

**Program Committee, Chair**  
**Teresa Castillo**

**2 year term**

### **Candidate Statement**

I accepted the nomination to this position as I would like to see a strong connection between our local and national work. I believe that branch and at-large members should feel the connection, support, and encouragement from WILPF US.

As an At-Large Board Member, I gained a better understanding of our national organization, which led me to accept the nomination to this Program Chair position. I am now looking at how I can be of service with my leadership skills in a role to organize and assist with important work that our members do and our organization promotes. If elected, I'd like to take the momentum already started to help further develop a strong, united national organization which celebrates the inclusivity of unique local involvement while unifying people and branches, focusing on our Issues Committees. Recognizing the positive effect of bringing together many diverse national members, I'd like to increase the level of involvement of members working on program issues on a monthly basis. Welcoming input, if elected, I'd like to hear from the members. We must work collectively to be strong, so share your thoughts on how we can bring program activities in supportive efforts across branches and how National can continue to facilitate positive, unifying efforts to bring us together to work on the many important issues at hand in these trying times.

I am a self-starter, eager to get to know our members and to continue to work with our National Board. I am professional, focused, analytical, task driven, computer literate, and proficient in communication and facilitation. If elected, these skills will allow me to be an asset to the members and the WILPF US National Board as the Program Chair.

## Application

1. US WILPF is a mission-driven membership organization. What does that mean to you?

This statement tells me that WILPF, as an organization, is focused on its goals, per the mission statement, which the members all are involved in maintaining. To me this ideally means that the members participate in determining and upholding the mission of the organization and they work collectively to achieve this.

2. Please describe your involvement in WILPF, including a brief summary of work at the level of branch, national, and/or international:

At the national level, I hold a one year term as an At-Large Board Member for WILPF US. I am also a participating guest on the WILPF US By-Laws Ad-Hoc Committee; during this year, I was also a member on 2 different special committees for our National Board.

At the local level, I have been a Co-Chair to our Fresno Branch for 3 years and chaired the Middle East Committee; additionally, I have been a member of our Library Committee, and special committees such as Retreat and Nominating Committees.

3. Why are you interested in filling this position?

I would like to help continue the efforts in building our organization. I'd like to bring more involvement from branches and at-large members to facilitate a united effort toward inclusivity and connection between local and national levels.

4. Please describe your other non-WILPF work or involvement that you believe helps qualify you for this position:

I am also a member of and hold board positions with other local peace, social justice, and human rights groups. By working and being involved with a wide spectrum of groups allows me to interact with many people who all have personal perspectives on how to bring about the goals and actions of the group, yet we come to compromises and respectful conclusions regarding the best methods to proceed with events and actions. This experience is beneficial to me in considering the Program Chair position as it has prepared me to approach issues with a collective mindset, rather than a singular or individual centered focus. I believe this is very important if we are going to have groups which are inclusive.

5. What skills can you offer in this position?

As stated in the previous response, I try to approach issues with a group in a collective way. That is, I try not to impose my way, but gather the group's ideas. Through my leadership roles as Branch Co-Chair and as President of other organizations, I have learned how to facilitate meetings using effective organization and time management skills, as well as mediation skills when needed.

## **Activist Biography**

I am campaigning for the Program Chair position on the National Board. I have been very active for many years supporting peace, social/racial/economic justice, and human rights through many groups. My volunteering activities began when I was young. I learned that I enjoyed being involved with the community and I found it rewarding, which led to an early sense that activities should be focused on service to others. Most memorable activities which I participated in or organized in my community involved environmental protection and clean up actions and historical and cultural appreciation/awareness events. I also was a youth leader for a monthly group of students with Down's syndrome. I value the experiences I gained in community organizing and involvement as they helped me gain a better understanding of the connections between my local, city and state, needs with our global neighbor's needs. The volunteering spirit continued when my children were in school, and I helped them to understand the benefits of volunteer service. I held positions on the various Parent Club boards; as a committee member, Treasurer, and President and was a parent advisor and supporter for various clubs and sports teams. The school based involvement helped teach me how to organize people with various interests; students, parents, clubs, teachers, school administration, community members, and with businesses for fundraisers, or educational and social events. One final accomplishment was to help implement new fundraising methods which involved facilitating a recycling program at events to raise money needed for teams and clubs on our high school campus.

