

We've Got Issues!

Report from the Women's Legislative Briefing

BY JEANNETTE FELDNER, CAROLYN PASTI, LIZ JOYCE, AND MARY BAILEY

"Thank you, Maryland, for giving us our first speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi," said keynoter **Donna Brazile** to the roar of the crowd. "With a woman two heartbeats away from the presidency, we're at the table." So began this year's Women's Legislative Briefing hosted by the Montgomery County Commission for Women. And what a successful briefing it was. When the number of those registered reached 800, the commission had to close the list for lack of space at the 4-H Conference Center. The event, which took place on January 28, was attended by elected officials including County Executive Isiah Leggett, County Council President Marilyn Praisner, U.S. Representatives Christopher Van Hollen, and Albert Wynn, and an uncounted but large number of state senators, delegates, and county council members.

Following the opening remarks, the session broke into several simultaneous workshops. including:

Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

Speakers at this session spoke urgently of the importance of citizen input during a legislative session. The Maryland General Assembly is now in session, and will be until April 9th. As this is the first session of a new 4-year term, it's a good time to get involved, said **Del. Kathleen Dumais**, District 15. The House of Delegates is still an "old boy network" where issues such as domestic violence are considered just "womens issue," she said. With 3,000 bills introduced in the House each year, "the squeaky wheel gets the attention." One important bill is HB 427, which extends the period for which protective orders in domestic violence cases from up to one year (plus six months for good cause) to up to two years. Dumais recommended calling the House Judiciary Committee members to let them know how you feel on this issue. (For names, see page 8.)

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Who Said That?

"The poor man who is currently our president has reached such a point of befuddlement that he thinks stem cell research is the same as taking human lives, but that 40,000 dead Iraqi citizens are progress toward democracy."

(See answer page 5)

Stop Stoning in Iran, But Don't Confuse the Issue

COMMENTARY BY SHEILA VAHDATI
REPRINTED FROM WOMEN'S ENEWS

The ritual of stoning is codified in the Islamic Penal Code of Iran. Treated like a Muslim corpse, the victim, usually a woman, is washed and wrapped in shrouds. She is then buried in a ditch up to her shoulders and then stoned by a crowd surrounding her.

The stones should be neither too small nor too large, but just the right size to guarantee a gradual and excruciating death. Although a man, too, might be sentenced to stoning for adultery, the legitimacy of polygamy and extra-marital sex (sigheh) often allows men to escape punishment.

In May 2006, a woman and a man were stoned to death in Mashhad. There are currently eight people – seven women and a man – sentenced to stoning.

In reponse to recent criticism of the practice by the European Union, Jamal Karimi-Rad, the Iranian minister of justice and spokesperson for the judiciary, publicly denied that stoning is practiced here. That has generated considerable uncertainty and concern about those sentenced to stoning. Could it mean that the government still means to kill them, just by other means? (Two women were hanged in Tehran and Ghazvin for adultery in 2006.)

Worst Form of Violence

Stoning is the worst product of discrimination and violence against women in Iran, who in many ways enjoy remarkable freedoms and rights. Nearly 80 percent of Iranian women are literate, around 95 percent of school-age girls and female teens are enrolled in school. The percentage of boys and girls enrolled in grade school is nearly even, 49 to 51. More than half of college students are female.

Although discrimination and sexual harassment do trouble the workplace, there is almost no legal barrier to women's employment in the public and private sectors. The enforced gender segregation of many aspects of society by the government has even helped women occupy positions equivalent to men in education, health and the service industry.

But while girls and women enjoy some equality in the public sphere, it ends at the household door, where gender discrimination and violence is officially sanctioned by the Family Law and supported by the penal codes. The Family Law declares the husband the head of the household with exclu-

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MC NOW Co-President's Message

BY JEANNETTE FELDNER

MC NOW Explores Possible Launch of Major Initiative Against Domestic Violence

MC NOW members have shown heightened interest in a proposal for future projects by the chapter. The proposal suggests that concentrating on one topic, domestic violence, could enable us to plan programs for which foundation grants might be sought.

For example, because some judges in Montgomery County are lax in issuing protective orders and in judging and sentencing offenders, we could make a detailed plan for a court watch in which a paid coordinator would target subjects, set up schedules, recruit volunteers, consolidate reports and issue information on findings. The latter would involve distributing these findings to county officials and the public and holding press conferences.

Another possible project would be a funded educational program (one session or more) for sitting judges, police officers, legislators and others involved in working with domestic violence victims. The materials for the program would include photos of the women's traumas, reports and therapy notes of the women, and specific expert communication from those who work most closely with victimized women.

With the cooperation of Montgomery County police, volunteers could be posted at targeted police stations on Friday and Saturday nights to assist victims in filing complaints and getting medical help if necessary. Or volunteers could be "on call" for this purpose.

Volunteers could also accompany victims to court and help them in navigating the justice system.

Information is being gathered on the incidence and severity of domestic violence in the county, on what programs are already underway and what they are doing. Fran Porter, heading up the new domestic violence committee, has met with Jeannine Carlson of the Sheriff's office, who is program director of the county's new Domestic Violence Coordinating Council. She is also in contact with the MD Network Against Domestic Violence.

Fran will report at the next meeting of Montgomery County NOW.

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SUBMISSION DEADLINE FOR THE MARCH ISSUE:
MARCH 20, 2007

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Cynthia Lifson, legislative counsel to the MD Network Against Domestic Violence, also advised attendees to contact members of the House Judiciary Committee from Montgomery County asking them to support HB 427. Sometimes a year's protection from an abuser is not enough, she said. Judges make the decisions regarding protective orders, and the ability to extend the length of protection gives them more flexibility. Another bill before the Assembly, HB 446, protects an abuse victim's right to property. If a woman is a victim of domestic violence by her husband or significant other, and he has title to the house they live in, he will be ordered to leave the house when she obtains a protective order. But, as the law now stands, the husband could obtain a wrongful detainer as a way to trump the order. HB 446 would be a technical fix to the wrongful detainer law in cases of domestic violence.

