

Transformation

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Transformation

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Letters to the editor are
welcome.

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Looking Back/Moving On

Suzanne Pharr

On September 7, 1996 the Women's Project celebrated 15 years of working for social justice. Many of you joined in helping us to celebrate by attending the wonderful concert that was presented by Odetta.

In our 15th Year Anniversary Program Book we described the work we have been involved in for the last 15 years. In this newsletter we wanted to share some of that same information with you and let you know in what direction we will be moving in the future.

This year we are taking stock of our work, our fundraising capacity, our effectiveness in the community, and the changes in our society which require different responses from us.

Over the past 15 years, we have been working on a project-by-project basis to keep a progressive agenda alive in Arkansas, as well as to influence the national progressive agenda. Consequently, we have worked on a wide variety of organizing projects (as described in this newsletter) and, when other groups have been willing to take them on, we have moved on to other things. While being an effective strategy to get "high-risk" projects such as providing HIV/AIDS training or confronting rightwing bigots or working with women in prison to be considered acceptable in the state, it has also kept us running in many directions.

At the moment, we are dealing with two realities: it is more and more

difficult to raise money to support these projects which require long years of work to realize success; and the needs of the community are changing. The Right's strategy to "defund the Left" is beginning to be felt and many organizations who once received government funding are now seeking those funds from private foundations and individuals, our major sources of funding.

In light of these two realities we have examined our work and our effectiveness in the community. We are proud of our organizing over the years and feel that some of our most effective work for change has been in helping people understand the interconnection of oppressions and the necessity for oppressed groups to join together to make change. Our strongest work has been our political education work, our technical assistance to struggling groups, and our convening of groups to work together. This will be the focus of our work beginning next year.

Our goal is to create a population of progressive people who understand the politics of our time, along with the interconnectedness of issues and people, and are hopeful enough to be committed to work for social change. We will accomplish this through workshops, trainings, cultural activities and in other forums designed to build the skills and strengths of communities and individuals to make justice for all a reality. ■

Funders:

- American Foundation for AIDS Research
New York City
- Angelina Fund
New York City
- Arkansas Commission on Rape & Sexual Abuse
- Arkansas Dept. of Health
- Arkansas Humanities Council
- Astraea Foundation
New York City
- Bert & Mary Meyer Foundation
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- Bydale Foundation
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- Chicago Resource Center
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- Claretian Social Development Fund
Oak Park, IL
- Combined Federal Campaign
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Little Rock, AR
- Fund of the Four Directions
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- Funding Exchange
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- Kimberly Clark
Conway, AR

About the Women's Project

In 1981, Suzanne Pharr founded the Women's Project with a staff of five VISTA volunteers, four African American women and two white women working across the state to provide community education and self-empowerment to women on a broad range of issues. By the end of the first year, Reagan-era cutbacks put an end to VISTA and the Women's Project focused its work on combatting violence against women and children and bringing social and economic justice to all women. By 1987, the Project had moved into its present quarters at 2224 Main. In 1989, we purchased the building and the adjoining carriage house to help ensure our stability in the neighborhood. The next year we built a ramp and remodeled the building to open up a large meeting space and make one of the bathrooms wheelchair-accessible.

In 1991, Janet Perkins became the new director of the Women's Project, and in 1993, Suzanne Pharr moved to Portland, Oregon and opened a satellite office of the Women's Project to continue her work against the right-wing movement on a national level. The Project has remained small, with no more than five or six paid staff, around 500 members, and over 100 active volunteers, but our vision and our work remain disproportionately large.

We believe that racism, sexism and all other forms of oppression are inseparably linked and are rooted in economic and social injustice. It is impossible to eradicate any oppression without tackling them all. We do local, state, regional and national work. Much of our work is educational and cultural, such as this event tonight. We also give technical assistance and training to a wide variety of groups. At any one time we have three to five major projects under way, each lead by a staff member, involving the



many volunteers who give muscle to our work. We organize conferences, retreats, workshops, and support groups. Our political actions include silent vigils, demonstrations, press-conferences, and testimony before state and federal civil rights committees.

