The Blues are Running

By Kim Bobo

In mid-February, I had the privilege of being the keynote speaker at the Faith-Labor breakfast organized by the Faith-Labor Committee of Portland Jobs with Justice (also affiliated with IWJ). I usually work from Biblical stories and texts, but sometimes I use other imagery.

I’ve been struck recently with how the issues we care about are front and center in the public consciousness and how many opportunities exist to engage new people in the work and push forward concrete gains for workers. The image that came to mind was “the blues are running.”

My deceased husband, Stephen Coats, was a fisherman. He didn’t usually catch that much, but he loved to fish. This was not one of the things we had in common. I find fishing a bit boring, I don’t like the hook-worm business, nor cleaning fish.

One summer we rented a house with other family members near the beach on the outer banks in North Carolina. Every afternoon, my husband would go surf casting. Basically, you stand on the shore and cast your line into the ocean. Every so often, he’d get a fish or two for several hours of fishing. Boring.

One afternoon, I heard him hollering, “Kim, Kim, come help. The blues are running!” I ran down to the shore and he was pulling bluefish (called “the blues”) in as fast as he could cast. He threw the line in, pulled a fish in, unhooked it, threw it on the sand for me to grab and put in the bucket and then threw the line in again as he ran down the beach. A giant school of bluefish was swimming parallel to the beach and we ran down the beach catching them. Honestly, if fishing were always that exciting, I might like it.

This moment in history feels like “the blues are running.” There are so many opportunities to grab some fish, make progress, change policy, and raise core standards for workers. I can’t share the whole talk in this article, but the key points were:

1. Keep your pole in the water (the real fishermen corrected me and told me it was your “line,” not your “pole”),
2. Start running down the beach in times of opportunity,
3. Get help – use the moments to engage new folks.

One of the best ways to take advantage of this “blues are running” moment is to participate in the June 22-24 national conference in Chicago. Leaders from around the country will share how they’ve been pulling in those wins. We will talk about how to run down the beach in sustainable ways. We’ll share best practices on expanding partners in the work. And, we’ll sing, have fun, do an action and meet new colleagues in the struggle. This is a great moment for the work. The blues are running! Join us in Chicago this coming June.

For more information about the conference or other IWJ campaigns, please email info@iwj.org.
Sunday, June 22nd
9 am–6 pm  Affiliate Meeting (Invite only)
6–7 pm  Dinner
7–9 pm  Opening Plenary & Welcome Address
Kim Bobo reflects on building faith-labor partnerships for the long haul.
Speaker: Kim Bobo

Monday, June 23rd
7:30–8:30 am  Breakfast
9–10:30 am  Workshop Session I
10:30–11 am  Break
11 am–12:30 pm  Workshop Session II
12:30–1:30 pm  Lunch
1:30–3 pm  Plenary II: The New Labor Movement – Hear about some of the most creative and innovative ways of building worker power from workers, worker advocates, and allies in the faith and business communities.
Break
3–3:30 pm  Workshop Session III
3:30–5 pm  Dinner
5–6:30 pm  Plenary III – Profiles in Action – Come hear Rev. Boesak speak on the intersection of vision, analysis, and action. Followed by an inspiring celebration of recent economic justice victories from IWJ and SCUPE constituents.
Speaker: Rev. Allan Boesak
9–10 pm  Monday Night Celebration

Tuesday, June 24th
7:30–8:30 am  Regional Breakfast
IWJ and SCUPE attendees will separate by region for guided discussions and strategizing about how to bring about economic justice in their area.
8:30–9:30 am  Sacred Text study
Led by Dr. Charles Amjad-Ali and other faith leaders this event will be a multi-tradition examination of sacred texts that speaks to the issues of worker and economic justice.
9:30–11 am  Workshop Session IV: Special Joint IWJ/SCUPE session – Come experience 12 dynamic workshop sessions drawing on the most inspiring leaders on economic justice issues from IWJ and SCUPE.
11:30 am–1 pm  Plenary IV – Preparing for Action
Sister Simone Campbell will prepare the 600 plus attendees for taking their faith and convictions out of the conference hall and onto the street!
Speaker: Sister Simone Campbell
1–2 pm  Lunch on the Bus
Box lunches will be provided as we drive to the action site
2–3:30 pm  Joint IWJ/SCUPE Action
Don’t miss what it feels like to be part of a 600-person strong action on behalf of working Americans.
3:30–5 pm  Plenary V – Profiles in Courage
Kim Bobo, Executive Director of IWJ and Shanta Premawardhana, Executive Director of SCUPE close out the IWJ portion of the conference with stories from the action and a challenge and call for continued ‘action’ after you leave the conference hall.
7 pm  Dinner and Book signing
Make last minute connections and future action plans over dinner. Celebrated authors from IWJ and SCUPE will be on hand to sign copies of their books.
IWJ Conference ends

