

♀ ON OUR WAY

Newsletter of the Women's Center
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SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1980

NO MORE CAGES., STOPPING PSYCHIATRY

A planned pediatric psychiatric unit at the University of Massachusetts Medical center in Worcester has been stopped by the Coalition to Stop Institutional Violence. On February 26th the Public Health Council denied the proposal a Certificate of Need necessary for opening.

The Department of Mental Health's (DMH) proposal for a new maximum security psychiatric prison unit for teenagers also received a major blow. The Council decided to deny the certificate after hearing the arguments of grassroots opponents. DMH did not prove need for the program. But the Council indicated a "willingness to reconsider" provided that DMH submit information on evaluating existing and proposed Regional Adolescent Programs (RAPs) and on alternatives. Existing RAPs, especially the one at Samuel Carter Fuller "Mental Health" facility, have come under scrutiny for cruelty. Recently, Senator Jack Backman has been at the facility, investigating the use of restraint and seclusion. DMH is now appealing the Council's decision.

The Coalition to Stop Institutional Violence has been fighting the opening of these pediatric and teenage units for some two years. We stopped the planned Women's Violent unit in May 1979, after a two and a half year struggle. The Coalition is a Boston and Worcester based feminist women's group opposing the prison and psychiatric systems. We have coordinated a network of people opposed to these units from different perspectives: ex-inmates and prisoners, present and former mental health workers, advocates, families and friends of prisoners, teenagers, teachers, etc.

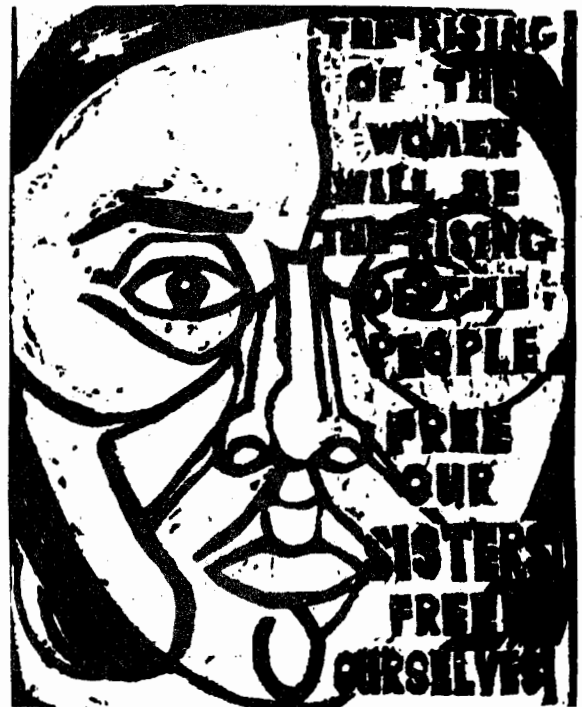
The proposed RAP unit came under attack at the Council hearing for its behavior modification program based on a punish-civil

rights restriction-step system (regimented system of "privileges for good behavior" that exists in most psychiatric wards),

- o drugging and labeling
- o long lengths of stay of 1-2 years
- o lack of community or patient input and control
- o lack of civil rights guarantees
- o use of restraints and seclusion (isolation cells) as "treatment" in existing RAPs, and part of the DMH proposal as well.

The pediatric unit proposed was more subtle. The emphasis here is on behavior modification. Opponents did not see this as progressive. The attempt would still be to mold the children to the modifier's standards of behavior rather than discovering what the children want and need. The

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planners of the unit clearly believe in the psychiatric model that individual and family pathology is to blame for the children's problem, e.g. a child is diagnosed as having a "school phobia" rather than examining what it is about the school system that makes children afraid to go. Another example is that although the unit would have had a "target" population of poor people, there is no understanding in the proposal of how poverty affects people's lives. Unfortunately the U. Mass Medical Center is resubmitting this proposal to the Dept. of Public Health in September.

What children, teenagers and adults need is not more of us being labelled and tracked into the psychiatric industry --state and private-- but more networks, more community-developed centers, money, and a society where we can live meaningful, productive lives. We have orientation at regular intervals and can find ways of using your energy if you would like to work in our network.

