

NOW Links Arms with LGBT Allies Against Hate Crimes

BY DARA GOLDBERG, NOW FIELD ORGANIZING AND CHAPTER DEVELOPMENT

For more than 30 years, NOW and our 500,000 members across the country have been fighting for lesbian rights. NOW believes that a woman's right to her own person includes the right to define and express her own sexuality and to choose her own lifestyle. NOW also believes marriage is a fundamental right that should not be denied to same-sex couples and was one of the first progressive organizations to "come out" for equal marriage. We will continue this fight because women will not achieve full equality until every woman can pursue her dreams free from discrimination.

NOW is working with its allies at Gender Public Advocacy Coalition (GPAC) by supporting the "50 under 30" public education campaign. This campaign calls for decisive action by human rights and other advocacy organizations, legislators, police, educators, media and youth to stand up for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) rights and against hate crimes that target people who do not fit into social "norms."

Since 1995, more than 50 young people in the U.S. aged 30 and under were violently murdered by assailants who targeted them because they did not fit stereotypes for masculinity and femininity. These deaths are underreported, under-publicized, and under-solved – 54 percent of the deaths remain unsolved, as compared with 31 percent of all homicides nationally in 2004. Authorities often fail to categorize these attacks as gender-based assaults or hate crimes. If they are covered by the media, the biological sex of the victim is reported and not their gender identity or gender expression. Since the epidemic is rarely viewed as an attack on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression, its root causes are never fully reported, nor are initiatives to address these crimes developed.

Currently, only ten states — California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Maryland, New Mexico, Minnesota, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Vermont, plus Washington DC — have added gender identity and gender expression or similar

(continued on page 3)

Who Said That?

"Women are the slaves of the world."

(See answer page 3)

The Sexualization of Girls American Psychological Association Report

BY MARY BAILEY
FIRST IN A SERIES

We've been reading accounts like these for years now: Toy stores carry dolls wearing black leather miniskirts, thigh-high boots, and feather boas aimed at 8- to 12-year-old girls. Clothing stores sell thongs, some labeled "eye candy" or "wink wink" in sizes for 7- to 10-year-old girls. Child beauty pageants encourage 5-year-old girls wearing makeup and false eyelashes to "flirt" onstage. Adult models resembling little girls wear sexy lingerie on TV fashion shows. Prime time TV repeatedly displays the sexualized image of JonBenet Ramsey, the murdered 6-year-old "beauty queen," even though she died 10 years ago.

None of this is child pornography, right? So, if it's not against the law, why make a fuss about it? It's not society's business. Let the family handle it in the privacy of the home.

One organization that wants to make a fuss is the American Psychological Association, specifically the APA's Committee on Women in Psychology. In its "Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls," released February 2007, the evidence-based organization summarizes "the best psychological theory, research, and clinical experience addressing the sexualization of girls via media and other cultural messages."

Sexualization differs from healthy sexuality, notes the APA. Healthy sexuality involves mutual respect between consenting partners. It fosters intimacy, bonding, and shared pleasure. By contrast, sexualization occurs when:

1. A person's value comes only from his or her sexual appearance or behavior, to the exclusion of other characteristics. Here, the report is concerned with the imbuing of adult sexuality upon a child.
2. A person is held to a standard that equates physical attractiveness (narrowly defined) with being sexy. A specific and virtually unattainable physical appearance is defined as being sexy for women and girls.
3. A person is sexually objectified — that is, made into a thing for others' sexual use — rather than seen as a person with the capacity for independent action and decision making. Sexuality is valued over other more relevant characteristics, such as girls' athletic abilities.

(continued on page 3)

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MC NOW Co-President's Message

BY JEANNETTE FELDNER

MCNOW Looking for A Few Good Members!

