One of the most curious situations going on in the political arena is the strong support construction unions get from Black elected officials and traditional civil rights organizations.

This blind and unconditional love affair going on even though construction unions are the most racist organizations in the nation defies all common sense. It is more than 44 years since the Civil Rights Act and the construction trades are no better today than they were during the struggles of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Unions, per se, have been great and progressive but the construction trades have hid behind the “skirt” of that legacy to prolong their exclusive and discriminatory ways.
The same unions that put out a “contract” on the life of Dr. Arthur A. Fletcher when he went around the nation implementing Executive Order 11246 and the Civil Rights Act are still resisting diversity.

That made it easy for us to convince President George W. Bush to prohibit Project Labor Agreements involving federal money. PLA’s are agreements that prohibit any business other than a union shop from working on a specific project.

Show me a PLA and I will show you Jim Crow employment plus a locking out of most Black-owned firms that happen to be nonunion most of the time. A Project Labor Agreement is a license to discriminate against Black workers.

We showed President Bush that on the Wilson Bridge Project in the DC area if we were to have a Project Labor Agreement like Maryland, as opposed to Virginia, it would reduce Black labor by 70%. When the President banned any PLA on the bridge he actually said: “I want to support

small business and stop discrimination in the work place".

That was a great moment for Black employment and business development.

With the new elections, the love affair between unions and the Democratic Party is about to emerge again. That is fine with me except with the bigoted construction unions. I feel that instead of screaming and complaining perhaps this is a great time to make a long overdue change. Let's make the construction unions integrate. President-elect Obama has promised groups like the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers that he will end the ban on PLA's.

As he makes good on this promise we must be vigilant and qualify each and every PLA. We must look at the demographic goals of each geographical area which are set by the US Department of Labor and match that with the current capacity of the applicable construction unions.

In essence, if a major project is going up in Chicago or Detroit we must see what the standard is for Black employment (laborer, journeyman, foreman, management, etc.) in that market. If the construction unions do not have those numbers in their ranks then we should file a complaint and stop the "set up" for discrimination - we have no other option.
Let's remember how the City of Detroit had less than a 10 percent Black workforce on their new baseball and football stadiums (the city is 83 percent Black) because of a stupid PLA

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Sooner or later the discriminating union halls are going to get the message and start recruiting Blacks within the ranks once and for all.

When the Indiana Pacers needed their new stadium built the construction unions demanded a PLA. Indianapolis Republican Mayor Steve Goldsmith saw that he needed to do this to get

funding from the democratically controlled state legislature.
The Hon. William Crawford, a Black State Representative and Chair of the Budget Committee, showed the Wisdom of Solomon. Here was his deal: The state will put up the money, but there will be a PLA providing that the Department of Labor standards are met. Harry Alford will verify those numbers and report them.

The unions got their way, the Mayor got his money and Black employment and contracting wouldn't suffer. However, it was indeed creative how the unions met those numbers. They didn't have enough workers to make them so they recruited or brought in workers from as far away as Milwaukee, St. Louis, Cincinnati, etc. to work on the project.

That was the only way they could do it. Also, there wasn't a Black persons in town working anywhere else but on the stadium. It was quite an experience that I cannot forget.

The pre-apprentice scams, the hush money to civil rights groups and political contributions will no longer work for the construction unions. They have got to integrate here and now. We are going to audit them and rank them market by market.
Anywhere a PLA pops up the chamber will be there to scrutinize, challenge and call out any discrimination. Eventually, our leaders and the unions will realize that it is 2009 and doing the right thing is the only thing they can do.

Never again will we close our eyes, turn our backs or simply ignore institutional racism. We will fight and kill it. Yes we can!

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