

Religious and Moral Issues Affecting Women's Health Care

Religious and moral objections as well as state laws that limit access to reproductive care have a severe affect on women's health care. There have been an increasing number of hospital consolidations; religiously affiliated institutions are taking over or merging with secular ones and imposing religious directives on them. More health care workers are refusing to provide certain types of services.

These trends will be explored to help us understand how "conscience" rules and religious guidance affect a range of medical services; how women's organizations are fighting attempts to restrict care and to assure that women, especially poor women and teenagers, have access to the services they need.

Our speakers will be **Amy Taylor**, Interim Vice President of Public Policy and Advocacy, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, and **Marissa Valeri**, Senior Associate for Domestic Programs at Catholics for Choice.

Date/Time: **Tuesday, April 26, 2011 / 12 noon sharp to 1:30 pm**

Open to the public, no reservation necessary.

Place: **One Dupont Circle, 8th Floor Kellogg Room, Washington DC**

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, May 24, 2011

Hispanic and Latina Women: Do You Know Us?

CWI's March speakers were **Carmen Delgado Votaw**, a member of the Clearinghouse on Women's Issues and member of the Board of Directors of the National Conference of Puerto Rican Women Inc., **Alma Morales Riojas**, President and CEO of MANA, a National Latina Organization, and **Alicia Diaz**, Director, Federal Affairs, Cuban American National Council.

Carmen Delgado Votaw began the discussion explaining that Latino

women do not get a chance to explain their concerns very often, so she thanked CWI for giving them this opportunity. She said the panel does not speak for all Latino women, but will talk about their views of where they are as women, what kinds of issues they want us to help them with, and how we can make sisterhood more meaningful. She mentioned that Latinos have made progress in social and economic areas, however, they still have far to go. Delgado Votaw cited the evidence that Latinos have only 26 (eight female) members of Congress and just one male in the Senate. She also cited the lack of Latinas in higher education, confessing that she does not have any yardsticks to measure how well Latinos have done in the last 50 to 60 years, but they are certainly not there in the ranks of leadership in majority women's organizations and are not really a force in solving the problems that affect their community.

The 2010 census reports there are 4 million living on the island of Puerto Rico and 4.2 million living in the US mainland — half are women.

Delgado Votaw stated that it is a challenge to work with our counterparts on the island, realizing that they have different issues. She feels we need to combine their strength with our strength and our knowledge of what is happening in the US, so that they can be more integrated in the defense of women's rights. This is especially true in

fighting violence against women, there are still situations where husbands kill their wives out of jealousy. We appear better equipped to

handle these situations because we know where the resources are. She points out that the Cubans have concerns with what happens on the island of Cuba and the same for Mexicans with Mexico, but not for the Puerto Ricans because they are American citizens. Puerto Ricans have joined the fight for fair immigration laws because they realize that even though they do not have the same problem with access to the mainland, they might be considered immigrants. They sometime cannot join the fight on some issues because they do not have the resources and because the rest of the population does not join them. In addition, she stated that many have been poor and their organizations have been starved for years having very limited capital.

Alma Morales Riojas thanked Carmen for being a hero to the Latino community and for women at large. She stated the latest number from the census that showed 52 million Hispanics live in the US, and out of that number 60-65 percent of those have Mexican heritage, 4.1 million have Puerto Rican, and 1.5 million



Carmen Delgado Votaw



Alma Morales Riojas



Alicia Diaz

Program Summary, continued

have Cuban heritage. She points out that this is significant, because if you look at the east coast and Washington DC where policy is made, most people think of Latinos as Puerto Rican or Cuban. If the country is going to consider Latinos as just Puerto Rican or Cuban then it is going to be a problem for the future not just for Mexican-Americans because there are different nuances for the different populations. If we are looking to the future of our country then that is an investment we need to be making. She points out that Mexican-Americans have the youngest youth population, and the reason why schools are open is because these kids are in the classrooms.

