

Transformation

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Multi-Issue Politics

Suzanne Pharr

At the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's Creating Change Conference, I was asked to give a luncheon speech to the participants of the People of Color Institute and the Diversity Institute. Right off, I told them that I thought I was an odd choice for these groups because I don't really believe in either diversity or identity politics as they are currently practiced. Fortunately, people respectfully stayed to hear me explain myself.

First, diversity politics, as popularly practiced, seem to focus on the necessity for having everyone (across gender, race, class, age, religion, physical ability, etc.) present and treated well in any given setting or organization. An assumption is that everyone is oppressed, and all oppressions are equal. Since the publication of the report, "Workforce 2000," that predicted the U.S. workforce would be made up of 80% women and people of color by 2000, a veritable growth industry of "diversity consultants" has arisen to teach corporations how to "manage" diversity. With integration and productivity as goals, they focus on issues of sensitivity and inclusion – a human relations approach – with acceptance and comfort as high priorities. Popular images of diversity

politics present people holding hands around America, singing "We Are the World."

I have a lot of appreciation for the part of diversity work that concentrates on making sure everyone is included because the history of oppression is one of excluding, of silencing, of rendering people invisible. However, for me, our diversity work fails if it does not deal with the power dynamics of difference and go straight to the heart of shifting the balance of power among individuals and within institutions. A danger of diversity politics is becoming a tool of oppression by creating the illusion of participation when in fact there is no shared power. Having a presence within an organization or institution means very little if one does not have the power of decision-making, an adequate share of the resources, and participation in the development of the workplan or agenda. We as oppressed people must demand much more than acceptance. Tolerance, sympathy and understanding are not enough, though they soften the impact of oppression by making people feel better in the face of it. Our job is not just to soften blows but to make change, fundamental and far-reaching.

(continued on page 2)

CONTENTS

**Battered Women's
Programs
Under Attack**

–Page 5–

**From Despair To
Hope In The Black
Community**

–Page 7–

**Women's Project
Receives Award**

–Page 9–

Identity politics, on the other hand, rather than trying to include everyone, brings together people who share a single common identity such as sexual orientation, gender, or race. Generally, it focuses on the elimination of a single oppression, the one that is based on the common identity; i.e., homophobia/heterosexism, sexism, racism. However, this can be a limited, hierarchical approach, reducing people of multiple identities to a single identity. Which identity should a lesbian of color choose as a priority – gender, race or sexual orientation? And does choosing one necessitate leaving the other two at home? What do we say to bisexual or biracial people? Choose, damnit, choose???

Our multiple identities allow us to develop a politic that is broad in scope because it is grounded in a wide range of experiences.

There are positive aspects of organizing along identity lines: clarity of single focus in tactics and strategies, self-examination and education apart from the dominant culture, development of solidarity and group bonding, etc. Creating organizations based on identity allows us to have visibility and collective power, to advance concerns that otherwise would never be recognized because of our marginalization within the dominant society.

However, identity politics often suffers from failing to acknowledge that the same multiplicity of oppressions, a similar imbalance of power, exists within identity groups as within the larger society. People who group together on the basis of their sexual orientation still find within their groups sexism and racism that have to be dealt with – or if gathering on the basis of race,

there is still sexism and homophobia to be confronted. Whole, not partial, people come to identity groups, carrying several identities. Some of the major barriers of our liberation movements to being able to mount a unified or cohesive strategy, I believe, come from our refusal to work directly on the oppressions – the fundamental issues of power – within our own groups. A successful liberation movement cannot be built on the effort to liberate only a few and only a piece of who we are.

Diversity and identity politics

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are responses to oppression. In confronting oppressions, we must remember that they are more than people just not being nice to one another: they are systemic, based in institutions and in general society, where one group of people is allowed to exert power and control over members of another group, denying them fundamental rights. Also, we must remember that oppressions are interconnected, operating in similar ways, and that many people experience more than one oppression.

