

# ♀ ON OUR WAY

Newsletter of the Women's Center  
46 Pleasant Street Cambridge Massachusetts 02139

(617) 354-8807

TTY and VOICE

dec. '89



## CHARTING A NEW COURSE

We know how easy it is to get so caught up in daily activities and details that we lose track of what we're trying to accomplish and whether we're succeeding. This is such a way of life at the Women's Center, that women attending the All Center Meetings decided to add on special 'philosophy' meetings to clarify our goals, priorities and strategies.

An emerging theme in the philosophy meetings is the role of the All Center Meeting. Presently, the All Center Meeting makes decisions about space use, spending, fund-raising, building maintenance, policies, problems that arise, personnel issues. The All Center Meeting has operated 'behind the scenes', trying to run things smoothly but keeping a low profile.

Participants of the philosophy meetings are committed to retaining many aspects of the Center. We want to continue to be a place where women who "fall through the cracks" of other organizations can find support and information. We want to continue putting considerable effort into helping women in crisis. And we want to continue to provide space and assistance to groups started by other women.

And, we want to change, too. We want to formulate and implement some programs which are based on strategy and vision rather than passively waiting for women to start groups which are personally important to them. We want the All Center Meeting to assume more of a leadership role, articulating our beliefs, clarifying our goals and our mission, opening up dialogs with groups, taking stands and expecting the groups to listen and respond to us. We want to more effectively communicate what the Center stands for.

Without this leadership, women have very different and individual concepts of the Women's Center.

Our thoughts have led to action. We created a group contract form which clearly delineates the responsibilities of groups and the All Center Meeting, and a Welcome Sheet which describes the Center's history, mission, structure and includes a list of the groups and projects which meet here now.

We want to develop a clearly defined, well-known identity. We want to head into the 90's with a greater sense of community and a common purpose which inspire, strengthen and unite us all.



## NEW ARRIVALS

We enthusiastically welcome the following new groups to the Women's Center:

- \* Women's Community Cancer Project and Cancer Support Group
- \* Incest Survivors Anonymous
- \* Other Mothers
- \* 'Soulcial' Therapy

Please see page 3 for descriptions of each of these new groups.

**ONGOING GROUPS  
AT THE WOMEN'S CENTER**

**MONDAY**

- Support for Battered Women.....7:30-9pm
- Women's NA 12 step.....7:30-9pm
- Lesbian Rap.....8-10pm
- Boston Bisexual Women's Network-Intro  
(1st Mon, even #'d months)...7:30-9:45pm
- All Center Meeting (biweekly).....6-8pm

**TUESDAY**

- Women for Sobriety.....8-9:30pm
- Bisexual Women's Rap.....7:30-10pm
- 30+ Lesbian Rap.....7-8:30pm
- Lesbian Partners & Ex-Partners of Incest  
Survivors (1st & 3rd Tues.)....7-8:30pm
- Other Mothers (2nd Tues., monthly)...7-9pm  
(lesbian non-biological mothers)

**WEDNESDAY**

- Lesbian Al-Anon (childcare).....6:30-8pm
- Writer's Support.....7:30-9:30pm
- Lesbian Survivors of Childhood  
Sexual Abuse (1st, 3rd Weds.).....7pm
- Healing Through Art for Incest Survivors  
(1st Wed., monthly, non-abusers)..7-10pm
- Battered Women's Support Group  
(2nd, 4th Wednesdays).....7-8pm

**THURSDAY**

- Incest Survivors Discussion  
Group (weekly).....7:30-9:30pm  
(facilitated 3rd Thursday, Sept.-June)
- 'Soulcial' Therapy - Open Support  
Group for Lesbians of Color....7-8:30pm
- Women's Community Cancer Project  
(1st Thurs., monthly).....7-9pm
- Cancer Support Group  
(2nd Thurs, monthly).....7-9pm
- Lesbians Choosing Children Network  
(2nd Thurs, monthly).....7:30-10pm

**FRIDAY**

- Birthmothers (1st, 3rd Fri)....7:00-9:30pm
- Incest Survivors Anonymous.....6:30-8pm

**SATURDAY**

- Writer's Support Group  
(biweekly).....noon-2pm
- Open discussion on Coming Out for Women  
of All Ages(monthly, 1st Sat)...11am-1pm
- Single Mothers Support Group (childcare  
provided) monthly, 1st Sat..11am-12:30pm

**TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION**

**LESBIAN RAP**

Mondays, 8-10pm

- Jan 1 HOLIDAY - NO RAP
- 8 Women's Self Defense
- 15 Games Night
- 22 Coming Out in the Workplace
- 29 Mothers & Daughters (All mothers  
of lesbians welcome)

**BISEXUAL WOMEN'S RAP**

Tuesdays, 7:30-10pm

- Jan 2 Crushes
- 9 Coming Out Again
- 16 Considering Therapy
- 23 Places of Interest to women in  
New England
- 30 Starting Your Own Business

**30+ LESBIAN RAP**

Tuesdays, 7-8:30pm

- Jan 2 Lesbian Literature
- 9 How Lesbian Are You?
- 16 Traveling As Lesbians
- 23 Sex, Part II
- 30 No Longer Lovers, Now What?



**FAT-POSITIVE SUPPORT**

The Fat-Positive Support Group is no longer meeting at this time, because attendance has been so low. If you are interested in the group call 354-8807.

**WELCOME RENAE**

The Women's Counseling and Resource Center welcomes Renae Grant to our staff of counselors. We continue to seek volunteer therapists (master's degree and 2 years post-master's experience required) to work with low and no-income women. We currently have a waiting list of clients seeking our services. Call us: 492-8568.

**CENTER HOURS**

Monday - Thursday 10am - 10pm  
Friday 10am - 8pm  
Saturday 11am - 2pm

## WOMEN'S COMMUNITY CANCER PROJECT

We do not accept the 'fact' that thousands of us must die quietly of cancer each year. We are concerned about the insufficient funding for: research, prevention measures, and education. Significant discrimination exists in many mainstream and alternative cancer establishments - sexism, racism, classism, homophobia, and ageism. These biases are reflected in the kind of research done and its interpretation, the attitudes of health care personnel, the accessibility of medical treatments, and the quality of emotional support services.

Our goals include providing a forum for relevant political activism, creating a volunteer system of physical and emotional support for women with cancer, producing a directory or referral network of local healers and professionals interested in helping women with cancer, and compiling cancer-related education resources.

Organizational meetings are from 7-9pm on the 1st Thursday of each month. All interested women are welcome. An open support group for women with cancer meets from 7-9pm on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays. The meetings are at the Women's Center, and are wheelchair accessible. For more information call the Women's Center.

## OTHER MOTHERS

Our group meets in response to the need for the non-biological 'mother' in a lesbian parenting relationship to air the particular concerns associated with this often invisible and/or unlegitimized role. We are mothers without proper billing, and this may be the case in the home with lovers (the biological mothers), or our children, as well as in the larger society, set up to tolerate only families containing a mother and a father or a single parent. The issues of invisibility and alienation are primary: thus the name 'other'.

Our goals are to bring together lesbian mothers who have concerns about their non-biological roles, to support each other in giving voice to our concerns, and to become a force for change by educating others about non-traditional parenting.

At present we are open-ended and exploratory, rather than task-oriented. We wish to continue to meet in response to interest and see ourselves in a beginning phase. Meetings are at the Women's Center on the 2nd Tuesday of each month, 7-9pm. We welcome any 'other mother' to join us.

## INCEST SURVIVORS ANONYMOUS

This ISA group ('Miracles') just moved to the Women's Center from the Cambridge YWCA. Our goals are to help each other to heal from incest. We do this by telling our stories, identifying with each other, providing a safe space to explore our issues without fear of being judged or disbelieved. By breaking thru the secrecy around sexual abuse (incest isn't taboo - talking about it is) we can begin to bring an end to the myth that women are powerless and subservient and are the possessions of men (or of power-hungry people in general). We grow as we realize our lives were determined by incest, and begin to place a focus on ourselves instead of our abusers. We meet from 6:30-8pm every Friday. The group is open to all women who are incest survivors, who have not become offenders, and their supporters. There is a weekly chairperson, but as with all 12-step recovery groups, there is no facilitator.

## 'SOULCIAL' THERAPY

This group, called 'Soulcial' Therapy, is for lesbians of color. It is a drop-in group that will meet on a weekly basis. The discussions will be relevant to being black and living in a homophobic society. The name of the group may be changed at a later date. There will be no dues or fees.

The intent of the group is to provide an environment for lesbians of color to share our experiences. The goal of the group is to be a positive influence on its members. This can be achieved by an ongoing dialog about the many issues that lesbians have to deal with as long as we are committed to this lifestyle.

The group will be facilitated by Dorothea Keeling, a certified social therapist of color. There will also be guest speakers and co-leaders of the group from time to time.

