



# afterwords

CONVENTION 2016

TUESDAY JULY 19, 2016

## TODAY @ CONVENTION

- ◆ U.S. Rep. Keith Ellison
- ◆ Sybrina Fulton, Trayvon Martin Foundation
- ◆ AFT Human Rights Luncheon
- ◆ Gov. Mark Dayton
- ◆ United Steelworkers President Leo Gerard
- ◆ Stav Shaffir, Israeli Knesset Member
- ◆ Committee Reports

## A vehicle for empowering our members

WEINGARTEN DISCUSSES OUR SUCCESSES AND OUR CHALLENGES



PHOTO BY ROB LEVINE

AFT PRESIDENT Randi Weingarten opened the convention Monday with a forceful case for Hillary Clinton, while hailing the 100-year-old union as a vehicle empowering our more than 1.6 million workers at the bargaining table and the ballot box. Weingarten commemorated the AFT’s enduring values and its century of collective action to make the country a more fair and just place, and described the union as a bulwark against public figures such as Donald Trump, Scott Walker and others who exploit Americans’ anxieties “and turn scapegoating into an art form.”

Speaking before the packed hall of more than 3,000 delegates, Weingarten described this year’s election as “a moment of reckoning for our country,” calling the choice that faces voters this fall “a battle for [America’s] soul and for our children’s future.”

She tied the achievements of the AFT in its first 100 years to the challenges currently facing our members and other working Americans. Drawing a parallel between today’s economic climate and that of AFT’s founding

years, she mentioned that “in 1916, wealth [in the United States] was the most concentrated on record ... until now.”

### Clinton ‘the best candidate’

“Hillary understands the most urgent issues confronting our country,” Weingarten said. “Her bold economic plan puts unions front and center. She will level the playing field for the middle class, raising incomes for hardworking

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families, creating debt-free college for students, and lifting children out of poverty.”

Weingarten pointed to Clinton’s lifetime of achievements and advocacy—for early childhood education, public education, universal healthcare, human rights and economic opportunity.

“She’s proved time and time again that she is a dreamer, and a doer,” Weingarten continued. “And while I don’t think anyone should vote for her just because she’s a woman, I know from experience that to achieve what she has is harder because she is a woman. How many of us in this audience have been told you sound shrill, don’t yell? You’re not smiling enough? That listening is a sign of weakness?”

### Trump ‘perilously close to fascism’

Contrasting Clinton with presumptive Republican nominee Donald Trump, Weingarten said that “in my lifetime, we’ve never faced anything like what we’re facing this year.”

“What do you call it,” she asked, “when a candidate for president debases an entire re-

ligion, mocks a disabled reporter, refers to women as pigs and calls Mexicans rapists? I call it a threat to civil society, to decency and to the values that underpin our country. Frankly, it is perilously close to fascism.”

Weingarten leveled a broad critique against Trump’s economic ideas, calling them “snake oil” that “will make economic inequality worse.” She blasted Trump for saying he’s against trade deals that would send jobs overseas but manufacturing his products at “sweatshops in Bangladesh, China and Mexico,” and noted that “he bankrupted his businesses four times, and while he boasts he was unscathed, his employees, contractors and vendors were devastated.” AFT empowers at the bargaining table and at the ballot box

“Our founders couldn’t have imagined that their vision would grow from eight locals to 3,500 locals, a union of more than 1.6 million members,” Weingarten remarked. She announced the addition of more than 36,000 members to the AFT’s ranks since 2014—growth that puts the union at a record-high membership of 1,637,412 workers.

“When unions are strong, we set a standard that helps all workers,” Weingarten said. “Union members earn higher wages and are more likely to have pensions and employer-provided health benefits. One of the strongest predictors of how well your children will do economically,” she continued, “is the percentage of union members in your community.”

Weingarten said it is “not surprising that our right to bargain is in the right wing’s crosshairs. Just remember *Friedrichs*”—referencing a recent Supreme Court case dealing with union membership—and how the right tried to use the Supreme Court to decimate us. But bargaining holds the potential to transform and innovate,” she said, detailing numerous examples of such innovative contracts.