My two-year commitment as President of this wonderful chapter is coming to an end in June. We are now in need of some new (or old) leadership in the following positions for 2007-2008:

- President
- Executive Vice President
- Action Vice President
- Recording Secretary
- Corresponding Secretary
- Membership Chair
- Treasurer
- Newsletter Co-Editors
- Community Relations
- MDNOW Liaison
- MCNOW PAC President
- MCNOW PAC Treasurer

As you see, it takes a village to run a National Organization for Women chapter.

- If you are in one of the above positions and would be happy to serve for another year, please let me know. We welcome you back!
- If you would like to change position for a new experience, that works, too!
- And if you are ready to commit to joining our illustrious board, we welcome new faces and ideas.

We have begun work on our new focus of aiding the women of the county who suffer from domestic violence by developing a Court Watch. We have other ideas, such as setting up a sex education program outside of the school system. And continued work on a sexual harassment education program on the college campus at Montgomery College in coalition with the AAUW.

It's an exciting time to be involved with MCNOW. And we need all the help we can get. Please consider volunteering some time to your chapter. Together we can do so much!
THANKS!

Jeannette Feldner
Co-President, MC NOW
LJ.Feldner@verizon.net

Equal Rights Ride Again

Hot off the presses! After 25 long, dry years, House and Senate Democrats on March 27 reintroduced the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). Although this time it's called the Women's Equality Amendment (WEA), its wording is the same: "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex." Since January, a state version of the amendment has been introduced in five legislatures as well. "Gender equality has definitely become a no-brainer aspect of Democratic Party ideology, even in Southern states," said Jay Barth, professor of politics at Hendrix College in Conway, Arkansas. "Thirty years ago, that was not the case." (Wash Post, front page, 3-28-07)

LBGT Allies (continued from page 1)

language to their hate crimes laws. No federal law has been passed, thus such statutes only apply to about 24 percent of the U.S. population (according to the 2006 “50 under 30” GPAC report).

This epidemic must be stopped, and we all have an important role to play in stopping gender-based discrimination and harassment and its escalation into fatal assaults through early intervention, education, advocacy, and prevention.

NOW is taking action by supporting The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act which will extend federal hate crimes beyond the narrow scope of protected federal activities (such as voting) to include violent crimes on the basis of gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation. At the same time, the bill protects freedom of speech by specifying that evidence of a hateful motive must be directly linked to the violent crime in question. The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act will allow the federal government to assist localities in the investigation and prosecution of hate crimes. When local law enforcement is unwilling or unable to investigate a hate crime, this federal protection will ensure that every hate-based crime is addressed and the people are protected.

NOW activists across the country have been working for the passage of expanded federal hate crimes legislation because our members know first hand how vicious crimes of hate can affect someone’s life. We also know that hate crimes are more than individual assaults – they send shock waves and fear through an entire community by conveying a violent message of intolerance.

NOW urges people of all sexual orientations to stand united against discrimination based on gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation. Take action! To learn more about GPAC’s “50 under 30” public education campaign – and what we can do in our communities to help stem this tide of violence – visit www.50under30.org.

Answer to Who Said That, page 1 Warren Buffett

Warren Buffett frequently observed that “women are the slaves of the world,” his late wife Susan told TV interviewer Charlie Rose. Today, Buffett is the world’s second richest man, behind only Bill Gates of Microsoft. Having made his fortune managing the Berkshire Hathaway mutual fund, Warren and his wife Susan planned to give most of their wealth away. Susan died shortly after the interview, and Warren followed through by pledging, over time, 85 percent of his worth (\$44 billion), the bulk of it to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. As the largest charitable institution in the world, the Gates Foundation focuses on the big issues — education and global health.

Sexualization (continued from page 1)

4. Sexuality is inappropriately imposed upon a person, especially a child. For example, when adult models who resemble girls pose in a sexy way, their sexual objectification blurs the distinction between adults and children and thereby sexualizes girlhood.

Being sexualized in one’s youth is a serious matter, the report says. One of the important tasks of adolescence is to develop a sense of oneself as a sexual being. Today, our culture is encouraging teenage girls to look sexy. Yet they know very little about what it means to be sexual or to have sexual desires. And they still have to learn how to make rational and responsible decisions about sexual pleasure and intimate relationships. Thwarting this healthy process, young girls are being imbued with adult sexuality, making them seem to be appropriate sex objects and suggesting they are sexually available when they are not yet sexually mature.

