

Women & the Welfare Rights Movement

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Outline:

- Origins of the movement
- Movement accomplishments
- Legacy of the movement



<http://www.thenation.com/sites/default/files/images/media/doc/128/1244127446-large.jpg>

"Mothers for Adequate Welfare" protest march. (*Boston, 1966*)

Movement Origins

Caseworker Treatment

- “The Welfare Queen” and other stereotypes
- Midnight Raids

Police Arrest 'Welfare Queen'

CHICAGO (AP) — A Chicago police officer testified Monday that the discovery of multiple welfare identification cards led to the arrest of a woman prosecutors have termed the “Welfare Queen.”

Linda Taylor, 49, charged with fraud for allegedly accepting multiple monthly welfare checks of \$300 from 1969 to 1974, is thought to have used as many as 80 different names to obtain welfare and Social Security benefits.

In November 1974, three

and furs had been stolen, according to earlier accounts.

Sherwin told Judge Mark Jones on Monday that he and three other investigators saw three green welfare identity cards fall from a suitcase that Miss Taylor held. The cards later were found to have been falsified, testimony indicated.

The 1974 indictment indicated that Miss Taylor allegedly cheated the Illinois welfare department out of at least \$7,600.

The arrest of this Chicago “Welfare Queen” perpetuated stereotypes about women who received public assistance. (*Ocala Star-Banner*, March 3, 1977)

Inadequate Benefits

The Economy Food Plan was based on short-term, "emergency" needs rather than long-term sustenance.

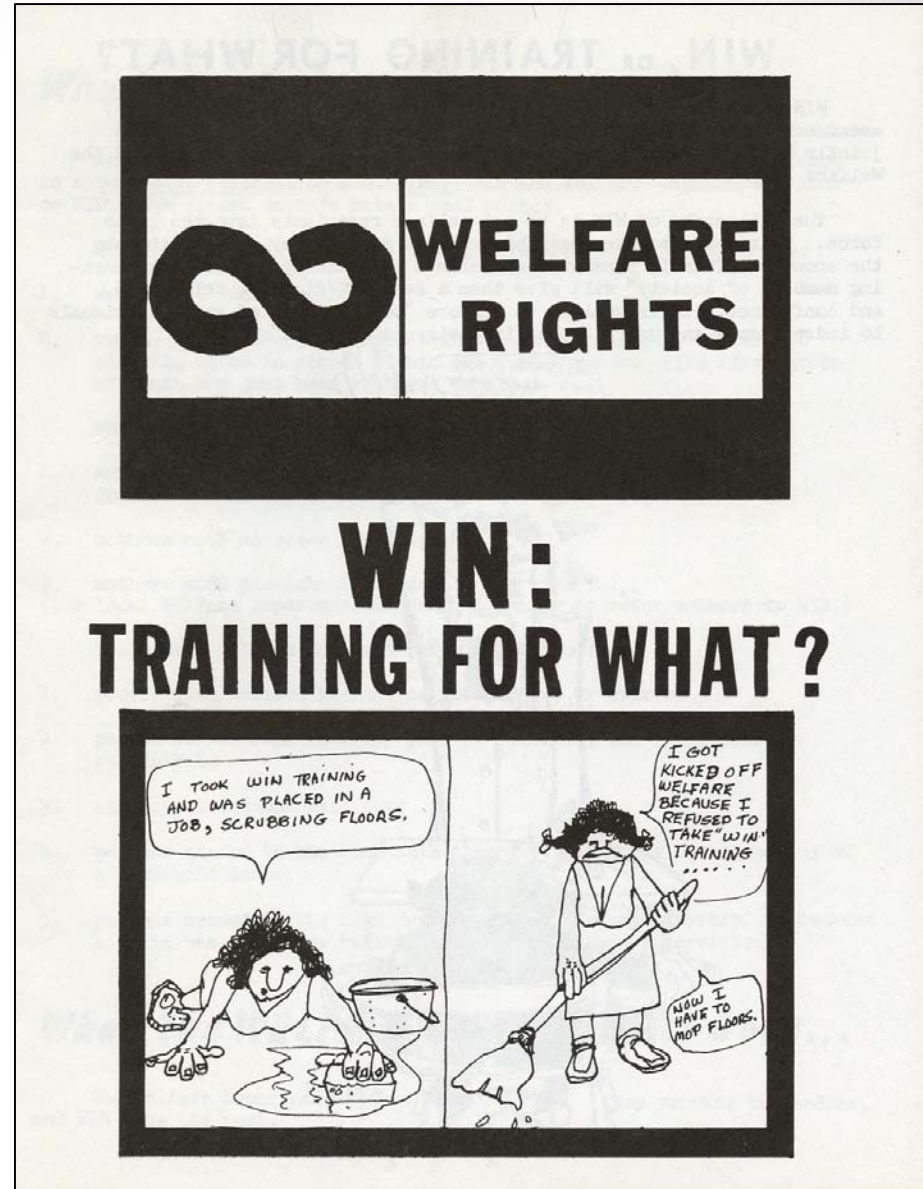
[In thousands]			
Residence and presence of parents	Families with own children ¹		
	Total	Poor by low-cost diet	Poor by economy diet
Total number.....	26,227	6,936	4,805
Mother and father.....	23,748	5,256	3,375
Mother only.....	2,225	1,578	1,355
Father only.....	254	102	75
Nonfarm, number....	24,349	6,237	4,239
Mother and father.....	21,953	4,610	2,854
Mother only.....	2,163	1,536	1,320
Father only.....	233	91	65

