

---

# GENERATIONS OF COURAGE

---



**The Women's International League  
for Peace and Freedom**  
From the 20th century into a new millennium

---

Founded in 1915, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) is one of the world's oldest continuously-active peace organizations. WILPF has international offices in Geneva and sections in 37 countries, including the United States. From World War I through the 21st century, WILPF has taken action to oppose war and the root causes of war, and to promote peace, social justice, racial equality and women's empowerment. WILPF has consultative status with the United Nations as a nongovernmental organization (NGO), and monitors U.N. work in Geneva, New York and Paris. Its members have included thousands of "ordinary" women and men, and five Nobel Peace Prize laureates: Jane Addams, Emily Greene Balch, Linus Pauling, Alva Myrdal and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

To join WILPF, or for more information about our programs, literature and resources, contact:

WILPF, 1213 Race Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107-1691  
phone: (215) 563-7110; fax: (215) 563-5527  
email: [wilpf@wilpf.org](mailto:wilpf@wilpf.org); website: [www.wilpf.org](http://www.wilpf.org)

WILPF, 1 rue de Varembe, 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland  
phone: (41-22) 919-7080; fax: (41-22) 919-7081  
email: [info@iprolink.ch](mailto:info@iprolink.ch); website: [www.wilpf.int.ch/](http://www.wilpf.int.ch/)

## The Solidarity of Women: WILPF's Suffragist Roots

WILPF was born — or the *idea* of WILPF was born — at an International Congress of Women which met in Holland from April 28 to 30, 1915, nine months after World War I began. The world seemed "hypnotized by blood." The Second Battle of Ypres, in which poison gas was used in war for the first time, was underway, and would result in 100,000 casualties. By the war's end on November 11, 1918, at least 10 million would be dead, 20 million wounded. "Into this atmosphere of carnage," writes one historian, "WILPF was born."

This was not women's first attempt to mediate a war. Women of the Iroquois nation met more than 300 years earlier to demand an end to intertribal warfare, and there are records of other attempts by "enemy" women to reach out to each other. But the Hague Congress was the first time in modern history that women from nations at war united to demand peace.

*Women for All Seasons*, a WILPF history, reports:

*"As a result of their participation in anti-slavery, workers' rights, and other campaigns, women in the developed world had become increasingly aware of their own lesser status. By the first decade of the 20th century, there was a well-organized movement of women demanding suffrage in the United States and most countries in Europe. The international organization that united them was International Women's Suffrage Alliance (IWSA), headquartered in London. From this organization and movement, WILPF emerged. . ."*

WILPF's birth was controversial and dramatic. *Women for All Seasons* recounts the words of British socialist and suffragist Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence:



**Dutch suffrage leader Dr. Aletta Jacobs (1854-1919) issued the call that led to the Hague Congress. The first woman university student and first woman physician in the Netherlands, Jacobs established the world's first birth control clinic in 1878.**

*"The woman suffrage movement (at least many sections of it) was split by the war. In our own and many countries the idea of the solidarity of women had taken a deep hold upon many of us: so deep that it could not be shaken. . . Had we not spoken and written of the solidarity of women whose main vocation in every nation was one and the same — the guardianship and nurture of the human race?"*

Their solidarity would be unique. Of the hundreds of organizations in Europe with international ties in 1914, according to one historian, none, including the Socialist International, maintained connections during the war.

In England, the executive committee of the National Union of Women's





Militant British suffragist Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence (1867-1954) shared a platform with “enemy” Hungarian suffragist Rosika Schwimmer

during a 1915 U.S. speaking tour. Their speeches helped “galvanize the peace sentiment of American women” and led to the founding of the Women’s Peace Party—later, U.S. WILPF.

Suffrage Societies split over women’s role in the war. Most of the locals wanted to support the British war effort. The “internationalists” on the committee, including key leaders Catherine Marshall, Chrystal Macmillan and Kathleen Courtney, resigned, and helped to found WILPF.

In London, Rosika Schwimmer, a Hungarian Jewish feminist and IWSA press secretary, tried to enlist support for a plan to pressure U.S. President Woodrow Wilson to convene an ongoing conference of neutral nations, which would send daily mediating offers to both sides. Isolated and harassed as an “enemy alien,” Schwimmer resigned her IWSA post and planned a speaking tour of the United States. Other women were also proposing mediation: Elna Munch, wife of the Danish Minister of War; Canada’s Julie Grace Wales, a University of Wisconsin professor who proposed a mediation plan that was passed by the Wisconsin legislature and sent to Congress; and Swedish suffragists, who urged their government to intervene.

