

## Hate Violence Against Women

Women and men in Canada, the U.S., and worldwide were stunned and appalled by the massacre of 14 women in the University of Montreal engineering school. There has been outrage, grief and intense questioning in the aftermath of this murder. People have wanted to know what could be the motivation for such an outrageous act, and there has been some relief drawn from the suicide note that many read as a statement of a deranged mind, suggesting that these killings were an isolated incident.

However, those of us who are longtime workers in the women's anti-violence movement know that these killings, while seeming to contain elements of madness, are simply one more piece of the more routine, less sensational hate murders of women that we deal with every day. According to the FBI, there are several thousand women killed by their husbands and boyfriends each year. This number does not include the great numbers of women killed by rapists on the street and in their homes. Almost all of these are women who die horrible deaths of brutality and terror with no public outcry and outrage for the waste of their lives.

There is media and public response when the murder is sensational either in numbers, in the esteemed worth of the victim, or when it is cross-race and the perpetrator is a man of color. Hence, the extensive coverage of the Montreal massacre, the rape of the

white female investment banker in Central Park, and the Republicans' use of Willie Horton as the rapist most to be feared. Otherwise, when murders and rapes of women are briefly reported daily in our papers and on television, the public, accustomed to the ordinariness of rape and murder of women and desensitized to it, simply see it as one more trivial incident in the expected way of life for women. It's just one more woman violated or dead; turn the page; flip the channel.

To see how staggering these numbers are, let's look just at one state, the small (pop. 2.3 million), mostly rural state of Arkansas. At the Women's Project, for almost a year now we've been monitoring hate violence in Arkansas, and unlike other monitoring groups, we include sexist violence along with racist, anti-Semitic and homophobic violence. During the first six months of the year, we were putting the project in place and quite possibly missed some of the murders of women; nevertheless, our records show 37 women and girls murdered in 1989. Their killers were husbands, boyfriends, acquaintances, strangers. Most of the women were killed in their homes and all were murders in which robbery was not the motive. Their ages ranged from 5 years old to 88. Some were raped and killed; all were brutal murders. Some were urban, some rural; some rich, some poor;

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**This may be  
your last  
issue of  
*Transformation*.  
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some white, some women of color.

A few examples will be enough to show the level of hatred and violence that was present in all the murders. A 67 year old woman was shot twice with a crossbow and dumped into a farm pond, her head covered with plastic and her body weighted down with six concrete blocks; a 22 year old woman was abducted from her home by three armed men while her small children watched, taken to an abandoned house, raped, sodomized and killed; a 30 year old teacher was slashed and stabbed dozens of times; a 19 year old woman was beaten to death and buried in a shallow grave; a 5 year old girl was raped, strangled and stuffed into a tree; a 32 year old paraplegic was killed, a 35 lb. weight tied to her, and dropped into the Ouachita River; an 86 year old woman was suffocated in her home.

Added to these brutal murders are the statistics from Arkansas Children and Family Services that indicate 1353 girls were sexually assaulted in 1988, and from the Arkansas Crime Information Center that 656 rapes were reported in 1988. In November the Arkansas Gazette reported that in the first six months of 1989, Little Rock had more rapes —119—than Washington, D.—90—a city three times its size. When we understand that only about 10% of all rapes are reported, these numbers become significantly larger. All in all, when the numbers of murders, rapes, and sexual assaults of girls are put together there emerges a grim picture of the brutal hate violence launched against women and girls.

I don't believe Arkansas is an

exception in this violence. From battered women's programs, from rape crisis programs, from crime statistics, we know that women are beaten, raped and killed in every state of this country, every day. Because so many women are viciously beaten and their lives placed in jeopardy, this country has over 1100 battered women's programs, all filled to overflowing, and more being developed every day.

Wherever we live in the U.S., women live in a war zone where we may be attacked, terrorized, or abducted at any moment. Women are not safe in the home, on the street, or at the workplace. Or, as in Montreal, in a school setting on the eve of final exams for 14 women about to enter engineering jobs that only recently became accessible to them in a world that considers engineering "men's work." There is no safe place, no "proper" kind of woman whose behavior exempts her, no fully protected woman.

While we recognize the absence of safety in all women's lives, no matter what class or race, we also are aware that women of color have even less safety than white women. Women of color are the targets of the combined hatred of racism and sexism, and as such, they experience both racist and sexist violence against their lives from white people as well as sexist violence from men of color, and often racist responses and services when they seek help.

Recently, the writers of a hate crime bill that went before Congress could not agree to put women alongside people of color, Jews, gay men and lesbians as targets of hate crimes. This

seems to me a critical error in moral and political judgment, one reminiscent of the immoral decision the white women of the 19th century women's movement made when they decided to turn their backs on black women in order to secure the participation of white Southern women. There is never a "more politically appropriate" time to bring in a group of people—in this case, 52% of the population—that is this country's largest target of hate crimes. When hate crimes are limited to anti-Semitic, racist, and homophobic violence, there is inherent confusion: when Jewish women are killed, when women of color are killed, when lesbians are raped or killed, it is often impossible to determine if they were attacked because of their religion, race, sexual identity, or their gender.

The U.S. Justice Department's guidelines to determine bias motivation for a crime include common sense (i.e., crossburning or offensive graffiti), language used by the assailant, the severity of the attack, a lack of provocation, previous history of similar incidents in the same area, and an absence of any other apparent motive. Under this definition, rape would be an apparent hate crime, often severe—including armed assault, beating and killing—often repeated in the same neighborhood or area, no other apparent motive, and almost always abusive woman-hating language.

The same would be true with our monitored cases of battering that ends in murder. In the majority of the cases, the woman was beaten (sometimes there was a long history of battering) and then killed. Rather than crossburnings

or offensive graffiti, the hate material is pornography. Most telling is the absence of any other apparent motive. And then there are the countless beatings and acts of terrorism that don't end in murder but do lasting physical and psychological damage to women. An example from Arkansas:

*(A woman) reported battery and terroristic threatening. She said her neighbor/ex-boyfriend threatened her with a handgun, and beat her, knocking her down a flight of stairs where she landed on a rock terrace.*

*(She) sustained permanent damage to her eardrum, two black eyes and extensive bruises and lacerations. She stated her assailant was not intoxicated; that he bragged of having been a Golden Gloves boxer; and he allegedly told her he could not be arrested for beating her since he struck her with his hands open. (Washington County Observer 8/17/89)*

Men beat, rape and kill women because they can; that is, because they live in a society that gives permission to the hatred of women.

This country minimizes hate violence against women because women's lives are not valued, because the violence is so commonplace that people become numb to it, because people do not want to look at the institutions and systems that support it, and because people do not want to recognize how widespread the hatred is and how many perpetrators there are among us on every level of society.

It is only when women's lives are valued that this violence will be

ended. If 37 African Americans were killed by whites in Arkansas, our organization would be leading the organizing to investigate and end the murders; or if 37 Jews were killed by gentiles; or if 37 gay men or lesbians were murdered by heterosexuals—for all of these other groups we monitor violence against, we would be in the forefront of organizing on their behalf. But why not on behalf of women? We talk about violence against women and help develop organizations that provide safety and support for victims, but even we sometimes get numbed to its immensity, to its everydayness, to the loss of freedom it brings with it.

All of us must stop minimizing this violence against women. We must bring it to the forefront of our social consciousness and name it for what it is: not the gentler, less descriptive words such as family violence, or domestic violence, or wife or spouse abuse, or sexual assault, but *hate violence against women*. It does not erupt naturally or by chance from the domesticity of our lives; it comes from a climate of woman hating.

For too long when women have named this violence as what it is, we have been called man-haters by people who want the truth kept quiet. "Man-hater" is a common expression but "woman-hater" is not, despite the brutal evidence of woman-hating that surrounds us: murder, rape, battering, incest. The common use of the word "man-hater" is a diversionary tactic that keeps us from looking at the hard reality of the source of violence in our lives. The threat of the label "man-hater" threatens women with loss of privilege and controls our behavior, but more importantly, it keeps us from

working honestly and forcefully on our own behalf to end the violence that destroys us.

Social change occurs when those who experience injustice organize to improve or save their lives. Women must overcome the fear of organizing on behalf of women, no matter what the threat. We must organize together to eliminate the root causes of violence against us.

We must make sure that hate violence against women is monitored and documented separate from general homicides so that we can be clear about the extent of it, the tactics, the institutions and systems that allow it to continue. We must hold our institutions accountable. In December 1989, the Arkansas Gazette ran a series of articles about local hospitals "dumping" rape victims, that is, refusing to give rape examinations because they did not want to get involved in legal cases. Such inhumane practices are dehumanizing to women and lead to public indifference to rape and its terrible consequences.

We must create a society that does not give men permission to rape and kill women. We all must believe that women's lives are as important as the lives of men. If we created a memorial to the women dead from this war against them—just over the past decade—our memorial would rest next to the Vietnam Memorial in Washington in numbers and human loss to this nation. The massacre must end.

Suzanne Pharr



# Black Women Plan for New Decade

This marks the first month of not only a new year, but a decade, and as such will be a time for reflecting on the past 10 years of planning, strategizing and goal setting for the future. The newness of a year gives each of us a chance to start again, and a renewed chance at success, happiness, fulfillment — whatever it is we are working toward.

We do this both as individuals and participants in movements working toward social change, which usually means our liberation and empowerment. We African-Americans enter this decade with some apprehension, unsure of what it will mean for us as a people. Oh sure, we have much to celebrate: the Black middle-class is growing, more of us are college-educated, more of us are winning political office, more of us are moving into decision-making positions in public and private industry.

But something else, I think, is growing, too — fear. Fear that we'll be poorer, less educated, more marginalized, and more self-hating. By now, anyone in America, Black or not, can rattle off the social ills which threaten our survival because by now they are ingrained in our minds through the evening news: teenage pregnancy, under- and unemployment, drugs, violence, AIDS, hopelessness, despair and just plain ol' fatigue.

I've seen so many of us shake our heads and sigh after assessing what's happening in our community nationwide, and I feel the same frustration and hopelessness at times. And sometimes I get so

angry at us for what we're doing to ourselves. A good case in point is the drug dealer. I see this brother on the street, dressed to kill, riding in a serious car, and I think about how he got these material goods and what that means to us. I want to shout at him, hit him, tell him to stop killing us, but he'd just whip out his gun and shoot me or beat me. And then he'd ask me why I'm mad at him. "Afterall, sister," he'd say, "I'm just trying to survive. Do you know of any other option besides flipping burgers at Mickey Dee's for \$3.35 an hour?" Toward whom or what should I direct my anger — him or the racist society that played a large part in his creation?

But then I remind myself that we as a people cannot become paralyzed by fear, frustration, and anger, and that the way to remedy our problems is to take action to better our lives.

This is the thinking behind one of the Women's Project's most exciting projects for 1990 — a statewide conference for Black women in Arkansas.

The central planners of the conference, which will probably be held in June, are the Black women on staff and the board. We decided it is time for Black women to take time out for ourselves to assess and celebrate our lives, to examine the challenges before us and to commit to struggling for the true liberation of ourselves and our people.

This will not be a conference where we get together, dressed in our Sunday-go-to-meetin' clothes,

talk in lofty terms about "sisterhood," and then go home to business as usual. Our hope is that the Black Women's Conference will be the beginning of real change for us in terms of how much we value our lives, what we expect from this world and the steps we will take to make our expectations of lives without racism, sexism, poverty, violence and homophobia a reality.

We are working hard to make sure the conference will be accessible for poor and working class women who reelect the majority of us. Conference fees will be on a sliding scale based on income, so that the poorest among us will not be denied the chance to participate.

The conference will consist of workshops, keynote speakers, cultural events and entertainment, and should be held during a weekend in June. One of our goals for the conference is to develop an agenda for the empowerment of Black women that will be a central focus in the work of the Women's Project. Such an agenda might include the formation of a new Black women's organization, an annual conference -- the possibilities are endless. We are limited only by our own ability to dream.

With the assistance of a brilliant organizer from South Carolina, Pat Callair, we developed the analysis of why a conference for just us is necessary, and what we hope to achieve from it. One part of that discussion was whether we wanted a conference for Black women only or whether we wanted



to include other women of color. The reason why we decided against inviting our sisters of color is the same reason we are not inviting white women — we have internal work to do before we can work with other sisters as whole, strong human beings. The damage done to us in this racist, sexist country is great, and there is so much internal healing we have to do.

For me, one of the most important steps to our liberation is the throwing off of white standards of beauty. The cultural imperialism under which we live has taught us that black (in relation to our skin and almost everything else in the world), nappy (in relation to our hair), and big or full (in relation to our lips, noses, thighs, behinds and bodies) is bad, ugly and sometimes sinful.

Until we learn to love, respect and trust ourselves and each other, we will not be able to give the same to other women of color. Instead we will remain suspicious of them, disregard their cultures, resent them for taking our small crumbs from white folks' plates and wonder if they're really on our side. 'Cause if I hate myself, I'm going to hate other black folk equally as much, and hate other people of color even more because of my own ignorance and fear.

The other reality is that in Arkansas, like in much of the South, most people are either Black or white. We have small populations of Asian-Americans and Latino-Americans. And because of the horrible oppression of Native Americans, they are few in number or isolated from us. So, the term "women of color" has little meaning

in a state such as ours. In fact, some Black women take offense at the term. A woman told one of the staff that she fought too hard to be Black and was not going back to being colored! But this does not mean that Black women and the Women's Project should not reach out to other women of color, no matter how few their numbers or where they live in the state. It is our responsibility, as an organization committed to the empowerment of all women, to be inclusive. And it is the responsibility of Black women to re-evaluate how we see ourselves in a world in which people of color comprise two-thirds (or more) of the population. While we must work on ourselves, also high on our agenda must be building coalition with sisters of color as we work toward empowerment for all of us.

To help us organize the conference, we have put together an advisory committee that reflects the diversity of Black women's lives. The advisory committee includes poor and working-class women, elderly and young women, middle-class, professional women, rural and urban women, single mothers and women without children, Protestant, Catholic, Muslim and pagan women, lesbians, formerly battered women, ex-offender women, chemically dependent women, homeless women and prostitutes. It is extremely important that the many kinds of Black women in our lives be part of this advisory committee so that all of our concerns and needs will be addressed. None of us can tell another woman's story because we have not lived her life. What we can do is respect each other because of the commonality

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## 1990 Workshop Series Planned

### **Black History Month — Anti-racism Workshop. February 16.**

Designed for those who wish to change society so that opportunity is not determined by one's race or gender. This five hour workshop provides an analysis of racism, both personal and institutionalized, its causes and manifestations, and strategies for working to eliminate it. \$20 fee includes lunch.

### **Women's History Month — Sexism and Homophobia Workshop. March 16.**

Designed for those who have some understanding of the power of sexism and homophobia in society and who want to go further in their analysis. This six hour workshop includes the connection between sexism, racism, and homophobia, with a half day spent on homophobia. \$20 fee includes lunch.

Friday's workshop will be repeated on Saturday for those unable to attend on a work day.

### **Gay and Lesbian Liberation Month — Internalized Homophobia Workshop. June 9.**

Designed for lesbians and gay men to examine the impact that society's homophobia has on their lives. This six hour workshop is for lesbians and gay men only. \$20 fee includes lunch.

Workshop Leader: Suzanne Pharr

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_  
State \_\_\_\_\_  
Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone/day \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone/evening \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Anti-Racism Workshop  
☐ Sexism and Homophobia Workshop  
☐ Internalized Homophobia Workshop

Registration must be received one week prior to training. Sorry, no refunds. Please make checks payable to Women's Project, 2224 Main Street, Little Rock AR 72206

# Schedule of Events (Clip and Save)

## January

- Tues. 9 Lesbian Support Group. 7pm.
- Wed. 10 Brown Bag Lunch for women in nontraditional jobs. Noon until 1pm.
- Sat. 13 AIDS Training for those interested in our prostitutes and AIDS project. 10am to 4pm. Call to register.
- Mon. 15 Martin Luther King, Jr. Parade. Walk under the Women's Project banner. War Memorial Stadium
- Tues. 16 Support group for formerly incarcerated women. 7pm.
- Thurs. 18 Support group for women in nontraditional jobs. 7pm
- Fri. 19 Women's Brown Bag Lunch. Noon.
- Mon. 22 Support group for adult survivors of incest. Twelve weeks. 6:30pm. Call to register.
- Tues. 23 Lesbian Support Group. 7pm.
- Wed. 24 Brown Bag Lunch for women in nontraditional jobs. Noon until 1pm.
- Sun. 28 Women's Sunday Supper Club. Potluck. 5pm.
- Sun. 28 HeartStrings. League benefit for AIDS groups including our Prostitutes Project. Robinson Aud. 8pm
- Wed. 31 Brown Bag Lunch for women in nontraditional jobs. Noon until 1pm.

## February

- Thurs. 1 Angela Davis. University of Arkansas at Little Rock. Time to be announced.
- Tues. 6 Support group for formerly incarcerated women. 7pm.
- Wed. 7 Brown Bag Lunch for women in nontraditional jobs. Noon until 1pm.
- Wed. 14 Brown Bag Lunch for women in nontraditional jobs. Noon until 1pm.
- Thurs. 15 Support group for women in nontraditional jobs. 7pm.
- Fri. 16 Women's Brown Bag Lunch. Noon.
- Fri. 16 Anti-Racism Workshop. Pre-registration required. See page 5.
- Tues. 20 Support group for formerly incarcerated women. 7pm
- Wed. 21 Brown Bag Lunch for women in nontraditional jobs. Noon until 1pm.
- Mon. 26 Disabled Lesbians Support Group. 7pm.
- Wed. 28 Brown Bag Lunch for women in nontraditional jobs. Noon until 1pm.

## March

- Thurs. 1 Discussion Group. Women of Color in Arkansas. 7pm.
- Tues. 6 Support group for formerly incarcerated women. 7pm.
- Wed. 7 Brown Bag Lunch for women in nontraditional jobs. Noon until 1pm.
- Thurs. 8 Women's Festival: Celebrating Diversity. Univ. of AR at Fayetteville.
- Wed/ 14 Brown Bag Lunch for women in nontraditional jobs. Noon until 1pm.
- Thurs. 15 Support group for women in nontraditional jobs. 7pm.
- Fri. 16 Women's Brown Bag Lunch. Noon.
- Fri. 16 Sexism and Homophobia Workshop. Pre-registration required. See page 5.
- Sat. 17 Sexism and Homophobia Workshop. Pre-registration required. See page 5.
- Tues. 20 Support group for formerly incarcerated women. 7pm
- Wed. 21 Brown Bag Lunch for women in nontraditional jobs. Noon until 1pm.
- Mon. 26 Disabled Lesbians Support Group. 7pm.
- Wed. 28 Brown Bag Lunch for women in nontraditional jobs. Noon until 1pm.



**All events, unless otherwise indicated, are held at the Women's Project are held at our offices at 2224 Main Street in Little Rock. The offices are wheel-chair accessible. For more information about these events, call 372-5113.**

## April

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|-----------|--|
| Tues. 3   | Support group for formerly incarcerated women. 7pm.  |
| Wed. 4    | Brown Bag Lunch for women in nontraditional jobs. Noon until 1pm.  |
| Thurs. 5  | Discussion Group. Prostitution and AIDS. 7pm.  |
| Wed. 11   | Brown Bag Lunch for women in nontraditional jobs. Noon until 1pm.  |
| Tues. 17  | Support group for formerly incarcerated women. 7pm.  |
| Wed. 18   | Brown Bag Lunch for women in nontraditional jobs. Noon until 1pm.  |
| Thurs. 19 | Support group for women in nontraditional jobs. 7pm.   |
| Fri. 20   | Women's Brown Bag Lunch. Noon.   |
| Sat. 21   | Women's Retreat. A weekend of social change workshops and exploration of our culture. Dormitory and private cabin space available. (Cabins must be reserved directly from the camp.) If you haven't received mailings about the retreat in the past, call us at the Women's Project. |
| Mon. 23   | Disabled Lesbians Support Group. 7pm.  |
| Wed. 25   | Brown Bag Lunch for women in nontraditional jobs. Noon until 1pm.  |

## May

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|-----------|---|
| Tues. 1   | Support group for formerly incarcerated women. 7pm.               |
| Wed. 2    | Brown Bag Lunch for women in nontraditional jobs. Noon until 1pm. |
| Thurs. 3  | Discussion Group. Women and Crack Cocaine. 7pm.                   |
| Wed. 9    | Brown Bag Lunch for women in nontraditional jobs. Noon until 1pm. |
| Tues. 15  | Support group for formerly incarcerated women. 7pm.               |
| Wed. 16   | Brown Bag Lunch for women in nontraditional jobs. Noon until 1pm. |
| Thurs. 17 | Support group for women in nontraditional jobs. 7pm.              |
| Fri. 18   | Women's Brown Bag Lunch. Noon.                                    |
| Wed. 23   | Brown Bag Lunch for women in nontraditional jobs. Noon until 1pm. |
| Mon. 28   | Disabled Lesbians Support Group. 7pm.                             |
| Wed. 30   | Brown Bag Lunch for women in nontraditional jobs. Noon until 1pm. |

## June

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|-----------|--|
| Tues. 5   | Support group for formerly incarcerated women. 7pm.                      |
| Wed. 6    | Brown Bag Lunch for women in nontraditional jobs. Noon until 1pm.        |
| Thurs. 7  | Discussion Group. Gay and Lesbian History. 7pm.                          |
| Sat. 9    | Internalized Homophobia Workshop. Pre-registration required. See page 5. |
| Sat. 9    | Annual Dinner. 7pm. To be announced.                                     |
| Tues. 12  | Lesbian Support Group. 7pm.  |
| Wed. 13   | Brown Bag Lunch for women in nontraditional jobs. Noon until 1pm.        |
| Thurs. 14 | Support group for women in nontraditional jobs. 7pm.                     |
| Fri. 15   | Women's Brown Bag Lunch. Noon.   |
| Tues. 19  | Support group for formerly incarcerated women. 7pm.                      |
| Wed. 20   | Brown Bag Lunch for women in nontraditional jobs. Noon until 1pm.        |
| Mon. 25   | Disabled Lesbians Support Group. 7pm.                                    |
| Tues. 26  | Lesbian Support Group. 7pm.  |
| Wed. 27   | Brown Bag Lunch for women in nontraditional jobs. Noon until 1pm.        |

## Reproductive Rights Struggle Moves to Local Level

Last July, the Supreme Court threw the abortion debate and controversy back to the state legislatures. It upheld in the case of Webster v. Reproductive Health Services three provisions of the Missouri statute: the declaration that life begins from the moment of conception; the prohibition on the performance of abortion at public facilities; and viability testing provisions.

The Supreme Court has indicated its unwillingness to uphold the decision in Roe v. Wade which stated that women have the right to choose abortion. As much as we are now worrying that Roe will be overturned, it is important to remember that Roe still allowed limits on women's reproductive freedom. By stating that women have the right to choose abortion, rather than the right to obtain abortion, the decision has been interpreted by the federal government and many state governments to say that abortions do not have to be publicly funded for poor women.

If the Roe v. Wade decision is overturned, the pre-Roe laws which remain on the books in many states will once again become enforceable. Arkansas has not yet repealed its pre-Roe laws. AR law provides that any person attempting or performing an abortion will be fined up to \$1,000 and imprisoned for one to five years. In addition, the so-called "Unborn Child" Amendment, which was passed in 1988, states that "The policy of Arkansas is to protect the life of every unborn child from conception until birth, to the extent permitted by the Federal Constitution." If Roe is overturned,

this law could not only have the affect of criminalizing abortion, but could also prohibit many forms of birth control, including some forms of the birth control pill, the IUD, and the morning after pill.

Many of the restrictions which are placed on abortion have far reaching consequences into the lives of women. The parental notification law in Arkansas and elsewhere is *supposed* to encourage better communication between minors and their parents by requiring young women to notify their parents before obtaining an abortion. In cases where the young woman is pregnant through rape or incest, or comes from a violent home, telling her parents that she is pregnant may put her at further risk to violence. The court bypass procedure is cumbersome.

