



# Women in Libraries

Volume 29, No. 2-3

The Feminist Task Force

Spring/Summer 2000

## ALA Members Head to Chicago in July

### Meeting Schedule

#### Friday, July 7, 2000:

8:00 am-5:30 pm: GLBTRT Preconference Program: Gayteens in the 21st Century (HICC - LaSalle D)

11:30 am-12:30 pm: Committee on Pay Equity (HYT - Stetson F)

2:00-5:30 pm: WSS/ACRL Awards Committee (SHER-Parlor F)

8:00-10:00 pm: GLBTRT Steering Committee I (INT - Illinois)

#### Saturday, July 8, 2000:

8:00-9:00 am: FTF/SRRT Membership Meeting (part of SRRT All-Task Forces' Meeting) (HYT - Regency B So.)

8:00-9:30 am: GLBTRT All-Committee Meeting (SHER - Mississippi)

9:30 am - 12:30 pm: SRRT Action Council I (HYT - Regency B So.)

9:30-11:00 am: Committee on the Status of Women in Librarianship - COSWL (HYT - Field)

9:30-11:00 am: COSWL Bibliography Task Force (HYT - Dusable)

11:30 am-12:30 pm: Introduction to Women's Groups in ALA (SHER - Michigan A, B)

12:45-1:45 pm: WSS/ACRL Ad Hoc Research Committee (INT - Amber Restaurant) - (For more information, contact Dolores Fidishun [dxfl9@psu.edu](mailto:dxfl9@psu.edu))

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Pornography and More!!

# Program Notes

"Pornography, Feminism and the Internet" (Sunday, July 9, 8-10 pm) has been identified by *Library Journal* (June 1, 2000) as a starred "pick." John Berry's comment about the program is "Important!"

Look for flyers about FTF's Author Event (Saturday, July 8, 2-4 pm) and Women's Night Out (Monday evening, July 10) in the conference registration area.

The first annual awards ceremony for the new WSS awards will be at the start of the WSS program on Monday. It will begin promptly at 9:30, lasting about 20 minutes. This year's award recipients are Sue Searing (Career Achievement) and Lynn Westbrook (Significant Achievement).—*Jessica Grim*

The Introduction to Women's Groups program will be hosted this year by Women's Studies. A member from this group will summarize its activities and opportunity for participation—a way to let people know about projects, programs, committees, etc. The second part of the program is devoted to discussion of a particular topic.

Ideas for this discussion include a follow-up to the Action Items/Issues list that came from the WSS Midwinter Discussion Meeting on Women's Groups at ALA. At that time, there was an interest in identifying projects or issues that COSWL, FTF, and WSS might collaborate on as well as an interest in increasing the communication among the three groups. A possibility of facilitating this is to turn the Introduction to Women's Groups into a woman's issues forum.—*Marlene Manoff*

"Future Challenges for Ethnic and Cultural Academic Collections," presented at 2:00 pm on Saturday, will address the following: How is a core collection defined for an academic ethnic or cultural collection? How should we preserve the out-of-print and historical materials? Should these collections be integrated or segregated from the consortium collections? What role should ethnic and cultural academic collections play in the future?

The Spring 2000 WSS Newsletter is available at <http://www.ala.org/acrl/wss/wsspr00>. [html](mailto:html)—*Megan Adams*

For people with an anti-gay-marriage argument, "Why don't gays just draft a legal agreement rather than trying to get married," let them check out GAO report OGC-97-16 (Jan. 31, 1997) which has 75 pages outline specific federal legal benefits of legal marriage.—*David Van Hoy*



## Women in Libraries

<http://www.lib.wayne.edu/ftf/>

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Send articles, comments, or materials for review, but not subscription questions, to Nel Ward, 156 SW Coast Street, Newport, OR 97365; 541-265-9141;

[nel@greengablesbb.com](mailto:nel@greengablesbb.com)

Send books for review to Sherre Harrington, Steveson Library, Vanderbilt University, 419 21st Avenue South, Nashville, TN 37240.

## More Meeting Schedule

### Saturday, July 8, 2000 (cont.):

2:00-4:00 pm: FTF/SRRT Program: Author's Forum (SWIS - William Tell Theatre)

2:00-4:00 pm: ACRL/African American Studies Librarian Section; ACRL/WSS; ACRL/Asian, African, and Middle Eastern Section; Black Caucus Program: "Future Challenges for Ethnic and Cultural Academic Collections" (Hilton Chicago & Towers - Lake Michigan Rm)

4:00-5:00 pm: ALA Membership Meeting I (With reserved seating for ALA Opening General Session). For more information, contact dconklin@OregonVOS.net (Note: Those present at both membership meetings will be entered into a drawing for free conference registration in San Francisco. The person must be present to win.)

### Sunday, July 9, 2000:

9:30 am -12:30 pm: WSS/ACRL All-Committee's Meeting (SHER - Superior B)

9:30 am-12:30 pm: GLBTRT Membership Meeting (HICC - Huron)

11:30 am-12:30 pm: LAMA Women Administrators' Discussion Group (PALM - Parlor A)

2:00-4:00 pm: WSS/ACRL Executive Meeting (HYT - Columbus H)

4:30-5:30 pm: SRRT Membership Meeting (SHER - Columbus B)

8:00-10:00 pm: GLBTRT Read-A-Loud Program (INT - Sullivan)

8:00-10:00 pm: FTF/SRRT Program: Pornography, Feminism, and the Internet (SWIS - William Tell Theatre)

### Monday, July 10, 2000:

8:00-9:00 am: FTF/SRRT Membership Meeting (SHER - Lincoln Bd.)