In the U.S., Rosika Schwimmer spoke at factory gates and public halls in 60 cities. At the same time, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence began speaking about

women and war during a U.S. speaking tour. Powerful speakers, Pethick-Lawrence and Schwimmer shared a platform in several cities. “The image of sisterhood evoked by these two women from warring countries galvanized feminine opposition to war,” *Women for All Seasons* relates.

Both women also tried to enlist the support of social reformer Jane Addams. Despite her initial doubts, Addams and IWSA president Carrie Chapman Catt sent out an invitation for a Women’s Peace Congress. On January 10, 1915, some 3,000 women representing women’s trade unions, suffrage groups and professional associations met at Washington, D.C.’s Willard Hotel. The women developed a “Program for Constructive Peace” and formed a Women’s Peace Party, which became the U.S. section of WILPF.

As war raged in Europe, Dr. Aletta Jacobs, president of the Dutch suffrage society, urged IWSA women to unite. In December 1914, Dutch suffragists proposed an IWSA business meeting in neutral Holland. England’s Chrystal Macmillan wrote to the 26 national suffrage societies suggesting a meeting of individuals if IWSA support was not forthcoming. A majority of IWSA officers and national presidents voted against a meeting, but Jacobs called a planning meeting anyway:

*“Women must show that when all Europe seems full of hatred they can remain united. . . . The members of my board. . . . did not agree on this plan. . . but I. . . decided to do what I could personally. When the answers came, so many were in favor that I thought, ‘Now I dare to do it.’”*

Belgian, Dutch, German and English suffragists met in Amsterdam. In three months, they organized the Hague Congress. Four Dutch women, Dr. Aletta Jacobs, Dr. Mia Boissevain, Cor Ramondt-Hirshmann and Rosa Manus, handled most of the arrangements.

## The Hague Conference

U.S. delegate Emily Greene Balch recorded her impressions:

*“The women, 1,500 of them and more, have come together and for four days conferred, not on remote and abstract questions but on the vital subject of international relations. English, Scottish, German, Austrian, Hungarian, Italian, Polish, Belgian, Dutch, American, Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish were all represented.*

*“On the first evening, Dr. Aletta Jacobs expressed her appreciation of the courage shown by those women who had braved all the dangers and difficulties of traveling in wartime. The programme and rules of order. . . shut out all discussions of relative national responsibility for the present war. . . . We met on the common ground beyond. . . the ground of preparation for permanent peace. . . .*

*“The largest hall in The Hague was needed for the meetings, over 2,000 often being present; and difficult as it is to conduct business with so many. . . languages. . . and divergent views, Miss*



Hungarian Jewish feminist Rosika Schwimmer (1877-1948) nominated for the 1948 Nobel Peace Prize. An organizer of Hungary’s first women’s trade union and an international suffrage leader, Schwimmer tried to arouse support for a plan to end World War I by mediation. She persuaded the Hague Congress to send envoys to world leaders.



*Addams and the other officials carried on orderly and effective sessions, marked by the most active will for unity that I have ever felt in an assemblage.”*

The “difficulties and dangers” were real. The 47 U.S. delegates risked their lives to cross the Atlantic on a ship, *The Noordam*, which was not allowed to fly the U.S. flag and could have been torpedoed. The 180 women who applied for the British delegation were denied passports, then granted 24 permits but—a laughing Parliament was told—were stuck in a port city when the North Sea was closed to traffic. Some German delegates were stopped at the German border. Rosika

At left: U.S. social work pioneer and social reformer Jane Addams (1860-1935) presided over the Hague Congress. Addams was elected WILPF’s first international president in 1919, and in 1931 became the first U.S. woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize.

“She was so utterly real and firsthand,” wrote Emily Greene Balch, “full of compassion without weakness or sentimentality. . . loving merriment while carrying the world’s woes in her heart. A great statesman, a great writer, one of the world’s rarest spirits.”



Schwimmer was body-searched. Five Belgian women who arrived on the second day after a grueling trip by car, train and on foot were invited to the platform by Anita Augspurg, an “enemy” German woman, as the Congress cheered.

Held in the Direntuin, a hall in the Zoological Gardens, the conference was a “masterpiece of organizing.” Proceedings were conducted in French, German and English, with resolutions handled by a multi-national committee. Only women could vote, though men attended as visitors. Of the 1,136 voting members, most (1,000) were Dutch. Delegates had to agree beforehand with two points: that



Cartoon in Britain’s Daily Express, April 28, 1915, ridiculing the “Peacettes” trying to travel to the Hague Congress. Evelyn Sharp, a journalist unable to obtain a passport, noted “the underlying note of fear” in British press reports. “Misguided, chattering and hysterical” were common epithets.

women should have the vote, and that international disputes should be settled peacefully.