Lisae Jordan, legislative counsel to the Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault, asked attendees for their support for SB 679/HB 648 concerning rapists and paternity. At this time, in Maryland, if a woman is raped, becomes pregnant, and chooses to keep the child, the rapist has the same rights to the child as any other biological father. The rapist can challenge for custody and visitation. This bill will make it law that if there is clear and convincing evidence that rape occurred, the court will not give custody or visitation rights to the rapist. However, the court can deny custody but still obligate the rapist to pay child support.

Effective Advocacy: Understanding the Budget and Legislative Process

Jean B. Cryor, former delegate to the MD General Assembly from Potomac, explained how to get the job done when it comes to legislative action. Get involved in the budget process right at the beginning, she advised. An item must be in the Governor's budget to get any kind of support. Being in the budget doesn't mean your item will be funded, because the budget with your item included still needs to be passed; but if it isn't in the budget you can't get support for it.

Once your item is in the budget, fight to keep it from getting cut. There are two kinds of committees: money (or fiscal) and policy. Learn who is on the particular committees, which will take up your issue and visit them often. Specifically, keep going back, and at the end of the meeting set up the next appointment before leaving. Go back often with facts, presenting them specifically and unemotionally. Leave the lawmakers supporting written information each time: what your proposal will cost and why, including budgets. Join others supporting the same interests, particularly groups. Form coalitions with other groups. Make a point to policy makers that you know what you want and the consequences of their saying no.

The state senator from District 18, **Richard Madaleno**, agreed that advocates should get started early to get their item in the budget. "Start early and be bold." [The Fiscal Year starts July 1st, so it's too late for this year – Ed.] Income and sales taxes comprise 81 percent of the money collected

for the State budget. The Governor proposes the budget and the legislature has only line-item veto power. The budget usually goes to the committees handling education, transportation, prison, healthcare, and human resources issues. Maryland's tax structure hasn't changed since the late 1960s, Madaleno said. But there will be a debate on the fundamental structure of the state's taxes over the next 18 months.

Duchy Trachtenberg, newly elected member of the Montgomery County Council, is a former president of Montgomery County NOW and currently the Co-President of Maryland NOW and Mid-Atlantic Regional Director of NOW's National Board. On the council, she will chair the Management and Fiscal Policy Committee, which handles the county budget, and sit as member of the Health and Human Services Committee.

Trachtenberg's vision is to "work with what we have and try to get more from the state." The county's budget process takes place in April and May. Trachtenberg urges countians to go to the budget hearings. In terms of women's issues, she said, the focus needs to be on benefits, living wage, health care, security, and a work and family balance that includes child and elder care support. Like Cryor, Trachtenberg advises building a community around the idea you want to create or support. Go to the council as a coalition. Provide it with supporting information – what is working and what isn't. Finally, she said, learn to be pragmatic, for changes come in stages.

Economic Security for Working Women

How can policymakers help women achieve economic security? The first way is by bettering women's education, which correlates with their children's success in school, said Montgomery County Councilmember **Valerie Ervin**, a former school board member. Another way is by finding a way around the legacy of the No Child Left Behind program, whose universal mandatory assessment test determines who receives high school diplomas and fosters discouragement and dropping out. Yet another help is to promote sex education. Another strategy is to stop forcing single mothers to name the fathers of their children in order to receive public assistance – the women need help, not policies that try to force them back into relationships with men who may be abusive or uninterested in taking responsibility. Ervin also championed affordable housing, adult education, universal pre-kindergarten, and free breakfasts for all children so they can concentrate in school.

Women in a New World: Issues Affecting Immigrant Women

Both speakers at this workshop — **Ana Sol Gutierrez** and **Victor Ramirez** — immigrated from El Salvador and now sit as delegates to the Maryland General Assembly. Gutierrez, of Montgomery County's District 18, noted that the problems for immigrant women are those that keep them from fully engaging in their roles as caregivers and eco-

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Issues (continued from page 3)

nomic providers for their families. Lack of documentation is a huge barrier, Gutierrez said. Another barrier is working for the minimum wage in domestic work, day care, and McDonald's. This sets up a ripple effect in housing and health care, Gutierrez said. Life for these women is a constant struggle, especially if they have families.

The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that children up to 16 years of age should have an education, regardless of their status. But many immigrant women don't use the natural path of education to rise above poverty. Because of the controversy over sex education, "nothing is being done" for pregnant Latina high school students. "In the past, there was a special school, counseling, and day care. Many have been born here, in a world that is not promising development." Legislation is needed to require schools to report their graduation rates. This would allow us to track the students who drop out, both Black and Central American. We need to know who didn't make it through high school so that we can intervene and fund the gaps. On the college level, immigrants should qualify for in-state tuition, not the international tuition that is three times the cost.

"If you go to our schools, you're our children and should be able to afford to go to college," said **Del. Victor Ramirez** from Prince George's County. Ramirez is sponsoring H.B. 6, a bill to help immigrant students go to college. Also, he said, we should expand adult education courses to accommodate the "long lines" of immigrants trying to get in.

Ramirez noted that cultural barriers can keep immigrant women from knowing about or looking for services that are available to them. These services, however, are increasingly costly. In Prince George's County, for instance, a marriage license now costs an extra \$15. When Robert Ehrlich was governor, he cut funding for Medicaid, prenatal care, legal aid and other services, and vetoed tuition aid for immigrants. "He thought no one would notice." But voters did. Newly-elected Governor Martin O'Malley is more sympathetic to immigrants and is committed to refunding programs for those who need the help.

Final Note:

More than one speaker noted that Montgomery County is more generous than many other Maryland counties. Therefore, stressed **Sharon Grosfeld**, former senator to the Maryland General Assembly, we countians must encourage our friends in the rest of the state to push their legislators for more equitable policies.

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sive rights to divorce and child custody, and allows him to practice polygamy and commit honor killing without penalty.

A girl in Iran is considered mature for marriage at age 13 and might be forced into an arranged marriage. Once married, she has no right to divorce and is obliged by law to satisfy her husband's sexual demands. Rape is not recognized in a marital relationship. In case of divorce, the woman would have no custody rights. If a woman finds herself trapped in an unhappy marriage and commits adultery, she will be sentenced to death by stoning.

