

Women's Economic Agenda Project

Oakland, CA

"The Real Economic Terrorism"

The national economical and social policies of the Bush administration filter down to the family level in simply awful ways. Every month members of about 400 families come to the Women's Economic Agenda Project (WEAP) to receive food aid from our Prescott Resource Center in West Oakland. This little bit of extra food is needed because the income they receive from their low-wage jobs, senior fixed incomes, disability checks, public assistance checks, or reduced earning as people in recovery is insufficient to meet their basic human needs. Each visit, people tell us about an outrageous lack of health care, an outrageous lack of decent housing, a stunning lack of programs to help their kids grow up decent and safe.

Most outrageous is that these working people represent millions more in the same situation, all victims of the stepped-up war on the poor that represents the other war being waged by the U.S. government—the war they don't discuss. But just as much as the torture in Iraq's Abu Gharib prison, the government's war on the poor is a violation of fundamental human rights as defined by the United Nations. The impact of the government's war on the poor is that increasingly people don't have enough income to deal with both rent and food.

It's significant that this is happening in California, the sixth largest economy in the world. California is one of the leaders of the national war on the poor, with its disappearing jobs, shuttered hospitals, horrendous rents and devastating cuts to public education while its corporations make off with billions.

Deep in the throes of a multi-year "budget crisis," we know this is no mismanagement of funds or a temporary slump. It is a deep economic and political crisis based on the fact that jobs are disappearing, corporations are making off with billions, and the government will cut every program possible before it touches the gargantuan profits of their corporate bosses.

Big problems demand big solutions. That is why WEAP coordinates the California Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign (PPEHRC) to build a movement to end poverty and guarantee economic human rights for all. The PPEHRC is based among working poor and jobless workers all over the country, including California and West Oakland. It brings the message that we must unite behind a broad social movement to guarantee economic human rights for all. WEAP unites poor women, and bring in others from senior groups, youth in recovery groups, labor unions and religious organizations.

We educate one another and build towards solutions to economic injustice through campaigns around Just Health Care and Free Higher Education.

Ultimately we must build a movement that will lay the base for a time in this country when we elect leaders to govern in our true interests, not the interests of the wealthy. Only then will we have attained democracy.

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www.weap.org.*

— Ethel Long-Scott
Executive Director