In rural Arkansas, women often must travel out of their home county to obtain an abortion. There have been cases where the judge in her home county and the judge in the county where she will have the procedure each say that the other one has the jurisdiction to issue a court order allowing her to have the procedure without notifying her parents. Either judge legally does have jurisdiction, but if they are unwilling to act, they make it more traumatic for the young woman who has an unwanted pregnancy.

Both parental notification and the lack of funds available for services for poor women frequently result in the women having abortions done later in their pregnancy.

Yet, in spite of all of the obstacles, the Webster decision has had a

positive impact on organizing being done around women's lives throughout the country. Before Webster, we all held our breath and hoped that the Supreme Court would make decisions in support of women. It was hard to mobilize grassroots support around filing a Supreme Court brief. It often seemed that the people who were most active at the grassroots level were the anti-choice forces.

Now, the decisions will have to be made by state legislatures. Grassroots campaigns have sprung up around the country to elect pro-choice candidates, lobby legislatures, and provide public education. The winning candidates in a number of elections this fall have won in large part because of their pro-choice position. In California, Republican Tricia Hunter won a seat in the state legislature because Democrats crossed party lines to vote for the pro-choice candidate. Choice was a key issue in the gubernatorial races in New Jersey and Virginia, where the pro-choice candidates won. When the pro-choice forces are well organized at the grassroots level and can mobilize voters, we can have significant impact on election results.

The Webster decision has forced many people to realize the fact that reproductive freedom may be further limited. It already does not exist for many women — women who are denied access to abortion services, pre-natal services, contraceptive information, or who are involuntarily sterilized on the basis of their age, their inability to pay, or the inaccessibility of health care facilities. When the pro-choice movement broadens to



include all of the these issues and all of the women affected by them, it will have the most significant impact on women's lives.

**Cheryl Doss**

## Women's Project Has Wheel Chair Ramp!

Thanks to our donors and our builders for readying our ramp for our December open house. Special thanks to Denise Estep for obtaining the materials.

## Gap Growing Between Rich and Poor

According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the Census data provides new evidence that the failure of a significant improvement in poverty is related to a marked unevenness in the distribution of economic benefits from the six-year U.S. economic recovery. The Census data show that the income gap between rich and poor families was wider in 1988 than in any year since the Census Bureau began collecting these data in 1947.

The wealthiest fifth of all families received 44 percent of the national family income in 1988, the largest share ever recorded. By contrast, the poorest fifth of families received 4.6 percent of the national family income, one of the lowest proportions on record and tied for the lowest since 1954.

The share of national family income going to the middle fifth of families was the lowest ever recorded. Similarly, the share of national family income going to the middle three-fifths of all families (all families except those in the richest and poorest fifths) was the lowest recorded since 1947.

The data demonstrate that the gap between rich and poor — and the gap between the rich and the middle class — are wider than at any point in the post World War II era.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities produces excellent reports detailing economic status of some of the country's most marginalized people. For more information about their publications, contact them at 236 Massachusetts Avenue, NE, Suite 305, Wash-

## The High Cost of Being a Working Parent

Working parents spent \$14 billion in 1986 on care for children younger than 15, with poor parents paying disproportionately high percentages of their family income, the U.S. Census Bureau.

About one-third of the nation's 18.2 million working mothers with children under 15 made cash payments for childcare, paying on average \$45 a week, or 6 percent of their monthly

family income, the survey found. But poor women paid a higher percentage of their income — 22 percent — for childcare, although they paid an average of \$32 a week for it, less than the national average.

More than 29 million children — 9 million of them younger than 5 — had mothers who worked full or part time in 1986. There are now 52 million children under 15 in the U.S. population.

Based on a weighted statistical survey of 1,650 working mothers conducted nationwide, the survey also found that 28 percent of children under 5 whose mothers work are cared for in their home, while 42 percent are cared for in someone else's home and 21 percent are in formal daycare facilities. The survey also identified important seasonal differences in the way mothers care for children aged 5-14. During the school year, 70 percent of these children were in school while their mothers worked, and 5 percent cared for themselves the survey found. But in the summer 13.2 percent of the 5 to 14 year olds—or an additional 1.6 million — were on their own.

### Income Distribution of American Families in 1988

Population Category	Percentage of Total National Family Income Received	Comment
Poorest Fifth	4.6%	Lowest since 1954
Second Poorest Fifth	10.7	Lowest ever recorded
Middle Fifth	16.7	Lowest ever recorded
Next Richest Fifth	24.0	
Richest Fifth	44.0	Highest ever recorded
Richest five percent	17.2%	Highest since 1952
Middle Three-fifths	51.4	Lowest ever recorded

Center on Budget and  
Policy Priorities  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

## Book Notes from the Women's Project Library



A Small Place by Jamaica Kincaid -- This monologue which Kincaid calls a "prolonged visit to the bile duct," attacks the racism and classism of the tourist in Antigua. The anger cannot be passed over lightly and most of the statements in the book are untheoretical, specific and painful. Don't take another vacation before reading this book!

Coz by May Pjerrou -- In this unusual novel, the mystifying incidents take place on Only Mountain, where an assortment of eccentrics live. Among these is Coz, a lovely, intelligent and gracious 80-year-old witch who lives at the top of the mountain, and who, according to the rumor, is able to make time move backwards, to resurrect the dead and suck the living back to the womb. The message of this story reads like the scary truth. Winner of the 1989 Mendocino Festival of Books Award.

Thirteen Steps: An Empowerment for Women by Swan -- This book presents a program for women in recovery or in personal transformation. Evolved from the author's work with groups of women who were dealing with recovery in some way, these steps are based on her belief that a woman-centered spirituality is the most successful path for empowerment.

Singing Softly/Cantando Bajito by Carmen de Monteflores -- Artfully crafted, this novel traces one family through the quickly chang-

ing history of Puerto Rico's colonization and entrance into the 20th century, bringing to light the harsh class and racial realities of the island as played out through the lives of women. The story centers around the life of Pilar as told by her granddaughter, Meli. Meli reaches out with her imagination and binds together the three generations of women burdened by secrets and frees herself to come back to the island she has fled.

The River That Give Gifts by Margo Humphrey -- A solid, enjoyable yet serious children's story about sharing, giving, creativity, and taking care of old people in one African American community. Inspired by the traditional stories and art of West Africa and the Caribbean.

### Periodicals

Among the many periodicals available for reading in the library are The Herland Voice, a newsletter from Herland Resources in Oklahoma City, Up and Coming, newsletter from Northwest Arkansas women's community, and Hericane, a newsletter from Gulfport, Mississippi. Check out what's happening in these local women's communities, plan a vacation to their area, and take note of the their local women owned businesses.

The library is still open Thursday and Friday from 10am to 2pm and on Saturday from 11am to 1pm. We are no longer open on Wednesday evenings but will be open in the evenings following support group meetings, discussion groups, and other special events at the project.

### New Decade

(Continued from page 5)

of our lives as Black women and realize that even though we are different and may not agree with how some of us live our lives, we are still connected to and need each other.

Planning the conference won't be easy. There will be times when we will become angry, disappointed and frustrated. But there will also be the times when we look around the room and see ourselves in every face, no matter how different the outward appearance, times when we are warmed by the fact that we don't need to explain why we hurt or or why we laugh because we're with our sisters and they are us.

If you are a Black woman and want to be part of this life-changing conference, contact Janet Perkins-Doles, Damita Jo Marks or Kelly Mitchell-Clark at the Women's Project.

**Kelly Mitchell-Clark**

### Lesbian Support Group Forms

The Lesbian Support Group has re-formed and will now meet on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month from 7pm until 8:30. The support group will be open to all lesbians for two weeks and then close for six weeks so as to foster trust-building. It will open again after eight weeks. Topics for the support group will include:

- \* The many levels of coming out
- Lesbian culture
- Lesbian activism
- Violence in lesbian communities
- Lesbian dating
- Celebrating lesbian rituals
- Lesbian sexuality
- Drug and alcohol addiction

For more information contact the Women's Project.



## **TRANSFORMATION GOES BI-MONTHLY! JOIN NOW.**

**Starting with this issue, Transformation will be published six times every year.**

**Six times each year, members and volunteers will receive analysis of contemporary issues, information about Women's Project upcoming events and activities, book reviews, and more.**

**If you are not a Women's Project member or volunteer and would like to continue receiving the newsletter, please fill out the membership form on this page.**

**Yes, I would like to join the Women's Project.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone/day \_\_\_\_\_

Phone/evening \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ \$ 5 low income

\_\_\_\_\_ 15

\_\_\_\_\_ 25

\_\_\_\_\_ 50

\_\_\_\_\_ 100

**Make checks payable to the  
Women's Project  
2224 Main Street  
Little Rock, AR 72206**

# **OUR MISSION**

Our goal is social change or, as the poet Adrienne Rich writes, "the transformation of the world." We believe this world can be changed to become a place of peace and justice for all women.

We take risks in our work; we take unpopular stands. We work for all women and against all forms of discrimination and oppression. We believe that we cannot work for all women and against sexism unless we also work against racism, classism, ageism, anti-Semitism, heterosexism and homophobia. We see the connection among these oppressions as the context for violence against women in this society.

We are concerned in particular about issues of importance to

traditionally underrepresented women: poor women, aged women, women of color, teenage mothers, lesbians, women in prisons, etc. All are women who experience discrimination and violence against their lives.

We are committed to working multi-culturally, multi-racially, and to making our work and cultural events accessible to low income women. We believe that women will not know equality until they know economic justice.

We believe that a few committed women working in coalition and in consensus with other women can make significant change in the quality of life for all women.

## **CURRENT PROJECTS**

### **Women and Work: Breaking the Barriers**

A training and advocacy project to make nontraditional jobs accessible to women.

### **Women's Watchcare Network**

A project to monitor incidents of racial, religious, sexual, and anti-gay violence, and the activities of hate groups in Arkansas.

### **The Homophobia and Racism Project**

Workshops on understanding racism and homophobia and developing methods to eliminating them.

### **Prostitutes and AIDS**

A project to develop strategies for working with prostitutes and caregivers around AIDS issues.

### **Communications and Events**

A newsletter, a lending library, statewide and regional conferences, and production of women singers, poets and novelists.

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**The Women's Project**  
**2224 Main Street**  
**Little Rock, AR 72206**

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**Non-Profit Organization**  
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## The Next Step: Moving From Personal Growth to Building A Movement

This week a reporter from the Arkansas Gazette interviewed me for an article she was writing on the consciousness-raising groups of the early 1970's. Our conversation helped me to recall what a life changing experience my consciousness-raising group was for me and then to analyze some of the things that happened to change and destroy those groups. They were the backbone of the wildly exciting activism that built the Women's Movement, but by the 1980's almost all consciousness-raising groups had disappeared, along with much of the political activism, and in their place was a concentration on self-growth through personal therapy and support groups that focused on single issues of victimization or addiction. It seems to me that these changes were not accidental.

First, the successes of consciousness-raising groups. These small groups of 8-12 women demonstrated the equality we sought in their very structures: they were grassroots and could be organized by anyone at any level of education or sophistication; they required no formal leader; the simple rules were empowering—safety, confidentiality, equal time and respect-

ful attention for each speaker—and their form and content were controlled by the participants. These groups initiated the basic organizing that changed the world for women:

- Bringing women out of isolation and breaking silence
- Telling our stories in a safe, respectful place
- Recognizing and analyzing the common experience, the universality of women's oppression that came out of our stories
- Giving a name and a face to the oppression and working together to take action against it.

At each meeting a single topic was discussed: our experience of going through puberty; love relationships; sexual abuse; our economic histories, etc. For me, the group I attended for three years beginning in 1970 is at the very heart of my journey toward liberation and my work as an activist, for it was there for the first time, at age 30, that I ever felt safe enough to tell anyone that I was a lesbian. I felt at that moment as though I were Atlas and the weight of the world had been taken from my

*(continued on  
page 2)*

**Women's  
Watchcare  
Report  
Transformation.  
See page 4.**



(continued from page 1)

shoulders, that for the first time I was able to stand upright and contemplate liberation for myself and others. What I learned in that group made me know that the world must be changed and that we were the ones to do it.

Given that these groups were so intensely meaningful to so many women and spawned such great political activity, why did they cease? Here are some of the reasons I saw:

- Repression began to affect the Women's Liberation Movement, as it had been systematically destroying the Civil Rights Movement. FBI infiltrators began appearing in our organizations and communities. They set forth to create disruption, diversion, and chaos. Trust and safety were affected.
- Having had their consciousness raised, women "graduated" from the groups and took on various forms of activism. What we did not do well was to develop the ways to bring new or younger women into the groups on a continuous basis so that there would always be a personal/political place of entry into the Women's Liberation Movement. As a result, there is now a generation of unpoliticized women who have no understanding of what this Movement gave them and who would in fact dissociate themselves from feminists or the label feminist. Also, there are many new feminists who have not had such opportunities to develop analysis

and action from sharing their personal experience with other women.

- The groups were made up primarily of white middle class women. Our failure to be inclusive of all kinds of women and to address directly issues of class, race, sexual identity, disability, etc., limited not only our analysis but our ability to make real and lasting social change.
- Through having the safety to talk about our victimization at the hands of our oppressors, women began to feel the need to find ways to heal from their injuries. Support groups were developed around specific issues: rape, battering, incest, alcohol, drug abuse, etc. Many sought out private therapists. At first these groups discussed issues in the context of sexism and looked at the systems that foster it. Healing was sought through understanding and activism. Soon, however, most of these groups became controlled by organizations or therapists, the political context and analysis and activism were removed, both the experience and the healing were individualized and privatized, and there became a common understanding that professionals were required to lead most groups. Indeed, instead of the free groups that were controlled by the participants, suddenly it cost women to attend groups. Capitalism took over. An exception was Alcoholics

Anonymous and the various groups that developed from its philosophy.

The decade of the 80's brought us a pervasive self-centeredness with Ronald Reagan setting the standard. The watchwords became personal growth and financial gain, with an emphasis upon the individual. People—primarily of the white middle and upper classes—who would not consider making even a \$10 a month pledge to a social change organization spent thousands on health clubs, personal gurus, and therapists. In this context, support groups that specialized in meeting specific needs proliferated, with some people attending several each week. The concern for individual healing and recovery spread to all sections of U.S. society. There was a slowing down of political activism, and racism and class differences increased. People began to think in terms of addictive individuals and even addictive societies; most change was on the personal level, and therapists, counselors and recovery centers made great financial gain.

One would have to be the Scrooge of psychological understanding to go so far as to say one did not believe in personal growth and individual healing, so I will not go that far. Indeed, I think that sexist and racist systems have fostered and supported individuals and institutions that have caused us terrible damage, and we need support to develop our strength in the face of that onslaught. However, I think we need much more, for we live in a world that continues to perpetuate horror, to maim and kill. We once again must learn to talk about our experience in its political context so that we can understand the commonality



of our experience and take action together to change society.

I've just returned from a Minnesota conference that looked at social change in the light of the teachings of Paulo Freire, and one of the concepts there was that we must do social change work that is liberating, not domesticating. That is, we must do the liberating work that enables us to develop our individual and group power so that we may change the world, not the domesticating work that enables us to adapt to or endure an oppressive world. I fear that support groups which encourage stories of victimization without the discussion of the political context and acts of resistance are doing little to change the face of oppression. The wounded and killed keep appearing in increasing numbers at the edge of the battlefield.

Personal growth and healing are good, no doubt about it, but we must use our regained power to build a movement that transforms the world. This movement will not be built from individual work within groups that do not address the context of our history and that charge for the opportunity to change and grow. Activism is antithetical to such groups. This movement must be built by ordinary women and men who take power into their own hands and work together to make change. A first step toward such a movement could be organizing free, non-specific discussion groups that examine life experiences within a political context and take actions, large and small, to change the systems that prevent our freedom.

**Suzanne Pharr**

## Prostitutes and AIDS Education Project

The Prostitutes Education Project is working to reduce the vulnerability of prostitutes to AIDS.

One aspect of the project is to work with organizations which come in contact with prostitutes to ensure that their policies do not serve to increase prostitutes vulnerability to AIDS.

We are meeting with organizations and institutions which may come into contact with prostitutes. These include the police and court systems, health clinics, drug and alcohol treatment centers, mental health services, battered women's shelters, and groups which work with "at risk" youth. We are trying to determine whether their policies increase prostitutes vulnerability to AIDS, (for example, do the police confiscate a person's condoms when they are arrested) and to determine what AIDS prevention information is being provided.

We will provide training for organizations who wish to improve their policies with regard to prostitutes or who wish to learn more about the situation for prostitutes in Arkansas.

The second aspect of the project is to work directly with prostitutes. Teams are being developed which will include both people who have worked as prostitutes and those who have not, to go out into the areas where prostitutes gather to provide AIDS education. These teams will distribute condoms and bleach and demonstrate how to use them. Much of the AIDS education that is being done is targeted to the general population, through the television and other media. Our street teams will reach people who otherwise might not be

informed about the risk of AIDS.

The project is developing a resource guide for women. Frequently, service organizations do not know that a client works as a prostitute, because she does not feel safe to provide that information. Health clinics, mental health centers, etc. all need to know the woman's background in order to provide adequate care. The resource list will provide prostitutes with the information on where she may feel most comfortable talking about her life. We are also laying the groundwork for support groups for women who work as prostitutes.

For more information contact:  
Kerry Lobel or Cheryl Doss at 372-5113

## Support Groups Meet

The Women's Project is host to several support groups for women:

Formerly Incarcerated Women  
1st and Third Tuesday

Disabled Lesbians  
Fourth Monday

Nontraditional Jobs  
Second Wednesday

Women's Brown Bag Lunch  
Third Friday at Noon

Nontraditional Jobs  
Every Wednesday at Noon

Lesbians  
Second and Fourth Tuesday  
(Closed until June 12)

All groups begin at 7 pm unless otherwise noted. All take place at the Women's Project, 2224 Main Street, Little Rock

## Women's Watchcare Network: White Supremacists Organize

Rather quietly, a man in Forrest City, Arkansas, is attempting to organize Arkansas' first chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of White People. An article that appeared in the Arkansas Gazette on January 8 reported that Johnny Berry, who successfully organized a Ku Klux Klan chapter in the same town, is now trying his luck with the NAAWP.

To recruit members, Berry has run one ad in the local Forrest City newspaper. For those of you who are unfamiliar with the NAAWP, it is the white supremacist group for which Louisiana state representative David Duke serves as national president. Berry says the organization answers "tit for tat" the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People by advocating equal rights for whites, an end to forced busing, total welfare reform, crackdown on violent crime, eliminating immigration, and preservation of the white race.

What's scary about this is that Berry says he received about 100 responses to the single ad he ran in the newspaper. Also frightening is the fact that to our knowledge, there has been no public criticism of Berry's activities. When the president of the NAACP was contacted for a reaction, he said that whites had a right to form their organizations, which doesn't concern him as long as they don't advocate violence.

According to Berry, the NAAWP seeks to preserve whites' culture and heritage, and doesn't condone any violence or illegal activity. But

we know that it is a short step from advocating the preservation of the white race to burning crosses and beating and killing people of color. This is illustrated by the recent killings of a white federal judge and a black civil rights lawyer by mail bombs in December, which the FBI believes is the work of white supremacists. Two more bombs were defused at the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals, which has handed down favorable civil rights decisions, and at the Jacksonville, Florida, NAACP office.

In fact for all oppressed groups — gay men and lesbians, Jews, women, people of color, the disabled — the creation of a repressive climate enables the intimidation and violence to take place, which keeps them "in their place," afraid to struggle for their own liberation. Men's belief that women are inferior leads to the battering of women. And heterosexuals' belief that lesbians and gay men are perverted makes them vulnerable to street beatings by roving mobs of youth.

When white, heterosexual, Protestant men band together to form organizations to promote themselves it is not the same as when members of oppressed groups who have been marginalized band together to build their strength. White, heterosexual, Protestant men don't need to fight for their rights because they enjoy more privileges than any other group in America. It is time that the myth of the poor white guy who is deprived of his fair share because society panders to women and people of color be debunked once and for all.

All of us who stand for what is right and decent must stand up and make noise every time an injustice — such as the formation of a white supremacist group — occurs. Perhaps we think if we just close our eyes, the will go away. Well they won't. While we're busy ignoring them, they'll be busy making bombs, which turn our worst fears into horrible and deadly realities.

**Kelly Mitchell-Clark**

### Resources Available for the Defense of Battered Women

The National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women provides information, resources and direct technical assistance to battered women charged with crimes, and to members of their defense teams including attorneys, battered women's advocates, and expert witnesses. If you are currently working with a woman is facing criminal charges, call the Clearinghouse for assistance and information: 125 S. 9th, Suite 302, Philadelphia, PA 19107.

### IRS Debt Goes Long Way Toward Meeting Deficit

According to its own calculations, the IRS is owed \$61 billion in delinquent taxes from people and corporations, including more than 3,000 cases in which the amount exceeds \$1 million a case and several hundred in which the amount owed exceeds \$10 million a case.



# Black Women's Conference Update

We are steadily working on the plans of the 1990 Black Women's Conference. As you know, putting this conference together requires a lot of work, but we are sure the fruits of our labor will be realized in abundance.

We are taking this opportunity to share with you the conference plans that have been accomplished so far.

**DATE:** June 1, 2, 3, 1990  
**PLACE:** Henderson State University  
 Arkadelphia, Arkansas

## CONFERENCE FEE:

Cost for the conference includes room and board and registration. Conference fees are based on the following scale:

Incomes \$15,000 and up	\$90.00
Incomes \$12,000 - \$14,999	\$45.00
Incomes \$9,000 - & 11,99	\$25.00

Limited scholarships will be made available for low income women.

## CONFERENCE WILL ALSO PROVIDE:

- Childcare
- Children's Cultural Enrichment Program for children 5 years to 12 years old
- Interpreters for the hearing impaired
- Braille for the visually impaired
- Wheelchair accessibility

The Black Women's Conference will provide a forum for Black women to engage in discussion and analysis about our lives.

To help us with this process and to strategize for the future, we have

asked organizers Barbara Major from New Orleans and Euba Winton from Fort Smith, Arkansas, to participate in the conference as keynote speakers and workshop leaders.

The celebration of Black women's culture and history will be a central theme of the conference. We are planning a recognition of our "Unsung Heroines" — those Arkansas women, living and dead, who struggled against societal constraints to make our lives better. There will also be a cultural fashion show featuring clothing worn by Black women throughout history. And folk singer/cultural worker Jane Sapp will do cultural activities with the children as well provide entertainment for the participants.

## Yes, Send Me Information About the Black Women's Conference

Please return this form to Women's Project, 2224 Main Street, Little Rock AR 72206

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (h) \_\_\_\_\_ (w) \_\_\_\_\_

1. Names of Black women that should be informed of the conference.
2. Names of possible workshops and workshop leaders.
3. Names of Black women who have been doing outstanding work in their communities but who may not be well known.
4. Businesses that we can contact to be exhibitors or place ads in the conference booklet.
5. Any comments or ideas you would like to share with us.

# Schedule of Events

## March

Thursday	1	Discussion Group. Women of Color in Arkansas. 7pm.
Thursday	1	Bent (A Play) to benefit Gays Lesbians and Straights Together. Through March 3 at Unitarian Church.
Tuesday	6	Support Group for Formerly Incarcerated Women. 7pm.
Tuesday	6	Women's Video Night. "Lesbian Tongues" and "Out and About". 7pm.
Wednesday	7	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon
Thursday	8	Women's Festival: Celebrating Diversity. University of AR Fayetteville
Wednesday	14	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon
Thursday	15	Support Group for Women in nontraditional jobs. 7pm.
Friday	16	Women's Brown Bag Lunch. Noon
Friday	16	Sexism and Homophobia Workshop. Pre-registration required. Repeated on Saturday, March 17.
Tuesday	20	Support Group for Formerly Incarcerated Women. 7pm.
Tuesday	20	Women's Video Night. "Liana" 7pm.
Wednesday	21	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. 7pm.
Wednesday	21	Know Your Enemy: Hate Groups in AR. Sponsored by AGLTF. 7pm. Unitarian Universalist Church.
Sunday	25	Sunday Supper Club. 5pm.
Monday	26	Disabled Lesbians Support Group. 7pm.
Wednesday	28	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon.

