

## ONE WILPF All Member Call -- December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016 4pm pacific/7pm eastern

38 WILPF Members from 23 branches, and 4 At- Large Members attended the 6<sup>th</sup> ONE WILPF Call on Thursday, Dec. 8<sup>th</sup> ([list appears at the end of these notes](#)).

The featured speaker, Medea Benjamin, appeared at the invitation of the WILPF US President, Mary Hanson Harrison (thanks Mary!)

Medea discussed her observations from her trip to support the Standing Rock Sioux in North Dakota, noted her concern about Trump's intention to shred the Iran Nuclear Deal, addressed the way that the US's stubborn continuation of selling weapons to Saudi Arabia is continuing the war crimes and abuse in Yemen, and discuss the need for strategic coalition-building in a post-Trump era.

### The two major sections of this call focused on

- Addressing how WILPF members can to put pressure on Congress to stop selling weapons to Saudi Arabia (to be used against largely civilian populations in Yemen) and to preserve the Iran nuclear deal.
- Break Out Rooms addressed 3 subjects.
  - Continuing planning for the April 2017 SOLIDARITY EVENT
  - Discussing how WILPF members can continue to work on peace in Syria and counter hate at home
  - Sustaining activism in a post-Trump era.

HERE IS THE AUDIO LINK if you want to listen to the call again, or if you didn't get to be on the call.

<http://mcrecordings.s3.amazonaws.com/QKUZU3M8DL2NEFUSUVKNP2TE8CTY548A.mp3>

### CALL SUMMARY IN BRIEF: (full notes follow for those who wish more detail).

ONE WILPF Call participants enjoyed a gathering space before the call began, where the tragic outcome of our US Presidential Election was much discussed and comfort was sought and given.

1. **Our special featured guest MEDEA BENJAMIN of CODE PINK**, presented ways that WILPF members could work in coalition with Code Pink to stop the US sale of weapons to Saudi Arabia and prevent Congress and Trump from pulling back from the Iran Nuclear Deal. *The full interview appears below.*
2. **BREAK OUT ROOMS & REPORTS BACK**
  - **SOLIDARITY EVENT** - Our discussions continued and revolved around a PROPOSAL that described the PROCESS for moving forward, for promoting the event throughout WILPF US, for choosing a date and theme and for gaining commitment from members to participate at one of 3 levels.  
**NEXT STEPS** – a call following the ONE WILPF Call completed edits on the Proposal and it was subsequently released for review by every segment of WILPF. The first VOTE on the date and theme is due by Jan. 8<sup>th</sup>. Commitment is asked by Jan. 29<sup>th</sup>.
  - **COUNTERING HATE & VIOLENCE at home and in Syria** - This outbreak room looked at options for providing meaningful response and protections for refugees, immigrants and people of color. Options and actions were suggested and described by members whose communities are pursuing Sanctuary City designation and other practical plans at the local level.
  - **SUSTAINING ACTIVISM POST TRUMP** - Addressing feelings of fear and intimidation is a way out of our current malaise following the election. Listening and providing safe spaces for people (women) to talk about their fears, their concerns is important for building resilience and community. Providing support allows the most vulnerable to find their voice and begin to use it to organize with others. It's also a way of building WILPF. Lots of great ideas and suggestions were offered.

3. Goodnight/**Adjournment**
4. **Soapbox**

**BOOKS DISCUSSED ON THIS CALL:** Medea Benjamin's **Kingdom of the Unjust** (about Saudi Arabia)

**NEXT CALL is Thursday, January 12<sup>th</sup> at 4pm pacific/7pm eastern. Ray Acheson is the schedule speaker, from REACHING CRITICAL WILL, International WILPF's UN Program on ending nuclear weapons proliferation.**

## **CALL DETAILS:**

*(all the news that fits, and then some!)*

**ONE WILPF CALL Team Members were introduced:** SANDY THACKER and ANNE HENNY (both of the East Bay CA Branch). InterOccupy's Michael Ippolito continued as engineer and technical facilitator.

During the ONBOARDING process, call participants had the opportunity to network for checking in and sharing their own perspectives on the recent election results and organizing going on in their communities. This is an important segment for members to feel connected to one another. There were some technical difficulties and this segment went on for a little longer than planned.

