

Voces de la Frontera Action, SEIU, Power to the Polls, Wisdom Action Network: Denounce Tim Michels' history of racist business practices that make him unfit to be Wisconsin's governor

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(Milwaukee, WI) – This Thursday morning, community organizations that represent Latinx and Black workers, including Voces de la Frontera Action, SEIU, Power to the Polls, and Wisdom Action Network held a press conference and rally to condemn Tim Michels' discriminatory hiring and labor practices ahead of the midterm election. Protesters gathered in front of the RIVER Michels Suites building in downtown Milwaukee. The event was streamed virtually on Facebook at [Vocesde la Frontera Action.](#)

[Click here for high quality video and photos for media use \(credit Voces de la Frontera Action\).](#)

Michels, the private construction company owner and Trump- endorsed Republican candidate for Wisconsin governor, has made [recent news](#) over disgusting allegations of sexual assault, on-the-job racial discrimination, and racist hiring practices. According to public record, “between 2011 and 2022 Michels Corporation’s demographics never surpassed 3% Black, 8.2% Hispanic, and never dipped below 88% White employees. The lack of diversity was even more pronounced at the top rungs of the corporate ladder. In 2022, 97.8% of Michels’ managers or officials were white, zero were Black and two were Hispanic, while

96.4% of Michels' employees listed as professionals were white, with zero listed as Black and one as Hispanic ([The Madison Times, October 8, 2022](#))."

What's more, while immigrant labor is critical to many key industries, including construction, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel published [documents](#) showing that during the 2007-2008 legislative session, as president of the board of the Wisconsin Transportation Builders Association, Michels' group lobbied against a bill that would have prevented companies that hire undocumented workers from receiving government contracts, tax breaks or loans.

See selected full transcripts and highlights from our speakers below:

In response, Christine Neumann-Ortiz, executive director of Voces de la Frontera Action said,

"In our community we judge people by what they do, not by what they say. But, in the case of Tim Michels, in both words and actions, it is clear that he is unfit for public office. Let's look at his actions. Tim Michels owns and is a VP of the Michels corporation, a company with an abysmal record of hiring Latino and Black workers. We live in a majority minority city that is almost 20% Latino and almost 40% Black. We are one of the poorest cities in the country with a poverty rate of more than 25%. Yet, Michels and the company he runs can't hire our people who have been disproportionately impacted by decades of de industrialization, corporate greed and unfair trade agreements.

We judge people by what they do and Michels and his company have disrespected the Latino community, the Black community, and Asian community by failing to hire us or even have a plan to address economic and racial inequality. Why? Because Michels is part of the problem and is unfit for public service.

Not only do we judge people by their actions, but also their words. Let's look at his words. Michels brags that he is endorsed by Trump and is paying for commercials attacking an essential part of Wisconsin's workforce-immigrants. He opposes immigration reform and soon 7,000 DACA recipients and thousands more who would have been eligible for this program, will lose their ability to work legally as nurses, nursing assistants, teachers, accountants, manufacturing workers and construction workers! Indeed in addition to this protected group, we know that undocumented workers are also a critical part of the construction industry and are essential workers in other industries, such as dairy where they are estimated to

comprise 90% of the workforce and almost half in at as a whole.

Under Michels, our economy will become even more unstable, inflation will continue to rise, labor shortage will become more severe and our tax base for schools and health care clinics will be even more reduced -why? Because of Michels shameful allegiance to the politics of bigotry and manipulation in rhetoric and practice

Tim Michels has not earned our trust or vote. He has disrespected our community. He is a right wing populist who pretends to be a working class man who shares sympathy for white working class people. In reality, Michels promotes policies that favor tax breaks for the wealthy and uses bigotry to divide and manipulate all working people. Tim Michaels record and rhetoric are undeniable and too extreme for Wisconsin.”

Eduardo Perrea, an immigrant essential worker in the construction industry, and Milwaukee resident said,

“He does not fit here in Wisconsin! I am a construction worker, working in construction for over 25 years and we, Hispanic people and other minorities, like Blacks and Asians, are a strong industry, we work hard, and the economy moves because of us. During the pandemic we were on the (front lines) right there working everyday, longer hours, because other people did not work for various reasons, but we were at the (front lines) risking our lives, putting our lives in danger.

We are hard working people, we care for our family, our people, our community, something he (Tim Michels) doesn't do, and if he doesn't do it for us, for minorities, he's not good for Wisconsin. We don't want a governor who is only good for a few, we want our government to be for everybody.

We're not going to vote for him. I want someone who's going to work for us, and with us, someone who is going to serve our needs.”

Ciara Fox, a representative from SEIU said,

“I am a Wisconsinite and I will be voting in Wisconsin, early voting October 25th.

(Tim Michels), if you are building an office here in Milwaukee, you should be creating jobs here in Milwaukee, for people of color, but we know (with Michels) that's not true.

People lie, numbers don't lie. After 25 years of service as a business owner, you should know that you should have a diverse work staff...not just white staff, that is totally unacceptable, and you're in Milwaukee building a corporate office, and there are no people of color working on staff? Shame on you Tim Michels.

Not only is there no diversity on his staff, he's also had 5 lawsuits of sexual harassment and racial discrimination. Really shameful."

Reverend Greg Lewis, from Power to the Polls said,

"This country was built on the backs of people who work very hard, and they were minorities, and here you come taking money from our state, and the way I look at it, it's billions. So, when you have that kind of privilege, you have an obligation to give back to the communities that you take from. We should not allow this man to take all this money, do all the things that he's doing, never considering hiring Black folks or Latinx, or Red folks or Yellow folks, and still let him get past. We have to stop letting things happen to us. We gotta start making things happen for us.

We can not continue to have people separating us. We have to build up our power, and we have to do it together."

Lee Henderson-Tatum, president of Wisdom Action Network submitted a written comment saying:

"My question for any candidate is "What are your plans for strengthening the Economy?" I am a former Labor Leader under the American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), and I am currently the President of the WISDOM Action Network. I believe in jobs that pay wages that a family can live on; not just survive. And, everybody, including people of color, deserves a chance at a good job. We are the people who have been left behind so many times before, including by Tim Michel's company.

Governor Tony Evers has worked to find solutions to filling job openings; there's the Workforce Innovation Grant Program that has funded projects that are designed to address local barriers to filling jobs. The grants are funded with dollars from the American Recovery Plan Act. Funding like this is used to tackle a community's most pressing workforce challenges. Then there's the worker advancement initiative. This program builds on the success of current transitional job programs in the state by launching a new, statewide effort to provide subsidized work opportunities to

approximately 2,000 individuals. We also have the worker connection program which connects Wisconsin workers who are looking for jobs with career coaches to help them succeed. And lastly we have the Wisconsin Tomorrow Grant Program which has delivered millions to support small businesses by helping them hire employees, and enable the businesses to stock their shelves thereby allowing the business to continue serving their communities.

We cannot chance another election debacle by electing Tim Michels as Governor. We can make a difference by educating ourselves on where a candidate stands on the issues that mean the most to us. If we are going to build strong communities, we have to be able to thrive. Good jobs and strong neighborhoods is the key. We have to turn out for this election; **YOUR VOICE YOUR VOTE!**"