## April

Tuesday	3	Support Group for Formerly Incarcerated Women. 7pm.
Tuesday	3	Women's Video Night. "Personal Best" 7pm.
Wednesday	4	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon
Thursday	5	Discussion Group. Prostitution and AIDS. 7pm.
Wednesday	11	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon
Tuesday	17	Support Group for Formerly Incarcerated Women. 7pm.
Tuesday	17	Women's Video Night. "Entre Nous" 7pm.
Wednesday	18	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon
Thursday	19	Support Group for Women in nontraditional jobs. 7pm.
Friday	20	Women's Brown Bag Lunch. Noon
Saturday	21	Women's Retreat. A weekend of social change workshops and exploration of our culture. Dormitory and private cabin space available. If you haven't received mailings about the retreat in the past, call us.
Wednesday	21	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. 7pm.
Sunday	22	Sunday Supper Club. 5pm.
Monday	23	Disabled Lesbians Support Group. 7pm.
Wednesday	25	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon.

## May

Tuesday	1	Support Group for Formerly Incarcerated Women. 7pm.
Wednesday	2	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon
Thursday	3	Discussion Group. Women and Crack Cocaine. 7pm.
Wednesday	9	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon
Tuesday	15	Support Group for Formerly Incarcerated Women. 7pm.
Wednesday	16	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon
Thursday	17	Support Group for Women in nontraditional jobs. 7pm.
Friday	18	Women's Brown Bag Lunch. Noon
Wednesday	23	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. 7pm.
Sunday	27	Sunday Supper Club. 7pm.
Monday	28	Disabled Lesbians Support Group. 7pm.
Wednesday	30	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon.



**Unless otherwise indicated, all events will take place at the Women's Project, 2224 Main Street, Little Rock**

## June

Tuesday	5	Support Group for Formerly Incarcerated Women. 7pm.
Wednesday	6	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon
Thursday	7	Discussion Group. Gay and Lesbian History. 7pm.
Saturday	9	Internalized Homophobia Workshop. Pre-registration required.
Saturday	9	Annual Dinner
Tuesday	12	Lesbian Support Group. 7pm.
Wednesday	13	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon
Thursday	14	Support Group for Women in nontraditional jobs. 7pm.
Friday	15	Women's Brown Bag Lunch. Noon
Tuesday	19	Support Group for Formerly Incarcerated Women. 7pm.
Wednesday	20	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. 7pm.
Sunday	24	Sunday Supper Club. 5pm.
Monday	25	Disabled Lesbians Support Group. 7pm.
Tuesday	26	Lesbian Support Group. 7;m.
Wednesday	27	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon.

## July

Tuesday	3	Support Group for Formerly Incarcerated Women. 7pm.
Wednesday	4	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon
Thursday	5	Discussion Group. 7pm..
Tuesday	10	Lesbian Support Group. 7pm.
Wednesday	11	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon
Thursday	12	Support Group for Women in nontraditional jobs. 7pm.
Friday	13	Women's Brown Bag Lunch. Noon
Tuesday	17	Support Group for Formerly Incarcerated Women. 7pm.
Wednesday	18	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. 7pm.
Sunday	22	Sunday Supper Club. 7pm.
Monday	23	Disabled Lesbians Support Group. 7pm.
Tuesday	24	Lesbian Support Group. 7;m.
Wednesday	25	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon.

## August

Wednesday	1	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon
Thursday	2	Discussion Group. 7pm.
Tuesday	7	Support Group for Formerly Incarcerated Women. 7pm.
Wednesday	8	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon
Tuesday	14	Lesbian Support Group. 7pm.
Wednesday	15	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon
Thursday	16	Support Group for Women in nontraditional jobs. 7pm.
Friday	17	Women's Brown Bag Lunch. Noon
Tuesday	21	Support Group for Formerly Incarcerated Women. 7pm.
Wednesday	22	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. 7pm.
Sunday	26	Sunday Supper Club. 5pm.
Monday	27	Disabled Lesbians Support Group. 7pm.
Tuesday	28	Lesbian Support Group. 7;m.
Wednesday	29	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon.

# A New Year, A New Decade And A New Plan

To meet the challenges of life, we constantly must be prepared to make changes where they are needed.

When we decide that the technique by which we have been conducting business for the last 20 years is the only technique, we get into trouble.

Of course it's very comforting to develop a plan, set it into motion, and continue in the same manner over and over again, year after year, because it's something that you are familiar with and because of this familiarity a limited amount of effort is required to execute the plan.

Much of our time in the past months has been dedicated to analyzing our work on improving women's economic status in Arkansas.

It really doesn't seem to have been that long, but it was 3 years ago we implemented our first program aimed at getting more women into male dominated occupations. Many changes have occurred since March, 1988. After each session we evaluate our Women and Work: Breaking the Barriers nontraditional employment preparation program and attempt to move forward with new ideas on how to provide a better program.

As an organization we are not satisfied with just doing a program for the sake of having work to do. We decided that focusing on nontraditional job opportunities for women was a project worth our commitment because this job market held some hope for women in this State. We cannot, and will

not do this project unless we are able to assist those who need it the most, women, the majority of whom are low wage earners, and sole supporters of their families. What we are constantly monitoring is the prior status of the women who attend our program versus how their economic future is impacted once they have completed the program.

The Women and Work: Breaking the Barriers program has made some major changes for 1990 that hopefully will have an impact on getting more women represented in the construction industry.

Recent reports have disclosed that the construction industry will experience growth over the next few years, but there will not be enough workers to fill the available positions. Over the past decade fewer people have been trained in the skilled trades, which equates into there not being a healthy labor pool to choose from.

In an effort to prepare women for this market we are offering a 10 week pre-apprenticeship training program which will begin on Monday February 26, 1990 with an orientation and continue until May 4, 1990.

The focus and philosophy of the program remains the same, to assist women in getting into higher paying occupations which are the male dominated fields. But our technique has changed from our previous trainings. We are specifically targeting one industry which has many trades represented. We are also stressing that our program is interested in getting women prepared to go further for addi-

tional training, such as into apprenticeship programs, vocational education, and on-the-job training programs. Construction workers who have a technical background will be prepared the best for the future. More and more employers are looking for the construction workers who have invested in higher education.

Through our past trainings, we feel that we have made a difference in women's lives, but we have not experienced significant numbers of women moving into the nontraditional job market.

There are many reasons for this being the case. First of all there has not been an aggressive campaign to make women aware of nontraditional employment opportunities since the late 70's and early 80's when C.E.T.A. funded many training programs of that nature. Many of the occupations women are interested in require skills and experience that we as women have not had the opportunity to develop. Women have met many difficulties when attempting to get into apprenticeship and on-the-job training programs such as the lack of financial resources to enter apprenticeship programs and the inability of women to find an employer who will hire them so they can gain the work experience that is required while they are in program.

Hopefully with our new approach women who are really desiring the skills to become electricians, plumbers, carpenters, concrete finishers, air conditioning/heating technicians and other related construction industry workers will see this program as an opportu-



nity to develop the skills and receive the needed information and support to pursue their career.

As I stated above, the program will be a ten week training program beginning on February 26, 1990 and ending on May 4, 1990. The first 8 weeks of the training will consist of daily math and physical conditioning and will cover other information that is pertinent to getting women into the construction industry. Four weeks of the eight week period will be dedicated to specific instructions in a variety of skills in the construction industry, such as the proper use of hand and power tools, reading blueprints and hands on carpentry projects.

The remaining two weeks of the ten week program will be used to assist women in making the contacts that are needed to get into apprenticeship programs, enter educational facilities or find employers who have trainings programs. This time is strictly reserved for women to be able to take the necessary steps to progress in building the foundation for them moving into a desired career and obtaining the training that is needed.

Throughout the ten week period we will provide childcare and transportation to women attending the program.

Women who are interested in non-traditional employment opportuni-

ties in the skilled trades should call the Women's Project to gain more information about the upcoming trainings for 1990. Please call Jo Marks or Janet Doles at 372-5113.

### TRAINING DATES

#### TRAINING #1

February 26, 1990 to May 4, 1990

#### TRAINING #2

June 11, 1990 to August 17, 1990

#### TRAINING #3

August 21, 1990 to October 27, 1990

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### Senate Passes Hate Crimes Legislation

The Senate has approved legislation that would require the Federal Government to collect statistics on crimes motivated by prejudice based on race, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation. Supporters said the measure would give law enforcement agencies new insights into hate crimes and determine whether such crimes are increasing.

Still sponsors of the legislation took great pains to assure colleagues that the measure did not condone homosexuality. An amendment which passed 96 to 0, declared that Congress believes that "American family life is the foundation of American Society; and "nothing in this act shall be construed to promote or encourage homosexuality."

Significantly, the new hate crimes legislation does to include crimes motivated by prejudice based on sex.

The legislation now goes to conference committee. The House of Representatives passed similar legislation last year.

### Jesse Helms Blasts Gays As He Announces Candidacy

U.S. Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC) who in the closing days of the last session of Congress single-handedly blocked Senate action to provide federal funds for low income people with AIDS in need of AZT, announced his candidacy for a fourth term in the U.S. Senate in January. Lashing out against his favorite targets, Helms declared that "homosexuals and lesbians (are) disgusting people, marching in our streets demanding all sorts

of things, including the right to marry each other."

The Human Rights Campaign Fund, the nation's largest lesbian and gay political organization, responded with a direct challenge to Helms. "Any politician who categorizes millions of Americans — people who pay their taxes, serve their country, build communities, lead productive lives in every work setting in the United States — as 'disgusting' is unfit to hold public office."

Tim McFeeley, HRCF Director said, "The U.S. Senate is an honorable institution reserved for people who respect and desire to help all Americans and should not be occupied by haters. I am sure the voters of North Carolina will agree."

## Book Notes from the Women's Project Library



*She Rises Like The Sun: Invocations of the Goddess* by Contemporary American Women Poets edited by Janine Canan is a powerful and moving up-to-date anthology of poets singing the praises of the Goddess. Poets include Maya Angelou, Paula Gunn Allen, Elsa Gidlow, Judy Grahn, Meridel Le Sueur, Audre Lorde and Marge Piercy.

*Mink Coats Don't Trickle Down: The Economic Attack on Women & People of Color* by Randy Albelda, Elaine McCrate, Edwin Melendez, June Lapidus, and The Center for Popular Economics. This book offers students, academics, and activists everything they need to know in order to understand conservative economic politics: how they're supposed to work and why they don't. "...it provides a perspective on the current plight of the poor, people of color, and women which is missing from the victim-bashing nonsense we have gotten from Reagan." (Barbara Neely, Exec. Dir., Women for Economic Justice.

*Kindred Spirits: An Anthology of Gay & Lesbian Science Fiction Stories* edited by Jeffrey M. Elliot explores the subject of same-sex love within the perimeters of the science fiction-fantasy genre. Here we have those rare stories where gay/lesbian characters occupy center stage without the

stereotyping of homophobic authors.

*Tough Tiffany* by Belinda Hurmence. Growing up in a small North Carolina city, the youngest member of a poor black family, Tiffany Cox has had a lot to deal with in her eleven years and she likes to think of herself as a "tough" kid. This is a funny, strong, and poignant story for young readers which will ring a note of triumph in their hearts.

*Close to the Truth: An Anthology Featuring the Creative Works of Women and Men with Disabilities*, Cheryl Marie Wade, editor, features the writing and art work of 33 disabled women and men, and is the 2nd anthology published by the KIDS Project in Berkeley.

### NEW AUDIOTAPE:

*A Radio Profile of Audre Lorde* weaves together conversations and readings by the author, and comments by writers Adrienne Rich, Alice Walker, Joseph Beam, Mary Helen Washington, Kate Rushin and others. It serves as an introduction to Lorde's work and provides a personal look at this founding mother of Black Feminism.

### OUTDOOR WOMAN NEWSLETTER

This newly published newsletter is for women who love the outdoors and will include articles by experts on equipment, networking opportunities, and how-to's. The newsletter will be published by and for women only. For more information write: Patricia Hubbard, Outdoor Women, P.O. Box 834, Nyack, NY 10960.

### Read Anything Wonderful from The Women's Project Library Recently?

Why not write a short book review for this page of *Transformation*.

### SPRING YARD SALE BEING PLANNED TO RAISE MONEY FOR LIBRARY

### DON'T THROW ANYTHING AWAY!!!

Save It for the April 28, 1990 Yard Sale at the Women's Project.

If you can hold on to it until April 27, 1990 it would sure help. If not, call the Project at 372-5113 and leave a message for Lynn. If anyone has a day area where yard sale items can be stored, call Lynn.

### Women's Project Volunteers Wanted

- Library
- Women's Watchcare Network
- Fundraising Events
- Women and Work
- Office Tasks

Hours Flexible  
Call Kerry  
372-5113



## **TRANSFORMATION GOES BI-MONTHLY! JOIN NOW.**

Starting with our November/December issue, Transformation will be published six times every year.

Six times each year, members and volunteers will receive analysis of contemporary issues, information about Women's Project upcoming events and activities, book reviews, and more.

If you are not a Women's Project member or volunteer and would like to continue receiving the newsletter, please fill out the membership form on this page.

**Yes I would like to join the Women's Project.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone/day \_\_\_\_\_

Phone/evening \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ \$ 5 low income  
\_\_\_\_ 15  
\_\_\_\_ 25  
\_\_\_\_ 50  
\_\_\_\_ 00

Make checks payable to the  
Women's Project  
2224 Main Street  
Little Rock, AR 72206

# **OUR MISSION**

Our goal is social change or, as the poet Adrienne Rich writes, "the transformation of the world." We believe this world can be changed to become a place of peace and justice for all women.

We take risks in our work; we take unpopular stands. We work for all women and against all forms of discrimination and oppression. We believe that we cannot work for all women and against sexism unless we also work against racism, classism, ageism, anti-Semitism, heterosexism and homophobia. We see the connection among these oppressions as the context for violence against women in this society.

We are concerned in particular about issues of importance to

traditionally underrepresented women: poor women, aged women, women of color, teenage mothers, lesbians, women in prisons, etc. All are women who experience discrimination and violence against their lives.

We are committed to working multi-culturally, multi-racially, and to making our work and cultural events accessible to low income women. We believe that women will not know equality until they know economic justice.

We believe that a few committed women working in coalition and in consensus with other women can make significant change in the quality of life for all women.

## **CURRENT PROJECTS**

### **Women and Work: Breaking the Barriers**

A training and advocacy project to make nontraditional jobs accessible to women.

### **Women's Watchcare Network**

A project to monitor incidents of racial, religious, sexual, and anti-gay violence, and the activities of hate groups in Arkansas.

### **The Homophobia and Racism Project**

Workshops on understanding racism and homophobia and developing methods to eliminating them.

### **Prostitutes and AIDS**

A project to develop strategies for working with prostitutes and caregivers around AIDS issues.

### **Communications and Events**

A newsletter, a lending library, statewide and regional conferences, and production of women singers, poets and novelists.

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The Women's Project  
2224 Main Street  
Little Rock, AR 72206

Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Little Rock, Arkansas  
Permit No. 448

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## The Women's Movement in Arkansas in the 80's

A Features article in the *Gazette* recently stated that the women's movement in the 1980's "fizzled," that with the exception of NOW and some efforts for reproductive rights, there was little happening in the past decade. It suggested that the 70's had been the golden decade.

The reverse is actually true. There has, in fact, been much more activity in Arkansas in the 80's than in the 70's. The Women's Liberation Movement has been vigorous in its activities.

- Since 1981, there has been a statewide conference on women's issues every year. This year there are three statewide women's conferences: this spring, a major conference was held in Fayetteville attended by 400 women; in June, there will be a history-making conference for black women sponsored by the Women's Project, and in the fall, a conference sponsored by the Committee on Women's Concerns.
- UALR's Commission on Women presents a month of activities focused on women's issues each year. Also, UALR's Black Forum sponsored nationally renown black feminist speakers for the past three years for Black History Month: Maya Angelou, Shirley Chisolm, and Angela Davis.
- Nineteen battered women's programs have been organized and staffed by grassroots community women. Feminists worked for several years to pass legislation to protect battered women. There is a funded state battered women's coalition and a statewide hotline. In the 80's there

were annual events to commemorate the lives of women who died from battering by men. There is a statewide project, the Women's Watchcare Network, that monitors racial, religious, sexist and anti-gay violence.

- The subject of incest and the prevention of child sexual assault was opened up by women's groups and attitudes changed throughout this state. Women have organized support groups for survivors of incest, rape, battering, for lesbians, for women working in nontraditional jobs, for women recovering from alcohol and drug addiction.
- Rape Crisis in Little Rock and Fayetteville have been strong voices for victims of assault. Take Back the Night Marches have been held in both Fayetteville and Little Rock.
- This has been a decade for women to examine the juncture of sexism and racism. Significant efforts have been made by white and black women to work together, and black women's leadership has been evidenced throughout the state in every social and political arena. The most outstanding leadership for women's legal rights has been from Arkie Byrd, a black feminist lawyer. Black women have led the work done on teenage pregnancy in the state. Black and white women are in the leadership of every progressive organization.
- Groups have worked in coalition for the past five years to fight attempts to diminish reproductive rights for women and have had such successes as removing the issue from the ballot.

(continued on page 3)

# A Story For My Sisters

This is my first article as a staff member of the Women's Project. The subject of my article is two-fold: job development and Jo's development. Through exposure to the new world that being at the the Women's Project has allowed me, I have come to see both myself and the world differently. I know first hand how difficult it is to break the cords that tie women to stereotypical roles, thoughts, and actions. I have experienced the dismay and disbelief of family and friends who continued to love me but doubted my sanity as I became involved with grassroots, feminist projects. I began this journey as a black child who became a teenage mother. I married at fifteen, had a child at sixteen, and a second child at eighteen. I lived most of my life in rural south central Arkansas, following the mores of what was allowed of my culture. I finished high school, then attended Henderson State University for two years. Then I obtained "acceptable" employment for a black women of my station and education in the library at HSU.

I worked at the library for ten years. The job was easily mastered and soon offered no new challenges. The job offered no opportunities for growth. The next job I took was one that was also acceptable for a woman of color in Arkansas. I became a receptionist for a large, middle class doctors' office. This office needed a woman of color for appearances sake. But working in that office was not one of the easiest things in my life. The white women there did not accept a woman of color, especially an outspoken one, with ease. Being pressured by what I perceived to be

my financial status, I felt as if I had to stay in the position for that and other reasons. I felt an obligation to my race to perform in the job that I had found, even though I wasn't accepted as an equal by the other women. Things began to become more and more stressful. The women grew increasingly difficult to work with. I found it harder and harder to stay. So I made a decision to leave, regardless of whether or not I had another job.

Looking through the paper, I saw an ad for a VISTA volunteer Public Relations person at the local women's shelter and youth home. I followed up this lead, only to learn that the position just paid a stipend. I then had to make a very difficult decision, one that led me to change my entire life. I quit the office where I worked and took the VISTA Volunteer position as a public relations person. This was my first involvement with a grassroots organization. The transition from a professional type atmosphere to grassroots was not an easy one, even as the change from traditional to nontraditional employment is a vast one.

It was scary, in the sense of lack of financial stability and doing what I thought I really wanted to do in life, a very radical departure from what my life had been and what my husband, family, and friends expected of me. In this transition, I began to find things about me as a woman and things that women, in general, needed to know. Working as a VISTA in this grassroots organization, I became part of a support system among the women working there that was like no other system devised by men in

any profession. No controlling, jealousy, envy, racism, or any of the negative things that I had taken for granted were a part of this organization. The change became easier for me and more acceptable for my family and friends as they began to see a change in me for the better. I felt like I began to live and do work that other women had not been able to do because of their fear of the change. A different type of support system than I had ever encountered was available to me in that grassroots organization, and I began to see with clarity a number of things I had never seen before. This is the time that I came to know that financial stability, although important, is not what it takes to fulfill me. I realized that I could have financial stability on any level of income, if I had the emotional support to go along with it. I wanted other women to be able to have access to this experience. I wanted to be able to let other women know that options existed for all women that they had not even dared to dream of.

All of this is about taking a risk. From this risk, I was connected with other grassroots organizations, such as the Arkansas Coalition Against Violence to Women and Children. There I became acquainted with an amazing group of strong, open-minded, dedicated women who shared my vision. The longer I worked the more I learned.

There were times along the way when I doubted myself and everything else. This experience was so alien to anything I had ever known that I couldn't believe in it although I was experiencing it daily.

(continued on page 3)



## Women's Movement

from page 1

- There were major musical performances by black feminist singers: Sweet Honey in the Rock on three occasions as well as Casselberry and Dupre and Jane Sapp. There have been feminist theatre, poetry readings, and small concerts. There were women's festivals, women's dances, and in Fayetteville, a community supported women's library and a newsletter that survived the decade.
- For eight years, there has been an annual lesbian retreat attended by women from around the state.
- During the 80's feminists created women's land communities in the northwest and sustained them.
- Women formed groups to study women's spirituality, the history of opposition to and destruction of the goddess, and have created rituals based on women's spiritual history and needs.

- For the past year women have been meeting to create plans for a lesbian retirement center.
- And finally, since 1981, the Women's Project has been a fully funded and staffed, community supported organization working on women's issues locally and nationally. The Women's Project has been a major participant in or organizer of many of the events mentioned above, as it has carried on sustained work on violence against women, economics, and social justice issues such as racism, sexism, homophobia, etc. Because of its support by the women of Arkansas, the Project has been able to buy its office building, grow to a staff of six, and maintain a volunteer corps of 300. It operates a library of African American and women's literature.

These are the things we call a women's movement. The evidence is overwhelming. The media has a

history of minimizing and devaluing popular movements, and its attack on the Civil Rights Movement and Women's Liberation Movement through omission and distortion has been unrelenting. The result is that people who want to seek societal change feel isolated in their efforts because they think that little is happening or that the "few" people who are working for change are disreputable people.

Both the Civil Rights Movement and the Women's Liberation Movement, despite efforts to repress them, are alive and well in Arkansas. The 1990's promise to be an even greater time for building the movements that bring freedom and equality to women and people of color.

Suzanne Pharr

## A Story for My Sisters

from page 2

Was it possible that these women were really what they appeared to be? And why, why should they be so different from everything that I had ever come in contact with? The longer I stayed with it, the more I felt it was for real and sincere. I waited and tested. Over time I became convinced that I was dealing with women who were on a different plane and that they wanted me there with them. Part of my hesitancy in accepting my perceptions was my own inverse racism. 'Black women don't do this kind of thing in Arkansas, and if they do, no one will pay them any attention.' But there is such a need for women of color to be involved in this work and to let other women of color know that this about social

and economic change.

This work is about empowering women of all races. It is more about the similarity of all women that it is about their differences. A second class citizen is just that, no matter what else is involved. In our society all women are second class. It matters not if they are white, red, yellow, or black; Moslem, Hindu, Catholic, or the popular southern "born again" variety; young, aged, of different sexual preference, or differently abled.

The second thing I learned was that I could go out of my familiar surroundings and do this work. When my boss and friend encouraged me to apply for the job at the Women's Project, I laughed. But I gained confidence because so many others had confidence in me.

Once again I took a risk. It was much easier this time. It was easier because this was the work I wanted to do. I had admired the work the women at the Women's Project had been doing. I came to realize that the barriers that were holding me back were within, not outside, me, I came to know without any doubt that this was my message to other women, especially women of color in the rural South. They, like me, are oppressed by the limitations that they impose upon themselves as well as the limitations placed upon them.

I have found that all women are sisters, that women have power, that women can change the way things are, that all women need to do is band together and speak out.

