

# Threads of Legacy: Weaving Hope, Tradition, and Justice in the U.S. South

Kelsey Wiskirchen's WARP's Executive Director's Closing Remarks

What does this somewhat wordy title mean for us?

As we conclude, I hope that we leave with a greater understanding of those who have fought for justice, and a sense of hope for the future. This week, we have heard stories of communities thriving in face of oppression. We have heard many of the hard truths of the history of injustice, and also the injustices that still exist for black and minority people. We have connected as a group, we have been inspired by our scholarship recipients, our assistantship recipients, our vendors, and by one another.

We began our weekend with a presentation by the author Mary Madison, who through her extensive research into the history of slavery in this country, has written the untold stories of enslaved weavers. Mary emphasized to us the importance of naming, saying out loud, the truths of the history of injustice.

We heard from Dr. Steve Brown, who shared with us the industrial perspective of cotton production in the US South. For us, invested in the empowerment of textile artisans worldwide, having the chance to learn about the standards of production that drive the industrial market is important and insightful.

This morning, we had the chance to learn from Zellipah Gihtui about how Weaving as a Chore Impacted her Immigration Journey from Kenya to the United States. Through her beautiful storytelling, Zellipah shared her life story with us. She spoke about reinventing oneself in this fast world, and about navigating through the American system that, as she put it, is like walking in mud. Zellipah cautioned us - let us not confuse movement with progress.

Many of us had the opportunity this week to visit the community of Gees Bend, and we just heard from Louise Witherspoon Williams of the Freedom Quilting Bee Legacy. Louise shared how the women of this community have taken quilting as a way of life to uplift many generations. Louise shared a story of creativity and resilience, and she emphasized to us that we are all more alike than we are different.

So, What can we accomplish in just a few days? How can we turn all of these conversations into something productive? How do we live up to our value of seeing positive change in the world as a direct result of our actions? As Babbie Cameron pointed out on the first day of our program, PEACE is in our name. I believe that the conversations and the sharing have a ripple effect. WARP is built on the idea that dialogue has the power to set movement into action. I hope that as you leave this place, you carry the things you have learned this week, and that it impacts your lives, your projects, and carries into your own communities.

I thank you all for joining us as we do what we can to create a more equitable, peaceful world.