Because we are a small organization with a broad agenda, a major part of our work involves forming coalitions to address the injustices we see. We have worked with and learned from hundreds of groups over the last fifteen years. We have tried to be a catalyst for the work of others, to develop and strengthen progressive organizations on a local, state, regional and national level, while we in turn were enriched by their vision and skills.

Our financial support comes almost equally from individual donors, memberships, fund-raising events, book and merchandise sales and from private foundations, churches and other organizations. You will see a sidebar containing the names of these funders to the left.

On the following pages you will find excerpts from our newsletter, *Transformation*, which we hope will illuminate the issues we believe are crucial to the liberation of all women, and indeed, of all people. Following the excerpts on each page, you will see a box which contains a list of some of our coalition partners or some of the projects, political actions, educational and cultural work we have done around those issues. These are necessarily short lists, since it would be impossible to be comprehensive in the space available here.

We hope these pages will give you a glimpse of not just what we do, but why we do it.

- The League to Make A Difference *Little Rock, AR*
- Levi Strauss *Little Rock*
- Ms. Foundation *New York City*
- The Needmor Fund *Boulder, CO*
- New World Foundation *New York City*
- Oxfam America *Boston, MA*
- Public Welfare Foundation *Washington, DC*
- Share Our Strength *Washington, DC*
- Ralph L. Smith Foundation *Portland, OR*
- Threshold Foundation *San Francisco, CA*
- Tides Foundation *San Francisco, CA*
- United Methodist Church
- Women's Bureau-U.S. DOL *Dallas, TX*
- Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program *Manhasset, NY*
- Valentine Foundation *Bryn Mawr, PA*
- Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation *Little Rock*

**Some of our
coalition partners:**

Local Organizations:

- Advocates for Battered Women
- Arkansas ACLU
- Boys, Girls, & Adults Community Development Center, Marvell, AR
- Arkansas Economic Coalition
- Arkansas Liberty Alliance
- Deaf People Against AIDS/HIV
- Ryan White Center
- AIDS Outreach of Arkansas
- Arkansas Education Association
- PFLAG-Little Rock Chapter
- Arkansas NOW
- Arkansas Dept. of Correction
- GLAAD—Little Rock Chapter
- The Parent Center
- Diamond State Rodeo Assoc.
- Dignity of Little Rock
- Brotha's & Sista's
- RAPPS
- Jewish Federation of Little Rock
- Mainstream & ADAPT
- Nat'l. Conference of Christians & Jews—Little Rock
- Arkansas Coalition for Choice

Our Vision of Feminism

“The Third Wave of the Women’s Movement: Making the Connections”—Suzanne Pharr, 1987

During the first and second wave of the women’s movement, the media (and many women) kept focused only on the white middle and upper class women who were activists, not on women of color, poor women, and lesbians....The white women of the first wave have been criticized for their willingness to sacrifice the inclusion of black women in order to gain the inclusion of more white women and the support of white men in the struggle for the vote.

The second wave, which covers the period from the late sixties until about 1980, has been criticized for its white dominance and its concentration upon the Equal Rights Amendment and abortion rights and for its middle class goals of reform rather than radical change. Many people have felt it was characterized by a desire for making white women equal to white men instead of bringing about liberation and equality for all women.

It sought to place more women in positions traditionally held by men within a system that continues to oppress women of color, poor women, lesbians, the differently abled, older women, etc., leaving the traditionally voiceless and under-represented at the bottom of an economic system that thrives on their labor.

What has gone unnoticed by the media—and by many mainstream feminists—is that there is a growing swell of a third wave of the women’s movement that is making connections among all women and therefore among all oppressions, nationally and internationally, and is looking at liberation in a much more all-encompassing way than before. This movement is made up of battered women, lesbians, poor women, old women, prostitutes, differently abled women who see that the majority of the world’s women suffer from more than one oppression and that all of these oppressions are connected.... It sees no single issues.

