

♀ ON OUR WAY

Newsletter of the Women's Center
46 Pleasant Street, Cambridge, MA 02139
(617) 354-8807

April 2002

WOMEN OF ACTION FIGHT BACK

Lynn Murray, community organizer at the Women's Center, discusses organizing for justice with Women of Action member, Jennifer Quinn.

LM: *Tell me about Women of Action. Who are you and what are your goals?*

JQ: We just recently named ourselves and formed our mission statement. We are Women of Action (WOA), women who live in Cambridge and are working towards fairness, access to resources and economic justice. We're a direct action organization.

LM: *What does it mean that you're a direct action organization?*

JQ: We do things like write a letter asking for changes or set up a meeting or a demonstration. Some sort of action to push people for a fair solution. We don't just meet and talk about how bad something is, even though that happens as a result of getting together. We are very supportive of each other and we share information to help each other out, but that's not our primary focus. We're trying to make our lives easier and better.

LM: *Are you working on issues now?*

JQ: We've just identified what we want to work on. Most of the issues that come up in our group are problems that affect low income women, some mothers and some not. Most of the women in WOA and women who we've talked to in Cambridge are having problems with the MBTA, Cambridge Housing Authority, and/or Department of Transitional Assistance.

LM: *And what are the problems with these agencies?*

JQ: These agencies don't respect the women they serve. That's the underlying issue. As a result of that disrespect, women are getting crappy service, misinformation or no information.

LM: *Is your plan to work on one particular issue first?*

JQ: Yes. We've decided to begin with the MBTA. We want the MBTA to be more accessible to women with children. Often, women who are waiting at bus stops with children in strollers are not picked up by the driver unless the stroller is all packed up. This is extremely difficult for a woman with children and other bundles. Not only is it difficult but it's discriminatory and we want it to stop. Another problem with the MBTA is that many times the elevators are either not working or they are completely filthy.

LM: *Some critics would say that the T has to run on a tight schedule and that waiting for mothers with children in strollers would throw that schedule off. What would you say to that?*

JQ: I would say that the MBTA needs to add more time to that bus schedule. Women with children deserve the same accessibility to the public transportation as anyone else. We can't decide to get in our car if we're left at the bus station. We're dependent on the MBTA to get to

work and lead our lives. We want some accountability.

At the same time, we also are looking for solutions that are just. For example, the elevator issue is hard because so many homeless people use them as bathrooms. We're not looking for a solution that would punish homeless people. We don't want to oppress another group. We would suggest more public restrooms in busy areas like downtown crossing. Our group is focused on justice for all.

LM: *It sounds like Women of Action are serious about getting these problems solved. Is there room for more women to fight with you?*

JQ: Of course! We're still figuring out what the best solutions are for us. We need other women to join us and help us make these decisions. People power is the only way we're really going to solve these problems.

LM: *What would you say to someone who wants to work to change these problems but doesn't consider herself an activist?*

JQ: I'd say join the club! None of us at Women of Action thought of ourselves as activists. We're just women trying to handle our business for ourselves and our children. We don't want to be disrespected or discriminated against and we've figured out that we can win if we fight together.

Women of Action meets at the Women's Center. To get involved or for more information, call Lynn at 617-354-6394.

From the Desk of the Executive Director

On Our Way

Is the newsletter of the Women's Center, published 3 times per year in *April, September, and December.*

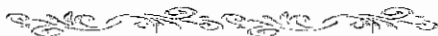
The Women's Center is a non-profit resource and support center for all women and their children, founded in 1971.

Our mission is twofold:

to provide women with the tools and resources they need to emerge from abuse, discrimination, addiction, sexism and racism, harassment, social isolation, violence, poverty, or other injustice

to challenge and change attitudes and actions which subjugate women.

Volunteers



The Women's Center gratefully acknowledges the ongoing efforts and contributions of our volunteers.

Thank you for giving so generously of your time and of yourselves.

The Women's Center relies on the generosity of the community to provide our wealth of free programming.

All donations are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.

For further information, contact:

The Women's Center
46 Pleasant Street
Cambridge, MA 02139
(617) 354-8807

email:

info@cambridgewomenscenter.org

Hours:

Monday-Thursday: 10am-10pm

Friday: 10am-8pm

Saturday: 11am-4pm

Helpline: (617) 354-8807

The year 2002 brings exciting developments to the Women's Center. We offer important new groups, announce ambitious new plans, and are able to report the realization of goals set during the last couple of years.