Contact the Coalition c/o the Women's Center.

MORTGAGE DRIVE-1980 UPDATE

The Center wishes to thank everyone who so generously responded to our Mortgage Drive during the past year. At the time we began the drive in 1979, we owed the bank \$14,787. Now, one year later, the mortgage has been reduced to \$6,226.

It is very important that this mortgage be paid off as quickly as possible. Almost one-third of our present monthly payments to the bank are comprised of interest and do nothing to reduce our principal. In just 8½ years, the Center has paid the bank over \$10,500 in interest, in return for borrowing only \$18,700 to purchase the building at 46 Pleasant Street. If we were to continue paying off our mortgage on the present schedule, our last payment would be in January 1993 and we would have paid the bank a total of \$38,583--over twice the borrowed sum of \$18,700.

The Center's funds are too hard to come by and women's money in general is too scarce to waste by paying mortgage interest. Women's money should be spent to benefit women, not to increase banker's profits.

PLEASE HELP US
BURN THE MORTGAGE IN 1980

(Send contributions to the Women's Center.)

On Saturday, April 13, white women from several different anti-racism consciousness-raising groups met at the Women's Center to share resources and skills. During the morning each group presented some part of its work that had particular meaning. The issues which required further discussion provided material for afternoon workshops. These included: integrating activist work with consciousness-raising; confronting racism and class; what is white culture?; anti-semitism and racism. At the end of the day women volunteered to act as contacts for projects or ideas that came up during discussions.

This gathering based its work on the knowledge that racism affects the lives of white people as well as people of color. Racism is not a problem only for minorities who suffer its consequences. White people can and must take responsibility for fighting the social systems and the individuals who prosper from racist ideologies.

For more information, call Gail at 776-8185 or Fredi at 876-5585. The Cambridge Women's Center has a list of the projects or ideas and contact women.

INTRODUCTORY

We are an open discussion group which meets every Wednesday night to discuss topics relating to us as women and to our common oppression as women. It is also a place where women new to the area or to the Center can come.

Since late 1979 a committee of women have met on a regular basis to plan topics and facilitate the meetings. This group is open to new women to join us. Call Linda at 731-6543 or leave a message for Introductory at the Center.

LUNA - LESBIANS UNITED FOR NON-NUCLEAR ACTION

We have general business meetings at the Center every two weeks on Monday night. The task groups, which are open to new members, meets on alternating Mondays. All women are welcome to join us.

* * * *

BOSTON AREA RAPE CRISIS CENTER
492-RAPE

The Rape Crisis Center is committed to providing support to women who have been raped, and working in coalition with other feminist groups to eradicate violence against women. We are all volunteers and funded solely by donations. Currently, more volunteers are being trained by the crisis center. In April, a local bar held a fund-raising event for us, and \$500 was raised. This was a great help in paying our phone bills and office expenses.

We work with women on a one-to-one basis, and in addition are presently forming support groups for women who have been raped or who have had experiences with violence. The groups may differ in length of time commitment, and whether the groups have facilitators. Also special interest groups may form.

We have been doing a lot of public speaking. We have met with high school and college classes, church and religious groups, university security personnel, and have appeared on local TV. These speaking engagements are an essential part of our efforts to publicize the myths that surround rape. Members of the collective have also testified at recent legislative hearings on the rape staircasing bill, which is intended to raise the conviction rate of rapists and to provide monetary compensation for victims of violent crimes.

INCEST-FOCUS OF IN-HOUSE TRAINING

At our April 8th meeting we met with two women from the Somerville Women's Mental Health Collective for a discussion of their work with women and children who have had incest experiences. We welcome hearing from women who would like to share their experiences with us.

FUNDRAISING TRAINING

A three-day seminar in fundraising given by the University of Detroit and recorded on 12 1-hour cassette tapes is now available for use at the Center. Anyone wishing to take this fundraising course must bring her own cassette recorder. Tapes are available only for listening at the Center. Please ask a staff woman if you wish to hear these tapes.