9:30-11:30 am: GLBTRT Program: Is There Anything in the Library for Me? The Challenges of Serving the GLBT Young Adult Community (INT - Exchange)

9:30 am-12:00 pm: ACRL/WSS Program: "Taking the Temperature of Women's Studies in the Year 2000 (SHER - Superior B)

11:00 am-12:00 pm: ALA Membership II (MCC-Vista BR) - (For more information, contact dconklin@OregonVOS.net) [See note on ALA Membership Meeting I, Saturday, 4-5 pm.]

2:00-5:30 pm: SRRT Action Council II (HYT - Regency D No.)

6:00-10:00 pm: GLBTRT 30th Anniversary Gala and Book Awards Presentation (INT - Grand BR)

Monday Evening: FTF/SRRT Women's Night Out

### Tuesday, July 11, 2000:

8:00-9:00 am: COSWL (HYT - Field)

8:30-11:00 am: GLBTRT Steering Committee II (INT - Illinois)

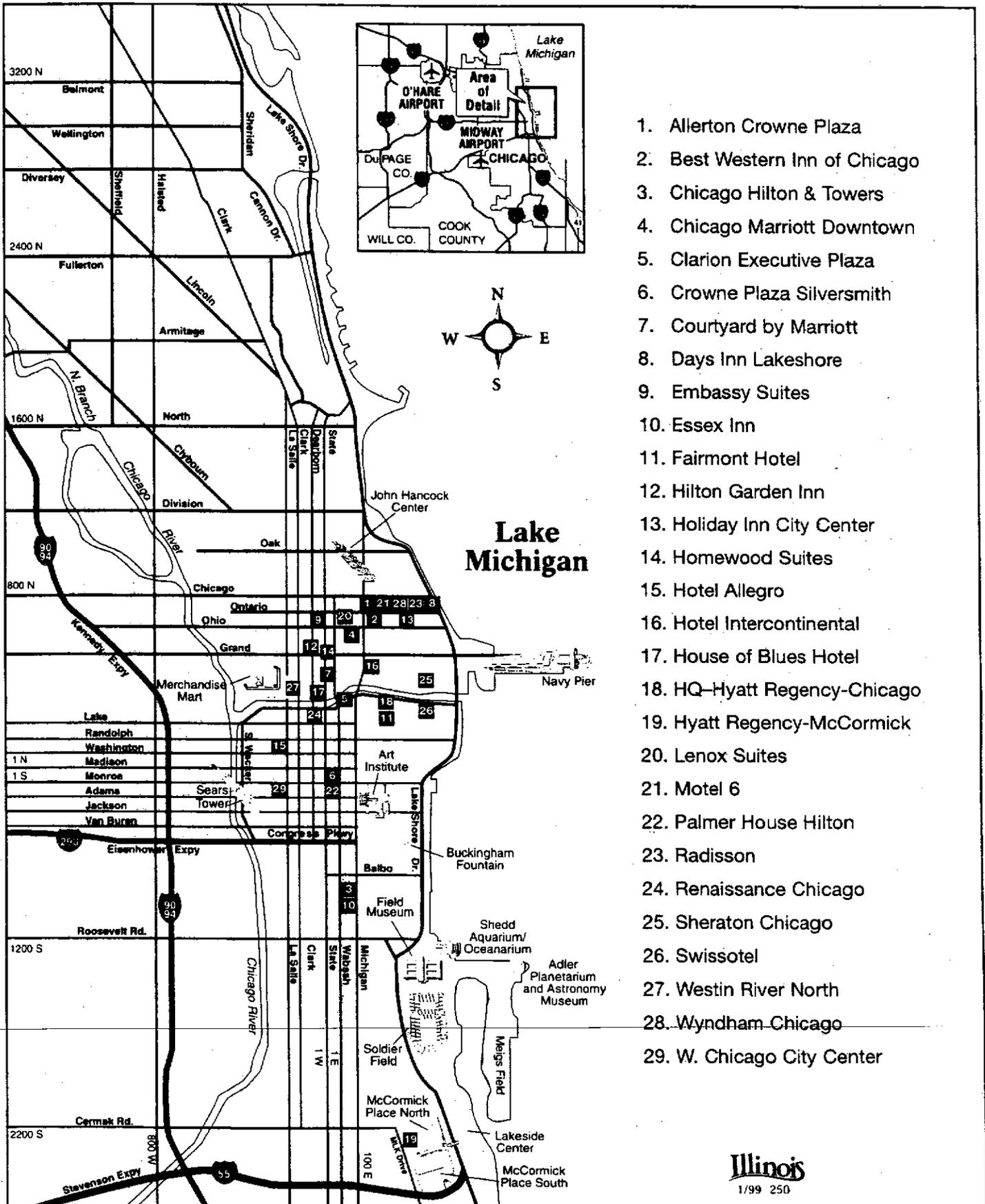
#### Meeting Rooms:

HICC - Chicago City Centre Holiday INN; HYT - Hyatt Regency Chicago; INT - Hotel Intercontinental; MCC - McCormick Place; SHER - Sheraton Chicago; SWIS - Swissotel

#### Groups:

ACRL - Association of College and Research Libraries; COSWL - Committee on the Status of Women in Librarianship; FTF - Feminist Task Force; GLBTRT - Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender Round Table; SRRT - Social Responsibilities Round Table; WSS - Women's Studies Section

# Chicago Hotel Locator Map



1. Allerton Crowne Plaza
2. Best Western Inn of Chicago
3. Chicago Hilton & Towers
4. Chicago Marriott Downtown
5. Clarion Executive Plaza
6. Crowne Plaza Silversmith
7. Courtyard by Marriott
8. Days Inn Lakeshore
9. Embassy Suites
10. Essex Inn
11. Fairmont Hotel
12. Hilton Garden Inn
13. Holiday Inn City Center
14. Homewood Suites
15. Hotel Allegro
16. Hotel Intercontinental
17. House of Blues Hotel
18. HQ-Hyatt Regency-Chicago
19. Hyatt Regency-McCormick
20. Lenox Suites
21. Motel 6
22. Palmer House Hilton
23. Radisson
24. Renaissance Chicago
25. Sheraton Chicago
26. Swissotel
27. Westin River North
28. Wyndham Chicago
29. W. Chicago City Center

## *Women Still Struggling with Gender Imbalance*

It's been thirty years since the inception of FTF. How much has changed? A two-page brief, "Women in the United States: A Profile," was released by the Census Bureau to commemorate Women's History Month last March. It shows data on age, race, education, earnings, poverty, marital status, living arrangements, occupation, and child-support awards, as well as comparable national data for men and historical data. (Quite a bit for two pages!)