### Union a vehicle for civil rights

Weingarten paid tribute in her remarks to Philando Castile, the staff member at J.J. Hill Montessori School in nearby St. Paul who lost his life earlier this July. She decried “the disproportionate use of deadly force against black people,” and said that “our justice system needs to be more just.” Weingarten spotlighted recent work by the AFT to bring attention to racial isolation and inequality—offering as an example a 2015 report that “confronts institutional racism and offers concrete steps to create excellent public schools for all students, with a focus on boys and men of color.”

Lamenting the gun violence that claims 33,000 lives in America per year—violence that took the lives of three police officers in Baton Rouge the day before her address—Weingarten said “we must never accept that mass murders or indiscriminate killings are the new normal.” Describing America as “awash in guns,” she argued that “working to make the criminal justice system more just and supporting police are not mutually exclusive. This is a matter of ensuring that everyone feels safe—those who swear an oath to protect us and those they are sworn to protect.”

In closing her remarks, Weingarten referenced the words of Martin Luther King Jr., saying, “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” The AFT, she said to the crowd, “is our vehicle in this journey for justice. It was that vehicle in 1916, it is today, and, because of you, it will be in the century ahead.”



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL CAMPBELL AND ROB LEVINE

Scavenger Hunt Clue  
Albert Shanker

# Hillary reserves 'seat at the table' for the AFT

ENLISTS MEMBERS TO FIGHT TRUMP'S DIVISIVE ATTACKS



PHOTO BY MICHAEL CAMPBELL

HILLARY CLINTON drew big cheers and rounds of thunderous applause from AFT convention delegates on Monday evening when she detailed a strong vision for public schools and the public sector—one that steers clear of derision and division as it charts a new course toward well-resourced institutions, effective community connections, and solid school strategies forged in partnership with educators on the frontline.

The presumptive Democratic nominee flatly rejected any effort to return to top-down reform. Real school improvement, she insisted, is something that requires the voices, talent and buy-in of professionals who do the work every day.

"I want to thank you for being one of the essential partners for everything we need to do to move the country in the right direction," Clinton declared to enthusiastic applause. "I want to say right from the outset that I'm with you.

"When I'm president, you will have a partner in the White House, and you will always have a seat at the table."

AFT President Randi Weingarten introduced Clinton at the session and pointed to a quarter-century of close work with the Democratic standard-bearer that revealed her

"compassion, courage and the commitment it takes to achieve real-world change."

The AFT was the first national union to endorse Clinton in the 2016 primaries and, as president, Clinton will "keep the promise she's made to all of us—the promise to break down barriers, to raise people's wages and to keep America safe," Weingarten said.

Clinton's fire to bring people together, rather than tear groups apart, was clearly on display at the convention. At one point, when a group of demonstrators interrupted her address with chants reminding the audience that

black lives matter, Clinton pointed to common ground in two essentials for society: "respect for the law and everyone respected by the law."

On education, Clinton vowed to lift the status of educators through career-long professional development, higher salaries for teachers and PSRPs, and relief from staggering student debt—a refreshing departure at a time when too many educators are ignored and underpaid.

And, the Democratic candidate insisted, these efforts must involve unions. "If we are serious about supporting educators, we need to support unions." Those seeking to privatize public education, to impose vouchers and to launch reckless charter school efforts can expect to find an enemy in the White House under any Hillary Clinton administration, she said.

Some of Clinton's harshest remarks were directed to presumptive Republican nominee Donald Trump. She listed a litany of his most vulgar, insulting and outrageous comments—his belief that we spend too much on schools while reserve too little for tax breaks benefiting the wealthy; his racist and sexist attacks; and the fear, pain and anger he has needlessly caused vulnerable groups ranging from immigrants to the disabled. Trump compounded the misery by picking as his running mate, Indiana Gov. Mike Pence, "a tea party politician and one of the most hostile when it comes to public education."

"Neither Donald Trump nor Mike Pence should be anywhere near our children's future," Clinton added. "If I weren't running against him, I would ask Randi to invite me here so I could rail against them."

On Tuesday, delegates are expected to consider a special order of business endorsing Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential bid.