This movement sees no one group or type of woman as being more acceptable than others. It works for the empowerment of individuals, for the development of real coalitions, for a new distribution of resources, for shared ownership and decision-making, for peace in the home and in the world. It is a movement of high energy, of great struggle, and of extraordinary commitment and hope. It works not for integration of women into an oppressive system but for the deep lasting change that will bring social justice and equality for all women.

- Planned Parenthood
 - Rape Crisis
 - Arkansas Coalition Against Domestic Violence
 - Advocates for Battered Women
 - Arkansas Dept. of Health
 - Arkansas AIDS Brigade
 - RAIN
 - Black Female Action
 - Dermott Concerned Citizens
 - Hispanic Ministries
 - Black Community Developers
 - UALR Black Forum
 - NAACP
 - United Methodist Women
 - Unitarian Universalist Church
 - Congregation B'nai Israel
 - Arkansas Gay and Lesbian Task Force
 - Coalition for Education and Action on Sexual Issues at Hendrix College
 - Grassroots Women's Project
 - Women Involved in Farm Economics in the Delta
 - Women's Forum for Economic Development in Marvell
- National Organizations:**
- Human Rights Campaign Fund
 - National Gay & Lesbian Task Force
 - Center for Democratic Renewal
 - National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
 - People's Institute for Survival and Beyond
 - Southerners on New Ground (SONG)
 - Department of Labor, Women's Bureau
 - National Black Women's Health Network
 - Applied Research Center
 - Political Research Associates
 - Center for Constitutional Rights
 - Coalition for Human Dignity
 - American Friends Service Committee
 - Centers for Disease Control
 - Highlander Research & Education Center
 - Institute for First Amendment Studies
 - Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund
 - Nat'l. Coalition for the Defense of Battered Women
 - People for the American Way
 - Rural Organizing Project
 - Klanwatch
 - Urban-Rural Mission
 - Western States Center
 - WHISPER

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How the Women's Project works to end sexism and violence against women:

Southern Technical Assistance Project

- state-wide and regional support to 69 battered women's shelters and rape crisis programs

Women's Watchcare Network:

- the only US group that logs murders of women as incidents of hate violence
- Memorial Day mock cemetery on the Women's Project lawn, mourning women killed by hate violence
- Protest of the release of rape victim's name in UA dorm incident, 1991
- Training manual for teachers on child sexual assault
- Educational film loan program
- Educational bookmarks distributed to schools
- Conference on teen dating violence
- National conference at Blue Mountain Center on "A Working Dialogue on Violence Against Women"
- Support group for adult survivors of incest
- Worked with the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence to address the issue of lesbian battering
- Women's Wall of Honor: commemorative tiles that salute women who have been a major influence in the donors' lives

Sexism and Violence against Women and Children

"Hate Violence Against Women" —by Suzanne Pharr, 1990



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 wide-

spread 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 eliminated. 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... It does not erupt naturally or by chance from the domesticity of our lives; it comes from a climate of woman hating. 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.

Women in Prison

“Supporting Women’s Efforts To Take Control Of Their Lives” —by Kerry Lobel, 1991

For me, prison work raises two important questions—one moral and one practical. First, are we directly or indirectly treating the women with whom we work as “our” property? And secondly, are we involving prisoners in planning and implementing an agenda that works for them?

The women as “property” notion is easily illustrated. In many states, for example, if a woman spends time in the sun and becomes sunburned and unable to work, she could get a reprimand because she has damaged state property. If a woman gets a jailhouse tattoo, or in any way changes her physical appearance, she can be reprimanded or disciplined because she has altered state property. The prison advocate perpetuates this notion, too, when she says “my women, my prisoners, my inmates, my girls.”

So in our case, as a freeworld person, I work with women inside on a project and then take our joint work to the Department of Correction. I become intermediary. At any point in this process it would be easy for me to withhold the information that women inside need to do their work. At any point in the process it would be less time consuming for me to act on my own. But I have also come to realize that with information comes involvement and ownership. I do not own our prison work. To the extent that the residents of the prison shape it and guide it, it is theirs. And, there is precious little that is theirs within that system.