<http://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/ssb/v26n7/v26n7p3.pdf>

Number of impoverished families according to the Economy Food Plan. Families were deemed "poor" if their total income was less than three times the cost of an adequate "economy diet." (Mollie Orshansky, 1963)

The Right to Mother

- Goal: the Guaranteed Minimum Income
- Reality: the Work Incentive Program



<http://luna-insight.smith.edu:8180/luna/servlet/detail/SOPHIA~29~3~1205~100328:Pamphlet-about-the-Work-Incentive->
P

Pamphlet created by the Greater Cleveland Welfare Rights Organization in response to mandated job training for welfare mothers. (March 1969)

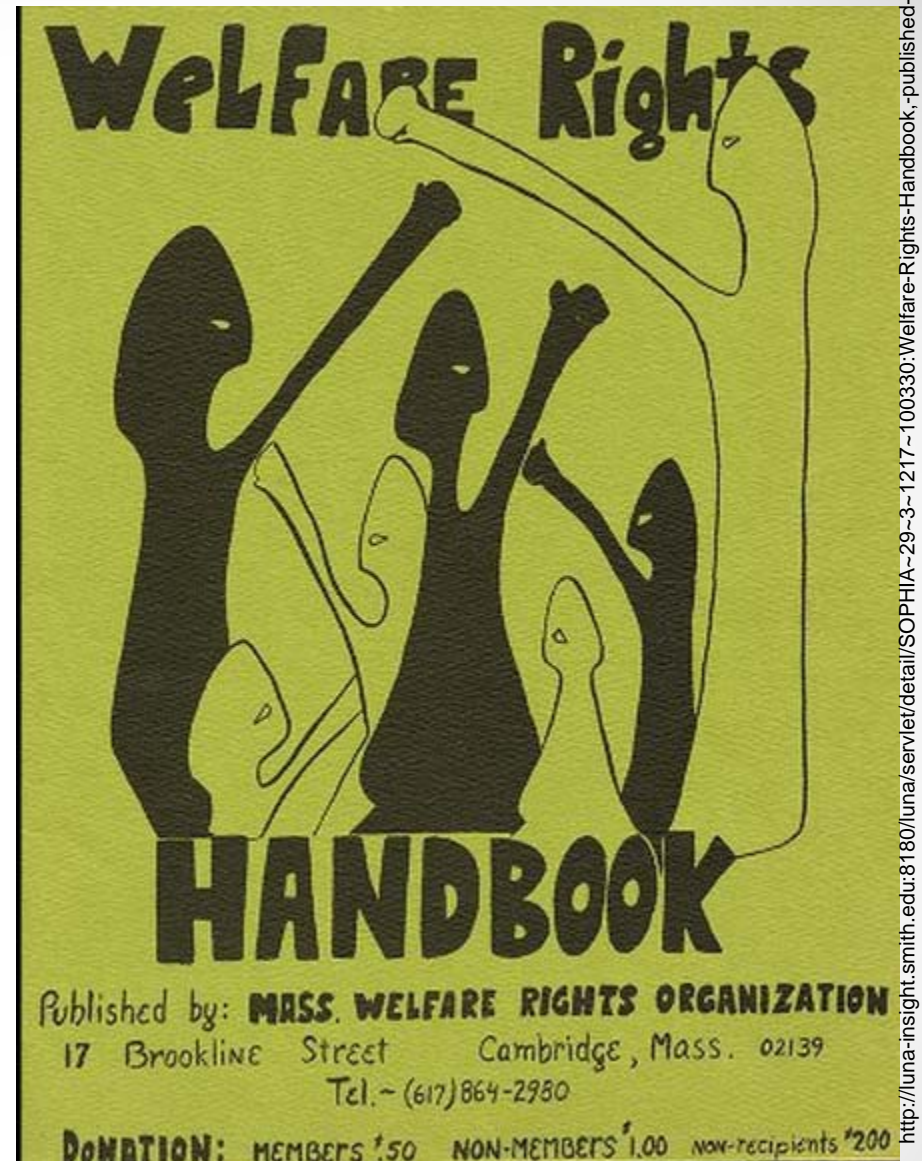
Accomplishments



Women protesting welfare cuts at the Wisconsin capitol. (1969)

Education: Lay Manuals

