

## The White House Council on Women and Girls: Empowering Women

Our speakers in November will be **Christina (Tina) Tchen**, Executive Director of The White House Council on Women and Girls, created by President Obama in March, and **Terry O'Neill** President of NOW. If you want to know what the Council is doing and what they plan to do, be sure to attend our November meeting. Tchen will discuss the focus of the White House Council on Women and Girls, which is to renew and expand the federal government's attention to gender equality. To learn about the Council's membership and activities, visit its website: [whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/cwg](http://whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/cwg).

Tchen is not only the Council's Executive Director, she also serves as the Director of the White House Office of Public Engagement. A well-known Chicago lawyer, Tchen was a NOW ERA Campaign leader in Illinois and a supporter of women's rights. O'Neill is also President of the NOW Foundation and Chair of the NOW Political Action Committees. In addition, she is a professor, feminist attorney and activist for social justice. She will share information on previous administration efforts to maximize attention to women's issues in federal agencies. Attendees at this meeting will be welcome to ask questions and provide comments. Questions may be submitted in advance to Sue Klein, VP for Programs, at [sklein@feminist.org](mailto:sklein@feminist.org).

**Date/Time:** **Tuesday, November 24, 2009 / 12 noon sharp to 1:30 pm.**

Open to the public, no reservation necessary.

**Place:** **American Council on Education,  
One Dupont Circle, 8th Floor Kellogg Room**

Bring brown bag lunch, soft drinks available from a machine.

### IMPORTANT NOTICE

A photo ID must be shown at the security desk of One Dupont Circle.

Please allow time to go through the sign-in system.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, January 26, 2010

## Women in Prison: A Challenge for Equity and Justice

CI's October meeting presented the topic of women in prisons chosen in honor of our long-time member, the late Clara Schiffer. Clara's daughter, Lois, was present as we fulfilled Clara's request that women learn more about this issue. Our panel **Dr. Fran Buntman**, Assistant Professor of [Sociology at George Washington University](#); **Deborah Golden**, Staff Attorney at DC Prisoner's Project, [Washington Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs](#); and **Dr. Nancy La Vigne**, Director of the [Justice Policy Center at the Urban Institute](#), enlightened us on the status of women in prison.

**Dr. Fran Buntman** described key criminal justice issues, the type of population entering, their treatment in prison and reentry results.

She debunked the myth of one-size-fits all policies. She stated, "When feminists come to the table, we are often looking for the same deal as men. This should not be the way we look at women in the criminal justice system. There are fundamental problems in the criminal justice system that hurt everyone," disproportionately women. For example, especially in drug cases, women are less likely than men to know the big drug dealers so they can't provide their names to get a lighter sentence.

Even though women only make up approximately ten percent of our country's inmates, America still holds the largest number of incarcerated women than any other country. Recently there has been a disproportionate increase in women inmates, with skyrocketing populations of poorer African American and Hispanic women. Sex, gender, race and class bias are common in our criminal justice system.



*Fran Buntman*



*Deborah Golden*



*Nancy La Vigne*

Buntman said that while some women who are found guilty are actually innocent, most are guilty of the crime for which they are charged. She feels we might be much better off as a society if we consider some of the behaviors we call crime as issues or problems of public health, mental health, or poverty. She believes incarceration can be reduced if we have less criminalization overall and more constructive handling of some of the criminal situations (e.g. more prevention, more rehabilitation during and after sentences).

Contrary to most international standards, U.S. male correctional officers can and do guard females due to nondiscrimination provisions of Title VII. A resulting problem of this U.S. approach has been abusive (as well as occasional consensual) sexual relationships, including correctional officer rape of female inmates. Courts tend to accept unequal and lesser provision of services in prison for women as "reasonable" given the disparities in numbers and related issues like budget constraints.

There are also equity issues involving support and funding. Due to a smaller population of female inmates and limited female prisons, women are often further away from their families and/or support systems

and they are also offered fewer inmate services including educational opportunities.

