



Women in Black – Frederick, Maryland

HISTORY AND MISSION: **Women in Black** (WIB) is an international grassroots movement of women united in their commitment to peace, restorative justice, human rights and nonviolence. The unifying aesthetic of WIB groups around the world is to stand in silent vigil, dressed in black, as a symbol of mourning all violence. Women in Black is about building bridges across borders, nationalities, racial, religious, ethnic and social backgrounds, from across the political spectrum and often from opposing sides of a conflict, based on our shared perspective. WIB vigils are now present in 33 countries, and in 38 US states. WIB vigils began in January, 1988 in Israel, when a small group of Israeli women, to protest the escalating cycle of violence, dressed in black and stood in silent vigil with signs stating “Stop the Occupation.” This began the now 16-year history of the WIB movement, as it spread spontaneously from country to country, wherever women sought to speak out against violence and injustice in their own part of the world. The vigils are a public statement that violence and oppression, under any label, are unacceptable.

The WIB movement has empowered women and men in many countries to mobilize for peace, and provided a support system for victims of oppression, exposing injustices to the light and pressure of world opinion. WIB takes many forms in many countries, but all hold in common an uncompromising commitment to nonviolence. WIB, represented by the Israeli and Belgrade groups, has twice been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, in 2001 and 2003. In 2001 WIB was awarded the Millennium Peace Prize for Women by the United Nations Development Fund for Women.

ACTIVITIES: WIB Frederick, in the tradition of all WIB groups, maintains a vigil in silent mourning. In addition, we sponsor and participate in activities which further our mission to engender dialogue, understanding, peace, restorative justice and nonviolence.

Vigil Schedule: All are welcome; please wear black. **Third Wednesday of every month**, intersection of Market and Patrick Streets, Frederick from 6:30 – 7 pm, and **first Friday** of every month, 12 - 12:30 pm, at War Memorial Park, W 2d and N. Bentz Streets, Frederick.

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A CHORUS OF WOMEN



Photographs by Colleen Young, © 2002, Women in Black Art Project

Women in Black dance a circle of Peace at Arlington Cemetery, also now a memorial to women in the military.

A Chorus of Women

We are A Chorus of Women¹ singing laments, in the ancient tradition of the Chorus in Greek drama. It is our way of expressing our grief for the violence that is occurring in our nation and the world. We hope to encourage you to be bold: to follow the human capacity for empathy and imagination into positive action.

We take our inspiration from Glenda Cloughley of Women in Black Australia who says: “Sorrow doesn’t oppose anything. It is a form of love. Often it is more potent and original than rage. In many myths about the eternal cycles of the seasons and (the passing of) generations, the song of grief brings life out of death.”

“We stand in an ancient lineage. In the Greek theatre the Chorus speaks for the citizens, comments on events and foretells the future. A robust, articulate Chorus is integral to the idea of democracy that is embedded in English from the Greek words *demos kratos*, meaning ‘the strength, influence, power, authority’ (of) ‘the people’.”

The Greeks considered serving in the Chorus to be part of civic duty. The leader of the Chorus spoke for the general population: it was the play's public opinion. The words of the Chorus were “the poets' answer to important questions, such as-- How should one behave? How can one accept the injustices of life? What is the price of **hubris***? Read a soliloquy from a Greek tragedy, or from Hamlet or Macbeth, and you will hear these questions being asked.”²

There were no spectators, as we think of it, in Greek drama. The actors, Chorus, and citizens who sat in the tiered stone seats of the amphitheater all had a role in

moving the action to where it needed to go. It was the large group of citizens in the amphitheater, however, who had a view of the “big picture”, the whole landscape of what was unfolding.

What is Hubris? Hubris is overbearing pride or presumption; it is arrogance and wanton violence that often results in retribution. Hubris is an important concept that the Greeks explored over and over in the great tragedies, in mythology and in the histories of Herodotus. The Greeks saw acts of hubris as the root of evil, and the hubris of leaders as the source of much of the suffering and destruction that befell the people.

Our wishes for you: *The Chorus hopes that imaginative responses will emerge from our collective grieving that encourage us all to become more creative and humane. We ask you to consider important questions also, and your role in democracy. We invite you to find your voice, and your own response.*

Do you participate in our democracy?Do you feel like a spectator?

Is your voice silent? ...Has your voice been silenced?

Do you think the voices of everyday citizens are heard?

What should we as citizens say to our leaders? What is civic duty?

What price do we pay today for the hubris of the world’s leaders?

What price do we all pay for war and violence? How does your life help to remove the causes of war and violence?

How can the people give birth to good from this grief?

¹ The Chorus of Women is sponsored by Frederick Women in Black.

² Botinelly, Robert. The ELAC Guide to Ancient Greek Theatre.