Who or what is responsible for this state of affairs? Why does our society tolerate it? As you might guess, the report’s answer is multi-layered. Society itself is one contributor by suggesting, through the media and other cultural messages, that the sexualization of girls is normal and good. So too, family and friends often treat girls as — and encourage them to be — sexual objects. And the girls themselves may treat and experience themselves as objects for sexual attention.

Girls develop their identities as teenagers. They model themselves on what they see older girls and young women doing. “There is no question that girls (and boys) grow up in a cultural milieu saturated with sexualizing messages,” the report notes. It stands to reason that if girls learn that sexualized behavior and appearance are approved of and rewarded by both society and their peers (whose opinions matter most to them), they are likely to internalize these standards and engage in what the report terms “self-sexualization.”

Consistent exposure to sexualized themes *over time*, the report stresses, can lead viewers to adopt a particular perspective about sex, or anything else for that matter. What young women believe about themselves and how they feel right now are significantly shaped by how they were treated and what they were exposed to when they were girls. In this connection, the role of the media is of particular concern. Children and teens spend more time with the media than on any other activity except school and sleeping. However, the media are not just a means of creating or strengthening cultural values, the report argues. They are also a primary delivery system for cultural values, not only to our culture at home, but for the U.S. culture being exported worldwide.

How did the APA come to these conclusions? Next month’s issue will cover the evidence upon which the report is based. In the issue after that, we will cover the consequences of sexualization on girls, on others, and on society at large. (Single copies of the report are available from the American Psychological Association’s Women’s Programs, 202-336-6044 or online at www.apa.org/pi/wpo/sexualization.html.)

Teens Call Hyper-Sexualized Media Image 'Normal'

BY SANDRA KOBRIN

ABRIDGED FROM WOMEN'S ENEWS, 10-29-06

Many female teens in a study conducted by the San Francisco-based Women's Foundation of California said hyper-sexualized media depictions of women are "normal." Almost all of the teens polled said such images are "no big deal," part of their daily life, and what they expect to see on TV and in magazines. While many said they believe the images are often not beneficial to women, the responses suggest that many of the young women are resigned to this being the way society is right now and that women's bodies are used to sell practically everything.

"I know in my head the images are excessive, but to me they feel normal," said a 17-year-old. "Sex is what sells, even to me. ... The sexy images do have an effect on me even though I know it shouldn't because it is based on materialism and shallowness," said an 18-year old. "My parents' generation had the '60s and '70s, women's rights and the Beatles," said a 15-year-old. "What do we have? Paris Hilton." Most of the young women noted that the images are geared toward men and may be harmful to women because they contribute to men's perceptions of women as sexualized objects.

Ariel Levy, author of "Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture" takes a dark view. "It gives them a message before they are even sexually active. They have already been taught through music videos, reality TV, MySpace, etc., that part of the job of being a female is to put on a show of wantonness...even if it has nothing to do with what you want. Young women are trying to look and behave like those images, as if they were porn stars. As if being able to incite lust is women's work. That's just your first job, inciting lust."

Last October, the Women's Foundation of California held nine focus groups, conducted an online survey of 700 females and 300 males aged 13 to 18, and included respondents from various racial and economic groups. The foundation plans to use the data for a 2007 report. While the findings have not yet been published, the teens' responses provide a tentative picture of these young women's reactions to the female images presented in the media.

Submissions to Newsletter Welcome

From NOW On reserves the right to edit submissions for brevity. Ads accepted for nominal fees.

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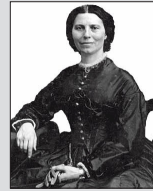
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SUBMISSION DEADLINE FOR THE MAY ISSUE:
APRIL 20, 2007

Field Trip

Clara Barton National Historic Site 5801 Oxford Road, Glen Echo, Md.