The following highlights were provided by Craig Smith at the Oregon State Library [SMITH, Craig@oslmac.osl.state.or.us] News releases, reports, and data tables are available on the Census Bureau's Internet homepage at <http://www.census.gov>.

Women have almost achieved educational parity with men. In 1999, 23 percent of women age 25 and over had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared with 27 percent of men. In 1980, 14 percent of women and 21 percent of men had completed four years of college or more.

The median earnings of women age 25 years and over who worked full-time, year round in 1998 was 73 percent of their male counterpart's earnings (\$26,711 and \$36,679 respectively).

Women continue to be over-represented in administrative support and service occupations. For example, in 1999, 79 percent of the 18.6 million people working in administrative support (including clerical) were female, as were 95 percent of the 859,000 people employed as service workers in private households.

In 1999, nearly 3 in 4 women age 25 and over worked in four occupational groups, administrative support, including clerical (24 percent); professional specialty (18 percent); service workers, except private households (17 percent) and executive, administrative and managerial (14 percent).

Between 1970 and 1998, the number of women living alone doubled from 7.3 million to 15.3 million. The percentage of women who lived alone rose for every age group, except those ages 65 to 74.

Women outnumbered men 139 million to 133 million in 1999. The male-to-female ratio declined with age, so that among people age 85 and over it was 49 males for every 100 females.

In addition, Debra Meyerson, a professor of management, science and engineering at Stanford University, reports that an increasing number of women are breaking the glass ceiling. In 1998, the 7.1 million women in full-time executive, administrative or managerial positions represented a 29 percent jump from 1993. The number of men increased to 9.4 million, a 19 percent increase.

That's the good news. The bad? While the median income for men and women in executive positions rose at the same 20 percent clip in 1998, men made nearly \$17,000 more—\$51,351, according to Wendy Rayner, a member of Women Executives in State Government and chief information officer for New Jersey Gov. Christine Whitman.

A study by Catalyst, a women's advocacy group in New York, found that women represented 11.9 percent of corporate officers in America's 500 largest companies as of March 31, 1999—a 37 percent increase since 1995. Yet men still hold 93 percent of "line" officer jobs—high profile jobs with profit-and-loss responsibility that often lead to the top spots. Thus many women who achieve executive or management level are shuffled into human resources or public relations.

High-tech professions also demonstrate gender imbalance. The U.S. Commerce Department estimates that 28 percent of computer programmers, 26 percent of computer scientists, and 9 percent of engineers in the U. S. workplace are women.

# Women, Pornography, & Censorship

## Some Food for Thought from the National Coalition Against Censorship

There is intense disagreement among feminists on the questions of whether there should be legal restrictions on sexual related expression. That is the one reason that FTF/SRRT is sponsoring a program on this issue on Sunday, July 9, 8:00-10:00 pm, called "Pornography, Feminism, and the Internet." (SWIS - William Tell Theatre).

The following material comes from a group founded in 1992 to oppose the myth that censorship is good for women, that women want censorship, and those who support censorship speak for all women.

The Coalition believes that government should not be allowed to tell women or men what we should think or write about our lives, including our sex lives. Historically, women have been harmed by censorship. In the name of "protecting" women from "smut," birth control information has been withheld; works of art have been removed from display; books that describe women's bodies, sex education, and information about AIDS have been banned.

There is little agreement on the meaning of "pornography." It has long been used to suppress literature, art, sex education, and information about women's sexuality. Most conservatives and some feminists have been using the term as though sexually related expression is inherently "subordinating" or degrading" to women.

At The Sex Panic, a Conference on Women, Censorship, and "Pornography," May 7-8, 1993, four major themes emerged from the discussion:

1. Sex panics—when "license" and "perversion" are found hiding under every bedcover, and religious and political vice squads mobilize to wipe them out—are not new. None of this has ever been good for women. An example of this is when the restrictive measures of anti-pornography proponents Catherine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin

are pushed by Christian fundamentalists and others on the right, whose agendas are explicitly anti-feminist and anti-gay. An anti-porn decision in Canada on obscenity (Butler, 1992) led to harassment of gay and lesbian bookstores.

2. The contemporary anti-pornography movement among certain feminists is growing more sophisticated, theoretically and tactically. Its goal to "protect" women, at the cost of making less free, is gaining adherents in many quarters. The position of protection from MacKinnon supports a belief in gender differences, that men are beasts and women, fragile. The new rhetoric of women-against-pornography, adopted by the conservative Meese Commission, led to attacks against the National Endowment for the Arts.

3. Contrary to the terror-mongers' claims, widely available and varied sexual speech and imagery are good for women. They're even often good for kids. Leonore Tiefer, President of the International Academy of Sex Research, said that "freely available information, ideas, and images" are crucial if women's ignorance and shame are to be lessened and new attitudes and behavior substituted." For young people, the bottom line of the "fear-based" education is to scare kids into abstinence—with threats the premarital sex causes everything from the blues to death—and to withhold information about abortion, contraception, masturbation, and sexual feelings, including homosexuality.