Damita Jo Marks

# Cultural Imperialism

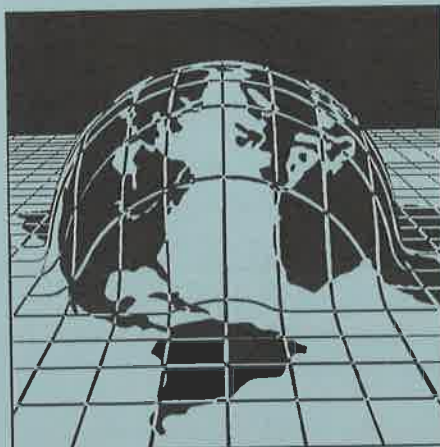
The topic for our March discussion group was to be the issues and concerns of women of color in Arkansas who were not African-American. Our goal was to learn about their lives and to begin figuring out how the agenda of the Women's Project could become more responsive to the needs of women of color and their communities.

A Latina, a Jamaican woman and an Asian-American woman agreed to be speakers. It was near the end of the discussion when the Latina, who had spent a great deal of time talking about the racism she had endured from society and her "gringo" in-laws, made — perhaps unwittingly — an offensive and hurtful comment.

Speaking to the Jamaican woman she said, "Your features are much softer than the American blacks. You are so pretty."

We, the three African-American women on staff, didn't know how to respond. After all, she was our guest. Were we to call her on her racism to let her know that she had just committed the same wrong against us that she accused whites of doing? We opted for hospitality and let the remark go unchallenged.

Her comment came at a time when I almost thought that I had my internalized racism around culture and beauty licked. I thought that I had been freed of the desire to mimic the beauty standards of the dominant society. I thought that I had convinced myself, through years of re-education, that full lips,



black skin and nappy hair are beautiful. But when she said those two sentences, she gave voice to all the nagging doubts I had about whether African skin tones, features and hair textures really are worthy of the same adulation as their European counterparts.

That sneaking suspicion that I really am part of the ugliest race on the earth's surface became truth. The 13 years I had spent trying to convince myself — contrary to messages I receive daily in this society — that the way I and my people look is okay had seemingly been a waste.

For me, the most damaging legacy of American racism is the destructive self-hatred that African-Americans have internalized over the past four centuries. And of all the self-hating behavior African-Americans regularly engage in, what we do to our much-despised physical selves is the worst.

In this country, people's worth is largely measured by their material possessions and outward appearance. For women, how

we look is even more important than for men. After all, supposedly the only way we have to attract men, who provide economic sustenance, is by our physical appearance. Therefore, I believe that cultural imperialism or colonization affects African-American women much more than it affects African-American men.

Every species and race of people think that the facial characteristics inherent to their group are the most pleasing, or should, regardless of the values of outsiders. This does not hold true for those people of color cultures that have been colonized by Western society and standards of beauty. If you are African-American, you cannot even face the mirror every morning without being reminded of your oppression. It is your blackness that causes whites to hate or fear you, and therefore, by changing how you look you can lessen the oppression, or so we have believed.

And no matter how acceptable your features, hair or coloring are — that is, closer to white people's — as an African-American you can't escape this self-hatred. I can remember as a child feeling good about myself because I had hazel eyes and was lighter than my cousins who lived nearby. I can also remember how we disliked another of our cousins, who visited infrequently, because she was biracial and had "good" hair and almost white skin. I can see myself parading around the house when nobody was around with beads on my head, pretending it was hair that I



could swing like the white girls in my class.

Do you ever wonder why some African-Americans are now wearing blue and green contact lenses? Or why some African-American women have taken to dying their hair blonde? Have you questioned why most of the African-American women we see in the media are those with light brown skin and hair weaves hanging down their backs, especially in music videos by African-American — yes, African-American — artists? For that matter, why do African-American women continue to apply perms to our hair to make it straight? All of it, even the hair straightening which I only stopped doing two years ago, comes from the same place of self-loathing, plain and simple.

I hardly ever see positive images of myself as a dark-skinned, broad-nosed, full-lipped, big-hipped, nappy-headed African-American woman affirmed. I can barely contain my rage when I think about all the little black girls in America who daily watch T.V. looking for images of themselves and instead only witness black people who look white, black people who look nothing like the people in their families and neighborhood.

They are beginnning the socialization process that will convince them that they are ugly, unworthy human beings whose only salvation lies in "whitening" themselves as thoroughly and quickly as possible. How many little black girls do you see with their hair permed before the age of 10?

Curiously enough, though, at the same time that we African-Americans seem to have completely lost touch with our true selves, there is a resurgence of interest in our African heritage and culture. I draw tremendous strength from the African-inspired clothing, hairstyles and jewelry that have become fashionable in the past two years. While we have used the term "African-American" to identify ourselves in the past, it has never enjoyed such widespread usage as today. There is also much philosophizing going on about how the social and familial systems of Mother Africa can be adapted to fit our current lifestyle in hopes of saving our drug- and violence-ridden communities.

Making these admissions was not easy. I debated whether I should expose my self-doubt, especially to white women. But I decided that my sisters would benefit from reading about my/our pain in hopes of beginning to heal and develop self-love, and that white women would develop a more profound understanding of what racism does to its victims.

There is no easy solution as to how African-Americans can free ourselves of the yoke of cultural imperialism. I only know that we first have to talk honestly and openly about our self hatred, and about our pain and anger for hating ourselves. I know that, for me, I have a long way to go — maybe even my lifetime — before I conquer this enemy. Just as anti-racist whites struggle daily against their racism, I, too, must spend my lifetime struggling against hatred of self.

Kelly Mitchell-Clark

## Columbus 1992: A Time for Education

The Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission is busy at work. They are taking seven years to plan the 500th anniversary celebration of Columbus; arrival in the "new world." That's three years more planning than the 1986 Statue of Liberty commemoration and five years more than Constitutional Bicentennial in 1987, so you can begin to imagine what we're in store for. Corporate and federal dollars are pouring into the commission and it's chaired by a Cuban-born Miami real estate developer. No Indians were originally appointed to the commission, but after protest an Indian non-voting observer was added. To find out what the official commission in the U.S. is up to contact: The Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission, 1801 F Street, NW, Washington DC 20006. 202/632-1992.

The Nonviolent Activist



# Schedule of Events



## May

Wednesday	9	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon
Saturday	12	N.O.W. Spring Fling Cookout and Dance. 6 pm until midnight. 1818 Reservoir – Unitarian Church. \$6 in advance, \$8 door.
Tuesday	15	Support Group for Formerly Incarcerated Women. 7pm.
Wednesday	16	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon
Thursday	17	Support Group for Women in nontraditional jobs. 7pm.
Friday	18	Women's Brown Bag Lunch. Noon
Saturday	19	Rally in support of the Americans With Disabilities Act. 10 am–noon on the steps of the State Capitol.
Saturday	19	Bon Voyage 90, a benefit for Helping People With AIDS and AR Children's Hospital. Call 224-HOPE.
Sunday	20	AIDS march & candlelight vigil. 7:30 pm Christ Episcopal Church. Call 375-5908.
Sunday	20	Little Rock Men's Chorus Concert - 4:30 pm. Women's City Club. Call: 221-9007 or 375-4530.
Wednesday	23	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. 7pm.
Sunday	27	Sunday Supper Club. 7pm.
Monday	28	Disabled Lesbians Support Group. 7pm.
Wednesday	30	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon.

## June

Tuesday	5	Support Group for Formerly Incarcerated Women. 7pm.
Wednesday	6	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon
Saturday	9	Internalized Homophobia Workshop. Pre-registration required. See box below.
Saturday	9	Annual Meeting to honor Dr. Betty J. Overton and recognize Project Volunteers. 6pm. to 8pm.
Tuesday	12	Lesbian Support Group. 7pm.
Wednesday	13	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon
Thursday	14	Support Group for Women in nontraditional jobs. 7pm.
Friday	15	Women's Brown Bag Lunch. Noon
Tuesday	19	Support Group for Formerly Incarcerated Women. 7pm.
Wednesday	20	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. 7pm.
Sunday	24	Sunday Supper Club. 5pm.
Monday	25	Disabled Lesbians Support Group. 7pm.
Tuesday	26	Lesbian Support Group. 7pm.
Wednesday	27	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon.

## July

Tuesday	3	Support Group for Formerly Incarcerated Women. 7pm.
Wednesday	4	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon
Tuesday	10	Lesbian Support Group. 7pm.
Wednesday	11	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon
Thursday	12	Support Group for Women in nontraditional jobs. 7pm.
Friday	13	Women's Brown Bag Lunch. Noon
Tuesday	17	Support Group for Formerly Incarcerated Women. 7pm.
Wednesday	18	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. 7pm.
Sunday	22	Sunday Supper Club. 7pm.
Monday	23	Disabled Lesbians Support Group. 7pm.
Tuesday	24	Lesbian Support Group. 7pm.
Wednesday	25	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon.



**All events, unless otherwise indicated, are held at the Women's Project at 2224 Main Street in Little Rock. The offices are wheelchair accessible. For more information about these events, call 372-5113.**

## August

Wednesday	1	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon
Tuesday	7	Support Group for Formerly Incarcerated Women. 7pm.
Wednesday	8	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon
Tuesday	14	Lesbian Support Group. 7pm.
Wednesday	15	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon
Thursday	16	Support Group for Women in nontraditional jobs. 7pm.
Friday	17	Women's Brown Bag Lunch. Noon
Tuesday	21	Support Group for Formerly Incarcerated Women. 7pm.
Wednesday	22	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. 7pm.
Sunday	26	Sunday Supper Club. 5pm.
Monday	27	Disabled Lesbians Support Group. 7pm.
Tuesday	28	Lesbian Support Group. 7pm.
Wednesday	29	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon.

### Gay and Lesbian Liberation Month: SURVIVING AND RESISTING LESBIAN AND GAY HATING

June 9, 1990  
9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
Women's Project • 2224 Main  
Street • Little Rock, Arkansas

A workshop designed for lesbians and gay men to examine the impact of society's homophobia on their lives.

This six hour workshop is for lesbians and gay men only.  
\$20 fee includes lunch.

The workshop will be lead by Suzanne Pharr. Suzanne is the author of *Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism*.

Deadline for registration is June 1, 1990. Sorry, no refunds. Please make checks payable to the Women's Project • 2224 Main Street • Little Rock, AR 72206.

### One Teenager in Ten REACHING OUT TO GAY AND LESBIAN YOUTH IN ARKANSAS

June 15, 1990  
9:00 a.m. to 4:15 p.m.  
UAMS Educational Building and  
Shorey Auditorium, 4301 W.  
Markham, Little Rock

The Arkansas Gay and Lesbian Task Force, in cooperation with numerous local and state service organizations including the Women's Project and the Arkansas AIDS Foundation, presents a one-day conference on lesbian and gay youth for educators, counselors, the medical profession, law-enforcement, gays, lesbians, parents, and other involved persons.

For more information/registration:  
The Arkansas Gay and Lesbian Task Force  
Box 45053  
Little Rock, AR 72214  
375-8525  
Fee \$20 by June 1, 1990, \$30 thereafter.

### ANNUAL MEETING TO HONOR OVERTON AND WOMEN'S PROJECT VOLUNTEERS

The Women's Project invites you to join us at a special event to honor Dr. Betty J. Overton and to recognize the contributions of our volunteers.

Dr. Overton will receive the annual Evangeline K. Brown Award for her outstanding contributions to the transformation of women's lives.

Saturday, June 9, 1990  
6:00 pm. to 8:00 pm.  
Call 372-5113 for more information.

**PHYSICAL FITNESS  
OPPORTUNITY**  
Need volunteer to garden:  
mow yard and trim  
shrubby.  
Call us at 372-5113.

# Travelling the Road to Each Other

"Life is difficult," are the opening words in the book, The Road Less Traveled, by M. Scott Peck, M.D. The author goes on to express that once we come to understand that life is not just difficult for us, but is problematic for everyone, we are over the biggest hurdle. As he states, we spend much of our time and energy longing for a less difficult, carefree life which keeps us from appreciating life for what it is. Knowing that we are going to have good times, and yes, the rough times are going to occur, but if we really understand what life is about, then we have fewer problems negotiating the bad times.

Many times I just sit and think very critically about life and attempt to figure out what makes life what it is. What are the things or combination of things, that make life good, and just what it is that can make it strange and unbearable.

We have absolutely no control over many occurrences in life. Tornadoes, floods, very cold, frigid temperatures or an exhausting heat wave, are all external factors and are beyond our control. No matter how responsible we attempt to be, these things are not within our jurisdiction of controlling.

But what causes us the most difficulties in life are not necessarily those problems caused by the elements of nature, they are the troubles that we must bear from what we as people do to each other.

When there is a tornado warning,

it never causes me a problem. I know that I must get out of the path of the tornado and take the proper precautions. I'm smart enough to know not to venture into water that is too deep during or after a heavy rain. If it's extremely cold or unbearably hot I do the things I must, to be warm or cool, healthy and safe. But sometimes, there aren't any logical approaches for being adequately prepared for the difficulties that are caused by human beings. When we talk about what really makes life difficult, I can truthfully say that it is us; people causing other people misery, hardship, fear and despair. It's very confusing to me, especially when you look at the fact, that we need each other so much to survive.

This article could be an endless expression of how people abuse and misuse each other, but my time will not permit my writing that much information and the space is limited.

The method in which we label people has been a sore spot with me for years. As I grow and get older my list seems to get longer and longer.

I do realize that we all do it. Labelling is our way of making sense and giving clarity to everything that we come in contact with. We as human beings have this need to give everything a place. This is our the method in which we assess and understand the world we live in.

But the problem I have with our system of labelling is that labels



*Susan G. Raymond*

have negative and positive connotations, that aren't completely accurate and can be damaging.

When we say that someone is "straight", opposed to being gay or lesbian, I get this overwhelming sense that this implies that they possess all the positive characteristics that exist, which we know is so far from being the truth. The "halo affect" goes into play, and the bad thing about it is, "straight" people have come to believe that their identity is the only identity and anything different is shameful, freakish, evil and to be prayed for. That's one of those negatives that we get from labelling. Not only is the label and its meaning inaccurate, but it is also delusional for those who describe themselves as being straight.

This word "Straight" says to me that you are the most perfect manifestation of human life, therefore, you have the responsibility of pointing out the imperfection in anyone who is defined differently.



Often times when I have been in situations where it has been disclosed I am "straight", I pause as if I'm waiting for the creation of a new word to describe my sexual orientation. The word "straight" just makes me nervous because I know the horrors that "straight" people have unleashed on lesbians and gays for no other reasons than their false sense of superiority of being the perfectly defined human beings.

Too often those people leading the anti-gay and lesbian movement have never known anyone who is gay or lesbian; are participants in this anti movement based on something they heard, thought or conjured up or worst yet, they are on a mission led by God's word.

I'm much more tolerant of those people who have never been exposed to gay men and lesbians, than I am of those who call themselves educated, spirit filled and doing the will of the Lord.

As many times as I have read the scriptures, I have never been overpowered with passages that refer to the sin of homosexuality and the judgement that will come for this disobedience, but I have seen it stated time and time again about how we should treat each other. I've seen where we are to be compassionate, kind, patient, tolerant. Also, the scriptures say, "judgement is mine, says the Lord". It's real clear to me that I'm not to put anyone in check but myself.

There are so many uncertainties that arise that make life very difficult, but just think of how life could be if we all had the opportunity to be whatever we are, without having to be invisible or to assimilate to some standard or

requirement that is deemed the "only way" to be in the world. We deny so much human potential and limit so much progress just because so many people are forced to live life minus real quality.

If we have any common sense, we know that the world is made up of all kinds of different people because that is the way it is supposed to be. We are not supposed to be carbon copies of each other, so therefore it stands to reason that all the various ways we exist in this world are o.k and should be supported, respected and allowed to experience life to the fullest without suffering and denial.

It's so silly for a label that is used to describe people should hold so much meaning and reinforcement on how we participate in the world...to control whether we will have opportunities or be denied opportunities, whether we will be doing the controlling or be controlled.

None of us will win at this game of life if we don't begin to recognize that we are all responsible for each other and we all must give the very best that we have in order for all of us to survive. The elimination of the difficulties in life does not come from us being well prepared for the environmental consequences that happen, but life is made much less difficult when we as people stop perpetuating misery and misfortune on each other based on who is more "right" and deserving to live in this world, and begin to see all of us as being valuable and deserving inhabitants.

Janet Perkins



## Black Women: Organizing for Empowerment in the 21st Century

June 1,2,3, 1990  
Henderson State University  
1100 Henderson Street  
Arkadelphia, Arkansas

### A Conference For, By, and About Black Women

*Conference Sessions*  
Economic Struggles of Black  
Women and Determining Our  
Strengths  
Carving A Path For Those Who  
Come After Us – Our  
Children, Our Future  
The Violence We've Come to Live  
With – and Understanding It's  
Not O.K.  
Internalized Oppression:  
Sometimes We Become Part  
of the Problem  
No Matter How Different We are,  
We're All Valuable

*Special Events*  
Salute to Unsung Sheroes  
Cultural Fashion Show and  
Celebration of Our Lives  
Speakout  
Jane Sapp in Concert

*Keynote Speakers*  
Barbara Major  
Euba Harris Winton

For registration information, call  
the Women's Project at 372-  
5113.





## BOOK NOTES FROM THE WOMEN'S PROJECT LIBRARY

**LIBRARY VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**  
Somebody pulled the plug on the pool of

library volunteers!

Seriously, there is a variety of work for library volunteers and some of it can be done at times other than library hours (Thursday & Friday, 10am-2pm and Saturday, 11am-1pm). We definitely need women to staff the library during those hours, once a month, twice a month, whatever. In addition, you might want to help shelve returned and new books, file articles in the Resource Files, or send overdue notices, all of which can be done during hours when the project is open but not the library. If you're interested, call the Project and leave your name and number and I will get in touch with you.

### NEW IN THE LIBRARY

Humid Pitch: Narrative Poetry by Cheryl Clarke. "I do not know Cheryl Clarke's field of inspiration. But then, I do not know plumbing. I do know when a faucet is working well. Ms. Clarke treats language with care and concern. Her musics are various: strong, or sharp, or quick, or lulling. Rich and Requiring." – Gwendolyn Brooks

South Africa: The Cordoned Heart – Twenty South African Photographers, edited by Omar Badsha, foreword by Bishop Desmond Tutu. "...these are the truths that must be known as we struggle to understand

tumultuous current events in So. Africa and the complex and terrible history that impels them. Their photographs speak to the heart with a speed and wisdom beyond words." – Cornell Capa, Director, International Center of Photography

The Secret Trauma: Incest in the Lives of Girls and Women by Diana E.H. Russell. Diana Russell has a rare ability to combine dispassionate scholarship with passionate commitment to the cause of women. With daring and persistence, she has documented the fact that incest is endemic to our culture. This is a definitive work which will be used as a point of reference for years to come." – Judith Lewis Herman, MD

Heather Has Two Mommies, written by Lesléa Newman and illustrated by Diana Souza. A children's book about a five-year-old whose co-parents are lesbians. A positive story with wonderful illustrations and actual drawings by children.

Other books written for children and available in the library are:

Cesar Chavez by Ruth Franchere, illustrated by Earl Thollander  
Coming of Age: The Hopi Way by Louise Monjo, illustrated by Thomas Brand

Malcolm X by Arnold Adoff, illustrated by John Wilson  
Bubbie and Zadie Come to My House: A Story for Hanukkah by Daniel Halevi Bloom, illustrations by Claudia Julian

### NEW VIDEOS

Eyes on the Prize, Part II - 8 parts  
Common Threads–The A.I.D.S. Quilt  
Your Legal Rights (or lack thereof) As A Gay Man or Lesbian - panel discussion sponsored by Ark. Gay and Lesbian Task Force  
Sonia Sanchez reading her poetry and drama at the 1989 Women Writers Conference at the University of Kentucky

### RESOURCE FILES

We are developing a list of local resources for services provided by women and businesses owned by women which we hope to eventually have on the computer. Right now this information (in the form of letters or business cards sent to the Women's Project) is being kept in a file in the Periodical Room of the library. If you want information about your service or business included, please mail it to us, c/o the library.



### ECOFEMINISM, SPIRITUALITY & ADDICTION: MAKING CONNECTIONS

Saturday, June 16, 1990  
10am to 3pm  
Unitarian Universalist Church  
Little Rock

A half-day workshop devoted to exploring the intimate connections between the ecological movement, the concern for the earth and its resources, and feminism. Call Jan Waldrip at 375-2448 Thursday mornings from 10 until 1 to register.



## TRANSFORMATION GOES BI-MONTHLY! JOIN NOW.

*Transformation* is now  
published six times every year.

Six times each year, members  
and volunteers receive analysis  
of contemporary issues,  
information about Women's  
Project upcoming events and  
activities, book reviews, and  
more.

If you are not a Women's  
Project member or volunteer  
and would like to continue  
receiving the newsletter,  
please fill out the membership  
form on this page.

Yes, I would like to join  
the Women's Project.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone/day \_\_\_\_\_

Phone/evening \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ \$ 5 low Income  
\_\_\_\_\_ 15  
\_\_\_\_\_ 25  
\_\_\_\_\_ 50  
\_\_\_\_\_ 100

Make checks payable to the  
Women's Project  
2224 Main Street  
Little Rock, AR 72206

# OUR MISSION

Our goal is social change or, as  
the poet Adrienne Rich writes,  
"the transformation of the  
world." We believe this world  
can be changed to become a  
place of peace and justice for all  
women.

We take risks in our work; we  
take unpopular stands. We  
work for all women and against  
all forms of discrimination and  
oppression. We believe that we  
cannot work for all women and  
against sexism unless we also  
work against racism, classism,  
ageism, anti-Semitism,  
heterosexism and homophobia.  
We see the connection among  
these oppressions as the  
context for violence against  
women in this society.

We are concerned in particular  
about issues of importance to

traditionally underrepresented  
women: poor women, aged  
women, women of color,  
teenage mothers, lesbians,  
women in prisons, etc. All are  
women who experience  
discrimination and violence  
against their lives.

We are committed to working  
multi-culturally, multi-racially,  
and to making our work and  
cultural events accessible to  
low income women. We  
believe that women will not  
know equality until they know  
economic justice.

We believe that a few  
committed women working in  
coalition and in consensus with  
other women can make  
significant change in the  
quality of life for all women.

## CURRENT PROJECTS

### Women and Work: Breaking the Barriers

A training and advocacy project to make nontraditional jobs accessible to women.

### Women's Watchcare Network

A project to monitor incidents of racial, religious, sexual, and anti-gay violence, and the activities of hate groups in Arkansas.

### The Homophobia and Racism Project

Workshops on understanding racism and homophobia and developing methods to eliminating them.

### Prostitutes and AIDS

A project to develop strategies for working with prostitutes and caregivers around AIDS issues.

### Communications and Events

A newsletter, a lending library, statewide and regional conferences, and production of women singers, poets and novelists.

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**The Women's Project**  
2224 Main Street  
Little Rock, AR 72206

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**Non-Profit Organization**  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Little Rock, Arkansas  
Permit No. 448



## Women's Project Presents Awards

On June 9, 1990, Betty Overton was presented with the Evangeline K. Brown Award at the Women's Project Annual Awards Celebration.

Each year the Evangeline K. Brown award is presented to a woman who has made a difference in her and in our global community, who epitomizes the Women's Project goal, "the transformation of the world." In past years the Award has been presented to Brown, Annie Abrams, the Project for Victims of Family Violence, and Carolyn Layman.

Dr. Betty J. Overton has served as Dean of the Graduate School at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock since 1985. In this position she is responsible for oversight of over 30 graduate programs and the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. A member of the Women's Project Board of Directors, Betty served as the organization's first chairperson. Betty is also a member of the Board of Directors for Our House, a shelter for the homeless, a member of the Black Women's Political Network, and a member of the Community Action Board for Combating Teen Pregnancy.

Betty is also the author of many papers and presentations including 1978-1988: *The Last Decade of Black Women Writing; The Disappearing Black Teacher in Arkansas; To Be Black, Female and an Administrator; and Women's Spirituality in the Writings of Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, and Toni Cade Bambara.*

Willie Mae Pantel was awarded the Volunteer of the Year Award. A volunteer since September, 1989, Willie often volunteers 10-20 hours per week at the Project and plays a key role in organizing our frequent mailings. Willie is an alumni of the Women's Project support group at the Women's Unit in Pine Bluff.