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**The AGENDA appeared on the TEXT PAD,** along with CALL NORMS, which appear below.

- a. **Be prepared and come ready to engage.** Read the agenda and do any preparatory work ahead of time.
- b. **Balance your participation**—speak and listen—and make sure everyone's voice is heard.
- c. **Look ahead to positive action,** not back on shoulda, woulda, coulda.
- d. Everyone is responsible for helping to **stay on topic**—capture off topic items in a 'backburner' and agree to discuss them later at a more appropriate time.
- e. **Be concise** and to the point.
- f. **Be open to feedback.**

### **1. Marybeth introduced MEDEA BENJAMIN** who appeared at the invitation of our US President, Mary Hanson Harrison.

Medea is a WILPF member and donor and the heart of CODE PINK. She had much to say about how WILPF members could support peace in Syria, Yemen and Iran. Transcription of a rich Q&A segment follows the notes.

Medea began by describing the organizing that went on in North Dakota at the site of the pipeline demonstrations. She was particularly moved by the leadership and spiritual nature of the indigenous women there who noted that they have been waiting for over 200 years for non-indigenous women to 'show up for them'. Medea felt that this was a very unique and new form of organizing that we need to talk about, study and emulate in the future, since it focused so deeply on prayer and spirituality and was an amazing example of coalition building across many issues, organizations and hemispheres. She feels we need to be at the ready to show up again for these kinds of gatherings. They can and must be replicated around the country.

**Regarding the Iran Nuclear Deal,** Benjamin is worried that although Trump's rhetoric on the campaign trail against the nuclear agreement with Iran seemed to be balanced a bit by his support for Russia, his cabinet selections have all been very anti-Iran, and that is disturbing. His choice for Secretary of Defense. "Mad Dog" (James) Mattis, called Iran "the single most

enduring threat to peace in the area". Another Trump pick, a Cuban American woman, wants to subject Iran to the same sanctions we saw for decades in Cuba, and to impose the same drastic sanctions against any nations that continue trade relations with Iran. This kind of dramatic turn around would feed into the Iranian hardliner point of view that the West is not trustworthy. The people of Iran are more secular than these hardliners, but giving power to hardliners would mean a lot of conservative pressure on Iranian citizens as well. It might lead Iran to pull out of the nuclear deal, which would be disastrous for non-proliferation agreements. We need to be attentive and start coalition-building about how to deal with this threat in DC.

**Two countries that want the US to pull out of the Iran Nuclear Deal are Israel and Saudi Arabia.** And the Trump Administration seems to be very close to both of those countries. Benjamin noted that her book KINGDOM OF THE UNJUST – BEHIND US-SAUDI CONNECTIONS describes the largest weapons deal, worth \$115 Billion, between the US and Saudi Arabia that was brokered under the Obama Administration. These weapons are being distributed in seemingly endless sales to the country most responsible for spreading terrorism and using the weapons to punish any nation that remains friendly to Iran, including the horrific ongoing attacks and humanitarian disaster Saudis are inflicting in Yemen, in a war that is going largely uncovered. This borders on genocide and war crimes, and the US is enabling it by continuing to sell weapons. **Were it not for our weapons, maintenance of weapons systems, refueling Saudi planes, and providing both logistical support and diplomatic cover for Saudis, this war would have already ended.** Instead it is generating a massive humanitarian crisis with 70% of the population suffering from deprivation and malnutrition, 2 million displaced, 3 million women and children severely malnourished. A naval blockade by Saudi Arabia is preventing imports of food and medical supplies as well as parts to repair infrastructure and water systems damaged in the daily bombings targeting schools, hospitals, roads, sewage plants. Now Yemen is dealing with outbreaks of deadly cholera. Half their health facilities have been destroyed and there is a severe shortage of medicine. The UN has called for \$1.6 billion in humanitarian aid but only half that has been funded so far.