Organizations around the world had been invited; 150 were represented. Women came from 12 of the 26 national suffrage societies. Three hundred mes-

sages of support and 30 protests arrived from India, Brazil, South Africa and elsewhere. Although the French suffrage society protested the holding of a congress while their country was under attack, 16 French women signed a letter of support.

WILPF’s founding mothers were strong and colorful women. Delegates included Scottish lawyer Chrystal Macmillan, who argued the case for women’s suffrage before the House of Lords; Emily Greene Balch, a pacifist economics professor at Wellesley; Dr. Alice Hamilton, a pioneer in the field of industrial medicine; and Anita Augspurg, Germany’s first woman judge. Historians do not record whether any of the delegates were women of color or from the working class. African American educator Mary Church Terrell was to attend the second women’s Congress, in 1919. Presiding was Jane Addams, “whose work with the poor led her to believe ‘there could be no peace without social and economic justice,’” *Women for All Seasons* notes – a vision of “broad social reform” was incorporated into WILPF’s platform.

The Congress passed 20 resolutions. One called for a continuous mediating conference of neutral nations, satisfying both delegates advocating an immediate truce, and those wanting proposals for a lasting peace. More controversial was Rosika Schwimmer’s proposal that envoys carry Congress resolutions to heads of warring governments and to Woodrow Wilson. Initially opposed by Jane Addams (who reportedly considered it “melodramatic”) the resolution passed after two votes.

## A Challenge to Action

In what became the best-known result of the Hague Congress, two teams of women, one headed by Jane Addams and Aletta Jacobs, the other by Rosika Schwimmer and Chrystal Macmillan, traveled to 13 European capitals and to

Washington, D.C., trying to convince officials to initiate or accept mediation. In all, they made 35 visits. In Britain, they met with the Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister; in Germany, the Chancellor, who had just lost a son at the front. In Norway, they saw the King; in Rome, the Pope. Jane Addams described one of the meetings:

*“We went into the office of another high official, a large, grizzled formidable man. When we had finished our presentation and he said nothing, I remarked, ‘It perhaps seems very foolish that women should go about in this way’. . . . He banged his fist on the table. ‘Foolish?’ he said. ‘Not at all. These are the first sensible words that have been uttered in this room for 10 months.’”*

On October 15, the women summarized the results of their visits: that representatives of the belligerent nations would not be hostile to mediation, and that three of the five neutral European countries would join a mediating conference. “We are but the conveyors of evidence which is a challenge to action,” they wrote.

*Women for All Seasons* reports:

“Although the women found several ministers sympathetic to their proposals, particularly in Sweden, they were unable to persuade any of them to begin a mediating process. Addams’ several meetings with Woodrow Wilson also failed to convince him that America should take the lead as a peacemaker.” In April 1917, the United States entered the war.

Although the results were disappointing, the vision of the women at The Hague influenced international relations for the rest of the century. Gertrude Baer, a WILPF leader, traced several impacts of the Hague resolutions: on Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points; on the United Nations Charter; and on the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights. Perhaps more important, the Congress provided a new



Three Hague delegates  
Above: Anita Augspurg (1857-1943) and Lida Gustava Heymann (1868-1943), “partners and comrades,” helped establish Germany’s women’s suffrage movement and were “active in every progressive women’s movement.”



At left: Julia Grace Wales of Canada, one of the Hague Congress envoys to government officials. Wales developed the plan for a “conference of neutrals” adopted by the Women’s Peace Party.

vehicle for activism.

“. . . Emerging as it did from the women’s movement,” *Women for All Seasons* concludes, “WILPF signaled the beginning of a mass peace movement that has grown and persisted throughout most of the twentieth century.”

*“I hope that on this centennial [of the 1848 Seneca Falls Women’s Rights Convention], which falls in the third year of the atomic era, women will retrace their steps from the many blind alleys to which they have strayed in imitation of. . . what we once called the ‘man-made world,’ and. . . remember that we sought equality for our half of the human race, not at the lowest, but at the highest level of human aspirations.” — Rosika Schwimmer, 1948*



## The Hague Resolutions

- We women, in International Congress assembled, protest against the madness and the horror of war, involving as it does a reckless sacrifice of human life and the destruction of so much that humanity has labored through the centuries to build up.

- This International Congress of Women . . . urges the Governments of the world to put an end to this bloodshed, and to begin peace negotiations. It demands that the peace which follows shall be permanent and therefore based on principles of justice. . .

- . . . Urges the governments of all nations to refer future . . . disputes to arbitration and conciliation.

- Since war is commonly brought about not by the mass of the people, who do not desire it, but by groups representing particular interests . . . urges that Foreign Politics shall be subject to Democratic Control.

- Since the combined influence of women of all countries is one of the strongest forces in the prevention of war. . . this Congress. . . demands their political enfranchisement.