Some of our work in the prisons:

- Staff have led weekly battered women’s group for nearly 7 years.
- MIWATCH program pairs children who are unable to visit their mothers with volunteers who transport them for monthly visits.
- Retreats for these children and their caregivers.
- Parenting groups for inmates.
- Non-traditional jobs training.
- Advocacy for individual inmates.
- Support for formerly incarcerated women.
- Collaborated on “Second Genesis,” half-way house for incarcerated women.

Comments by Deidra Gaddy

“ I have been a member of the Battered Women’s Group within the Arkansas Department of Corrections [at the Women’s Unit in Pine Bluff] for over a year... 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 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! ”

Some of our
HIV/AIDS
prevention
work:

- HIV/AIDS training for inmate peer counselors in the Women's Unit at the Department of Corrections
- Preparation of HIV/AIDS training manual by inmates
- Volunteers have gone into the streets to give AIDS education and safe sex kits to prostitutes and IV drug users
- Volunteers have taken AIDS education and safe sex kits to many local beauty parlors serving African American women
- Volunteers host house parties to introduce lesbians to safe sex education
- Helped organize Dining Out for AIDS
- Campus AIDS awareness training at Philander Smith, UALR, and Shorter College
- HIV/AIDS and safer sex awareness classes in Lake Village, Dermott, Eudora, Marvell, Marianna, Holly Grove and Helena

HIV and AIDS Services in Under-served Communities

"Women, Incarceration and AIDS" —by Cindy Haltom-Fox, 1993

I've been teaching HIV/AIDS classes for over two years now and as of this date, over 308 women have completed the four-hour course. In addition, two more 19-hour workshops have been conducted, and a total of 54 women received their certification in HIV/AIDS counseling. We have established a program that ensures that an inmate certified through the Arkansas Department of Health is situated in every unit on the compound in order to provide ongoing education and counseling to the inmates living there.

Kerry and I have co-authored a book, "HIV, AIDS and Reproductive Health: A Peer Trainer's Guide, which was funded by grants from the Arkansas Department of Health, the American Foundation for AIDS Research (AMFAR) and INSURE. We are giving the manual our own personal test drive – our newly-certified counselors each received a copy, and are using it to guide them in conducting their own monthly classes. The book has exceeded our expectations in providing the information and format necessary in order to establish a structured class on HIV/AIDS and STDs. We hope and pray that this manual will be eventually distributed to every penal institution in the U.S.

The women on the compound are no longer afraid. Concerned, yes, passionate, yes, but we are no longer paranoid, suspicious or misinformed. There is peace of mind that comes with this confidence in our roles....

Joyce Copely put it very nicely when she said, "I have learned how the AIDS virus got transmitted and hopefully with what I've learned, I can help some of the younger kids understand about AIDS and what to use to keep themselves safe and healthy....I also know what to use myself." Knowing how to protect *ourselves* is the first step; once we realize that it's our own actions that put us at risk, we are granted that very rare and precious sense of control that is so hard to have in here.

....Being incarcerated doesn't mean we must be ignorant of an issue that affects the entire human race. We belong. We have the power to make a change, to protect ourselves and others, to help in any way we can.

That feels good.

The Right Wing Movement and Hate Violence

“An Open Letter to the Conservative Right” —by Suzanne Pharr, 1990

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 for 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 our entrance into Saudi Arabia, and this bogus war for oil and greed 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 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.

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 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 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?