## WHAT CAN WILPF DO?

WILPF members are encouraged to actively support the UN's call for full funding for humanitarian aid to Yemen and for the US to stop selling weapons, munitions and planes/helicopters to Saudi Arabia. There will be ongoing weapons deals that come before Congress... and up till now Congress has refused to act to squelch the deals. Last time the vote rendered only 27 Senators who rejected the sale. We have to do a better job getting to the Senate to insist that they stop these ill-advised sales which are contributing to humanitarian crises and war crimes.

Finally Medea noted that in a post-Trump world our peace organizations are going to have to become a lot more connected and responsive. One kind of resistance necessary on the national level is the large scale mobilizations like we saw at Standing Rock. They will continue to be important to push the envelope on human rights and Constitutional rights. But a lot of the work we will have to do must be local.. at the state and city level. Some are already working to create and designate Sanctuary and Peace Cities. And because Trump says he is planning to make a lot of the decisions about immigration, climate, and human rights a state responsibility, that is where we will have to put our efforts.

Meanwhile she noted that WILPF is in a unique position to use its International connections to call for Solidarity with GLOBAL peace activists and human rights activists.

Many excellent questions for Medea Benjamin were raised. Her responses and the discussions during Q&A are well worth reading.

**The Q&A Transcription (Section 1B) follows these notes, after the attendance list.**

**2. THE LATEST ON THE TPP** – Nancy Price reported that the reporters are all saying that the TPP is dead and will not be brought up again in the Lame Duck Session. This is a victory to all of us who worked so hard to defeat this. But Trump is not good on Fair Trade or on Climate, so we fully expect a new version of a trade bill to come up which may be even worse than the TPP. Nancy is working with trade experts to fully and clearly articulate what Fair Trade principles would look like, and how to promote them. Trade will continue to have huge implications on energy policy, climate and environmental policy, food security and regulations... so whatever Trump proposes, be prepared to stay vigilant and be ready to act.

**3. BREAK OUT ROOMS WERE ORGANIZED AND PEOPLE CHOSE WHICH ONES THEY WISHED TO PARTICIPATE IN. The topics for break out rooms (BORs) included:**

- **Solidarity Event Planning** with Barbara Taft (Greater Phoenix AZ) as facilitator and Sandy Thacker (East Bay CA) as note taker .
- **Next Steps for countering hate in the US and planning a WILPF response on the Syrian Crisis**, with Nancy Wrenn (Boston MA) as note taker and Mary H Harrison (Des Moines IA) as facilitator.
- **Sustaining Activism in a Post-Trump Reality.** Anne Henny (East Bay CA) facilitated and reported on this working group.

The SHARING RESOURCES BOR will convene again next month.

**Because of technical problems at the beginning of the call and delays, a vote was taken to extend the length of the Break Out Rooms to get more work done.**

**30 minutes were devoted to organizing in each of these Break Out Rooms**, and then participants asked for 10 minutes more.

#### **4. REPORTS BACK:**

##### **Break Out Room 1 - SOLIDARITY EVENT PLANNING - IDEAS FOR ACTIONS BY WILPF BRANCHES DURING APRIL 2017**

Since the November call work was done on producing a formal PROPOSAL for the Solidarity Event which was sent out just prior to the December call and discussed in this break out room. For a while we focused unproductively on the date and theme again, but then realized that the process suggested is for all members to vote on this and thereby decide. So that was accepted and the response date for these initial decisions (date and theme) is Jan. 8<sup>th</sup>. Discussion continued about the processes outlined in the Proposal and the way in which to promote the Solidarity Event organizing throughout all of WILPF US. It was decided that more work was needed to review the Proposal before it was released, so an interim meeting was set for Monday, Dec. 12<sup>th</sup>. After the final edits and revisions, the proposal will be released throughout WILPF US on Dec. 13<sup>th</sup>, with a cover email that notes the need to respond by Jan. 8<sup>th</sup>.

The Dec. 12<sup>th</sup> call was attended by: Marybeth Gardam, Barbara Taft, Sandy Thacker, Florie Freshman, Joan Goddard, Margaret Pecoraro, Nancy Price, Celeste Howard. Final edits were made to the Proposal

and it was agreed it would be distributed on Dec. 13<sup>th</sup>, which was done. It went to the ALL MEMBER list a day or two later.