- . . . Urges that the organization of the Society of Nations should include:
  - . . . a permanent International Court of Justice;
  - . . . a permanent International Conference . . . in which women should take part, to deal with . . . practical proposals for furthering International Cooperation . . .

*From the resolutions adopted by the Hague Congress*

## Implementing the Vision

WILPF's founding vision continued beyond 1915. Committed to action, the Hague delegates created an International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace (ICWPP), with an office in Amsterdam. By November 1915 there were 12 national sections in Europe and the United States, and an Australian affiliate. Five women in each section were asked to publicize the Hague resolutions and to build support for another congress.

Building support was easiest in neutral countries. The Danish section gained 15,000 members. In Sweden, one million signatures were collected to support the Hague resolutions. In the U.S., the Women's Peace Party, which became a section in early 1916, worked to counter pressures for U.S. entry into the war.

Sections in nations at war faced repression. In Hungary, ICWPP meetings were banned; in Italy, police investigated the section. The German section sent the resolutions to every member of the Reichstag, but Hague delegates were harassed and Lida Gustava Heymann was banned from public speaking. The British



**Below: Emily Greene Balch (1867-1961), WILPF's first international secretary (1919-1922), helped establish WILPF as an organization. A former settlement house worker**

**and economics professor whose work focused on the situation of immigrants, Balch was fired after 25 years at Wellesley for teaching "pacifism not economics." Her report, *Occupied Haiti*, written after a 1926 investigative mission to Haiti, is credited with helping lead to the withdrawal of U.S. Marines. In 1946, she won the Nobel Peace Prize.**

section, called WIL (Women's International League), enlisted almost 4,000 members in 50 branches by the war's end; members had their phones tapped, and were harassed at public meetings.

On May 12, 1919, six months after World War I ended, women met in a second congress. The Zurich Congress was the first body to publicly protest the harsh terms of the Treaty of Versailles, which sowed the seeds of World War II. The Congress also demanded the lifting of a food blockade of Germany and Austro-Hungary; proposed that a Woman's Charter be included in the peace agreement; debated the use of violence in social revolutions; and failed to reach consensus on whether to support a weak League of Nations. It also adopted a name suggested by Britain's Catherine Marshall: Women's

International League for Peace and Freedom.

For the next seven decades, spanning the turmoil of the 20th century, WILPF would become "a dynamic international force for social change," in the words of historian Blanche Wiesen Cook. Its vision — for social and economic justice, women's empowerment, the rights of minorities, a "concert of nations," an end to imperialism and the arms trade — remains far-sighted.

Working as "cadres of progressive women," rather than as a mass organization, WILPF members were and are leaders in the progressive history of the 20th Century. As Blanche Wiesen Cook reminds us, they embody the early suffragists' belief that "there is no life worth living but the fighting life."



**Delegates to the Second International Congress of Women, held in Zurich, 1919. Emily Greene Balch is seated far right and Jane Addams is seated third from the right. Delegates included Jeanette Rankin (seated fourth from left), the first U.S. Congresswoman; socialist lawyer Crystal Eastman; educator Mary Church Terrell; and Irish trade unionist Louie Bennett. Some had lost loved ones in the war; women from Germany, Austria and Hungary were haggard and hungry. Despite hardships, the Congress rose to its feet and declared: "I dedicate my life to peace!"**



## The '20s and '30s

As women's suffrage campaigns succeeded in many countries after the war, women's rights became less of a focus for WILPF's founders. WILPF monitored the League of Nations, opposed imperialism, and sent fact-finding delegations to Haiti, Indochina, China, and Nicaragua. In 1924 WILPF condemned anti-Semitism and warned of a growing totalitarian threat in Germany. In 1932, WILPF presented six million signatures calling for universal disarmament to a World Disarmament Conference. In 1933, WILPF's Munich office was raided, and Anita Augspurg and Lida Gustava Heymann were forced into exile.

In the United States, WILPF built ties with Latin American women, established a Committee on Minorities, and worked to

**At right: Delegates to WILPF's fourth Congress, held in 1924 in Washington, D.C. (left to right): Gertrude Baer, Germany; Cor Ramondt-Hirschmann, Netherlands; Dr. Ethel Williams, England; Gabrielle Duchene, France; Lida Gustava Heymann, Germany; Virginia Piatti Tenco, Italy; Vilma Glucklich, Hungary; Dr. Najda Surowzawa, Ukraine.**



**Left: Bertha McNeill, chair of U.S. WILPF's Committee on Minorities, and a delegate to the 1937 Congress in Czechoslovakia. Right: Tano Jodai, founder of the Japanese section in 1921, and president of the Japanese Woman's University.**

make lynching a federal crime. WILPF drafted a 1924 bill against economic imperialism, and in 1934 helped initiate Senate hearings into the munitions industry.



