
Human RIGHTS CWA

**NATIONAL & LOCAL
COMMITTEES**



HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

The purpose of this manual is to help CWA Locals establish functioning and effective Civil Rights and Equity and Women's Committees in their locals. This manual can be used as a resource for newsletters, articles, posters, flyers, and informational handouts.

For more information about CWA's Human Rights Department, please visit our website at:

www.cwa-union.org/national-issues/human-rights or
send an email to HumanRights@cwa-union.org.

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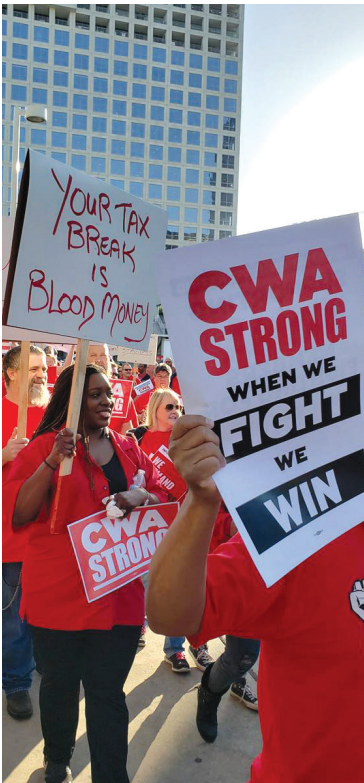
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INTRO

A wise man once stated, *“The ultimate tragedy is not the oppression and cruelty by the bad people but the silence over that by the good people.” ~ Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Human Rights are under attack and CWA will not stand for it! We can no longer afford to allow systems of oppression and hatred to create division between us while the 1% reaps the benefits of our hard work. For decades, CWA activists have stood as champions and protectors of democracy and human rights. We fought for the abolishment of child labor. We fought for equal voting rights for African Americans and Women. We participated in historical movements resulting in the inclusion of people of all races; regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, nationality, religious belief, or socio-economic status. Though we have made much progress, the unfortunate reality is that there is still a great deal of work to be done.

National political leaders are trying to roll back the clock and undo decades of progress on fundamental laws ranging from citizenship to healthcare to labor rights. Government and state legislation attacks people based on religion, race, sexual orientation, and citizenship status nearly every day. Yet, at a time when we feel defeated, it is imperative we remain dedicated to preserving, protecting, and expanding our democracy. Now is the time to use our people power to tear down the walls of division in society and build a bridge of commonality and shared goals. We must share our stories and work together to transform our minds and remove the fear preventing us from creating a progressive culture that values social and economic justice.



To do this, CWA leaders must build a powerful network of organizers through the recruitment and development of human rights activists in our union. By developing and sustaining active coalitions with like-minded groups and individuals, we can win the fight for social and economic justice and democracy.

- ◎ **We can win the fight to hold elected officials accountable to the people** by supporting public and small donor financing initiatives and increasing our Political Action Fund contributions.
- ◎ **We can win the fight to make sure everyone is treated fairly at work** by negotiating contracts that protect working people against discrimination based on gender identity.
- ◎ **We can win the fight to protect the right to vote** by challenging voter suppression legislation and advocating for the reinstatement of voting privileges to disenfranchised citizens.
- ◎ **We can win the fight to secure good, family and community supporting jobs** by actively opposing the outsourcing and offshoring of American jobs.
- ◎ **We can win the fight for healthcare** by advocating for legislation providing quality health care and a secure retirement for American workers.
- ◎ **We can win the fight to protect working people from the threat of deportation** by urging Congress to pass legislation that provides a path to citizenship for immigrants.
- ◎ **We can win the fight to decriminalize marginalized communities** by collaborating with grassroots organizations to pass criminal justice reform.

When we fight, we win!

-CWA Human Rights Department

History of Human Rights in **CWA**

Purpose:

During the 1973 CWA Convention, extensive discussions were held on the methods by which CWA handled and resolved the problems of Women and Minority members. For months conversations were held with the National Executive Board to determine how CWA could move forward as an inclusive union and embrace all of its diverse members.

Establishment:

After much discussion and persistence from women and minority members, in 1973 the National Executive Board established the “**Blacks and Other Minorities Structure Committee**” and the “**Female Structure Committee**” to make recommendations to the President and the Executive Board on ways to better involve women and minority members. In 1974 resolutions were adopted to establish a “**Committee on Equity**” (COE) and the “**Concerned Women’s Advancement Committee**” (CWAC) to include a rank and file member as a representative from each District. Committee members would serve as activists who defend, promote, and protect the Human Rights of the entire membership and our communities.