PHOTO BY RUSS CURTIS

# Voices on the issues

The AFT's five membership divisions held their meetings Monday morning and discussed issues ranging from higher education strikes to medical debt to the Every Student Succeeds Act. Here are some of the more notable speakers and quotes from the meetings:

## LINDA DARLING-HAMMOND

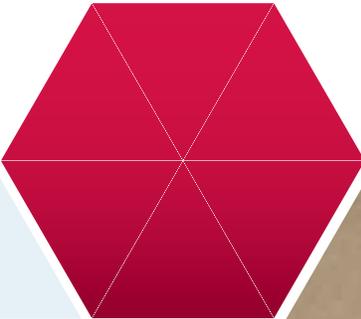
President and CEO of the Learning Policy Institute

"Test and punish is not what accountability should be, and we need to reinvent it," leading education researcher and advocate Linda Darling-Hammond told the teachers division.

The effort must begin now—with a strong roll-out of the Every Student Succeeds Act—and that requires active educator involvement in local, state and national discussions about ESSA. "Change is possible, and the moment for that change is now."



PHOTO BY MICHAEL CAMPBELL



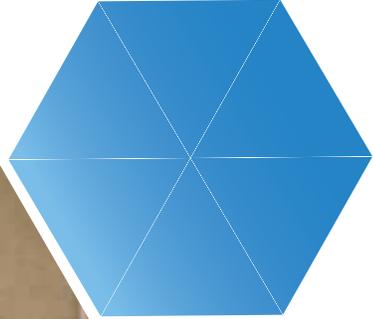
## HEATHER BLOCK

Patient Advocate

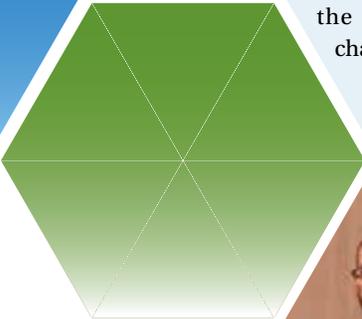
Heather Block shared the story of her fight to pay medical debt—and still get the care she needs to battle cancer—with AFT nurses and health professionals. When Block's cancer returned after being in remission, she broke down. "It was not because of the cancer, but because of the money." Although she is on Medicare, Block still must pay 20 percent of her medical bills. She has outlived her original diagnosis but says, "Mine is not a feel-good story. My drugs are keeping me alive, but I'm going through my savings at an alarming rate to pay for them. It's a double-edged sword."



PHOTO BY ROB LEVINE



sure it was done correctly. I was afraid." A fellow PSRP showed her how, demonstrating to the new employee how to scan in the numbers. "She made a difference in my life from the day I walked into that building. If it hadn't been for her, nobody would have gotten paid," Newbold said. "Who are we? We are PSRPs. We make a difference in people's lives."



## JAENEY HOENE

President of Green River United Faculty Coalition, Green River Community College, Auburn, Wash., and panelist at the higher education divisional meeting on strikes, activism and militancy

"We had done everything else that we could think to do, and our college was not moving at all. We simply had to strike. After two years resisting it, when we did it, it was actually a really joyful experience. Our membership is so much more united than they were before. After walking the picket line with people who were from the other side of the college, we are so much stronger."



PHOTO BY RUSS CURTIS



PHOTO BY RUSS CURTIS

## RUBY NEWBOLD

President of the Detroit Association of Educational Office Employees

On her first day working for the Detroit schools, PSRP chair Ruby Newbold recalls, "if you're clerical, you walk in with little or no training." "I walked in and, believe it or not, payroll was due," she said. "I was responsible for making

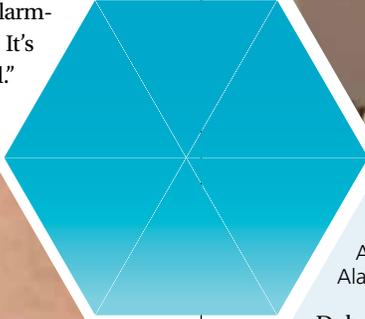


PHOTO BY ROB LEVINE

## CRIS SANDERS-PORTER

Adult Probation and Parole Officer, Alaska

Delegates from the AFT Public Employees division came prepared to discuss their resolutions and were incredibly respectful and cohesive, said Cris Sanders-Porter, who works for the state of Alaska. "It was such a well-organized group," she said. "Everybody did their homework, everybody came prepared." For instance, in discussing the resolution about the Flint water crisis, an important statement of outrage over the governor's mishandling of the lead in that city's water, nobody argued about the order of resolutions. "It was just so graceful," she added. "It's the realization that we're all in it together."