At the event, a brief report of Women's Project accomplishments was presented including progress on the Women's Watchcare Network, Prostitutes and Prison Projects, the Women and Work Project, and the Black Women's Conference.

Our thanks to Drs. Lloyd and Wieke Benjamin for their home and to I.J. Routen for her performance.

**Women's Watchcare News  
On Page 6.**

# Black Women's Conference

Over 100 African-American women from around the state gathered on June 1, 2, 3, 1990 for our conference, Black Women: Organizing for

*Sometimes We Become Part of the Problem*

- *No Matter How Different We Are, We're All Valuable*

provided challenging keynote addresses. Jane Sapp and the children of the conference brought a wonderful cultural evening to all. A cultural fashion show and recognition of our Unsung Sheroes further tied us together.



The conference brought those who attended closer together, with a new commitment to organize with African-American women in their own home regions around issues they deem as important.

Here's a sampling of the evaluations:

"This event saved my 33 year old life, hadn't slept in months. Now by being open to all the love and support my heart palpitations have ceased, and I slept. I wish all present lived in the same locale."

This is the greatest happening in my life. I hope there will be many more conferences in the future. I also hope that when my daughters come of age, that these conferences will still be going on."

Empowerment in the 21st Century. The conference was organized by, about, and for Black women in Arkansas.

Barbara Major from New Orleans and Euba Harris Winton from Fort Smith

Conference participants attended five group sessions on the following topics:

- *Carving a Path for Those Who Come After Us – Our Children, Our Future*
- *The Violence We've Come to Live With and Understanding It's Not OK*
- *Economic Struggles of Black Women – and Determining Our Strengths*
- *Internalized Oppression:*





# Women at Work



Now in its third year, the Women and Work Project continues to advocate for women in nontraditional jobs, especially those in construction related fields.

A brief review of the first two years of the project has shown significant results. Eighty nine women completed the Women and Work training including twelve women who were incarcerated at the Women's Unit in Pine Bluff.

Of those who attended the training, seventy were not working at the time that training began.

Following the training program, twelve had not yet been released from prison, and thirteen others were not working. Thirty-eight women found work in traditional jobs, twelve in nontraditional jobs, nine were enrolled in school, and the status of four women was unknown.



The Women and Work Project has contacted over two hundred employers advocating for more women in nontraditional jobs. Monthly support groups provide an opportunity for present and past program participants to meet with employers as well as to share information and skills.

For information about the Project, call Janet or Jo.

## Women's Resource Manual

As an important component of the Prostitutes and AIDS Project, we have completed our Women's Resource Manual.

Spearheaded by Women's Project Intern Cheryl Doss, the 56 page manual was funded by the Arkansas Department of Health. The Resource Manual includes chapters on AIDS services and information, sexually transmitted diseases, violence against women, legal

information, prostitution, and resources in such areas as childcare, counseling, crisis financial assistance, drug and alcohol treatment programs, employment, government assistance programs, health services, hotlines, literacy programs, support groups and other support services. Manuals are free.

For a single copy of the manual, write us at 2224 Main

Street, Little Rock AR 72206 or phone at 501/372-5113. For multiple copies, call or write us to make arrangements for pick-up or delivery.

Work of the project for 1990-1991 will include safer sex meetings for women, trainings for workers in battered women's programs, and AIDS training for residents at the Women's Unit in Pine Bluff.

## USA TODAY: State Department now tracks violence against women

For the first time, the State Department has instructed its embassies to focus on the extent to which foreign governments tolerate or condone violence against women according to Thomas Williams of the department's Bureau of Human Rights.

"This year we made a change. We had been getting indications from a variety of sources, including Congress, that there was not sufficient attention being paid to the question of violence against women," he said.

Williams said the State Department's annual reports had included information about discrimination against women in jobs and educational opportunities. But this year, the February report specifically mentioned all forms of violence, including wife beating; dowry deaths, which occur in India; and genital mutilation.

What constitutes a human rights violation?

"If violence is occurring against women, let's say wife beating on a significant scale, and government doesn't even attempt to enforce whatever laws it may have on the books, then we would consider that a human rights abuse because the laws are not being

applied equally," Williams aid.

The bureau's actions can extend beyond paperwork.

"Violence against women will be treated as any other form of human rights abuse. And where it is egregious, we would recommend further action."

Among the options available, Williams said, are:

- private, behind the scene talks to influence change
- public criticism
- foreign aid reductions or cuts

*This comes at a time in which the United States Congress has enacted and the President has signed hate crimes legislation which does not include violence against women as a bias crime.*

— The Women's Project

## ONE DAY IN THE LIVES OF USA'S CHILDREN

Every day in the USA:

- Δ 2,795 teens (women under 20) get pregnant
- Δ 372 teens miscarry
- Δ 1,106 teens have abortions
- Δ 1,295 teens give birth
- Δ 689 babies are born to women who have had inadequate prenatal care
- Δ 67 babies die before one month of life
- Δ 105 babies die before their first birthday
- Δ 27 children die from poverty
- Δ 6 teenagers commit suicide
- Δ 30 children are wounded by guns
- Δ 135,000 children bring a gun to school
- Δ 7,742 teenagers become sexually active
- Δ 623 teenagers get syphilis or gonorrhea
- Δ 211 children are arrested for drug abuse
- Δ 1,512 children drop out of schools
- Δ 1,629 children are in adult schools.

Source: Children's Defense Fund

## ONE NATION UNDER DUKE: A Plan to Segregate America



David Duke's relocation plan for minorities as promoted in the December 1984 newsletter of the National Association for the Advancement of White People, the group he founded.

David Duke, a U.S. Representative is a candidate for U.S. Senate in Louisiana. His candidacy is supported by hate groups throughout the United States.





## BOOK NOTES FROM THE WOMEN'S PROJECT LIBRARY

*Women,  
Culture &  
Politics,*  
Angela Y.

Davis — "...the most difficult challenge facing the activist is to respond fully to the needs of the moment and to do so in such a way that the light one attempts to shine on the present will simultaneously illuminate the future."

—from the Introduction.  
"The power of her historical insights and the sweetness of her dream cannot be denied." —*The New York Times Book Review*

*The House with the Blind Glass Windows,* Herbjorg Wassmo —  
"Although this novel addresses the issues of child sexual abuse, poverty and feminism realistically, the characters and the complexity of their lives remain paramount. Wassmo presents Tora's inner world in such a tender, touching way. A compelling, thoroughly engaging story." — Ellen Bass

*The Eating Hill,* Karen Mitchell — The first

winner of the Eighth Mountain Poetry Prize. The judge was Audre Lorde, who said, "I chose *The Eating Hill* because of its skill, passion, insight and commitment to living." These poems are full of people and their stories: they are about birth and death, love, loneliness and spirituality, and the Black experience in America.

*Back Rooms: An Oral History of the Illegal Abortion Era,* Ellen Messer & Kathryn May, eds. — Those who came of age after 1973 cannot remember the days before *Roe v. Wade*. This book presents the moving testimony of women—and men—who cannot forget. At a time when mounting pressure from anti-abortion activists increasingly challenges the *Roe v. Wade* decision, this book lends authority and moral clarity to the pro-choice position.

*Women on War: Essential Voices for the Nuclear Age from a Brilliant International Assembly,* Daniela Gloseffi, ed. — Here in one volume are the voices of notable women—both past

and present and from all over the world—joined together in a plea for peace. They range from Grace Paley to Winnie Mandela, Hannah Arendt to Simone de Beauvoir, Doris Lessing to Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Nadine Gordimer, and many more.

*Cards and postcards are now available for sale in the library.* They include individual cards from sets of African-American cards and lesbian/gay cards. There are also new books on sale from these two categories. Come in and browse!

**START SAVING FOR  
THE FALL YARD SALE  
TO BENEFIT THE  
LIBRARY**



# Women's Project Commemorates Women's Lives

## PRESS STATEMENT Memorial Day MAY 30, 1990

Since January 1, 1990, at least one woman in Arkansas has been murdered every week—not because she was targeted for robbery but because she was a woman. Twenty-six women were murdered by men. Some



were killed by husbands, some by boyfriends, some by acquaintances, some by strangers. The murders had common elements: they were brutal and torturous—women were stabbed repeatedly, shot in the face with .12 gauge shotguns, strangled, abducted; and they contained sexual violence—women were found nude or partly clothed and sodomized or raped.

We are gathered here today to mourn the deaths of these twenty-six women and also the countless women and girls who have been damaged by rape, beatings, incest, terrorization. We are acknowledging the on-going war against women and we are honoring both the survivors and the dead.

We have placed a tombstone for each dead woman on the lawn of our office to heighten the public awareness of the brutality toward women that leads to death. We call this violence bigoted hate violence—not domestic violence, not family violence, not cultural violence—because of the extreme brutality, the use of hate language and name-calling, the terrorization, the lack of motive other than the victim's gender, her presence, and her status in a society that does not consider women to be the equal of men or their lives to be as valuable.

One might ask why this killing of women is



considered bigoted hate violence when the murderer is often a person they know or are related to through marriage or a love

relationship. We ask, what difference does it make? Both strangers and loved ones kill from a sense of societal permission. In fact, isn't it all the more hideous, more atrocious when a woman is killed by someone who is in a relationship with her? Isn't it worse when the murder occurs in a context where love and respect



should be the norm?

We are here today because we know that violence against women is minimized because women's lives are not valued highly. We are here because women are not considered valuable enough to be legally granted equal rights, pay equity, and control over our own bodies. We are here because both men and women have become desensitized to the to the onslaught of violence that women of every race, age, and class experience through beatings, disfigurement, incest, rape, sexual harrassment, pornography, and murder. Too many people have come to believe that violence is simply to be expected in the lives of women. It is seen as an



unavoidable way of life.

We are here today because we believe that violence should not be a fact of life for women, because we believe that society can be changed to a place where women do not have to live in fear for their lives. What do we want?

1) We want violence against women to be considered as critically important as all other violence against persons and against property. We want police, prosecutors, courts to begin acting toward women without bias. We want violence between men and women in relationships not to be seen as "domestic violence" and thereby something private because of an accepted definition of

family that includes the belief that men own women.

2) We want the laws currently on the books to be rigorously enforced, restraining orders to have true enforcement, and batterers, rapists and murderers to receive the full force of the law.

3) We want the violence against black women to be treated with the same seriousness as the violence against white women.

4) We want guns to be banned by law, and the law vigorously enforced.

Finally, we are here today to say that we cannot afford such human loss. In a country that purports to cherish motherhood and apple pie—so much so that women must be "protected" from military combat, equal opportunity in the workplace, and control over our bodies—our people are standing by while mothers, sisters, daughters, the women behind the sentimental notion of motherhood and apple pie, are being destroyed. This destruction must stop—for the survival of our society, for all of us.

—The Women's Project



## 1990 WOMEN'S WATCHCARE NETWORK LOG

1. Dumas, 1/21, AG. Cheryl Franklin, 28, mother of two, was found partly clothed along a country road, "apparently beaten with a slab of concrete during an attempted sexual encounter." Three men were charged. Prosecutor said it "appeared" that crack was involved.

2. Blytheville, 1/12-19, AG. June Larrimore, 24, found partially clothed in bedroom. The police chief said the scene was "one of the most brutal" he'd seen during his 18 year law enforcement career. The state medical examiner's office said Larrimore was "stabbed approximately 130 times in the breasts, vagina, buttocks, both eyes and forehead." The murder occurred two days after the couple had celebrated their first wedding anniversary. The husband, Gregory Larrimore, 27, was charged.

3. Greenbrier, 2/4-9, AG. Pamela Faye Felkins, 32, a video store clerk, was abducted, raped, beaten to death, dumped on a muddy hillside. Police first reported the body had been



mutilated and then denied the report. The Sheriff Chief Investigator said, "This was overkill. It was kind of like he had a vengeance against women or something."

4. \*Pine Bluff, 2/4-5, AG. Hortense Jones, 85, Black civic leader, was found in her home with her throat cut. In a similar case, Mandy Brown, 88, Jones' blind neighbor, was found suffocated 12/89.

5. North Little Rock, 2/11, AG. Charlotte Irene Harrison Rhoden, 42, was found dead in the kitchen with a 12 gauge shotgun wound in the face. Her husband, Ted Rhodes, 50, was charged with 1st degree murder.

6. Benton, 2/12-16, AG. Laurie Ann Brown, 28, 5 1/2 months pregnant, was found with her throat slashed, next to the China Grove Cemetery. She had struggled for about 60 feet. Brothers Darrell Wayne Sheridan of Little Rock and Robert Sheridan, 28, of Benton, have been charged with capital murder. Authorities have said the killing was tied to drugs—that the men thought she might "squeal on them."

7. Luxora, 2/22, AG. Bertha Killian, 39, was shot at least once in the head and may have suffered other wounds during a domestic violence argument with her husband.

8. Newark, 2/28, AG. Sheila Gregory, mid-twenties, was found dead, lying face down on her bed. Prior to the autopsy, there were no apparent signs of foul play.

9. \*West Memphis, 3/12. Cleopatra Morris, 84, was found stabbed to death in her bedroom. Tommy Lee Hall, 31, was charged

with capital murder.

10. Des Arc, 3/15, DeValls Bluff Times. Shirley Robinson, 36, was fatally shot by her estranged husband, James Robinson, 41. The Sheriff reported that he had been called because the husband had been harassing her at work and she wanted the sheriff to meet her at home. A deadbolt lock had been installed that morning and was still in place, locked, after the door was kicked in. She and her 16 yr. old son and his 21 yr. old male friend locked themselves in the bathroom but Robinson entered the room through the window. "She was trying to crawl under the bed when he shot her," the Sheriff said. Robinson then shot and wounded himself.

11. Fayetteville, 3/15-16, AG. Katherine Deason, 32, and her children, Julieann, 3, and Sean Weylin, 1, were killed with a .30 caliber semi-automatic weapon by Jimmy Earl Deason, 29.

12. Ashdown, 3/22, Ashdown Little River News. Deborah Kay Jackson was shot by her husband, Asberry Fortson, Jr., 42, who was charged with 1st degree murder.

13. Helena, 3/20, Helena-West Helena World. Victoria Phillips, 44, was shot in the eye with a .357 magnum pistol by her husband, Danny Phillips, 46, who has been charged with 1st degree murder.

14. Fort Smith, 3/21-24, SW Times Record. Ramona Gregory, 15, missing since Feb.; body was found naked & badly decomposed. Police initially thought the remains might be those of Lucy Hassler, 34.

15. Helena, 3/23, AG. Demetrius Young, 9, was shot by her

stepfather, Essix Brown, 67, tried to shoot his wife.

16. Benton, 4/4, AG. Kiva M. Corwin died from a blow to the back of her head when she fell from the back of Larry McDonald's pickup truck. He is charged with manslaughter.

17. Sherwood, 4/4-4/26, AG. Bonnie Fleitas, 37, was found strangled in her apartment. After a weeklong hunt, her husband, a former police officer, was arrested and placed in a drug treatment center. While an officer in R.I., he had been sued for beating a suspect, and he was fired from the NLR police department in 1988 for using excessive force against a handcuffed man. 5/17, AG. Fleitas was denied bond because he walked away from a drug treatment center earlier this month.

18. Monticello, 4/22-27, AD, AG, Courier Democrat. Teresa Mae Thomas, 36, a school librarian, was strangled to death on a deserted road by her estranged husband, former Wilmot Police Chief, A.C. Thomas, 47, who later jumped out of a fourth story jail window, sustaining multiple fractures. The murder occurred on their 11th anniversary. Thomas was charged with felony murder.

19. \*Pine Bluff, 4/24-26, AG. Nettie Walker, 81, found in her bed, stabbed and beaten to death. Mrs. Walker was the grandmother of State Rep. Bill Walker. Esaw Eatmon, 27, was charged with capital murder. He is also a suspect in the killings of Mandie Brown, 88, found 12/15/89, and Hortense Jones, 85, found 2/3/90.

20. Jonesboro, 3/24, AG.



Barbara Lou Easton, 32, was found on the kitchen floor, shot in the face with a 12 gauge shotgun. Her boyfriend, Jerry C. Minton, 46, was held on a first degree murder charge.

21. West Memphis, 5/1-5/9, AD, AG. Beverly Diane Hawkins, 30, was found stabbed in her home after neighbors (her inlaws) heard a strange sound coming from the house, and found the sound to be from Hawkins' children, age 2 and 3. Jerry West Green was arraigned on a capital murder charge.

22. Little Rock, 5/4, AD. Evone Pettus, 33, died from being shot in the back of the head with a .38 caliber pistol. Her boyfriend, Rickey Earnest, 30, who had been released on a \$25,000 bond for first degree battery, was charged with first degree murder.

23. Little Rock, 5/4, AG. Onesa Williams, 82, was killed with one shot in her chest during an argument over the way \$5 was spent. Her husband, Luther Williams, 93, killed her.

24. Little Rock, 5/23, AD. Valerie Mitchell, 30, was found lying facedown along the road on West 16th Street. She had been shot at least once in the chest with a large-caliber. Perry Thurman, who had dated Mitchell, was charged with the shooting.

25. Camden, 5/23, AG. Marie Shaw, 59, was found shot in a gravel pit in Ouachita County where she and her husband had been fishing. Her husband is wanted in connection with the death.

26. Bentonville, 5/27/90, AD; Benton County Daily Demoncrat. Erma M. Sims, 42, was found shot in her home east of Lowell. She

had been shot four times in the back. She lay dead 4-12 hours before being found by her 4 year old daughter. Her common-law husband is wanted for questioning.

*Unless otherwise noted, all reports are from the Arkansas Gazette (AG) or the Arkansas Democrat (AD). Under sexist violence, we did not include the hundred accounts of rapes, abductions, incest, battering, and terroristic threatening of women. However, these accounts are on file in our office, if needed.*

\*An asterisk indicates that robbery could have been a

possible motive.

With many thanks to our many volunteer monitors,

Kelly Mitchell-Clark  
Suzanne Pharr  
The Women's Project  
2224 Main Street  
Little Rock, AR 72206.

16B Thursday May 31, 1990 Arkansas Gazette

## METRO/STATE

# Rights group battling violence against women

*"In memory of those who died for being women" — sign on the Women's Project lawn, 2224 Main St., Little Rock*

By Carla Johnson Kimbrough  
Gazette Staff

Kathy Logan of Little Rock didn't get a chance to pay her last respects to a high school friend until Wednesday, when she placed a half-dozen red roses by a commemorative tombstone for June Larrimore.

Larrimore, of Blytheville, was stabbed 130 times in January — two days after celebrating her first wedding anniversary. She was 24.

Her husband, Gregory Larrimore, was charged with the crime, but is out on a \$150,000 bond. A late August trial is scheduled in Craighead County, Police Chief Larry Christie said.

"I didn't get to go to the funeral because of work," Logan said Wednesday. "I had to pay my respects to my friend."

The Women's Project, a commu-

nity-based women's rights organization, made that possible with its lawn display of tombstones of 26 women killed in Arkansas so far this year. That's more than one woman killed each week. Most were killed by husbands or boyfriends, the Women's Project said.

"It's dangerous to be a wife and mother," Brenda Hampton, a staff member for Advocates for Battered Women, said. "It's time for the people of Arkansas to react with outrage."

Suzanne Pharr, Women's Project director, said people have become desensitized to violence against women. The Women's Project supports weapon bans and enforcement of current laws, she said.

It also wants police, prosecutors and the courts to treat women without bias and to consider violence against black women with the same seriousness as violence against white women, Pharr said.

"We are here today because we believe that violence should not be a fact of life for women," Pharr

said.

Attached to the tombstones were news articles of how the women were killed. The headlines told their stories: "Dumas woman found beaten to death in ditch outside town," "Man held after death of girlfriend," "Babies, mother slain," "Hazen man kills estranged wife," "Boyfriend faces murder charge," "Wilmot police chief arrested in estranged wife's death."

Schatzi Riley, who works in Little Rock and lives in Perry County, said she was shocked by the number of deaths of women.

"I really can't believe it," Riley, who was among about 50 people attending the ceremony, said. "To see 26 in five months and Arkansas is a small state. ... It's not like it's New York City."

The other shocking aspect was that most of the women were killed by people who knew them, Riley said.

Kelly Mitchell-Clark, who directs the project's Women's Watchcare Network, said about 100 volunteers statewide documented hate violence against women and other minorities.

"We call them our eyes and ears," Mitchell-Clark said.

Most Arkansans are "decent people of good will," she said, and reading this data on hate crimes may bring them into the fight against violence.

# Schedule of Events



**All events, unless otherwise indicated, are held at the Women's Project at 2224 Main Street in Little Rock. The offices are wheelchair accessible. For more information about these events, call 372-5113.**

## July

Tuesday	3	Support Group for Formerly Incarcerated Women. 7pm.
Wednesday	4	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon.
Saturday	7	Debbie and Dee and ALASS in concert. 8:30pm. Unitarian Universalist Church.
Tuesday	10	Lesbian Support Group. 7pm.
Wednesday	11	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon.
Thursday	12	Support Group for Women in nontraditional jobs. 7pm.
Friday	13	Women's Brown Bag Lunch. Noon.
Tuesday	17	Support Group for Formerly Incarcerated Women. 7pm.
Wednesday	18	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. 7pm.
Sunday	22	Sunday Supper Club. 7pm.
Monday	23	Disabled Lesbians Support Group. 7pm.
Tuesday	24	Lesbian Support Group. 7pm.
Wednesday	25	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon.

## August

Wednesday	1	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon.
Tuesday	7	Support Group for Formerly Incarcerated Women. 7pm.
Wednesday	8	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon.
Tuesday	14	Lesbian Support Group. 7pm.
Wednesday	15	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon.
Thursday	16	Support Group for Women in nontraditional jobs. 7pm.
Friday	17	Women's Brown Bag Lunch. Noon.
Tuesday	21	Support Group for Formerly Incarcerated Women. 7pm.
Wednesday	22	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. 7pm.
Sunday	26	Sunday Supper Club. 5pm.
Monday	27	Disabled Lesbians Support Group. 7pm.
Tuesday	28	Lesbian Support Group. 7pm.
Wednesday	29	Brown Bag Lunch for Women in nontraditional jobs. Noon.

## Construction Skills for Women Offered in Evening Sessions

Starting Monday July 9, 1990 from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., the Women's Project will offer a series of two hour trainings on tool identification and blue print reading.

Participants will also have hands on experience with working on a small construction project.

Childcare will be provided.

For more information, childcare or to register, call Janet or Jo at 372-5113.



## TRANSFORMATION GOES BI-MONTHLY! JOIN NOW.

*Transformation* is now published six times every year.

Six times each year, members and volunteers receive analysis of contemporary issues, information about Women's Project upcoming events and activities, book reviews, and more.

If you are not a Women's Project member or volunteer and would like to continue receiving the newsletter, please fill out the membership form on this page.

Yes, I would like to join the Women's Project.

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City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone/day \_\_\_\_\_

Phone/evening \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ \$ 5 low income  
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\_\_\_\_\_ 25  
\_\_\_\_\_ 50  
\_\_\_\_\_ 100

Make checks payable to the  
Women's Project  
2224 Main Street  
Little Rock, AR 72206

# OUR MISSION

Our goal is social change or, as the poet Adrienne Rich writes, "the transformation of the world." We believe this world can be changed to become a place of peace and justice for all women.

We take risks in our work; we take unpopular stands. We work for all women and against all forms of discrimination and oppression. We believe that we cannot work for all women and against sexism unless we also work against racism, classism, ageism, anti-Semitism, heterosexism and homophobia. We see the connection among these oppressions as the context for violence against women in this society.

We are concerned in particular about issues of importance to

traditionally underrepresented women: poor women, aged women, women of color, teenage mothers, lesbians, women in prisons, etc. All are women who experience discrimination and violence against their lives.

We are committed to working multi-culturally, multi-racially, and to making our work and cultural events accessible to low income women. We believe that women will not know equality until they know economic justice.

We believe that a few committed women working in coalition and in consensus with other women can make significant change in the quality of life for all women.

## CURRENT PROJECTS

### Women and Work: Breaking the Barriers

A training and advocacy project to make nontraditional jobs accessible to women.

