



Live Life



Martin had a dream
Harriet's railroad lead to freedom
JFK believed rights denied to
one threatens all
Malala was shot seeking an education

Since the Cyrus Cylinder in 539 BC, humanity has struggled to define human rights and ensure those rights for everyone. Marches, rallies and non-violent civil disobedience marked the movement during the 1960's, but the quest continues.

Justice and equality – the backbone of human rights – are founding principles of the IAM. While the IAM has always participated in collective action, we've also been proponents of localized advocacy.

Eleanor Roosevelt said human rights begins, "in small places close to home ... in our neighborhoods ... the school ... the factory, farm or office." We can celebrate our diversity and make the world a better place. We can do it through the work of human rights committees.

Where to Begin?

Like everything else, forming a human rights committee starts with conversations.

- Talk to other members in your lodge about working together to make things better.
- Talk to your lodge leaders and get their support. Explain that there are members willing to form a human rights committee.
- Talk to the membership to determine areas

of concern. Remember to be sensitive to different opinions as you encourage unity.

Pick an Issue ... Any Issue

Much of what happens in our communities is reflected in our workplaces. When the media sensationalizes hate, it can create a divisive environment. Human rights committees can encourage members to stick together based on what matters most – how an issue affects workers.

- Voting Protection Laws. These laws claim to be protecting the integrity of the ballot box when in fact they silence voices—workers' voices. Studies show that in 2012, a disproportionate number of working class minorities and millennials were affected by changes in voting laws (Politico, 10/09/14).
- Discrimination. Denying someone something based upon their race, religion, sex, ethnicity or gender identity is simply wrong. We have laws that prohibit such action. Educating members on how the laws protect them is the first step in ending discrimination.
- Bullying. Bullies aren't just found on the playground. Harassing or intimidating, either physically or verbally, is bullying and it can take place on the job. Bullying is about power. Developing interventions and anti-bullying policies restores power to victims.

The list of issues goes on and isn't limited to what happens on the clock. Education and activism on any issue are important committee goals.

Plan Something

Once you have identified the issues, consider ways to spark improvement in those areas. Start with a short-term goal. Consider the following:

- Host a lunch and learn to increase knowledge on a topic.
- Schedule a guest speaker to talk about a subject before a lodge meeting.
- Work with community groups seeking legislative improvements by spreading the word, circulating petitions, etc.

Keeping it Going

To establish the committee as a viable functioning resource to the members, you have to be consistent with your activities.

- Schedule regular meetings and promote the date and time to the members.
- Create an agenda and stick to it. This will ensure efficient use of time.
- Set realistic timelines and goals.
- Assign duties and responsibilities to all committee members to avoid burn-out and keep everyone interested.
- Brief lodge leaders about committee activities.
- Give reports at the monthly lodge meeting so members stay informed.
- Write for the lodge's newsletter or website.

Maximizing Your Voice

Everything we do and the rules dictating how it's done are decided in the political arena. From school boards and county officials to state and federal representatives, our voices count, but only if we use them. Many workers don't vote, or vote against their interests, because they don't know which leaders are in their corner. Human rights committees can help educate members on which candidates support workers. Once representatives are elected, the committee can coordinate visits to the local office, email campaigns or call-in days to keep our issues relevant. When they know we're watching, they listen.

Growing Stronger

"Strength in numbers" isn't just a saying, it's a fact. When workers stand together they have more power than an individual. Equality, dignity and respect are often at the heart of successful organizing campaigns. These are human rights issues. When there is an effective human rights committee in the lodge, workers are more satisfied. With a proven track record on human rights, the IAM becomes a stronger union more capable of improving the world in which our members live.





Are you ready to change the world?

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