How the Women's Project fights right-wing activity and hate violence:

- The Women's Watchcare Network: a state-wide volunteer network monitors incidents of hate violence against women, people of color, Catholics and Jews, lesbians and gay men and the activities of white supremacist groups and individuals
- Local and statewide training conferences for Watchcare volunteers
- Worked with AETN on hate violence documentary
- Community education meetings on the right-wing at college campuses throughout Arkansas and elsewhere
- Keynote speeches on hate violence across the state and nation
- National gatherings of leaders working against the right wing
- Workshops on the right-wing at NGLTF Creating Change Conferences, the National Lesbian Conference and many more
- Suzanne Pharr participated with Oregon Coalition for Human Dignity and the Lesbian Community Project in the No on Nine campaign in Oregon
- Publication of *In the Time of the Right: Reflections on Liberation* by Suzanne Pharr in 1996

How we work to end racism:

- The African-American Institute for Social Justice seeks to empower African American women to take control of their lives and bring justice to our communities
- Research project on the impact of racism on jobs, education and housing
- Monthly discussion groups
- Two state conferences for African American Women and Children
- Conference for African American Mothers and Daughters
- North/South Grass-roots Dialogue on Drug Issues
- Support group for African American Teenage Women at Central High
- Petition drive with NAACP in Warren, Arkansas
- Press conference demanding a new trial for convicted rapist Barry Lee Fairchild
- Counter-demonstrations against the Klan
- Protests against white supremacists Thom Robb, Richard Barrett and David Duke

Racism and Violence against People of Color

"African-American Women's Self-Empowerment"—by Janet Perkins, 1992

African-American women have struggled since the very beginning to be recognized just as human beings...To some we were and still are akin to work animals— much like the ox, mule or plough horse. We are recognized for being strong, healthy and producers of many babies for labor, which is either free or cheap. African-American women have always been seen as being able to work long hours with little rest, requiring very little to survive and always being available to take care of the needs of others.

"Cultural Imperialism" —by Kelly Mitchell-Clark, 1990

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 TV 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.... 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.

"In Danger: African-American Youth"—by Janet Perkins, 1990

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?



Social Justice

“Living in Arkansas as a Jewish Woman” —by Kerry Lobel, 1991

When I moved to Arkansas 6-1/2 years ago, I was struck with how pervasive the influence of Church was on most everyone I met. Church and Christianity were everywhere. Meetings began and ended with prayers. Assumptions were made that everyone is Protestant. At my first meetings with many strangers, I was often asked, “What Church do you go to? I then would explain that I was a Jew. For many people, I was the first Jew they had met. During my years here I have heard these phrases: You don’t look Jewish, You Jews are so good with money, and occasionally people have asked where I hid my tail and horns. All myths and stereotypes....

But it is not these incidents which cause the deepest injury. It is the damage done every day by living in a culture that does not recognize your existence - that holds you invisible. That sees the space that you occupy, but doesn’t understand what moves you. That does not celebrate your holidays, know your history, or recognize your writers. That because it holds your full self invisible, can never see you. Can never see what hurts you. **And in the end, not know how to love you.**

“Toward a Concept of Wholeness” —by Suzanne Pharr, 1988


Society’s treatment of lesbians and gay men displays so very clearly the controls and limits placed on a particular group’s ability to achieve wholeness. It says to a lesbian or gay man, as long as you are self-negating and act without wholeness, without integrity, we will accept you. As long as you hide who you are as a human being, the truth of your reality, we will accept you. On the other hand, if you act with integrity and wholeness, if you are open about your life and let us know you are a lesbian or a gay man, we will punish you by taking your job and economic survival from you, by taking your children and access to other children from you, by limiting housing, health care and insurance, by providing you no legal protection, by attacking your credibility and your character, **by isolating you within your community, or by threatening your life.**

How the Women’s Project works for social justice:

- The Social Justice Project has presented hundreds of workshops on racism, sexism, homophobia, and internalized homophobia in 40 states
- A conference of 50 African American women and 50 white women formulated an Arkansas Women’s Agenda for Social Justice
- The Lesbian Network, a social and discussion group
- Protest of the release of names of men arrested in Boyle Park
- Testimony before Arkansas Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights on civil rights for lesbians and gay men
- Protest calling for Bishop McDonald to oppose the Vatican’s stand against civil rights for lesbians and gay men
- Pro-Choice “Die-in” at the National Life Chain in Little Rock
- Counter-demonstrations to oppose Rev. Otwell and his God Said Ministries
- Clinic defense against Operation Rescue
- Publication of *Homophobia: a Weapon of Sexism* (1988), by Suzanne Pharr; used in classrooms at over 150 colleges and universities, now in its 6th printing (28,000 copies)