I believe that all oppressions in this country turn on an economic wheel; they all, in the long run, serve to consolidate and keep wealth in the hands of the few, with the many fighting over crumbs. Oppressions are built in particular on the dynamic intersection of race and class. Without work against economic injustice, against the excesses of capitalism, there can be no deep and lasting work on oppression. Why? Because it is always in the best interest of the dominators, the greedy, to maintain and expand oppression – the feeding of economic and social injustice.

Unless we understand the interconnections of oppressions and the economic exploitation of oppressed groups, we have little hope of succeeding in a liberation movement. The religious Right has been successful in driving wedges between oppressed groups because there is little common understanding of the linkages of oppressions. Progressives, including lesbians and gay men, have contributed to these divisions because generally we have dealt with only single pieces of the fabric of injustice. We stand ready to be divided. If, for example, an organization has worked only on sexual identity issues and has not worked internally on issues of race and gender, then it is ripe for being divided on those issues.

The Right has had extraordinary success in using homosexuality as a wedge issue, dividing people on the issues clustered around the Right's two central organizing points: traditional family values and economics. An example is their success in using homosexuality as a way to organize people to oppose multicultural curricula, which particularly affects people of color

and women; while acting to "save the family from homosexuals," women and people of color find themselves working against their own inclusion. If women's groups, people of color and lesbian and gay groups worked on gender, race and sexual identity issues internally, then perhaps we would recognize the need for a coalition and a common agenda for multicultural education.

An even more striking example is how the Right, in its "No Special Rights" campaign, successfully plays upon the social and economic fears of people, using homosexuality as the wedge issue, and as the coup de grace, pits the lesbian and gay community against the African-American community. Ingeniously, they blend race, class, gender and sexual identity issues into one campaign whose success has profound implications for the destruction of democracy.

In summary, the goal of the "No Special Rights" campaign is to change the way this nation thinks about civil rights so that the groundwork is laid for the gradual elimination of civil rights. This is not an easy idea to present to the general public in a straightforward manner. Therefore, the religious Right has chosen homosexuality and homophobia to open the door to thinking that is influenced by racial hatred and its correlatives, gender and class prejudice. (See "Eliminating Civil Rights," *Transformation*, Nov.-Dec. 1993, Vol. 8, 6, pp. 1-2)

Depending upon the persuasion of racism, sexism and homophobia, the religious Right seeks these basic twisted and distorted changes in our thinking about civil rights:

1) They suggest that civil rights do not already exist in our

Constitution and Bill of Rights; they are a special category for "minorities" such as people of color and women. The religious Right refers to these people as having "minority status," a term they have invented to keep us focused on the word **minority**. Most people think of minorities as people of color. Recently in Oregon, signs appeared that read, "End Minority Status." They did not specify gay and lesbian: the message was about **minorities** and what that so-called "status" brings them.

2) Then they say that basic civil rights are themselves "Special Rights" that can be given or taken away by the majority who has ordinary rights, not "special rights."

3) They argue that "Special Rights" should be given to people based on deserving behavior and hardship conditions (especially economic) that require special treatment. In their words, people who "qualify" for "minority status."

4) Then they introduce the popular belief that "Special Rights" given to people of color and women and people with disabilities have resulted in the loss of jobs for deserving, "qualified" people through affirmative action and quotas. This introduces the notion that rights for some has an economic cost for others; therefore the enhancement of civil rights for everyone is not a good thing.

5) They argue that lesbians and gay men have no hardship conditions that would require extending "Special Rights" to them. Further, homosexuals **disqualify** themselves from basic civil rights because, by the nature of who they are, they exhibit bad behavior. They do not, according to the Right's formula, "qualify" for "minority

status."

6) Then there is the pernicious connection: There are other people who already have "Special Rights" who exhibit bad behavior and prove themselves undeserving as they use and deal drugs and commit crimes of violence and welfare fraud. The popular perception is that these are minorities. However, the Right also extends its description of the undeserving to those who bear children outside of two-parent married families, women who choose abortion, and even those who receive public assistance.