## World War II and the Cold War

As fascist movements gained strength, WILPF struggled to reconcile the views of pacifist and non-pacifist members. Many sections lost members, including the U.S. section, which opposed U.S. entry into the war. But WILPF avoided an ideological split.

Some members, such as Ireland's Louie Bennett, urged WILPF to try to persuade the Pope or other leaders to mediate the war. But as war enveloped Europe, WILPF sections in Germany, France, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Holland, Hungary, Poland and Yugoslavia "virtually disappeared." The Japanese section was banned, but continued to meet.

**WILPF activist Marii Hasegawa, one of thousands of Japanese Americans interned by the U.S. government during World War II. Hasegawa learned of WILPF, one of the few organizations to immediately protest the internment, through its efforts to assist released internees. Later she led WILPF branches in New Jersey and Virginia, and was U.S. section president from 1971-75.**



Some WILPF members joined resistance movements. Some Polish members hid Jews and, in one incident, rescued

Jewish children from a deportation train. The Danish section sent food parcels to a concentration camp, rescued 300 children, and sold "peace flowers" to German soldiers.

During the Holocaust, the U.S. section distributed 50,000 copies of a booklet by member Mercedes Randall urging action to rescue the European Jews. Jewish women such as Rosa Manus and Rosika Schwimmer had played a key role in WILPF's founding, along with women of many faiths.

Devastated by the war, WILPF's 1946 postwar Congress in Luxembourg "agonized" over a proposal for WILPF's dissolution. Mildred Scott Olmsted of the U.S. successfully argued for WILPF's continuation.

Horrified by the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, WILPF confronted the nuclear arms race. WILPF opposed NATO's creation in 1948, a position that led some European members to resign. WILPF protested the U.S. atomic test at the Bikini Islands, and in 1953 proposed a World Truce, a forerunner of the 1980s Nuclear Freeze campaign. In 1957, U.S. members presented 10,000 signatures protesting nuclear testing to the White House — efforts which helped lead to the 1963 Limited Test Ban Treaty.

Despite redbaiting, the U.S. section refused to ban communist members, and continued to try to build bridges. In 1947 WILPF organized the first Inter-American Congress of Women, and began a children's art exchange. In 1953 the Jane Addams Peace Association (JAPA), established in 1948 as WILPF's education fund, sponsored the first of seven Conferences on Disarmament and Development and initiated the annual Jane Addams Children's Book Award to promote peace education.

The Cold War period was, one member remembers, "a hard time to work for peace." But WILPF's work continued.

**Eugenie Miskolcy Meller, president of the Hungarian section, killed in Auschwitz.**

**Melanie Vambery, the section's secretary, was also killed. Other WILPF victims of the Nazis included Czech senator Frantiska Plaminkova; Milena Illova, Elsa Kalmus and four other Czech members; and Holland's Rosa Manus, who had helped organize the Hague Congress. Manus aided refugees in Holland until her deportation to Auschwitz.**



**Gertrude Baer (1890-1981) German feminist, is credited with keeping international WILPF alive during the war. In 1939 she moved to safety in the United States from Geneva, where she had been monitoring the League of Nations. A delegate to the 1921 Zurich Congress,**

**Baer remained a lifelong WILPF activist and in later years urged WILPF to remember its feminist roots.**



**WILPF U.N. Representative Adelaide Baker (in white blouse) at 1959 U.N. Commission on Human Rights session. A participant in the 1945 U.N. Charter Conference, WILPF was granted consultative status to the Economic and Social Council (ECO-SOC) in 1948. WILPF urged creation of UNICEF, a High Commissioner for Refugees, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.**



## The '60s and '70s

As movements for national liberation and civil rights grew in the late '50s and early '60s, the ongoing debate between pacifists and non-pacifists in WILPF intensified. In 1971, at its 18th Congress in New Delhi — the first in the Third World — WILPF reaffirmed its belief that violence begets violence, but supported “the human right to resist injustice.” Sections were free to interpret that as they chose.

Its 50th Anniversary Congress at The Hague in 1965 found WILPF strong but “introspective,” faced with the challenge of involving a new generation of activists. As a “global sisterhood” consciousness increased in the '70s, and the gap between “have” and “have not” nations widened, WILPF worked to establish sections in developing nations. WILPF sponsored a women’s disarmament seminar at the U.N. and worked to include disarmament perspectives in the 1975 U.N. International Decade for Women conference. The U.S. section’s “Feed the Cities Not the Pentagon” campaign called for cutting the U.S. military budget to fund human needs.



