

Beth,

March 2, 2020

I take it from this email that the time on Fri. April 9 has been cut from about an hour to around 30 minutes. OK. What I am envisioning then is 5 minutes for the union leader, 5 minutes for the Indiana family center rep, and 5 minutes each for the 2 workers. This leaves 10 minutes for questions or dialogue. Any suggestions?

As well, since the time that's been reduced, I request that the panel be moved to the end of the agenda because a lot of people don't get on Webex until after 8:30 or 9.

A RCRLN year-long initiative re: labor

Also remember, we discussed that this initial panel is the beginning of a year-long attempt by the Network to raise the level of attention and support that's equal to that given the Chamber of Commerce, a level of support engrained in the DNA of the RCRLN from its inception.

Ways RCRLN can validate labor

Tim Nation has already offered a suggestion regarding different ways the Network can support workers: "I see no problem sharing labor's legislative agenda to the RCRLN just like we ask the Urban League or Jewish Federation's lobbyists to update us on legislation they are following – pro and con." And this is just the beginning. Once you get others involved, more ideas will flow as to how the Network can support workers--those who do all the heavy lifting and monotonous work to keep Indianapolis going all year, day and night.

RCRLN and those Indy working class living south of US 40—Indy's Mason-Dixon Line

This is important because the RCRLN must wake up to the fact Indy is segregated not only by race, but by social class. Though currently neo-colonialism (i.e., gentrification) is changing the demographics of Indy's working-class neighborhoods, according to the 2010 census our city continues to be [one of the 21 most segregated US cities](#).

See the link to the [Indianapolis](#) map. Note the low percentage of African Americans south of Washington St. and consequently the high number of white, and in this case mainly working-class.

Homo sapiens vs. Homo faber

Here is an analysis by the Indianapolis Working-Class Task Force revealing a clearer picture of class in Indianapolis especially the south of US 40 white working class. I challenge you and Network leaders to read: "[A proposed compromise regarding the Southside debate 'College or die' vs. 'Not everyone needs to go to college.'](#)" RCRLN cannot be an organization perpetuating false divisions of mental vs. manual labor, one where an individual is cast as either:

- *Homo sapiens* (one who thinks/works with his or her mind), or
- *Homo faber* (one who labors/works with his or her hands).

Political writer Antonio Gramsci's approach questions and breaks down the division between thinker and worker, replacing it with a paradigm valuing the intellectual potential in all people. This is a better view of society, fostering a diverse and more equitable Indy.

RCRLN has a once-in-a-generation opportunity

Regarding a 12 month+ RCLN initiative, I argue that the Network has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to expand its basic middle-class orientation to respectfully and authentically include Indy's lower classes of all colors. How this will manifest has yet to be discussed.

The Network's challenge is to make sense of and act around the unprecedented intersectionality of 1) the Trump presidency; 2) the Biden presidency; 3) the global Black Lives Matter movement; 4) CICF's efforts to end systemic racism; and, 5) the concept of caste. Each of the 5 will contribute to

form a matrix that will challenge and in fact compel the Network to be the place where the traffic of these various factors merges.

1. Trump: Trump has attracted certain white poor, working poor, working class/union workers and their families. For a more fair and equitable Marion County, the RCRLN must want to authentically engage this demographic, or from my perspective, it is keeping the Network and Indianapolis in the 20th century.

2. Pres. Biden: Here's Biden's pro-worker agenda. I recommend RCRLN support our president's plans in spite of any Chamber pushback.

Pres. Biden's plan for strengthening the worker organizations, collective bargaining, and unions which support the union's Worker First Agenda:

<https://aflcio.org/speeches/trumka-workers-first-agenda-will-build-sustainable-economy-and-stronger-democracy>

Here's [Biden's PRO Act](#) initiative.

A *Huffington Post* story showed how congressional Democrats are pushing for the biggest labor reform in a generation

- https://www.huffpost.com/entry/congressional--pushing-labor-reform_n_601c095bc5b62bf30754ce96

AFLCIO's plan

- <https://aflcio.org/workers-first-agenda>

Of course, the national Chamber is not for Biden's PRO Act legislation

- <https://www.uschamber.com/press-release/us-chamber-denounces-reintroduction-of-the-pro-act>

3. BLM: What BLM does for our RCRLN initiative is to bring in an organized global movement made up of people representing inter-generational, inter-racial, cross-cultural, cross-gender, inter-state, and multi-social-economic class categories.

4. CICF: I know that CICF is planning to erase systemic racism from Indianapolis. Yet, CICF is trying to reason with a mainly white middle-class audience. CICF does not have a strategy to engage Indy's poor white folks whom I know will not sit around in a circle and discuss their whiteness like Indy's white "educated" citizens.

As a local [hillbilly](#), I know we need a backdoor approach which asks: how can RCRLN contribute to the self-affirmation of the white poor, working poor, blue collar workers, and union members so as to validate their dignity, personhood/family, history, and culture--especially language?

5. Caste: *Caste: The origins of our discontent* in a current world-wide best seller and finalist for the national book awards by Isabel Wilkerson—and I know why: she mixes caste with race and class:

- <https://www.c-span.org/video/?477464-6/author-discussion-race-caste-america&event=477464&playEvent>
- <https://www.vogue.co.uk/arts-and-lifestyle/article/isabel-wilkerson>

Caste brings in hierarchies, the pecking orders within each racial, gender, age, size, etc. silos that the RCRLN must explore, analyze and discredit, and then finally abandoned.

It is easy to understand why the majority of the Network members, who are middle-class, do not want to unpack the issue of caste or class since many of them benefit from their higher ranking on the pecking order continuum of our socially constructed racial categories, among others.

For example, Network members like yourself or Tim have your spot somewhere on the white pecking order caste continuum that ranges from white “Blue bloods,” to the bottom rankings of “white trash.” Black Network members have their spots on the pecking order caste continuum rankings ranging from Black bourgeois, then the “wanna be”/“ bougie” and then the lower ranking “ghetto.”

What makes caste so important is though it includes race, it transcends it. Caste is one’s language (grammar, enunciation, dialect, etc) dress/fashion, where we worship, how one walks, uses a fork and knife, our music, hair style, fingernails, diet/cuisine and what kind/label of beer/alcohol we drink or don’t, etc.--all very subtle, yet glaringly obvious to certain others.

I would invite more of the Network leadership into this conversation as well. One way to approach the situation (RCRLN/Chamber/workers) is to have someone come in and discuss the concept of “caste”--reflecting the current national and global discussions on this concept.

Let’s continue planning for April 9. Let’s also start planning for an even more diverse and inclusive Race and Cultural Leadership Network.

John Harris Loflin
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“The IW-CTF is a proud member of the Southside Quality of Life Plan since 2015”