4. We're fighting back—for free speech and freer women. From columnist Molly Ivins comes this advice: "The cure for every excess of freedom of speech is more freedom of speech."

For information about the Coalition, go to <http://www.ncac.org>

# Internet Challenges Feminist Thought

Lynn C. Chancer will discuss Feminism, Pornography and the Internet at the SRRT Feminist Task Force/ACRL Women's Studies Section program on Sunday, July 9, 8:00-10:00 pm (SWIS - William Tell Theatre).

Chancer is the author of *Reconcilable Differences: Confronting Beauty, Pornography and the Future of Feminism* (University of California Press, 1998) and an assistant professor of sociology at Barnard College in New York.

In *Reconcilable Differences* Chancer examines the cultural factors that have resulted in what she calls the "sex versus sexism" split in feminism and suggests that in second-wave feminist debates, two critical feminist goals—the achievement of sexual freedom for women and the freedom from sexism—have been unnecessarily polarized.

She traces this political dichotomy through pornography, beauty, prostitution, sadomasochism, and rape, arguing that it counterproductive and dangerous because as feminists divide among themselves, "sexism may be emboldened in its strength and ability to perpetuate and re-create itself" (p. 10). She suggests that feminist positions on these topics represent an either/or mode of thinking that must be replaced by both/and conceptions. We do not need to take a side, she argues: there shouldn't even be sides.

Feminists face challenges from both the external social environment and internal conditions in the attempt to end sexist practices. Chancer focuses on internal problems, which mainly result from the "character of gendered subordination itself" (p. 28) and from the need for feminists to

consider both commonalities and differences between women. The nature of gendered relationships is such that "comfort and oppressiveness regularly [occur] together" (p. 39). Feminists face the "troubling possibility that the very fulfillments and pleasures of the personal could also be the undoing and bane of the political" (p. 43).

Chancer advises feminists to refrain from condemning individuals for their practices, but to be aware of and try to change the underlying structures that shape their sexuality. She maintains, for example, that it is possible to distinguish between sexual choice and sexual coercion. Thus, it is possible to both argue for the legality of pornography and criticize it as part of patriarchal society.

Chancer concludes with a look at both the past and future of feminism. She believes that one of the most important contribu-

tions of second-wave radical feminism was the insistence that women have something in common: under patriarchy, their bodies are subject to men's control. A related commonality is that women are vulnerable to violence perpetrated by men.

Chancer's work is accessible to those who find themselves straddling the divide as well as those who are firmly camped on one side or the other. She articulates theoretical interventions on behalf of a third wave of feminism that stresses commonalities relative to differences, solidarity, and diversity. By deconstructing the origins of the schism, she creates a genuinely new framework within which women can and should be able to work together.—*Sherre Harrington, Stevenson Library, Vanderbilt University*

*...women have something in common: under patriarchy, their bodies are subject to men's control. A related commonality is that women are vulnerable to violence perpetrated by men.*

*Cat in the Hat* is "a volume of absurdity that worked like a karate chop on the weary little world of Dick, Jane and Spot." This blurb, penned by Ellen Goodman in a piece on the popularity of Dr. Seuss, has appeared on the book jackets of several books by the venerable children's author.

But much to Goodman's dismay, it has also appeared on *Honey Bunny, Fummybunny*, a Beginner Book that was not written by Dr. Seuss. In her May 9, 2000 column, she explained her concern about the book.

This is "a tale in which an older brother

through *The Boston Globe*, PO Box 2378, Boston, MA 02107.

On another front, the National Organization for Women (NOW) has finished a review of prime-time television characters and determined that it will put more pressure on advertisers to spend money on programs that depict women in a positive way.

The "feminist prime-time report," the first in NOW's 34-year history, determined that this area of television remains a largely male-dominated arena, with many comedies in particular still build

## ***Primary Books, TV Teach Negative Lessons***

bunny, P.J., is mercilessly teasing Honey Bunny—dumping carrots on her head, hiding her security blanket in the refrigerator and painting her face—until their parents intervene.

"So the unrepentant brother goes from teasing to ignoring her altogether. . . . And she is only reassured that he does so love her, when—guess what?—he starts teasing her again. This time, he paints her face with polka dots."

According to Goodman, "this not-so-honey of a book is a preschool training manual in the worst of male-female relationships. Our little sister learns *her* lesson: that the wrong kind of attention is better than no attention. That you can either be abused or neglected. That painting your face with polka dots—or black and blue eyes—is a sign of affection.

"The brother learns withholding love makes you the winner. Love means you never have to say you're sorry."

Goodman took her concerns to Random House's Alice Jonaitis, line manager for Beginner Books who admitted that "we have received a certain amount of concerned letters suggesting that it encourages loving your abuser." But she concluded, "I have older brothers that teased me that I loved very much. It reminded me of my love for them."

At least Goodman got her blurb removed from the book. Ellen Goodman can be reached

around sexist stereotypes. Examiners also found sexual exploitation rife in the specials and TV movies during sweeps months.

Among those at the bottom of the barrel were Fox Broadcasting's *Who Wants to Marry a Multimillionaire?* and CBS' "Perfect Murder, Perfect Town" about the JonBenet Ramsey case. A few bright spots emerged: CBS' *Family Law*, ABC's *Once and Again*, and NBC's *ER*.

The study involved teams of feminist viewers from NOW who looked at 82 prime-time programs during the February sweeps period, then graded the four largest broadcast networks on the basis of their programs' gender composition, violence, sexual exploitation and violence. NBC won the highest grade, a B-plus; CBS followed with a C-plus; ABC got a C; and Fox, which the report labeled the "network of shame," got a D-plus.

Women of different body types than the prevailing slenderness are not often seen on these channels. Lesbians and people with disabilities are virtually non-existent.

