The Freedom Forum - Local Hiring

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On Saturday, November 12, Leaders of a Beautiful Struggle[2], a local progressive think-tank, hosted its latest political forum[3] called, “Local Hiring: How do we get Baltimore working?” Cory McCray, a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 24, was one of the panelists. Here is what he had to say about the event.

With economic turmoil widespread across the country and the globe, urban communities and cities find themselves dealing with disturbing unemployment [4] numbers. This has everyone brainstorming solutions to deal with high unemployment rates in cities such as Baltimore.

Yesterday I had the pleasure of participating in the Freedom Forum; an event held by Leaders of a Beautiful Struggle [2]. The topic of choice for the Freedom Forum was Local Hiring. The special guest moderator was Ms. Diane Bell Mckoy, the CEO of Associated Black Charities [5]. The panel consisted of myself (Cory McCray [6]), Professor John Bullock [7](Towson University), the Dean (Sojourner-Douglass College) John Morris [8], Kenya Asli, Red Line Economic Officer.
The discussion touched on several great points from Unions, to the Occupy Movement, and innovative solutions to locally solve the job crisis. The very first question was “How has the global economic climate affected the availability of jobs in Baltimore?” Since Baltimore City has been known to be a blue collar city, having manufacturing plants such as General Motors, Lever Brothers, Sparrows Points, Domino Sugar, and several can plants, dealing with the economic changes around the globe, has adversely affected Baltimore City. Baltimore City is suffering from high unemployment rates, foreclosures, high rates of poverty [9], and a loss of population due to the economic crisis. “What role should unions play in job creation?” [10] Unions can have a vital role, if Baltimore City let them participate, several pieces of local hiring legislation have been proposed, and met with roadblocks due to the lack of government innovation and need to challenge the status quo. That roadblock is the “Privileges or Immunity Clause” [11] in the constitution which the city council fails to challenge. The “Privileges or Immunity Clause” [11] has been challenged recently in San Francisco and Prince Georges County. The unions have the ability to play a big role in local hiring, by bringing along their structure, teaching young men and women a trade, and providing Baltimore City residents the ability to make a good living wage. This however, cannot be possible without the Baltimore City Councils ability to be innovative in finding new ideas.

One of the great highlights was when Dean Morris stated “The system is broken and we are going to have to experiment in finding new solutions.” I believe that is the key because no one knows which answer is right or wrong, but we are going to have the courage to try new things instead of staying with the status quo which works for 1%, but is broken for 99% of the people. This was such great conversation around the occupation movement and what it can become. If you were unable to attend, I would encourage you to catch the video with some of the highlights of the discussion on Local Hiring [12]. Once again thank you to Leaders of a Beautiful Struggle for giving me the opportunity to share my views and solutions to fixing the problem of unemployment in Baltimore City!

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