

Secular Organizations Panel

Saturday October 21, 2017

8:30 a.m. **Plenary: *Genesis and Persistence in Advocacy for Peace – Secular Organizations***
(Moderator: Scott H. Bennett)
American Civil Liberties Union (Robert B. Remar), War Resisters League (Joanne Sheehan)
Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (Mary Hanson Harrison)

American Civil Liberties Union

The ACLU was founded in 1920 to address perceived injustices during World War I and its aftermath: criminalization of dissident speech, treatment of conscientious objectors, and dragnet detention and deportation of immigrants and suspected anarchists during incidents like the Palmer Raids. For close to 100 years, the ACLU has battled for liberty, justice, equality, and democracy in contexts that are sometimes eerily similar to the World War I era. “War on terror” laws and practices today, for example, chill free speech and association, target Muslims, and threaten to subvert democracy’s necessary balance between government power and individual freedom.



Robert B. Remar is the Vice President and Treasurer of the American Civil Liberties Union. He has served on the ACLU Board of Directors for more than 30 years. He is a partner with the Atlanta law firm Rogers & Hardin LLP where he handles complex commercial and business disputes, administrative law and civil rights/constitutional law.

War Resisters League

The oldest secular pacifist organization in the U.S., the War Resisters League has been resisting war at home and abroad since 1923. WRL’s work for nonviolent revolution has been shaped by the new visions and strategies of each generation. Present programs include a campaign against police militarization, resources on nonviolent action and counter-recruitment.



Joanne Sheehan has been involved with War Resisters League since 1973 and she co-founded the WRL New England Office in 1985. Joanne was elected to the War Resisters International Council in 1983, serving as WRI Chair 1998-2006. She is chair of the Voluntown Peace Trust, formerly the Community for Nonviolent Action.

Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom

WILPF continues its work of 102 years to encourage diplomacy and non-violent resistance to war and to challenge the roots of those wars. The organization has 38 branches in the U.S., 36 Sections around the world and international programs: 'Reaching Critical Will' and 'Peace, Women and Security,' headquartered in New York and has consultative status at the UN.



Mary Hanson Harrison currently serves as president of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom. Mary is an educator, community peace activist and feminist, and her academic career focused on a critique of 18th & 19th century humanism. She’s worked in non-profit organizations within diverse communities and continues her peace activism both locally and globally.