WORKSHOP HIGHLIGHTS
Strategize on issues affecting workers, get trained on organizational development, learn more about current labor campaigns, new models of interfaith and worker organizing, and the future of the labor movement. More than 30 workshops will be available over the three days of the conference.
Learn what groups around the country are doing to advocate for an increase in minimum wage, put an end to wage theft, support Walmart, fast food and retail workers. Visit www.iwj.org for updates on workshop topics and speakers.
LOCATION
The conference will be held at:
DePaul University
Student Center
2230 N Sheffield
Chicago, Illinois 60614

Amenities of the Student Center available to Conference attendees:
• Interfaith Worship Space
• Ample meeting areas for networking
• On Site Dining Area
• Free Wi-Fi

The Student Center easily identified by the statue of Monsignor Jack Egan, a founding Board Member of IWJ.

LODGING
Discounted dormitory housing has been secured at the Clifton-Fullerton Hall (2350 North Clifton Avenue) located four blocks from where the conference will be held. There is elevator access to all floors.

• Double Occupancy – $60 per person per night
• Triple Occupancy – $40 per person per night

NOTE: All triples have one set of bunk beds. If this poses an issue for you please select a double.

Reserve today! Due to combined conference with SCUPE, DePaul housing is extremely limited. Reserve today!

All rooms:
• Are air conditioned;
• Have free Wi-Fi;
• Share a bathroom with another room;
• Are equipped with Twin Extra Long beds;
• Come with basic linens (mattress cover, sheet, and blanket).

Information for nearby union hotels can be found at www.iwj.org.

Bring your own pole!

REGISTRATION FORM
Please return form and payment to:
Interfaith Worker Justice, ATTN: Conference Registration
1020 W Bryn Mawr Ave, 4th Fl., Chicago, IL 60660

Personal Information:

First Name
Last Name
Email Address
Address
City
State/Province
ZIP/Postal Code
Daytime Phone
Religious Affiliation

Dietary Restriction:

Vegetarian
Kosher
Halal

I will need Spanish translation:

YES
NO

Choose a main conference registration – All rates include all meals!

Three Day Pass (Sunday – Tuesday):

Early Bird General Registration: $250 (if received before March 31st)
General Registration: $350
Student Rate: $175 OR $150 (if received before March 31st)
One Day Pass (Select as many as applies)

Monday $150
Tuesday $125

Note: Register online in a group of 5 or more to take advantage of our group rate.

Registration Total

Housing

Dormitory Rooms:

Double Room: $60/pp per bed per night
Triple Room: $40/pp per bed per night

Note: All triples have one set of bunk beds. If this poses an issue, please select a double.

Indicate specific nights:

3 nights (Sunday, Monday and Tuesday)
2 nights (Sunday and Monday)

Housing Total (multiply room rate by number of nights checked)

Roommate Information (if no roommate preference put no preference):

Roommate #1: First name          Last name
____________________________________________________________________
Roommate #2: First name          Last name
____________________________________________________________________

To aid in roommate assignments, please circle if you are: Male   or   Female

Although IWJ will try to accommodate all roommate preferences, we cannot guarantee you will be housed with your desired roommate.

Volunteers Needed

Please mark if you would like to volunteer before or during the conference.

Payment Options

Are you an IWJ affiliated worker center or religion labor group? If so, STOP.
Please visit www.iwj.org for a special registration page just for you!

Paying by Check (made out to Interfaith Worker Justice)

Credit Card     Visa / Mastercard

Name on Card
Credit Card#          Exp. Date

Grand Total (Registration + Housing Total)
Interfaith Worker Justice National Conference

*In Conjunction with*
Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education

**JUNE 22-24 • Chicago**

**Featuring:**

- **Ms. Kim Bobo**
  Executive Director
  Interfaith Worker Justice

- **Rev. Dr. Allan Boesak**
  Anti-apartheid and human rights activist

- **Sr. Simone Campbell**
  Executive Director
  NETWORK

Come experience how your FAITH can lead you!