# Convention opens with commitment and resolve

IN A STIRRING WELCOME, Education Minnesota President Denise Specht demonstrated firm resolve to overcome the difficult times in which we live, as she recalled Bloody Friday. On that day in 1934, union busters fired into a crowd of striking Teamsters in Minneapolis—a violent event, but one that “did not break labor,” she said. “It made us stronger, when thousands of people were outraged and joined the cause.”

Similarly, the outrage over Philando Castile’s death in St. Paul, and other tragic deaths involving overzealous law enforcement officers, has “strengthened our resolve to confront all the forces aligned against our sisters and brothers of color.” Specht also mourned the police officers killed in the escalating violence.

Her inspiring words were followed by prayer and then song, as the Rev. Paul Slack asked for grace and wisdom in perilous



Denise Specht

times, and Peggy Flanagan, a state representative and powerful singer, performed the national anthem. Flanagan is a citizen of the White Earth Nation and a member of the Wolf Clan family, which is tasked with protecting the community, just as AFT members do, she said. “Big thanks for all of the work you do to be the protectors of the community, to take care of our young people, and to make sure they have a future that we know is possible.”



Peggy Flanagan

PHOTOS BY RUSS CURTIS



# Minnesota senators lift up labor and elections

AL FRANKEN may be funny—he was a comedian before he became a U.S. senator from Minnesota—but he and Amy Klobuchar, the state’s senior senator, are serious about their commitment to the labor movement. Both spoke passionately about their union connections: Franken as a member of three unions, and Klobuchar through her family, including her mother, a proud AFT member who taught until she was 70 years old.

There’s nothing more important than how we educate our kids, said Franken, who learned about the problems with No Child Left Behind and overtesting early in his political career, and worked hard to shift policy away from teaching to the test.

“Tests don’t measure everything that’s important—not by a long shot,” he said. Employers around the state tell him they want creative employees with critical-thinking skills and an ability to work well with others. “It’s really hard to actually test those things,” he said. The recently passed Every Student

Succeeds Act begins to recognize them, though—and addresses other issues as well, like student mental health, STEM education and the humanities. “Because the brain isn’t a mind, and a mind isn’t a soul, we need to teach the arts,” said Franken.

All students should have access to these resources, said Klobuchar: “It shouldn’t matter what school you attend, all children deserve to receive a high-quality education that will open doors to opportunity,” she said, adding that NCLB never accomplished that because it was never backed with resources. And Klobuchar praised the ESSA.

But the presidential election is the union’s most important work, said Klobuchar. “Our country’s choice in November could not be more stark. It is a choice between electing a leader who is determined to make education affordable for all, and someone who has scammed students with his Trump University. Between a leader who will bring down the price of prescription drugs and support our nurses, and someone who wants to repeal the Affordable Care Act,” she said.

“The choice is clear, and it’s up to all of you to make sure we elect leaders who stand up for our children and our communities.”



PHOTOS BY RUSS CURTIS



PHOTO BY KENT KANOUSE

## Book it

WHO BETTER than an English teacher to share her favorite independent bookstores in the Twin Cities? Here are AFT Executive Vice President Mary Cathryn Ricker’s faves:

- ◆ Birchbark, owned by award-winning author Louise Erdrich
- ◆ Minnesota Center for Book Arts, downtown
- ◆ Common Good Books in St. Paul, owned by Garrison Keillor
- ◆ Magers & Quinn, uptown Minneapolis
- ◆ Subtext, in St. Paul, owned by a longtime teacher and AFT member
- ◆ Wild Rumpus, a children’s bookstore with a menagerie of cats, a chicken, and caged rodents and reptiles



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# The value of community collaboration

“WHEN WE ENGAGE and mobilize our members, we are making real progress,” AFT President Randi Weingarten told convention delegates, kicking off a session Monday that included three local elected officials—all strong allies of AFT affiliates—who have been working with the union to improve their communities.