Campaign launched in October

In October, some women's rights activists and lawyers launched the Stop Stoning Forever campaign in Iran to eradicate the law of stoning. Six weeks later, the European Parliament passed a resolution on violation of human rights in Iran and demanded that stoning be abolished. The campaign so far has been successful in saving two women from stoning. The women, each a mother of two children, were defended through the appeals process by the campaign's volunteer lawyers.

While campaign activists continue their efforts to save others, they aim to revise the law. The success of this campaign depends on international support. We Iranian women are inspired by and have been learning from U.S. women's struggle for their rights. Now that it is time to put our learning into action, we ask for support and solidarity of American women and men.

But we do not want our outreach to U.S. people to be confused in any way with support for the policies of the current U.S. administration. We want our culture and people to be respected and advanced by legal means. We work in a way that seeks engagement. The Bush administration, by contrast, darkens 2007 with the threat of bombings of our nuclear facilities.

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Belva Lockwood The Woman Who Would Be President

"Before there was Hillary Clinton, Condi Rice or Nancy Pelosi – or, for that matter, Sandra Day O'Connor – there was Belva Lockwood. It was Lockwood who was the first woman to mount a full national campaign for president – and she did it in 1884. Even earlier, it was Lockwood who, denied her diploma from the National University Law School (today's George Washington University Law School) because she was a woman, got President Ulysses S. Grant to give it to her — and that was in 1873. It was Lockwood who, told by the Supreme Court that a woman could not argue before it, got Congress to pass a law undoing that prohibition – back in 1879." *(Invitation to "Belva Lockwood: The Woman Who Would Be President," sponsored by the Woodrow Wilson Center, the National Women's Law Center, the National Women's History Museum, and the GWU Women's Studies Program. See March 22 calendar entry page 12.)*

Stoning (continued from page 4)

Women Worse Off in Region

Our outreach to American people should similarly not be confused with support for the U.S. attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq. Those attacks came with a promise to bring gender equality along with democracy to those countries. Years later, women in the region find themselves in a worse situation. In Iraq, kidnappings, rapes and “honor” killings are now far more common. In Afghanistan, the Taliban is raising its ugly and violent reach for power and control.

In Iran, the U.S. has repeatedly asserted its interest in a regime change and has allocated \$70 million to support internal political opposition. This has caused the current Iranian regime to see the hand of the U.S. at work in every movement for social and legal change. Because the women’s movement is chief among those, we find ourselves undermined by an air of suspicion about our genuine aims and activities.

The U.S. military presence has empowered all fundamentalist factions both within and outside the governments in the region and fueled opposition to women’s rights. In the face of everyday violence in the region, the women’s agenda has been pushed back far behind a long list of issues such as national sovereignty, inflation and unemployment.

Nevertheless, the women’s movement is strong and is the stronghold of the social and political movement toward democracy in Iran. The current campaigns for gender equality and women’s rights, such as the Stop Stoning Forever campaign, are some of the most significant democratic initiatives in the country.

We welcome your understanding and support.

(Dr. Soheila Vahdati is an Iranian American human rights activist and coordinator of the Stop Stoning campaign based in California. She may be reached at www.meydaan.com/stoning.)

Field Trip 11701 Berwick Road, White Oak

The next time you’re driving around, make a trip past the house at 11701 Berwick Road in White Oak. Called “Quaint Acres,” it was the home of scientist Rachel Carson. Often considered the founder of the environmental movement, Carson published her controversial bestseller *Silent Spring* in 1962. “Her condemnation of the pesticide industry led to wide-scale growth in environmental consciousness. She showed that DDT and other chemicals used to enhance agricultural productivity were poisoning our lakes, rivers, oceans, and as a result, ourselves. Through her work, Carson enhanced scientific respectability for the environmental movement and prompted the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency.” Rachel Carson died at Quaint Acres two years after publication of her earth-shaking book. The house is privately owned.

(Source: Maryland Women’s Heritage Trail resource kit, MD Commission for Women)

Answer to Who Said That, page 1 Molly Ivins The One Who Named George W. Bush “Shrub” August 30, 1944 to January 31, 2007

When Texas columnist Molly Ivins died of a cancer-related illness in January, the press around the country poured out its grief. It also gave us a stream of funny, insightful, and serious Ivins quotes, some of which grace this page:

“... Our very own dreaded [Texas] Legislature is almost upon us. January 9, and they’ll all be here, leaving many a village without its idiot.”

“Good thing we’ve still got politics in Texas – finest form of free entertainment ever invented.”

“The Founders were right all along, but the results are a lot funnier than they intended.”

“It’s hard to argue against cynics – they always sound smarter than optimists because they have so much evidence on their side.”

“Satire is traditionally the weapon of the powerless against the powerful. I only aim at the powerful. When satire is aimed at the powerless, it is not only cruel – it’s vulgar.”

“Writing a humor column for Ms. Magazine always sounded like the punch line of a joke to me. That estimable publication tends toward the sober.... Still, being a female is often a comical proposition in this world, and being a Texas feminist is a particularly oxymoronic vocation.”

“Politics is not a picture on a wall or a television sitcom that you can decide you don’t much care for.”

“The thing about democracy, beloveds, is that it is not neat, orderly, or quiet. It requires a certain relish for confusion.”

Molly Ivins’s last two columns were “cries from the heart” about stopping the madness in Iraq. She was so weak, her editor said, that she could not write them down, but had to dictate them to someone else. The end of her last column said:

“Stand Up Against the Surge. We are the people who run this country. We are the deciders. And every single day, every single one of us needs to step outside and take some action to help stop the war. Raise hell. Think of something to make the ridiculous look ridiculous. Make our troops know that we’re for them and trying to get them out of there. Hit the streets to protest Bush’s proposed surge. If you can, go to the peace march in Washington on Jan. 27. We need people in the streets, banging pots and pans and demanding, ‘Stop it now.’ “

Voice of the Victim

A postcard on the plight and rights of victims of human trafficking (forced prostitution and forced labor) is being distributed throughout Montgomery County as part of a Voice of the Victim campaign. The postcard summarily features the rights and benefits of these victims and where services supporting their rights can be found in Montgomery County.