### Women's Watchcare Network

A project to monitor incidents of racial, religious, sexual, and anti-gay violence, and the activities of hate groups in Arkansas.

### The Homophobia and Racism Project

Workshops on understanding racism and homophobia and developing methods to eliminate them.

### Prostitutes and AIDS

A project to develop strategies for working with prostitutes and caregivers around AIDS issues.

### Communications and Events

A newsletter, a lending library, statewide and regional conferences, and production of women singers, poets and novelists.

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**The Women's Project  
2224 Main Street  
Little Rock, AR 72206**

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## The Battered Women's Movement: A Brief Retrospective – and a Call for Action

Southern families—perhaps all families—can get downright ornery when someone from outside criticizes one of us. We circle up and lay out the defenses in what appears to be an united front. However, from the inside, we can lay out all our problems and talk them to death, or in good times, to a solution.

In the spirit of that tradition, I am writing about some of the problems and failures I have witnessed as a participant in the battered women's movement since 1976. For more than a decade I have written articles to document or analyze or strategize or criticize the work of this loosely knit, varied group of us (numbering thousands) who have worked to end violence in the lives of women and children. This is the first time I have taken something of the long view, looking back over time, to give a personal assessment of that work.

I write this article as a daughter of the battered women's movement because, though I had been involved in other movement work in the 1960's and 1970's, it was the battered women's movement that gave me a chance to grow as much and as fast politically as I was capable. It was here through working alongside extraordinarily diverse women and learning the ways that violence worked in our lives that I found all women's issues converged and were connected. It was here I learned that every woman was a battered woman. It was here that I learned from

battered women an ever-growing analysis of the many forms of oppression. It was here that I grew up.

Because I have such deep love for the battered women's movement, because it gave me the women I call my closest friends and chosen family, because it is the place I have so often felt the sense of genuine and lasting worth in our work, because for so many years it was home and community, I find it now painful and profoundly disappointing to witness its failures—and to write about them. I write now because I still believe there is no more important work than our efforts to end violence and because I maintain hope for radical change. I write as part of the dialogue that must take place to find the strategies, the solutions that lead to lives of safety and wholeness for all women.

The early days of the U.S. battered women's movement were filled with the heady air of rebellion and creation, of women's power and control over our lives. Battered women opened their homes to house other battered women. Women broke the silence of centuries and spoke out to say they had been beaten, raped, terrorized. Ordinary women took extraordinary steps of courage to leave their homes and all means of financial support to seek safety for themselves and their children in the company of other women.

Thousands of women joined this  
(continued on page 2)

## The Battered Women's Movement...

from page 1

movement—some were recently battered, some battered years before, and some not currently experiencing violence in their lives—all seeking hope for safety and a better world. As shelters began to be opened and staffed, it was a grassroots movement, a popular movement—that is, one created from the populace, not the government or already established institutions—and it was radical.

As P. Catlin Fullwood, the founding chair of NCADV's Women of Color Task Force, used to say, most of us were not radicals when we entered the battered women's movement; we were very ordinary women and it radicalized us. How did it do that? By chance or by design, it followed some long established steps of popular movements. With the understanding that all women share the common oppression of sexism and its attendant violence, the movement offered a place to every woman who was willing to share her life. It broke the isolation that keeps people from being able to recognize common problems and organize together.

From that beginning, the steps were simple but life-changing:

- 1) Women broke socially enforced silence by telling the stories of the violence they had experienced and they found safety together;
- 2) Together women reflected upon those stories, coming to realize that each individual was not unique in her story but that they all shared common elements.
- 3) Analysis of those common

elements led women to stop blaming themselves for the violence and instead to look at the source of the violence. In time, it was necessary to look beyond the individual abuser and to analyze the institutions that support domination and violence.

4) And finally, women recognized that action was necessary, and that it had to be more than individual; it was essential for women to join together to confront and change institutions—in fact, the entire fabric of society. (It was in the confrontation of institutions that women were radicalized, Fullwood said, because we never thought they would be so entrenched, still so woman-hating, once we showed them the full extent of violence against women.)

So far, so good. What more could one ask of a movement? Perhaps that it be not just a radical movement, that is, one that goes to the root of the problem, but also a liberation movement? A movement that offers power and leadership to all its people, equality of access and opportunity, a new way of being with one another? Liberation for all? Power to the people?

Paulo Freire points out that the difference between liberating work and domesticating work is that liberating work confronts and changes institutions (or creates new ones) so that oppression is overcome and the people have power, while domesticating work seeks to make oppression more bearable to the people who experience it. Domesticating work most closely resembles charity, or doing for people rather than working with people to have control over their own lives. It was in choosing between these two points of view that decisions were made that led to the major failure in the battered women's movement.

By the early 1980's, battered women's activists had slammed right up against entrenched institutions that supported male dominance, centuries of social conditioning for women to be "nice girls," the Reagan years, and a job market flooded with social workers. The coded words for the pressures for domestication placed on women were "institutionalization, credibility, and professionalism."

Institutionalization. When women confronted institutions about their

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covert or overt support of violence, we were told that the best way to make change was from within, that the goal of the battered women's movement should be to get shelters incorporated into already existing institutions, thereby insuring their respectability, their continuity, their economic survival. Consequently, many women made the decision to try to make their shelters a part of—or at least accepted by—the very institutions that had historically oppressed us, the institutions that were the embodiment of, the enforcers of our oppression. Battered women's organizations began to be in the position of the chickens trying to win the approval of the fox. The power began to move from women's hands into the hands of parenting institutions—churches, YWCA's, county governments, Salvation Armies, alcohol and drug treatment centers, etc.

Credibility. From the beginning, there was tension between the idea of a movement and the idea of service delivery, empowerment and charity, social change and social work. Some people argued effectively that it could be a movement and still provide the services of safety, housing, childcare, support. However, the idea of a movement was frightening to many women because it called for reflection, analysis, confrontation, and change to a new, previously unknown, way of living; that is, it called for behavior that for centuries had been called unwomanly, unladylike, unnatural for women. To gain credibility, we were advised to create boards that were filled with powerful members, both female and male, from the community's established

institutions. Those who followed this advice, created boards that were made up of representatives of business or institutions with no history of supporting women's empowerment—and constituents (battered women and those with a history of working on behalf of women) were left out. Many battered women's organizations then developed into something that resembled businesses whose products were service and public relations.

Professionalism. In the early years of the movement, battered women helped one another, created shelters, raised money, and worked to get their communities to understand this thing called male violence. Then came the pressure for legitimacy, for credibility (in the dominant culture's terms, of course), there was a call for trained, "professional" people to administer programs, for advocates to be replaced with counselors, and suddenly formerly battered women, movement women, were not adequate to provide leadership. This call for professionals coincidentally came

at the same time there was a glut of social workers on the job market. Women who would not get near us in the early years of our struggle to get established now applied for the highest level jobs. Let me not be misunderstood: some of our most brilliant and radical workers in the movement have had MSW's, and they moved beyond their training to develop strategies for lasting social change. But hundreds of other social workers entered this work for a job, not for a place to work to change the world. Domestication is at the very core of social work training—finding ways to make oppression more bearable, providing services and charity. By the end of the 1980's it had become almost unheard of for a shelter director not to have a MSW (or a degree in business administration), individual counseling had replaced most group work, and some shelters began hiring men as directors.

And where did this decision (or these many small decisions that add up to the same) lead us? We have suffered two enormous

## WOMEN'S PROJECT PLANS FALL YARD SALE BONANZA

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(continued on page 12)



# The Death Penalty: One Woman's Perspective

The first time I ever thought about the death penalty was when I was a student at Hendrix College. When Dr. Matt Ellis discussed with us in Ethics class the issue of capital punishment, I decided I was definitely against it. It was not until sixteen years later that I did anything about that decision.

In 1977-78, when I was working in the Attorney General's office, we would have conversations from time to time among some of the staff about whether or not we favored capital punishment. One day I was shown photographs of a terrible looking man who had recently been sent to death row in Arkansas and was asked, "Are you sure you don't think this 'animal' deserves the death penalty?"

Not long after that the Arkansas Gazette ran an editorial opposing capital punishment. I wrote a letter to the editor thanking him for his editorial and the letter was published. After my letter appeared in the paper, I was contacted by a member of the Arkansas Coalition Against the Death Penalty. She explained that the Coalition was a small group of persons who were working to abolish the death penalty and who were trying to befriend the persons on Arkansas' death row. She asked if I would like to join and I said yes. She

then explained that there was one person on death row (there were 14 at that time — today there are 33) who was in particular need of a friend because he had no contact with his family, the guards did not like him and even the other persons on the row

*I decided twelve years ago that I would befriend John Swindler and that commitment lasted until June 18, 1990, when John was executed by the state of Arkansas.*

disliked him. I asked who he was and she replied, "John Swindler." The person she wanted me to befriend was the terrible looking man whose pictures I had been shown in the A.G.'s office. Suddenly my opposition to capital punishment was more than an academic issue. If I was really opposed to the death penalty, I would do something about it.

I decided twelve years ago that I would befriend John Swindler and that commitment lasted until June 18, 1990 when John was

executed by the state of Arkansas. June 18 was a sad day for me personally and for our state. I lost a good friend and our state resumed executions again after 26 years without one. The following week Ronald Gene Simmons was executed and Barry Lee Fairchild is scheduled to be executed September 5. Once a state executes someone, it does seem that other executions inevitably follow.

There are many good reasons one can give for being opposed to capital punishment. Murder rates are lower in states that have abolished the death penalty. Innocent people are executed. Many family members of murder victims don't want the death penalty. The death penalty is arbitrary and capricious. Every western democracy except the U.S.A. has abolished the death penalty. Public opinion supports alternatives to the death penalty. The death penalty costs more than life imprisonment.

The death penalty is racist. Although these are all good reasons, and I have used them in discussions with persons about the death penalty, they are not the primary reasons for me personally to be opposed. I am opposed to killing. I don't want to kill anyone and I don't want my state to do it in my name. I

(continued on page 5)



Have we ever stopped to think about our black children having an untapped power? It's in them like a bright flashing light flickering on and off with signals saying, "look at this light – how bright it shines – and how powerful I am." When the light is recognized, we act as though we need to institutionalize, control, or take it away from them. But, have we ever stopped to see that it is not to be developed? Whether the light is in the eyes of a rural, city, poor or rich youth, African-American youth seek understanding from adults.

Oppression has put a dimness on the light that flickers and as youth grow to be adults the light becomes so dim that no

## Our Black Children



one sees or pays attention to its slow dimming flash. So the light is slowly turned inward and as a result, we have slower motivated group of young adults, a less

interested group wanting to succeed and compete a society that just continues to smother and force the light to turn inward.

Are we allowing a path for a light of a natural to shine and reflect a positive and resourceful future?

Let's start recognizing what is around our African-American children by listening to what they are not saying, look at what they are not showing us, and the paths they are not traveling. The light is shining bright. The questions are how is the light shining? What is it shining on? and Why?

Jo Marks

### Death Penalty

from page 4

also came to realize during my twelve year friendship with John and my acquaintance with others on the row that they all have changed. The John Swindler who entered Arkansas' death row in 1977 was not the same John Swindler who died in the electric chair on Monday night, June 18. John had become a better person, more capable of caring about others and more sensitive to the pain he had caused others. Why should my state, then, be in the business of snuffing out lives that can be productive, even from the confines of prison?

Since there are no women on death row in Arkansas, it might seem that there is no direct

relationship between the issue of capital punishment and the work of the Women's Project. However, I couldn't help but notice that in the weeks surrounding my friend's execution for the killing of a white, male state trooper, there were two murder convictions and sentences in Arkansas for the killing of women and neither of the convicted persons received the death penalty. I do not want anyone to be executed, but I wonder if our society places a higher value on the lives of certain victims than others. All the more reason to abolish the death penalty.

Freddie Nixon  
Board Member,  
The Women's Project  
Russellville, Arkansas

## Support Groups Meet

**Lesbian Support Group**  
2nd and 4th Tuesdays  
at 7:00 p.m.

**Women in Nontraditional Jobs**  
3rd Thursday at 7:00 p.m.

**Disabled Lesbians  
Support Group**  
4th Monday at 7:00 p.m.

All events, unless otherwise indicated, are held at the Women's Project at 2224 Main Street, Little Rock. The offices are wheelchair accessible. For more information about these events, call 372-5113.

# Undoing Racism Conference

## *Editors Note:*

*On July 27-29, 1990, three Women's Project staff and one board member, along with eight other women and children boarded a van for New Orleans to participate in a training organized by the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond. What follows is a reaction to the training by Onie Norman of Pine Bluff.*

After attending the conference on "Undoing Racism", which was held at the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond in New Orleans, Louisiana on July 27-29, 1990. I have a renewed sense of who I really am as an African-American woman and a deeper spiritual connection to the history and culture of my people.

There were many, many questions answered for me that I have sought to answer for a lifetime. Therefore, this conference will enable me to look upon my black sisters and brothers with a new eye and a new understanding of the "Why's and Why Not's." I now will have a new determination to carry the torch for freedom, dignity, and equality that many of our ancestors struggled, fought and gave their lives for. I am proud to be a part of such a magnificent people.

If we are to continue this struggle and make an effective impact on racism, we as a people will have to organize and improve ourselves individually and collectively, realize we need to know about our history and culture, re-think our values and regain our spiritual connections and a deeper senses of who we really are.

It is imperative that we know more about ourselves historically and culturally-wise, and getting past how society characterizes us, daring to unfold as a people of strength and determination, but realizing our unsung

contributions to America.

We must stop perpetuating the Institution of Negativism and Racism by buying into the whole idea of bureaucracy and letting the system dictate our behavior. We should be creators of our own vision to change the power of politics and creating sources of strength for ourselves through a sense of our own power, and understand there is no "quick fix" and this is a long struggle.

We must develop a social change ethic among ourselves and regain faith in each other, then we will stop letting the system and ourselves destroy each other. Also, we must stop conveying negative social messages about other black people, and interweave our historical culture and family ties and really a counter message, we are a people of worth and value and as a race of people we can and will make a better future for ourselves and succeeding generations.

Finding ways to provide discipline and purpose and direction to fulfill the dream of our ancestors should be one of our basic priorities, for we must realize that very few black people are committed to, or have the opportunity or mind to move for the cause. Too many have become victims of the illness and amnesia of what's wrong with America — Individualism and Materialism.

Lastly, African-Americans must continue to organize and send counter-messages to people until they become aware of the sick mentality that says black people are worthless and inferior to the rest of humanity. We must appreciate our past history and culture and realize it is not "Racism and Prejudices", it's the "Strength for Survival and Beyond."

Onie Norman





## Women's Project Reaches Landmark

This past June we experienced a landmark in our work at the Women's Project by sponsoring the first Black Women's Conference in Arkansas. This was the first opportunity that African-American women had had to have a forum to discuss the issues that we deal with on a day to day basis. This was our chance to name the issues, analyze the effects they are having on our lives and to work together on strategies for change.

As Angela Davis so aptly put it, "when America sneezes, the black community catches a cold." The African-American community realizes that the stresses and strains that we must labor under are worsening. The unemployment rate among African-Americans in 1989 was 32.7% compared to 12.6% for whites. In 1986 the infant mortality rate was 8.9% for white infants, 15.7% for nonwhite infants and 18.0% for African-American babies. Ninety-one percent of African-Americans do not receive health care because of economic reasons compared to 5.0% of white Americans. I don't care what the issues are; drugs, housing, care for the elderly, education, or employment for youth, the implications of these issues on the lives of African-Americans are much different than the impact on any other race of people.

During the three days of the conference, we discussed these issues and many more that we as African-Americans must face constantly. With each discussion we were able to hear women validate the statistics over and over again. Our conference participants consisted of single heads of households. (African-American women make-up 60% of all households nationally that are supported by single females.) Some of the participants were unemployed or underemployed. We were the host to older women, lesbians, women who were differently-abled, previously incarcerated women, battered women. There were women at that conference who had been active in social change work for many years and others who for the first time were being introduced to the idea that they too are capable and expected to contribute to making a difference.

Each of these women brought their own point of view and their personal experiences to describe what life is like for them as an African-American woman in Arkansas. Some of the information that was presented verified what we already knew. Other information was very enlightening because many of us were unaware that some situations existed. The picture that was painted was dismal and we could

most definitely come to consensus that the conditions are bad, but the main question that we attempted to answer on each issue that we raised was, "what can we do to make real change."

Once the conference was over, the staff of the Women's Project immediately started grappling with the question of what we can do as an organization to support African-American women in struggling to create change... what is it that we can do that is going to make a difference, a real difference in the lives of African-American women, their families and communities? When there is so much to be done, organizations run the risk of outlining an impossible agenda that accomplishes very little or nothing at all, or worse yet is to develop a plan that only offers temporary relief and in no time the situation is back to where it started.

The Women's Project is in the planning stages of developing an African-American Women's Institute for Social Change that will support African-American women in developing the skills that are necessary for doing effective organizing for social change. The project will attempt to provide information and resources that are most often unavailable in African-American communities. The

(continued on page 13)

# H • A • T • E • V • I • O • L • E • N • C • E

The Women's Watchcare Network is rooted in the belief that diverse women working together who are committed to creating a just society can make a difference in their lives and in the lives of all in their community and state. During this second year of the project Suzanne and I have focused on working with people to do actions against or to respond to bigotry and the violence that it engenders.

Actions or responses to bigoted violence are powerful weapons against injustice and intolerance. While the constitution guarantees our enemies the right to free speech, it also guarantees those of us committed to social justice the right to use our collective voice to challenge their hatred at every turn. Only when we send a consistent message that hatred is unacceptable — through our letters to the editor, candlelight vigils, public seminars to raise awareness around bigotry, and marches to the mayor's office — will we begin to create a society that grants justice and freedom to each of us.

What follows is a month-by-month listing of the Watchcare activities since the beginning of 1990, which were responses to violence against women, people of color, gay men, lesbians, Jews and Catholics. We could not have done this work without the support of the nearly 200 women and men who work with the Women's Watchcare Network.

January: Women's Anti-Violence Coalition, made up of the

Women's Project, Advocates for Battered Women, Rape Crisis and the Arkansas Child Abuse Prevention Project, held a luncheon meeting for women media persons to discuss their support of a media campaign against violence against women. Letters were sent to about 15 women in both the print and broadcast media. Four media women attended and two committed to helping us develop an ad campaign. This has yet to happen but tangible results have come out of the meeting. Issues of violence against women have been reported more frequently and with more clarity, and a feature writer for the Arkansas Gazette is planning a series on anti-woman violence.

February: Suzanne and I, along with Jan Hodges from the Arkansas Gay and Lesbian Task Force, conducted a training for police officers and criminal justice graduate students at UALR. The training's purpose was to sensitize law enforcement officials to issues that concern the lesbian and gay community so they will truly "protect and serve" all citizens.

Also, the 1989 Women's Watchcare Log documenting acts of bigoted violence was published and mailed to the volunteer monitors, the church and human rights groups that serve as allies and to board members.

We mailed a copy of the 1989 log to all of the state battered women's coalitions across the country asking them to join us

documenting the murders of women and to get women included in hate crimes bills.

March: A presentation was done to the Arkansas Gay and Lesbian Task Force on hate violence against lesbians and gay men, and how the Task Force can join forces with the Women's Project to counter such violence. Task Force members agreed to discuss using the statewide hotline to report anti-gay/lesbian violence, whether volunteer teams could patrol the bars and parks frequented by gay men to prevent further violence and to develop better relations with police.

April: Watchcare community education meetings were held in Magnolia and Fort Smith which attracted 10 people each. The Fort Smith meeting presented a model of what effective community organizing should be. Those in attendance included lesbians and heterosexual women, African-American, Latina and Asian-American women and a transsexual.

When a near riot occurred after fighting between black and white students broke out in England, KKK Grand Wizard Thom Robb travelled from Harrison to organize the white students and parents to fight for their rights. He distributed 800 racist tracts around town. I contacted members of the United Citizens of England, the black group, to determine what supportive role the Women's Project could play.



They decided that since Robb was denying the Klan's and his violent nature, a flyer should be published that recounted his history and would be distributed by churches. We were able to gather information on Robb with the help of the Center for Democratic Renewal.

On April 12, Suzanne, Jan Hodges and I did our second police training on lesbian and gay concerns. As the group was made up of rookies who had no choice about participating in the workshop, some of them were hostile and uncooperative. It was a very hard training but we managed to get through it.

Two weeks later, Nettie Walker, grandmother of Rep. Bill Walker, was found murdered in her Pine Bluff home, bringing to four the number of elderly black women killed since Nov. 1989. I met with members of ACORN, whose members — mostly elderly black women — were protesting the murders and the police response. I discussed our work to name violence against women as hate violence and was asked to get five hundred crime prevention brochures to be distributed to elderly women and men.

At our request two Watchcare volunteers from Northwest Arkansas disguised themselves and infiltrated the Christian Identity Church meeting held in Bentonville at the Day's Inn. Afterwards, we wrote a letter of protest to the Day's Inn because the local paper & our volunteers reported that the staff had screened people for the event. We later received a letter and a personal phone call from the president of Day's Inn.

May: The Women's Project participated in a rally to call attention to the Pine Bluff murders. The "Mother's March for Safety" drew about 50 people who marched in downtown Pine Bluff and had a press conference demanding better police protection along with suggestions for fighting crime.

The Women's Memorial Day, in which mock tombstones were erected on the Women's Project lawn, for the 26 women killed in the state from January 1 - May 30, 1990. The tombstones were an excellent way to help the community visualize the terror women are forced to live with. About 50 people attended the commemoration, which was organized by the Women's Anti-Violence Coalition.

We mailed newspaper reports of the Memorial Day and a copy of the 1990 six-month to state coalitions to keep them encouraged to take on this work.

June: The Women's Project attended a community meeting in Jacksonville after a white boy shot and killed a black man because he wanted to "shoot me a nigger." At the meeting, those who attended agreed to do a massive rally to protest the lowering of the boy's bond and to ask for a new bond hearing. People were also asked to write to the prosecuting attorney. No additional meetings have been held to plan the community response.

A community education meeting was held in Hot Springs with only lesbians and gay men so as to ensure their safety. This was the first lesbian and gay only

meeting. Those who attended were receptive to the idea of working with the Women's Watchcare Network. Jan Hodges also attended to discuss how the Task Force can help communities around the state organize.

July: A gay man who attended the Hot Springs meeting was beaten with baseball bats by four males. The victim decided to file charges and two of the assailants have already appeared in court. The Women's Project attended the first court session and then organized lesbians and gay men in Hot Springs to serve as the victim's support network. The gay-bashing nature of the crime has not come out; it is treated as a simple assault.

However, the victim has plans to file a civil suit during which time the homophobic nature should come out. We will be monitoring this case as it moves through the system.

Project staff met with members of the Black community to strategize about a response to Say McIntosh's announced plans to burn a flag on July 4th and the plans of Ralph Forbes & the KKK to hold rallies. We decided not to participate actively in the events but instead attended the KKK rally to take pictures of the Klan members to keep on file.

The Women's Project and Advocates for Battered Women were instrumental in organizing a press conference in response to the state Supreme Court's decision that struck down the Domestic Abuse Act. Battered women's advocates from around the state came to the State Capitol to voice their outrage.

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# Women's Project Organizational Management Structure

*Many organizations and individuals have asked us about our organizational management. Deborah Dudley, a volunteer, interviewed staff members and wrote this report.*

In keeping with our commitment to social change, racial, sexual and economic justice and the empowerment of all women, we have tried to organize our internal working structure to reflect the kind of world we wish to create and live in. The pressure to use traditional hierarchical organizational models, as well as the absence of acceptable alternatives result in our continual experimentation, evaluation and improvisation with structures and methods of working together to achieve our goals. We are committed, not just to a redressing inequity, but to a change of vision and policies through the majority participation of those who have not had a voice, have not had access to power.

Our work is directed and overseen by a 10 member Board of Directors made up of half rural and half urban (Little Rock) women. There is a commitment to a women of color majority as we feel that even with equal or proportional representation there is still the likelihood of a white vision dominating. Currently, seven members are women of color. We are also committed to the inclusion of lesbians through the Board participation of at least one visible lesbian with active ties to the lesbian community. We strive for a mix of both working and professional class women, low and middle income women as well as women of varying ages. The Board nominates and elects new members for an average term of three years from among recognized feminist and social change activists throughout the state.