Philadelphia City Council member Helen Gym talked about how poverty and inequality lie at the heart of the injustices in our country. The answer is local organizing, she said. “It’s a movement that I’ve been a part of. It’s a movement that I’ve been a beneficiary of.” She noted that the delegates’ “love of our children is in itself a deeply political act. Now is the time to take to the streets and to the polls. We have everything to win.”

Los Angeles Unified School District board of education member Steve Zimmer knows the power of community collaboration. The work that the school board, United Teachers Los Angeles and the school district did together raised graduation rates in the city by 25 percent. “The forces of market and corporate reform come after us because collaboration

actually works,” said Zimmer.

“We know that in order for the promise of public education to be true, it must be true for every child who comes to the schoolhouse door,” he said. “The names of children may have changed but the dreams haven’t changed. These are our kids, our schools, our dreams, our future.”

Plattsburgh, N.Y., school board member Rod Sherman says years of collaboration between the school district and his union have benefited his community, too. Sherman was the president of the Plattsburgh Teachers’ Association for nearly 40 years until he retired in 2012. Early in his presidency, his local went on strike, which resulted in unifying teachers with parents and the community. “We took that unity and worked to create a better school district for our kids,” said Sherman.

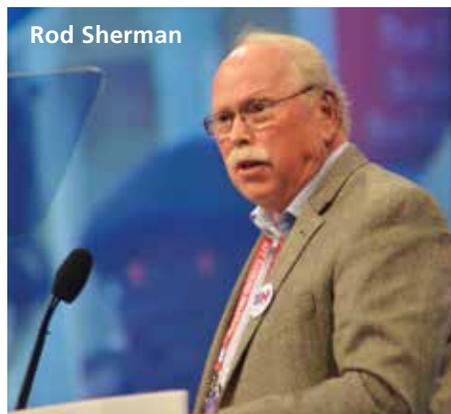
Even in retirement, Sherman continued to work with his union and the school district. This spring, Sherman won a seat on the school board. “I am humbled that the community trusts me. I believe that those years of collaboration helped to build that trust.”



Helen Gym



Steve Zimmer



Rod Sherman

PHOTOS BY ROB LEVINE

## Locals share their Twin Cities tips

Here are some recommendations from AFT members who live in and around Minneapolis. Thanks to PSRP Everyday Hero Brenda Johnson, a transition specialist at the Hennepin County Juvenile Detention Center; Kevin Lindstrom, president of the Minnesota State College Faculty; Laura Scott, a teacher at Burnsville High School; Susan Snorek, from Southview Elementary in Waconia; and Tom Stinson, a school nurse and member of the Nurses and Health Professionals program and policy council.

### Favorite restaurants

- ◆ Zelo, Amazing Thailand, Butcher & the Boar, Modern Times—all very different and delish!
- ◆ Brit’s Pub, Black Sheep Pizza and Prohibition (for the great views)
- ◆ Salut, W.A. Frost and Company, and Sweeney’s Saloon for drinks on the patio
- ◆ Ginger Hop and J.D. Hoyt’s Supper Club
- ◆ Famous Dave’s (live music during Sunday brunch)
- ◆ Stella’s Fish Cafe (rooftop dining)
- ◆ Seven (rooftop dining)
- ◆ Manny’s (one of the best steakhouses in town)
- ◆ Libertine for trendy, rooftop people-watching and craft cocktails

### Favorite things to do

- ◆ Walk along Summit Avenue
- ◆ Walk around Lake Calhoun, Lake Harriet and Lake of the Isles
- ◆ Visit the Guthrie Theater and walk out on the “endless bridge” for a view of the Mississippi
- ◆ Tour the Surly Brewery
- ◆ Visit the beautiful warehouse district with its breweries
- ◆ Hear music from the Minnesota Orchestra, or visit the Dakota Jazz Club, the Shout House dueling piano bar and the Cabooze
- ◆ Hang out over fish ‘n chips and lawn bowling at Brit’s Pub on Nicollet Mall
- ◆ Watch the St. Paul Saints play, or see a game at the Target Field ballpark
- ◆ Anything uptown—bars and nightlife



PHOTO BY MEET MINNEAPOLIS



PHOTO BY MICHAEL CAMPBELL

# Meet the AFT's amazing 2016 Everyday Heroes



PHOTO BY MICHAEL CAMPBELL

OVER THE NEXT TWO DAYS, the seven AFT members selected as 2016 Everyday Heroes will be recognized during plenary sessions. Read more about this year's winners at [www.aft.org/2016-aft-everyday-heroes](http://www.aft.org/2016-aft-everyday-heroes).

