



## SRBWI COMMISSIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Access to Power and Decision Making

“SRBWI is responsible for my being the Mayor of Hayneville. You invited me to Georgia for a regional convening and talked about our responsibility as women to change our communities. The meeting so inspired me that I came home and told my husband that I am going to run for Mayor. Of course, I want a Commission on Human Rights. There is so much to be done.”

-Mayor Helenor Bell, Hayneville, Alabama\*

From its beginning SRBWI has recognized that advocacy focused on human rights is a powerful approach in achieving economic and social justice for southern rural black women. Exposing the glaring gap between the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1948, and the daily lives of black women and children in the rural south ties these women to the international human rights movement in a way this is unprecedented.

### Strategic objectives are:

- Ensure access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making
- Increase women’s capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership

The nine existing Commissions are located in:

- **Alabama** – Hayneville and Wilcox Counties
- **Georgia** – Douglas and Wilcox Counties
- **Mississippi** – Anguilla, Leland, Metcalfe, Mound Bayou, and Shelby

The Commissions on Human Rights are the vehicle for organizing and involving SRBWI women of all ages in taking responsibility for the well-being of their communities. They are led by black women community leaders or elected officials and are made up of at least ten local women including two young women. . The Commissions sign an MOU with SRBWI agreeing to meet on a bi monthly basis and for the 2010 -2011 year to develop and begin implementation of a local action agenda for achieving economic and social justice. The agenda is based on information the Commissions gathered on the status of women in their communities using a survey developed by SRBWI. The results were published in a report: *The Rain Don't Fall to the Ground Down Here: The Status of Human Rights for Southern Rural Black Women*. Commission Leaders presented their findings at a gathering of thousands of women from around the world, the U. S. Social Forum in Atlanta, Georgia in 2007.

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\*Hayneville, Alabama is the county seat of Lowndes County, where the Black Panther Party was founded and SNCC's Stokely Carmichael and Bob Mants were field secretaries. Jonathan Daniels was murdered in the courthouse square steps away from City Hall where Mayor Bell has her office.