**Deborah Golden**, working as an attorney, has seen little consistency in the legal rights of female prisoners. While current laws make it possible for inmates to obtain some voting rights and reproductive health services, the access a prisoner has to these rights is dependent on the leniency, or lack thereof, of individual judges and prison

## Program Summary, continued

employees and to their ability to comply with the numerous legal procedural requirements.

Even in cases of sexual assault or rape, women have to cut through much red tape before filing claims. Illiteracy, lack of knowledge of their rights and deadlines on filing (often no more than twenty days) can play a large role in limiting justice. Poor policies, like those found in [the 1996 Prison Litigation Reform Act](#), prevent retribution by requiring evidence of physical harm, etc.

Golden also noted that our census counts prisoners in rural areas where prisons are also a major source of employment. This means that resources needed for prevention and re-entry do not go to the prisoner's home community.

Studying female inmates in Texas, **Dr. Nancy La Vigne** found similar findings. Female inmates are often unsuccessful with rehabilitation due to a lack of funding. Her studies showed the need to treat the whole person (i.e. mental health issues, drug addiction, past criminal history, economic status, etc.) to ensure successful reentry into their home communities. She also found family support was incredibly beneficial and also more common for women than men.

While her studies were about our policy failures, she pointed out that George W. Bush's "[Second Chance Act](#)" has good provisions. The Act establishes a [National Reentry Resource Center](#) to provide information on the most effective programs and policies for reentry, as well as to create a national database. La Vigne's Justice Center at

the Urban Institute will be working on some parts of this contract.

Questions and answers focused on the role of children, the details of the National Reentry Resource Center and the necessity for public education on the importance of rehabilitation.

The "Equity and Justice" focus of the meeting was emphasized in a question about whether national civil rights laws such as Title IX and Civil Rights Act Title VII were helpful in protecting inmates from sex discrimination. The answer among the panelists was a resounding "kinda." There are many hurdles that the prisoners must overcome before they can file complaints. Even prison reform advocates tended to focus on other rights such as humane treatment and reproductive care rather than performing gender analyses to insure that the smaller populations of women inmates received needed (if not identical) benefits as men.

All agreed that there is a lot of work left to do in order to address prisoners' rights, but we were also reminded of the hope for progress that will go along with the Second Chance Act and the National Reentry Resource Center. But even then feminist advocates need to insist on more gender analysis than is currently planned to learn which re-entry programs are more effective for some women than they are for men.

An additional article written on this meeting is on the [AAUW blog Women in Prison: What Rights?](#) by zkhorakiwala.

---

## Moving Along: National Women's History Museum

The National Women's History Museum Act of 2009 was passed by the House of Representatives last month and will now go to the Senate. Congressional approval is necessary because the chosen site (land surrounded by 12th Street, Independence and Maryland Avenues) involves the sale of federal property. In a press release, Representative Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), who sponsored the bill, said, "From Louisa May Alcott to Kristi Yamaguchi, the story of what women have contributed to the American way of life is a story long overdue for the telling... House passage today is a recognition of that story. Thanks to the

leadership of Speaker Pelosi — a trailblazer herself — and Chairman Oberstar and subcommittee Chair Norton, American women are one step closer to a long-overdue 'museum of our own.'"

Dues are payable in September for the 2009-10 year. If you have not received a renewal letter or you would like to join, please see our website to download a membership form at [www.womensclearinghouse.org](http://www.womensclearinghouse.org) or call 301-493-0002.

## Power Talk with Power Women

*From the Department of Labor Newsletter*

“What happens when women run things?” That was the question posed to U.S. Secretary of Labor Hilda S. Solis at the 23rd Annual California Governor and First Lady’s Conference on Women. The gathering of more than 15,000 women of all generations and backgrounds (was) designed to empower women to be a catalyst for change in their family, communities and internationally.

“Solis participated in a riveting panel discussion with Dr. Ruth Simmons, President of Brown University; Arianna Huffington, Editor-in-Chief of *The Huffington Post*; and Cindie Leive, Editor-in-Chief of *Glamour* magazine. Claire Shipman, Senior National Correspondent of ABC News’ *Good Morning America*, served as moderator.”