7) And finally, their logical and dangerous conclusion: because giving "Special Rights" to undeserving groups is destroying our families, communities and jobs for good people, who deserves and does not deserve to be granted "Special Rights" should be put to the popular vote and good, ordinary citizens allowed to decide who gets them and who gets to keep them.

Clearly, the religious Right understands the interconnection among oppressions and in this campaign plays directly to that interweaving of racism, sexism, classism and homophobia that is virtually impossible to tease apart. To see this campaign as single issue, i.e., simply about lesbians and gay men, is to ensure defeat of our efforts in opposing it. It has to be responded to as the multi-issue campaign that it is. If the "No Special Rights" campaign is successful, everyone stands to lose.

The question, as ever, is what to do? I do not believe that either a diversity or identity politics approach will work unless they are changed to incorporate a multi-issue analysis and strategy that combine

(continued on page 4)

the politics of inclusion with shared power. But, you say, it will spread us too thin if we try to work on everyone's issue, and ours will fall by the wayside. In our external work (doing women's anti-violence work, working against police brutality in people-of-color communities, seeking government funding for AIDS research, etc.), we do not have to work on "everybody's issue" but how can we do true social change work unless we look at all within our constituency who are affected by our particular issue? People who are infected with the HIV virus are of every race, class, age, gender, geographic location, yet when research and services are sought, it is women, people of color, poor people, etc., who are usually overlooked. Yet today, the AIDS virus rages on because those in power think that the people who contract it are dispensable. Are we to be like those currently in power? To understand why police brutality is so much more extreme in people-of-color communities, we have to understand why, even within that community, it is so much greater against poor people of color, prostituted women and gay men and lesbians of color. To leave any group out leaves a hole for everyone's freedoms and rights to fall through. It becomes an issue of "acceptable" and "unacceptable" people, deserving and undeserving of rights.

Identity politics offers a strong, vital place for bonding, for developing political analysis, for understanding our relationship to a world that says on the one hand that we are no more than our identity, and on the other, that there is no real oppression based on the identity of race or gender or sexual identity.

Our challenge is to learn how to use the experiences of our many identities to forge an inclusive social change politic. The question that faces us is how to do multi-issue coalition building from an identity base. The hope for a multi-racial, multi-issue movement rests in large part on the answer to this question.

Our linkages can create a movement, and our divisions can destroy us.

Internally, if our organizations are not committed to the inclusion and shared power of all those who

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share our issue, how can we with any integrity demand inclusion and shared power in society at large? If women, lesbians and gay men are treated as people undeserving of equality within civil rights organizations, how can those organizations demand equality? If women of color and poor women are marginalized in women's rights organizations, how can those organizations argue that women as a class should be moved into full participation in the mainstream? If lesbian and gay organizations are not anti-racist and feminist in all their practices, what hope is there

for the elimination of homophobia and heterosexism in a racist, sexist society?

When we grasp the value and interconnectedness of our liberation issues, then we will at last be able to make true coalition and begin building a common agenda that eliminates oppression and brings forth a vision of diversity that shares power and resources. In particular, I think there is great hope for this work among lesbians and gay men. First, we must reconceptualize who we are and see ourselves not as the wedge, not as the divisive, diversionary issue of the religious Right – but as the bridge that links the issues and people together. If we indeed represent everyone – cutting across all sectors of society, race, gender, age, ability, geographic location, religion – and if we develop a liberation politic that is transformational, that is, that eliminates the power and dominance of one group over another within our own organizations – we as old and young, people of color and white, rich and poor, rural and urban lesbians and gay men can provide the forum for bringing people and groups together to form a progressive, multi-issue, truly diverse liberation movement. Our success will be decided by the depth of our work on race, class and gender issues.