In 1861, 40-year-old Clara Barton was working at the Patent Office in Washington when wounded soldiers arrived in the city after the Baltimore Riots. She organized a relief program for the soldiers, the beginning of a lifetime of philanthropy. When she learned that many of the wounded from the Battle of First Bull Run suffered from lack of medical supplies, she began an independent organization to distribute goods. For three years she followed military operations throughout Virginia and around Charleston, South Carolina. Her work in Fredericksburg hospitals caring for casualties from the Battle of the Wilderness attracted national attention. Barton expanded her concept of soldier aid, traveling to Camp Parole, Md. to organize a program for locating men listed as missing in action. By the end of the war, Barton had performed nearly all of the services later be associated with the American Red Cross, which she founded in 1881. In 1904, she resigned as head of the organization, retiring to her home at Glen Echo that was also the first permanent Red Cross headquarters. Barton lived here from 1897 until her death on April 12, 1912.

(Source: "Historical Times Encyclopedia of the Civil War," edited by Patricia L. Faust)

Just Ask Marilyn

Marilyn vos Savant is smart. She was listed in the Guinness Book of World Records for five years under "Highest IQ." She's also wise, as was demonstrated in her Sunday magazine column in *Parade* last month. Kary Anne Tamblyn of Ellicott City, Md. who wanted to give her sons her husband's last name and her daughters her own, asked for Marilyn's opinion.

"You're in the vanguard of a social revolution that someday will better the lives of all women," replied Marilyn. Men have always had the "psychological advantage of unbroken identities," she noted. The practice of conferring the groom's surname on a bride is a subtle but profound assault on her sense of self. Even when a woman keeps her own name, the name passed on to the children is the father's. In effect, the female heritage vanishes.

"When enough women keep their surnames throughout life and pass them on to their daughters for life, we will witness an improvement in the stature and independence of women the likes of which has not been seen since women got the vote." Spoken like a true savant.



Elsewhere in the World

ABRIDGED FROM WWW.WOMENSENEWS.ORG

March 2, 2007

Mexico Replies to Juarez with Anti-Violence Law

Mexico has implemented sweeping national legislation aimed at stamping out widespread and multiplying violence against women. Some 400 women have been murdered in and around Juarez since 1993 in a grisly pattern seen as emblematic of gender-based violence across the country. Passed in February, the law calls for integrated federal, state and local programs involving the police, courts, media, and schools. It gives the Interior Minister the power to declare a state of alert on an outbreak of gender violence. It contains measures to remove an aggressor from the household in domestic violence cases, and calls for a strong network of women's shelters. The legislation also mandates gender training for police, prosecutors and other officials. In addition, state and municipal governments must develop laws and programs within six months to reduce gender-based violence and punish abusers. Radio and TV ads are now airing ads sponsored by the legislature warning that domestic abuse will be punished. Proponents of the law say it marks a watershed for Latin America in making violence against women an issue of national priority. But after more than a decade of botched criminal investigations in Juarez, victims' relatives are guarded about the law. And, some lawyers argue the law is too broad. "To tell sexist jokes in a bar is misogynous conduct that often goes unpunished. Is that a crime?" asked one.

March 3, 2007

Moroccan Women Become Spiritual Guides

Fifty Moroccan women became the first in any Muslim country to graduate as "mourishidat," or female spiritual guides. The mourishidat will lead religious discussions and advise their congregations, especially female members, but will not be allowed to lead prayers, a duty still reserved for men. The women graduated despite a March 2003 bomb attack that killed 41 people in retaliation for allowing women to study.

March 3, 2007

Domestic Violence Now a Crime in Ghana

Ghana's parliament has approved a domestic violence bill that makes abuse a legal offense. Introduced in 2002, the bill annuls a previous law that made domestic abuse "excusable offenses" against marriage partners. A similar effort to make marital rape a crime was deleted from the bill's final version, but women's rights activists hailed the bill as a step forward for Ghana, where one in three women have been victims of intimate partner violence.