**BREAK OUT ROOM 1 Participants:**

Barbara Reed (Greater Phoenix AZ), Marybeth Gardam (At-L Winter Haven, FL), Portia Gage (San Jose CA), Margaret Pecoraro (Tucson AZ), Nancy Price (At-L Davis CA), Blanca Gerard (Essex Co NJ), Floris Freshman (Greater Phoenix AZ), Robin Lloyd (Burlington VT), Odile Hugonot-Haber (Ann Arbor MI), Joan Ecklein (Boston MA), Sandy Thacker (East Bay CA), Laura Dewey (Detroit MI), Peggy Olsen (Monterey County CA) *(see list at end for contact info)*

**Break Out Room 2 – COUNTERING HATE locally and working nationally to end the Syrian wars.**

**DISCUSSION ABOUT NEXT STEPS WE COULD TAKE:**

This discussion focused on the many levels of threats against immigrants, refugees, people of color and LGBTQ folks under a Trump administration and a Dept. of Justice run by someone who has a history of racist and bigoted comments..... and the various actions and strategies being employed around the country to counter his. There is a lot of work going on at the city and state level with focus on Sanctuary Cities and defense of local immigrants. There was discussion about how to show solidarity and visibility while collaborating. The question was raised about how to integrate branch activities for wider national impact. Some remarked that the work of the SHARING RESOURCES committee could be useful.

Many branches are supporting Sanctuary City designations and the Safety Pin campaign. Fresno is working with Standing for Racial Justice and Black Lives Matter and is planning to resettle some Syrian refugees in their community. East Bay and Oakland are Sanctuary Cities. There is a threat of federal \$ being taken away but it hasn't happened yet. Rutland, VT wants to bring in refugees. In Fresno there are Arabic translators in the schools. They are looking for funds. Religious groups and AFSC are involved. Mary said that 70% of the women in the world go hungry. She encouraged branches to look at the BLM Platform, submit articles for ENews and Peace & Freedom, wear WILPF Tshirts when collaborating. How to integrate our branch activities is the challenge.

Although Randa was muted during the break out room due to background noise, she later sent this idea which might have wide implications for communities across the country to build resilience and capacity to be able to respond quickly when necessary.

"I did want to say something about what we're doing here (in Santa Cruz CA) - not only joining with other groups, especially focusing on keeping our Muslim and immigrant communities safe. So one thing we've started is called an **Emergency Roster**, which is taken from international human rights groups. YOU make a list of people and their contact information - and their skills - and how much notice they need to get mobilized, and how long they could volunteer for. So for instance, can you provide transportation, or childcare if the parents have to go to court, or direct shielding, or temporary shelter, etc. We've already had about 30 people sign up, and my daughter knows how to put that on Google forms (which is what the IRC uses) so that we all have an up-to-date list of contact information if anything happens suddenly.

"And of course we're going to meetings - for example, there were 500 people at a local high school at a meeting called by a healthcare provider whose clients are 90% immigrants - and holding banners saying Immigrants Welcomed Here, and talking to immigrant friends and families about how we can help, where they can get legal help, what their rights are. The Santa Cruz community is looking to become a sanctuary county."

Randa noted that: "The most heart-tugging times have been when I've been in the schools (at a LifeLab garden, or volunteering at a grandkid's class) where so many children are worried that their parents are

going to be taken away (by immigration) - and this goes from third grade to eighth grade kids who are so scared. So we're trying to help."

This group plans to meet again after the holidays about how they can better integrate local solutions into a wider national strategy.

**BREAK OUT ROOM 2 Participants:**

Bernice Vogel (Montpelier VT), Teresa Castillo (Fresno CA), Jean Hopkins (Burlington VT), Jim and Tomi Allison (Bloomington IN), Renee Kasinsky (Boston MA), Randa Solick (Santa Cruz CA), Annie Boddum (East Bay CA), Mary Hanson Harrison (Des Moines IA) and Nancy Wrenn (Boston MA). *(see list at end for contact info)*