Instead of the flashpoint for division, we can be the flashpoint for developing common ground, a common agenda, a common humanity. We can be at the heart of hope for creating true inclusive, participatory democracy in this country. ♦

This is article #9 in an ongoing series on the religious Right. The complete series may be ordered from the Women's Project for \$9.95.

Battered Women's Programs Under Attack

Kerry Lobel

Many, if not most, of the institutions that advocate social change in this country are under attack. One need not look very far for examples. For instance, the Right has gone on the offensive to shift public funding from public to private schools through school voucher programs, hounded abortion providers so that the number of physicians available to perform the procedure grows smaller and smaller, founded organizations like the False Memory Foundation to discredit survivors of child sexual and physical abuse, and filed litigation to support the burgeoning so-called father's rights movement. They have used anti-gay and lesbian rhetoric to create a wedge in people of color communities and racist code-words to gain a foothold with unemployed whites.

With so many attacks coming from so many different directions it is easy for most people to miss the fact that the entire battered women's movement continues to be under attack.

Recently, however, we heard the story of Allegra Perhaes, the director of a battered women's shelter in Hawaii. Her program has gone through the ringer and she is one of those examples of a baby who has been thrown out with the bathwater. The Family Crisis Shelter Inc. runs shelters in west Hawaii and east Hawaii and has always held itself up as a feminist program. The program has spent the better part of the summer and fall under attack and Allegra has resigned hoping to remove at least one source of the heat from the work. You can like Allegra or not, but the basis of attacks for the programs should be of concern to us all.

What follows are some quotations from a preliminary investigative report conducted by the state of Hawaii, Department of the Attorney General. It should be noted that this report was issued to the press prior to being forwarded to either shelter staff or board members. The report's contents are in italics, my responses are in regular type.

Unqualified staff

"Most of the staff do not have college degrees or

experience in social work or counseling. Witnesses told us that the most desirable qualifications for employment at FCSI are to be a former client and to have a commitment to feminist philosophy.

Your CPS social workers believe that those who have been personally involved in family violence bring an important perspective to the work of helping battered women. However your staff also believes that those who are in the midst of their own family crises, or who are currently involved in abusive relationships, are in no position to act as counselors, advocates or role models for battered women."

Battered and formerly battered women have guided the battered women's movement since its inception. So long as battered women's advocates were underpaid and undervalued in our society, there wasn't a big push to staff shelters with professionals. As shelter budgets grew and as there was a glut of Masters of Social Work on the job market, there became a larger push by funders and others to mandate the hiring of professionals. Programs that were initiated on a peer-support and goal-setting model rapidly turned into counseling and treatment programs. Credentialed battered women's advocates realized that a degree is no replacement for experience. Involving professionals was no substitute for setting a clear program direction that relied on supporting women's experiences and strengthening their ability to make their own choices.

Anyone who has worked in a shelter realizes that working there alone is enough to create a family crisis. Long hours, crisis calls in the middle of the night, and the constant demands of working in a battered women's program are a challenge to any relationship. But many of us also realize that family crises are endemic to life in our society. Caring for family members living with AIDS, supporting aging parents and raising children alone don't even begin to cover it. Battered women's advocates should be provided with the same understanding and support as any worker in any field. Do we really want the government to decide whose crisis should be the basis for the job we do?

(continued on page 6)

Racial Discrimination

"Numerous current and former employees testified about FCSI's near-obsession with racism. Some of their complaints may fairly be categorized as a disagreement with the executive director's ideology and philosophy. Social scientists may debate whether or not battering is another manifestation of the same dynamics of power and control which are at the core of racism. Virtually every current or former employee whom we interviewed confirmed that FCSI conducted racially segregated staff meetings on a monthly basis. Employees were categorized as either White Women (WW) or Women of Color (WOC). WW were required to participate in an indoctrination session and monthly meetings of the 'White Women's Liberation Group,' 'White Women Against Racism,' or similarly named groups."

