Women Confront Power

As a WILPF member, Robin Rose offers a flower to police, who pepper spray her during the first day of the Republican National Convention in Minneapolis, where she was participating in the Funk the War march, the Poor Peoples Economic Human Rights Campaign, and an anti-war march. Robin was briefly arrested.

INSIDE

- Gender and Activism
- Standing Up for Peace
- Stopping Sexual Violence
- Women in Afghanistan
The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) has been working since 1915 to unite women worldwide who oppose oppression and exploitation. WILPF stands for equality of all people in a world free of racism, sexism, and homophobia; the building of a constructive peace through world disarmament; and the changing of government priorities to meet human needs.

WILPF has sections in 37 countries coordinated by an international office in Geneva. U.S. WILPF carries out its work through grassroots organizing by WILPF branches. WILPF supports the work of the United Nations and has NGO (non-governmental organization) status.

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The theme of this year’s National Congress, “Moving Forward, Making Peace,” proved provocative. The entire first day of our gathering in Indianapolis, Indiana, was set aside for internal WILPF concerns that arose last fall, such as the lay-offs of the national office staff, the financial crisis, temporary shut-down of the office, and ensuing structural changes. Congress attendees and members from branches across the U.S. asked many questions and insisted on answers. The board has focused on transparency and accountability since the events of last fall, and members made it clear they want backup for their branch work and up-to-date information, but not top-down leadership or obscure direction. Attendees also stressed the importance of a strong national presence for our venerable, 94-year-old organization. Overall, the first day’s discussion was constructive and fruitful.

Traditionally, the heart of WILPF’s Triennial Congress has been to establish a program for the next three years. This year, rather than choosing campaigns as we did for 2005-08, WILPF established a mini-grant program for the branches and issue committees. Branches (individual and groups of branches) may apply for mini grants to support an issue they are working on — building our national campaign. Do some fundraising. This year was no different, as branches produce the previous and new National Board Members and to produce an internal WILPF newsletter. Congress attendees and members from branches across the U.S. asked as many questions as they did for mini-grants. Branches and issue groups also sold a wide variety of materials.

On Saturdays of each Congress, it is traditional to introduce the previous and new National Board Members and to do some fundraising. This year was no different, as branches and individuals were encouraged to pledge donations to the national office. Branches were asked to encourage their members to give monthly $10 pledges, or to pledge as a branch to make a specific monthly donation. (To learn how, go to www.wilpf.org and click on “Donate Now!”)

In the midst of all the intensity, the Des Moines branch sponsored a magnifi-cent local women’s dance troupe and secured tickets to a delightful, well-sung community opera.

Amy Goodman with Peter David Lewis who presented WILPF with the James Chenes Peace Award at Congress.

Amy Goodman of Democracy Now! radio told anecdotes about the human casualties of current governmental policies. YES! Magazine creator and publisher Fran Korten talked about “planetary alchemy,” the development and conservation of natural resources through sustainable grassroots programs. Peg Mullen received the First Annual “Strong, Feisty Woman Award” from the Des Moines Branch for her years of outstanding work.

This Triennial Congress ushered in several new events and action items:

• An extensive collection of Jane Addams Peace Award book winners was exhibited. Susan Freist described her classroom use, as well as student and parent reception of a “peace curriculum.” Creative uses of the books by branches were reported.

• Members are asked to volunteer for several national WILPF committees now being formed. These committees are: 1) Site Committee, to search for a new location for the national office; 2) Grant Allocation for the mini-grants, 3) Grant Oversight and Evaluation; and 5) Personnel. For full descriptions of these committees and to volunteer, go to www.wilpf.org.

Every WILPF section in the world is looking forward to the next 100 years. By 2015, when we celebrate our 100th anniversary, a new Manifesto will be proposed. An online committee is forming to help write the Manifesto. Also, International WILPF has set a goal of finding 1,000 members worldwide to donate $1,000 dollars each by 2015.

• U.S. Y-WILPF: for WILPF members aged 18-35, was officially welcomed with two seats on the Board. At the international Congress in Sweden six years ago, a resolution was passed to establish a youth group within WILPF; called Y-WILPF. Next year, a meeting of all Y-WILPFs will convene in Europe. U.S. Y-WILPF is engaged in fundraising for this meeting. It also planned a presence at the Democratic and Republican conventions this summer, and continues to work on recruitment and communication.

From hands-on workshops such as how to conduct a “Perfect Meeting,” to sessions on “The Real Cost of War,” our Congress covered a lot of ground. It was a chance for all of us to be inspired by our speakers, to re-connect and re-commit to WILPF, and to welcome the new Board.
The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom believes in an Americanism... which... holds the future of our people as its pledge.

And there is need today of more thought on these subjects for what we had inherited as unquestioned watchwords have been allowed to become just unreal phrases hallowed by lip service only, and after a period of dry rot belief in them is now crumbling. How many Americans not only believe, but openly maintain that fascism is better than democracy, that unhinging obedience is better than action based on individual conscience and thought, that patriotism is synonymous with nationalism, that liberty is dangerous, that peace is a dream and not even a beautiful dream.

The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom believes in an Americanism which is older than the world — France, Germany, England, the United States, Italy, Holland, the Scandinavian countries, Australia and others. They had come together as pacifists. No lesser issue than the freedom of women and of the land was involved.

But in the United States freedom also means newness of a kind. The Americanism of which we are speaking is newness of a kind which is suspicious and provokes challenge. “What do you mean by Americanism?” is a question which...
New Resolution Tackles Sexual Violence in Conflict

By Sam Cook

It is undeniable that sexual violence is being used as a method of war and perpetrated at levels that defy belief. In too many cases the perpetrators act with impunity. In June, the U.N. Security Council (under the presidency of the U.S.) held an Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security, which concluded with the unanimous passage of Resolution 1820 on sexual violence in conflict. Some 30 other U.N. member states, not on the Security Council, co-sponsored this resolution.

The resolution and the advocacy for its adoption was controversial, in part because there was not broad and open consultation with women’s groups when it was drafted. In addition, women peace activists were troubled that the U.S. was leading the debate on this issue.

