

## **The Westcoast Association of Marxist Historians (WAMH)**

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The Westcoast Association of Marxist Historians (WAMH) was formed in the Fall of 1979 in Los Angeles. Most of us were involved in the renewal of critical, radical, and Marxist perspectives in historical scholarship, which was stimulated by revolutionary liberation movements in the Third World and the radical movements that emerged in the United States in the 1960s. We felt the need to come together to share ideas and give one another critical support. We aimed first to address ourselves to the important issues facing radical and Marxist scholars in all disciplines, and second, to connect our work as scholars to current issues and struggles.

To accomplish these aims, WAMH has held forums every month and publishes a newsletter every other month. Forums have focused on working-class culture in the United States, feudalism in the Third World, Hollywood and the Cold War, and revolutionary strategies in Mexico today. Recently we held forums on race and class in the United States, the legacy of Walter Rodney, and the right-wing attack on reproductive rights. We also sponsored talks by E.P. Thompson and Eric Hobsbawm. WAMH also runs a Works-Shop, in which members read and criticize one another's work in progress.

WAMH's membership is not limited to historians and academics. We feel strongly the need to breach the artificial lines among disciplines and the chasm between scholarship and activism. We have worked against U.S. intervention in El Salvador and for a citizen-controlled police review board in Los Angeles. We are working with *El Foro del Pueblo*, a Latino community newspaper in Los Angeles. We are planning a series of radio programs—historical perspectives on current struggles. In September we are holding a weekend conference, taught by members of the Popular Economics Center in Amherst, Massachusetts, which is designed as a fast course in economics and the current crisis for activists. In February of 1982 we will co-sponsor the Union of Radical Political Economists' regional conference in Los Angeles.

Every two months our newsletter reaches over a thousand readers; although the bulk of the readership is in California, the newsletter is mailed to scholars around the world. It includes political statements, reviews of books that challenge

the approaches of consensus history, continuing debates on important political-scholarly topics (Althusser vs. E.P. Thompson), announcements of conferences, works in progress and lists of publications of interest to our readers. Along with the forums, the newsletter has helped us reach out to a wide audience and has provided the institutional base for a strong, continuing organization.

WAMH seeks to include in its membership or to cooperate with groups outside of the Los Angeles area. We work with the Mid-Atlantic Radical Historians Organization (MARHO) and with URPE. With MARHO we are planning a mini-conference at the AHA convention in December of this year in Los Angeles. We want to link up with other individuals and organizations of like perspectives. We hope to see a cooperative national network of organizations like our own.

WAMH's newsletter and membership in the organization is free; but of course we are always in need of financial support. We want to hear from you if you would like a copy of the newsletter or if you have an idea for an article, a review, or a Works-in-Progress. (Send your ideas and requests to WAMH, c/o History Department, Bunche Hall, UCLA, Los Angeles, California, 90024.)

We want a wider participation. We know that now, with Reaganomics and Reaganistic militarism in power, the existence of the left, and indeed, of all the people of the world, is more seriously threatened than it has been in years. At the same time, we have the opportunity to expose in starkest terms the dangers inherent in this political and economic system.