There doesn't seem a strong place for women in comedy now, except as the targets of sexual comments and advances. Games shows lack women hosts. And CBS has both the poorest record on violence and the top two ranked shows in the report.

(Network executives suggested that the findings were skewed by NOW's ideology.)

# Book Talk

## Small Press Offerings Suggested by American Booksellers Association

Cheri Register, *Packinghouse Daughter*. Minnesota Historical Society Press: In this unique blend of memoir, myth, and the lost history of a Midwestern labor town, Register's coming-of-age tale combines with her family's and the community's struggle during a tumultuous labor strike that divided her hometown.

Helen Benedict, *The Sailor's Wife*. Zoland Books: In this novel, a young girl from Miami marries a Greek sailor. Benedict brilliantly conjures a world of peasants, soldiers, fishermen, and peddlers on a remote Greek island. *The Sailor's Wife* is a tour de force, a rare glimpse at an ancient culture peopled with sharply drawn and memorable characters, where a modern woman is plucked from her comfortable American nest and set down in a harsh, striving, and totally alien world limned with great beauty, honesty, and sadness, reminiscent of *Corelli's Mandolin*.

Emily Carter, *Glory Goes and Gets Some*. Coffee House: How is a woman in her thirties, HIV-positive and fresh out of rehab, supposed to find love and work in contemporary, urban America, steering clear of self-pity and doctrinaire "happy talk"? This linked short story collection shows how Glory goes and gets some.

Linda Watanabe McFerrin, *The Hand of Buddha*. Coffee House: Short stories in this collection are about women of various ethnic backgrounds, from various regions of the United States, who find themselves in situations that spin wildly out of control or silently disintegrate. Somehow McFerrin's characters maintain their sense of humor, if not their equilibrium.

## And One from a Not-So-Small Press with an Amazing Premise!

Alan Axelrod, *Elizabeth I, CEO: Strategic Lessons in Leadership from the Woman Who Built an Empire*. Prentice Hall Press: In the press's "lead Fall title," Axelrod turns to one of history's greatest rulers, and greatest women, for a fresh look at the always compelling topic of how to lead people to extraordinary achievement. *Elizabeth I, CEO* reveals how the embattled monarch overcame daunting obstacles to win intense loyalty and lead England to greatness. [Yes, I know the book is authored by a man, but it is about a woman and seems almost too funny to pass up.]

## Still Another Book to Watch Out For

MIT is selling lots of copies of *A Natural History of Rape* by Randy Thornhill and Craig Palmer. The premise? That to reduce their chances of being raped, women must understand "that there are costs associated with dressing provocatively and going out alone at night and so forth."

Thornhill claimed on a *Dateline* segment that he isn't blaming the victim when he tells women their clothing can trigger men's biological tendencies to demand sex by force. Instead he's merely "suggesting the only way to prevent rape is to understand it scientifically."

The author, and "evolutionary psychologist," insists that "rape is a sexual act with a sexual motivation" that evolved as a reproductive strategy for men to pass their genes on to as many offspring as possible. Perhaps the next court defense will be "Darwin made me do it!"

## Small Press Loses to Mattel

Two years ago, Seal Press published *Adios Barbie: Young Women Write about Body Image and Identity*. Edited by Ophelia Edut, this book was a collection of essays by women in their twenties.

(Cont. on Page 10)

## More Book Talk

(Cont. from Page 9)

As the title indicates, the concern of the writers is with perception of appearance—size, color, and shape. A demonstration of a struggle for self-esteem, a journey to survival, the book is vital for young women—and men—who have been guided by our media and cultural view that equates beauty with near anorexic looks.

Along comes Mattel. Last fall, they filed a suit against Seal Press claiming that the Seattle publisher infringed on the Barbie trademark. It seems that the company owns the hairbrush, high heel, foot, and even the shade of pink and font used on the word “Barbie” on the cover illustration.

In January, the women at Seal decided to settle with Mattel, agreeing to pay them \$10,000, sell no more than 4000 copies of *Adios Barbie* in its current printing, and never ever again manufacture a product imitating the Barbie trademark or elements of the Barbie trade dress.

*Adios Barbie* will reappear with a different title and cover in late summer. Look for *Body Outlaws*, for this book that deals with issues surrounding women’s bodies, the racist cultural beauty standard, and self-esteem.

Lick, Sue Fagalde. *Stories Grandma Never Told: Portuguese Women in California*. Berkeley, CA: Heydey Books, 1998. Cloth. ISBN: 1-890771-05-8. \$17.95.

Sue Fagalde Lick “grew up American.” Before she researched this book, she “didn’t even know where the Azores were.” [Ed. Note: Neither did I!] Her interviews of these women and retelling of their stories open up a whole new world of overcoming oppression.

When women migrated from the tiny islands 800 miles off the coast of Portugal, they had to be claimed by a man before they could enter the United States. Many of the women in the early twentieth century never learned to speak English. “My mother was like a hired hand,” said one of the

women. Young women could not date although their brothers did; single women could not move out of the parents’ home.

One woman tells about her voyage to the United States: terrified that she would be poisoned, she ate almost nothing. She wore an address on her coat as if she were a package. Another woman says that she could either immigrate or join a convent. And a banker left her successful job in Toronto because her father wanted his sons to move to California to fish.

In simple, dynamic language Lick passes along the riveting tales these women told her about their lives and dreams and struggles. In the beginning they believed that their stories were not important enough to tell, yet they speak to all women, not only Portuguese and not only immigrants.

These stories are not only about first generation women. Their daughters and granddaughters tell of their struggles to find their own identity while keeping in touch with their heritage. And almost all are told without complaining, with the strength that can come from adversity.

