

# Committee Corner

Around and about WILPF



## Advancing Human Rights: WILPF Branches Further Human Rights Agenda

Laura Roskos

WILPF members across the country are taking leadership roles in the national movement to “domesticate” human rights. While the United States has always been vocal in criticizing the human rights records of other countries, our government has lagged behind much of the world in terms of monitoring human rights compliance within its own jurisdiction. Some of the crises driving this activism were articulated in testimony presented before the National Truth Commission on Poverty (NTC), held in Cleveland this past July.

Victoria Carter and Valerie Robinson represented Cleveland WILPF at the event, organized by the Poor People’s Economic Human Rights Campaign, a movement “to unite the poor across color lines as the leadership base for a broad movement to abolish poverty.” (See [www.economichumanrights.org](http://www.economichumanrights.org).) They witnessed testimony presented by those personally affected on violations of the rights articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ([www.un.org/overview/rights.html](http://www.un.org/overview/rights.html)), such as health care, a living wage, housing, education, water, food and other basic necessities, as well as a special panel convened on the unjust removal by authorities of children from poor households. They also participated in a march through downtown Cleveland to Republican and Democratic headquarters, and attended workshops on a variety of topics including organizing day laborers and video documentation.

Valerie sees the success of this event, the first of its kind in the United States, as “an indication that people can unite around the pressing domestic issues of our time.” She noted that “Testimony . . . spoke to the urgency of the need to address poverty in this country and to work toward its eradication. Analysis and action are desperately needed from organizations such as WILPF.”

Mary Bricker Jenkins, a WILPF member and professor of social work, facilitated a dynamic workshop on the plight of children who are removed from their homes because of poverty. (In many U.S. cities, this practice disproportionately affects black families.) At the workshop, groups from different parts of the country shared tactics that have been successfully publicizing and combating this problem.

Meanwhile, WILPF activists in Milwaukee have formed a human rights working group to design and advo-

cate for an institutional vehicle that could enforce international human rights standards in city governance. Informed by the similar ordinance campaigns currently under way in New York City and San Francisco, the Milwaukee group seeks to develop a human rights instrument tailored to that city’s own civic traditions of populism and clean government. Their diverse coalition partners include the NAACP and United Nations Association, among others.

On September 15, the Milwaukee group hosted an “intergenerational roundtable” at America’s Black Holocaust Museum intended to bring county supervisors and other public and union officials into the human rights organizing process. Rose Daitsman, lead organizer of the event, reflected that “The roundtable format enabled grassroots community activists to come together with recognized leaders to consider local issues in the context of international human rights law.”

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The Advancing Human Rights (AHR) Committee exists to recognize and strengthen the ongoing human rights work of WILPF branches across the United States. If your branch is already working on local campaigns for immigrant, labor, or women’s rights or for recognition of the universal human right to housing, health care, or equal marriage, we invite you to send us a report and urge you to appoint a branch liaison to the committee to help build resources that can assist WILPF in strengthening this dimension of our work.

*Laura Roskos is co-chair of the Advancing Human Rights Committee and co-founder of the Massachusetts CEDAW Project.*

## Building the Beloved Community

Vickie M. Fouts

The mission of the Building the Beloved Community (BBC) Committee is to provide educational information about the history and nature of systemic racism, the connections between different forms of oppression, internalized oppressions, racial justice and the struggles to achieve it. In light of this mission, we ask members and branches to join us by participating in one or more of the initiatives below.

**1) Pledge to Heal Racism in My Life.** To stay mindful of racism and take the first steps for an ongoing transformation to overcome and eliminate racism in ourselves and in our society, we invite members and branches to sign on to the Pledge to Heal Racism in My Life, and to share it



WILPF’s Rose Daitsman (r.) presents Corrie Joe Biddle of America’s Black Holocaust Museum with a citation honoring the human rights work of museum founder James Cameron.

Photo: Susan Lina Ruggles