How we work for economic justice:

- The Economic Justice Project educates and empowers women about economic issues
- Women in Non-traditional Jobs Research Project
- *Women and Work: Breaking the Barriers*: over 500 women received information about non-traditional jobs; 132 participants completed job skills training
- Poultry Project: research on conditions in the poultry industry in Northwest Arkansas
- Food bank project in Marianna
- Served on the board of the Southeast Women's Employment Coalition and a founding member of the Arkansas Women's Economic Coalition
- *The Faces of Poverty: Women & Children in Arkansas*—a conference with keynote speaker, Dr. Jocelyn Elders



Economic Justice

"Enough Blame to Go Around, Or Recycling the Poor" —by Janet Perkins, 1994

I agree that welfare has outlived its intended purpose and it is time for some changes to occur, but the motivation behind the changes can't be driven by seeing welfare recipients as scum and unfit animals who we are tired of supporting. The motivation for welfare reform must be that each human being in this world has value, deserves to be treated decently with respect and no one in this country should be poor. Along with making changes in the welfare system, measures should be taken to restructure large corporations and the government which plays a major role in making it impossible for people not to be poor.

"Trying to Walk the Talk" —by Suzanne Pharr, 1996

Much of our political analysis is focused on economics as the root source of inequality, and we have seen it at work everywhere. Daily, we witness women unable to leave their batterers because they cannot afford to feed their children. We witness people condemned because of their poverty. We see the poverty of people of color viewed as an indication of their lack of value in society. Hence, we decided to address the internal issue of economics first. We pay everyone at the Women's Project the same salary, no matter what job she does, and no matter how long she has worked there. At any time we have only four to five full-time employees, and pay others such as a bookkeeper, child care providers, and newsletter designers on an hourly basis at the same rate the full-time staff is paid. Longevity is rewarded with other forms of compensation: a month yearly vacation after two years of employment; a retirement pension after five years; five months paid sabbatical after every five years worked.

We believe that an hour of one woman working as hard as she is able is equal to another woman's working hard, no matter what the task at hand: whether it is writing funding proposals, providing care for children, giving speeches, clipping newspaper articles and logging violence, or cleaning the office.

I am often told that such a pay structure could work only in such a small place. Perhaps so, but...larger organizations could create a policy to allow no more than a 20% differential between the highest paid employees and the lowest paid. If we do not do this, then the structure of our social change organizations reflects the economic pyramid of this country. Those at the apex (the fewest) make the most money and have the most power (control of decision making and distribution of resources). Accountability is vertical rather than horizontal. Those at the bottom make the least and are not allowed to take part in the decisions that affect their lives and the life of the organization and its constituency.

Education, Communication and Culture

"Growing Up With Racism"—by Amy Edgington, 1996

Feeling at a soul level my indebtedness to African Americans has allowed me to know how much I need people of color as my allies in this world and to care enough about what happens to them to risk my safety and privilege. Caring means going back to school, because being white has meant never needing to think about race, being sure that my view of the world meant "reality", tuning out the feelings, culture and experiences of people of color. As one way of learning, I have immersed myself for the last ten years in fiction, poetry and biographies by people of color, particularly African American women. This literature is kitchen table talk brought to a high art form. It speaks to me with an intimacy that few people of color can risk with me in person. It has been a fountain of wisdom that allows me to begin to appreciate both what we have in common and the various, unique flavors of African American life.

This literature delights while it educates, but it does not romanticize. The myth that oppression makes people noble pervades our society.... African American literature brings home the truth: racism wounds and scars people, including those who manage to survive and even thrive. It is interesting to me to see the amount of attention paid in our popular culture to the lifelong damage individuals suffer from such traumas as incest, child abuse, neglect, rape, and battering. I am glad notice is finally being given to these issues. But I would also like to see our culture acknowledge that racism, although different, is surely as devastating, particularly when combined with the horrors of poverty. How, exactly, is a person of color supposed to escape a dysfunctional relationship with white society? Where can one go to recover from racist abuse that never stops? African American literature makes it clear that people behave nobly, when they do, at great cost and in spite of injury, not because of it. I am glad that oppression does not ennoble us. If racism were about turning people into saints, why would we want to stop it?