Of the estimated 20,000 victims, mainly women and children, trafficked to the U.S. each year, many end up in high immigration concentration areas such as our county. Victims usually mesh in seamlessly with the immigrant population and are not visible. They are faced with a raging storm of physical and mental abuse by their traffickers and remain painfully voiceless. Their sole saving grace is the US Trafficking Law — The Trafficking and Violence Protection Act, 2000 and 2005 — which provides benefits and legal rights for these victims, and maximum punishment for their perpetrators.

Voice of the Victim is asking the media and all citizens and residents to join it in combating this crime by keeping the rights and benefits of the Trafficking Law visible through sharing the information and reporting the crime to law enforcement as soon as identified.

In order to reach as many people as possible, the postcard has been translated into Spanish, French, Arabic, Swahili, Hindi and Mandarin Chinese. It will be available at all police stations, all health and human services offices and community centers, as well as at Migrant and Refugee Cultural Support, Inc. (MIRECS) and CASA of Maryland. The program will send these postcards to all state and federal legislators. It will also send them to organizations and women's movements in Africa, Asia, South America, Russia and Eastern Europe.

It is hoped that the above groups can use the cards to influence their governments to 1) create safe havens for victims by creating economic opportunity for them, 2) pass laws protecting victims of slavery, and 3) increase penalties of traffickers. The campaign also urges residents of Montgomery County to send the postcards to people they know in the "sending countries" of human trafficking victims.

Voice of the Victim is a joint effort of Migrant and Refugee Cultural Support, Inc. and CASA of Maryland. The campaign is supported by all the victims of crime community agencies in Montgomery County and is funded by the Montgomery County Government. The program's convener is Jeredine Williams, executive director of MIRECS. She may be contacted at 301-495-3733 or mirecs@aol.com.

Maryland Bills of Special Interest to Women — and The MC Legislators Who Sponsored Them

The deadlines for introducing bills in the Maryland Senate and House of Delegates have passed. Bills introduced after the deadlines go to each chamber's Rules Committees and must be voted out to a standing committee in order to move through the process. March 5 is the final date for introducing bills without suspension of the rules, which require a 2/3 vote of the chamber in question.

During the legislative session, bills are referred to committees. The committees hold public hearings on legislation and examine each item thoroughly before recommending to the General Assembly the action it should take on each bill. A schedule of upcoming hearings is released weekly, which you can access at www.mlis.state.md.us and then click on Bill Information and Status.

The following is a list of bills of special interest to women.

It is as complete as we could make it. The list describes each bill and includes the names of the Montgomery County legislators who have sponsored the bill to date (there may be more). An easy way to learn more about your representatives is to first identify them from the Directory of Montgomery County Legislators on page 8 and then check below to see which bills they have sponsored. Why not urge them to support certain bills?

SB 59: The Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2007. Requires the Stem Cell Research Commission to place a priority on funding embryonic stem cell research. *MC Sponsor: Senator Lenett.*

SB 61: re Sexual Misconduct Involving a Minor. Authorizes a court to admit evidence of a defendant's separate act of sexual conduct involving a minor in a trial for a crime involving a sexual offense to a minor. Requires the State's Attorney to disclose to the defendant the State's intent to offer the evidence before the trial unless the court allows a later disclosure for good cause, etc. *MC Sponsor: Senator Forehand.*

SB 149/HB 132: Maryland Health Care Access Act of 2007. Alters specified eligibility requirements for participation in the MD Children's Health Program, etc. *MC Sponsors: Senator Garagiola. Delegates Hucker, Kaiser.*

SB 170/HB 213: Child Sexual Abuse and Crimes of Violence. This bill would designate the crime of violence of "sexual abuse of a minor" as a "crime of violence" when the child-victim is under 13 and the perpetrator is over 18. This would require these offenders to serve half of their sentence before being eligible for parole (current law requires only one-third of the sentence to be served), require minimum sentences for repeat offenders, and create parity between sexual abuse of a minor and other serious crimes. *MC Sponsors: Senators: none. Delegates Dumais, Lawton, Lee, Montgomery, Waldstreicher.*

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Bills (continued from page 6)

SB 199/HB 427: Duration of Protective Orders. Increases the duration of protective orders in domestic violence cases from 12 to 24 months. The current time period of one year plus a possible extension of six months is too short a time for some victims to establish a new independent life. *MC Sponsors: Senator Forehand. Delegates Dumais, Ali, Barkley, Barve, Bronrott, Feldman, Gilchrist, Goldwater, Gutierrez, Heller, Hixson, Hucker, Kaiser, N. King, Lawton, Lee, Manno, Mizeur, Montgomery, Rice, Taylor, Waldstreicher.*

SB 207/HB 288: Healthy Maryland Initiative. Establishes the Healthy Maryland Initiative Fund. Requires specified appropriations from the Fund for specified health care purposes. Alters the distribution of tobacco tax venues. Increases the tobacco tax rate on tobacco products. Expands eligibility under the MD Medical Assistance Program to specified parents with incomes below specified level. Establishes a Small Business Health Care Incentive Program, etc. *MC Sponsors: Senators Forehand, Frosh, Garagiola, Lenett, Madaleno and Raskin. Delegates Hixson, Ali, Bronrott, Dumais, Feldman, Goldwater, Gutierrez, Heller, Hucker, N. King, Lawton, Lee, Manno, Mizeur, Montgomery, Rice, Simmons and Taylor.*

SB 260/HB 212: Flexible Leave Act. Requires employers who already grant sick leave to allow employees to use their sick days to care for the medical needs of their sick children, aging parents, or other family members needing their care. *MC Sponsors: Senators Garagiola, Madaleno. Delegates Dumais, Feldman, Taylor.*

SB 392: re Election Law. Requires specific voting systems to produce a paper record of a voter's ballot choices and provide the voter the opportunity to inspect the paper record before casting a final vote. Requires the paper records to be preserved in a specified manner, etc. *MC Sponsors: Senators Forehand, Frosh, Garagiola, Hogan, Lenett, Madaleno, Raskin.*