## **Break Out Room 3 – SUSTAINING ACTIVISM in a Post Trump World.**

### **DISCUSSION ABOUT NEXT STEPS WE COULD TAKE:**

The discussion in this Break Out room mirrored many of those in BOR 2. Seasoned activists are already engaged in connecting with and building coalitions with allies. It is hard to prioritize a narrow focus because so much seems to be hitting us at once, with such traumatic impact. But people are feeling good about connecting locally and working locally. It's important to have a support group and the ability to talk and be heard about your worries, fears, ideas for solutions. It's important to keep connecting. Since WILPF continues to struggle with limited and aging numbers, it is important to focus strategically on what could have the most impact and be the most useful way to share resources. Many people felt we needed good printed materials to distribute with a way to customize it by branch name, contact info and location/time of meeting. We need to be sharing more about WILPF. Some wanted to narrow the focus to nuclear weapons. The consensus was that we need more members.... And that talking and education is fine but lets DO things too! Even our older members can help with connecting, promoting, giving interviews, reminding young people that things used to be a bit more democratic.

The trauma people are feeling now in this Post-Trump moment is much like folks felt after 9/11. There is a greater need during these times for people to feel safe and heard. It's possible for WILPF to offer that by creating safe spaces for people, especially women, to meet and connect, listen to one another's fears and concerns and to empower each other to act by acting in solidarity. We could hold community Solidari-TEAS, inviting women to gather and holding space for THEM to be heard. In the days following 9/11 lots of women new to organizing told us that the safe spaces we created for them were important, often the ONLY safe space for them to express their yearning for peace without being called 'unpatriotic'. This is a unique opportunity for WILPF to connect by listening... because our presence in communities is not just virtual. If WILPF members, who have the benefit of sisterhood and solidarity to depend on, feel traumatized, imagine how those without a support system feel. Now is a good time to invite them, reach out, hold 'listening posts', pass leaflets outside factories, talk to low-wage workers and young people struggling to pay off student debts. Reach out in a deliberate way to create bridges where there haven't been any.

**BREAK OUT ROOM 3 Participants:**

Anne Henny (East Bay CA), Betty Traynor (San Francisco CA), Libby Gerlach (Boston MA), Helen Evelev (Philadelphia PA), Edit Bell (Pittsburgh PA), Tina Shelton (Philadelphia PA) and Judy Karas (Monterey County, CA).

*(See list at end for contact info)*

**Marybeth thanked everyone for calling in and reminded them of the next call:**

**NEXT ONE WILPF CALL: Thursday, JAN. 12<sup>th</sup> 4pm pacific, 7pm eastern.**

**5. ADJOURNED** -- Goodnight All! Everyone said goodnight.

**Medea Benjamin Q&A Segment is below the attendance list.**

**6. SOAPBOX** - It was such a full meeting, and the technical difficulties at the beginning made us run so late that only a handful of members remained on for the Soapbox portion of the meeting. Mostly we discussed the progress these calls have been making and how to make them better, promote them more effectively. Anne Henny noted that as the calls become even more well attended the challenge for conducting the break out rooms grows too. Michael suggested that there are ways to address this.

Sandy, Anne and Marybeth agreed to meet shortly after the holidays to try to work out some details for problem solving in the future.

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**Continued from Section 2A.**

## **1-B Q&A FROM MEDEA BENJAMIN SEGMENT OF THE CALL:**

**Q1 - Nancy Price**(At Large – Davis CA) **Asked:** **It is disturbing to think about Iran organizing what sounds like a religious war between Suni and Shiite forces, and including Hezbollah, Syria’s Assad forces and the Russians.**

**A1 - Medea:** All the more reason to work to de-escalate the situation in every way we can. We continue to support the Saudis who support the most right wing extremists, including Al Qaeda forces in Syria and Afghanistan. The US is right in the middle of all this, fomenting these divisions between Sunis and Shias, Kurds and Turks. We have to stop arming the Saudis if we want this to end.

**Q2 - Barbara Taft** (Greater Phoenix AZ) **Asked:** **People who think the Iran deal is a bad idea might be persuaded by the old saying “keep your friends close and your enemies closer”. Couldn’t we use that to convince them that keeping the Iran deal gives us a window into what Iran is up to, and pulling out makes the US less aware of their actions?**

**A2 - Medea:** The Iran Nuclear deal will continue, even if the US pulls out. The world will know what is happening. The inspections will continue as scheduled. But the US just won’t be a part of it. Our best strategy might in fact be to promote the business opportunities of a vast market in Iran. But all that will change and the deal could collapse if the neo-con rhetoric emboldens the religious extremists in Iran and they end up pulling out of the deal.