While social scientists may debate whether racism is related to the same dynamics of power and control as woman abuse, those of us working in the battered women's movement know from our own experiences and those of other women that in fact these two are related. A fundamental cornerstone of the battered women's movement has been its active commitment to working against racial injustice and racism. Women-of-color activists have fought and won the right to meet in their own spaces and discuss their own issues since the early 1970s. Just as important has been the choice by some women of color to organize with others to end violence in their own communities. Similarly white women have realized that fighting racism is our responsibility and that we cannot hope to support the choices of women of color without understanding our own racism and prejudice.

Non-Cooperation with Child Protective Services

"CPS workers complained that they were routinely denied telephone and physical access to parents and children at the West Hawaii Shelter, that they were forced to have an 'advocate' present during their meetings with parents, and that these advocates were often obstructive in their communications with parents."

For many years, battered women's programs have had to contend with sometimes adversarial relationships between shelter staff and zealous CPS workers. When and where CPS intervenes often reflects their gender bias. While women in shelters are faced with losing their children for "failure to protect them from abuse," battered women fight a system that often refuses to intervene when batterers physically or sexually abuse their children. Too often, shelters have had to provide safe harbor for women and children fleeing from abusive fathers and

abusive courts.

The allegations faced by the Hawaii program have a familiar ring to most every battered women's program. Their struggle is shared by many.

Realizing that, we must be intentional about the consequences of our programs' policies and procedures. At one time shelters' very existence was enough to rattle the status quo. So while it was never "safe" for battered women's programs to espouse feminist ideals, these programs now are being challenged like never before. Starting as small, fly-by-the-seats-of-their-pants operations, many programs' fiscal policies have not kept up with increasing budgets. Programs that worked well because a small intimate core group of advocates shared a vision and philosophy are being rocked as they shift to accommodate the changing interests, values and priorities of new staff. Once shelter staffing was a political priority, now it's a job.

It must be understood that while shelters have always been subject to attack by the Right, new challenges are also under way. A so-called return to "family values" and a re-emphasis on keeping families together and supporting the male gender role as provider and boss, are the cornerstone of the ever-growing Right. Shelters, as the symbols of alternatives for women, are under great pressure to justify their very existence. The pressure to fit in has forced many programs to simply declare themselves as havens from violence, rather than as an alternative to a male-dominated, violent relationship.

As some shelters continue to change their image to conform and hide among social service programs, those that challenge the status quo will come increasingly under attack and will need our support. The main areas of attack? The very areas that are of concern to the Right today—economics, children as property, and maintaining white power and control.

We must stay strong in our belief that our energies must be used to stop battering rather than to control battered women's services. We must understand that the Right hates anything that allows women to have independent and autonomous lives outside the home. Hence their attacks on programs such as childcare and Headstart. Both are programs that offer children some measure of exposure to forces outside the family and both offer women an alternative to staying home. Male authority cannot be absolute when women live their own lives.

Battered women's programs at their core offer a refuge from male domination and control. Challenging that control by including survivors at all levels of battered women's services is essential if women are ever to have their freedom. ♦

From Despair To Hope In The Black Community

Janet Perkins

Another year is about to end. Unfortunately, whether it is nationally, internationally or locally, when we review the events and happenings of '93 the bad far outweighs the good. Or should I say the things that happened which pointed to some hope and improvement were overshadowed and swallowed up by such incredible acts of craziness and irrationality that I keep questioning whether the whole world has gone mad.

At the end of each year or at the beginning of a new one, I review my life from every aspect—work, family, love, health, dreams, goals and desires. I look at what I accomplished and where I failed. This is when I determine what is needed for me to go on and just how I look at life in general. This is my attempt to keep on top of life, maintain the little sanity that remains and to stay focused. But in doing this review of my life, my work, my place in the community, how I fit into the larger scheme of things, I must tell you I'm afraid. Some days I feel I'm not doing nearly enough to make change. Sometimes I feel that each of us at the Women's Project are dancing as fast as we can, but we just can't keep up with the beat.