WOMEN AGAINST VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
(WAWAW)

WAWAW has been working on a number of projects since the Warner/Electra records boycott which started the L.A. branch of our organization in 1976. This spring's demonstration against the films "Windows" and "Cruising" which depict gays as violent and sadistic helped promote community awareness of these media stereotypes. Our most current film boycott is that of "Dressed to Kill", which has gotten a lot of publicity for its slick treatment of rape. The film, starring Angie Dickinson, glamorizes this violent act by promoting the myth that women secretly want to be violated. The summer, though usually a fragmented time for our group due to vacations and busy work schedules, Take Back the Night, and the Michigan Women's Music Festival, has marked the commencement of plans for a phone tree. This communication system would help consolidate the forces of the women's community by providing a means of mobilizing a large number of women in a short period of time. If any one is interested in being

part of the phone tree and misses our local mailing on the subject, please leave a message at the Women's Center.

Also - our slide show about violence against women in the media is in its most recent final revision, and we are still showing it in all its transitional glory. We are planning a public slide show and some open forums to discuss media violence, pornography, S&M, and censorship for the fall. Anyone with suggestions is welcome to leave them in WAWAW's box at the Center.

STAFFWOMEN

We work at the Women's Center during the Center's open hours: M-Th 10-10; Fri 10-5 and Saturday 11-3. Daytime staff usually work from one to five days a week; night hours are broken down into two shifts from 6-8 p.m. During our shifts we give information and referrals to women calling or coming into the Center, and take care of the daily running of the Center. This involves everything from updating referrals and cleaning to doing crisis counseling. Often women come to the Center to seek refuge from the violence we experience in many aspects of our lives -- on the streets, at work, at home. Providing the resources to help each other in finding work, places to live and support systems is rewarding.

It is sometimes very frustrating and draining to experience over and over again how society constantly assaults women. We can feel very inadequate in trying to offer some kind of support, healing, answers or solutions to women struggling for survival within insensitive and unfriendly systems.

Because inter-staff support can make the difference between being burnt-out and feeling good about our work, we have been doing a lot of talking about how we can communicate better with each other to give more support. We've started to have regular "all-staff" Sunday brunches that include a staff meeting. It's exciting for us to be beginning this kind of communication with each other on a continuing basis.

We are always in need of new staffwomen. We ask for a minimum commitment of three months, two hours a week. If interested, contact the Center between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m.

Agorophobia is a chemical or metabolic malfunction that predominantly affects women and a small number of men. It is manifested in severe episodes of panic or anxiety which are often connected to a particular event. The panic can only be described as terror. Sometimes these feelings disappear of their own accord. But, for many agoraphobics, these episodes lead to a chronic state of anxiety and/or depression. In an effort to avoid another panic attack, these agoraphobics often develop avoidance patterns which literally hold them prisoner for years. The avoidance patterns are as varied as individuals with agorophobia: i.e., some are unable to leave home, other unable to stay home, some can't be alone, some can't be with people, avoidance of elevators, crowds, theatres, stores, etc... wherever they feel trapped.

Agorophobia seems to arise after an accumulation of stressful events, such as illness or accident; environmental pollution; drugs; childbirth(s), etc., that may weaken the body or stress the person's resources.

A questionnaire survey was undertaken last year to find out more about agorophobia: who gets this condition, how it affects people's earning capacity, what physical symptoms or malfunctions are associated with it, social reactions to it, its connection to stress, and so on.

Presently, there have been enough questionnaires returned to begin tabulation of the replies. If you could volunteer a few hours of your time each week to help with this project, it would be greatly appreciated.

Contact Betsy Warrior: 492-5630 or call the Women's Center.



Current Events Of P.U.M.A.

The Prostitutes Union of Mass. proudly announces it's 5th. annual "Hooker's Ball" this Halloween @ the Rise Club to raise money for the Pros bail fund & housing program.

Support Groups

Support groups by and for battered women are held weekly, mornings and evenings, at the Women's Center. This is an action group--by talking about living with violence with other battered women, you can act on it. For more information call our 24-hour hot line:661-7203.

Volunteer Staff

Transition House is a refuge for battered women and their children. The refuge is run by a collective of feminist women, most of whom are volunteers.