**Q3- Marybeth Gardam** (At-Large FL) **Asked:** **So if getting the word out about what bad actors the Saudis are can help, what if anything is going on with the law suit brought by the 9/11 families against Saudi Arabia? Is supporting that a way to keep the onus on the Saudis?**

**A3 – Medea:** The court gave the 9/11 families the right to sue Saudi Arabia. But the Saudis have been hiring many lobbyists to influence Congress to reverse the court decision. We have to keep the pressure on. Yes, this is an excellent way to keep the Saudi misdeeds in front of the public... which is probably why they are trying to squelch the details of what really happened on 9/11.

But then again, there have been many stories coming out in isolated publications about Saudi war crimes in Yemen or their bold support for Al Qaeda. But these stories don’t seem to get any traction or attention in the wider media or among the public. So any avenue to put a spotlight on Saudi misdeeds, like the 9/11 families law suit is worth working on.



**Q4- Judy Karas (Monterey Co. CA) Asked:** [When you were in Monterey you mentioned a specific Congressman who was sponsoring legislation to put limits on the kinds of funding and weapons trade we conduct with Saudi Arabia.](#)

**A4- Medea:** That was Sen. Chris Murphy of Connecticut. His bill was a good one and we should write to thank him for his efforts and encourage him to continue. We should be watching how the Congress votes on all these weapons deals and thank those who vote the right way, and complain to those who vote for more weapons sales.

**Q5- Judy Karas (Monterey County CA) Asked:** [There is a new bill we've heard about that changes the definition of anti-semitism to make it difficult to protest against Israel's policies.](#)

**A5- Medea:** This is a very dangerous bill. It conflates being against Israel's policies with antisemitism. The bill especially targets college campuses in an effort to silence critics. It has already been causing problems for Students for Justice in Palestine. We really must work together to stop this bill from passing both Houses. And there are also bills being introduced at the state levels to make it illegal for companies to support the movement for Boycott-Divestiture&Sanctions (BDS). These laws ALL violate the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment and we are going to have to go to court to defeat them. That could take time. So we need to be proactively working against them now.

**Q6- Nancy Price (At Large Davis CA) Commented:** [On a June 2016 trip to Iran she was lucky enough to have a wonderful and candid guide who made it possible to talk to local people.](#) She said that

everywhere they went Iranians were very welcoming to Americans and went out of their way to tell them they were welcome. It seemed obvious that most urban and educated Iranians are scared to death of any unrest. They see themselves as a stable state surrounded by unstable states. So any threats against Iran will result in an authoritarian crack down on the population there. A destabilization of Iran would benefit Israeli and US War Hawks, but would not be good for ordinary Iranians.

**A6- Medea:** Yes I have found Iranians to be very welcoming to Americans when I was there, and I even made it clear I was a Jew and they were warm and welcoming. The people of Saudi Arabia are also afraid of religious extremists and want the US to support the democrats, not the royal family. Hawks in all countries support Hawks in other countries. We must take pre-emptive moves to work with local women peace groups. And I want to point out that one group, the NIAC (National Iranian American Council) has been very focused and effective at building understanding between Iranians and Americans. This is a good group to support.

Nancy Price added that there is a great deal of tension in Iran between Muslim Religious culture and Persian Sectarian culture. The more the west threatens Iran, the more power will go to the religious extremists as a way of being 'united' against the west.

**Q7 - Marybeth Gardam (At Large – FL) Asked:** [Which were the Congressmen who were supporting limiting weapons sales to Saudis?](#)

**A7 – Medea:** There were 27 who voted the right way. You can easily google this. It's important to thank the 27 and chastise the rest! During the Obama administration alone there were \$115 billion in weapons funding approved by Congress in 42 different deals. Congress could have stopped any of them.

Marybeth thanked Medea for her time and for joining us. Medea thanked WILPF US for the invitation and said she looks forward to strategizing with WILPF on work in the future.