We are offering three new groups: *Healin' and Dealin'*, a support group for survivors of non-sexual child abuse; *Support for Women Whose Partners are Coming Out*; and *Collage Pot Luck*, where women will come together to express their creativity. We also are providing more educational workshops on financial planning and debt reduction. In addition, this month, we complete our first 10 week session of the new Mother-Child Art Project, a series of art classes for toddlers. In the coming months, we hope to begin an ESL class.

We are continuing in our efforts to be more accessible to Spanish speaking women. We have nearly completed a resource binder in Spanish with information on immigration, ESL, legal supports, and healthcare. Our free computer training program is now fully staffed with Spanish-speaking volunteers. We are currently working toward increasing the number of bilingual volunteers on our Helpline. In addition, we are collaborating with the Latino Health Institute to assess the needs of Latina women in the community, so that we may provide programming to meet those needs.

In a matter of four months, our new Community Organizing Project recruited a strong core group of members. They identified their first campaign and named themselves *Women of Action*, emphasizing their purpose: acting to create justice.

With the increasing number of children at The Women's Center and the success of our computer access program, we are now looking to completely renovate our basement. Soon we will launch a capital campaign to make the basement a pleasant and comfortable work and play space. This is a huge undertaking which includes foundation

repair, moving and enclosing the furnace putting in new flooring, and enhancing the lighting. We are excited by the prospect of creating a brighter and more welcoming space for women and their children.

We need your help, if we are to maintain our new programs and continue making improvements to the Center. If you are able to assist financially or through volunteering, please contact me at (617) 354-8807. Your support builds the foundation of the Women's Center.

~ Mary Quinn



Computer Training

Yay! We have new computers in our computer lab and they all are operating with Windows 2000 and Office Professional 2000. (Don't worry if this means nothing to you, just know they have become very snazzy!). Women are free to drop in during any of our open hours. If you don't know how to use a computer we offer friendly introductory classes with patient volunteers. We can teach you how to create an email account and search the internet, and basic word processing. Classes are offered at 6pm-7pm Monday-Thursday and on Saturdays. We ask that you commit to one day per week for at least three weeks. Please call (617) 354-8807 to fill out a request.

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Celebrating Our Beginning

On March 9, a large enthusiastic crowd gathered at the Cambridge YWCA to celebrate International Women's Day and the 31st anniversary of the founding of the Women's Center. The evening featured a viewing of a documentary in progress focusing on the takeover of the Harvard building at 888 Memorial Drive (now the large shrub/bush lot at Mahoney's) on March 6, 1971. The takeover, the endpoint of the 1971 International Women's Day march, was possibly the only building occupation by women for women ever, and it resulted in the creation of the Women's Center.

The Cambridge Y event included a viewing of Alice Maxfield's film of the 1971 march and occupation, excerpts from recent interviews of participants, materials from march leaflets and newspaper coverage, and women's music from the time. The participants' spunk, excitement, and dedication to women's and others' rights radiated as we watched them march through the streets, storm into the building, and occupy it for 10 days.

Cambridge Councilwoman Marjorie Decker presented a proclamation from the city of Cambridge, noting in a heartfelt speech that 888 was too long ignored and represented the kind of history that should be taught in all schools. Mary Quinn talked about the Women's Center today. The evening ended with a series of comments by 888 participants, others who remembered the impact of the takeover, and current Women's Center staff.

The Women's Center History Project committee (Libby Bouvier, Susan Jacoby, Esther Leidolf, and Rochelle G. Ruthchild) thanks Lynn Murray, Judy Norris, Mindy Sage, Heather Searles and Rachel Woolfsy for their assistance and support before and during the event.

If you are interested in volunteering to work on this ongoing project, and especially if you have computer graphics, documentary film-making, and video skills, please contact Heather at hls4@aol.com.

~ Rochelle G. Ruthchild



Women's Health Day

Usually a spring event, Women's Health Day has been moved to the fall this year. We're aiming for Saturday, September 21. We will have workshops, a lunch, tons of information, the ever popular massages, childcare and more—all absolutely FREE. Put it on your calendar now! We're hoping to make an energizing and fun day for all women.

We've created a survey (available in English, Spanish, Haitian Kreyol, and hopefully Portuguese), asking for your input about what kind of workshops you want. We want to hear from you! You may have received a survey with this newsletter. If not, you can pick one up at

the Women's Center, or call Page 3
(617)354-8807.