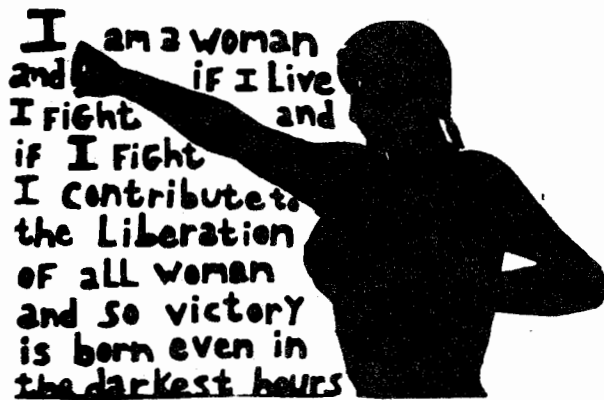
The women who come to Transition House are from all different race, class, and ethnic backgrounds. We would like the staff to reflect the same diversity in order to be a more supportive place for all women. Therefore, before we do another volunteer staff training, we would like to recruit more Third World, former battered, mothers, and older women.

We Will Not Be Beaten

Our hour-long videotape is now a 35 minute 16 mm film.

Through interviews with former battered women, the film shows how difficult it is to escape a battering situation, the lack of alternatives, and how your life can change.

For information about purchasing and renting the film call Transition House Films at 426-1912.



cpf/women: a journal of liberation

MONDAY

- 6pm CORE - members of coordinating committee
- 8pm STAFF/PROJECTS - general policy and decision making at the Center - all welcome (every other Monday)
- 7:30pm Battered Women's Support Group (battered women only)
- 7pm Lesbians United for Non-Nuclear Action (LUNA)
- 7pm Gay Light Support Group for Lesbian Women, 14-21 yrs. old.

TUESDAY

- 7pm RAPE CRISIS CENTER - members only
- 7:30pm INANNA poetry workshop - all welcome

WEDNESDAY

- 11am Battered Women's Support Group - battered women only
- 6pm EMOTIONAL COUNSELING PROJECT - members only
- 7pm WAVAW - Women Against Violence Against Women - members only
- 8pm INTRODUCTORY MEETING - all welcome
- 7:30pm WORD - Women Organized Against Registration & the Draft - all welcome

THURSDAY

- 6pm TRANSITION HOUSE STAFF Meeting - staff of TH only
- 7pm Coalition to Stop Institutional Violence - members only
- 8pm LESBIAN LIBERATION - all welcome
- 8pm Lesbians with Children Support Group - all welcome

FRIDAY

- 2:30pm STAFF MEETING - All day and night staff welcome.

Women Center hours: Mon - Thurs. 10am-10pm; Friday 10am-5pm; Sat. 11am-3pm. closed Sunday.

WORD (Women Opposed to Registration and the Draft), has been ^{meeting} since February at the Center. The group offers draft counseling for women and men, presents educational and workshops, provides speakers, and works in coalition with other local anti-draft groups.

WORD opposes registration and the draft for both women and men, but we believe the draft is inherently a feminist issue because of the myriad ways women have traditionally been victimized by war. We have been raped, murdered, prostituted, starved, and irradiated; within the military itself, we suffer discrimination and sexual harassment. Those of us committed to fighting the draft as feminists must also contend with sexism within the anti-draft movement itself. For these reasons -- the development of a feminist analysis of militarism and the draft, and the eradication of sexism within the movement -- we believe it necessary to have an all-women's anti-draft group.

WORD is currently considering becoming a project of the Women's Center; in the meantime we have been given a space here for our biweekly meetings. Meetings are held every other Wednesday from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m., and all interested women are invited to attend. Call the Center for more information.

LESBIAN LIBERATION

Lesbian Liberation meetings continue and, although attendance has been low in the past year, there seems to be an increase in interest.

A lesser known part of Lesbian Liberation is the answering of letters. These letters come from all over the country as responses to the article in Our Bodies, Ourselves, "In America They Call Us Dykes", written in 1972. The women who wrote the article are no longer around so two of us on volunteer staff answer the mail. Some letters are complimentary, some are for term papers. The majority, however, are from isolated women reaching out for information or just contacts with other lesbians. They are very moving. We try to answer supportively and give them info about groups in their area or state. We also have typed up a short lesbian booklist with a list of mail order women's bookstores.