Some of their discomfort was alleviated by the fact that the U.S. was taking up an initiative driven by many women’s groups and governments over a long period of time.

With regard to the resolution itself, there were several substantive questions beginning with: why the focus on sexual violence? After all, Security Council Resolution 1325 (adopted in October 2000) provides a broad and fairly comprehensive framework for a range of issues affecting women, peace and security. Some argued that Resolution 1820’s exclusive focus on sexual violence would undercut the powerful breadth of SCR 1325 and reduce its importance.

For some, spotlighting sexual violence in conflict is seen as reducing the issues of women and armed conflict been affected by sexual violence and conflict. The issues of participation and violence are inextricably linked — sexual violence is both a cause and consequence of low levels of women’s participation in all decision-making. Sexual violence does more than discourage political engagement: as a women’s rights activist from the Democratic Republic of Congo explained, sexual violence holds communities hostage and prevents access to markets, water and schools. Getting women and gender equality concerns into the highest levels of decision-making is critical if we are to eliminate such violence. But, this is not an easy exercise.

As many studies (including the 2006 Secretary General’s Study on Violence Against Women) have shown, ending such violence requires a multidimensional and integrated response from many actors. The Security Council is one such entity; its mandate is to maintain international peace and security, and its resolutions set the mandates of U.N. peacekeeping missions around the world. It also has the power to act against countries waging war through illegal methods.

Gender, Peace and Security

Many who agree with this assessment argue that what’s needed is to fully implement Resolution 1325. Indeed, 1325 does address the issue of sexual violence and the implementation of its commitments must continue. Indeed, a new resolution was not needed to recognize that sexual violence can constitute a war crime or crime against humanity. International law’s recognition of this has out-paced the response of the Security Council. The Security Council has done little to prevent such violence or to sanction the use of sexual violence as a method of war.

As WILPF and other NGOs monitor the work of the Security Council, we see peacekeeping missions that are not given explicit mandates to provide protection from sexual violence; high rates of violence not being considered in discussions on arms embargoes or sanctions; and the rates and patterns of such violence not being reported in the Secretariat General’s reports to the Council on Countries. Where there is no information in country-specific reports, the Security Council, claiming a lack of credible information, does not include an explicit mandate to peacekeepers to prevent, protect and respond to sexual violence. (Unfortunately, the Security Council does not count the reports of human rights and humanitarians NGOs working on the ground.)

Time and again members of the Security Council have argued that the issue of sexual violence is not within their purview. It is not, they claim, a matter of international peace and security. While this argument may seem somewhat absurd, Resolution 1820 puts this debate to rest (as the U.S. Secretary of State chaired the debate noted). On the question of whether systematic sexual violence belongs on the Council’s agenda — the answer is a resounding “yes.”

Much work remains to be done to implement Resolutions 1325 and 1820. Certainly 1820 is not perfect; its provisions, passive language and sovereignty concerns make commitments weaker than they might have been. There are vital issues, such as the provision of comprehensive services to survivors and commitment of resources that are not comprehensively covered. In part this is because some of these issues must be taken up elsewhere in the U.N. system and bilateral governments. Also, because of the work done to link the issue to the protection of civilians — an explicit theme on the Council’s agenda — Resolution 1820 at times conveys the idea that it is only sexual violence against civilians that is of concern. These various issues must be addressed. But it is important to recognize this resolution as a step forward.

Sam Cook is the Project Associate of WILPF’s PeaceWomen Project, based in the United Nations Office in New York. www.PeaceWomen.org

Key Provisions of Security Council Resolution 1820

Clearly establishes that sexual violence in conflict situations is a matter for the Security Council to consider and act upon.

• Stresses that sexual violence, when used or commissioned as a tactic of war in order to deliberately target civilians or as part of a widespread or systematic attack against civilian populations, can significantly exacerbate situations of armed conflict and may impede the restoration of international peace and security, and expresses a readiness to adopt appropriate steps to address widespread or systematic sexual violence.

• Provides explicit examples of possible measures to provide protection from sexual violence, including vetting armed and security forces to take into account past abuses, the evacuation of those under imminent threat of sexual violence and debunking myths that fuel sexual violence.

• Affirms the Security Council’s intention to consider taking measures against parties who commit rape and other forms of sexual violence in armed conflict when renewing sanctions against regimes.

• Reiterates previous calls to end the exclusion of sexual violence crimes from amnesty provisions in the context of conflict resolution processes.

• Explicitly requests the Secretary General to include information and recommendations on the protection of women and girls in his country-specific reports to the Council; to provide an extensive report on the implementation of Resolution 1820, information on the use of sexual violence (including prevalence and trends), strategies to prevent such violence and benchmarks for measuring progress in this. (This is important because it establishes pathways for the continuing flow of information.)

• Recognizes the importance of women’s participation.

• Requests training of personnel including pre-deployment training and urging the development and strengthening of the response capacity of national institutions (including judicial and health systems) and local civil society networks.

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President of WILPF
Palestine Makes Historic
U.S. Tour

By Odile Hugonot Haber

The Palestinian population has the highest number of displaced people in the world, an estimated 7 million.

One well-known Palestinian is Hanan Awwad, president of WILPF Palestine. A highly regarded activist, poet, and academic (she was head of the Department of Cultural Studies and the Department of Humanities at the College of Science and Technology, Abu Dies, Jerusalem), she recently completed a wide-ranging tour of the United States with the help of numerous branches. WILPF’s Middle East Campaign worked to bring Hanan to the U.S., just as it had done earlier with Aylah Strauss, president of the Israeli section.

Many branches helped raise money for the tour and Hanan was able to visit several of them, including: Cleveland, Philadelphia, Detroit, Ann Arbor, San Francisco, San Jose, Palto Alto, Arcata and St. Louis. She spoke at the WILPF Congress in Des Moines before heading to Washington, D.C. and New York.