The next time you want an adventure story, pick up this book. Follow these women as they demonstrate the bravery and spirit of women everywhere.—*Nel Ward, Newport, OR*

Marcos, Subcomandante Insurgente; il. Domitila Dominguez; trans. Anne Bar Din. *The Story of Colors/La Historia de los Colores: A Bilingual Folktale from the Jungles of Chiapas*. El Paso, TX: Cinco Puntos Press. Cloth, ISBN: 0-938317-45-8. \$15.95.

On March 9, 1999, after a call from *New York Times* reporter, NEA Chairman William Ivey personally canceled a grant that supported this picture book’s publication. No explanation. The story, a reworking of a Mayan creation myth, treats the subject of diversity and tolerance. Last line? “. . . the world will be happy if all the colors and ways of thinking have their place.” This wonderful folktale reveals down-to-earth wisdom of the indigenous people of Chiapas as well as a fresh perspective on the struggles of the people there. A must buy!—*Nel Ward, Newport, OR*

# Religious Groups Control Women's Decisions

A year ago at the United Nations, delegates gathered to draft a document for the General Assembly special assembly on population and development. The gathering, known as Cairo+5, came five years after the landmark Cairo Conference of 1994, which recognized women's empowerment and reproductive health as key to seeming global population growth. The delegates to Cairo+5 represented 159 nation-states—and Vatican City's Holy See.

The Roman Catholic church is the only religious body to enjoy "nonmember state permanent observer" status, able to speak, lobby, and negotiate on equal footing with any nation. The See may not vote, but it can and does influence the documents the nations vote on.

Frances Kissling, president of Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC), puts its position clearly: "Why should an entity that is in essence 100 square acres of office space and tourist attractions in the middle of Rome, with a citizenry that excludes women and children, have a place at the table where governments set policies affecting the very survival of women and children? Nobody else at the U. N. claims to represent God."

Bene Madunagu, chair of Girls' Power Initiative in Nigeria, adds, "The death toll from HIV and AIDS in Africa rises with every Holy See success in intimidating health organizations from broadening prevention and education programs."

In the discussion regarding reproductive health, women's rights, and issues of family and youth, John Klink, the See's lead talker, opposes any mention of female condoms and advocates replacing "rights" with "status" as in "respect for women's status" instead of "respect for women's rights." On a busy Monday afternoon, Klink spoke five times in an hour against confidential sex counseling for adolescents.

Because U. N. chairpersons work hard to achieve consensus, the See can delay proceedings with a single dissenting view, as Klink did in this case. Over and over again, delegates heard the Holy See's representative declare, "We cannot approve." When Klink says "we," he says he's

referring to the Catholic Church, which, he asserts, "is comprised of the entire people of God."

Part of the reason why the church wields so much power is that in almost every country of the world it is deeply involved in providing health care. The church has made it very clear that if any government or U.N. agency attempts to force those facilities to provide abortion services or requires them to offer contraception services, they would pull out. This creates a hostage situation, as for example the prohibition on the use of condoms for protection against sexually transmitted diseases even for married couples when one partner has HIV. (For more information on this issue, read *MS*, October/November 1999.)

In Jerusalem, parliament has passed a bill sentencing women who pray at the Western Wall to seven years in prison. Yet the women defy the bill. Ultra-Orthodox Jewish men in the adjacent male section at the site considered most sacred to Jews shouted "Shame!" and "Quiet!" at the women, as they faced the stone wall that once was part of the biblical Second Temple compound.

Passed by a half-full parliament, the bill would have to pass some half-dozen more legislative steps before becoming law. It directly contradicts a Supreme Court ruling last month allowing women at the site to read aloud from the Torah and don prayer shawls traditional worn by men. In Israel the legislature can pass laws that override Supreme Court decisions.

And Southern Baptists now say that the ministry is for men only "as qualified by Scripture." Women can still legally be pastors but are discouraged from this. Since the 1980s, Southern Baptists have been guided by leaders who regard the Bible as "inerrant," literally true in all matters. This new decision follows the one from two years ago that "a wife is to submit herself graciously to her husband's leadership." Christians are also called up to oppose racism, homosexuality, pornography, and abortion while bringing government and society "under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love."

# Book Reviews

*Bi Lives: Bisexual Women Tell Their Stories.* Ed. Kata Orndorff. Tucson, AZ: See Sharp Press, 1999. Paper, ISBN: 1884365-94, \$14.95.

Self-identified bisexual woman Kate Orndorff has edited this volume of 18 interviews with bisexual women from diverse backgrounds and experiences. She includes a safer sex guide by Sex educator, Rowan Frost, and a resource list by Robin Ochs, editor of *Bisexual Resources Guide 2000*.

The 18 interviews are revealing and the questions and answers very candid and in-depth. The women range in age from 21 to 57; they represent many different races, classes and include disabled women, as well as one HIV positive woman. The women are midwives, artists, performing artists, and professionals; the bisexual political organizer, Lani Ka'ahmanu, is also interviewed.

With this collection, Orndorff explores how these women have dealt with the discovery of their own bisexuality, accepting it or not, and how coming out as a bisexual has affected their lives.

"Mary" had an open relationship with a bisexual man; they both attended sex parties until they learned they were HIV positive. "Lani," the bisexual activist, talked at length about the rejection of bisexual women in the lesbian separatists community. "Michelle" is a nurse-midwife in a long-term relationship with a woman, "Casey," the following interview, and her husband, Doug. "Revi," the youngest woman in the collection, at 21, talks of her rejection by her lesbian separatist mother when she admitted an attraction to boys while in high school.

Orndorff writes about her own experiences as a bisexual woman in her preface to *Bi Lives*. She explains her views on safer sex and the importance of including questions on it in her

interviews. Her introduction and short notes on the women included in the book are useful because she explains the interview process and her inclusion of follow-up passages and name changes.

