

Women's Economic Justice Project

Of Ventura & Santa Barbara Counties

What is the Women's Economic Justice Project?

As recently as 2001, low wage working women providing intensive direct care to the disabled, blind and elderly, while earning below poverty wages, were excluded from the benefits of a local living wage ordinance. This sparked the Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy (CAUSE) to initiate the Women's Economic Justice Project (WEJP) in late 2001 to:

- ❖ Establish the WEJP Working Group as a regional coalition of progressive community, faith, labor, academic and student groups, (with an emphasis on women's organizations and leadership) in support of women's economic justice policies, community development activities and organizing. The Working Group:
 - Plans and coordinates the Women Working For Economic Justice Conference held in commemoration of International Women's Day.
 - Assists in regional studies of women in poverty through participatory research, writing and dissemination of published reports.
- ❖ Provide leadership development opportunities, that engage young women high school and college students and adult working women as interns and volunteers.
- ❖ Strengthen local community organizing and unionization efforts that result in practical women's economic justice gains for the women and families who need them today.

Through these means, the Women's Economic Justice Project directly addresses the structural root causes of poverty, particularly the silencing of low-income and immigrant working women. Ultimately, the immediate and long-term beneficiaries of the WEJP are the region's low-income working women, who will see direct improvements in their economic condition through policy reforms, collective bargaining, and effective community advocacy and organizing addressing economic and other social and environmental justice issues affecting their lives.

How can I help?

1. **Join the Women's Economic Justice Working Group.** Monthly meetings are held on a Saturday morning in a location accessible to participants from Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties.
2. **SPONSOR** the Women's Economic Justice Conference!

Where can I find out more?

Visit the CAUSE website at www.coastalalliance.com or call CAUSE at 805-658-0810. *CAUSE is a non-profit community planning and policy research center for the study and promotion of sustainable economic policy and community development activities in the Central Coast Region of Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties. CAUSE defines sustainable economic development policies and activities as those that contribute to the development of a prosperous, just and environmentally sound regional economy.*

ORIGIN OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

The origins of International Women's Day can be traced back to March 8, 1857, when women garment and textile workers in New York City demonstrated against their low poverty wages, 12-hour work days and unhealthy working conditions. The women participating in this action were attacked and eventually dispersed by the police as they marched from the city's poor area where they lived to a nearby wealthy neighborhood.

In recognition of this action and in response to the continued plight of working women and their families, on March 8, 1908 fifteen thousand women demonstrated in New York City. The women demonstrators, most of who worked in the needle trades, demanded the right to vote, a 10-hour workday, safer working conditions and the abolition of child labor. The slogan adopted for the march was "Bread and Roses." Bread symbolized economic security while roses represented a better way of life.

Since then women throughout the world have celebrated March 8 as International Women's Day. The first international celebrations occurred in 1910, when over one million women in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland rallied for women's suffrage, the right to work, vocational training and the end to workplace discrimination.

For many of these working women, participation in International Women's Day actions was to be their first political act, leading up to involvement in more militant struggles for peace and justice.

The growing international women's movement, which has been strengthened by four global United Nations women's conferences, has helped make the commemoration a rallying point for coordinated efforts to demand women's rights and participation in the political and economic process.

We commemorate International Women's Day as an opportunity to reflect on progress made, to continue to call for change and justice for all working women and to celebrate acts of courage and determination by ordinary women who have played an extraordinary role in the history of women's rights.

*¡Sí Se Puede!
It can be done!*