

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, May 24, 2005

www.cbtu.org

For More Information Contact:

Dwight Kirk (202) 257-3966

dwight@d-flat.com

TOP BLACK LABOR LEADER SAYS
ARIZONA WORKERS RIPE FOR UNION ORGANIZING

1,500 Delegates to Open First Black Labor Convention in Phoenix This Week

Phoenix –

Why would 1,500 black workers from 77 international unions come to Phoenix to meet in blistering 100-degree heat; in a right-to-work state; in a place with more cactus than black folk? Well, because they will be attending the 34th International Convention of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, which begins Wednesday, May 25th, at the Phoenix Civic Plaza. The five-day convention (May 25-30th) will be CBTU's first in the Southwest.

CBTU President William Lucy issued the following statement:

“There is a tremendous challenge for unions to organize people of color in the South and the Southwest. But many workers of color and immigrant workers are already ‘socially organized’ in their own communities – through civic, religious and culturally-based groups. Our role is helping to build bridges of communication and unity among black, Latino and Native American workers in Arizona and throughout the Southwest. People of color already comprise 30 percent of union membership in the United States. But we must create ways to talk to each other, regularly and honestly. Then we must find common ground to make the labor movement more relevant to our communities. Organized labor will not be as appealing to unorganized workers unless its leadership and priorities reflect the diverse workforce that is changing the fabric of America. So, at the end of the day – hot though it may be – Phoenix is really the right host for this CBTU convention.”

Lucy, who is also international secretary-treasurer of the 1.4 million-member American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), said CBTU would be proposing a new political initiative to mobilize African American voters, who are becoming more alienated from the national Democratic Party's electoral structures and strategies because they lack credible and sufficient black input.

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2005 CBTU CONVENTION HIGHLIGHTS

Thursday, May 26

- 9 a.m. Opening Session (Ballroom)
Keynote Speaker: William Lucy
CBTU President
- 11 a.m. **Guest Speaker:** John J. Sweeney
President, AFL-CIO
- 12 noon **Guest Speaker:** Rev. Jesse L. Jackson
President, National Rainbow/PUSH Coalition
- 1 p.m. – 6 p.m. **Youth Leadership Institute** (Yuma 28-33)
- 1:30 p.m. – 5 p.m. **Environmental Justice/CARAT Team Conference**
- 5 p.m. – 7 p.m. **Town Hall Meeting** (Ballroom)
“African American, Native American, Asian American & Latino Relations”

Friday, May 27

- 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. **CBTU National Retirees Conference (Yuma 29 – 35)**
- 9 a.m. **CBTU National Women’s Conference (Ballroom)**
Anita Patterson, Co-chair, CBTU National Women’s Committee
- 9:30 a.m. **Keynote Speaker:** Shirley Harrington-Watson
United States Department of Agriculture
- 12 noon Women’s Conference Awards Luncheon (Tucson 36-43)
Keynote Speaker: Dr. Eula Saxon Dean, J.D.
Education/Leadership Consultant
- 6 – 8 p.m. **Town Hall Meeting** (Ballroom)
“Trade and Employment: The Flight of American Jobs”

Saturday, May 28

- 11 a.m. **Guest Speakers:** (Ballroom)
U.S. Senator Jon Corzine (D-NJ)
U.S. Rep. Bennie Thompson (D-MS)
U.S. Rep. Loretta Sanchez (D-CA)
Willy Madisha, President, Congress of South African Trade Unions
- 2 p.m. **Update on Labor Coalition for Community Action**
Gloria Johnson, LCCA President

Sunday, May 29

- 6 p.m. **Awards Dinner & Rodeo Show** (Corona Ranch)
“Denim & Diamonds”