March 10, 2007

UN Addresses Worldwide Violence Against Females

Three in four females in Liberia have been raped, some as young as 3. ... Of married Indian women, 37.2 percent were victims of physical or sexual abuse by their husbands. ... Sixty-two percent of women in Bangladesh experience both physical and sexual violence by intimate partners. ... About 66 percent of families in Uganda suffer from domestic violence, and women are the most frequent victims. FINALLY, last month the UN marked International Women's Day with a resolution to prevent perpetrators of violence against girls and women from escaping with impunity. "Violence against women and girls continues unabated in every continent, country and culture," said UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon. He called on diplomats, international advocates and private organizations to work for gender equality on all levels.

March 17, 2007

Abortion-Related Deaths Plummet in South Africa

Since South Africa legalized abortion in 1996, deaths from clandestine abortions have dropped 91 percent. In the decade since, nearly 530,000 women had abortions. It is estimated that 4.2 million unsafe abortions are performed across the African continent annually, resulting in about 30,000 maternal deaths each year.

March 17

Mexican Journalist Exonerated

Mexican journalist Lydia Cacho will receive the 2007 Ginetta Sagan Human Rights Award from Amnesty International. Chaco's book, "Children of Eden," reveals ties between business and government interests in forcing girls into prostitution. She was arrested in 2005 after the book's publication and sued for defamation. Charges have since been dropped.

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The Watchful Eye

BY MARY BAILEY



Still, it's a good start. Fathers have increased their hours devoted to childcare and housework, according to a University of MD study published in the book, "Changing Rhythms of American Family Life." In 1965, fathers spent 2.5 hours a week on childcare and 4.4 hours on housework. By 2003, however, they were devoting 7.0 hours a week to childcare and 9.6 hours to housework. When household and workplace hours are totaled, the

workloads of fathers and mothers have become nearly equal – 64 hours a week for him and 65 hours for her – with fathers spending a higher percentage of their time at the workplace. But gaps remain. Mothers still have more responsibility for organizing and orchestrating the family's daily life (Wash Post 3-20-07). And, of course, mothers have proportionately fewer hours to pursue their careers.

Governor Jim Doyle: an appreciation. Wisconsin's governor has directed the state health department to refuse \$600,000 in Title V federal abstinence-education funds for fiscal year 2007. Wisconsin has accepted the funds every year since 1997. But, to receive them for 2007, the state would not be able to offer complete information about contraception or sexually transmitted diseases. The current Title V requirements also prevent adults and other groups from receiving comprehensive sex education. Commented Doyle spokesperson Matt Carter, "To be teaching about contraception for married couples is certainly appropriate." Community groups in the state receive about \$3 million a year from other federal grants that are not affected by rejecting the Title V funding. (medicalnewstoday.com 3-08-07)

Young men who have never been traumatized are least likely to believe that child abuse occurs or, if it does, was harmful to the victim. In a study by psychologist Jennifer Freyd of the University of Oregon, 318 college students heard a male or female describe an abusive incident with an adult that happened when they were 9 years old. Among the students, the females were willing to believe the allegation, whether or not they had ever personally suffered a betrayal of adult trust. This was also true of all the males who had experienced such betrayal. But among the males without a personal history of abuse, there was a dramatic decline in believability. This split, according to Freyd's previous research, exists because men are rarely betrayed by adults close to them and when they are abused it is more likely not to be sexual in nature. Freyd found the young men's disbelief took two forms. One was that, like Holocaust denial, they thought such things never happen. The other, that no harm took place and that kids are sexual beings who sometimes experiment with grownups. But, noted Freyd, the study

involved 9-year-old victims. It's hard to believe that any sexual contact between an adult and a 9-year-old is not abuse and can't cause harm. The study is published in the March 2007 issue of *Psychology of Women Quarterly*. (medicalnewstoday.com, 2-20-07)

Of money and men. Now that the rich are getting richer, the ante for enrolling in a high-end dating service is rising with the times. One New York service that introduces "rich" men to "beautiful" women requires that the men under 25 earn at least \$200,000 a year, while those over 30 must make \$500,000 or more. If a man is among the idle rich, he has to have at least \$1 million in invested assets or \$4 million in a trust fund (Wall St Jnl, 3-16-07).