The branches were very creative, arranging for her to speak at salons, poetry readings, churches, synagogues and with Women In Black vigils. Events were well attended and some of the programs were co-sponsored by local coalitions, including Detroit, where Jewish Voices for Peace was part of the effort. In Arcata, Hanan spoke at Temple Beth El in Eureka, followed by a Q&A; the program was organized by WILPF in conjunction with Rabbi Naomi Steinberg.

At Congress, Hanan spoke about United Nations resolutions on Palestine and the history of the conflict. In Washington, D.C., Joan Drake organized a very full day of meetings for Hanan, including a meeting with Elizabeth Olson, Sen. Barack Obama’s legislative correspondent. We gave her a brief presentation about WILPF. She welcomed the visit and declared that Sen. Obama is aware and concerned about the situation in the Occupied Territories. Hanan expressed hope that the U.S. Congress would exert sufficient pressure on Israel to bring about a change in policy and an end to settlements and occupation.

Hanan also met with Nahil Ahuznaid, from the PLO Mission to the United States and with Nicole Schampain, deputy director, Israel/Palestine Affairs, U.S. Department of State. Hanan talked about the occupation and settlements, which are making normal life impossible for Palestinians. Ms. Schampain said that “peace cannot be imposed” and talked about the “problem” with Hamas, adding: “The Palestinians are shooting themselves in the foot by sending rockets into Israel.” Joan replied: “We are not here to speak about individual culpability but about national policy.”

This was quite a journey for Hanan, but when she returned to Jerusalem, the hard reality of the occupation hit as she discovered she could face imprisonment over unpaid taxes on her office. WILPF immediately responded, with members sending money. (Palestinian NGOs face harassments in the form of high taxes from the Israeli authority.)

Here at home, WILPF’s National Middle East committee is re-organizing and continues to focus on U.S. policy.

Odile Hugonot Haber is a long time member of WILPF’s Women Challenge U.S. Policy in the Middle-East (WCUSP/Israel Palestine) campaign.

Wearing three of the peace necklaces San Jose WILPF has been circulating widely, Hanan Awwad spoke at the San Jose Peace and Justice Center and at the South Bay Mobilization. See page 29 for additional information on her visit. [Image in photo]

WILPF, Water and the World

By Nancy Price

The 5th World Water Forum will be held in Istanbul, Turkey from March 16 - 22, 2009. Calling this the “world’s largest water event,” the World Water Council (organizers of this every-three-year Forum) seem to have missed the drying lakes and rivers, the hurricanes, floods, melting glaciers and ice-sheles. I would call these catastrophes the world’s largest water events.

Such natural disasters — brought on by global warming, combined with water pollution and taking too much water from surface and groundwater sources — have led to the current global water crisis. Up to a billion or more people lack safe, affordable, sufficient water for domestic use and sanitation, causing hundreds of millions of deaths, particularly for children. Yet the World Water Council wants to solve this crisis the good old corporate way, through privatization and public-private partnerships with governments that put profits over the rights of people and nature.

This is how the World Water Council describes their vision: “The largest water event in the world, aimed at putting water firmly on the international agenda. A stepping stone towards global collaboration on water problems, the Forum offers the water community and policy-makers from all over the world the unique opportunity to come together to create links, debate and attempts to find solutions to achieve water security.”

The global community that advocates for water as a “human right” and a right of nature has organized at each of these meetings. At the last Forum in Mexico City, Olivia Zink and I (representing WILPF’s Save the Water Campaign) peacefully marched with tens of thousands from all over Latin America. This was the first time activists organized a parallel People’s Water Forum, holding our own, three-day meeting outside — while representatives of major water and human rights groups met with policy makers on the inside.

U.S. WILPF and the Save the Water Issue Group will explore with International WILPF opportunities for our participation with other NGOs in Istanbul. Join the Save the Water Issue group to find out what you can do here at home.

Nancy Price is a member of WILPF’s Save the Water Campaign.

This summer, after a potluck supper at Cleveland Friends Meeting House, Hanan Awwad addressed over 60 long-time activists and young people. From the 1948 “Nakba” (catastrophe) to the 1967 occupation and beyond, Hanan brought 60 years of land confiscations, restrictions, imprisonment, torture, accelerated settlements, roadblocks, checkpoints, neighborhood bombing, house demolitions, and the “Wall” to life for us. She talked about men, women and children being shot on sight, and Palestinians’ struggle to regain their homeland.

Hanan spoke of the right of resistance (U.N. Resolution 3703) and the role of the writer in resistance. The power of her poems was evident as she read three in Arabic, with a lyrical translation following each.

Responding to many questions, Hanan touched on media distortions, silence and apathy in Europe and the U.S., Israel’s continued control over Gaza since its purported withdrawal, and peace conferences from 1991 (Madrid), to the most recent “peace process.”

Hosting Hanan was a great honor and pleasure for Cleveland WILPF. I felt a strong connection with her from our first meeting in the airport (where her luggage failed to arrive — held, we later learned, in Tel Aviv), to the most recent “peace process.”

Vicky Knight

HANAN AWWAD IN CLEVELAND

On opening night at the Triennial Congress, the Waterway Dance Theatre performed “Water is Life.” [Image in photo]

By Odile Hugonot Haber

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U.S. Global Duty: To Deter Violence Against Women

By Tzili Mor

When Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Barack Obama first introduced his running mate this past August, he described Sen. Joe Biden as the man who championed the 1994 Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) so that “every woman can have a place for support.” Obama noted that VAWA yielded “dramatic reductions in the rate of domestic violence” and gave countless “women a second chance.” While Sen. Obama disappointed many by not choosing a woman for the coveted vice presidential spot, he chose a senator with long-time support for women’s human rights, both at home and as part of U.S. foreign policy responsibilities.

As chair of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Biden (D-Delaware) has, albeit unsuccessfully, called on his colleagues to ratify the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). More recently in late 2007, Biden co-drafted and introduced, along with Sen. Richard Lugar (R-Indiana), the International Violence Against Women Act (I-VAWA). Sen. Obama joined the 21 bi-partisan co-sponsors of the bill in June.

