

## Women Saving the Future

By Carol Masters

“We withdraw our consent.” With these stirring words, women from many cultures, in many venues have come together to declare an end to the business of destroying this planet. The founding mothers of Women Against Military Madness (WAMM) did it 30 years ago. They declared that U.S. militarism threatened not only this nation but also countries around the world and the well-being of future generations. The mission of the Minneapolis-based organization continues to be to dismantle systems of militarism, economic exploitation, and global oppression.



*Solstice returns, as seen through a linden tree. Minneapolis, Minnesota  
Photo: Susu Jeffrey*

Across the world in the continent of Africa, ten years ago women of Liberia, Christians uniting with Muslims in reaction to a raging civil war, joined social worker Leymah Gbowee to speak out for peace. Many internally displaced women joined the campaign. Wearing all white clothing the women gathered at a fish market, sat, danced, carried signs, and sang for peace. The fish market land was visible from President Taylor’s residence, and his motorcade had to pass it daily. Thousands joined the campaign, agreeing to go on a sex strike, denying their partners intimacy until the war ended. Peace did not come in a day, or a year, and the women found it necessary to continue their mass action campaign until the elections of 2005, but the disarmament process began earlier, in December 2003.

More recently, in Moab, Utah, in the fall of 2012, women community leaders came together to draft a “living” document that calls for an end to ecocide and for “new institutions, ideas, and laws that recognize the rights of nature and future generations.” They envision an emerging human rights movement for future generations.

The idea for the first Women’s Congress for Future Generations emerged from mostly Western conversations among longtime environmental activists and

academics in political arenas and on the frontlines of civil disobedience who have been protesting fracking, nuclear power, and mountaintop removal. The original Congress planners were women “from across the diverse spectrum of womanhood—women of all ages and cultural groups, women from all places, backgrounds, and walks of life, women with diverse talents and interests, vocal leaders, and those still finding their voice.” Men could participate as “sacred witnesses” to the event. The planners recognized “the double layer of oppression for women of color, indigenous women, lesbians, transgender individuals, and women living on the frontlines of the environmental and social struggle.” They sought and seek inclusion of these voices.

Moab was chosen because the beautiful landscape, the Colorado River, and ancient sacred sites that were threatened with fracking and a proposed nuclear power plant. Over the four-day conference, the focus was on: acknowledging what human beings have done to destroy the future and agreeing on a plan of reconciliation; gathering in caucuses to listen and speak on behalf of the future ones and draft a Bill of Rights for Future Generations; convening the caucuses as a Congress of Women to ratify the Bill of Rights planning action and reconciliation. The final day, called Day of Direct Action, they released a Declaration and Bill of Rights for Future Generations.

For the full document, see the first [Women's Congress for Future Generations](#).

Topics in the present Bill of Rights (see full text of the [Bill of Responsibilities](#)):

- Right of individuals to a clean and healthy environment
- Right of nature to exist
- Right of Future Generations to whole, biologically diverse, unpolluted ecosystems
- Right to peace
- Right of Future Generations to have ecosystems restored
- Right of communities to self-representation and self-determination
- Right to return or remain in place of origin, heritage or ancestors
- Right not to be coerced into or implicated in harm.
- Right to environmentally sustainable economies
- Corporations do not have inherent rights

The 2nd Women’s Congress for Future Generations will be held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on November 6 to 9, 2014. Stay tuned for more information on registration in the coming months. The planners welcome your thoughts, input, and suggestions.

To contribute to the draft of the Declaration of the Rights Held by Future Generations: visit the blog at [celebratewcffg.wordpress.com](http://celebratewcffg.wordpress.com) to make suggestions and comments.

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