## Are You A Ms.? The Origin of the Title Explained

*From the New York Times by Ben Zimmer*

“In the Nov. 10, 1891 edition of the Sunday Republican of Springfield, Mass., an unnamed writer put forth a modest proposal. ‘There is a void in the English language, which, with some diffidence, we undertake to fill,’ the writer began. ‘Every one has been put in an embarrassing position by ignorance of the status of some woman. To call a maiden Mrs. is only a shade worse than to insult a matron with the inferior title of Miss.’ Yet it is not always easy to know the facts.

“How to avoid this potential faux pas?” He suggested ‘a more comprehensive term which does homage to the sex without expressing any views as to their domestic situation, namely Ms.’ With this ‘simple and easy to write’ title a tactfully ambiguous compromise between Miss and Mrs., ‘the person concerned can translate it properly according to circumstances. ...’ This was largely ignored most of the subsequent time, until 1961, when Sheila Michaels, a 22-year-old civil rights worker in New York City, ... became a one-woman lobbying force for the title. ... her advocacy finally paid off the following August, when women’s rights supporters commemorated the 50th anniversary of suffrage with the Women’s Strike for Equality, and Ms. became recognized as a calling card of the feminist movement.” To read the full story go to [Ms.](#)

## From the National Women’s History Project

If you want to brush up your women’s history, the NWHP monthly calendar offers interesting details concerning our foremothers.

### Highlights:

**Nov 1, 1848** – First medical school for women, the New England Female Medical School, opens; in 1874 it merges with Boston University to become one of the world’s first coed medical schools.

**Nov 14, 1946** – Emily Greene Balch, co-founder of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

### Birthdays:

**Nov 5, 1857 (1944)** – Ida Tarbell, investigative reporter, wrote expose on Standard Oil that led to federal investigation and break-up of the company.

**Nov 18, 1857 (1950)** – Rose Knox, one of America’s foremost businesswomen, cofounder of Knox Gelatin Co. Following her husband’s death, she revolutionized the company, initiating a five-day work week and two-week vacations.

For more information and to sign up for calendars, visit [www.nwhp.org](http://www.nwhp.org)

## Women’s Issues in Congress

*From the Source of Women’s Issues in Congress, prepared by Women’s Policy, Inc.*

### Girl Scout Coin Bill Heads to President:

On October 19, the Senate passed a bill to mint \$1 coins commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Girl Scouts USA.

### Second Congressional Committee Targets International Violence Against Women:

On October 21, the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights, and Oversight held a hearing, International Violence Against Women: Stories and Solutions.

### Girls and Juvenile Justice Subject of House Hearing:

On October 20, the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security held a hearing, Girls in the Juvenile Justice System: Strategies to Help Girls Achieve Their Full Potential.

## From the White House

### Press Release

The President recently nominated two women who, if confirmed, will serve in positions that will directly impact the health, safety and lives of women and girls.

“Sara Manzano-Diaz was nominated to lead the Women's Bureau at the Department of Labor. ... Sara is uniquely qualified to lead the Women's Bureau. She has spent her career in public service advocating on behalf of working class families, women, and girls. She has more than 25 years of federal, state, and judicial experience including 16 years in senior management. Most recently, she was appointed by Governor Edward G. Rendell as Deputy Secretary for Regulatory Programs at the Pennsylvania Department of State. As Deputy Secretary, (she is) the highest-ranking Latina in Pennsylvania state government. Previously, she served as Deputy General Counsel for Civil Rights and Litigation at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, where she enforced fair housing, civil rights, and anti-discrimination laws. She has served as Co-Chair of The Forum of Executive Women's Mentoring Committee, which mentors young professional women as they begin their careers. The nominee also participated in Madrinas, a program that provides mentors for at-risk Latina girls to encourage them to finish high school and attend college.

