



# UNION SPOTLIGHT

AFT Washington, AFL-CIO

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April, 2017



## Another Successful Conference for Classified Members

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# Another Successful Conference for Classified Members

(Continue From Cover)



“I would recommend this conference to my co-workers because it’s a lot of fun, has great classes, and I can catch up with other paraeducators,” said one participant at the recent AFT Washington Professional Development Conference for Classified Members. The annual conference is planned by the AFT Washington Classified Council.

About 80 members attended the annual conference on Saturday, March 18th, to take workshops that gave them new or expanded job skills about topics including workplace bullying, tools and tips for Microsoft Office programs, and working with children who have autism. In addition, there were two workshops to build union skills: Know Your Contract-Know Your Rights and Labor in the Time of Trump. Thank you to the workshop presenters **Nancy Grimes, Jen Haggard-Mlynarek, Todd Hahn, Randy Holt, Nancy Kennedy, Barb Randall-Saleh, Dan Troccoli,**



and **Lee Williams**. After the workshops, there was a labor history presentation by **Merrilee Miron**.

President **Karen Strickland** brought



greetings and talked about the challenges and opportunities ahead of us, and TFP boardmember **Maria Haynes** emceed the program.

The highlight of the event was the donated door prizes that were raffled off by AFT Renton Classified president **Janet Watson** who solicited most of the items. Door prizes were donated by Starbucks Coffee, Sunrise Dental, Sam’s Club, I Fly Indoor Skydiving, AFT Washington, Taco Time, Bartell’s, the Fife family, TFP Local 461, AFT Renton Classified Local 6367, Panera, Olive Garden, and Red Robin.

Locals represented at the conference were AFT Renton Classified, UCWU Northshore and Issaquah Chapters, Lake Washington Institute of Technology, Clover Park Technical College Classified, and Tacoma Federation of ParaEducators (TFP).

We appreciate everyone who took their Saturday to attend the conference.

## AFT Washington Executive Board

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Board meetings are usually held on the first Saturday of the month except for holidays and summer months. Board members are elected to two-year terms.

AFT Washington represents over 6,500 members in early childhood education, K-12, and higher education in Washington State and is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, which represents 1.6 million members nationwide.

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Photos by Sylvia Watson unless otherwise noted.  
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*Karen Strickland*

## President's Column

# Standing Together and Moving Forward

Spring is here and with it a series of AFT Washington events. Our Classified Conference and Treasurer and Data Management training have already taken place. The Classified conference offered workshops such as Autism, Information Technology, and Understanding your Contract. At the Treasurer and Data Management training, local officers learned how to efficiently and effectively meet the responsibilities of their office.

Three exciting events are yet to come: The Contingent Faculty and their allies will come together on April 8th to collectively devise strategies to address long-term problems like lack of job security, sound hiring processes, and low pay. On April 29th, our Human Rights Committee will hold a Human Rights Summit, bringing together organizations and unions to share knowledge and resources that will contribute to the fair and just society we yearn for. Finally, and very importantly, on May 19-20, we will hold our 80th convention at the Silver Reef Casino in Ferndale, Washington. I urge you to talk to your local leadership about representing your local as a delegate.

On the business side of the house, delegates to Convention will set the priorities for us as a union for the next two years, elect new officers, and conduct the business of the state federation. On the

inspirational side of the house, convention provides an opportunity to consider who we are collectively and how we can best express a collective voice. Convention will inspire, motivate, and empower us to continue fighting for the things that are important to us in the workplace and beyond. The daily news and social media sometimes makes us feel small and powerless to make a difference. If we stand alone, that may be true. If we stand together, it is definitely not true.