Social Therapy is based on the concept that people in certain groups (poor people, people of color, disabled people, gay men and lesbians) experience crisis as part of their everyday lives because they have been socialized to adapt to a society that does not want or need them. Its goal is to help people develop new ways to effectively deal with crisis without becoming its victim, to free themselves from crisis and crisis paralysis.

We are just starting to meet. Meetings are on Thursdays from 7-8:30pm. Call the Women's Center for more information.

## INTERNATIONAL VISITORS

In the past year, several women from different countries have visited the Women's Center. Some of these women dropped in unannounced. They gaped at the large selection of resource information available in the sitting room, eagerly read our newsletter and calendar, asked questions, and walked around in a kind of blissful daze muttering, "How did you do it?" and "This is incredible." Some women even photographed our sitting room so they could show friends back home.

At times, our interactions with international visitors were scheduled and more formal. Ms. Yesuko Vtaugi, the director of the Women's Bureau for the Japanese Socialist Party, Amanda Centeno Espinoza, from the Nicaraguan ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, and Rina Sen Gupta from the Rural Employment Sector Programme in Bangladesh met with Women's Center staff during the last year.

Violence against women, poverty, blaming the victim, and men treating women as possessions are common in all of our countries. Within each country, women's struggle against patriarchal abuses occurs within a social, economic and political context. The form of women's struggle for freedom arises out of this context and is partially determined by it. What is common to us all is that women are rallying for justice in every part of the world. In Bangladesh, a woman participates in creating theatrical performances designed to change sexism. In Nicaragua, women confront their Sandinista brothers with their machismo attitudes.

Behind each international visitor, there are thousands of women in her country who are fighting against sexism with courage, wit and endurance. The Women's Liberation Movement consists of these all too often unsung heroes. Our international visitors gave us a glimpse of the magnitude of the struggle. We are left with a powerful sense of connection with women in different countries, and the knowledge that each of us has a part to play in the unfolding of a world where justice, equality and respect prevail.



## PROTEST AT DOMINO'S

Saturday, January 20  
1:30-3pm

Corner of Broadway & Prospect Street  
Cambridge

The owner of Domino's Pizza is a major funder of Operation Rescue, the anti-choice terrorists who blockade abortion clinics. Join R2N2 (Reproductive Rights National Network) in a protest at the new Cambridge Domino's Pizza. And, in any case, boycott Domino's pizza.

**DON'T LET DOMINO'S TELL YOU TO DELIVER!**

Cambridge Women in Cable Presents:  
**WOMEN & SELF DEFENSE**  
Every Wednesday in December at 9pm on  
Channel 19-Cambridge Community TV

This show highlights several women who have learned skills to defend themselves in their homes and on the streets. You will see excerpts from Model Mugging (a technique of self defense), Sanchin (a local women's school for self defense and karate) and Capoiara Camara (a Brazilian martial arts form). Women will speak to the real issues of violence around us.

## RAPE SURVIVOR SUPPORT

Drop-In Discussion Group for Women Who  
Have Been Raped

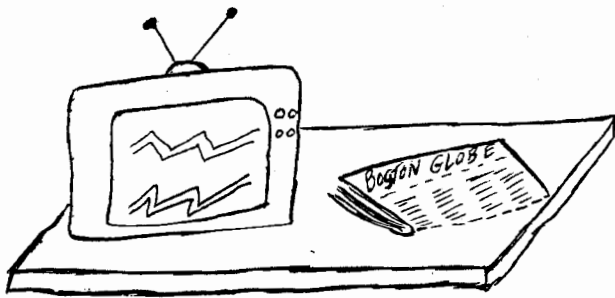
At: Boston Area Rape Crisis Center  
99 Bishop Allen Drive, Cambridge  
(One block from Central Square)

Thursday, Jan. 11	Sexuality
Monday, Jan. 22	Self Image
Thursday, Feb. 8	Fear & Safety
Monday, Feb. 26	Getting Support
Thursday, Mar. 8	Self-Blame
Monday, Mar. 19	Body Image

All meetings are from 7 to 8:30pm.  
Due to the sensitive nature of this group,  
no one will be admitted after 7:10pm.  
Call 492-RAPE for more info.

## AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN

Drop-In Discussion Group  
-- Rape and Other Forms  
of Violence Against Women --  
Saturday, January 20  
Call Boston Area Rape Crisis Center  
for more info -- 492-8306



### MAKING THE NEWS

The Women's Center has received media attention from both the Boston Herald (August 1) and the Boston Globe magazine (October 1) in the last several months. The focus of the Herald article was on the local plethora of support groups for women, many of which meet at the Women's Center. The Globe Magazine article was about healing from child sexual abuse and mentioned the Women's Center's referral services and the group Healing through Art which meets at the Center. The Women's Center was also featured in the Boston Foundation's summer newsletter which focused on women's organizations. And at the close of a program on incest, Channel 4's People are Talking broadcast the Center's name and phone number for anyone seeking additional information.

The Women's Center makes the news in other, more hidden ways, too. For example, Women Center staff were instrumental in linking up survivors and Globe reporters for the magazine article on healing from sexual abuse. With increasing frequency, reporters who are writing articles on a wide variety of topics -- sexual abuse by physicians to lesbian parenting -- call the Women's Center asking who they can interview for a story. Center staff make many phone calls until we locate appropriate women who are willing to contribute to the news story or television program. And then we wait to see the news we helped to make.

### NETWORK SEEKING WOMEN

The recently formed Network for Battered Lesbians is seeking women of color and women with disabilities to work against battering in lesbian communities. Formerly battered lesbians encouraged to join. Batterers are not welcome. Call (617) 424-8611. TTY users: Please use the Mass Relay Service to leave a message and we will call you back on our TTY.

### GROUP EVALUATION RESULTS

We received 115 evaluation forms from 9 groups which meet regularly at the Women's Center. The forms were distributed to groups during the summer.

The results were overwhelmingly positive. For example, 84 women said they received what they wanted from their group; only 3 said they did not. Ninety-nine women said they felt welcomed by the group; only 4 did not.

When asked what they wanted from the group, most women (79) said a supportive network, followed closely by making friends (74) and emotional support (73). While responses were varied to the question, "What do you like about the group?" the item most commonly checked off was "content of discussion" (81) followed by "gain insight" (75) and "feeling less isolated" (73).

The most common complaints about the groups were: there was an insufficient opportunity to express oneself (9); some group members were intolerant of others (8); and few women participate in the discussion (8).

There was some marked differences between groups. For example, incest survivors were much more likely to want "emotional healing" than were women who attend more general discussion groups who were more apt to be seeking friendships and a "supportive network." And survivors most valued "feeling safe" and "less isolated," while women who attend rap groups valued the "content of the discussion" and an opportunity to "gain insight."

Here are some things that women had to say about the groups:

"It seems like one of the incredible oases on this earth -- it magically 'works.'"

"The group seems so accepting and inclusive of all individual group members"

"This forum is sacred and precious to me."

"I feel that others are listening, accepting me."

"The facilitator . . . is excellent. (She) helped me to stop feeling like a victim and learn a tremendous amount about myself."

. . ."welcoming, confidential, safe, participatory atmosphere."

"Since I'm here, I am not isolated."

"Can't imagine where I'd be without this place."

**NAME THAT THERAPIST**

Do you see a therapist that you like? Rumor has it that people like to hoard their therapists, but we're hoping your desire to contribute to our resource information will over-ride any resistance. Daily we get requests for referrals to therapists: therapists who specialize in substance abuse, relationship addictions, children of alcoholics, incest survivors, ritual abuse, multiple personalities, self-esteem, couple or family therapy, etc.; therapists accessible to people with very low incomes; therapists who are lesbians; therapists who are wheelchair accessible, or know ASL or other languages; therapists from Southern Maine to Worcester to Cape Cod.

We have designed questionnaires to get information that will be of use to women seeking therapy. Currently, therapists

have filled out and returned about 90 questionnaires, chock full of information on specialties, background, fees, beliefs, and other particulars. Women seeking therapists can look at the forms at the Women's Center or get more limited information over the phone.

We would like to have a much greater number of forms. Would you help? If you send us the name and address of a therapist that you respect, we will send out a questionnaire and a letter explaining our system of referrals. If you send us the therapist's name and phone number we will call and ask about sending out the questionnaire before sending it.

Please help if you can!

P.S. - We also get many requests for all kinds of health care providers, and would greatly appreciate any suggestions.

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**THERAPIST TO CONTACT**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/STATE/ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_  
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**HEALTH CARE PROVIDER TO CONTACT**

Field:    GYN        Internal Medicine        Midwife        Nurse Practitioner        Chiropractor  
          Dentist    Acupuncture        Dermatology        Surgery        Optometry        Other \_\_\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/STATE/ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_  
.....

**ADD ME TO THE WOMEN'S CENTER'S MAILING LIST**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/STATE/ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_  
.....