Because the African-American community appears to be quickly sinking under the weight of violence, economic deprivation, inequities in healthcare and many other problems

that absorb so much of our energy, I no longer will spend time and energy reviewing and just talking about the problems.

Mind you, I didn't say waste time, because I do not feel it is a waste of time for us to understand the problems we face. We must understand the cycle of drugs, for example. Basically, black folks have no money to import drugs to this country, but we are the main culprits who are arrested and who line the prison walls. We are the ones who are dying from the violence associated with drugs. We must be curious about why the African-American community is experiencing the majority of the death and crime when we know white people are just as heavy into the drug culture as importers, dealers and users. Why is the face that we see attached to drugs primarily some shade of color?

Additionally, it is crucial we have discussions about why so many of our children are dropping out of school and why, at the completion of 12 years, far too many are basically illiterate. I don't feel it's being disrespectful to those who fought for integrating the schools for us to question how desegregation helped or hurt us. Some time must be devoted to understanding, if I'm a black female or black male, why my wages will be lower than my white counterparts with the same amount of education and experience. The list goes on.

We have to look at the disparity regarding health issues, infant mortality, the banking industry, housing, etc. And we must understand the power of racism and how our lives have been shaped, guided, controlled and impaired by it. Everytime we talk about the problems, we must be equally as expansive in exploring the possibilities to change the situation, and take the steps to establish plans of action.

We must raise the questions of how and why we practice classism, homophobia, sexism, ableism and ageism in the black community. Why do we want to deny we are still playing the color and hair game in our community? Why is it when we look at each other we see nothing, and we demonstrate to each other day in and day out a level of disrespect that communicates that we see each other as less than human? And is this why we are killing each other in such large numbers? Or is all the death we are seeing in our communities mercy killings? Are people actually assisting others to escape the hopelessness and despair by killing them and knowing they too will find a solace through being killed or being removed from circulation through going to prison?

Please don't think I'm underestimating or not recognizing the programs and activities that are efforts to build the African-American community. I know there

(continued on page 8)

are many people who have dedicated their lives and almost every waking moment to concentrating on the development and survival of our community—but it's still not enough, because the efforts lack the support of the total community.

Now I must take my own advice not to raise an issue without the discussion of how we can make change. I've raised an issue about the lack of support from everyone in the community participating in the growth and stabilization of the community. First, some questions. Those of us who say we are working for the empowerment and strength of the community, are we really sincere, or are we part of the problem? The programs that we work in, are they really a catalyst for change or just a paycheck for us or a way for us to establish our names as somebody? Do we really love and embrace our community or do we stay in the community because we don't have anywhere else to go? Is it because we don't have the money or resources to flee to the suburbs with all those other black folks we call traitors that we stay and do the best we can to maintain some structure and order? I'm just asking the questions because I think we must examine our commitment and motives for working and living in the black community.

First of all, we must believe change can occur in our community; if we don't believe it, we are guilty of just marking time and adding to the devastation. We must view the community as valuable and worth investing in. Instead of always lamenting about what the community isn't, we should be building on what is outstanding about our community, visioning what it can become and working toward

that goal.

With all of our differences based on economics, class, sexual identity, age, color and hair, education, and all the other things that separate us, we must see ourselves as a unit of one. We all must see ourselves as responsible for the leadership of our communities; this is not just one person's duty. And we all must understand how dependent we are on each other for our community to be protected, stabilized and growing.

One of the major elements crucial to our survival is trust—the ability for one black person to be able to trust another. The most horrible condition that has resulted from racism is how black people see white people as the champions of this world. There is an old saying in the black community that we believe white folks' ice is colder and it doesn't melt as fast.