- "How To" guides
- "Predicaments" & "Discussions"
- Special grants



A Welfare Rights Handbook released by the
Massachusetts Welfare Rights Organization. (1970)



<http://album.atlantahistorycenter.com/store/Products/91071-national-welfare-rights-organization-protest.aspx>

- Political Action:** Welfare mothers protesting Georgia Governor George Busbee's refusal to increase welfare assistance levels. (*Undated*)
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Empowerment

- Politicizing the women
- Female leaders in the NWRO



Johnnie Tillmon, second NWRO Executive Director and welfare mother, speaks to a crowd of supporters. (1968)



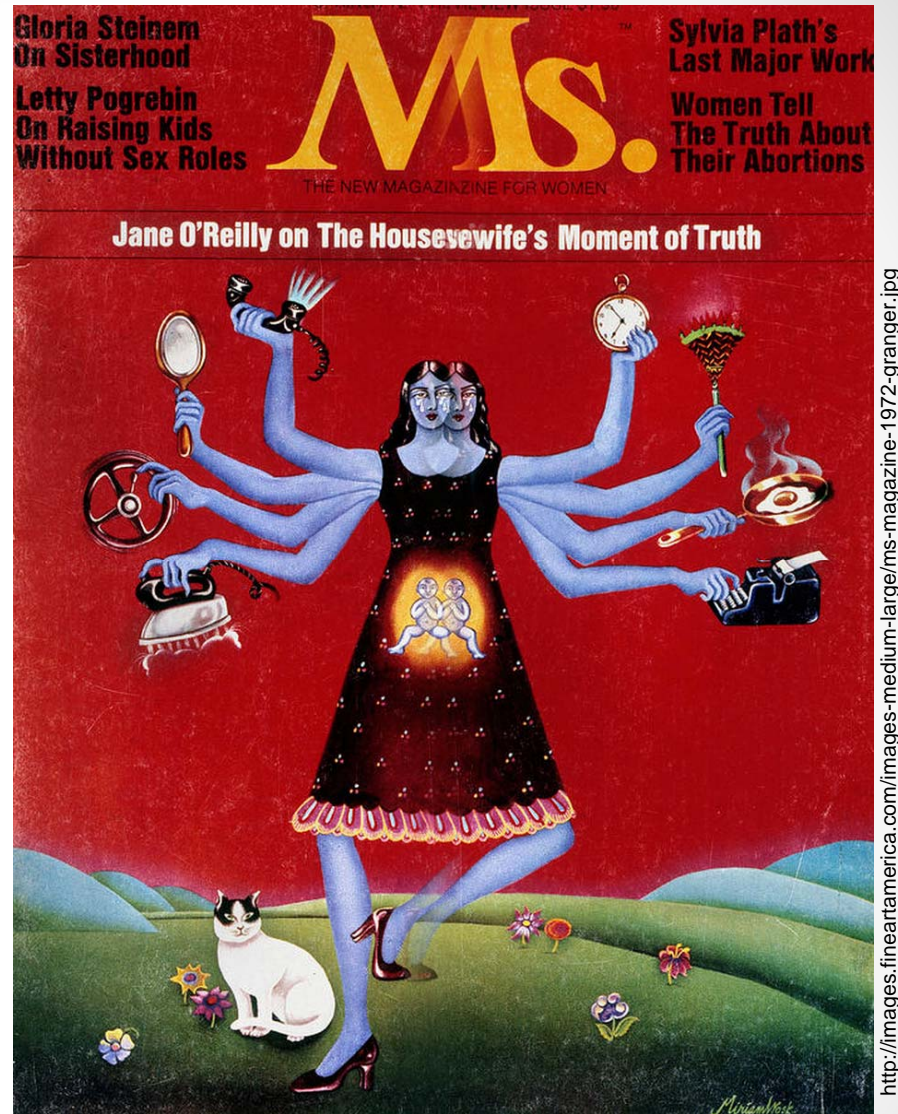
<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/~abbat22/classweb/feminizationofpoverty/unitedstates.html>