In more recent years, my volunteering focus has been activist centered to promote education and awareness of social, racial, and economic justice and human rights issues which is why I became involved with the Fresno WILPF branch; because I noticed how many important issues the members of the Fresno branch focus on. I was especially impressed with the leadership I saw in longtime Fresno WILPF members who continue to take that role. So several years ago I jumped in, joined Fresno WILPF, and my interests and abilities were welcomed. I did the same at the National level; I was elected to a one year term as At-Large WILPF US Board Member which has also opened other opportunities. I am a guest participant on the By-Laws Ad-Hoc Committee and served on 2 special committees; one to bring a compromise proposal to assist in resolving a sensitive Board issue and the other was the Scholarship Committee for the 2017 Triennial Congress. At the local level, I represented of our Fresno Branch at the recent 2017 and at the 2014 Triennial Congress. My first Congress experience brought me closer to seeing the bigger picture of WILPS US and the second one only deepened my connection with other WILPF members. As branch Co-Chair, I alternate running our monthly branch meetings with a longtime WILPF member. I am fortunate to have many strong, long-term WILPF members who mentor me in my branch. I Chair the Middle East Issues Committee where I give awareness updates on issues and plan events concerning MENA. I assisted in arranging speaking engagements in CA for the founded of the Women in Hebron Embroidery Cooperative. I am also a member of our WILPF Library Committee, which our branch created under the Building a Beloved Community Committee. We partner with other local organizations to promote literacy by collecting and donating books for youth in addition to purchasing and donating the Jane Addams Peace Award books to several local libraries and our Jane Addams elementary school.

Plus supporting and promoting our local author, Margarita Engle, a recipient of the Jane Addams Peace Award multiple times and recipient of numerous other literary awards. I have been involved as a board member of Peace Fresno for the past 4 years; as President, VP of Publicity/Media, and Treasurer. With the continued spending and acceptance of a militarized nation, I was interested in a local group, founded after the 9/11 tragedy, focused on anti-war and the effects of war locally and globally. With the support of Peace Fresno members, in 2012, I spearheaded Peace Madera, an awareness group with the motto: Social Justice Peaceful Plane and I serve on the board of the Madera Coalition for Social Justice which is a parent organization of many youth focus groups, with our main outreach being to partner and assist low income people of color through education and empowerment.

I represent the above groups in my membership in the Human Rights Coalition of the Central Valley where I actively assist in the planning and inception of an annual event in recognition of the UN Human Rights Day. Each year, our event focuses on a different, specific global human rights issue which is experienced locally. As a Coalition, we meet to select a new topic each year and determine the format of our event, partnering with new groups each year based on the topic and its content.

In 2014, I mentored a group of young Palestinian-Americans in their formation of a new awareness group, the Palestine Freedom Project. We all came together during our weekly protests of Israel's 2014 attack on Gaza. The Palestine Freedom Project printed informational materials and spoke to groups and organizations about the current conditions in Palestine and ways to help. It has since evolved into a recognized student organization at CSU Fresno.

With my focus on social, racial, and economic justice, I partner and volunteer with various other groups who use alternate means to bring education, assistance, and awareness to others. Some of the groups I participate with are: Dulce Upfront, Fresno Peoples Media, Mothers Helping Mothers, Fresno Reforma, local Black Lives Matter groups – Showing Up For Racial Justice and Uprooting Racism, Bay Area CodePink, Occupy Beale Air Force Base, Fresno Homeless Advocates, Fresno Light Brigade, Fresno Rising, and March for Democracy/99 Rise. Though my involvement with many groups and organizations, I gain a stronger perspective of the human element of the issues we find important to support and promote to bring change. I have collaborated on actions and events to bring in globally recognized speakers as well as less known individuals who have important information to share. I actively run social media pages for the groups I am a member of as well as write several times each year for our local progressive newspaper, the Community Alliance. I support and promote the events and actions of groups within and outside my community who are aligned with the ideology of promoting peace, justice, and upholding the human rights of all people, everywhere.

My activist involvement overlaps from one group to the next, from local, to national, to global which helps me be that link to spread information, to be more inclusive, and to try to reach a more diverse crowd. We all know we have power in numbers, and different people are involved with different groups, so I find it very satisfying to be involved at various levels with different groups to spread awareness and bring people together. It also helps me to see the community

with a broader spectrum and understand global issues with more compassion and connection to my local community. Our education never ends when we can listen as well as speak.