SB 505/HB 415: re Family Law Protective Orders. Changes the standard of proof in protective order proceedings from the current standard of "clear and convincing" to a revised standard of "preponderance of the evidence." This distinguishes the different remedies available to victims of domestic violence. The victim choosing the criminal justice system uses the "clear and convincing" standard to prove abuse "beyond a reasonable doubt." But many domestic violence victims request protection under civil, not criminal, orders. The standard of proof using the civil justice system is "preponderance of the evidence." *MC Sponsors: Senator Forehand. Delegates Dumais, Ali, Barkley, Barve, Bronrott, Feldman, Gilchrist, Goldwater, Gutierrez, Heller, Hixson, Hucker, Kaiser, N. King, Lawton, Lee, Manno, Montgomery, Rice, Taylor, Waldstreicher.*

SB 606/HB 876: Human Trafficking and Involuntary Servitude. A bill to criminalize human trafficking under Md. Law and hold businesses accountable if they profit from

human trafficking. This bill explicitly addresses trafficking for purposes of prostitution and sexual exploitation of trafficked children. *MC Sponsors: Senators Forehand, Kramer, Raskin. Delegates Lawton, Dumais, Ali, Barkley, Bronrott, Gilchrist, Gutierrez, Hixson, Hucker, Kaiser, N. King, Lee, Manno, Mizeur, Montgomery, Simmons, Waldstreicher.*

SB 607/HB 446: re Protective Orders and Wrongful Detainer. This bill clarifies a loophole in the law to allow victims to remain in their home for the duration of the protective order even if they are not the rightful owner of the property. Currently, when a court orders an abuser to vacate the home, the abuser can file for a wrongful detainer, arguing that he/she is the holder of legal title to the property. He/she can also argue that the wrongful detainer statute does not make an exception for a court's domestic violence protective orders. HB 446 remedies this by adding that, for the duration of a civil order of protection, a wrongful detainer action is not permitted. This relief remains discretionary with the court, based on listed factors. *MC Sponsors: Senator Forehand. Delegate Dumais.*

SB 679/HB 648: re Paternity and Rapists. Current law gives rapists who cause a child to be conceived the same rights as other biological parents. Additionally, if a rapist-parent cannot be located, current law requires that the victim's name be published in the newspaper. This bill would limit the parental rights of rapists when the child was conceived through rape and to increase protections for rape survivors who have a child conceived through rape. *MC Sponsors: Senators Raskin, Lenett, Madaleno. Delegates Dumais, Ali, Bronrott, Feldman, Gilchrist, Gutierrez, Hucker, Kaiser, N. King, Kramer, Lawton, Lee, Manno, Mizeur, Montgomery, Rice, Simmons.*

HB 400: Maryland Universal Health Care Plan. Establishes the MD Universal Health Care Plan and its Board of Governors' duties and powers. Authorizes the Board to adopt specific regulations, etc. *MC Sponsors: Delegates Montgomery, Ali, Barkley, Goldwater, Gutierrez, Hucker, Kaiser, Lawton, Lee, Manno, Rice, Taylor, Waldstreicher.*

HB 430: Living Wage Law. Requires specified contractors and subcontractors to pay specified employees a minimum wage under specified State procurement contracts, etc. *MC Sponsors: Delegates Hucker, Ali, Barkley, Barve, Bronrott, Dumais, Feldman, Gilchrist, Gutierrez, Heller, Hixson, Kaiser, N. King, Lawton, Lee, Manno, Mizeur, Montgomery, Rice, Simmons, Waldstreicher.*

HB 754: Children and Working Families Health Care Act of 2007. Expands health care access to the State's uninsured. *MC Sponsors: Delegates Ali, Barkley, Barve, Bronrott, Dumais, Feldman, Gilchrist, Goldwater, Gutierrez, Heller, Hixson, Hucker, Kaiser, N. King, Kramer, Lawton, Manno, Mizeur, Montgomery, Rice, Simmons, Taylor, Waldstreicher.*

Directory of Montgomery County Legislators in Annapolis

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Addresses:

Senators. “J” after a room number indicates James Senate Office Building, 110 College Ave., Annapolis, MD 21401. “M” after a room number indicates Miller Senate Office Building, 11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401.

Delegates: Lowe House Office Building, 84 College Avenue, Annapolis, MD 21401.

Phone Numbers.

To legislators from area code 301, dial 858 plus extension.

For information on bills, legislators, synopses, budget, etc., dial 310-970-5200 or visit <http://mlis.state.md.us>

<u>District 14</u>	<u>Committee</u>	<u>Room</u>	<u>Phone Ext.</u>
Sen. Rona E. Kramer	Budget & Taxation	214J	3625
Del. Anne R. Kaiser	Ways & Means	405	3036
Del. Karen S. Montgomery	Health & Government Operations	222	3110
Del. Herman L. Taylor, Jr.	Economic Matters	224	3383
<u>District 15</u>			
Sen. Robert J. Garagiola	Finance	104J	3169
Del. Kathleen M. Dumais	Judiciary	350	3052
Del. Brian J. Feldman	Economic Matters	223	3186
Del. Craig L. Rice	Ways & Means	223	3186
<u>District 16</u>			
Sen. Brian E. Frosh	Judicial Proceedings, Chair	2EM	3124
Del. William A. Bronrott	Appropriations	411	3642
Del. Marilyn R. Goldwater	Health & Government, Vice Chair	241	3454
Del. Susan C. Lee	Judiciary	414	3649
<u>District 17</u>			
Sen. Jennie M. Forehand	Judicial Proceedings	223J	3134
Del. Kumar P. Barve	Ways & Means	361	3464
Del. James Gilchrist	Ways & Means	219	3744
Del. Luiz R. S. Simmons	Judiciary	225	3037
<u>District 18</u>			
Sen. Richard S. Madaleno, Jr.	Budget & Taxation	203J	3137
Del. Ana Sol Gutierrez	Appropriations	220	3181
Del. Jane Lawton	Environmental Matters	222	3638
Del. Jeffrey D. Waldstreicher	Judiciary	219	3130
<u>District 19</u>			
Sen. Mike Lennett	Education, Health & Environment	202J	3151
Del. Henry B. Heller	Appropriations	429	3528
Del. Benjamin F. Kramer	Judiciary	226	3485
Del. Roger Manno	Economic Matters	226	3492
<u>District 20</u>			
Sen. Jamie Raskin	Judicial Proceedings	122J	3634
Del. Sheila E. Hixson	Ways & Means, Chair	131	3469
Del. Tom Hucker	Environmental Matters	220	3474
Del. Heather R. Mizeur	Health & Government Operations	219	3493
<u>District 39</u>			
Sen. Patrick J. Hogan	Budget & Taxation, Vice Chair	3WM	3686
Del. Saqib Ali	Environmental Matters	224	3021
Del. Charles E. Barkley	Appropriations	413	3001
Del. Nancy J. King	Ways & Means	225	3037

