

2009 Equity Conference
“Embracing Our Differences As We Grow Our Union”

This year the District 3 Equity conference was held in Daytona Beach, Florida on March 13-15. The weekend was packed with several topics which are designed to help us grow our unions and embrace our differences. Our topics of discussion included workshops on Differences between the Equity Committee and Minority Caucus, Employee Free Choice Act, Words Hurt, Generation Gap, and Harassment.

We opened our conference with a greeting from Senator Anthony C. “Tony” Hill, Sr. from Florida. Senator Hill spoke of the accomplishments on Capital Hill since President Obama’s election in November 2008. He also spoke on the ‘Secret Ballot’ amendment being put forth by right to work states. Senator Hill stated that “This amendment is nothing more than a Trojan horse shielding big industrialists from their true agenda” These executives have “Feared the ability of employees to organize because they know the consequences: better pay, affordable health care, and decent working conditions” He spoke of major Retailers backing these amendments that include Walmart and Starbucks, both company’s spending hundreds of millions of dollars to pass these amendments. Senator Hill closed by saying that we “The Unions” must work together more now than ever on the front lines to educate our peers and neighbors of this important situation at hand.

The conference continued by a brief speech from District 3 VP Beverly Hicks. She spoke that we are “Many faces from many places but we are only one Union.” Our first workshop was on the ‘Difference between the Equity Committee and Minority caucus. President Walter Andrews (ATL) and Booker Lester spoke candidly on the differences, which Equity is to include: heterosexual, handicapped, gay, bisexual, transgender, black, white, Hispanic, other national origins and the human and civil rights associated to these individual groups. We spoke that Equity was to provide equality within the different aspects of the union. The Minority Caucus per Walter and Booker is the “Unofficial NAACP of the union”. They closed by saying, the COE and Minority caucus is NOT a black thing, we are all ONE.

We then moved on to the “Employee Free Choice Act” which was held by Kelvin Banks and Liz Roberson from MS. This was an open floor

discussion of educating and familiarizing ourselves with the various aspects of this bill. We spoke of community organizations and neighborhood educating programs in our local areas. All of the “EFCA” information can be found on our local and national websites as well as our local union offices.

The next workshop was on “Words Hurt” this was a powerful workshop as we discussed derogatory names and slang terms used in today’s society to describe a person or group of people. These words were so harsh I am not comfortable listing them as I figure we all can use common sense to determine them. We must educate ourselves in what is appropriate to say and in what aspect we say them.

The “Generation Gap” held by Esther Pond and Thelma Dunlap of TN touched on the different generations still in our workforce and how we must embrace these gaps and work together to learn from each other’s experience. Our generations include:

Traditionalist 1922-1945 (practical, dedicated, civil minded)

Baby Boomers 1945-1960 (optimist, driven, team builders)

Generation X 1960-1980 (skeptical, self reliant, technology minded)

Millenniums 1980-2000 (civic minded, techno savvy, structured)

Our final workshop was on “Harassment” and the plethora of ways this can happen in a working environment. Everyone can view harassment differently. The most important things to remember is always “Think before you speak” and “Sexual harassment” depends on how the person being harassed is affected, not on the harasser’s intent. You can review your harassment policies put forth by US Airways for more detailed information.

We closed with our dinner and awards ceremony. The recipient for the 2009 Norma C. Powell award was Liz Roberson from MS; she was awarded this based on her organizing efforts and accomplishments. We received closing statements from Alphonso Pollard, the Director of Politics and Human rights. He spoke of the legislations already passes by our new president, Barack Obama, and the change in pace in Washington DC. The union is now receiving daily emails from the White House in regards to lobbyist and current legislations on the table.

I personally want to thank my local Brothers and Sisters for giving me the opportunity to attend this conference. Please seek me out for more

detailed information and to join our own Local 3640 Equity Committee.
Together we WILL build a stronger union despite our differences.

In Unity,

Derrick Hicks
4th Floor Area rep