.

The transgender community has fought tirelessly for recognition and equality, but much work remains. As one of the most marginalized groups, transgender people face unique challenges that require dedicated advocacy and support. By increasing visibility, providing legal protections, and pushing back against harmful policies like those of the Trump administration, we can move closer to an inclusive society where transgender individuals are not ostracized but are instead embraced as equal members. It is our collective responsibility to continue to champion their rights, ensuring that they no longer remain on the back burner in the fight for justice.

Sources and Additional Reading Materials

Women and the American Story: Christine Jorgensen

<https://wams.nyhistory.org/growth-and-turmoil/cold-war-beginnings/christine-jorgensen>

National Center for Transgender Equality: Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey

https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/resources/NTDS_Report.pdf

Supreme Court of the United States: Bostock v. Clayton County.

https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/19pdf/17-1618_hfcj.pdf

U.S. Department of Justice/U.S. Department of Education. Dear Colleague Letter on Transgender Students

<https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201605-title-ix-transgender.pdf>

New York Times: ‘Transgender’ Could Be Defined Out of Existence Under Trump Administration

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/21/us/politics/transgender-trump-administration-sex-definition.html>

U.S. Department of Defense: Military Service by Transgender Individuals

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2017/08/30/2017-18544/military-service-by-transgender-individuals>

Human Rights Campaign: Fatal Violence Against the Transgender and Gender-Expansive Community in 2020

<https://www.hrc.org/resources/violence-against-the-trans-and-gender-expansive-community-in-2020>