Many of us prefer to do business with white people because they will treat us better, though these same white businesses will not hire African-Americans nor will they make investments in our communities. If white people are not involved, we feel the activity must not be about much or worth our time and attention. In 1990 the Women's Project was questioned as to why we were doing a conference just for black women, since we don't live in a world that is "black only," and we require the tools and skills to be able to participate in the world with white people. Sadly, we continuously had to explain that black women needed their own space, that when white women or men enter into the picture, the dynamics totally change, the dialogue changes and the true exploration of self that is needed to build strength and power does not

occur. Many people feel a real accomplishment has occurred if you can have black and white people together in any setting, i.e., work, church, etc., Who is in the power position? Who has access to information and resources? Who makes the decisions? These are questions we must ponder when we talk about black and white being together. Unfortunately we were questioned by just as many black women as white women about the black women's conference.

Whatever is needed in the African-American community, I believe we can provide it. We continue to see the economic base become weaker and weaker, in spite of the news that the unemployment rate is lower. Why can't we build businesses in our communities ourselves? Why can't we take our skills and talents and develop them into businesses? We have been so conditioned to work for someone else, we fail to see that many businesses started small and grew to be large corporations. I know banks don't lend us money as readily as they do whites. We need to develop banks in our own communities, with our money. We are the largest consumers of many products. Many of our churches are very large depositors in banks. We must find methods to maintain more of our dollars in our communities, instead of our money being more beneficial to other communities.

How many of our children will have to die before we say we have had enough? The government is building more penitentiaries and jails. They say this is the answer. There are more and more task forces being developed to deal with youth violence. A few members of the African-American community are

involved but there are not nearly enough. When did we give our children to the streets? When did we decide we were too afraid to talk with our children and be involved in their lives? There was a time when there was a collective approach taken to dealing with the children in the community. Whether a child was yours or not, there was a sense of responsibility that was taken for that child. Have we gone too far that we can't have that kind of concern and involvement?

When you look at the African-American community there is plenty of blame to go around as to what is wrong with the community and who's at fault. By the same token, there is plenty of work for all of us to do if we are really sincere about the black community departing the dark shadows of despair.

No single person has the power to bring about change to our community. Our elected officials can only do so much. The real hard work must come from a total community effort. This effort must struggle against the odds to overcome the problems we are currently burdened with, and actively develop a plan of action that will continue to build strength and power for years to come. We must create within ourselves and each other a spirit that eliminates all doubts and fears as to whether the task before us is possible.

How will we measure our work?

Women's Project Receives Award

The Women's Project was chosen by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute to receive the 1993 Creating Change Award. The award was presented at the closing plenary on Sunday, Nov. 14 at the sixth annual Creating Change Conference sponsored by NGLTF.

Past recipients include the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center, the "No on 9" campaign in Oregon, the National Latina/o Lesbian and Gay Organization and the Equal Protection Campaign.

The plaque presented to the Women's Project reads, "The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute honors the Women's Project for its extraordinary work in building alliances across the boundaries of gender, race, class and sexual orientation."

More businesses will be located in our communities that are owned by African-Americans and employ African-Americans. There will be an absence of jobs that reward men and women differently. We will have learned we can't swap one oppression for another. There will be fewer liquor stores and pawn shops and more grocery stores, pharmacies, cleaners and shoe repair shops, and there might even be a photo developing shop in the inner city. You will not be able to tell if you are in a low-income neighborhood or middle-class neighborhood, because streets and

sidewalks will be well kept. Children and older people will face a lot less uncertainty about their care and their futures because so many are involved in making sure they are well taken care of. And most of all, the signs of hopelessness, anger and fear will have dissipated. I know this is a lot to ask, but it does give my life the meaning that is necessary for me to survive. And no, I do not feel I'm setting myself up for disappointment. I learned long ago you must first know what you want, before you can get it - I definitely know what I want and I will continue to work to make it a reality. ♦

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Book Notes

From *The Women's Project Library*

Lynn Frost

New Books in the Library:

You Don't Have to Take It! A Woman's Guide to Confronting Emotional Abuse at Work by Ginny NiCarthy, Naomi Gottlieb & Sandra Coffman. Packed with information, this book provides exercises and practical advice for coping with controlling, abusive supervisors and harassing co-workers, as well as suggestions for assertive confrontation and workplace organizing. Woven through the book are real-life accounts from women in all kinds of jobs who tell about the abuse they experienced and how they fought it.