Currently pending in Congress, the I-VAWA represents an unprecedented recognition by the U.S. government that eradicating violence against women cannot be divorced from addressing today’s most pressing global development and human rights challenges, including poverty, health epidemics such as HIV/AIDS, and humanitarian, war, and conflict crisis. Existing U.S. overseas health assistance programs contain guidelines on violence against women and girls, but similar guidelines do not exist for other areas, such as training programs for foreign militaries, police and judicial authorities to address prevention and response to violence against women and girls.

Current efforts by the U.S. to promote the political participation and safety of women and girls lack oversight, coordination, and accountability. No effective strategy to address such a global phenomenon can be fashioned from isolated programmatic successes. The I-VAWA would create an Office of Global Women’s Initiatives in the U.S. government to address violence against women and girls; and authorize more than $1 billion over five years in U.S. assistance to support international programs that prevent and respond to violence; provide for U.S. training of foreign military and police forces on violence against women and girls; support capacity-building for overseas women’s organizations working to stop violence against women and girls; create an Office of Global Women’s Initiatives in the State Department and an Office of Global Women’s Development at the Agency for International Development (USAID) to coordinate efforts and integrate violence prevention programming into current foreign assistance activities.

For more information about the I-VAWA campaign:
www.aiusa.org/ivawa
www.womenthrive.org/ivawa
www.endabuse.org

Since “1 in 3 of women in the world will experience violence in her lifetime,” the bill recognizes that “violence against women and girls is rooted in multiple causes and takes many forms, including physical, sexual, and psychological. It affects all countries, social groups, ethnicities, religious, and socioeconomic classes and is a global health, economic development, and human rights problem of epidemic proportions.”

Cognizant of horrific, large scale rape and sexual violence raids against women in the Democratic Republic of Congo and other crisis regions, the bill devotes a detailed section to “addressing violence against women and girls in humanitarian relief, peacekeeping, conflict, and post-conflict operations.” This concern over the impact of conflict on women echoes the U.S. push this summer at the U.N. Security Council to pass Resolution 1820 on sexual violence in situations of armed conflict. (For a discussion of this historic resolution, see article by Sam Cook on page 8).

Both the I-VAWA and U.N. Resolution 1820 suffer from— at points — a heavy handed focus on women as perpetuators of violence, rather than as empowered agents of change and reform. I-VAWA drafters, however, specifically solicited women’s and human rights groups in countries receiving or affected by U.S. foreign aid for their views and feedback on programmatic priorities and resource allocation levels to be highlighted in the bill. The resultant bill emphasizes “community-based solutions” and earmarks substantial support and capacity-building for overseas women’s organizations working to stop violence against women and girls. For example, when crafting emergency measures for outbreaks of violence during conflict or post-conflict operations, I-VAWA requires the Secretary of State to consult NGOs with “demonstrated expertise working on preventing and addressing systematic violence against women and girls as a weapon of intimidation and abuse in situations of conflict and war.” While this provision may still focus on input from U.S.-based or international NGOs, rather than local groups, it mandates consultations with women’s human rights groups with relevant expertise, rather than relying exclusively on internal State and Defense Department intelligence agencies.

The I-VAWA also partially addresses criticisms about differing standards for U.S. and foreign armed forces by mandating similar training “on preventing and responding to violence against women and girls” in U.S. training of foreign military and police forces and to all U.S. “military personnel, military contractors and military forces deployed to humanitarian, relief, conflict, and post-conflict operations.”

In keeping with U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, the I-VAWA calls on the Secretary of State to expand the number and roles of women in all U.N. peacekeeping missions and to routinely propose women candidates for such missions.

Highlights of theInternational Violence Against Women Act

The I-VAWA will:
• set up a comprehensive, five-year strategy to reduce violence in 10 to 20 diverse countries with severe levels of violence against women and girls;
• authorize more than $1 billion over five years in U.S. assistance to support international programs that prevent and respond to violence;
• provide for U.S. training of foreign military and police forces on violence against women and girls;
• support capacity-building for overseas women’s organizations working to stop violence against women and girls;
• create an Office of Global Women’s Initiatives in the State Department and an Office of Global Women’s Development at the Agency for International Development (USAID) to coordinate efforts and integrate violence prevention programming into current foreign assistance activities.

Working Together

Amnesty International-USA, the Family Violence Prevention Fund, and the Women Thrive Worldwide (formerly Women’s Edge) are leading an effort in partnership with WILPF and numerous other NGOs to increase U.S. leadership to end violence against women and girls globally. The campaign aims to reshape the way in which the U.S. government provides assistance to other governments and designs overseas programs. The bill embodies unique collaboration and input from more than 150 groups, including U.S.-based and international NGOs, ranging from WILPF, the Global AIDS Coalition, Man Can Stop Rape, NOW, CARE, Refugees International, and faith-based groups, U.N. agencies, and 40 local women’s groups from across the globe.

For additional information on the campaign to support the I-VAWA, please visit: www.aiusa.org/ivawa

Violence Against Women in Armed Conflict

Let your Senator and Representative know that you support I-VAWA legislation (in the Senate: S.2279; in the House: HR.5927).

For more information about the campaign to support the I-VAWA, please visit: www.aiusa.org/ivawa

Given the purported nonpartisan nature of advocacy around I-VAWA, the act unsurprisingly fails to explicitly link violence against women and reproductive health and rights. Instead, the universally agreeable “women’s health” terminology pervades the bill, though devoid of any contextual content. For example, while the I-VAWA condemns rape as a “weapon of war,” it stops short of specifying support for much-needed programs to address victims of sexual violence, including comprehensive access to post-exposure prophylaxis, emergency contraceptives, and safe abortion services. Existing foreign aid restrictions would likewise continue to cripple efforts by local women’s rights activists overseas to advocate for safe abortion services for victims of incest and rape, including rape by one’s husband.

According to its drafters, the “I-VAWA (S.2279, HR.5927), if passed, would consistently incorporate solutions for reducing violence against women into U.S. foreign assistance programs.” Notably, a recent drive for an over-haul and modernization of U.S. foreign aid — currently governed by the 1961 Foreign Assistance Act designed to fulfill a defunct Cold War era ideology — could boost I-VAWA in its efforts to partially amend this act.