Toward Better Understanding Spirituality and Spiritual Feminists

BY CAROLE A. RAYBURN
CHAIR, MC NOW COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND SPIRITUALITY

Much blame for violence and war has been laid at the feet of religious institutions and particularly at patriarchal ecclesia. Without doubt, historically such patriarchy has severely discriminated against female members of many religious establishments. Religion basically concerns doctrines and tenets of belief and usually requires adherents of the faith community to follow these creeds. When liberal or feminist female members have not adhered to the most conservative, rigid rules of the establishment, they were often seen as the out-group, the unacceptable or non-kosher ones. Ironically, at least 60 percent of congregants are female.

When religions veer most from their most worthy courses, it is often because they have lost much of the heart of all esteemed human enterprises – the spiritual core for which many such groups originated. Although religion in its best expression of human concern may and even should include spirituality at its very center, religion and spirituality are separate entities and should not be confused nor perceived as identical or equal.

Unfortunate misunderstanding and confounding may result if religion is seen as the only domain of spiritual expression. Not only theists, but atheists, agnostics, Buddhists, Hindus, Sufis, and many others may be quite spiritual in their outlook and commitment. Spirituality is not a matter of doctrinal or creedal expression but of caring for others (people, animals, the environment, the universe); seeking goodness and truth; seeking peace and forgiveness; and having a sense of transcendence of there being something (Creator, Guru, Nature, Animal Spirit, Teacher, etc.) beyond the self that may influence oneself.

The gender ego trip found in many extreme patriarchal settings in which males place their gender above the female gender is not in any way a spiritual happening. Spirituality, in fact, would from the outset place a very high value on gender equality. Spirituality is inclusive, not exclusive or excluding.

Understanding spirituality and spiritual feminists depends on separating the concepts of religion/religiousness and spirituality. This is NOT a matter of semantics but of conceptual perception and cognition. Because of such misunderstanding by others, including other feminists, spiritual feminists have often been seen as objects of distrust and naivete. The last MC NOW newsletter referred to “spiritual violence by men.” This is deeply erroneous. Perhaps the writer meant to use the more appropriate allusion to very patriarchal religion.

Historically, the most patriarchal religion has at times misconstrued and misdirected gender violence, prejudice, and/or giving female persons subservient, inferior, even seriously demeaning images and positions in the ecclesiastical community. In any event, spiritual feminists will fight to the depths of their being any discrimination against them by

males and/or females because of any misunderstanding, contamination, or lack of appreciation of the conceptual difference between religion and spirituality. To allow such prejudice would seriously threaten spiritual feminists with ghettoizing them and would, in effect, cut them off from being dedicated and strong workers in the feminist movement that they desire to be.

Many of us were sent by the National Organization for Women (Central Office) to Utah in the 1980s to fight for the cause and passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. We stayed in Utah and fought the good fight with the largely Mormon opponents of the ERA. Our foremothers, Alice Paul, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Sojourner Truth, as well as Sonia Johnson in our times who fought her Mormon Church officials in support of the Equal Rights Amendment and was excommunicated for this battle, would certainly identify themselves as spiritual feminists. All of these women would defy anyone who denied their identity as spiritual women. Hopefully, understanding and appreciation of spiritual feminists will increase significantly in the near future and in feminist organizations, including NOW.

Remembrances

Dolly Packard – Dolly was one of the young women fired from their jobs to make room for men returning from World War II. She saw this as sexism, and it changed her life. Dolly first joined the Women's Party to work for the Equal Rights Amendment. Then, as a NOW member, Dolly successfully lobbied the Maryland legislature for the ERA. She shackled herself to the White House fence to promote the national ERA, and her picture was published across the country. Dolly took battered and abused women into her home, was a founding member of the Women's Political Caucus, and worked on a report that led to the creation of the Commission for Women. *Maryland NOW is organizing a Dolly Packard Memorial College Scholarship for young Prince George's County feminists. Send check or money order designated for the scholarship to: MD NOW, PO Box 7216, Silver Spring, MD 20907.*

Barbara Fosberg – Named a Working Woman of the Year in 2001 by ABC Channel 7, Barbara earned her law degree from American University at age 60. While in school, she founded OWLS (Older Washington Law Students) and was honored on the university's Founder's Day. Upon graduating, Barbara became *guardian ad litem* (legal guardian) for abused or neglected inner city children. MC NOW member Fosberg was active in Democratic Party politics, the handgun control organization CeaseFire, and several activist committees at the River Road Unitarian Church.



Elsewhere in the World

ABRIDGED FROM WWW.WOMENSENEWS.ORG

January 23, 2007 Women on Waves Seeks European Ruling

Women on Waves, a Dutch organization that operates an abortion clinic on a ship, has a case on backlog before the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France. The ship – the *Borndiep* – travels to Portugal, Ireland and Poland, picking up women who seek abortions and other reproductive health services while in harbor and then sailing into international waters to perform the procedure. According to Dutch law, Dutch ships are only subject to Dutch law, which doesn't require a license to abort pregnancies of less than 6.5 weeks. In August 2004, Women on Waves set sail for Portugal, but Portugal sent two warships to block its path. The ship was forced to anchor offshore while protracted negotiations were held between the Dutch and Portuguese governments. The Dutch foreign minister requested that Portugal let the ship through. But the diplomatic route failed, and after two weeks Women on Waves turned back, never having entered Portuguese waters. The organization has been pressing the case in various Portuguese courts, but the courts have dismissed the case because the ship had left their jurisdiction. Only about 10 percent of cases put forward to the European Court of Human Rights receive a hearing because most fail to exhaust all lower courts in their nation of origin.