“The President also nominated Susan Carbon as the head of the Office on Violence Against Women. The announcement was made on the first day of October, Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Susan Carbon, first appointed to the bench in 1991, has been a Supervisory Judge of the New Hampshire Judicial Branch Family Division since 1996. She is a member of the Governor's Commission on Domestic and Sexual Violence and, until recently, chaired New Hampshire's Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committee. Judge Carbon was also a President of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) from 2007 to 2008 where she still frequently serves as a faculty member. She also serves as faculty for the National Judicial Institute on Domestic Violence — a partnership of the U.S. Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women, the Family Violence

Prevention Fund, and the NCJFCJ. ... (Both of these women) are dedicated to the issues confronting women and girls across America.”

## The Shriver Report

Last month the Center for American Progress, in partnership with California First Lady Maria Shriver, released [The Shriver Report: A Woman's Nation Changes Everything](#), a groundbreaking examination of how “women's changing roles are affecting our major societal institutions, from government and businesses to our faith communities.” For the first time in American history, women are half of all U.S. workers and mothers are the primary breadwinners or co-breadwinners in nearly two-thirds of American families. Considering that in 1967, women made up only one-third of all workers, this is a dramatic transformation that fundamentally changes how all Americans work and live, “not just women but also their families, their co-workers, their bosses, their faith institutions, and their communities.” Shriver said, “Institutions need to adapt to who the American family is today ... they need to get smarter. They need to get more progressive.”

To help understand the actual conditions in American homes and workplaces, a nationwide poll was commissioned to take a deep look at what men and women think of their changing roles in society and their attitudes toward each other as spouses, parents, bosses, and co-workers. The authors said “the battle of the sexes is over ... The profound shift in women's role in the U.S. economy has not led to massive conflict between men and women. In fact, the opposite happened — men and women view this change in quite favorable terms. Virtually all married couples see negotiating about the rules of relationships, work, and family as key to making things work at home and at work.” ... It's a clear message in recent years, yet the parameters of women's jobs have yet to change to meet new demands. Political and business leaders who fail to take steps to address the needs of modern families risk losing good workers and the support of men and women who are riding the crest of major social change in America with little or no support.

Visit [A Woman's Nation](#) for the full report.



## Clearinghouse on Women's Issues

10401 Grosvenor Place #917  
Rockville, MD 20852

FIRST CLASS MAIL

### COMING EVENTS

**Saturday,  
December 5**

**Empowering Women in this Economy.** Maryland Commission for Women Symposium 2009. 8:30a - 4p. Prince George's Community College / Largo Student Center, 301 Largo Rd Largo, MD 20774 [www.marylandwomen.org](http://www.marylandwomen.org). Phone: 410-767-3049 Email: [mcw@dhr.state.md.us](mailto:mcw@dhr.state.md.us)

**Sunday,  
Jan. 31, 2010**

**Women's Legislative Briefing.** University of Maryland, Shady Grove Campus, 9630 Gudelsky Drive, Rockville, MD 20850. 12:30 - 5:30p. Keynote speaker will be pay equity heroine Lilly Ledbetter. General admission \$10; students \$5. Online registration required. Registration is now open. The Women's Legislative Briefing will conclude with a reception providing guests the opportunity to meet with County and State elected officials, and to network with advocates and representatives of other women's organizations. For more information, call 240-777-8330 or visit [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cfw](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cfw)

---

*Photos: D. Anne Martin; Editors: Roslyn Kaiser and Jessica Lazar; October meeting summary draft by Cori Fordham, FMF intern. Production: Letterforms Typography & Graphic Design.*

#### **CWI Board of Directors, July 2009 - June 2010**

**OFFICERS:** *President*, Barbara J. Ratner; *VP Program*, Sue Klein; *VP Membership Co-chairs*, Kellye McIntosh and D. Anne Martin; *Treasurer*, Linda Fihelly; *Secretary*, Harriett M. Stonehill.

**DIRECTORS:** Alvin Golub, Sarah Gotbaum, Roslyn Kaiser, Jessica Lazar, Ruth G. Nadel, Ellen S. Overton, *ex officio*.