If you would like to help with organizing the Health Day, or would like to help out on the day (childcare, lunch prep & serving, signing women in, etc.), please call Judy Norris at (617) 354-8807.
~Judy Norris

WISH LIST

Boxes of herbal tea
Bag of sugar
3 subject notebooks
Computer choirs
Toys for toddlers
Playpen
Art supplies
Gift Certificate to WB Mason
Tampons, Pads
Large transparent heavy containers

Foundations and Corporations

A special "thank you" to the foundations, organizations, and individual donors who have contributed \$250 or more between 11/1/01 and 3/15/02:

A Better Place Foundation
Ascential Software, Inc.
Boston Jewish Women's Community Fund
Cambridge Community Foundation
Cambridge Mustard Seed
City of Cambridge
Connor Charitable Foundation
Crabtree Foundation
First American Title Insurance Company
Foundation M
George & Beatrice Sherman Family Charitable Trust
Mind's Eye Yarn, Lucy Lee
North Star Asset Management, Inc
Philips Medical Systems
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Sheila Ganble Cook Fund
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Marlene G. Fried & William D. Fried
Marta M. Frank & Robert S. Frank, Jr
Neal Buchalter
Rebecca Anne Derby & Evan W. Morton
Rodger G. Morrill
Suzanne Pippin

Thank You!

WOMEN'S CENTER CALENDAR - SPRING 2002

46 Pleasant Street, Cambridge, MA - free & open to women - Info & helpline: (617) 354-8807

GROUPS

MONDAY

- Al-Anon for Women (weekly).....6-7:30pm
- Healing Circle (weekly through May 6)
Info: ashanti@nativestar.net8:30-10pm
- Lesbian Partners & Ex-Partners of Incest Survivors.. 7:30-9pm
(3rd Monday, Info: Daniela (617) 497-0911)
- * Lesbian Rap (weekly).....7:30-9pm
- Women of Color Reading Circle (2nd Mondays).....7-8pm
Info: Jyoti at jgupta71@hotmail.com

TUESDAY

- * Bisexual Women's Rap (1st & 3rd Tuesdays).....7:30-9pm
- Facilitated Mothers' Support Group (forming).....morning
[call group facilitator Diane at (617) 876-2139]
- * Support for Married Bisexual Women (2nd Tues).....7:30-9pm
- Women's Reading Group (4th Tuesdays).....7:30-9:30pm
Info: Mary (781) 891-5727
- Writer's Circle (2nd Tuesdays).....7-9pm
Info: Cassandra at (617) 494-2695

WEDNESDAY

- Battered Women's Support Group (all Weds, except 3rd)..7-9pm
- Liquid Poets (2nd & 4th Wednesdays)7-9pm
- Transitioning out of the Patient Role6-7:15pm
(ongoing group, open to new comers April 24)
- * Women Maximizing Abilities Now (WOMAN)2-3:30pm
(1st & 3rd Wednesdays. Email: woman@brainfrust.org)
- * Women Over 40 (2nd & 4th Wednesdays).....7-8:30pm

THURSDAY

- * Collage Pot Luck (May 23 and June 20).....6:30-8:30pm
info: creativescavenger@yahoo.com
- Healin' and Dealin' (2nd & 4th Thursdays).....6:30-8:30pm
(for survivors of non-sexual child abuse)
Info/to register: maureen-b@yahoo.com
- Support & Strategies for Dealing with Language-Based Learning Disabilities (4th Thursdays).....6-7:30pm
- Thursday Night Gathering for Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse (weekly)7:30-9:30pm
(Topic at 1st meeting of month, May 2, Sleep & Dreams)
- * Volunteer Orientation (April 11)6:30-7:30pm

FRIDAY

- Incest Resources Facilitated Discussion for Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse.....6-7:30pm
(usually last Friday of month, September - June)
- **Survivors of Incest Anonymous (SIA) (weekly)6:30-8pm
- * Game Night (April 19).....8-10pm

SATURDAY

- * Bankruptcy: An Option for Dealing with Personal Debt (April 13).....2-3:30pm
- * Coming Out Discussion for Women of all Ages.....11am-1pm
(1st & 3rd Saturdays except holiday weekends)
- * Support for Women Who Have Partners Coming Out (April 13).....11:15-1pm

* Wheelchair Accessible

** Wheelchair Accessible except 3rd Friday of each Month
All activities are free and open to women

FREE CHILDCARE

If given four days notice, we do our best to provide free childcare for women attending groups and workshops.

Please do not wear perfumes or strong scents in the Women's Center.

NEW AND FEATURED ACTIVITIES

***BANKRUPTCY: AN OPTION FOR DEALING WITH PERSONAL DEBT.** Saturday, April 13, 2-3:30pm. Attorney Susan Grossberg will provide information about declaring bankruptcy. Info: (617) 354-8807.