In the Other Washington, House Republicans had proposed healthcare legislation that would provide \$275 billion in tax breaks to the wealthy and cause 24 million people to lose healthcare. (While I prefer to focus on policy, not partisanship, I am specifying Republicans in this case because there are no Democrats supporting this bill.) Additional losses include blocking access to reproductive care, increasing premiums (up to 750%) for older adults up to 64 years old, and sharply reducing services to children in schools. These changes will hurt us all and some more directly than others. In Congressional District 8, Dave Reichert's district, more than 76,000 people may lose their insurance if this bill passes. Although the ACA is not perfect, the majority of Americans want to keep or improve it.

Other challenges on the national front include the direction the Department of Education takes and the next nominee for Labor Secretary, Alex Acosta. Meanwhile, our state remains in revenue crisis mode because of our regressive tax system and a legislature reluctant to raise revenue.

In spite of these challenges, we have had victories! I'm thinking of our Green River Community College strike, which not only unified faculty and cemented

relationships with students and staff, it also resulted in the ouster of the college president and the appointment of two supportive Trustees. Our AFT Renton Local built an alliance with other unions representing employees in the Renton School District and stood in solidarity for bigger raises! In 2015's legislative session, we won the right for faculty at the community and technical colleges to bargain local dollars, resulting in the payment of step increases that haven't been funded since 2008 – to the tune of hundreds of thousands of dollars in their pockets! This year, a bill to make that right permanent had a hearing in the Senate, resulting from the involvement of Sharon Mitchler, President of Centralia College Federation of Teachers, who met with her senator and Lobbyist Bernal Baca several times.

These victories are the result of our members, leadership, and staff raising our collective voice to improve our lives. Attendance at AFT Washington events and especially Convention are opportunities to strengthen our foundation, develop our infrastructure, and shape the future as we want it to be.

**SAVE THE DATE**

**July 6-8, 2017**

**AFT Northwest Leadership Forum**

**Vancouver Hilton Hotel,  
Vancouver, WA**

- Featuring skills-based training on complaints vs. grievances
- Introduction to contract negotiations
- Workshop tracks on social justice, organizing, running an effective local and political mobilizing.

**Registration Coming**

# 2017 Convention Takes Place in May

Join us May 19-20 for our 2017 Convention at the Silver Reef Casino and Spa in Ferndale.

We'll kick off with an early bird workshop from 2 – 5 PM, Friday, May 19th. The workshop will explore challenges and opportunities during the Trump administration and how we can work together to achieve our goals. Join us for “Are Unions Done in the Time of Trump? Turning Fear and Apathy Into Action.”

Later that afternoon, we'll have a delegate reception and dinner featuring our guest speaker Kent Wong, a founding member of APALA (Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO). Kent is currently the Director of the Center for Labor Research and Education at UCLA. Kent has worked with undocumented students to build the Dreamers' movement in Los Angeles, collectively publishing several books telling the stories of these students.

At this year's convention, we will be electing officers to the AFT Washington executive board, approving bylaws



Silver Reef Casino and Spa in Ferndale, WA | Photo credit: Elizabeth Ferrell

amendments and resolutions, and honoring members and locals for their union work. We'll also have themed baskets to raise money for our education scholarship fund, which we encourage your local to contribute for the raffle.

Listed below are significant deadlines for many convention-related activities. Most of these deadlines are mandated by our bylaws.

**April 17**  
Nominations for Board awards and Human Rights award to the Executive Board

**April 19**  
Bylaws & Standing Rules amendments due in AFT Washington office

**April 29**  
Bylaws & Standing Rules amendments published

## April 29

Officer nominations by petition due

## April 29

Resolutions due

## May 1

Last day for candidates to send in candidacy information sheet/bio

## May 4

Hotel room reservation cut-off date

## May 9

March per capita must be paid to AFT & AFT Washington

## May 12

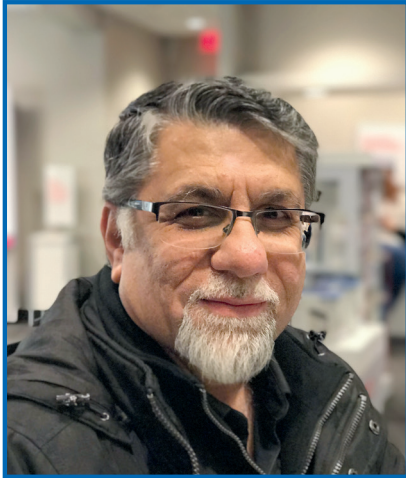
Complete delegate packet sent to registered delegates