The Black Woman's Gumbo Ya-Ya: Quotations by Black Women, edited by Terri L. Jewell. "Gumbo Ya-Ya" means "rich words, found words" – the thoughts, observations, viewpoints, songs, poetry and dreams of black women. The author has collected true words, including poetry, jazz lyrics and proverbs, from 350 black women the world over. These women are survivors, rulers, thinkers, warriors, instigators, lovers, investigators, critics, navigators, movers and shakers.

Every Employee's Guide to the Law: Everything You Need to Know about Your Rights in the Workplace – and What to Do if They Are Violated by Lewin G. Joel, III. From reading the want ads to coping with on-the-job problems to negotiating your severance pay, this easy-to-read, concise and reassuring guide explains everything you will ever need to know about your rights as an employee. Whether you work in an office, a factory, a small business or at home, this book takes you through each step of the employment process, from the initial interview to the pink slip.

More to Life Than Mr. Right: Stories for Young Feminists, compiled by Rosemary Stones. These 8 short stories throw new and surprising lights on the choices facing young adults in today's world. But the stories don't offer easy answers: How do you act when your mother has a new boyfriend? If a girl acts like a boy, will she be treated like a boy? What makes a

feminist—ideas or actions? This provides a contemporary alternative to romance fiction, and a challenge to teenage readers to define feminism for their own generation.

Blanche on the Lam by Barbara Neely. In an effort to avoid jail, Blanche White goes into hiding in the home of a wealthy white family. Blanche can hide in plain view, stay on the lam in her own town, because no one really sees her: as a middle-aged, fat (she prefers "big-boned"), working-class, African-American woman, Blanche is invisible to the white powers that be. This first novel by an African-American woman uses the crime-fiction genre and humor effectively to make some sharp political points, and the book jacket promises that Neely is at work on the next Blanche White mystery. From a review by Maureen Reddy in *Sojourner: The Women's Forum*, 8/92.

\$3 OFF ALL CALENDARS AND DATEBOOKS UNTIL FEB. 5!

Dining Out For Life

The Women's Project, along with seven other organizations, will participate in "Dining Out for Life" on Feb. 3, 1994, a national event to benefit organizations that offer HIV prevention or services to people living with HIV and AIDS. Restaurants in the Central Arkansas area have been asked to donate a percentage of their proceeds from lunch and dinner on Feb. 3 to the Women's Project, the Ryan White Center, Jefferson Managed Care, R.A.I.N., Arkansas AIDS Foundation, Helping People With AIDS, Arkansas Association of People With AIDS and Arkansas AIDS Outreach.

By Dining Out at participating restaurants on that day, you'll be helping the Women's Project as well as other organizations. For a list of restaurants participating in Dining Out For Life, call the Women's Project at 372-5113 (voice) or 372-6853 (TTY).

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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.

Transformation is published six times every year.

In each issue, 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.

Current Projects

Prison Project

A support and advocacy project for women in prison that provides support groups for battered women in prison, a prisoner-led AIDS program and a transportation program for the children of incarcerated mothers.

Women's Watchcare Network

A project to monitor and respond to incidents of racial, religious, sexual, and anti-gay violence; and to provide education and strategies to counter the activities of hate groups and the religious Right.

The Social Justice Project

Workshops on understanding racism and homophobia and developing methods to eliminate them; women's economic issues; organizational development for social change organizations.

Women and AIDS

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

African-American Women's Institute for Social Justice

A project which creates strategies for overcoming the barriers that hinder African-American women's efforts toward power and self-determination.

Communications and Events

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



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

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone/day _____

Phone/evening _____

\$ 7.50

(low income)

\$ 25

\$ 50

\$ 50

\$100

Make checks payable to:

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

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