



Highlights from San Jose Social Forum

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“Another world is possible!” has been chanted at every world and social forum since the first in 2001. The 2015 forum, as with all others, continues to proclaim this eventuality! Highlights from San Jose range from “healing the hurts” to “claiming our money.”

This year’s U.S. Social Forum, one of four held in late June, attracted WILPF members, including the Raging Grannies, to San Jose from throughout the West Coast. Plenaries, People’s Movement Assemblies, workshops, a film festival, and performances provided participants the opportunity to discuss and create the people’s solutions to the current economic and ecological crises. An important goal unites we the people “in our struggle to build a powerful multi-racial, multi-sectoral, inter-generational, diverse, inclusive, internationalist movement that transforms this country and changes history.”

The following paragraphs present snippets from the U.S. Social Forum in San Jose:

Dolores Huerta

At a plenary, we applauded eighty-five-year-old Dolores Huerta for urging us to build a base through house meetings. Through a chain of house meetings, we also develop leaders. She emphasized the importance of bringing feminism to the forefront of and for the movement. She cautioned us to be aware of the Koch brothers’ attempt to sway Latinos to vote Republican through their Libre campaign. Another issue related to the abuse of farm workers who were awarded financial judgments (more than \$8 million), but only collected a little more than \$2 million.

Listening to heal

At a workshop to create intersecting movements, we learned about the process for healing the hurts caused by racism, an oppression that our society must stop. In practicing the art of listening, we acknowledged another with attentive listening, which exemplified our respect for the dignity or “love” of the person talking. Another oppression, sexism, was addressed at a subsequent workshop, using the same techniques from “Re-evaluation Counseling” or Co-counseling.

Human Rights

In building a Human Rights Network, Joshua Cooper explained that the United States has ratified only three of the nine international human rights conventions or treaties. He also reported on the May 11, 2015 session of the United Nations Human Rights Council during which the United States responded to the 228 recommendations from its first Universal Periodic

Review in 2010. Also of interest was the news that two of the forty-one Council's Special Rapporteurs had visited Detroit to review the current situation of the right to housing and water.

Peace and Anti-Militarization Techniques

During a peace workshop, WILPF members from San Diego (Anne Barron and Anne Hoiberg) discussed the root causes of war and actions to take to stop war, as outlined in the WILPF Manifesto 2015. Attendees were asked to commit to promoting peace in their life, community, and world. The Raging Grannies entertained with several songs.

All of Us or None

During this people's assembly, it was emphasized that we need a conversation about race at this pivotal time. Blacks have been marginalized, incarcerated, and repressed. One effort is to "Ban the Box," removing the check-off boxes on applications that eliminate individuals from qualifying for employment, housing, etc. We also need to challenge the Prison-Industrial Complex in our society.

Whose Money? Our Money!

This workshop urged us to become knowledgeable about money, state banks (e.g., the Bank of North Dakota), and debt. In establishing a state or national bank, the profits would be used for the public good. Currently, the bankers on Wall Street pocket the huge profits. Also discussed were the debt traps of pay-day loan and check-cashing stores; pay-day lenders occupy 23,000 locations throughout the United States, a fast-growing industry! Another suggestion was to expand the U.S. Postal Service to include banking services, as supported by Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders.

Humanity for All

In discussing the plight of refugees, we raised the question, "Where's the humanity?" There is no humanitarian welcome for those persons on unsafe boats who are refused refuge in Italy and Australia. Also, how can we as human beings accept the Palestinian situation and the Srebrenica tragedy where 8,000 men and boys were executed—or the rape camps in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the early 1990s? We need to counter capitalism with humanism.

From this summary of the forum's highlights, it is concluded that we can transform our country through the implementation of this multi-racial, multi-sectoral, inter-generational, diverse, inclusive, internationalist movement. Yes, another world is possible!