## **AFT Higher Education** **Arnold Korotkin**

*Sociology professor, Montclair State University, Montclair, N.J.  
Montclair State University Federation of Adjunct Faculty*

When Korotkin sees a need, he steps in and fills it. That includes starting a group email list for 9-11 survivors and their families, advocating for lead-free water in New Jersey schools, and getting New Jersey Transit to build a shelter when he saw that bus riders needed one. He keeps his own community informed with the “Gadfly,” a blog that covers everything from property taxes to overtesting in the schools. At his local union, Korotkin co-directs COPE and keeps members informed of all things activist in New Jersey.

## **Early Childhood Educators** **Sandra Cappelli**

*Teacher, John F. Horgan Elementary School, West Warwick, R.I.  
West Warwick Teachers' Alliance*

Cappelli is lead teacher for her grade level, a teacher who works to create and share model lessons with coaches in the district. And she's a powerful force at the local and state union levels when it comes to getting outstanding professional development into the hands of colleagues in the field. Sandra's work over 17 years has been sterling. One colleague at her school describes Cappelli's classroom as a learning space that “ticks effortlessly like the inner components of a fine timepiece.”

## **AFT Paraprofessionals and School-Related Personnel** **Brenda Johnson**

*Transition specialist  
Minneapolis Federation of Teachers and Educational Support Professionals*

Johnson, a local hero who works at a high school within the Hennepin County Juvenile Detention Center, shines love and hope on troubled kids. She works to build trust—with the students, their families and local law enforcement officials, among others. Her approach to engaging the families of incarcerated students has become a national model and attracted people from as far away as Australia who want to see how she supports her students.

## **AFT Teachers** **Erika Wozniak**

*Teacher, Oriole Park School, Chicago  
Chicago Teachers Union*

A fifth-grade science teacher, Wozniak is also a tough-minded unionist. She's a proud building representative for the Chicago Teachers Union—someone who isn't afraid to go to the mat for colleagues and her kids—as well as a mentor teacher and a member of the licensure board for the state board of education. When the debate heats up about how to improve Chicago public schools, Wozniak is at her toughest—determined to keep the voice of teachers in that mix.

## **AFT Public Employees** **Valentina Washington**

*Health Department Accountant  
Baltimore County Federation of Public Employees*

Washington is a problem-solver and a champion for the people of Baltimore. Her enthusiasm and powers of analysis help her on the

job, where she is a union steward. As a mother, she volunteers at her children's schools and speaks out at school board meetings. She is active in her neighborhood civic association and volunteers as a Little League parent coach. To top it all off, Washington is working toward a master's degree in accounting and information systems.

## **AFT Nurses and Health Professionals** **Roger Woods**

*Registered nurse, Danbury (Conn.) Hospital  
Danbury Nurses' Union*

Woods is an emergency room nurse at Danbury Hospital in Connecticut, and that work led him to pursue first-responder training through the Federal Emergency Management Agency. He used what he learned to train his colleagues on how to use personal protective equipment when the Ebola crisis hit in the U.S. More recently, Woods became a certified clinical hypnotist; he is also known as the “Patient Whisperer,” using his skills to calm anxious patients and family members.

## **AFT Retirees** **Sam Trivette**

*Retired, Alaska Public Employees Association*

Trivette, who has been a tireless advocate for public employees—even in retirement—spent his 30-year career working for the Alaska Department of Corrections. After retiring, he became a member of the Alaska Retired Public Employees Association and served as president. As a member of the Alaska Retirement Management Board, Trivette got to know most of the state's lawmakers on a first-name basis and learned every policy, law and procedure concerning public retirement systems in order to look out for the retirements of Alaska's public employees.