Above: Annalee Stewart, U.S. Section Legislative Director, meets Madame Kruschew, wife of the Soviet premier, at the second WILPF-Soviet Women’s Committee Seminar, Moscow, 1964. U.S. WILPF initiated the pioneering exchanges with Soviet women in 1961.



“Maison Internationale,” Geneva, WILPF’s home for 47 years. Headquartered near the League of Nations, WILPF monitored the League and helped make its progress more democratic. In 1967 WILPF moved to quarters near the U.N.’s Geneva offices. “Miss Balch knew everyone, and people like Gandhi would come [for afternoon tea],” recalled young U.S. social worker Mildred Scott Olmsted, suffragist and future WILPF leader, at right, who met WILPF leaders during relief work in Germany after World War I. She played a key role in building the U.S. section, and served as executive secretary or director from 1932 to 1966.



As WILPF considered how to respond to liberation movements, Dr. Sushila Nayar advocated the pacifist position at WILPF’s 18th Congress. Nayar, an international officer and a member of WILPF’s Indian section, had been one of Gandhi’s physicians.



## The '80s and '90s

Despite dramatic changes in Eastern Europe by the end of the decade, the 1980s were dominated by East-West tensions, “low intensity” conflicts in the Third World, and an escalating nuclear arms race. In 1982, WILPF launched a Stop the Arms Race (STAR) campaign which drew 10,000 women to a March 8, 1983 rally in Brussels protesting NATO deployment of cruise and Pershing II missiles. In 1984 WILPF relaunched an international signature campaign for a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and WILPF members worldwide participated in anti-nuclear vigils, lobbying, women’s peace encampments and nonviolent civil disobedience actions. WILPF’s popular “Peace Tent” at the 1985 U.N. Women’s Decade Conference in Nairobi helped promote dialogue among Israeli and Palestinian women. In 1989, women from the Pacific Islands addressed WILPF’s first Congress in the Southern



WILPF member Coretta Scott King spoke out against the Vietnam war at a WILPF press conference one week before her husband’s assassination on April 4, 1968. Listening are WILPF leaders Kay Camp (left) and Dorothy Hutchinson. In 1971 Camp, an international and U.S. section president who also participated in peace missions to Chile, Central America and Iraq, signed a women’s peace treaty in Hanoi with Le Thi Tuyen of the North Vietnamese Women’s Union. U.S. WILPF members also met with women in South Vietnam.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a WILPF sponsor, addressed WILPF’s 50th anniversary dinner in 1965. WILPF members participated actively in the civil rights movement, and helped organize the 1965 Selma to Montgomery march.



U.S. WILPF members protest the Vietnam war. WILPF members in Europe, New Zealand, Australia and Japan also demonstrated against the war. WILPF sections cooperated in an “Appeal to American Women” signature campaign, and in a successful campaign to free Ngo Ba Thanh, a Vietnamese woman peace activist, from prison.





In 1998, Edith Ballantyne took on a new role as International WILPF's Special Advisor on U.N. Matters in Geneva. She was International President of WILPF from 1992-1998 and prior to that was WILPF Secretary General for 23 years. A Sudeten German refugee aided by WILPF's Canada section during WWII, she played a leadership role in the NGO community at the U.N.

Hemisphere, in Sydney, Australia.

The 1990s saw the rapid growth of WILPF (LIMPAL) sections in Latin America, and the development of a "Women's Peace and Justice Treaty of the Americas" by sections North and South, to promote solidarity and action. WILPF published "counter-Columbus" resources in 1992 in solidarity with indigenous Americans. WILPF promoted a "two-state solution" to the Israeli-Palestinian



Barbara Joseph, a WILPF member from New York City, sings "This Little Light of Mine" at the conclusion of the WILPF/Hermanas Conference in 1999.

conflict, participated in a 1991 international women's delegation to Baghdad to try to prevent the Gulf War, and took a leadership role in the U.S. anti-war coalition. Branches used a Women's Budget by U.S. section Executive Director Jane Midgley to call for redirecting national and global priorities and halving the U.S. military budget.

With the rise of ethnic nationalism and violence as the 20th century drew to a close, and with women, children and other civilians making up an increasing proportion of war casualties, WILPF's work remained urgently needed.



Board member Robin Lloyd holds a poster at a WILPF march in Burlington, Vermont, on International Women's Day 2000.

## A New Millennium

### Peace Train

In 1995, some 30,000 women attended the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. WILPF organized a "Peace Train" that took 234 women (and 12 men) from Finland to China. WILPF was also active in networking that took place in the massive tent city where NGO activists held workshops, mentored young women and made international connections. WILPF's "Peace Tent" became the meeting ground for women (especially those living in war situations) to tell their stories. Members also attended the official U.N. conference. Five years later, WILPF was at the U.N. in New York for the Beijing+5 review meeting, making sure officials were working towards the goals established in the Platform for Action in 1995.