Timeline of Significant Events:

1978

CWA held its first annual **National Women's Conference** in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Conference participants attended plenary sessions, workshops, and discussion groups. Resolutions on Equal Rights Amendment, child care and job pressures were presented to the CWA Executive Board

1982

The first **National Minority Conference** was held. In response to recommendations by the National Committee on Equity for training opportunities devoted to minorities

1983

Executive Board established **the Minorities Leadership Institute** – an intensive study program dedicated to increasing the involvement of minorities at all levels of the union

1986

CWAC recommends that family issues are made a bargaining priority

1989

Executive Board adopts the COE's recommendation to include a discrimination policy in the Constitution

1991

Delegates made changes to the CWA Constitution to allow the COE and the CWAC to give annual reports and recommendations to future Conventions

2002

The Executive Board amends CWA's Policy on Mutual Respect to include the statement **"Freedom from discrimination within our Union is a right and privilege of all CWA members. Any abridgment of this right and privilege shall be subject to a complaint under the CWA Internal Appeals Procedures."**

2005

Delegates adopt a Constitutional amendment requiring the COE Committee and the CWAC become regular standing committees in all CWA Locals

2007

Convention delegates adopted a resolution and corresponding constitutional changes adding four at-large diversity Executive Board members

2008

Elections were held for Executive Board diversity-at-large seats, and the Executive Board Diversity Committee was established

2009

The Human Rights Ad Hoc Committee is established to expand participation at all levels of the Human Rights program, develop



materials for locals, and use resources in ways that build the effectiveness of CWA's Human Rights effort

2010

Delegates adopted a resolution to change the COE's name to **CWA National Civil Rights and Equity Committee**. The CWAC's name was changed to **CWA National Women's Committee**

2012

On **International Human Rights Day**, CWA joined with over 100 progressive organizations to launch a nationwide democracy initiative, calling on elected officials to ensure

2015

CWA members alongside the NAACP and other allies participated in **America's Journey for Justice** March. Marchers covered more than 860 miles and held teach-ins in almost 40 locations between Selma, AL, and Washington, DC.

2016

CWA Human Rights activists joined the **Standing Rock Sioux Tribe** in South and North Dakota to fight the development of the Dakota Access Pipeline. The pipeline posed a great threat to the Tribe's community, land, and water supply

2017

CWA members marched with thousands of Human Rights activists on **International Women's Day** calling for pay equity, fair wages, paid leave, and labor rights at work

2017

Convention delegates adopted the **CWA STRONG** resolution. The **CWA STRONG** resolution calls for an increased focus on organizing, legislative and political action, and human rights by establishing functioning, effective committees and improving workplace mobilization structures

2017

Convention delegates adopted the **"WORKERS' RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS: THE FIGHT FORWARD"** resolution creating the **Fight Forward Program** to grow and strengthen local human rights committees by building power through local activism and mobilization

2018

The National Executive Board and CWA members rallied in Washington, D.C. with the co-organizer of the renewal of the **Poor People's Campaign**, Reverend William Barber, II. Activists marched to the Supreme Court and engaged in civil disobedience to draw national attention to the lack of progress made on education, living wages, jobs, and housing

Human RIGHTS

CWA

Program and Goals

The CWA Human Rights Program is developed, supported, and implemented by CWA activists who work to engage members on broader issues of social justice. Activists strive to inform and educate the public on Human Rights issues that relate to members and their communities on topics of race, gender, sexual orientation, religious practice, immigrant status, national origin, criminalization, environmental justice, climate change, and much more.

The goals of CWA's Human Rights Program are to:

- ✔ **Work to fully integrate Civil Rights and Women's issues** within the core work of the union
- ✔ **Expand CWA's network of Human Rights Activists** by creating a structured, national network of socially conscious union and community organizers
- ✔ **Increase grassroots activity on Civil Rights and Women's issues** directly impacting the working class
- ✔ **Increase visibility** of CWA Civil Rights & Equity and Women's Committee in communities
- ✔ **Provide support to grassroots community organizations** actively engaged with members on campaigns related to CWA's broader goals for social and economic justice



Fight Forward Training

The **Fight Forward Program** is a training and leadership development program supported by CWA. The Fight Forward Program seeks to identify, train, and support activists who want to build power for our union through growing our membership, developing activists committed to advancing causes of social and economic justice, and building solidarity with community organizations.