Conservative critiques of the I-VAWA only make it sound more attractive. One group attempted to denigrate the I-VAWA as “bankrolling CEDAW’s mandates.” Phyllis Schlafly cautioned her supporters that the I-VAWA “would create millions of dollars of feminist pork.” This is pork even the vegetarians amongst us should be able to stomach.

Tzili Mor is an Attorney Teaching Fellow with the International Women’s Human Rights Clinic at Georgetown University Law Center. She has coordinated, edited and drafted numerous reports and documents to the United Nations and has worked on international human rights projects in several regions of the world. She is a member of WILPF’s AHR committee.
Fueled by rising prices in copper, gold, zinc and uranium, there has been an explosion in mining exploration, development and production in Alaska. Figures from 2000 ($1.85 billion) to 2006 ($3.26 billion) show an astounding 76 percent increase. This parallels mining development nationally, particularly in the western U.S., where active mining in 12 states increased 80 percent from January 2003 to July 2007. Enter rivers, streams or lakes to devastate flora and fauna and pollute drinking water. The large-scale diversion of water systems by mining companies can also diminish access to water by local communities.

For these reasons, Alaska WILPF developed a film series and public forum on industrial mining as part of U.S. WILPF’s Water Campaign. We ran the series at three venues: at the Anchorage Museum to reach a general audience; at the University of Alaska, Anchorage to build student leadership on mining issues; and at the Islands and Ocean Visitor Center in Homer, Alaska where citizens are very concerned about development of the proposed Pebble Mine. If developed, Pebble Mine would be situated at the headwaters of the largest sockeye salmon fishery in the world, in a seismically unstable region. Public controversy over the mine generated Alaska’s Clean Water Ballot Initiative, which sought to reinstate water protections that would prevent large-scale mines from releasing contamination harmful to salmon spawning and human health. Given all of this, the film series was particularly timely. Five months later, Alaskans were to vote “thumbs up” or “thumbs down” on the initiative.

We selected films that looked at mining from several perspectives: the politics of regulation and development (Frontline’s The Curse of Inca Gold); what companies leave behind for governments and communities to clean up (Poison in the Rockies); and a close examination of specific types of impacts, such as acid mine drainage.

Environmental justice, particularly as it relates to Indigenous communities, was a prominent theme in the majority of the films. In rural Alaska many Indigenous communities follow traditional practices of hunting, fishing, and food gathering, often referred to as subsistence. While federal law protects subsistence rights for all communities in rural Alaska, state law prioritizes multiple uses of land. This can result in development that pollutes natural resources.

Following each film, local leaders from tribes, non-profits and environmental law firms tied the issues raised in the movies to our situation in Alaska. We wanted to convey the growing extent of mining exploration and development; the difference between mining as it operated historically and mining as implemented by multinationals today; and to provide an up-close look at the environmental records and practices of multinationals who want to do business in Alaska.

We also wanted to illustrate that federal and state regulations provide little environmental protection, a point of view that contrasts with common public perception.

Sadly, the Clean Water Initiative was defeated by 62 percent of Alaska’s voters. Some say that Governor Sarah Palin’s personal but very public opposition (she took a full page ad in the Anchorage Daily News) to the initiative sealed its defeat. It’s also likely that the questionable reputation and politics of the initiative’s sponsors (resource development Republicans, not environmentalists and their funders contributed to its downfall. But, for the moment, multinationals and Alaska’s mining industry are the victors, with Governor Palin’s resource development priority firmly in place.

Despite this, activists and politicians continue to work toward more stringent regulation of Alaskan mining. As a follow-up to the film series, Alaska WILPF convened a working group to oppose uranium exploitation and development on the Seward Peninsula. This working group meets monthly by teleconference and includes tribal leaders, educators, researchers, environmentalists and attorneys from Alaska and the southwestern U.S. The teleconferences are now coordinated by Alaska WILPF as part of the U.S. WILPF’s Water Campaign. We are grateful to our sponsors for their support: the U.S. WILPF Water Campaign, the Alaska Conservation Foundation, the Pratt Museum and the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Maryellen and Richard Oman.

Dee Hunt was the project leader for “The Consequences of Mining: Films and Forum on Mines, People and the Land,” a project of Alaska WILPF. Contact her at dhunt@gci.net.
Welcome to ‘Democracy in Action’

By Stacey Ann Ferguson and Rachel Crosby

One of WILPF’s recent projects has been creating a partnership with the online database management system “Democracy-In-Action” (DIA). Now before you yawn and turn the page, let us tell you how DIA can make a difference to you and to our activism. This system is very user-friendly and has the ability to keep us organized, in touch and active. More than 400 organizations are now utilizing DIA.

Democracy In Action is more than your average online database system. By using it, we are also tapping into a host of different advocacy tools that we can all use to coordinate and motivate ourselves, our branches, and our national advocacy efforts.

The decision to collaborate with DIA was made in an effort to give each WILPF member the ability to manage her own membership, renew membership dues online, and stay connected. We have linked our national website directly to DIA, enabling new members to sign up online, pay a membership fee, and get involved with WILPF right away. Also, using the online donation page from our national website makes it easier than ever to manage your own records. Democracy-In-Action enables all WILPF members to:

- Correct personal contact information, such as a change of address, phone number, or updated email address.
- Renew individual and/or family memberships. Each time you renew your membership, a financial record of this transaction appears in your personal profile. Now it’s easy to track when you’ve updated your dues. Democracy-In-Action can also update your donation record to reflect any other special donations/contributions that you’ve made online.
- Keep track of all WILPF transactions, including membership renewals, resource material purchases, donations, and more!
- Branches and individual members can also suggest items for e-advocacy campaigns.

Now, we recognize that computers are not for every one and that “getting online” can be a scary thing. Like anything, it takes a bit of practice and getting used to. That’s what we at the national office are here for! Please be sure to give us a call or send us an email if you are encountering any difficulty using Democracy-In-Action.