COMPUTER INTERNET AND ACCESS. We have 4 computers available to women on a first come first serve basis.

FREE COMPUTER TRAINING. We offer free introductory trainings on email, the internet, Microsoft Word, and Windows on weekdays at 6pm and on Saturdays. Must be able to commit to same time for minimum of 3 weeks. Please call (617) 354-8807 to fill out a request.

***COLLAGE POT LUCK.** Thursdays, May 23 and June 20, 6:30-8:30pm. No...not food. Bring supplies that you fancy and are willing to share. Info: creativescavenger@yahoo.com or (617) 216-5168.

***GAME NIGHT.** Friday, April 19, 8-10pm. Come frolic with us and play games such as *Cranium* and *Taboo* - a fun social evening for all. Light refreshments. Bring a game if you like.

***NOTHING TOO HEAVY TO SHARE (NTHTS).** For survivors of extreme abuse, such as torture, forced isolation, severe neglect or sexual exploitation. Info/to join: Esther (617) 969-9347.

SUPPORT AND STRATEGIES FOR WOMEN WITH LANGUAGE-BASED LEARNING DISABILITIES. Thursday, April 25, 6-7:30pm (4th Thursdays). Having a learning disability does not have to limit your options in education or career choice. Support and strategies. Facilitated by Kai Long, Speech Therapist. Info: (617) 354-8807.

***SUPPORT FOR WOMEN WHO HAVE PARTNERS COMING OUT.** Saturday, April 13, 11:15-1pm. Dating someone who is struggling with issues surrounding coming out inevitably negatively affects our relationships and ourselves as individuals. If you are a partner of someone coming out, please attend. Info: Robyn at (617) 522-5694.

TRANSITIONING OUT OF THE PATIENT ROLE. A facilitated six-session group begins Wednesday, April 24, 6-7:15pm. For women who have been labeled "chronic patients" by the mental health system. The session on April 24 is open to new members; the rest will be closed. Info: Diane at (781) 226-7097 [pager, 10am-8pm].

***VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION.** Thursday, April 11, 6:30-7:30pm. Come learn about our history, mission, and different ways you can volunteer at the Women's Center. Call (617) 354-8807 to RSVP.

WOMEN WITH DISSOCIATIVE DISORDER / MULTIPLE PERSONALITY GROWING INTO A BETTER LIFE. 4 Wednesdays, 7:30-9pm, beginning April 10 (may go longer). For women who suspect and women who know they experience or have experienced these confusing states. To understand yourself/selves better, have happier relationships and a more satisfying life. Info/to register, call the facilitator Vera S. Cohen, LICSW, at (617) 354-2304.

TOPICS

***BISEXUAL WOMEN'S RAP - 1st & 3rd Tuesdays, 7:30-9pm**

- April 16 First Female Love.
- May 7 What Do You Consider Romantic?
- May 21 When Do You Tell Someone You're Bi?

INCEST RESOURCES FACILITATED DISCUSSION FOR SURVIVORS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE - Last Fridays, 6-7:30pm

April 26 Control; May 31, Spirituality; June 28, Letting Go

***LESBIAN RAP - Mondays, 7:30-9pm**

- April 15 Gay Marriage
- 22 Tupperware with Theresa
- 29 Safer Sex

WOMEN OF COLOR READING CIRCLE, 2nd Monday, 7-8pm

May 13 Book: *Troublemaker & Other Saints* by Christina Chiu

***WOMEN OVER 40 - 2nd & 4th Wednesdays, 7-8:30pm**

- April 10 Describe Yourself in Three Words
- 24 Reinventing Yourself: Rebirth/Renewal

WOMEN'S READING GROUP - 4th Tuesdays, 7:30-9:30pm

- April 23 Book: *Persian Mirrors: The Elusive Face of Iran* by Elaine Sciolino

Women of Color Reading Circle

For two and a half years, the Women's Center has been hosting a Women of Color Reading Circle. The reading circle is open to all women who identify as being a 'woman of color.' The books that are read in the circle are written by women of color from around the world.

When Lynn Murray, a community organizer at the Center, and Vanessa Washington started the reading circle years ago, it was one of the few activities at the Center where women of color could bond.

Lynn comments, "I wanted to hear stories that were out of a woman of color perspective and experience. It's comforting to have friends who share similar insights and we consider authors like friends. I also wanted to learn more about myself and connect my personal life to a larger political struggle but in a non-academic way. The reading circle seemed like a perfect place for that to happen."

