

PRESS RELEASE

**Women, Labor and Compassion:
Honoring the Women Who Make Our Clothing
Paintings by Janet Essley
Nov. 11, 2011 – Feb. 28, 2012**

In honor of *Women, Labor, and Compassion*, the City of Madison Women's Issues Committee (WIC) is presenting an exhibition of paintings of garment industry workers from around the globe. Twenty-two portraits, by artist Janet Essley from her series "She is Here with Us," will be on display in Madison from November 11, 2011 through February 28, 2012. Co-sponsorship of this exhibition comes from the City of Madison Arts Commission and the Committee on Sweatfree Purchases as well as other non-profit organizations that share the same goal of promoting global human rights for work with dignity.

The fight for safe, decent and fair working conditions as a human right and labor right remains an overwhelming challenge today as it did 100 years ago. Right here in our own State, we struggle to defend the right to collective bargaining. So do the women and workers in Bangladesh, China, Colombia, and the Philippines. Elsewhere in the world, Libyans, Egyptians, and Tunisians are demanding respect for core human rights.

At no time has this common struggle for decent wages, better working conditions, and respect for core labor standards become more relevant and timely than now. Our goal is for this event to be an opportunity to honor the women who make our clothing and those who came before us and fought valiantly so that we can enjoy the benefits of having unions today. This event will engage us to reflect on the connections that we have with these women, to be involved and inspired to improve the industry and promote the status of women in the global marketplace.

Women, Labor, and Compassion will bring together public authorities, labor rights, sweat free experts and community organizations to focus on the current struggle for labor rights, fair trade and sweat free issues around the world as well as in our own backyard.

The Madison exhibition of Essley's paintings will be held in the Playhouse Gallery at the Overture Center for the Arts from November 11, 2011-January 8, 2012. Come meet Janet Essley and others involved in the local struggle for worker's human rights at the opening reception on Friday November 11th from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. A free screening of the film "Made in LA," the story of Latina immigrants working in Los Angeles garment sweatshops will follow the reception.

In January, Essley's work will move from the Overture Center to the Madison Municipal Building. An encore reception will be held at the Municipal Building on January 18 at noon.

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