As of late September, any member could go online and get started by either checking their existing profile or by creating a new profile. If you have been getting emails from WILPF in the past few months, the odds are good that you are already in the DIA database and will only need to request a password to go in and check the accuracy of the data on file.

**Getting Started**

1. **First, go to www.wilpf.org** and, on the home page, click on the link near the top of the right side that says “Click Here for DIA Member Login.”
2. **This will take you directly to the DIA login page.** (It will appear at the top banner as the top at other WILPF pages, however.)

How do I get into the DIA database?

Once on the DIA login page, do one of two things:

1. If you have been receiving emails from U.S. WILPF during the past few months (usually 2008), your record is probably already on file with DIA. So, all you have to do is request a password by entering your email address and clicking on the button that says “Send Password.” You will quickly get an email that provides a password and a link to click so you can go back to DIA and change your password. Then you can review your record.
2. If you are sure that you are not in the DIA database, click the link that says “Not signed up yet?” and you will be able to create a new profile.

- Enter your First Name, Last Name, Email, and Zip Code
- Check your email account in order to receive your temporary password. (You can also login directly to the profile manager by clicking on the link that says “Log in to your profile manager here.”)
- Once in the profile manager, click on the tab that says “Your Profile” and fill out or update your contact information. Make sure to click on “Submit changes” to save your new information.

We look forward to seeing you online, where we can all practice democracy in action together!

Stacey Ann Ferguson is WILPF’s Director of Operations; Rachel Crosby is WILPF’s Webmaster.

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**Issue Committees**

**Advancing Human Rights**

Works to ensure U.S. compliance and full domestic implementation of international human rights instruments through advocacy at the international, national and local levels of government.

Tizl Mor:

TizlMor@hotmail.com

Laura Roskos:

lauranoskos@hotmail.com

**Building the Beloved Community**

Provides educational information about the history and nature of systemic racism, connections between oppressions, inter-related oppressions, racial justice, and the struggles for racial justice.

Sha’an Mouliert:

mouliert@vlink.net

Tura Campanella Cook:

turacc@earthlink.net

(Commit them for information and the name of a new committee facilitator. Sha’an is now developing an electronic white privilege for WILPF branches around the country.)

**Corporations vs. Democracy**

Exposes the dangers of corporate personhood, provides an updated study guide and promotes action to end corporate domination of local communities when in conflict with human political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights.

Torn and jumini:

jumini@earthlink.net

(812) 336-6671

**Women and Cuba**

Works to normalize relations between Cuba and U.S. governments and to educate people on the reality of Cuban society, especially the gains made for women and children under the Cuban revolution.

Cindy Domenico:

cindydomenico@gmail.com

**DISARM! Dismantle the War Economy**

Works for the abolition of nuclear weapons and war itself, and for a peace economy promoting human security and human rights for all.

Claire Gosselin:

clagos@verizon.net

Haiti Committee

Promotes debt relief, immigration reform; continuing inves-
tigation of the U.S. role in the 2/29/04 coup d’état; and the politicalization of U.S. aid to Haiti.

Joan Drake:

joanWDrake@aol.com

(717) 715-7024

Iraq-Iran Committee

Works to end the war and occupation of Iraq, and oppose any invasion or bomb-
ing of Iran.

Megan Cleef:

mvc@ig.org, (484) 384-2487

Yoshiko Buta:

YButa@aol.com, (216) 521-7057

Pan-Africa and Diaspora

Women’s Issues

Provides a forum for ALL women of Africa and the various diasporas to inform the U.S. Section of WILPF of their issues, and to make the Pan-Africa & Diaspora Women’s issues an intrinsic part of WILPF U.S. and International Program/Agenda/initiatives.

Paj Willey Bailey:

pajwbailey@aol.com

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**WILPF Program and Contacts**

WILPF U.S. political, educational and advocacy program is generated by our members and branches. The WILPF Program Committee consists of representatives from each of the national issue committees. National issue committees represent both members-at-large and branch representatives. We urge you to join one of these committees. You can also use resources developed by these committees for branch or individual, local actions.

The Program Committee administers mini-grants which are available to both branches and issue committees for projects that promote peace and freedom. (www.wilpf.org/grant_program). Committee members also work together to weave our many interrelated issues into a coherent whole.

**Program Co-Chairs**

Contact the co-chairs if you want to generate a new issue committee or apply for a branch or issue commit-
tee mini-grant. To join, or learn more about a particular issue committee, contact the conveners directly.

Carol Urner:

carol.disarm@gmail.com

(503) 320-9106

Tura Campanella Cook:

turacc@earthlink.net

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**Women Challenge U.S. Policy in the Middle East (WCUSP/Israel-Palestine)**

Focuses especially on resolving the conflict between Israel and Palestine and has produced a WCUSP Feminist Action Guide to Challenging U.S. Policy in the Middle East. This is a 165-page tool with original source material, articles, maps and steps to take action.

Odile Huguet Haber:

odihlh@gmail.com

Barbara Taft:

beejayssite@yahoo.com, (480) 380-6325

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**Save the Water**

Works to create the larger “right to water” and water justice movement, with many other local, national and international groups (including other WILPF sections), all working to keep water services under local democratic control, to stop the commoditization of water for profit, to create healthy communities by working to end water pollution, and to advocate that water be held in the pub-
lic trust as a commons to be protected for people and nature for all time. Nancy Price:

nancyprice@juno.com

(530) 758-0726

Linda Parks:

vegaguy@yahoo.com

(216) 851-0968

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**Women in Democracy**

Gloria Steinem:

gloria@gloria.com

(212) 243-0828

Melody C. Walker:

melody@melody.com

(212) 741-0923

Women in Democracy’s Advisory Council:

Barbara Taft:

lauranoskos@hotmail.com

Laura Roskos:

mouliert@vlink.net

Joan Drake:

joanWDrake@aol.com

(717) 715-7024

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We look forward to seeing you online, where we can all practice democracy in action together!