If you are interested in becoming a delegate for your local, please contact your local president. If you have convention questions or concerns, contact Elizabeth Ferrell (eferrell@aftwa.org or 206.432.8088). See you in May!



# Despite Racism My Name is Still Magnificent

By Oussama Alkhalili, Instructor at Highline Community College



Oussama Alkhalili

Before the Day, many people thought of me as if I had come from Hawaii because of my lovely name, Oussama Alkhalili. People were fascinated to learn I am from Beirut, Lebanon. The meaning of my first name, Oussama (pronounced Osama) means “lion” or “leader.” The meaning of Alkhalili is “a friendly and trustworthy person.” Yes, I had a beautiful name before the Day of September 11, 2001. Since then, my name has changed from beauty to fear and is associated more with terrorism. My name has labeled me as a Muslim terrorist before people get to know me.

Yes, I had numerous experiences of being screamed at, cussed at, shoved in public, and spat on in public. I had other experiences of being discriminated against at airports and in public institutions. I even had students walking out of my classes once they learned about my first name. The more I experienced these harassments and discriminations, the more I wanted

to speak out about the truth of Islam, Muslims, and Arabs. The opportunity arose a few years ago during the Arab Revolution Spring. People were more interested to hear about Arabs, Muslims, and about ISIS and Islam. I spoke in classes. Then I spoke in conferences.

It is disheartening to witness how the western world, particularly the Christian realm, paint an entire race in one single brush as a single entity that has the sole purpose to terrorize the globe. Although it is true that there are many Muslim extremists, haters, and thugs, we fail to see how small a number they represent. Moreover, we fail to see there are greater threats from other groups than there are from Muslims. Yes, we can

## Here are some numbers that can help:

Muslim Extremists	Numbers
al Qaeda	2,200
Jabhat al Nusra	10,000
Al-Shabaab	5,000
Islamic Maghreb	300
Jemaah Islamiya	100
Taliban	35,000
Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan	200
Boko Haram	300
Others	10,000
Total	63,100

blame the media for spreading false and fabricated news about the Islamic religion and Muslims. However, you are to be blamed for not reading and investigating in the truth.

There are about 1.6 billion Muslims in the world, about 23 percent of the world population. About 72 percent of Muslims identified as moderate, 27 percent of the Muslims are unknown or not identified, and one percent (1%) are identified as extremist. Thus, there are 1.6 million Muslims who identified as Muslim extremists. Not all extremists harbor aggression and commit violent acts. Based on the listed terrorist Muslim groups, the real number of terrorists from the entire Islamic world is 0.00394% of Muslims.

The truth is, according to the FBI, Muslims are only responsible for six percent (6%) of terrorism in the United States, and only two percent (2%) in the European Union. Therefore, you are more likely to die from second-hand smoke than you are to die from a Muslim terrorist.

The recent 2016 presidential elections have painted big targets on our backs. We cannot know when a racist, encouraged by recent events and politics, will strike. I do not mean to take anything away from my brothers and sisters of color; Muslims have now been targeted to be slain.

The ways to fight these racist perceptions is through education and openness.

We can achieve peace within our society by meeting with and getting to know a Muslim.

Source: <http://www.cnn.com/2014/09/26/opinion/bergen-schneider-how-many-jihadists/>

# Everyday Hero

By Sylvia Watson, Communications Coordinator, Editor



Wadiyah Nelson

It's been quite a while since I've seen Wadiyah Nelson, a librarian with the Seattle College District. I could count on running into her at various events held by AFT Washington — conventions, trainings, causes; you name it, she was there. As I sat across from her in the café booth, I felt like I was visiting an old friend.

