



Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

United States Section

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November 2011

Dear:

FIRST INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT

Jane Addams
Nobel Peace Prize 1931

FIRST INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY

Emily Greene Balch
Nobel Peace Prize 1946

U.S. SECTION

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Your commitment to and support for WILPF have paved the way for a deeper understanding of democracy to emerge.

For ninety-six years, WILPF has been working tirelessly to create an environment of political and social freedom, economic justice and true equality so that sustainable peace can be enjoyed by all. Now, around the world, and across our nation—from Tunisia to Wall Street—non-violent people's movements are rising up to challenge the systems and institutions that deny fundamental freedoms and human rights. The seeds that WILPF planted and the foundation we, along with others, laid have set the stage for a world-wide wave of peaceful resistance to oppression and a powerful, optimistic insistence on change. People everywhere are waking up and our hearts are occupied with fresh hope for the future.

The Occupy Wall Street movement has been a long time coming. Historians will analyze its origins and genealogy. In this letter, we would like to share some of the activities WILPF has been involved in over the past year that we modestly believe have contributed to this awakening. Your contribution now will help WILPF grow its membership and amplify its voice during the pivotal months to come.

On January 20, 2011, WILPF women set the stage for this "democratic awakening" when members in dozens of cities and towns demanded the restoration of democracy in U.S. electoral politics by calling attention to the one-year anniversary of the Citizens United Supreme Court decision removing limitations on corporate support for political candidates. Working through the powerful Move to Amend coalition, on whose Steering Committee WILPF sits, we demonstrated the interconnections between sustainable peace and democracy through "I Miss Democracy" street theater and vigils.

In August, WILPF co-sponsored the Democracy Convention held in Madison, WI, to consolidate lessons learned from the budget battles taking place in Wisconsin and other states this spring and strategize ways to non-violently challenge corporate personhood and rule. This organizing paid off when the movement to Occupy Wall Street very quickly ignited parallel occupations in over a thousand cities and towns—often with WILPF members providing the backbone for rapid organizing. Leveraging the momentum of the leaderless, non-violent people's movements, WILPF must continue to pave the way and expand our capacity to communicate our high ideals balanced with the in-depth analysis of issues that WILPF uniquely contributes.

WILPF depends on your financial support to strengthen our capacity to coordinate internationally and build campaigns using social media and other technology.

In October 2010, upon hearing Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's commitment to creating a U.S. National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security as part of the implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325, WILPF's Advancing Human Rights Issue Committee immediately developed a multi-dimensional campaign to ensure that the U.S. 1325 NAP would not merely be a foreign policy tool to make war safer for women. Responding to peace educator Betty Reardon's observation that: "if you want to stop violence against women in war then you must end war; if you want to end war then you must involve women equitably in every level of domestic and foreign policy decision making," the committee launched an on-line petition that called for the U.S. to adopt a "human security" approach and demanded that civil society women's voices be listened to at every stage of the development and implementation process.

Throughout the summer, WILPF branches handed out leaflets at screenings of *The Whistleblower*, a dramatic film depicting corruption, trafficking, and torture among military contractors and U.N. peacekeeping forces in Bosnia. Using materials designed through our new partnership with the Minneapolis College of Art and Design, WILPF members spread the message that impunity for violent crimes against women must end by promoting a postcard campaign directed to U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki Moon. Last month, WILPF Secretary General Madeleine Rees was invited to lead a discussion of the film with U.N. officials following a private screening of the film organized by Ban Ki Moon as part of his efforts to enforce a zero tolerance policy among U.N. mission staff.

Your engagement in and support of WILPF are transforming the way the world understands peace and security.

In response to a position paper developed by members and hand-delivered by WILPF's National Director Tanya Henderson in July, the U.S. Department of State agreed to listen to women's security concerns at five consultations organized by WILPF branches around the country and attended by representatives of the U.S. State Department's Office of Women's Global Affairs. Women participating in these consultations eloquently made the case—through examples of environmental degradation, structural violence of impoverishment, or proliferation of light weapons into the domestic arena—that safety at home is tangibly connected to foreign affairs through the militarization of U.S. society.

The concerns and priorities expressed at these consultations will be at the core of the message WILPF members will deliver to their neighbors and local leaders on December 10, when, as part of an internationally-coordinated WILPF action, they will literally "blow the whistle on military spending (as a threat to women's security)" in their town centers, to make the connection between militarization and gender-based violence. The information gathered at the consultations will inform the content of the 2012 Voters' Guide to Women, Peace and Security that WILPF will produce and distribute in partnership with allied organizations, such as Women's Action for New Directions.

Your support for WILPF sustains our peace work locally and globally.

In February 2011, WILPF's delegation to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women included 23 college women, enrolled in the highly competitive Practicum in Advocacy at the United Nations program, and—with the addition of special funding for the new Local 2 Global program—six seasoned WILPF activists committed to building the capacity of their branches for ongoing advocacy within the U.N. system.

At the same time, WILPF's Mini-Grant program has enabled local branches and national issue committees to delve more deeply into our multi-issue peace work and create educational and advocacy projects that engage broad-scale audiences in our most politically relevant work.

Unleashing the power of women's non-violent approaches to building sustainable peace requires building critical mass among our civil society sisters and political will within the institutions of governance. In this coming election year, we need to continue our vital work in each vein. **Can you support this work with a generous year-end contribution?**

Your gift will enable WILPF to:

- Produce and distribute 50,000 copies of a 2012 voters' guide to "Women, Peace and Security" issues.
- Develop new partnerships, build membership and new branches, and increase social media communications.
- Expand our Mini-Grant Program for greater participation and greater impact, in more communities and through broader distribution of member-produced materials.
- Bring a delegation of young WILPF women to the Rio+10 Commission on Sustainable Development meetings in Brazil.

Like you, we were thrilled by the news that the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to three brave women activists--Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Leymah Gbowee and Tawakkul Karman—for their "non-violent struggle for the safety of women and for women's rights to full participation in peace-building work." Ellen, Leymah, and Tawakkul join a dozen other women, including three WILPF leaders, who have been thus honored since the prize's inception in 1901.

Women, and in particular WILPF women, have been at the forefront of much of the successful movement towards democracy and peace around the world. And, now is the time to multiply our membership and amplify our voices.

We deeply appreciate all of your efforts, and hope that we can count on your even greater financial support at this critical time in human history.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "L. Roskos", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Laura Roskos
President

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read "Tanya Henderson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Tanya Henderson
National Director

P.S. We invite you to fill out the reply card on the reverse side of this page, and to continue your generous commitment to WILPF.