

## **Bus Tour Campaigns for Right to Work and Living Wage**

by Wanda Sabir

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Ethel Long-Scott, director of the Women's Economic Agenda Project (WEAP), says America is at the beginning of an economic movement for the rights of poor and working class citizens.

"What we are focusing on now is the concept of economic human rights, because most Americans don't have a concept of economic human rights. We have a concept of civil rights. This century we have to flush it out and say people have a right to economic human rights.

She takes her cue from the work of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, who both referenced the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Articles 23, 25 and 26, which address the right of all people to have "jobs with just and favorable conditions and a living wage," "food, housing, clothing, medical care and other social services" and "the right to education."

WEAP, along with Community Homeless Alliance Ministry (CHAM), is hosting Save the Soul of America Bus Tour today to September 2, stopping in cities throughout the South and East Bay "to protest, educate and document that poverty is an economic human rights violation."

What organizers want to accomplish on this tour is to make the language of Articles 23, 25 and 26 (adopted in 1948) diner table topics.

The free bus tour from San Jose through Hayward, Oakland, Richmond, Vallejo and back to Oakland is for everyone, especially "if you are not working at an adequate wage or suffering because you don't have health care or your health care is inadequate," says Long-Scott. "If the amount of your income is used up in your rent and you can barely make it, often having to chose between paying your rent and buying food or medicine, then this is the march is for you.

"If you are someone who has been laid off, or you don't have rights as a worker, you need to be on this march. This tour is also for a parent who is working more than one job and doubling up in her housing because she can't afford the cost."

WEAP and CHAM hope people come for all eight days; however interested parties can join the caravan for whatever their schedule will allow. "It is important that we (reflect) the voice of the people affected, especially young people who are being systematically criminalized because we're shutting the doors of opportunity. They need to join this march."

Each day will highlight one of the three Universal Human Rights Articles that address economic justice rights, such as "the Right to Adequate Housing (23)" and that day's activities – rallies, teach-ins, workshops, marches, etc. – will center thematically on that issue.

The "Save the Soul of America Bus Tour" is part of a series of national and regional actions the 20-year-old Oakland organization have spearheaded and participated in over the past several years.

In the spring, as part of a movement to highlight poverty as a human rights violation WEAP went to Utah with delegation of international representatives draw attention to the fact that our national commitment to sports does not equal out commitment to eliminate poverty.

"We utilized that convening to stage teach-ins and civil disobedience, and met with the citizens of Utah, Representatives from Oakland got to meet with hundreds of thousands of representatives of people from across the country and raise questions of poverty in our homeland."

Last October WEAP partnered with CHAM to stage a 60-mile march from San Jose to San Francisco. "The goal of the March for Compassion and Spiritual Renewal was to connect those rights articulated in the U.N. document with our God-given rights," Long-Scott said.

This march was a continuation of the Freedom Bus Tour throughout the state spearheaded by WEAP in November 2000, which resulted in 20 Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign Committees formed to address poverty issues in different California regions.

Similar to Freedom Riders of Old, the success of this action is based on the cooperation and collaboration with individuals and organizations along the route. So WEAP is looking to sponsors to donate food, lodging, transportation, child-care, etc.

Those interested in participating in any capacity should call Blanche Mackey at 451-7379, Ext.217, or email Diana Polson and [dpolson@weap.org](mailto:dpolson@weap.org). The most up-to-date information is on the organization's Web site: [www.weap.org](http://www.weap.org)

Long-Scott went on to say, "Most American's aren't aware of these rights that the United States signed on to, but didn't endorse, so now we need a movement that codifies this...We need to join the other nations across this globe. [American citizens] need these things. What I think is so powerful about this is that it gets people off the defensive – the mama and papa that's making two dollars a day needs to have economic human rights as was as the disabled and everyone else. I think it is a very life-affirming framework.

"We're trying to take this message to the people, much in the way Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s work on civil rights...did. We consider that this movement is picking up that mantle of economic continuing with that."