I met with her to write about her story, the story of an educator, a part-time librarian, a union member. And an everyday hero. She treats people with respect and believes in helping to create opportunities for others.

Wadiyah was a part-time librarian at Seattle Central College up until 2016 but she and another part-time librarian were let go when the college hired their fourth full-time librarian. Now she is a substitute, working when needed at three Seattle College campuses, Highline Community College, and Third Place Books in South Seattle.

"I love being a librarian!" she exclaimed.

"What I enjoy about being a librarian is connecting information to students who need to do research and teaching them to critically deconstruct information and analyze it," Nelson said. "Many times students will Google information and that's all."

She believes this personal "teaching moment" encourages students who are interested in transferring to a four-year university where research is a major part of their education.

Before becoming a librarian, Wadiyah was a counselor and brings those skills to her everyday work.

"I pick up on emotional issues students are experiencing in college. If I feel a student has anxiety, I will encourage them, particularly students from working-class backgrounds, and those who are disabled, who are older students, and ESL students who are overwhelmed by the academic experience," said Nelson.

She added, "Someone once said, the role of the instructor is to help students make meaning out of learning."

Generations before have been told that if you work hard and play fair, you will have opportunities to succeed.

Wadiyah has lived in Seattle for 30 years where she tried to find an apartment but couldn't afford most. She finds it hard to make ends meet.

The lack of salary increases over the past eight years and the rising costs of living make it difficult to remain in Seattle.

She said, "I was between a rock and a hard place. I make too much money for a retirement home but not enough to rent an apartment. I downsized and sold my three-bedroom house and moved to a one-bedroom apartment on Beacon Hill. The proceeds from the sale of my home will pay for rent for one year."

Wadiyah Nelson has been part of a union family since birth. Her late husband was a union member and mentored younger members. Her daughter and son-in-law are union members and her young granddaughter is following in their footsteps—she even sings union songs.

"I am very proud to be a union member," she stated. "It's very distressing to see people going from working-class to poor because they don't know the importance of unions."

Wadiyah's years of involvement with her students, faculty colleagues, local union, and the state federation is an example of everyday heroes who, like her and all of our members, believe that by working together, we can make sure everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed.

Wadiyah is a member of a northwest African American women's quilters group and is creating a quilt made up of a variety of union t-shirts that will be a gift to the Lummi elders who will be bringing a native blessing to our convention on May 19th.

**"I love being a librarian!"**

## The Anti-Labor and Racist History of Right to Work (for less!)

By Dan Troccoli, External Organizer

On February 1, 2017, Iowa Congressman Steve King (R-IA) and Joe Wilson (R-SC) introduced a bill into the U.S. House of Representatives called the National Right-to-Work Act (H.R. 785). Also another case similar to the Friedrichs v. State of California lawsuit that came before the Supreme court last year is on its way. Like Friedrichs, it will also attempt to eliminate agency fees for public sector unions, including the AFT.

Agency fees, also known as “Fair Share” fees, are the portion of dues that workers who are represented by the union but are not members pay since they benefit from the union contract just

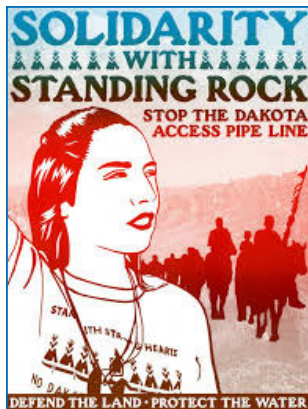
like union members who pay full union dues.

But the concept of Right to Work is much broader and includes all sorts of anti-union laws. Other bills dreamed up by the likes of the Koch brothers and their tools in ALEC wait in the wings to remove our ability to collect dues and restrict or remove our rights to bargain collectively. Right to Work has racist roots in the Jim Crow South where segregationists sought to further divide black and white workers and weaken one of the main institutions that could threaten segregation itself: unions. Of the 26 states that have right to work laws, 19 originally enacted them during the Jim Crow era.