The broad goals of the training are:

- 1) To expand CWA's field infrastructure by creating an organized, national network of socially-conscious Human Rights Activists**
- 2) To grow the number of effective Human Rights Committees across our union**

During the training program members will learn how to recognize tactics used to divide and conquer the working class while developing concrete organizing skills to defeat anti-worker legislation. Members will learn how to build union power and solidarity at the local and national level by collaborating on broader issues of social justice that relate to members and their communities on matters of race, gender, sexual orientation, religious practice, immigrant status, national origin, criminalization, environmental justice, and more.

Following the training, activists will complete a personalized action plan and work with Human Rights Activists in their District to strengthen people power and protect and promote human rights standards throughout their community and their District.

Why Do We Need Human RIGHTS CWA

Committees



The cornerstone of unions is to ensure just and equal treatment on the job and in society. Both committees create space for CWA activists with experience, passion and knowledge around key human rights issues to come together and ensure that Human Rights issues are central to CWA's work on all three sides of the triangle: bargaining, organizing and political/legislative work.

These committees also make it clear to our members, employers and communities that CWA is committed to addressing the needs and protecting the interests of the entire membership and our communities. Working together to ensure Human Rights are protected builds power and strengthens the credibility of our Union.

National Women's Committee

- **Mission Statement:** To educate, inspire, and empower women while working all sides of the CWA Triangle.
- **Vision Statement:** To create a just and equal society for all women by protecting the interests of the membership and our communities.

National Committee Member Duties

- ✔ **Work with locals** to grow the number of functioning effective Women's Committees
- ✔ **Educate the membership** on health, economic, and social issues that affect women
- ✔ **Research, report, and make recommendations** to give direction to the National Executive Board and Convention delegates on actions which improve the quality of life of all women
- ✔ **Promote and encourage women** to run for elected public office and support candidates
- ✔ **Encourage and support women** by fighting at the local, state, and national level to pass legislation designed to improve the status and lives of all working women

National Civil Rights & Equity Committee



- **Mission Statement:** To advocate for the removal of systemic barriers that affect the fair and just treatment of working people.
- **Vision Statement:** To build a society where members of all races, cultures, religions, sexual orientations, gender, disabilities, ages, and nationalities feel welcomed, respected, and heard in our union and our communities.

National Committee Member Duties

- ✔ **Work with locals** to grow the number of functioning effective Civil Rights & Equity Committees
- ✔ **To fully integrate civil rights issues** within the core goals of our union
- ✔ **Provide guidance and support** to local Civil Rights & Equity Committees
- ✔ **Research, report, and make recommendations** to give direction to the National Executive Board and Convention delegates on actions which address civil and human rights issues
- ✔ **Work along all sides of the CWA triangle** to engage members on issues and campaigns which may fall outside of the traditional union domain

Local Women's and Civil Rights & Equity Committee Member Duties

- ✔ **Build and encourage** the establishment of functioning Local Civil Rights & Equity Committees
- ✔ **Work cooperatively** with the Local Executive Board, stewards, and community activists to defend attacks against the human rights of the working class by increasing grassroots activity on Human Rights issues
- ✔ **Educate the membership** on current Civil Rights & Equity and Women's issues impacting the local and the community
- ✔ **Work all sides of the CWA triangle** to strengthen labor by building coalitions and working with grassroots community organizations on campaigns related to social and economic justice

Establishing a Local Committee

Per the CWA Constitution, each chartered Local must have a Women's Committee and a Civil Rights & Equity Committee. However, if your local does not have a committee, you should start by talking to your Local Executive Board. The committee should function under the direction of the Executive Board, and its members will be appointed, or elected, according to local bylaws. Both the Women's Committee and Civil Rights & Equity committees are designed to represent and support the diversity of our membership including women, people of color, LGBTQ individuals, immigrants, religious minorities, and the differently-abled. Contact your Local President for more information.

What Do We Do Now?