*Bi Lives: Bisexual Women Tell Their Stories* is a useful purchase for libraries with women's studies, gay studies, and/or sexuality collections. It is a welcome addition to the growing list of books for and about bisexual people.—Lisa Johnston, Sweet Briar College Library

Chesler, Phyllis. *Letters to a Young Feminist*. New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1997. Cloth, ISBN: 1-56858-093-2, \$18.00

Phyllis Chesler's *Letters to a Young Feminist* is a series of 22 letters, the last of which is written to her son. The others are written to "a young woman, possibly a young man, somewhere between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five, but you may also be a decade older—or younger—than that. You may not yet be born."

The book is in part a reflection of what it means to be a feminist. Chesler says, "Feminism is a way of understanding reality, not just a series of things to do. Feminism challenges our predilection for one right answer, one right God, one size fits all." In this book she gives us a new understanding of reality, as well as a list, of sorts, of things to do. She talks of feminist history, of the gains made by feminists up to now, and of what still needs to be done, saying that, while consciousness is being transformed, women are still far from free.

Her reflections include love and sex, marriage, motherhood, money, and many other things. She does not soften her truths at all. As one who was involved in the feminist movement, many of the things she says are highly personal. She includes honest accounts of her own personal accomplishments and mistakes she has made, as well as the

## Book Reviews Continued

collective accomplishments and setbacks of feminists as a group.

The letters are not only reflection though, they are also a definite call to action. She says, "Stand up early as you can in life. Take up as much space in the [male] universe as you need to. Sit with your legs apart, not together. Climb trees. Climb mountains too. Engage in group sports. Dress comfortably. Dress as you wish. How do we stop injustice? We begin by speaking truth to power."

She also lists concrete things you as a feminist can do. In the case of women's reproductive rights, she suggests, among other things, voting for pro-choice politicians, escorting women into and out of abortion clinics, lobbying your church or religious congregation to change its stance on birth control and abortion, becoming a physician willing to perform abortions or a lawyer willing to represent physicians who perform abortions, clinic owners, and staff.

The book includes an excellent bibliography. It is not, as the author herself says, exhaustive, but it is a very good place to start. This is a book that should be read by everyone, regardless of age. It educates—there were things which I learned (or remembered) about feminist history, my legacy, and my duty to carry forward what has been done in the past. It caused me to revisit my own beliefs and actions. Not an easy thing to do, but very necessary.—*B. Jedlicka, University of Georgia*

Sullivan, Barbara Stevens. *The Eighth of September*. Portland, ME: Astarte Shell Press, 1995. Paper, ISBN: 1885349-01-7, \$12.95.

Shirley Friedman was once a sharp, active woman with an intellectual curiosity and an appetite for life. After having a stroke, she is confined to a wheelchair and requires much help to accomplish even simple tasks. Her husband, Ralph, takes care of her for some years until his own health suffers a blow. When it becomes apparent that he

can no longer care for his wife, Ralph and his children make the difficult decision to put Shirley in a board-and-care home until Ralph is well enough to care for her again.

Shirley's health declines in the home. She becomes depressed and loses her will to live. Eventually she decides that she wants to die. Ralph is beside himself. In an attempt to help her regain her appetite for life, he brings her home again. Nothing can change her mind, however. Shirley wants to commit suicide, and she needs her family's help.

Although the book centers around Shirley, the reader gets to know her husband and daughters very well. The story is told from the alternate points of view of Shirley, Ralph, and their daughters, Ellen and Molly. Sullivan does a wonderful job of bringing out the personality of each family member and their complex relationships.

As in life, nothing is clear-cut. Each character has good points, but none is perfect. Ralph feels the weight of being married for so many years to this demanding woman, yet he loves her deeply. Ellen, the older daughter, is a caretaker in her career as well as in her family. Having a tumultuous relationship with her mother over the years, Ellen has strong feelings, both love and hate, for her mother. The younger daughter, Molly, is stylish and beautiful with an occasional sharp, caustic tongue. Her relationship with her mother is quite different than that of her sister's.

Each family member shows the many effects which assisted suicide can have on a family—fear, relief, guilt, etc. Through it all shines Shirley's fierce determination that this is what she wants to do.

Each person feels differently about the issue and wants to do the right thing. Sullivan does not hint at what she feels that might be, bringing out the different possibilities through her characters.

The book is an honest and thought-provoking look at one family's experience with assisted suicide.—*Beth Jedlicka, University of Georgia*.

## Feminist Task Force Celebrates 30th Year Anniversary, Tackles Issues, and Raises Consciousness within ALA

To prepare this double issue of *Women in Libraries*, I read samplings of the publication since its inception in August 1970, discovering the truth of looking backward to improve the future. What I found also was the courage of the women who formed and continued the Feminist Task Force to make life a bit better and create an understanding of women's struggles, both professionally and personally. Following are excerpts from past newsletters during FTF's first three decades.

"The SRRT Task Force on the Status of Women in Librarianship was established this summer at the ALA convention in Detroit. . . . At the first meeting of the Task Force, chaired by Ellen Gay Detlefsen, Anita Schiller gave a background briefing on the history of discrimination against women in librarianship.

"Fifty years ago, with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution, women won the right to vote." (August 1970)

"At the 1971 Midwinter meeting in Los Angeles the ALA membership adopted this Task Force's resolution demanding equal opportunity for women in librarianship. [When asked their opinion regarding the resolution, all ALA Council candidates either endorsed or did not reply except for Thomas Hart who said,] 'Oppose this policy, will oppose measures to implement.'

"Dallas Calendar: Meeting of all librarians interested in reviewing children's books during this conference. Librarians will be assigned to specific publishers' booths and asked to review children's books there. The purposes of this project are to identify new children's books with particularly good or bad images of women and girls. . . ." (April 1971; Linda Robson, ed.)

