



Advancing Racial Justice in 2015: Communities and Labor Organizing Together

A Declaration of Unity and Solidarity

Introduction

We represent community, civil rights, women's, youth, faith, immigrant rights and labor organizations on the frontlines of the continuing struggle for racial justice and human dignity.

We are inspired by the legacy of past social movements that have envisioned an America that lives up to the promise expressed in its own original declaration of the unalienable rights of all people to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. In this moment, we envision an America that welcomes immigrants from all parts of the world seeking a better life, embraces the demand that Black Lives Matter, guarantees world-class public schools in every neighborhood, and provides jobs with good wages and benefits, dignity and the right to organize a union to all workers.

We come together to fight for the transformational social changes required to accomplish our vision. The United States is rapidly becoming a nation where wealthy elites and global financial institutions dominate and manipulate our political and economic systems. The government's role as protector of the common good has been weakened. And, although there have been advances since the end of World War II, centuries of institutionalized racism continue to fuel the oppression of Black and Brown people. The result is escalating inequality and privatization of critical public services that now threaten our very democracy and even the planet.

Recognizing the deep points of intersection between our movements, we are uniting to confront the nation's twin legacies of racial and economic injustice. We endeavor to transform the current political, social and economic order to affirm the inherent dignity and worth of all human beings and foster just and equitable social change. Such transformational change is realized only when powerful social movements emerge that are led by the people whose interests are most directly at stake.

Movement for Black Lives

The use of excessive force and discriminatory treatment of Black communities by law enforcement is a long-standing crisis whose scale is only now being more broadly acknowledged. We declare our solidarity with the young Black organizers across the gender spectrum who have highlighted this crisis and called attention to the related issues of mass incarceration and criminal justice reform. We will fight together for lasting solutions, including the elimination of institutional racism in the criminal justice system and the implementation of concrete changes in law enforcement training, community involvement, oversight, investigations, and whistle-blower protections. We are inspired by the Movement for Black Lives' commitment to organize against structural racism in all its forms, from economic inequality to unequal access to well funded, high quality public schools, and the call for solutions that redirect resources to address the economic and social needs of Black communities.

Education Justice

Public education should be our nation's gateway to democracy and racial and economic justice. The only way to achieve that goal is by strengthening, not abandoning, public education from cradle to college. We call on students, parents, teachers, faith and community allies to reject efforts to deprive our schools of resources, to blame teachers, unions and parents for school "failure" and to eventually close down and privatize our schools, particularly those that serve communities of color. Instead, we unite behind our collective vision for high quality, fully resourced, and democratically controlled public schools in every neighborhood.

Immigrant rights

Activists remind us that this country's history has always involved struggles for immigrant rights, with each wave of immigrants demanding access to citizenship and fighting for dignity. What is new is the intensity of resistance to the browning of the immigrant population, including disturbing anti-immigrant rhetoric, an increasingly militarized border, workplace exploitation and a dramatic increase in detentions and deportations. We come together to reaffirm the inherent dignity and worth of all persons, and call for immigration reforms that end deportations and keep families together, provide a clear pathway to citizenship, and provide equitable access to academic opportunity and economic success.

Economic Justice

One-third of American families lack sufficient income to enjoy basic subsistence, while the top 1 percent take home 20 percent of total income, and own 40 percent of the nation's wealth. African Americans suffer disproportionately higher unemployment and poverty levels, less access to high-quality public education, and fewer opportunities for wealth creation. We join in celebrating and supporting current worker struggles for a living wage, and call for an economic system and government policy that guarantees a living wage and good benefits for every worker and creates millions of new jobs to meet the needs of a sustainable and caring society. We call for the

right of workers to unionize. Union membership is one of America's best anti-poverty programs and a highway to the middle class. We call for investments specifically designed to unlock economic opportunity in the nation's poorest communities, funded by taxing concentrated wealth and curbing predatory lending practices by banks.

A Convergence of Struggles: Why We Must Unite!

Our movements share a profound belief in elevating grassroots voices and building democracy from the ground up. We share in the conviction that the United States must end its over-reliance on policing and incarceration, and instead invest in neighborhoods, public schools and good jobs.

The points of intersection and convergence between our four movements are clear. The Movement for Black Lives and the campaign for immigrant rights both call for an end to mass incarceration and detention that harm both communities. Because Black and Brown workers, particularly women, are disproportionately represented in the low-wage economy, the fight for a living wage is an important part of the struggle for racial justice and gender equity. Investing in our public schools so that all students have access to a high quality academic program, comprehensive community and social services, and restorative justice practices can begin to reverse the pipeline to prison and instead build a road to opportunity. And support for the right of workers to organize and bargain collectively over economic and working conditions and the well-being of communities they serve will help combat income inequality and reinvigorate the labor movement as a force for social justice.

We pledge to support each other's struggles and to actively build toward moments of convergence. Our struggles form the critical foundation and impetus for a social movement for racial and economic justice. Together, we resolve to reclaim our collective dignity and to reinvigorate democracy.

Onward, Together!