- ✔ **Meet Regularly!!** If possible, schedule committee meetings on the same day membership meetings are held
- ✔ **Assign Roles**
 - **Chair:** Creates the agenda and leads the meeting. Also serves as a liaison between the Local President's office and the National Committee.
 - **Treasurer:** Sets and manages the budget for events
 - **Secretary:** Takes minutes and handles administrative tasks
 - **Issue Researcher:** Researches human rights issues and reports back to the committee
 - **All Members:** Responsible for educating local members and distributing information
- ✔ **Identify needs and opportunities** within your local and your community and approach your local leadership with ideas to lead the fight or support the cause
- ✔ Once you have identified issues, **establish a budget to participate** in campaigns and provide support to grassroots community organizations



TIPS

- ✔ **ADDRESS** issues that directly impact your community or workplace. Take advantage of the momentum and use the opportunity to recruit new members!
- ✔ **CREATE** a social media page to educate and keep members updated on upcoming activities.
- ✔ **SET** short term priorities (achievable within four-six months) and long term goals (obtainable within one year).
- ✔ **PLAN** at least **TWO** fundraisers per year. Fundraisers give you the chance to build community presence, and you can use those funds to implement programs requiring expenses.
- ✔ **IDENTIFY** strategic organizations in your community and assess opportunities to collaborate on key campaigns or offer union resources (union hall, phone list, volunteers, copies, etc.) to support their work.
- ✔ **VOLUNTEER** for community organizations in your area to build solidarity and additional support for future union fights.
- ✔ **ENCOURAGE** members to sign up for CWA's Activist network at www.cwa-union.org/pages/human_rights_activist_card
- ✔ **DO NOT GIVE UP!** Having a small committee is okay. A small group of people can change the world for many.

Human Rights Issues

- Affirmative Action
- Sexual Harassment
- Violence Against Women
- Healthcare
- Paid Family Leave
- Equal Pay for Equal Work
- Access to affordable childcare
- Reproductive Rights
- LGBTQ Rights
- Criminal Justice Reform
- Immigration Reform
- Economic Security
- Disability Discrimination
- Systemic racism
- Voter Suppression
- Religious Discrimination
- Hate Crimes

Community Allies

- ⊙ **CNAACP** - National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
- ⊙ **CWA** Pride at Work
- ⊙ **CLUW** - Coalition of Labor Union Women
- ⊙ **APRI** - A. Philip Randolph Institute
- ⊙ **CBTU** - Coalition of Black Trade Unionist
- ⊙ **LCLAA** - Labor Council of Latin American Advancement
- ⊙ **APALA** - Asian Pacific Labor Alliance
- ⊙ **MANA** - Mexican American Women's National Association
- ⊙ **NCNW** - National Council of Negro Women, Inc.
- ⊙ **NOW** - National Organization for Women
- ⊙ **NCTE** - National Center for Transgender Equality
- ⊙ **SCLC** - Southern Christian Leadership Conference
- ⊙ **LCCR** - Leadership Conference on Civil Rights
- ⊙ **DREAM DEFENDERS**
- ⊙ **MIJENTE**
- ⊙ **MPOWER CHANGE**

CWA POLICY ON MUTUAL RESPECT

The CWA Policy on Discrimination is as follows:

- 1.** The Communications Workers of America reaffirms its commitment as a matter of principle and policy that all forms of discrimination, for whatever reason, be vigorously opposed until all vestiges of discrimination are eliminated from society.
- 2.** Freedom from discrimination within our Union is a right and privilege of all CWA members. Any abridgment of this right and privilege shall be subject to a complaint under the CWA Internal Appeals Procedures and should be investigated immediately without fear of reprisal and retaliation.
- 3.** In restating our policy for conduct within our Union, it is equally important that our employers reflect this policy so that neither the Company nor the Union shall unlawfully discriminate against a person on account of race, color, gender, religion, age, marital/parental status, political beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, or because a person is handicapped, a disabled veteran, or a veteran of the military service. This means what it says: “No form of Discrimination will be tolerated at any level of CWA.”
- 4.** Any matter which relates to the field of discrimination should be immediately and appropriately handled by the appropriate level of the Union that comes across the allegation of discrimination. It should be handled thoroughly in an honest and positive manner.
- 5.** It is a matter of principle that no one member is more equal than another. The handling of the representation of our members at all levels of CWA should be done in an evenhanded way with no fear; no preference; no favorites.
- 6.** Local Equity and Women’s Committees can play a positive role by providing continuous education training assistance and by reporting to the members of the Local on the ways and means of eliminating discrimination in its entirety.
- 7.** CWA Constitutional Committees should be representative of the Union. Local CWA Constitutional Committees should be representative of all the Local membership and should be active committees, not paper committees.
- 8.** The Union policy to have a job steward for each fifteen members should be fully implemented and should be reflective and representative of the entire membership of each Local.

(Adopted by the CWA Executive Board June 11, 2002; revised December 17, 2009)



Human RIGHTS CWA