"The second annual program meeting of the Task Force [FTF] centered around the questions of sex discrimination and affirmative action in the library. . . . The meeting was well attended by anywhere from 300 (my estimate) to 1000 (LJ's estimate) librarians. It [an hour long question and answer session] was highlighted by a library school

student's description of the discrimination she met when she first applied for admission to library school. Her difficulties inspired a small group of women to meet still later that night to prepare an amendment to the proposed accreditation standards for library schools prohibiting (among other things) sex discrimination in recruitment, admission, and financial aid policies. This amendment passed largely through the efforts of Pat Mitchell, a recent graduate of San Jose State L.S.

[Business Meeting Notes:] "While efforts will be made to have ALA provide child care as a regular conference activity, acting on a Task Force resolution, SRRT agreed at its membership meeting to support child care financially should this need arise." [At this time, the newsletter cost \$1 "to cover paper and postage]

"What should we be doing?

1. An annotated listing of films about women, feminism, the history of women.
2. Position papers on such subjects as maternity leave, hiring programs, retirement benefits, etc.
3. Institute a bibliographic responsibilities sub-task force to keep track of the literature on women in libraries, sexism in children's literature, etc.
4. Develop the possibilities of shared employment and flexible scheduling." (September 1972)

" . . . areas of concern to women librarians:

—The task force should sponsor a feminist book award.

—Inequities in ALA health insurance policies need to be investigated.

—Numbers of women vs. men on ALA Council and committees should be investigated.

—Attendance of women vs. men at ALA midwinter and annual meetings should be investigated and the results published.

—The task force needs more visibility in the ALA structure; possibly by forming a round table or caucus for women librarians and para-professionals." (February 1973)

"FTF continued to monitor conference exhibits for sexism. . . . The Committee on the Status

# More from FTF's Past 30 Years

of Women in Librarianship (COSWL), a standing ALA committee since 1976, has won its third ALA Goal Award. . . for a study of re-entry women librarians." (September 1982; Michele Leber, ed.)

"COSWL sponsored, with the support of FTF, a lecture by Black feminist Flo Kennedy, who spoke about "The Power Position of the Librarian in a Pathological Society." Known for her incisive wit, Kennedy. . . feared. . . that many of us may have the motto, BOHICA, Bend Over. Here It Comes Again. . . . Since we are often in public service departments, librarians are in a good situation to stir up people. . . and to learn from them." (September 1986; Leslie Kahn and Mary Vela-Creixell, ed.)

"SRRT Action Council passed a resolution to boycott TWA for union-busting. . . . It condemned a situation where flight attendants, mostly female, have been placed in job-threatening circumstances. The airline is ignoring a court order on rehiring its former employees who struck for better conditions. See *MS*, Jan. 1987 for details.

Thanks to Bethany Lawton, the FTF Sexism Awareness officer, for her letter in the Dec. 1986 *American Libraries*, where she protested the expression 'resource rape' in the context of interlibrary loan and small libraries: "To use the term 'rape' as a catch word for differing interloan levels denigrates the very real experience of rape with which women must deal.' . . . Is there no justice? Bethany recently lost a suit against the Minnesota town of East Grand Forks, which made a male store manager its library director instead of giving that post to her, a female person with a library degree. And to read about just a few other cases of sex discrimination, turn to the July 1986 editorial in *School Library Journal*." (March/April 1987, Leslie Kahn and Mary Vela-Creixell, ed.)

"Now that George Bush is president-elect, women have more work ahead of them. The Republican party's abortion plank gives us much to fear. The platform states 'that the unborn child has a fundamental right to life which cannot be infringed.' Marjorie Bell Chambers, a Republican

and a platform committee member, proposed an amendment to delete the last four words, arguing that the words 'cannot be infringed' meant 'that men and fetuses have a right to life at all times, but women lose that right when they become pregnant.' The committee roundly defeated the amendment. We are now faced with a future president whose party believes that a fetus should not be aborted even to save an adult's life. Any reasonable adult can only react to such a proposition with horror." (November/December 1988; Madeleine Tainton, ed.) [Ed. Note: Are we heading into this again?]

"The scrutiny of Anita Hill and the charges she raised against Judge Clarence Thomas in recent weeks has brought a lot of attention to the subject of sexual harassment. . . . One question regarding the decision to report or not to report a case of sexual harassment is that of definition. What is sexual harassment? The term has been used to cover a multitude of behaviors from 'anything that makes you feel uncomfortable' to actual physical assault. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission defines it as any unwanted physical or verbal sexual attention which is used to intimidate a person into submission. In an article published in *Public Personnel Management Journal* (10, No. 4, Winter 1981: 402-407), Jennifer James suggests five guidelines to identify sexual harassment. It is usually repetitive, one-sided, and unwelcome. It also involves power of a physical and/or managerial nature. The fifth identifying feature is that the victim cannot get the harasser to stop. (November 1991; Julia Phipps, ed.)

"The Feminist Task Force is sponsoring its first author breakfast at midwinter. The task force is planning to host an author breakfast during every midwinter and annual ALA conference. Our first guest will be Mary Morell. Morell and her partner, Anne Grey Frost, manage a feminist bookstore called Full Circle Books in New Mexico. Mary has been an English teacher, a counselor, and a travel agency manager. In addition to writing novels, Mary writes poems, plays, and political diatribes." (January 1992; Julia Phipps, ed.)

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## We Need You!

*Women in Libraries* is looking for issues, ideas, materials, reviews, articles—in short, anything to benefit feminists. Send clippings, quotations, essays, etc. to be included in future newsletters. And if you have an inclination to review books, send us your name and address. This is your newsletter: you can be a part of it. Deadlines are the 15th of February, May, August, and November.