Morales Riojas wants people to understand that in the census of the 70s, 80s and 90s the Mexican-American population was undercounted, but now there are correct numbers because Spanish-speaking census workers were hired. There is a fear that this increase represents illegal immigration; that is untrue. The other thing that is important to recognize is that not all counted on the census are immigrants. Remembering that from Texas to Oregon that territory was once part of Mexico, you have a large number of people with Mexican heritage that have never been to Mexico. She states that next to education, immigration is the biggest issue for the Mexican community, and would like help in getting people to understand this issue so that we do not fear the people who come across the border. In fact, many of them were here to welcome you. Morales Riojas spoke about her childhood in Texas and how she learned to read and write English from her older brothers. She can remember that if you spoke Spanish in school, you were kicked out. She also remembers her teacher using the term “dirty Mexicans” when describing who America was fighting at the Alamo. For years you were considered ignorant if you spoke in the southwest with an accent. She points out that the United States is the second largest Spanish-speaking country in the world and that by 2040 one-fourth of the US population will be Spanish speaking. She suggests that you should have your grandkids learn Spanish.

Morales Riojas stressed that education is so very important to Latinas. She points out that her organization has the only mentoring program for young Latinas. It has a 97 percent graduation rate, and almost zero percent teen pregnancy rate; however, they have to work really hard to get money and find volunteers to keep the program going. They partner with schools, AFT (American Federation of Teachers) and the NEA (National Education Association). She praised the National Women’s History Museum for wanting to include Latinas, because she talked about an exercise they did with her kids at the Smithsonian to find Latinas in history that affected their communities. At the end of the day, they came back with empty sheets. She ended her discussion by hoping that you will get involved and help people understand about the need for education, and understand the issue of immigration because the majority has the power to change policy.

Alicia Diaz expressed that she is not asked to speak about Cuban women often, so this is a rare opportunity. She mentioned that Cuban women often dichotomize their remarks from the island and America. There is a huge body of knowledge about half the Cuban population that is unknown. So, if the title of this event is *Hispanic-American Women, Do You Know Us?* the answer from the Cuban-Americans is: NO. Let’s change this. There were 1.6 million people of Cuban descent living in America in 2008, and they accounted for 3.5 percent of the Hispanic population. The man to woman ratio is equal, and 60 percent are foreign born. The age of the Cuban-American population is older than the average population of the US: the average age 41, and for women, 55 years old. Thirty-eight percent of the population are US citizens, of the female population 70 percent are US citizens. The reason for this being the Cuban Adjustment Act. Cubans are never undocumented. When Cubans go to Mexico, and then cross the border, they look for an American official to begin the process of entering and hopefully staying in the US. Cuban women have been in the US for a

Program Summary, continued

median of 28 years. Cuban women put a lot of importance on education and family. Diaz points out that Cuban-Americans report and perceive a non-discriminatory relationship with their host community; however, she also points out that does not mean that in that population discrimination does not exist.

The National Association of Cuban-American Women was founded in 1972 by Ana Maria Perera, an American, to provide services for Cuban-American women, and also includes other women. The organization's goals are to work with other women's organizations to ensure a strong national platform responding to common concerns. Membership in this organization includes states from all over the US providing services to all minority women including: increasing awareness of education and career opportunities for minority women, promoting participation of minority women in Hispanic community service activities, developing leadership skills, advancing the career goals of its members, and accurately portraying characteristics, values, and concerns of Cuban-American women.

In contrast is the Coalition of Cuban-American Women. This organization is completely dedicated to ending human rights violations in Cuba and sends out information on these violations around the world. They are advocates for Cuban people and for the movement in Cuba. They began in 1995, and the membership includes Europe, and all over the world. They feel as though the world has not fully denounced human rights violations in Cuba.

The women's organization in Cuba is called the Ladies in White. This group is an opposition movement in Cuba consisting of wives and other female relatives of jailed dissidents. The women protest the imprisonments by attending Mass each Sunday wearing white dresses and then silently walking through the streets dressed in white. The color white is chosen to symbolize peace. There is a movement to award them the Nobel Peace Prize. Diaz ended her discussion by saying that the assertion that Fidel Castro's revolution brought women's rights along is wrong. Raul Castro's wife, Vilma Espin, led it but the agenda was not really a woman's agenda.

Geraldine A. Ferraro, Who Ended Men's Club of National Politics, Dies at 75

The headline of a NY Times obituary for Ferraro, who died March 26

"Geraldine A. Ferraro, a barrier-breaking woman, paved the way for Sarah Palin and Hillary Rodham Clinton. A lawyer and three-term congresswoman, she "made anything seem possible as the vice-presidential nominee ... 64 years after women won the right to vote, a woman had removed the 'men only' sign from the White House door.