February 1, 2007 Missing Coptic Women May Send Distress Signals

In the past few years, young women from the minority Coptic community in Egypt have left home under mysterious circumstances. Once returned to their families, the women's absences often remain unexplained. Some families have alleged that the women were kidnapped by Muslim men and forced to undergo conversion to Islam. But women's rights advocates argue that these are not kidnappings, but more often cries for help by young women in a conservative Coptic community that practices arranged marriages and denies access to divorce. Another factor spurring young Coptic women to flee their families is the move in the 1990s by Coptic Christian churches to forbid conversion to another

Christian sect in which they might have found more freedom. "So they turn to Islam, not because of a spiritual belief in the religion but because it gives them more of an opportunity to choose their life's path," said Nahed Abul Komsan, head of the Cairo-based Egyptian Center for Women's Rights. The issue has spurred a public discussion of inequities for religious minorities in Egypt.

February 11, 2007 Cheers # 1: Women on Emirate Council

Eight Emirati women were appointed to the 40-member Federal Council of United Arab Emirates, the country's main legislative body. That brings the total number of female members on the council to nine. Amal Abdullah al-Kubaissi from Abu Dhabi was the only woman elected in December, when national elections were held for the first time. By law, half the council is appointed and half is elected.

February 11, 2007 Cheers # 2: Saudi Women Petition King Abdullah

A group of Saudi women has petitioned King Abdullah to annul a forced divorce. The case concerns the decision by the country's high court to separate a couple against their will after three years of marriage, because of their different tribal backgrounds. "Fatima" – whose identity is concealed – is in jail with her youngest child for refusing to return to her parental family after the court order. In a related development, a Saudi lawmaker has proposed a civil law consistent with religious law that allows Saudi women to retain half of their husbands' fortune in case of divorce.

February 11, 2007 Cheers # 3: Egyptian Fatwa Okays Women as National Leaders

Egypt's grand mufti, Dr. Ali Gomaa, has issued a fatwa – or religious order – saying women may serve as heads of states. Gomaa said that women are not allowed to be caliphs – a religious position that largely disappeared after the Ottoman period – but that women are eligible to lead nations.

February 16, 2007 Chile Kick-Starts Debate on Gender Quotas

Chile may be notable for having a female president, but the country ranks 14th out of 18 Latin American countries in female representation. When Michele Bachelet took power in Chile, she named women to half the positions in her cabinet. Now congressional hearings on a bill requiring gender quotas for political parties' slate of candidates are stirring debate. In January the Chamber of Deputies' Commission on the Family began the hearings on a bill the ruling left-wing coalition revived after four years of inaction. The commission will continue to debate the bill after it returns from summer recess in March. The bill requires political parties to ensure that at least 40 percent of their candidates – from federal to municipal level – are female. Half of the countries in Latin America have quota laws, most targeting 30 percent female representation.



The Watchful Eye

BY MARY BAILEY



Six Montgomery County schools will field-test the sex education lessons the county school board finally approved in January. If the pilot program proceeds as planned, it will be the first time sexual orientation is directly addressed in 8th and 10th grade health classes (with parental permission). Currently, teachers are only allowed to discuss the subject in answer to student questions. The lessons also teach tolerance, define harassment and discrimination, and explain how to apply a

condom. Immediately upon Superintendent Jerry D. Weast's appointments, three groups petitioned the state Board of Education to reverse the school board and stop the program. The groups contend that the lessons violate students' rights to speech and religious exercise by portraying homosexuality as "natural and morally correct." Maryland education officials are reviewing whether the state school board has jurisdiction over the matter. Meanwhile, Weast will present the results of the field test this spring, giving the school system time to refine the lessons before countywide implementation next fall. The six schools chosen, based on statements of interest from their principals, are: Argyle Middle School in Silver Spring, Julius West Middle School in Rockville, Westland Middle in Bethesda, Bethesda-Chevy Chase High, Sherwood High in Sandy Spring, and Watkins Mill High in Gaithersburg. (Wash Post 2-9-07)

Of money and men. In contemplating the marriage between 89-year-old oil billionaire J. Howard Marshall II and 26-year-old Playmate Anna Nicole Smith, now both dead, Washington Post writer Philip Kennicott mused, "For centuries, there have been men who have wondered why women really love them. That the real sexual allure of men may not be their good looks, their masculinity or their charm, but rather their power and position, can make men wonder whether they are loved for themselves or for something external and unrelated." (Philip Kennicott, Wash Post writer, 2-9-07)

Lesson in semantics. When President Bush announced his plan to send 20,000 more troops to Iraq, he called the buildup a "surge." But in reporting the news, the Washington Post and the New York Times didn't use Bush's term — nor does the Democratic leadership. Instead, they employ the more accurate term, *escalation*. The word "surge" indicates a short-term increase in force, like a wave that naturally returns to its previous level. But Bush plans to keep the troops in Iraq 18 months or more. "In short," says George Lakoff, founder of the Rockbridge Institute, "the very use of the word 'surge' was a lie." On the other hand, the word "escalation" also has a charged meaning, but this time its echoes of Vietnam express the truth about "the inevitable negative effect" of Bush's war policy. (www.rockbridgeinstitute.org, 2-16-07)

Games change brains. Playing violent games has a measurable effect on adolescent brains, according to a study conducted by Vincent P. Matthews, professor of radiology at the Indiana University School of Medicine. Using MRI technology, Matthews had 44 teenagers between 13 and 17 play either a game featuring military combat or an equally exciting but non-violent car-racing

game. Measuring changes in brain activity, Matthews found that those who played the military games had increased activity in the region (the amygdala) associated with emotional arousal and less activity in the region (prefrontal lobes) responsible for decision-making, self-control and focus. Meanwhile, the teens who played the exciting but non-violent car-racing games showed the opposite effect (www.healthology.com, 12-13-06). Earlier studies have shown a correlation between exposure to media violence and brain function in adolescents, but this is the first to attribute the difference to the type of game played. (www.medicalnewstoday 12-5-06)

Can't resist another Ivins quote. "Let me say for the umpteenth time, George W. is not a stupid man. The IQ of his gut, however, is open to debate. In Texas, his gut led him to believe the death penalty has a deterrent effect, even though he acknowledged there was no evidence to support his gut's feeling. When his gut, or something, causes him to announce that he does not believe in global warming — as though it were a theological proposition — we once again find his gut ruling that evidence is irrelevant. In my opinion, Bush's gut should not be entrusted with making peace in the Middle East."