The function of the Board is to set the overall direction of the Project, develop policy and hold internal political discussion through quarterly meetings. Also, it holds the organization accountable to its constituency both financially and programmatically. Members receive written reports from each of the Project staff prior to meetings, and staff is present at all meetings for questions and discussion. The Board participates in fundraising

activities, special Project events and activities, and provides moral support in Project endeavors.

The Women's Project staff is made up of women from a variety of backgrounds and with a variety of skills. As with the Board, there is commitment to a majority women of color presence, lesbian presence, and economic, cultural and age diversity. We believe in an equal sharing of power through access to information and opportunity as well as an equal respect for the work of all women. We strive to counter the belief that certain kinds of women are only suited to certain kinds of work, and that certain kinds of work (managerial/organizational) is of more value than others (secretarial/support). To this end we do our own office cleaning and maintenance and we do not employ support staff, believing that typing, computer work, etc., is work that can and should be done by all of us, and those skills learned and shared by all. We believe that any women's time is as valuable as our own and pay for contracted services accordingly. For example, our childcare workers are paid at the rate of \$10.00 per hour for their services, the same as our staff members.

Because we work toward equal access to information and power and are a staff of varying skills and experience, we encourage and create opportunities for staff development through in-house training, time off for classes and workshops, and provision of funding for staff to attend one conference/workshop of their choice per year. We route all incoming information to all staff, encourage networking, and routinely share material from conferences attended by individual staff members. Written information for public distribution is always drafted and circulated for comment then finalized with input from all staff. We wish for no one or two individuals only to be identified as the Women's Project so encourage and expect all staff to do media work and outside public speaking. Participation in outside community social change work of special interest to staff is encouraged.

While the Women's Project is not operated as a  
(continued page 11)



collective, it shares features of that organizational structure in that all staff have equal participation in the decision-making and functioning of the Project as well as equal salary and benefits regardless of length of tenure with the organization. Longevity is rewarded not with increased salary but with increased vacation time and, after five years' commitment, contribution to a pension fund of choice and one month sabbatical for each year worked.

A yearly staff retreat provides the opportunity to review the overall progress of the Project's work as well as to strategize new work to be undertaken. Specific projects are agreed upon by consensus, with each staff member becoming lead organizer for at least one project chosen according to her interest, skills and desire. As lead organizer she is directly responsible for the functioning of her project, but work on all projects is shared by all staff. Weekly meetings provide an opportunity to brainstorm and problem-solve with each other and ask for specific help with project tasks. Lead organizers present quarterly written reports to the Board and attend Board meetings to discuss and answer questions related to their projects. One designated staff member is responsible for coordinating the work of the Project as a whole, assuring that work is flowing smoothly, tasks are balanced and evenly distributed, and the specific projects are working in sync. Another staff member is responsible for the fundraising and financial management of the Project in addition to her other project work.

Because the Women's Project is a community-based organization it encourages and relies on the help of many volunteers in its work. Volunteers are women and men both from the community and from Project programs such as the non-traditional jobs training and prison support groups. They work on the on-going work of the project such as bulk mailings, yard work, teaching in the non-traditional jobs program, clipping news stories for the Women's Watchcare Network, and fundraising. In addition, volunteers create their own projects such as the African American and Women's library at the Project which is funded, staffed and subsidized solely by volunteer efforts. They also organize, facilitate and do outreach for support groups such as incest survivors, women with disabilities, and Lesbians. During 1990 the Project has had 250-300 volunteers participating in its work.

When originally founded and for six years thereafter, the Women's Project was under the

umbrella of the United Methodist Church and was dependent on foundations and the church for 98 percent of its funding. We then made the decision to become a broad based community organization, and in the three years since that change we have reduced our dependence on foundations and corporations to approximately 50 percent. The remainder of our funding comes in the form of income from special events, product sales (T-shirts and sales of Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism), training sessions done by staff to various groups around the country, and from pledges, donations and memberships by many individuals. Though we have taken government funds for specific projects, we prefer to solicit as little government money as possible to avoid the accompanying restrictions which hamper our ability to create true social change. We prefer to be supported by the people and organizations appreciative of the radical nature of our work who can feel an ownership in our vision and work through their financial contributions. In addition to the people who support us through large donations (\$500, \$1000, \$5000), we are sustained by many small donations and pledges (\$5, \$10, \$15) from many people around the state of Arkansas as well as from around the country who learn of our work through training workshops or our bimonthly Newsletter. Our funding structure is such that we need not be dependent on any one large donor for our support, thus avoiding any major loss of funding. Staff and Board also actively participate in fundraising by asking for memberships and donations from the people and organizations they deal with both through the Project and as individuals in the community.

In the area of Project expenditures we tend to be fiscally conservative, attempting to spend as little as possible. Our major expenses are incurred with staff salaries, participant expenses for the Women in Work program, travel expenses and debt service on the Women's Project building.

In trying to fulfill our mission to change the world by working to eliminate racial, sexual and economic injustice and providing opportunities for the empowerment of women we are continuously experimenting, talking, evaluating, making mistakes and trying again. We do the same in our attempts to create an internal organizational structure that is reflective of the way we wish to live and work in the world.

Deborah Dudley

## The Battered Women's Movement...

from page 3

losses:

1) A widespread, united effort for radical social change. The drive for institutionalization necessitated moving away from social change work because it is not in the interest of the dominant culture's institutions to seek true social change—only to make oppression more bearable. Shelters have continued doing the critical work of providing safety for women, a place to talk about their lives, and support for living lives free of violence, but most have not gone beyond service delivery. The major risk-taking work of organizing with battered women to confront institutions and create alternatives often takes second place to service delivery or does not happen in any significant way. As far as I know, there has been no reduction in battering since 1970, but there has been an enormous increase of shelters providing services. In Arkansas, for example, since 1980 we have grown from four shelters to eighteen, many operated under the umbrella of conservative institutions.

2) The promise of liberation. The decision to seek credibility and professionalism brought with it traditional hierarchical structures (what else does the dominant culture respect, what else serves it?), and the elevation of those people already closely aligned with the community's established institutions. Hierarchical structures, by their pyramidal design, severely limit leadership development, collective work,

and empowerment. Even in supposedly feminist institutions such structures still reflect those of male culture in salary differentials and decision making power. Generally, those most acceptable to the dominant culture are hired at the top positions. To gain credibility, battered women's organizations, in a sense, had to leave behind those women the dominant culture does not traditionally honor or think worthwhile: visible lesbians, women of color, poor women. These women have been relegated to the lowest paid or least visible jobs or in fits of liberalism, they often have been tokenized, but in general, there has been a low ceiling placed over their leadership and advancement in hierarchical structures. Consequently, issues of race, class, sexual identity and gender have been removed from the forefront of the analysis and work necessary to bring about the liberation of women and end male violence.

We have done a good job getting the public to understand that woman abuse exists but a very bad job of getting them to bring about the change necessary to end it. We have a great proliferation of shelters and direct services and relationships with the criminal justice system, but women are being beaten, raped, terrorized, and murdered every day. In Arkansas alone in the first seven months of this year, forty women have been murdered by men in horrible circumstances where robbery was not the motive. The majority were killed by husbands and boyfriends, present and former.

Clearly we need a new strategy to

bring an end to violence against women. Our failures are pressing us on. We have witnessed the battered women's movement become fragmented and part of the system that oppresses us; the mass murder of women engineering students in Montreal; and the passage of a national hate crimes bill that deliberately excluded women from coverage. Yet it is females who are the most viciously attacked, abused, and killed across all cultures; it is women who are consistently victims of the cultural crime of woman hatred. We have exposed the crimes, we have exposed the nature of the hatred, but no rescue, no solutions are forthcoming from major institutions and the perpetrators and supporters of male violence.

We must enter a time of intense reflection and analysis; we must examine anew the issue of violence against women. It is time for women who represent all of our variety and differences to come together in large groups and small, in think tanks and strategy meetings, in political retreats and in overnights in women's homes, to intensify the dialogue of bigoted hate violence against women and the discussion of stronger, more effective strategies to work locally and globally to bring it to an end. This work must take place now to end this war zone of assault against the female gender. It is time to take strong, courageous action to save the lives of women.

Suzanne Pharr





# Make Your Combined Federal Campaign Pledge Work for Women.

*Job training for women  
entering nontraditional  
occupations*

*Support groups for women  
in prison*

*Lending library of Women's  
and African American  
literature*

*AIDS education programs  
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women at risk*

*Community response to  
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## We work in your name.

Help us by designating all or part of your pledge to the Women's Project when you make your CFC gift.

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### Landmark

from page 7

opportunities for attending leadership development seminars and trainings and cultural activities are few and far in between and generally only a few are exposed to such opportunities. We also realize that it will take more than one workshop or training to build the needed skills and provide the useful resources that will make a difference. We want to be involved in a process over an extended period of time that meets the goals of African-American women being empowered to meet the challenges of breaking down the

barriers that exist in our lives.

We have sent out a survey to women who attended the conference to solicit their ideas and to identify their commitment, and we would like to do the same thing by requesting our newsletter audience to let us hear from you. We are very excited about our plans for the African-American Women's Institute for Social Change and we will be making frequent reports to you regarding the progress of its development.

*References on statistics taken from The Status of Black America, 1990, published by the Urban League.*

Janet Perkins

## New Support Groups May Form

Do you work second shift and have an interest in attending or facilitating a lesbian support group before work or on the weekend? Contact the Women's Project at 372-5113.

Are you interested in camping with other women in the spring and fall? Contact the Women's Project at 372-5113.

Are you interested in attending a support group for adult survivors of incest? Contact the Women's Project at 372-5113.



Transformation is published six times each year by the Women's Project, 2224 Main Street, Little Rock, Arkansas, 72206. Letters to the editor are welcome.

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### Women's Project Staff:

Janet Perkins  
Jo Marks  
Suzanne Pharr  
Kerry Lobel  
Kelly Mitchell-Clark



## BOOK NOTES FROM THE WOMEN'S PROJECT LIBRARY

**Clover**, by Dori Sanders, is a novel for adults about a ten-year-old Black girl. It's a

stunning portrayal of Black-white relations as seen through the eyes of a girl whose father has just remarried—to a white woman—and then is killed in an automobile accident, leaving Clover with a stranger for a step-mother and her entire community's ambivalence about the marriage.

**The Guide to Resources on Women and AIDS**, Center for Women Policy Studies —

"According to the Centers for Disease Control, as of Feb. 1, 1990, women accounted for 10,611 of the 115,786 reported cases of AIDS in the U.S. Women still constitute the fastest growing group of persons with AIDS. This Guide includes directories of resources for services and funding, essays and case studies.

**Corregidora**, by Gayl Jones—This

chilling novel is a classic story of how the memory of slavery plagues Black women and men long after legal emancipation. Blues singer Ursa is consumed by her hatred of Corregidora, the 19th-century slavemaster who fathered both her grandmother and mother...(she) slowly and firmly strikes her own terms with womanhood in a tortured world.

**Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica**, by Zora Neale Hurston—Based on the author's personal experiences in Haiti and Jamaica, where she participated as an initiate rather than just an observer of voodoo practices. "...she writes of all this with sympathy and level-headed balance with no sensationalism, in a style which is vivid, sometimes lyrical, occasionally strikingly dramatic, yet simple and unstrained..." (New York Times Book Review).

**The Floating World**, by Cynthia Kadohata—A Japanese-American daughter tells of her experiences growing up in the Arkansas

Ozarks where her family moves from California to work in the chicken hatcheries. This is a heart-warming, funny, and informative novel.

### New Audiotape:

**Dyke Proud** — Lesbian Poets read from their works at the 3rd International Feminist Book Fair in Montreal, 1988.

### New Videotapes:

1. **Sharon Thompson** speaking in early 1990 to a group of feminists about her experiences fighting sexism, homophobia and discrimination against the disabled. She tells how she became politicized through her struggle to maintain contact with her disabled lover, Sharon Kowalski.

2. **Through the Wire** — a documentary film about three women political prisoners being held in a subterranean "prison within a prison," built expressly to house inmates the government considers "escape risks."

## Hate Violence

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The media reported 60 women in attendance. We also hung two signs on the walkway bridge above Interstate 630 during rush hour traffic. One read, "Supreme Court Ruling Means Death to Women," and "Women Are Protected in Every State but Arkansas."

The Harold Flowers Law Society has announced plans to get an anti-hate crimes bill passed in the state legislature and the Women's

Project plans to be part of the coalition lobbying on behalf of such a bill.

We have begun getting responses from women and organizations around the country about our efforts to identify violence against women as bigoted hate violence. There is the beginning of a movement to include women in state hate crimes bills. We will also be organizing a national meeting of women theorists and activists to develop the analysis

for defining violence against women as bigoted hate violence. The meeting is scheduled for the summer of 1991 and will be held in New York.

Finally, the Women's Anti-Violence Coalition is planning a massive march and rally around women's issues to be held sometime this fall. The rally will address the prevalence of violence in women's lives and the right of women to control their bodies.

Kelly Mitchell-Clark



## TRANSFORMATION GOES BI-MONTHLY! JOIN NOW.

*Transformation* is now published six times every year.

Six times each year, members and volunteers receive analysis of contemporary issues, information about Women's Project upcoming events and activities, book reviews, and more.

If you are not a Women's Project member or volunteer and would like to continue receiving the newsletter, please fill out the membership form on this page.

**Yes, I would like to join the Women's Project.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone/day \_\_\_\_\_

Phone/evening \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ \$ 5 low income  
\_\_\_\_\_ 15  
\_\_\_\_\_ 25  
\_\_\_\_\_ 50  
\_\_\_\_\_ 100

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Little Rock, AR 72206

## OUR MISSION

Our goal is social change or, as the poet Adrienne Rich writes, "the transformation of the world." We believe this world can be changed to become a place of peace and justice for all women.

We take risks in our work; we take unpopular stands. We work for all women and against all forms of discrimination and oppression. We believe that we cannot work for all women and against sexism unless we also work against racism, classism, ageism, anti-Semitism, heterosexism and homophobia. We see the connection among these oppressions as the context for violence against women in this society.

We are concerned in particular

about issues of importance to traditionally underrepresented women: poor women, aged women, women of color, teenage mothers, lesbians, women in prisons, etc. All are women who experience discrimination and violence against their lives.

We are committed to working multi-culturally, multi-racially, and to making our work and cultural events accessible to low income women. We believe that women will not know equality until they know economic justice.

We believe that a few committed women working in coalition and in consensus with other women can make significant change in the quality of life for all women.

## CURRENT PROJECTS

### Women and Work: Breaking the Barriers

A training and advocacy project to make nontraditional jobs accessible to women.

### Women's Watchcare Network

A project to monitor incidents of racial, religious, sexual, and anti-gay violence, and the activities of hate groups in Arkansas.

### The Homophobia and Racism Project

Workshops on understanding racism and homophobia and developing methods to eliminate them.

### Women and AIDS

A project to develop strategies for working with women and caregivers around AIDS issues.

### Communications and Events

A newsletter, a lending library, statewide and regional conferences, and production of women singers, poets and novelists.

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## Deregulating Women's Lives and Regulating Greed: An Open Letter to the Conservative Right

I am writing this letter to express my concern over the obsession you have developed about regulating women's lives, using as your agents the clergy and elected officials. You have taken a stand as major proponents of preventing a woman's right to choose an abortion, that is, to have control over her own body, and also of the deregulation of big business so that there is no control over greed and economic injustice. I wonder why the regulation of one and not the other?

To each of us we are given only a body — it is all that we bring into the world and all that we take out. If we cannot have control over it, if we cannot have privacy where it is concerned, if we cannot make decisions about our own best interests, what is there left to us that we can call our own? You propose a world where those men who lead the anti-abortion forces such as Operation Rescue and those men who make up the majority of the courts of the land will have decision-making power over women's bodies and thereby over women's lives. You are saying that no woman should have control over her own life: it should be controlled by government.

You say the same for gay men and lesbian women. One should not be allowed to live out the sexual identity one is given; you say that people should not have the right to choice in who they love. In fact, you advocate for laws to control the lives of gay men and lesbian women. Who are the chosen few, then, who should be allowed control of their bodies and their lives?

I find it strange then to see how you fight the control of the government in almost all other areas. Aren't you the same guys who fight against gun control and for the death penalty? Your anti-abortion troops call themselves pro-life and yet your forces are on record everywhere as being

overwhelmingly in favor of these agents of death: guns and lethal injections. And aren't you the same ones who support the likes of Ollie North and financial and military support for regimes that have the worst human rights abuses and killing records — ie., the Contras, the white government of South Africa, and Saddam Hussein up until the day Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait? Would you please explain to me again your stand on life and death issues?

It seems to me that you're always talking about wanting to save the "unborn child." Well, what about the children already born and those policies you promote and support that lead to their early deaths or diminished lives because of poverty? What about the regulation of greed that leads to poverty for the many and obscene wealth for the few? I believe you are the fellows who scream about no new taxes (on the rich; "read my lips") and then seek a balanced budget by cutting benefits to the elderly, assistance to farmers, and social programs that provide that fine, vulnerable screen that keeps most people in this country from falling off the edge into total disaster. You're the same ones who supported the deregulation of the airlines and jumped transportation prices out of sight, the deregulation of the S&Ls that promoted so much unbridled greed that the taxpayer is now sacked with a bill in excess of \$100 billion. You support with waving flags our entrance into Saudi Arabia and this bogus war for oil and greed that will quite likely end up taking the lives of countless adults and children, along with depleting the monies here at home that help keep people alive. And you continue to fight a

(continued on page 2)

## Deregulating Greed

from page 1

national health care bill that would ensure the health of children and adults who cannot afford to purchase the high free market rate of competitive health care.

I keep forgetting. You say that your domain is moral issues and these I mentioned are not moral; they're only economic. And you quote the Bible to me about the domination of women and the abomination of homosexuality. Well, I beg your pardon. It seems to me that many of you on the Right tote that Bible around a lot, talking about "this Christian country" (not acknowledging our religious diversity of Jews, Muslims, and other religions), holding prayer breakfasts that are fronts for political meetings, and naming yourselves the gatekeepers of Christian morality. In fact, you talk about Christian morality as though there were no other. Inspired as you say you are by Christ and his words, where do you find among those words attributed to him (not the words of the misogynist Paul, for instance) one word about the domination of women and the abomination of homosexuality? What you find are statements again and again about economic justice and about the acceptance of all persons because they are equal in the sight of God.

Nowhere is there a directive asking you to stand in God's place as the judge of humans and the controller of their lives.

It is no wonder that some many people now think of conservative politicians and clergy as being Bible thumpers who exhibit moral bankruptcy. They are waiting for you to speak out in support of the Christ you extol and to help lead the country to a time of economic and social justice. You concentrate on controlling the lives of women and protecting children while remaining silent on the issues that would save the lives of children and adults (here is a radical idea for you: the lives of adults are as precious as those of children), and that silence reeks of immorality because it supports the destruction of life.

Why are you not roaring with rage from every pulpit and from every politician's favorite media spot about the destruction of women's lives through battering, rape, incest, and murder? Why do you support with your silence and your policies a war zone for women and children? Why are you not insisting upon such a high taxation for U.S. companies exploiting cheap labor overseas that those companies would willingly return to this country and institute fair labor practices and provide decent employment for the increasingly underemployed here? Why aren't you supporting anti-discrimination laws and economic development in rural and people of color communities? Why aren't you crying out for free pre-natal care, child care and health care for all our people so the children born into this world could have a chance to live productive lives? And if you are so obsessively focused on abortion, why don't you work on prevention and fight like hell for the development of simple, effective, accessible birth control for both men and women?

You have the power to be a part of a general movement to bring about good, especially those of you who are clergy and leaders in religious settings because at last once a week you have an audience as well as an established

organization to work from. I am asking you to bring about a change in focus — from the destructive one of attempting to control people's lives to the creative one of attempting to make a world where people's lives are liveable. It is a high moral calling.

Suzanne Pharr

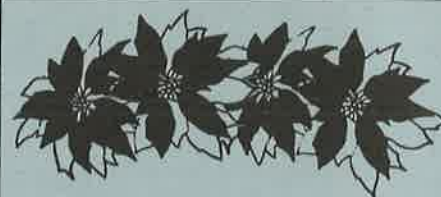
## Visit the Women's Project for Holiday Gifts!



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Saturday 11:00-2:00



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season: Christmas, Solstice,  
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2224 Main Street (Main Street at 23rd)  
Little Rock, Arkansas  
372-5113

## Transformation

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*Editor* Kerry Lobel  
*Creative Associate* Kelly Henry

### Women's Project Staff:

Janet Perkins  
Jo Marks  
Suzanne Pharr  
Kerry Lobel  
Kelly Mitchell-Clark



# In Danger: African-American Youth

I have vivid memories of my mother telling me that her prayer was that she be permitted to live to see me become an adult, strong and capable of taking care of myself. I can also remember our family talks where they repeatedly outlined their dreams for me finishing high school and college. I remember starting my period one summer at the age of twelve while playing hiding-go-seek. That very day my parents thought that it was time to tell me about SEX. SEX - 101, I call it. These people fumbled and stumbled over some information that made very little sense to a twelve year old - but I do remember how adamant they were about not having babies until I was ready. Oh no, correction. I mean, until they told me I was ready. Everytime I had my eye on some boy, the baby speech was made. After a while I became so amused at how the speech always had the same words and the voice had the same inflection, no matter if it was my mother or father making the presentation.

No matter what generation, parents have always worried, prayed and been concerned about the survival of their young. But parents of today have some additional concerns they must deal with regarding their children. It is so frightening to think that your child may never return home from school or a recreational activity because they may be murdered by another teenager. Between 1984 and 1990 the number of murders by juveniles more than doubled nationally, from 1,004 to 2,208, and for African-American males and females between the ages of 15 and 34, homicide is the leading cause of death.

There are major considerations surrounding the survival of all youth in America, but we are witnessing the increased violence that exists more among youth living in the inner-city and who are suffering the most from poverty, so therefore the highest percentage of victims and perpetrators of violent crimes are

African-Americans. In 1986, the last year for which complete figures are available, African-Americans accounted for 44 percent of all murder victims, but only 12 percent of the population. After a 15 year decline, homicide among African-Americans is increasing. The number of homicides increased nine percent in the general population between 1985 and 1986, but increased 16 percent among African-Americans; among African-American males, ages 25-29, there was a 29 percent increase in homicides during that year. In 1986, African-American males were six times more likely to be a homicide victim than a white male, and African-American women were four times more likely to be a homicide victim than white females. (*The State of Black America 1990, National Urban League, Inc.*)

In recent studies of juvenile homicides connections are being made between child abuse, poverty and drugs as the main elements that contribute to teenagers committing violent crimes. Reports of child abuse nationally have swelled from 669,000 in 1976 to 2,178,000 in 1987. Although a percentage of the increase might be due to a greater awareness of child abuse, it is speculated that the real increase in the number of incidents is probably due to a number of factors including little societal support for parenting (childcare, health care, decent that isn't connected to gross commercialism) and because children are for the most part hated in this country.

Charles Patrick Ewing, who is credited with creating the so-called "battered women's defense" for women who kill their abusers, told a meeting at the American Psychological Association's annual convention that murders by disaffected juveniles will grow by "epidemic proportions" over the next few years. Also Ewing states "there's very little that can be done to deter most juvenile homicides, because they're so

impulsive and partly because they're committed while the killer is under the influence of drugs." (*Boston Globe*, August 13, 1990).

"There's very little that can be done." This statement is very problematic for me. This statement says to me, the lives of African-Americans have very little value and it easier to build a case that supports that there are no solutions to the problems. Some years ago I watched a documentary on black youth growing up in the urban "ghettos", and in that report it was stated that only one child out of ten will make it out. Again, the message rings loud and clear that there is nothing that can be done to turn this situation around. These

(continued on page 5)

Coming 1991:

## The Women's Project Celebrates Our 10th Anniversary

Join us on  
February 23 as we  
celebrate with Sweet  
Honey in the Rock in  
concert.