Stacey Ann Ferguson is WILPF’s Director of Operations; Rachel Crosby is WILPF’s Webmaster.
Every year since 1953, a committee of WILPF members has selected books of the highest artistic and literary merit for the Jane Addams Children’s Book Awards (JACBA). Books promoting peace and social justice are singled out for this prestigious award. Your branch can order sets of the 2008 JACBA books and join the dozens of WILPF branches donating these books to schools, libraries, and shelters, thereby promoting social justice and WILPF.

The Award Winners Are . . .

The 2008 winner in the Books for Younger Children category is, The Escape of Oney Judge: Martha Washington’s Slave Finds Freedom, written and illustrated by Emily Arnold McCully (Farrar, Straus and Giroux) which tells the story of a young woman “owned” by Martha Washington who flees when Mrs. Washington tells her she will not grant her freedom until her death. This well-researched biography portrays the bravery of Oney Maria Judge who claimed and fought for the right to have “no mistress but herself.”

“Straightforward and unapologetic — a noteworthy effort to add complexity to the mythology surrounding the country’s first president.” — Kirkus Review

The 2008 winner in the Books for Older Children category is, The 2008 JACBA Book Set Order Form

JACBA BOOK SET ORDER FORM

Make check payable to Jane Addams Peace Association and mail to:
Jane Addams Peace Association, 777 United Nations Plaza, 6th Floor, New York, NY 10017

A Letter of Apology

We regret that mistrust had so escalated that the lock on the door of the office was changed on Dec 7, 2007 by a new representative of the January 4, 2008 layoffs necessitated by our fiscal crisis; and subsequently directly offering you mediation instead of talking to you through your union representative.

We apologize for not giving you proper notice through your union representative of the January 4, 2008 layoffs and for not talking to you directly.

Specifically, we take responsibility for the lack of communication around the proper process of negotiating and approving the contract with the Industrial Workers of the World governing your work conditions.

We apologize for not giving you proper notice through your union representative of the January 4, 2008 layoffs and for not talking to you directly.

We regret that mistrust had so escalated that the lock on the door of the office was changed on Dec 7, 2007 by a new representative of the January 4, 2008 layoffs necessitated by our fiscal crisis; and subsequently directly offering you mediation instead of talking to you through your union representative.

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A New Home for WILPF's Office

In September the site committee gave the site committee approval to seek temporary (for about a year) office accommodations until the decision for permanent headquarters is made. Locations in Washington, D.C. and Boston, MA have been inspected for this interim arrangement and the commit-

tee expects to make a decision soon. Following a decision, the Race Street facility will be vacated and surplus furniture donated to other non-profits in the Philadelphia area.

We Want to Hear from You

• How do you and (for branches) your branch see interacting with the national office?
• Do you, and (for branches) your branch want more support for legislative advocacy in Washington, D.C.?
• Is it important to you that WILPF have a central, physical, headquarters?
• Should we have more than one office?

Please respond to home4wilpf@wilpf.org by no later than December 1, 2008.

Some of the scenarios for WILPF’s permanent home have been posted on the website (www.wilpf.org). Please review the scenarios and the graphic information and let us know what you think. The site committee has an email address for feedback.

Site Committee
Pat O’Brien, chair, nominating committee, Boston Branch
Madeline Duckless, member, Berkeley-East Bay Branch
Terry Fatuyove Micus, member, Detroit Branch
Deb Garretson, member, Bloomington Branch
Robin Lloyd, member, Burlington Branch
Ellie Blaustein, member, Fresno Branch
Barbara Nielsen, national treasurer, member,
San Francisco Branch
Laura Roskos, national co-president, member,
Boston Branch
Ellen Schwartz, member, Sacramento Branch
Stacey Ferguson, Director of Operations

Violence Against Women in Armed Conflict

Excerpted from a fact sheet prepared by WILPF

The U.S. Bureau of Population, Refugee and Migration asserts that gender-based violence is a feature of virtually every recent or ongoing or current armed con-

flict. Whether women are engaged in armed conflict as mili-

tary personnel, political leaders, medical/ aide workers, or civilians, they may be subjected to gender-based violence.

Stacey Ferguson

A woman and her daughter seek shelter after fleeing their home in the village of Abeyi, engulfed by the heavy fighting between the Sudan Armed Forces and the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army. (May 2008)

A woman and her daughter seek shelter after fleeing their home in the village of Abeyi, engulfed by the heavy fighting between the Sudan Armed Forces and the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army. (May 2008)

armed conflict and where conflict has eroded security and public order. Iraqi women cite the breakdown in security and public order as the primary reason for the more than 400 Iraqi women abducted and raped within the first four months of the U.S. occupation. These rapes triggered a spike in so-called Honor Killings, where male relatives murdered rape survivors to salvage the honor of the family.
the WILPF radio show highlighting WILPF members and important issues. Tune in at www.communityradio.coop.

Click on the box in the upper right hand corner!

Great Ideas

New York Metro continues to share its extensive video library for home parties, providing the videos, a discussion guide, and even a facilitator, if requested! I love the way they framed their request for sustaining monthly memberships, with the question: WILPF Women are dangerous women! How dangerous are you? Starting with $5/mo = Dangerous Woman in Training, to $100+ = Dangerous to the Nth Degree at $100+.

The St. Louis newsletter’s column, “Random Readings,” has quotes and excerpts from various national newspapers. Duplicating its former success with the Roots of Violence, Seeds of Change, Cape Cod, in conjunction with the Western Asia Study Group, is creating another ambitious curriculum for its local community college. This one will focus on the central conflict of the region — Palestine/Israel — and will use The Lemon Tree by Sandy Tolan to discuss natural and political geography, water issues, history of the area from the Crusades to Zionism, the wars, borders and current U.S. foreign policy. For more information, contact Mary Zeperek. Perhaps you can bring it to your local community college.

