

FSW Function Report

Name and Title: Kendall Bell

Name and nature of event/function (i.e. District 1 Conference, Steward Training at ILR, etc.): CBTU Region 1 Annual Conference

Dates attended:

August 15-18, 2013

What was the purpose/goal of the function?

The theme of the event was “Honoring Our Past, Strengthening Our Future”. Over the course of the event participants embraced the struggles and achievements of community leaders and activists like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., A. Phillip Randolph, Bill Lucy, Frederick Douglas, Susan B. Anthony and all of the other activists historically and currently who have been a part of the ongoing struggle for civil rights and human rights.

Through various workshops and a town hall meeting, participants were educated in how to be community leaders and use the lessons from the past as a guide for the future. That said, it was also impressed upon the participants that although great strides have been made, there is still much work to do, whether it be regarding racial or gender equality, sexual orientation issues, or basic human rights issues.

Although there are many people of color and from the LGBT community in positions of influence, this is not the time to rest. What has been gained is the tip of the iceberg and all of us must work diligently in our local communities to ensure that the momentum continues.

What did you learn and/or what significant information was shared at the function?

I attended several workshops and each had significant information to impart. However, the presenters of the **Coalition Building** workshop were especially powerful. All of the presenters, except one, were members of the LGBT community. They all had compelling stories and experiences to share, however a phrase from one presenter has stuck with me since it was uttered. “No two oppressions are the same, but they all have a common pathology.” As simple as it is, it is so true. In no way can the struggle of a person of color be compared to that of a white woman or a gay man or a person with limited abilities. However, they all face oppression and disenfranchisement in a similar fashion, which is one of the binding factors that unite them in the human rights/civil rights struggle.

How is what you learned relevant to FSW?

What I learned at the conference is relevant to the Federation of Social Workers because it is at the core of what we do. There is no way we can ignore the impact of civil rights and human rights as we provide services to our clients and community partners. We must also remember that these same principles apply to us as colleagues and that the tolerance we are intent on showing toward those we serve should be no less when we interact with each other.