To help, call us at  
372-5113.

# Training Organizers in the South

Friendship and coincidence led a man named Myles Horton from Copenhagen to Grundy County, Tennessee, where he soon began a school of freedom, the Highlander Research and Education Center. In 1932 Myles Horton established a school for community people. His philosophy for the school was that people's lives are the learning experience every one needed to learn from. During that time Tennessee was the Nation's poorest region, and it soon became one of the most important training grounds for union organizers in the South.

In 1950 the school shifted its focus to desegregation. It sponsored workshops, where people like the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks and John Lewis argued late into the night about the direction of the civil rights movement. It gave birth to Septima Clark's famous "citizenship school," where thousands of blacks learned to read and write so they could vote.

Highlander was considered subversive enough that Tennessee officials tried to shut it down. But when they succeeded in revoking the Monteagle school's charter in 1960, Mr. Horton relocated to Knoxville and then to the serene 110-acre site in northeastern Tennessee between the Cumberlands and Smokies, where the school operates under its current status as the Highlander Research and Education Center. The work at Highlander did not end with the civil rights movement. Much of its energy in recent years has been spent working with poor rural communities of Appalachia, fighting economic decay and environmental problems.

The content differs from the 1960s, but the format is much the same as it was during that time. Participants still come to a wood-frame hilltop meeting room bathed in light, where they sit in circle in aged rocking chairs and share ideas. It still rings with the fading culture of the

South. Instead of outside experts, its participants are craggy-faced coal miners, mountain housewives turned environmental activists or rural blacks. The emphasis is still on what ordinary people can achieve.

I was accepted in the Southern and Appalachian Leadership Training Program (SALT) at Highlander this year where I participate with nine other people from the states of Mississippi, Virginia, and Alabama. All of us have projects outside of our regular jobs that we are committed to. My project for the past year has been within an organization called CornerStone, a center for youth in Little Rock, Arkansas, that was established to build and develop teenagers' skills and attitudes for today's society and to provide them with support and respect. In my volunteer work with African American youth I stress the importance of their roles as African Americans in this society. We talk about racism and how it affects their lives, and we try to identify things that go on with them that is caused by internalized oppression.

Being in the SALT program at Highlander and knowing why Myles Horton developed the school has made me realize that volunteer work can be the answer to a lot of problems and I can develop solutions by working with people who want the same thing. Answers come from you and the people you work with for social change. Highlander allows me to come and talk about what I'm doing and helps me realize that no program has been developed on this level. They provide resources and workshops where the agenda is set to meet my needs in my community. I am able to develop a plan of action that just won't be for one particular thing but can accommodate other communities as well.

Being one out of ten SALT fellows who are from different areas of the United States, coming together

and talking about things we do in our communities has made me more aware of the need for others to know that change does not come unless it is demanded. The most difficult thing in this work for me is that young people don't know they have a voice and should be heard. Highlander has been a support system for me to develop a plan of action that will be useful in the work I do in my community. The center brings SALT participants together to share in open group discussion and experiences. It also allows us to see that the answers come from us. From this I realize the focus of my work. Highlander helped me come to this realization.

*The history section of this article came from Highlander Reports, an excellent publication of the Highlander Research and Education Center. To learn more about Highlander, write 1959 Highlander Way, New Market TN 37820.*

Damita Jo Marks

## Support Groups Meet

### Lesbian Support Group

2nd and 4th Tuesdays  
at 7:00 p.m.

### Women In Nontraditional Jobs

3rd Thursday at 7:00 p.m.

### Disabled Lesbians Support Group

Last Monday at 7:00 p.m.

All events, unless otherwise indicated, are held at the Women's Project at 2224 Main Street, Little Rock. The offices are wheelchair accessible. For more information about these events, call 372-5113.



## Youth

from page 3

types of statements only serve to further deepen the feelings of hopelessness. They resign African-Americans to a state of complacency and acceptance that the problems that exist in our communities are bigger than life and we really can't expect things to change.

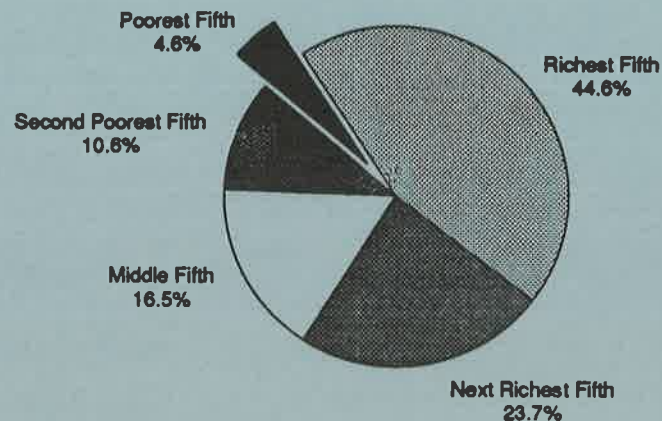
When the savings and loan crisis was made public, I can't remember one news report that deemed the situation unsolvable. On the heels of making us aware of the crisis came the information that it would cost each American approximately \$2,000 per year to bail the savings and loans out.

Why is it that some problems have solutions and others don't? Why is it that policies can be made to aid foreign countries much swifter than strategies and commitments to improving the quality of life for African-Americans?

I refuse to accept that my young will continue to die and kill disproportionately in this country. I refuse to become so fearful that my solution is to stay out of the way of African-American youth. Just because I'm not a parent I don't see my responsibilities as being any less than those who are parents. My parents were not the only ones who worried and prayed for me. My community took considerable interest in protecting me and caring for me, and I can't do any less for these children that too many people are giving up on and are describing as being hopeless. When it is said that there are more frustrated parents because of poverty and so therefore there are more severely abused children and those children are more likely to become killers, I must not let this explanation stand without questioning why there are more poor people. What role does racism and sexism play in this situation and what is really being done to bring about change?

Janet Perkins

Distribution of Total Family Income in 1989,  
By Fifths of All Families



Center on Budget and Policy Priorities  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

## Make Your Combined Federal Campaign Pledge Work for Women.

*Job training for women entering nontraditional occupations*

*Support groups for women in prison*

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# Women in Prison: One Perspective

My work in the Pine Bluff Women's Unit, Arkansas' prison for women, began in December 1989 when I joined Kerry Lobel as a co-facilitator of the battered women's support group. At the time, I remember being excited about the challenge but also nervous about how the women would accept me. Maybe I wouldn't look tough enough, like I can't handle myself, I thought. I had been at the prison only once before and was intimidated by their stares.

My stereotypes about how women in prison look and act were shattered at the first meeting of the group I attended. Hearing one inmate describe what it's like to be locked up for life at 19 kept me in tears during much of the first meeting. (They later gently teased me about being "green.")

Few of the women were big, tough, unfeeling and semi-literate like the incarcerated women portrayed by the media. Instead, these were women who looked like myself, my friends, the women in my family. There was an almost equal mix of black and white women. Friendships and relationships frequently crossed color lines, which is unusual in our mostly segregated society. And I rarely heard complaints about racism.

In the next nine months, the women in our group would teach me more than I could ever teach them. First and foremost, they taught me about trust. The invited me, a young woman who often pretends to know much more about the world than she really does, into their lives. Each week, members of the support group shared with Kerry and I some of their innermost secrets, painful experiences they had never before shared, fears around whether they'd survive prison or make it in the free world, regrets about their crimes and guilt for having left behind children. We learned about their partners — the batterers and non-batterers alike — their children and their families. Sometimes, we would get glimpses of the women they were before entering prison.

With many friendships, establishing trust is a long process but I was stunned at the swiftness at which the support group members opened up. Evidently consistency and commitment helped create a safe space in which to share their lives. It was enough that we came each week and were interested.

The support group members also reinforced what I knew about the terrible violence women live with.

Sometimes, I'd want to shut down at the beginning of another story about another beating, another case of incest, another rape. But their willingness to share their pain bonded the group member to one another and to Kerry and me.

The women taught me about strength. I marvelled at their ability to maintain their sanity while living within an incredibly cruel system. Oh sure, some cracked, but most held onto as much of themselves as possible. Some continually challenged the system as they fought to maintain their identity and dignity. How, I wondered, did they find a reason to laugh, or develop deep, caring friendships, or celebrate holidays and birthdays, or take pride in their appearance? Certainly if they could do it while behind bars, I could, too.

I also learned about intelligence. Still struggling to separate myth from reality on countless occasions I would think to myself, "What's a woman like her doing in here?" I'm not talking about formal education. I'm talking about the ability to negotiate a prison system. To figure out how subservient or how much of yourself you can be with a guard at any time. To discern which guards you can trust. To figure out how to live with 280 women without private space or time and not go crazy. To develop the understanding that the prison system, like batterers, exercises power and control over your life through physical, emotional and sometimes sexual abuse.

I learned about women's ability to make positive change in their lives and not be tied to the past. For many of the women in the support group, being in prison presented them with their first opportunity to figure out who they were and what they wanted from life. Too many women spend our lives nurturing and supporting those around us and give little time to ourselves. The women in the group started recovery from alcohol or drugs, got a GED, and had time for self reflection. Many had optimism about the future and set goals for themselves upon their release.

I no longer do the group with Kerry but the lessons of those nine months remain with me. It is just one more example of the need to cast off the myths about groups of people this oppressive society uses as scapegoats and profits from.

Kelly Mitchell-Clark



Do you work second shift and have an interest in attending or facilitating a lesbian support group before work or on the weekend? Contact the Women's Project at 372-5113.

Are you interested in camping with other women in the spring and fall? Contact the Women's Project at 372-5113.

Are you interested in attending a support group for adult survivors of incest? Contact the Women's Project at 372-5113.



# Women in Prison: Our Work

## History

Two hundred and eighty-eight women constitute the population at the state's only women's prison, the Women's Unit in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. More than 80% of the women in the prison have been battered, though like women in the free world, not all of them recognize or name their battering.

For several years, battered women's advocates had been very interested in starting a battered women's support group at the Women's Unit. In October, 1988, we received permission to begin the group.

Initially the effort began as a collaboration between the battered women's shelter in Pine Bluff, CASA, and the Women's Project. For a short time, the prison group was a project of the Arkansas Coalition Against Violence to Women and Children. The Pine Bluff shelter led the group from October through January. They then started providing one-on-one sessions to prison residents, which was later picked up by the Little Rock shelter, Advocates for Battered Women.

In February 1989, the Women's Project began the facilitation, a position we hold today. For a short time, during the summer of 1989, a woman's advocate from the Camden shelter co-facilitated the group. At present, two staff members from the Women's Project facilitate the group. I have facilitated since February, 1989, and three other staff members have rotated as co-facilitators.

## The Women's Project Work at the Prison Today

The core of our work at the prison is the battered women's support group. It is an open group which means that although there is a solid core group of women who gather from week to week, any woman is welcome to attend. When the group first began, approximately 8-10

women attended. There were a few months when group attendance averaged between 35-45 women. Now, 25-30 women attend on a weekly basis.

Two group members serve as group co-leaders and are elected by the group. They are responsible for doing outreach for the group, serving as a resource for women in between group meetings, and acting as a source of information about what is going on in the prison. They are the glue that holds the group together. They provide an important source of feedback for what is working and not working with the group.

The group has a fairly loose format. Each group starts and ends with a song, reading, poem, or reflection prepared by a group member. Each week we go over the group rules: confidentiality, respect for differing opinions, and leaving space for everyone to talk. We spend about 30 minutes addressing group members' issues and about an hour discussing a set topic. We spend a lot of time using the power and control wheel as a jumping off place. We also address such issues as love, living alone, jealousy, children, and conflict resolution.

Our contacts with prison residents and staff have led to other work at the Women's Unit:

- We organized a nineteen hour training which was completed by 17 prison residents. Each received certification in HIV serologic test counseling and partner notification techniques through the Centers for Disease Control. We invited Department of Health staff to lead the training which was conducted on evenings and weekends.

- Graduates of the CDC course will co-lead two sessions per month on AIDS, safer sex, and sexuality.

- We completed a 12 hour parenting pilot program through the Prison's Pre-Release Program. Pre-release staff are working through the

prison system to purchase materials and incorporate them into every pre-release group.

- We are working collaboratively with parenting organizations in the state to set up twice monthly parenting groups at the Unit.

- We have secured donations of periodicals and books for the prison library.

- We have surveyed the prison's residents to determine barriers to child visitation. We are working with local church groups to develop a transportation system for children unable to visit their mothers.

- We conduct nontraditional jobs training through the prison's pre-release program.

- We act as advocates for individual women in the battered women's support group on child custody issues, developing parole plans, and leveraging community resources.

- We are working collaboratively with other women in Central Arkansas to establish the state's first halfway house for women.

- We attempted to establish a support group for formerly incarcerated women. This group had sparse attendance. Most of our followup activities are one-on-one. We work with women on child custody issues, employment, and other support issues.

## Personal Reflections

Before we started the prison work, other advocates told us not to do it unless we were willing to make a total commitment to the work. Our Project began the prison work without specific funding for it and with only a small idea about how involved we would become. We have been fortunate since then to receive some financial support from foundations and churches.

We have made some ground rules for ourselves in going in to the  
(continued on page 8)

## Prison

from page 7

prison:

- We never make promises to follow-up on a woman's request unless we can and will do it.

This does not mean that we can guarantee that we can produce the information or assistance the woman requests, but it does mean that we will try.

- We never cancel the group. In the time we have been leading the group, we have only missed twice. Once because an ice storm made travel impossible. The second, because the prison was in the middle of a major lock down when we arrived and wouldn't let women attend the group. We have spent July 4th, Labor Day, Columbus Day, all the Monday birthday holidays, Christmas, and New Year's at the Prison. For us this was no sacrifice; it felt that we were spending the holidays with members of our extended family.

We're fortunate that we work in pairs, and that two other battered women's programs can fill in for us in an emergency.

- We don't let our work stop with the battered women's group.

As our work describes, when we walked in the prison door, we made a commitment to address women as total persons. This meant looking at their other needs, both in and out of prison. We have acted as advocates for women with the parole board, with the foster care system, tracked down missing children, and put women in touch with a wide range of resources and information.

We have found the experiences of other prison workers to be very important. People who had been leading support groups told us what to expect and what ground rules to negotiate with the prison. Long time prison activists have brought us insight into the full range of women's prison experiences and given us the perspective that our work involves both advocacy and services as well as a commitment to changing the

prison structure.

### A Note About Relationships with Prison Officials

The Women's Unit has been a very accessible place in which to work. Although it took us a long time to get into the prison, once we arrived we found the staff eager to consider new projects. We work especially closely with the Prison's substance abuse treatment program and pre-release coordinators. We receive no funding from the Department of Corrections and so we are treated like volunteers. This is good from the standpoint that our time is respected and appreciated. This is bad from the standpoint that we can be asked to leave the prison at any time.

Earlier this year, we came very close to being asked to leave the prison or to compromise on the values with which we approach our group work. Prison security staff became concerned that we were encouraging women to foment rebellion within the institution. We were asked to never discuss women's lives within the prison. We had to make it clear that our goal was to offer options and skills that would result in women's self determination and that it would be impossible to prevent women from talking about the totality of their experience. This conflict with security staff has resulted in the periodic attendance of officers at the group.

This taught us an important lesson about involving the Warden directly in every aspect of our work. We also learned to involve other community groups in our prison work and make each day at the prison count. The things we might want to put off into the future we do today, because the future is promised to no one — particularly in an institution.

Kerry Lobel

*These two pieces were written by participants in the Battered Women's Support Group at the Women's Unit in Pine Bluff, Arkansas:*

I have been a member of the Battered Women's Group within the

Arkansas Department of Corrections for over a year. It has been during this time that I have begun to understand the essence of being a Woman. There is a splendid beauty in our presence, we are the binders of the Universe. If we would understand this we could discover the power that each of us holds to drive this planet towards unity.

The Battered Women's Group here has become a haven and a beacon for many. I have watched women come and go but for those of us who have held on for the stretch the blooming begins and continues, because once you have had a taste of your own God given rights, it's very difficult to pretend you do not have any because now you know the truth. It is so emotional for me to see the transformation of a woman who is so defeated in spirit that she is unable to even speak audibly to that of a woman who feels she has opinions too and you darn well better listen.

It is not okay or acceptable the deplorable way that our judicial system handles domestic violence. They attempt to sweep it up under the rug with the other issues that do not have any thing to do with the impediment of the rights of the white male. That's just the way it is, but through the love and assertiveness of Women, ALL WOMEN, we can make some serious changes happen. We already have!

Deidra Gaddy

(continued on page 10)

△ △ △ △ △ △ △ △ △ △ △

## For African-American Women

A discussion  
of the book  
*The Black Man's Guide  
to Understanding  
BlackWomen*

Saturday, December 1st  
11:00 am – 2:00 pm  
The Women's Project



# Happy Holidays from the Women's Project



*Seven Easy Ways to Make Your Holiday Shopping Work for Social Change*

**1.**

## T-Shirts.

Front of shirt has this message: UNTIL THERE'S EQUALITY THERE'S THE WOMEN'S PROJECT. Neon pink with black lettering. One size fits all. 100% cotton. \$10.

**2.**

## T-Shirts.

Front of shirt has Black Women's Conference logo over your heart with this message: BLACK WOMEN: ORGANIZING FOR EMPOWERMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY. Gold, Red XXL, XXXL.. \$10.

**3.**

## Long Sleeve T-Shirts.

Front of shirt has Women's Project logo over your heart. The back reads: WORKING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE Black with copper lettering. L 100% cotton. \$15 each.

**4.**

## Bumperstickers.

Bumpersticker has this message: UNTIL THERE'S EQUALITY THERE'S THE WOMEN'S PROJECT. \$1.00.

**5.**

## Sweat Shirts.

Front of shirt has Women's Project logo over your heart. The back gives you a choice of two messages. Purple with hot pink lettering. TRANSFORMING THE WORLD L, XL 50% cotton/50% polyester. \$15 each. WORKING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE L, XL 50% cotton/50% polyester. \$15 each.

**6.**

## Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism.

The Women's Project is pleased to bring you the first book of its kind on this important subject. \$9.95.

**7.**

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## BOOK NOTES FROM THE WOMEN'S PROJECT LIBRARY

### New Books In the Library:

#### **Love & Politics: Radical Feminist &**

**Lesbian Theories** by Carol Anne Douglas – "...a lively and coherent overview of radical and lesbian feminist ideas over the past few decades, reminding us of their creativity and diversity." – Charlotte Bunch

**I Shall Not Be Moved** – new poems by Maya Angelou

**Letters to Marina** by Dacia Maraini – a novel in the form of letters from one woman to another after the break-up of their relationship. In the course of writing these letters the narrator, under the pressure of a failed love relationship, explores her past: her distance from her father, her incestuous desires for her mother, her miscarriage, her childhood

eroticism and her present life with its sexual needs and desires.

#### **Making Face, Making Soul: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Women of Color**, edited by Gloria Anzaluda – a bold new collection of creative pieces and theoretical essays by women of color, including Joy Harjo, Audre Lorde, Trinh T. Minh-ha and Barbara Smith.

**Keys To Carling: Assisting Your Gay & Lesbian Clients** by Robert J. Kus, Ph.D. – a collection of 31 essays offers informed advice to health care and other professionals about how they can better serve their gay and lesbian clients.

**Malden Voyage** by Tania Aebi with Bernadette Brennan – this book tells the story of the first American woman—and the youngest person ever—to circumnavigate the globe alone. "It combines the appeal of physical adventure with emotional

coming of age."

### New Audiotape:

**Shadows On A Dime** – features 11 songs written and composed by Canadian singer/songwriter, Ferron.

### New Videotapes:

**1. Lesbian Tongues** – Interviews with JoAnn Loulan, JEB, Joan Nestle, Barbara Grier, Jewelle Gomez, Lois Weaver, Peggy Shaw, Donna McBride, Minnie Bruce Pratt, Deanie Williams, Betty Hollowell, Evin J. Evans, and Emily W. Davis.

**2. Lifetime Commitment: A Portrait of Karen Thompson** – This documentary chronicles the evolution of Karen Thompson's transformation from a non-political, closeted lesbian to an outspoken fighter and activist. It includes footage of her daily life, photos and anecdotes from Karen and Sharon Kowalski's life before the accident, and more.

## Prison • from page 8

### THIS IS THE KEY

PHYSICALLY, SEXUALLY AND MENTALLY WE HAVE BEEN BATTERED  
AND WE OFTEN FELT, TO NO-ONE, NONE OF THIS MATTERED  
LACK OF LOVE FOR OURSELVES RESULTED IN INSECURITY, VIOLENCE AND ISOLATION  
IN TURMOIL WE WERE BLINDED BY MASTERED CALCULATION

WE WERE SCARED AND OFTEN FEARED FOR OUR LIVES  
YET OBEDIENTLY WE SAT AND LISTENED TO LIE AFTER LIE  
WITH CUTS AND BRUISES WE STILL FELT WE WERE LOVED  
BUT IN REALITY...IN DARKNESS IS WHERE WE WERE SHOVED

YOU KNEW ALL THESE THINGS WERE WRONG...LISTEN TO YOUR INNER VOICE  
TO WALK A PATH OF HAPPINESS OR MISERY IS YOUR CHOICE  
IT'S TRUE IN SOME CASES LOVE TEARS YOU DOWN  
ALL YOU NEED IS THE RIGHT LOVE TO TURN YOU AROUND

SO TODAY START DOING ALL THOSE THINGS YOU LOVE TO DO  
AND DON'T EVER FORGET SOMEONE LOVES YOU FOR BEING YOU  
THAT'S A SPECIAL PERSON...THEY'LL LET YOUR SPIRIT RUN FREE  
THROUGH SUCH A PERSON YOU WILL FIND...LOVING YOURSELF IS THE KEY

Deborah A. Perry/Esther Williams (better known as Press)





## **TRANSFORMATION GOES BI- MONTHLY! JOIN NOW.**

*Transformation* is now published six times every year.

Six times each year, members and volunteers receive analysis of contemporary issues, information about Women's Project upcoming events and activities, and book reviews.

If you are not a Women's Project member or volunteer and would like to continue receiving the newsletter, please fill out the membership form on this page.

**Yes, I would like to join the Women's Project.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone/day \_\_\_\_\_

Phone/evening \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ \$ 5 low income  
\_\_\_\_\_ 15  
\_\_\_\_\_ 25  
\_\_\_\_\_ 50  
\_\_\_\_\_ 100

Make checks payable to the  
Women's Project  
2224 Main Street  
Little Rock, AR 72206

## **OUR MISSION**

Our goal is social change or, as the poet Adrienne Rich writes, "the transformation of the world." We believe this world can be changed to become a place of peace and justice for all women.

We take risks in our work; we take unpopular stands. We work for all women and against all forms of discrimination and oppression. We believe that we cannot work for all women and against sexism unless we also work against racism, classism, ageism, anti-Semitism, heterosexism and homophobia. We see the connection among these oppressions as the context for violence against women in this society.

We are concerned in particular

about issues of importance to traditionally underrepresented women: poor women, aged women, women of color, teenage mothers, lesbians, women in prisons, etc. All are women who experience discrimination and violence against their lives.

We are committed to working multi-culturally, multi-racially, and to making our work and cultural events accessible to low income women. We believe that women will not know equality until they know economic justice.

We believe that a few committed women working in coalition and in consensus with other women can make significant change in the quality of life for all women.

## **CURRENT PROJECTS**

### **Women and Work: Breaking the Barriers**

A training and advocacy project to make nontraditional jobs accessible to women.

### **Women's Watchcare Network**

A project to monitor incidents of racial, religious, sexual, and anti-gay violence, and the activities of hate groups in Arkansas.

### **The Homophobia and Racism Project**

Workshops on understanding racism and homophobia and developing methods to eliminate them.

### **Women and AIDS**

A project to develop strategies for working with women and caregivers around AIDS issues.

### **Communications and Events**

A newsletter, a lending library, statewide and regional conferences, and production of women singers, poets and novelists.

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**The Women's Project**  
2224 Main Street  
Little Rock, AR 72206

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Little Rock, Arkansas  
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