Global Areas of Concern

Madison held a town hall meeting on U.S. Policy Toward Iran. St. Louis joined to sponsor an event, “Life in Occupied Palestine: Eyewitness Stories and Photos” in March and then hosted Hanan Aawad, a resident of the Palestine Section in June just before Congress, as did Palo Alto. In May, Los Angeles co-hosted Living with the Conflict — A Palestinian and Jewish Experience Form the Oasis of Peace. Triangle hosted three events in April on Israel/Palestine. New York Metro joined V-Day’s world-wide campaign to end violence against women. Several members jour- neyed to join this year’s V-Day focus on New Orleans. Check out www.vday.org and look for the film, Until the Violence Stops, to arrange for a showing. In April, New York Metro also participated in an event, “Owning U.S. Military Bases Abroad,” while Los Angeles noted the “Close the Bases Tour” stop organized by the AFSC, which aims to close the over 700 known military bases and unknown/secret installations in 40 countries around the world. Palm Beach County, which learned about Haiti at its March meeting, plans an additional fall meeting to check the status of working conditions and the plight of Haitian citizens at that time. Palo Alto’s April membership meeting featured a video on the Cuban Latin American School of Medicine (Caso Angelito) and a report by Carol Cross on current Cuban issues. Madison’s April meeting heard three tourists’ views on “Warriors of Fair Trade,” after a trip to Oaxaca, Mexico to attend the annual meeting of the Family Farm Defenders.

Vigils and Demonstrations

Madison Granny shows up at the Senior Idol Talent Show at the Dane County Fair. No word yet on whether they took first place! St. Louis joined the annual war tax protest at the local Post Office on April 15. Palo Alto members Sara Alchemes and husband Jon celebrated the Day Day with the IWLU, shutting down the West coast ports to protest of the Iraq war! Palo Alto Grannies enjoyed their Anti-War tax event enlisting many passers-by to join in the fun. The Granny Peace Brigade, loosely connected to New York Metro, had a Times Square Knit-in for the March 19 Iraq War commemoration in front of the recruiting offices there. The pouring rain tried their ingenuity, but they knitted socks for stumps (amputated limbs) for both U.S. and Iraqi soldiers, and baby clothes for Afghanistan in camps and orphanages — singing all the while. Portland continues its weekly Wednesday vigils. Women in Black on Fridays and celebrated the 17th anniversary of the Clotheline Project in August, thanks to Yvonne Simmons.

Legislative

St. Louis hosted a talk on the Missouri Tax System and advocated for local legislation to counteract restricting access tocontraception. They also joined AFSC in resisting plans to build a nuclear bomb plant near Los Alamos.

Afghanistan

contributing to a case study of the limits of 1325 on-the-ground in Afghanistan: “To ask if women are at the peace table” one sentence reads, “seems obscene when their presence in the public market alone puts them at risk of summary execution by the Taliban.”

By Day Four, My Work Plan Has Transformed itself into a movement-building machine. It’s filled with the voices of the women who have inspired me for the last six months, and the ghosts of the two headless Afghan women pinned above my desk. The unit is designed with multiple and easy entry and exit ramps — escape routes really — to allow for a mastery of commitment and around the world. I realize it will be messy: capacity will be built along the way, but right now we will work with what we have. I take an inventory of what’s in the” column: incredible, passionate Afghan women, here and in the Diaspora, committed to not turning back, to not see- ing the country dissolve into war again. We also have a global network of women and men committed to women’s peace-building. We have daily high-level meetings with (all-male) power brokers on the fate of Afghanistan — is this war won, almost won, almost lost, entirely lost? In this parched land, we will need to do some bridge building.

We also have the Taliban, and the warlords (too many of whom, despite committing gross human rights abuses during the civil war, now serve in parliament or on the cabinet). We have “night letters” in the south warning of the fatal consequences for using cell phones after dark; we have gang rapes in the north by command- ers more powerful than the U.S.-backed president; we have girls in the west who burn themselves alive out of a hopelessness more made acute after learning about this illusory idea of “universal human rights.”

We will need even while leaving a heavy footprint for peace. We will need witnesses at our back — is the world of women peacebuilders ready and willing? We will need to have courage, wherever we are.

By the Night of Day Five, I’ve completed the unit. It takes up barely any room on an external hard drive, or my 15-kilo evacuation pack. I’ve called it “Women in Peace and Governance.” I spent day six dis- tancing myself, ready to tear the whole thing apart if needed after having shared it with the Afghan women for whom it is intended. What do I know? I am only a visitor here, locked behind barbed wire, with armed guards stationed at my guest house door. All I know is the fire in my belly that says even the evacuation is called, I will not abandon this work.

It’s late in the night when the last text message arrives. “Situation normal. Restrictions lifted. Report to work as usual.” And, as quietly as it began, so it ends.

For some of us, understandably, it’s a nightmare, invaded back into an unprotected world with fear as ubiquitous as the dust in the dry air. For me, it’s an awakening into a new kind of day, with a new kind of clarity about the beautiful bravery of women’s peace building in Afghanistan.

Theresa de Langis, Ph.D., works as the Senior Gender & Politics Specialist for UNIFEM Afghanistan. She can be reached at Theresa.delangis@yahoo.com.

Support WILPF’s Fall Membership Drive; see the back page of this magazine and renew today!
Paying dues online is easy!

You can join or renew through www.wilpf.org. Click on JOIN WILPF on the right hand bar of the homepage. Joining or renewing online saves on administrative expenses and allows WILPF to focus more energy on its advocacy work. Once you join online, future renewal notices will automatically be sent to your email address. If you prefer to renew by post, use the mail-in form below.

Here's my Membership Renewal!

Name _________________________________________________________________________________

Address _______________________________________________________________________________________

Telephone _________________________________ Email _________________________________________________

Individual: ___$35 ___$45 Household ___$500 Lifetime ___$15 Low Income/Student

(Annual dues include a subscription to Peace & Freedom)

Additional gift to support WILPF’s work: _______

I have enclosed a personal check in the amount of ________ Please bill my charge card below in the amount of _______

VISA/MC#_______________________________________ Expiration Date_________________

Signature_______________________________________________________________________

Mail to: U.S. WILPF, 1213 Race St., Philadelphia, PA 19107

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
1213 Race Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107-1691

Time Value – Do Not Delay

See Congress Report, page 4