Chimps make weapons for hunting. This was observed for the first time by Jill Pruetz and Paco Bertolani of the University of Cambridge while studying chimps in Senegal. Thus dies the canard of "man the tool maker" — literally. It turned out that the main makers and users of the weapons were the female chimps, who "tend to be the innovators and creative problem solvers in primate culture." The females tore off branches, stripped them of their bark, and sharpened one end to fashion a spear. They then repeatedly jabbed the spear into bush baby hollows until they killed their prey. Commenting on the observation, anthropologist Adrienne Zihlman of the University of California/Santa Cruz said the research adds to other evidence that female chimps are more likely than males to use tools, are better at it, and are more likely to pass their knowledge on to others. Why the females? "They are pregnant or lactating or carrying a kid for most of their life," Zihlman said. "And they're supposed to be running around in the trees chasing prey?" (Wash Post 2-23-07)

How It Was MAR (1950 – 1969)

- 13 Marguerite Perey, who discovered the 87th element, francium, becomes the first woman elected to the French Academy of Sciences, 1962.
- 20 Journalist Dee Wedemeyer is elected the first woman in the Albany (NY) Legislative Correspondents' Association, 1967.
- 23 Seven Kikuyu students resume their classes in Nyeri, Kenya, after becoming the first African women to climb Mt. Kenya, Africa's second highest mountain, 1965.

(Selections from The Liberated Woman's Appointment Calendar, 1972-74. The above shows how constraining the two decades after World War II were for women. Those were the years when McCall's magazine, TV stations, and the press in general led a ferocious back-to-the-home campaign against women. Just ask women you know who had held wartime jobs or were growing up at the time. They'll tell you.)

MC NOW Calendar of Events

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

MARCH: WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

- 5 (Mon) 7-9 pm. MC NOW ALL CHAPTER DINNER MEETING. Hollywood East restaurant (Asian), University Blvd, Wheaton. RSVP and directions: lj.feldner@verizon.net or 301-942-0938. SEE PRESIDENT'S LETTER PAGE 2 FOR TOPIC.
- 8 (Thu) International Women's Day
- 8 (Thu) 6:30 pm. "Women and Books: A Powerful Collaboration," Stony Run Friends Meeting, 5116 N. Charles, Baltimore. Review of the books that gave us inspiration to pursue feminism, led by feminist author Lynn Buck. Sponsored by Baltimore NOW. 410-668-4399 or info@baltimorenow.org.
- 8-9 (Thu-Fri) Intersectional Models of Women's Health: Uniting Theory and Practice Conference. Institute for Teaching and Research on Women (TROW). Towson University campus. Discussion of how the intersections of racism, sexism, heterosexism and class affect women's health. www.towson.edu/trow.
- 10 (Sat) National Appreciation Day for Abortion Providers. The 14th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. David Gunn, the first provider murdered by an anti-abortion extremist.
- 11 (Sun) 3-5 pm. Montgomery Women Signature Event and Tea, Strathmore Music Center, 10701 Rockville Pike. Rising Star Award to be presented to a county woman who "promotes our emphasis in the community and in the political sphere." Speakers include MD Secretary of State Mary Kane, MD State Treasurer Nancy Kopp, and keynoter Catherine Meloy. \$25 or free to MW members. RSVP 301-585-5593 or merlejsteiner@aol.com.
- 15 (Thu) 7-9 pm. Pro-Choice Clinic Escort Training, Washington Area Clinic Defense Task Force. Place to be announced. www.wacdtf.org.
- 15 (Thu) Application deadline for National NOW's Summer Internship Program. Areas cover government relations/public policy, field organizing, global feminism & diversity, political action committees, communications, and direct marketing/fundraising. www.now.org/organization/interap.html.
- 22 (Thu) 3-5 pm. Biographer Jill Norgren on "Belva Lockwood: The Woman Who Would Be President." Woodrow Wilson Center, 1300 Pa. Ave. NW, DC, Conference Room, 5th Floor. RSVP www.wilsoncenter.org. Picture ID required. See also page 4.
- 31 (Sat) Montgomery County Women's Fair, Doubletree Hotel & Executive Meeting Center, 1750 Rockville Pike. All-day workshops and exhibits. Keynote speaker Candace B. Pert: author and international speaker on HIV/AIDS, Alzheimer's, and brain research. www.mcwomensfair.org or 301-649-5551.

APRIL

- 2 (Mon) 7-9 pm. MC NOW ALL CHAPTER DINNER MEETING. See March 5 for details.
- 24 (Tues) 5-8 pm. "Unhappy Hour on Equal Pay Day." McGinty's Public House, 911 Ellsworth Drive, downtown Silver Spring. Sponsored by the Business & Professional Women. "Let's network!" Music, light refreshments, and talk. RSVP by 4/16 to 301-251-7251 or denisestoutamire@montgomerycollege.edu.

JULY

- 13-15 NATIONAL NOW CONFERENCE 2007, Detroit, Mich. To register for the conference, go to www.now.org/organization/conference/2007. To reserve your room at the Hyatt Regency, call 800-233-1234. For special room rate, ask for the NOW conference room block or visit <http://dearborn.hyatt.com/hyatt/hotels/index.jsp>. Check www.now.org for additional conference information.



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