

# Let's come together, resist efforts to divide us along racial lines

By Chelsie Glaubitz Gabiou, President, Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation

Workers today face historic economic challenges and are fighting a system designed to be a race to the bottom. And, as history has shown time and time again, those with power and influence purposefully pit workers against each other — to help drive up their own profits and increase their own power. The biggest fear of corporate CEOs is a united workforce.

From the bombing of a mosque right here in Bloomington, Minnesota to the white nationalists marching in the streets of Charlottesville, Virginia, the moral compass of this country is being tested.

It's important to understand that these horrific events point to a much bigger, often quieter, fight: the struggle that people of color, immigrants and other marginalized communities face day in and day out as they try to live their lives and support their families.

We cannot wait for tragedies to move us to action. We need the leadership of our unions, the voices of union members of color, and the creativity of our organizers to come together and put forth bold ideas to keep moving the ball forward on racial justice. The fate of our unions requires this priority. The victories may be small and the victories may be big. Some will be fast, many will be slow. But, the victories must come.

As the events in Charlottesville were unfolding, a newly-created leadership cohort of the MRLF was just wrapping up an intensive three-day racial and economic justice training. I am hopeful that this training is just the start to a broader initiative to give unions the tools and expertise they need to effectively fight back

against racism in all its forms in our workplaces and in our unions.

Coming out of that experience, it is clear to me that this work must be grounded in real human relationships, not directives, committees, talking points or politically-correct statements. Back-to-basics organizing always seems to be the answer.

This observation of focusing more on human relationships couldn't be more clear as we approach the 2017 elections. This year in Minneapolis, a divisive dust seems to be settling across the city. There is a lot of pain in our communities. Our demographics continue to shift. Healthy (and some not-so-healthy) discussions about the "correct" or "most important" priorities abound.

Above all of this debate, however, we need to be reminded that we have a very powerful shared enemy that is bigger than our city alone. It's time for Minneapolis to start taking responsibility as the major urban center in this state and lead a conversation based on a human connection around the issues that impact our lives — from racial justice to the economy and everything in between.

We must lead by example so that workers who share our values across the state can follow. The MRLF plans a series of community conversations throughout 2017 and leading into 2018 with hopes to unify our fractured base.

We must come together because it takes all of us to reject race-based terrorism and resist efforts to divide us along racial lines. Workers will not be silent in condemning the actions of white supremacists, but we must come together to make our voice even more powerful. Together, we will work even harder to organize for change in all of our communities.



"If you can convince the lowest white man he's better than the best colored man, he won't notice you're picking his pocket..."



"...Hell, give him somebody to look down on, and he'll empty his pockets for you."



## MRLF will co-host Bloomington city council candidate forum September 6

BLOOMINGTON — The Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO will co-host a candidate forum for candidates for Bloomington city council Wednesday, September 6.

The forum will run from 6:30-8:00 p.m. at the Bloomington Civic Plaza (city hall), Council Chambers, 1800 West Old Shakopee Road, Bloomington.

The November 7 general election ballot in Bloomington will feature city council races for one at large city council seat and for Districts 2, 3, and 4.

District 2 is in southwest Bloomington.

District 3 includes parts of the northern and western half of the city.

District 4 includes the northeastern part of Bloomington.

The MRLF will co-host the candidate forum with several local progressive organizations and issue groups.

The event will be recorded and later televised on local public access television stations.

For more information, contact Graeme Allen, MRLF community and political organizer at 612-321-5672 or graeme@minneapolisunions.org.

## MRLF-endorsed Brian Shekleton advances to November ballot for St. Louis Park city council

ST. LOUIS PARK — Brian Shekleton, MRLF-endorsed candidate for St. Louis Park City Council, Ward 1, came in second in the August 8 primary and will advance to the general election in November 7.

Ward 1 is bounded roughly by France Ave. on the east, Louisiana Ave. on the west, the Burlington Northern railroad tracks on the north, and Highway 7 on the south.

Sue Sanger, the 22-year incumbent, chose not to run for re-election.

Shekleton works as the principal aide for Hennepin County Commissioner Peter McLaughlin. He worked previously as a policy aide for the Minnesota House of Representatives. He currently serves as a board member of the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District.

For more information: www.shekforslp.com

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