Some women would like to be writing on a continuing basis. If anyone is interested in being a "penpal" let us know. If women know other good sources or contacts besides GAIA's Guide, let us know.

The Women's School is a collective effort of 15 women who want to teach ourselves and our sisters things we need to know, like our own history or how to look critically at the world. This past semester, (March-June), we had seven courses: Marxism, Working with Clay, Growing up Female, The Politics of Science, Self Defense, Women's History in the U.S., and a Women's Literature course. We use space at the Center for some of our classes. Courses are free except for a \$5 registration fee and possible material fees.

Classes are informal and as collective as possible. Teachers are volunteers who may know more about a subject and who agree to take responsibility for organizing the courses. The success, of course, depends on the involvement of the students--not only in class discussions but in constant evaluation.

We believe that childcare is an important principle and collective experience, and we all have a responsibility to the children in our community. Women with children can attend class because of the free childcare provided by the other students. We are planning an intensive outreach to a broader spectrum of women, especially Third World women. Contact us at our office: 595 Mass. Ave., Room 208, Cambridge. 492-4845.

We see the school as part of the larger socialist/feminist political process and hope that the students and teachers will become more actively involved in work for social change that will transform our collective and individual lives.

Registration for women needing childcare will be held in the School's office on Sept. 25 & 26, 3-7pm. For all other women, registration will be held Oct. 2 from 3-7pm; Oct. 3 12-7pm and Oct. 4, 1-4pm.

Classes begin Oct. 6th and last for approximately ten weeks.



EMOTIONAL COUNSELING
GROUP

We currently consist of 13 women. At present, our group cannot take any new clients at the Center. However, we will make referrals to other counseling collectives and feminist therapists in the Boston area.

We have begun a process of outreach to therapists and counseling collectives in the hope of finding more inexpensive, feminist therapy opportunities for women. If you know of therapists who use a sliding scale, who would be interested in providing therapy to at least one or two low income women, please contact the Emotional Counsel Group, care of the Center.

FLASH! FLASH!

A Yard Sale at the Women's
Center

Yes, that's right! Sunday, Oct. 19th
12 noon to 6 pm. Baked goods, books,
clothes, records and much more!!!! All
Donations welcome - please bring them to
the Center the week before - Oct. 13-18 -
and put them in the basement
room to the left of the stairs. Thanks!

LIBRARY UPDATE

There are four of us working on the Library; processing new books and accounting for the many that are checked out. Since February we have 'lost' approximately 120 books. They were either not signed out or the woman who checked them out has moved and left no forwarding address.

Please remember to check out books according to the directions in the library, AND PLEASE....Return books you borrow so that your sisters can use them too!! We are a small, feminist library and we can not afford financially and emotionally to keep losing so many many books!

We appreciate donations of materials and suggestions for new additions to the library. And most of all we could use a lot more help



THE WOMEN'S CENTER IS A NOT-FOR-PROFIT TAX-DEDUCTABLE ORGANIZATION.

Here is my contribution toward keeping the Women's Center operating during the coming year: \$5 \$10 \$20 \$50 \$100 Other

I would like to cover the following specific expense for month (s).

Please donate this \$ to the Mortgage Drive.

Rather than contribute now, I would like to PLEDGE \$ per month for months, starting .

Please send me a monthly pledge reminder .

VOLUNTEERING to work at the Center is crucial to our survival. Please consider working two or more hours a week at the Center; either staffing or in the library.

I would like to work at the Center. Please call me at .

DONATIONS-IN-KIND also help us to defray costs. Please indicate if you or the place where you work can donate the following or any other useful items:

Household cleaning supplies

Office supplies

Furniture:

Toilet paper

(paper, pens, pencils)

couches, tables, chair lamps, rugs

Coffee & Tea

Xeroxing

Light bulbs

Printing

Use of an out-of-town residence for retreats

Garbage bags

Other

The Center will give you or your employer a receipt for donations to use for tax purposes.

NAME ADDRESS PHONE



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