



National Welfare Rights Union
Mission Statement
November 2021

Mission Statement

We the poor and dispossessed are organizing for our economic human rights as a union of grassroots welfare rights organizations. We are finding and uniting leaders to fight for our survival and the collective welfare of everybody by ending poverty.

Explanation of the Mission Statement

Who Are We?

The welfare rights movement is one way that we organize as people who must work to get the things we need to live. Some of us get wages for our work and some of us don't. Some of us sell our mental labor and some of us sell our physical labor. Some of us can't find a job that pays a wage that allows us to live with dignity. Some of us are unpaid for our work, like child and elder caregivers.

For many of us what we earn from work isn't enough to make ends meet. When that happens we have the right to welfare. Some of us get benefits like medicaid, social security, food assistance, school meals, child tax credits, or college grants. But most of us are blocked from getting what we need to live a good life, while a small group of billionaires hoards more than they need and use the government to help them do it.

Like the poor and dispossessed in the United States, our members include people of all races and all ethnicities. Systemic racism divides us and must be understood through political education and working together in order to be confronted. Race is used to keep us separated and keep us poor, to split the class. Beginning with genocide against Indigenous nations and raiding Africa to enslave laborers, the history of our country is the history of systemic racism used

against the poor through the worst violence and dehumanization. Our opposition to racism in all its forms is moral and political.

We are the victims of poverty, but we are not defeated. We must--and we can--take back our families, our communities, and our government to live responsibly and respectfully on this planet with all the world's peoples. We want what's ours, and we're organizing to get it!

Why Are We Committed to this Mission?

We know that the problem of poverty does not come from a lack of abundance. There is enough in the world for everyone, and yet we must fight for our human rights, like water, health care, housing, food, education, and adequate income.

We are clear that poverty is not the result of personal failures. It is the product of an economic system that creates more poverty as it concentrates wealth in the hands of the few. Those who control that system have shredded even the "safety net" that historically met some basic human needs. They have abandoned workers they no longer need. They have created a growing class of poor and dispossessed. They convince us that our problems come from other workers, including immigrants. We refuse to be pitted against each other. We refuse to be blamed for our poverty. We create all the wealth and all the workers. We have earned these rights and refuse to be treated like charity cases. Our aim is to satisfy everyone's human needs and stop environmental devastation. We realize that this can only be accomplished when our class, the working class, the class that creates everything, has political power.

Our understanding of our mission comes from our many faith traditions and, for those of us who are not religious, our deep sources of morality. We believe that we are the salt of the Earth. God chooses the poor and rejects those who hoard wealth and abuse their workers. God commissions us to fight the powers and principalities of this world. We follow the call of our faiths and moral compass by organizing like the disciples in our many traditions: finding other leaders from among the poor and dispossessed, putting down our fishing nets to become "fishers of people," and organizing together.

What issues do we take on?

For decades the welfare rights movement has been fighting for policy changes. Our efforts have been, and continue to be, necessary--but not sufficient. We demand more. We are committed to organizing for the right to the "general welfare" or the right to fare well.

We have fought for our children when they were snatched by the government. We have organized for a guaranteed adequate income for all people, including caregivers. We have supported each other when our food and medical benefits are cut. We have refused to be silent when they poisoned and tried to privatize our water. Our logo represents a link in a chain, because we are linking up the many different struggles. We must unite as never before to demand that the abundance of the world be used to meet the basic human needs of all people—no exceptions.

How are we organizing?

We are building a member-based network of local unions and organizations. We can share our knowledge and skills, support each other, educate and engage our neighbors and friends, and act democratically and collectively to press our demands and secure our claims to economic and social justice. As we organize together around our rights to welfare, and through study and political education, we are developing ourselves as leaders with clarity and competence for a broad-based movement to end poverty.

We come out of a long history of poor people organizing other poor people to end poverty. Our organizing history includes the National Welfare Rights Organization of the 1960s and 70s, including the 1968 Poor People's Campaign; the National Union of the Homeless organizing drive of the late 1980s; the demand for wages for unpaid caregivers; the fight against Democrats and Republicans when they joined together to end welfare in the 1990s; the struggle to keep utilities like clean water as public goods and not sources of private profit; the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival; and the many fronts of struggle for the right to fare well today.

What would it be like to live in a society without poverty? As the poor and dispossessed, we can imagine what the world can be, and we are the ones to

make it real by building the power we need to abolish systemic racism, sexism, and classes. Through our political organizing we are exposing the failures of our current system. We are making it clear that we can eliminate poverty, because the resources exist to create a good life for everyone everywhere.

Where are we going?

For more see our pamphlet, *Which Way Welfare Rights?*