Since the first meeting, where women discussed the sci-fi Parable of the Sower by Octavia Butler, books have been chosen by a loose algorithm: each month, we read a book either by a woman of a different ethnicity and/or a book that falls in a different genre (e.g. nonfiction, poetry, play, etc.).

Women submit their choices for books, and members of the group vote to pick the next book. Books are chosen two months in advance, so everyone has plenty of time to finish the reading.

We laugh a lot while discussing the books, our lives, and growing up and/or being women of color in the U.S. The books we've read range from easy-reading favorites such as Amy Tan's The Kitchen God's Wife to political tracts such as Cherrie Moraga's Loving in the War Years – now one of my favorite books.

For our May meeting (Monday, May 13) the book is Troublemaker and Other Saints by Christina Chiu. Christina Chiu will be speaking at New

Words bookstore on Thursday, May 16 at 7pm.

The group meets on the second Monday of each month at 7pm, and I encourage women of color to check it out. Snack-sharing is also encouraged! I hope to see you soon!

~Jyoti Gupta



Mother-Child Art Class

Looking for a fun activity to do with your little one? The Women's Center is delighted to announce that we are continuing to collaborate with the YMCA to offer FREE Mother-Child Art Classes. Classes meet once per week for ten weeks at 10am and last for an hour. The classes are designed for toddlers ages 2-4. Marianne Guillette, an experienced Art Teacher, sets up three different art projects each week and matches them with a story. Marianne also shares tips on how to foster children's creativity and how to make homemade art supplies and inexpensive art projects.

Though the children are encouraged to create independently, Moms, Grandmas or other caretakers must be present to encourage them and to assist with tricky parts. Art projects include sculpture, collage, and painting. Research shows that, aside from being a lot of fun, these classes can help little ones develop their language and motor skills.

Please call Heather at (617) 354-8807 to sign up or to find out more information.

Lesbian Dating Event

Back by popular demand, the Women's Center will be holding a second Lesbian Dating event on June 23rd (*specific time and location to be determined*). Our first was a wonderful success with over 50 women participating. The Women's Center was overflowing and buzzing with women eager to meet friends and potential dates. Women reported back that they loved being able to meet other single women in a comfy environment without alcohol and cigarettes.

In case you've never heard of speed dating, here's how it works: initially, everyone is assigned to different rooms on the basis of age (under 30, 30-45, over 45). Every five minutes, you switch and talk to a different woman. If she strikes your fancy, you write her name down on a card. Several 15-20 minute breaks are scheduled where everyone can mingle and eat snacks. This way, if a cutie catches your eye who isn't in your room or you aren't matched with her, you can make your move. Each woman should formally meet at least 12 other women, most from the age group you selected.

The next day, we will email or call everyone with mutual matches (meaning that she has to write down your name, and you, hers). After that, it is up to you to set up a date.

To improve the registration process, we're having everyone pay and register beforehand. Tickets can be purchased at New Words or at the Women's Center for \$20 beginning June 1st. You may also mail in your check to Dating Party, The Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. Cambridge, MA 02139. We need to know the age group you want to be placed in. Call (617) 354-8807 or email dating-party@hotmail.com for more information.





Yes, I want to support the Women's Center!

Enclosed is my tax-deductible donation of: ___\$25 ___\$50 ___\$100 ___\$500 ___other \$ ___
___ I'm interested in volunteering at the Women's Center.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____

Thank You!

If you'd prefer to be taken off of our mailing list, please check the following box and return to the Women's Center. (Women's Center, 46 Pleasant Street, Cambridge MA 02139)

Save Trees and Save Us Money

We're hoping to become technologically-savvy enough to post our newsletter on our webpage and notify you to check it out via email. This would save us a whole lotta time and money. If you would prefer to access your newsletter in this format, please email newsletter@cambridgewomenscenter.org with your name and current mailing address. Hopefully, we will put this in place by this coming September.



Fun Night

Poetry, games, potlucks, music and more! Many of you have told us you want a fun, social event open to all women. WE HEARD YOU! We thought that was a fantabulous idea, so on the 3rd Friday of every month we're keeping the doors open 'til 10pm and having a free night of frivolity. Now we need YOUR HELP. We have held *Words of Fire* and a *Women's Game Night* for the past few months and they have been a huge success. But we need new ideas and new women to take charge. So if you are inspired with some great social idea and have some energy to organize it, give Lynn or Heather a call at (617) 354-8807.

The Women's Center
46 Pleasant Street
Cambridge, MA 02139

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