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Rallying for a living wage in Missouri

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NCR Today

I was at a march and rally Thursday* to raise the wage for fast-food workers. It's the beginning of a union-organizing campaign, and at least 50 of my old friends from other peace and justice campaigns were there. With us were hundreds of young people, black and white, chanting vigorously, "You can't survive on seven-thirty-five." (The minimum wage in the state of Missouri is \$7.35.)

We carried signs that read "I am a man" and "I am a woman." A couple of my friends and a few strangers asked me what the sign meant.

I reminded them all of Sojourner Truth's May 29, 1851, speech "Ain't I a Woman?" at the Women's Convention in Akron, Ohio. Then, in 1967, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s ringing speech to join together was a call to all men -- presumably including women -- to march against poverty. The Memphis sanitation workers on strike the next spring when King was assassinated were carrying signs that read, "I am a man." And finally, I said, if we women of a certain age were working today in a fast-food chain, we'd be called girls.

But more than all that history and usage, the signs were an invitation to the men and women who work in fast food to stand with generations of union men and women for living wages.

**An earlier version of this blog named the incorrect day.*

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