### U.N. Resolution 1325

On October 31, 2000, the U.N. Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. This marked the first time the Security Council addressed the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women, and recognized the under-valued contributions women make to conflict prevention, peacekeeping and conflict resolution. It also stressed the importance of women's equal and full participation as active agents in peace and security. This historic new piece of international law became reality in part because of WILPF's active work at the U.N. Through PeaceWomen (a project of WILPF's U.N. office in New York) members continue to work for the full implementation of the resolution, maintain an extensive website, produce an e-newsletter and are translating the resolution into numerous languages. See: [www.peacewomen.org](http://www.peacewomen.org).



Betty Burkes, president of U.S. WILPF (1996-1999), right, met with the great-granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa in 2001.

### Reaching Critical Will

In 1999, WILPF began an initiative to help NGOs participate in the 2000 Review of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Leaders in the peace and disarmament movements had identified the need for a critical mass of political will to encourage a positive outcome of the 2000 meeting, which included 187 governments. Since then, WILPF's Reaching Critical Will initiative has expanded to provide primary resources and information around other disarmament issues and meetings, including the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva and the General Assembly First Committee (focused on Disarmament and International Security.) Run out of the WILPF U.N. office in New York, the project helped galvanize NGO participation in the 2004 annual NPT - PrepCom meetings for the 2005 Review Conference. The daily bulletins and shadow documents developed by the Reaching Critical Will staff have been praised by delegates as being more useful than materials provided by their own countries. See: [www.reachingcriticalwill.org](http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org).

### Racism

In 1997, WILPF U.S. held a symposium on using South Africa's Truth and



Reconciliation model (implemented after apartheid was ended) as a way to approach race in the United States. WILPF continues to address racism on many fronts. In 2001, members of WILPF attended the historic U.N. World Conference Against Racism, pushing for the official delegates at the meeting in Durban, South Africa, to include language in their resolutions that, among other things, would recognize slavery as a crime against humanity. This was achieved, including calling on past colonial powers to enact measures addressing the impact of slavery. Between 1997 and 2005, U.S. WILPF ran campaigns dealing with race, most recently called Uniting for Racial Justice: Truth, Reparations, Restoration and Reconciliation (UFORJE).

## Cuba

As part of the follow-up to the Beijing conference, more than 3,000 women gathered in Havana, Cuba in 1998 for an International Solidarity Conference. The WILPF delegation was the largest group of U.S. women attending the conference. Delegates focused on globalization and



WILPF members demonstrate for peace in the Middle East at a vigil at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland.



In 2002, WILPF members protested outside the Israeli Consulate in Philadelphia, calling for an end to the occupation and an end to the violence.

women, disarmament and ending the economic blockade against Cuba. Since 1997 WILPF has led delegations of women to Cuba and worked in conjunction with the Federation of Cuban Women. From the 1960s forward, WILPF members have been leaders in defending the right to travel to Cuba, challenging U.S. government restrictions, and encouraging cities and states to build sister relationships with Cuban counterparts.

## Middle East

In 2001, the Palestine Section invited WILPF to hold its 27th International Congress in East Jerusalem, Palestine. Unfortunately, the meeting had to be cancelled due to escalating violence in the Middle East. This was the first time, since WW II, that a WILPF Congress was cancelled because of violence. Members instead held a meeting of the International Executive Committee in Geneva, as well as a special seminar on "Actions to Break Barriers to Peace in the Middle East." A



U.S. WILPF Director Mary Day Kent with members of the WILPF Colombia Section, Bogota, 2003.

detailed report of the seminar is available. Throughout the past two decades, WILPF members in every section of the world have been actively protesting the deteriorating situation in Palestine, with vigils, marches and calls for international intervention. Israeli Section members have been leaders in women's peace movements there and actively opposing the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

After September 11, WILPF U.S. was instrumental in the creation of Uniting for Peace and Justice, a progressive coalition opposed to the war in Iraq. One of the largest, global days of protest in the history of progressive movements occurred on Feb. 15, 2003, when more than 10 million took to the streets. WILPF members around the world helped organize many of these massive demonstrations and continue to push the U.S. and its allies to end the illegal war of intervention in Iraq and support the role of the U.N. in solving global conflicts. Members consistently opposed the new wave of imperialist actions across the world and came to the defense of civil liberties.