American women continue to suffer from poverty 38% more often than men.

Legacy of the NWRO

“Welfare is a Women’s Issue”

- Johnnie Tillmon’s 1972 *Ms. Magazine* feature
- The feminization of poverty



Ms. Magazine was launched in 1971 by feminist leader Gloria Steinem. (Spring 1972)

Post-NWRO Activism

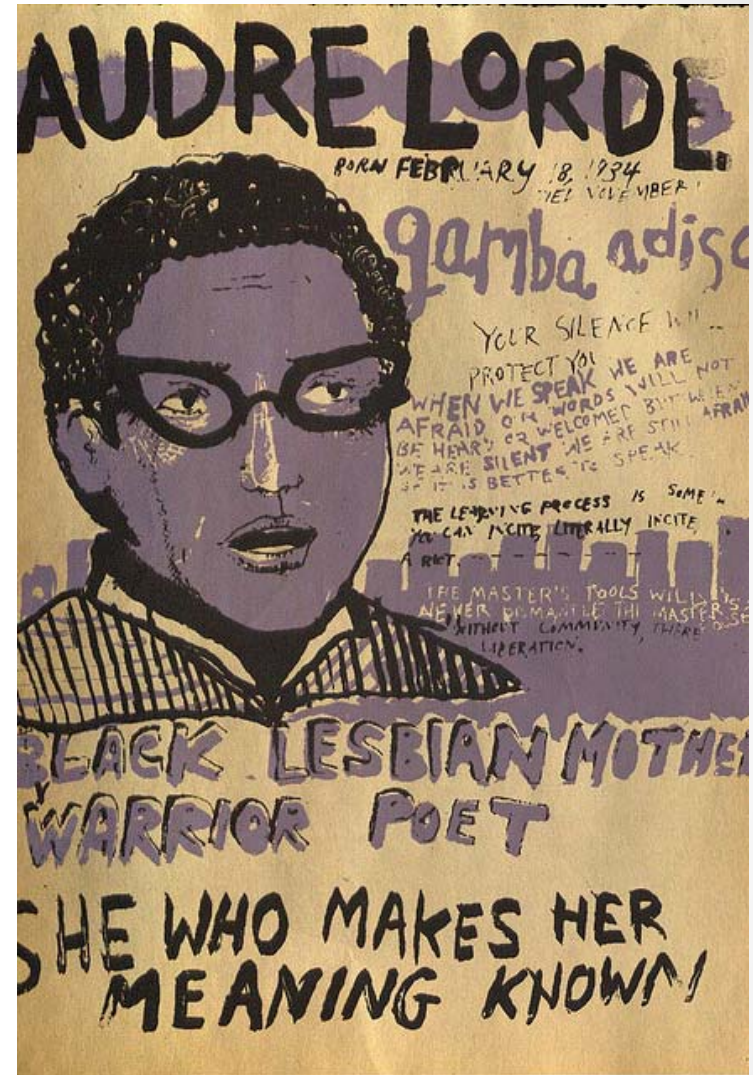
- Ethel Dotson:
environmental
advocacy
- Catherine Jermany:
legal rights
- Johnnie Tillmon:
continuing the
movement



Ethel Dotson speaking out against environmental pollutants in her Richmond, California community.

Black Feminism

- National Black Feminist Organization
- Combahee River Collective
- *"If I didn't define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people's fantasies for me and eaten alive."*



Audre Lorde is a prominent African American poet and black feminist.

http://azumahcarol.files.wordpress.com/2014/02/tumblr_lknkpldnp1qivn7do1_500.jpg



http://www.blackpast.org/files/blackpast_images/org_nwro.jpg