"Ann Richards, who later became governor of Texas, said that after the Ferraro nomination, 'The first thing I could think of was not winning in the political sense, but of my two daughters.' She added, 'To think ... of the numbers of young women who can now aspire to anything.' Ferraro co-sponsored the Economic Equity Act, which was intended to accomplish many of the aims of the never-ratified Equal Rights Amendment; she supported financing for abortions, ... she was elected secretary of the Democratic caucus, giving her influence on committee assignments ... and later became chairwoman of the 1984 Platform Committee. She said that in becoming the first woman to hold that post she owed much to a group of Democratic women Congressional staffers, abortion rights activists, labor leaders and others who called themselves Team A and lobbied for her appointment."

Statement by Nancy Pelosi on the Passing of Geraldine Ferraro

“Geraldine Ferraro will be deeply missed. She not only made history when she was nominated for Vice President, she inspired women across the country to reach their own greatness as they strengthened our country. Her service in the House is a source of pride to all of us in Congress.

“In 1984, her nomination was greeted with thunderous applause in the Moscone Center in San Francisco. The drumbeat that Geraldine Ferraro began that day in July will continue for a long time to come....”

Clara Barton

Clara Barton lived the last 15 years of her life in a large house in Bethesda, adjacent to Glen Echo Park. Open to the public every day, there are guided tours on the hour. On Saturday, April 16, there will be a 7-9pm open house and at 7:30pm, a 45-minute one-woman show about Barton. Free. For more information call 301-320-1410.

Barton, who was never a nurse, received permission during the Civil War to transport supplies to battlefields. She was known as the Angel of the Battlefield, and became president of the Red Cross. She also was interested in rights for women and African Americans. She died at age 90.

Work for a Woman

From Association of Women in Science (AWIS) March 2011 newsletter

“Women thrive in companies led by women and tend to climb the career ladder far more effectively when there are already women on the boards or in the C-suites of the companies they work for, says David Matsa of Northwestern University’s Kellogg School of Management. That’s probably because female business leaders tend to champion and mentor women in a way that male bosses are reluctant to emulate.”

We are still hoping someone will volunteer to help write and edit the newsletter. Call Barbara Ratner at 301-493-0002.

Shirtwaist Fire Leaves Work Hazards Smoldering

From WeNews by Allison Weingarten March 25, 2011

A notorious fire that killed New York City female garment workers 100 years ago is good reason to remember another group of predominately female workers—nurses—who would benefit from New York lawmakers’ passage of a safety bill this spring.

“Today marks the 100th anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, which stole the innocent lives of 146 workers in New York’s garment industry, most of them young, female and recent immigrants. The gross violation of basic human safety at the factory—the workers were locked in a room and unable to flee—was a turning point for workers and governmental entities.”

“From the ashes of the fire rose a labor movement fighting for one common cause: to improve the lives of working people. Labor organizations led an effort to force policy makers to establish the New York State Department of Labor. At the same time, employees were realizing the benefits of labor representation and forming and joining unions. Both the Department of Labor and the tradition of commitment to unionization in New York helps keep workers safe on the job to this day. This event haunts and inspires my work as legislative director of the Assembly’s subcommittee on workplace safety, chaired by Assemblyman Rory Lancman.

“But a century after the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, hazardous working conditions, especially for immigrant and minority women, are all too easy to find. For instance, women working in nail salons are surrounded by toxic chemicals, often six or seven days a week, while women working in homecare services are threatened by violence as they enter unfamiliar homes. In 2009, the percentage of female workers experiencing injuries resulting in days away from work increased from 37 to 39 percent, while the proportion of women in the work force stayed the same, according to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics. To counter these growing injury statistics, the subcommittee on workplace safety is working closely with labor representatives.”



Clearinghouse on Women's Issues

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FIRST CLASS MAIL

COMING EVENTS

- April 16** **National Capital Chapter Walk to End Violence Against Women and Girls.** 9:30am-Noon. Gateway Park, Rosslyn, VA to Dupont Circle, Washington, DC. US National Committee for UN Women, National Capital Chapter. Help raise funds for the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women and Girls. Registration Fee: \$20 non-members; \$15 members; \$10 students. For more information, visit <http://www.unwomen-usnc.org/natcapital/calendarofevents> or contact NCC5KWalk@gmail.com
- April 22 - June 5** **"RUINED" Arena Stage.** 2009 Pulitzer Prize-winning play by Lynn Nottage, one of the country's leading female black playwrights. This play promotes stopping violence against women and bringing justice and equality to the world of the sexes. For more information, visit www.arenastage.org or call 202-488-4380.

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