## A Sustainable Environment

As WILPF moves forward into the 21st Century, a new focus on the environment

and sustainable development has evolved. WILPF members have made connections between economic globalization and the privatization of water. They are demanding that water be recognized as a human right and that everyone can have access to clean water and a healthy environment. WILPF promotes the implementation of international conventions and agreements on safeguarding the environment and health, such as the Kyoto accord. WILPF sees that the essential requirements for sustainable development are poverty eradication, changing unsustainable patterns of production and consumption,



Des Moines, IA, branch member Rita Hohenshall, at right, with her daughter and granddaughter at Fort Benning Military Base, GA, was sentenced to prison for a 2000 protest against the School of the Americas.

and protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development.

While the political enfranchisement of women has not achieved all the dreams that WILPF's foremothers invested in it, their vision and lives remained models of courage and commitment. WILPF's proud history and longevity promise that it will continue to transform women's visions of peace, justice and empowerment into action well into the 21st Century, for new generations of women.

**On to the future:** Zoë Olivia Kwasnicki, daughter of WILPF-U.S. Development Director Amy Kwasnicki, in 2004.





“Those who make a bequest are like  
people who plant shade trees under  
which they will never sit.”  
— adapted by Ruth Chalmers



In 1994, WILPF honored Ruth Chalmers for her 42-year tenure as Executive Director of the Jane Addams Peace Association (JAPA).

The Jane Addams Peace Association (JAPA) was founded in 1948 by WILPF women in Chicago. Today JAPA is “The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom Educational Fund.” Over the last 55 years we have established a history of wisely investing the gifts and honoring the trust of WILPF’s most generous and dedicated members.

JAPA offers you the opportunity to make a permanent gift to WILPF and receive a fixed income through an annuity. Please include the Jane Addams Peace Association in your financial planning and become a part of the vitality and resources necessary to continue WILPF’s work during and beyond the 21st Century.

For more information, please contact JAPA’s executive director at (212) 682-8830 or write to JAPA, 777 U.N. Plaza, New York, NY 10017.

This history of WILPF is indebted to the work of the many women who have preserved WILPF’s history:

- \* Catherine Foster, *Women for All Seasons: The Story of WILPF* (University of Georgia Press, 1989)
- \* Eleanor Fowler, “The WILPF Story—Then and Now.”
- \* Gertrude Bussey and Margaret Tims, *Pioneers for Peace: WILPF 1915-1965* (Alden, 1980)
- \* Anne Wiltsher, *Most Dangerous Women: Feminist Peace Campaigners of the Great War* (Pandora, 1980)
- \* Wendy Chmielewski, ed., “Guide to Sources on Women in the Swarthmore College Peace Collection”
- \* Anonymous, “History of the U.S. Section 1915-1940” (from WILPF collection)

Excerpts from *Women for All Seasons* reprinted by permission of the University of Georgia Press, © 1989 by Catherine Foster

*President, WILPF U.S. Section:* Sandy Silver

*Layout and Design:* Roberta Spivek, Theta Pavis, Judy Mathe Foley

*Editing and Writing:* Roberta Spivek and Theta Pavis

*Copyediting:* Marjorie Schier, Proofreading, Mary Day Kent, Pamela Jones-Burnley

*Photo Credits:*

Front cover: Glenn Russell, *Burlington Free Press*, Cachelle Ink

pp. 1 to 13: Swarthmore College Peace Collection

pp. 14: Rachel Kamel (*top*)

p. 15: Uta Fellechner (*top*) and Wendy Rosenfield (*bottom*)

(Photos not credited are from WILPF’s collection.)

Front Cover: *Clockwise*, Central Vermont’s Raging Grannies in 2000; U.S. Section members and staff in 2004; Board members in 2004: Cindy Domingo, Noy Thrupkaew and Tammy James.

Back Cover: WILPF members at the March for Women’s Lives, Washington, D.C., 2004

Roberta Spivek, a feminist journalist and writer, wrote and edited 70th, 75th and 80th anniversary histories of WILPF, on which this booklet is based. She was editor of the U.S. section’s journal, *Peace & Freedom*, from 1984 to 1992.

This updated version was edited by Theta Pavis, editor of *Peace & Freedom* since 1998.

© 2004, Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom • Published 2004 by WILPF U.S. Section

Printing of this 90th anniversary edition of *Generations of Courage* was made possible by the support of the Greater Boston branch of WILPF, in honor of the initiative and activism of their late member Sophie Pann. Contact [www.wilpfboston.org](http://www.wilpfboston.org).



**“The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom has always been an international organization, working to influence and support policies that promote peace. It is an organization of women united to eliminate the causes of conflict and war, and to further peace based on justice and equality in a culture of freedom.”**

*— Edith Ballantyne, WILPF’s special advisor on U.N. Matters in Geneva*



**Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom  
1213 Race Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107-1691  
(215) 563-7110**

**email: [wilpf@wilpf.org](mailto:wilpf@wilpf.org)**