No amount of reading could teach me to know racism from the inside. People of color will always be the experts and the leaders on this issue. As a white person I've been taught that the only worthy results are those that surpass others. To devote myself to understanding racism and pursuing justice, when I am guaranteed never to reach the top, flies in the face of conditioning, but it fills other needs: not to be the best at others' expense, but to do better by everyone; to contribute through action, instead of profiting by doing nothing. As I do so, I become smarter and tougher in my struggles as a woman, a lesbian, a person with disabilities. **And I gain powerful allies.**

Some of the cultural work we use to communicate and educate:

- Lending library of over 4000 books, periodicals, audio and videotapes by women and people of color
- *Transformation* Newsletter
- Bookstore specializing in materials of interest to feminists, African Americans, women of color, lesbians and gay men
- State-wide film loan library specializing in films on economic issues and sexual assault
- Out and About Project mails videos and books to gay and lesbian groups around the state
- Lectures by Barbara Smith, Maria Theresa Tula, Leslie Feinberg and others
- Workshops, panels, and discussion groups
- Concerts by Jane Sapp, Gayle Marie, Casselberry and Dupree, Sweet Honey in the Rock, and Odetta
- Two cultural festivals
- Women's Coffee House
- 2 "Reel Women" Film Festivals

Wishlist

Another way to help the work of the Women's Project is by donating much needed supplies and equipment. These tax deductible gifts will facilitate our work while reducing our operating expenses. Needed items include:

Office Supplies

- photocopier paper
- black pens and markers
- red pens and markers
- Post-It Notes
- manila file folders
- 8-1/2 x 11 inch writing pads
- 9x12 mailing envelopes
- double density 3.5 inch diskettes
- 3.5 inch diskette storage boxes
- Royal Alpha 6000 typewriter



- box sealing tape
- Imagewriter printer ribbons
- Apple laser printer cartridges

For the Library

- bookcases
- gently used books

For Meetings and Events

- flip charts
- serving platters
- serving bowls
- serving utensils
- conference room chairs

For MIWatch Program

- infant and child car seats

For Accessibility

- raised toilet seat
- doorbell on ramp

For Marianna

Food Bank

- Macintosh computer & printer



CONGRATULATIONS to former Staff Member KERRY LOBEL

*on being named the new
Executive Director of the National
Gay and Lesbian Task Force*

Kerry was a lead organizer at the Women's Project from 1985 through 1994. She takes over the helm at NGLTF on December 1, 1996.

**Good luck Kerry,
and we miss you!**

The American Civil Liberties Union of Arkansas

invites you to attend our
1996 Banquet
honoring

Civil Libertarian of the Year

Freddie Nixon

with

featured speaker

Senator Dale Bumpers



Wednesday, October 30, 1996
North Oaks Event Center

Cocktails at 6

\$75 per person

Dinner at 7

(\$56.25 tax-deductible)



M 001 111 299

"Home for the Holidays"

An International Celebration
of Holiday Decoration



November 3rd
Noon - 6:00
Excelsior Hotel

Noon -2:00 Craft fair

2:00 - 4:00 Friday's Flowers presents

"Decorating your home for the holidays"

a presentation by Little Rock's top floral artists

4:00 - 6:00 Silent auction, drinks & hors d'oeuvres

Call 372-4293 for tickets . \$20 in advance; \$25 at the door.

**"Home for the Holiday's" is a fundraising event for the Women's Project
sponsored by Friends of the Women's Project and Friday's Flowers**



**I cannot attend but would like to support The Women's
Project with my tax-free contribution of \$_____.**

Mail to 2224 Main, Little Rock, AR 72206

Women's Project

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Little Rock, AR 72206

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