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Mexican President's Remark Still Rankles Black Labor Leader
Rev. Jesse Jackson to Speak at Town Hall Meeting On Improving Relations Among
Ethnic Groups in U.S. on Thursday, May 26th at Phoenix Civic Center

Washington –

Although Mexican President Vicente Fox has apologized for his recent remark that insulted African American workers, singling out black workers in his criticism of U.S. immigration policy still rankles William Lucy, president of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, and CBTU will host a town hall meeting Thursday, May 26th, at the Phoenix Civic Center to discuss easing tensions and building stronger relationships among African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans and Asian Americans.

Lucy, who is also a member of the AFL-CIO Executive Council, said, "CBTU shares President Fox's frustration with the Bush administration's immigration policy, and we will address that issue during our convention later this week. But I'm sure President Fox now understands that casting African Americans as unwilling to work is both unjustified and unwise, and it undermines the solidarity needed between black and Hispanic workers to combat our common enemy – discrimination and exploitation – not each other."

The town hall meeting "African American, Native American, Asian American and Latino Relations" will be held Thursday, May 26th, from 5 p.m. - 7 p.m., at the Phoenix Civic Center (in the ballroom). The panel is part of the 34th International Convention of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, which will be held May 25-30, 2005, at the Phoenix Civic Center.

Lucy, who is also international secretary-treasurer of the 1.4 million-member American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), said the cultural land mine stepped on by President Fox with his May 13th statement that Mexicans in the U.S. do the work that African Americans won't do "makes it clear that honest dialogue among the people reshaping the fabric of American society is much-needed and timely."

(more)

Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, Sr., who accepted an apology from President Fox last week, will be one of the panelists at the CBTU town hall meeting on ethnic relations. Rev. Jackson has urged President Fox to address the 1,500 delegates at CBTU's convention to help close the rift created by his comments about black workers. [Rev. Jackson also will speak earlier Thursday morning, May 26th, at the CBTU convention on economics, politics and Social Security as they impact people of color.]

AFL-CIO President to Speak at CBTU Convention May 26th

AFL-CIO President John J. Sweeney will give his first major speech to black trade unionists since announcing that he will seek a third term as president of the labor federation. Sweeney's speech, which comes as the debate over the future of the American labor movement enters a critical phase, will precede Rev. Jackson's remarks and will begin at 11 a.m., Thursday, May 26th. Critics of Sweeney's 10-year tenure have escalated their opposition to his candidacy, but the AFL-CIO president remains confident that he will be reelected at the federation's convention in July.

More than 1,500 activists will be in Phoenix for CBTU's convention. The theme is "Forging a New Vision for Tough Challenges Ahead." CBTU, which is the nation's largest independent African American labor organization, has 59 chapters, including one in Ontario, Canada.

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