In Washington State, SB 5692 introducing Right to Work (for Less!) recently died in committee, but could have more sway in the future in the debate nationally. Unions will need to mount more visible and vociferous struggles in the future if we are to fight back against the emboldened, anti-union, far right wing’s renewed right-to-work-for-less efforts. AFT members are encouraged to join other unions on May Day, May 1st, for the Immigrant Rights March and add our voice to this traditional workers’ holiday! Watch for announcements on upcoming May Day events in your e-mail or go to the The Stand.

## Staff Donate to Dakota Access Pipeline Fund

By Merrilee Miron, Labor Relations Representative



At the end of every year, AFT Washington staff choose an organization or cause to send personal donations. In 2016, staff made their donation to the Dakota Access Pipeline Donation Fund supporting the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe in their battle to stop the pipeline from going

through their treasured homeland, threatening the region’s water supply. Many of us continue to support and donate given the intolerable actions of the U.S. Government in seeking to advance the project.

If you would like to donate to help them with their legal fees, supplies, etc., here are two ways: go online to [Standingrock.org](http://Standingrock.org) where you can donate on their website, or mail a check made out to the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, P.O. Box D, Fort Yates, ND 58538.

## Welcome Our Newest Staff



Sandra Toussaint

We are pleased to announce that **Sandra Toussaint** was hired as our Political Organizer just before the new year. She is responsible for statewide political and legislative

education and engagement. Some of you might have met her at various events or meetings already.

She joins us after working most recently on an organizing campaign forming a new local in Vancouver. She previously worked for AFT during the election season in Cincinnati, Ohio, and on an internal organizing project in Alaska.

Prior to working with AFT Washington, Sandra worked as a federal investigator, an assistant store manager, and a post-graduate intern for AFT.

 *A Union of Professionals*  
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 please contact  
 Christine Landon,  
 206-432-8075 or  
 clandon@aftwa.org.**

**CALENDAR**

**April 8, 9 AM - 3:30 PM**

**Contingent Faculty Conference,** @  
 South Seattle College - Georgetown  
 Campus  
 Register at: <http://bit.ly/2017-CFIC>

**April 22, 8:30 AM – 3 PM**

**6th Annual North Puget Sound  
 Conference on Race, Promises to  
 Keep: Environmental Racism,** @  
 Everett Community College's Jackson  
 Conference Center, Free event  
 We will have a panel presentation as part  
 of the program. For details, e-mail C3@  
 C3Coalition.org or call 425-255-8828.

**April 27-30**

**AFT PSRP Conference** @ Detroit, MI

**April 28-30**

**AFT Higher Ed Organizing Conference**  
 @ Detroit, MI

**April 29**

**AFT Washington Human Rights  
 Summit** @ Renton Technical College,  
 Bldg. C, Blencoe Auditorium

**May Day, May 1st**

Events will be held in various communi-  
 ties. Please contact Sandra Toussaint,  
 Political Organizer, at 206-427-8107.

**May 19-May 20, Beginning 5:30**

**AFT Washington Biennial Convention**  
 @ Silver Reef Casino in Ferndale, WA

**May 19, 11 AM - 12:00 Noon**

**AFT Washington Retiree Chapter  
 Annual Meeting** @ AFT Washington  
 Biennial Convention, Silver Reef Casino,  
 Ferndale. Planning on attending? Contact  
 Merrilee Miron at [mmiron@aftwa.org](mailto:mmiron@aftwa.org) or  
 206-432-8083

**May 19, 2 PM - 5 PM, 4:30**

**AFT Washington Executive Board  
 Meeting**

**July 6-8**

**AFT Northwest Leadership Forum** @  
 Hilton Vancouver Washington. More  
 details to follow.