Renaissance women artists. The "rebirth" inherent in the word Renaissance did not extend to women. Rather, they were the property of husbands and fathers, victims of rape and beatings, and were confined to careers as wives, nuns or prostitutes. Female artists could be counted in the dozens, not in the thousands, as could male artists. Those who received training, which was rarely of the caliber of the male schools, usually got it from fathers hoping their daughter's skills would stand in for a dowry. The National Museum of Women in the Arts' current show presents 15 of these female artists in an unusual light. We are invited to see their work as providing something no man could achieve: "She *owned* the fact that she was female and could make potent art that spoke of it." Artemisia Gentileschi, who had been raped by her tutor and then tortured and publicly humiliated at his trial, is the star of the collection. Her "Judith Slaying Holofernes" graphically depicts a female hand severing a male neck. Another of her paintings presents a nude female being "ravished" by Zeus in disguise. In either case, she must have known that her art would be purchased and viewed by wealthy and powerful men. And she must have known that they would know a woman painted the pictures. She knew, they knew, she knew: such is one of the complex messages offered by the museum's "Italian Women Artists from Renaissance to Baroque." (Wash Post, 3-26-07)

How It Was APR (1950 – 1969)

22 Bernadette Devlin takes her seat in the British House of Commons and defies convention by immediately making her maiden speech in an emergency debate on the Londonderry riots, 1969.

(That's it, folks, the only entry covering women found in either The Liberated Women's Calendar or the National Women's History Project list. As one who lived through the period, I knew it was bad, but I didn't realize it was this devoid of activist women and events. Will the aftermath of the 4-year-long (and counting) War in Iraq bring another era of repression and suppression? Or has it already begun? – See Sexualization article on page 1.)

MC NOW Calendar of Events

Chapter Meetings generally take place on the first or second Monday of each month. All members welcome.

APRIL

- Thru Jul 15 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sunday. "Italian Women Artists from Renaissance to Baroque." National Museum of Women in the Arts, 1250 New York Ave, NW, DC. \$10 adults, \$8 students and seniors, free for persons 18 and under. (See Watchful Eye, p 7)
- 2 (Mon) 7-9 pm. MC NOW ALL CHAPTER DINNER MEETING. Hollywood East on the Boulevard (Asian restaurant), University Blvd, Wheaton. RSVP or directions: 301-942-0938 or lj.feldner@verizon.net.
- 3 (Tues) 7-9 pm. WACDTF Pro-Choice Clinic Escort Training. GWU Marvin Center, Room 404, 21st St. NW at H/I Sts, DC. www.wacdtf.org or www.wacdtf@wasdtf.org.
- 18 (Wed) 2 pm. MD Women's Heritage Center presents "Generations of Women Moving History Forward." MC Commission for Women, Rockville. Presentation celebrates 30th anniversary of historic Houston Women's Conference and the contemporary International Girls' Summit in 2006. Contact lshevitz@msde.state.us.
- 22 (Sun) 1:30-3:30 pm. WACDTF Pro-Choice Clinic Escort Training, Northeast Neighborhood Library, 330 7th St, NE, DC. Contact: see April 3.

- 24 (Tue) Equal Pay Unhappy Hour. McGinty's Public House, 911 Ellsworth Drive, Silver Spring. MC Business & Professional Women. Live Irish band. Private bar. Snacks. Let's network! RSVP by 4/16 to 301-251-7251 or denise.stoutamire@montgomerycollege.edu.

MAY

- 7 (Mon) 7-9 pm. MC NOW ALL CHAPTER DINNER MEETING. See April 2 for details.

JULY

- 13-15 National NOW Conference, Detroit, Mich. Information at www.now.org.



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