

Portland Organizing to Win Economic Rights

Healthcare Truth Commission

Tuesday June 10, 2008, 6:00-8:30PM

At Portland's Community Public Access, 516 Congress St, Portland, ME

This event is co-sponsored by POWER & MSEA-SEIU Local 1989



"Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in healthcare is the most shocking & inhumane."

--Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

On June 10, 2008 POWER will host a Healthcare Truth Commission to shine a light on some of the healthcare rights violations happening in our community. The purpose of this event is to call attention to these human rights violations & expose the true scope of the healthcare crisis currently affecting thousands here in Maine & millions more across the country, so that we can join together to bring about the changes we need to end this crisis and win our human right to healthcare for all.

Here we will hear the stories of 9-12 individuals who will serve as Testifiers to testify & share their experiences struggling to meet their health needs. In addition, 6-9 people of conscience from throughout our community will be on hand to serve as Truth Commissioners to officially witness, and, if they so choose, respond to these testimonies.

In bearing witness to these important testimonies, not only will we be able to better understand the nature of this healthcare crisis & the real life impact it is having on so many, many lives; it will also be an opportunity for us to come together as a community and confront this crisis & demand change. It is in this spirit that we encourage all who care about justice to mark your calendars & help us spread the word about this event, so that as many people as possible can join us in taking a stand for healthcare justice.

Dr. King also said "There comes a time when silence is betrayal... The truth must be told..." For those of us who are dying for healthcare here in Maine, this is our time to speak out, break the silence, & tell the truth about the healthcare crisis & demand our human right to healthcare – NOW! Won't you join us?



A CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS!!!

POWER is currently seeking community members willing to participate in this event, either as testifiers or as commissioners. **If interested please contact POWER as soon as possible: 207-650-5092 | power@povertyontrial.org | pob 4281 Portland, ME 04101**

Those interested in TESTIFYING should contact POWER as soon as possible so we can learn more about your story, help you prepare your testimony, give you an overview of the event, & answer any questions.

- Due to space & time constraints, there's a selection process to determine which testimonies will be presented. In the event your testimony is selected, we will notify you as soon as possible.
- If possible, please mail or email us a written copy of your healthcare story (1-2 pages). While this is not required, it is very helpful. For tips on getting started, see our Healthcare Justice Survey, available online & in print form. Please visit our website: www.povertyontrial.org, or call 650-5092 with your mail/email address & we'll send you a survey.
- Anonymous testimony will be accepted. While we encourage you share your story in person if at all possible, in the event you decide to give your testimony anonymously, one of our members can read it in your place.
- All healthcare stories are welcome. While limited in the number of testimonies we can present at this event, if you have a story to share, please don't hesitate to send it in. POWER is collecting stories of healthcare injustice and other economic rights violations on an on-going basis, and we are grateful for any testimonies we receive. In order to expose the truth about economic injustice in this country, it is critical that we document as many of our stories as possible.

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More about Truth Commissions

Truth Commissions are safe, respectful spaces where people gather to testify, witness, and address human rights violations that are occurring in their community. Here, members of the community who have experienced human rights violations serve as Testifiers to speak out & provide testimony about their experiences, while other community members serve as Truth Commissioners to witness, reflect upon, & address these testimonies. It's a time for the community to come together to share, to listen, & to learn, in an environment of mutual dignity, understanding, compassion, & above all, respect.

Part of a larger movement...

Our local Truth Commissions are part of a nationally-coordinated effort to win economic justice & end poverty. POWER is one of over 100 organizations that make up **the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign** (PPEHRC); the PPEHRC is *committed to uniting the poor across color lines as the leadership base for a broad movement to abolish poverty*. As part of this big movement, Truth Commissions just like ours are happening in communities across the nation as people come together to expose the truth about poverty & economic injustice in the United States. For more information: www.economichumanrights.org

More about Economic Human Rights...

Economic Human Rights (EHR) are our basic human rights to food, housing, healthcare, living-wage jobs, education, & basic income for those who need it. These rights are protected under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR – for more information see: www.un.org/Overview/rights.html), signed by the US in 1948. These rights are signed into law, yet they are violated every second of every day all over the country. Below are some examples of common EHR violations:

- * Lack of access to adequate, timely healthcare, including doctor visits, prescriptions, medical treatments, mental health services, dental care, eye & ear care, substance abuse treatment, etc; having to rely on emergency rooms for primary healthcare; bankruptcy or foreclosures caused by healthcare bills; choosing between healthcare & other basic necessities such as heat, food, or transportation.
- * Lack of access to affordable housing; having to pay more than 1/3 of your income towards rent, mortgage, &/or property taxes; homelessness, including having to stay at shelters, in your car, or doubled up with family or friends.
- * Lack of a living wage job, benefits, or workers rights; having to work overtime &/or hold down multiple jobs in order to make ends meet;
- * Lack of heat, lights, gas, or phone, or having to struggle to pay these bills.
- * Lack of affordable childcare, reliable transportation, or adequate nutrition.
- * Lack of access to training or higher education due to cost, and/or having to take on student loan debt in order to receive education or training;

More about POWER...

Portland Organizing to Win Economic Rights is a grassroots anti-poverty action group *led by poor & low-income people*. Together with all those who align themselves with this mission, we're building a local movement to win economic rights for all, end economic oppression, & abolish poverty. *When we unite to claim our rights together we have POWER!* POWER is a proud member of the national POOR PEOPLE'S ECONOMIC HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN: www.economichumanrights.org. To learn more, please visit POWER's website: www.povertyontrial.org, or call us at 650-5092. All those who support POWER's mission are welcome and encouraged to attend our **Monthly POWER Meetings on the 3rd Monday of every month, 6:30-8pm, at 644 Congress St in Portland, ME.**

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