

## Issues Affecting Hispanic and Latina Women

The growing segments of the Hispanic population, according to the U.S. Census, are 29.3 million Mexican Americans, 4.1 million Puerto Ricans, 1.5 million Cuban Americans and 1.2 million Dominicans.

Our panel discussion will address the issues that affect these women; challenges facing young girls in these populations; and the collaboration or lack of contact with major feminist organizations. The panel also will review the development of Hispanic women's organizations in the United States.

**Carmen Delgado Votaw**, member of the Clearinghouse on Women's Issues and member, Board of Directors of the National Conference of Puerto Rican Women, Inc., will moderate the panel discussion.

**Alma Morales Riojas**, President and CEO of MANA, a Latina organization, will speak about Mexican American and other Latina women. **Alicia Diaz**, Director, Office of the Cuban National Council, will speak about Cuban-American women.

**Date/Time:** Tuesday, March 22, 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.

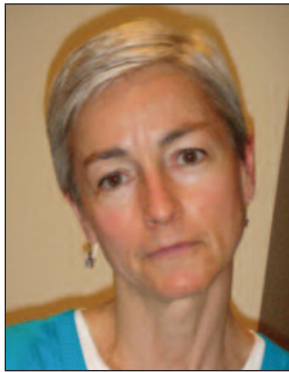
The CWI meeting will be cancelled if bad weather closes government offices.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, April 26, 2011

## Girls: Body Images, Relationships and Overall Health

WI's February speakers were **Leslie Cameron**, Director, Administration and Communications of the American Psychological Association and **Clare Bresnahan**, Public Policy and Advocacy Associate for the Girl Scouts.

Additionally, **Mary Bailey**, editor of *The Watchful Eye* and chair of Montgomery County NOW's Sexualization of Youth Project, briefly described this project.



Leslie Cameron



Clare Bresnahan



Mary Bailey

music videos, music lyrics, Bratz dolls, a stripper pole for little girls, clothing with sexually explicit phrases across the chest, an advertisement for the TV show *Gossip Girl*, and photographs from the recent *Glee* photo shoot for *GQ* magazine.

Cameron also noted that Black and Hispanic women were often depicted in stereotypes, clothed in animal prints or otherwise portrayed as being exotic.

**Leslie Cameron** discussed the genesis of the Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls which is available for free at [www.apa.org/pi/women/programs/girls/report.aspx](http://www.apa.org/pi/women/programs/girls/report.aspx). The task force's definition of sexualization contains four components. Sexualization can be identified when: a person's value comes only from his or her sexual appeal or behavior, a person is held to a narrow standard of beauty, a person is made into an object for another's sexual use, and finally when sexuality is inappropriately imposed upon an individual. To demonstrate this final point, Cameron referred to a photograph of a group of seven or eight year-old girls drenched in makeup and dressed in clothes more likely to be found on much older women, including high heels. "These are little girls," explained Cameron, "being portrayed as 'big girls,' or women, and they are inappropriately made to look sexualized." Sexualization does not require all four components to be present, two or three of these factors are enough to indicate its incidence.

Cameron then went on to identify examples suggesting the sexualization of young girls throughout society. These examples included

Similarly, images of Asian women were sometimes sexualized and depicted as subservient.

After discussing some of the manifestations of the sexualization of young girls in society, Cameron described the harmful effects of this sexualization on women. Evidence indicates that sexualization has cognitive and emotional consequences. It can undermine an individual's confidence; it can also lead to body image problems as well as feelings of shame and anxiety. Similarly, sexualization negatively affects mental and physical health.

Cameron ended her presentation with an overview of what can be done to counteract these effects. Cameron discussed the positive results that would come from the media choosing to portray women in roles where they are judged for their actions and accomplishments rather than their appearance. The importance of media literacy campaigns, diverse athletic and extracurricular programs, and comprehensive sexuality education programs in schools was stressed. So, too, were alternatives to popular culture, such as community or religious organizations. Cameron also encouraged parents to watch television with their children and then

## Program Summary, continued

discuss what has been seen on the screen. Most of all, Cameron shared the importance of girls speaking up and acting upon their beliefs. At the close of her talk, Cameron directed the Clearinghouse to several organizations, such as SPARK, the Girl Scouts of America, Girls Inc., the Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood, Parent's Television Council, and the "Evolution" video in Dove's Campaign for real beauty. Cameron also encouraged the Clearinghouse to review the APA's sexualization tip sheets, which has been tailored to girls and parents.

**Clare Bresnahan** began her presentation by underlining the increasing impact of the media on today's youth. A study by the Kaiser Family Foundation shows that teenagers spend approximately ten hours of recreational time watching media sources everyday. She explained that unhealthy media images have become so ingrained in media representations and youth culture that adolescent girls may not have the tools to detect them and understand the impact. The overwhelming saturation of sexualized images of women is dangerously affecting their cognitive and social development. As they grow up, they are disproportionately concerned with their appearance and thus developing self-esteem and confidence issues. A whopping 90 percent of girls feel the pressure to be thin, and more than half of them are already dieting. Bresnahan explains that three of the most common mental health problems for girls are tied to the sexualized images of women in the media. Girls come to understand their physical appearance as their defining attribute and measure of their value. Intersecting inequalities also impact the representation of certain groups of women. For instance, black females are often portrayed as being more violent and are often placed in exotic contexts. Social hierarchies are also emphasized in storylines involving an overweight or disabled child. Animated film and television programming do not escape these static gender dynamics since studies show that one in three female characters do not have significant speaking roles.

In an effort to remedy the problematic misrepresentation of women in the media,

Bresnahan discussed the proposed bill *Healthy Media for Youth Act* which focuses on promoting healthy body images, developing positive active role models and portraying equal and healthy relationships. If passed, it would establish a grant program for media literacy and empowerment groups. The bill would encourage and facilitate the research on health impacts of various types of media on teens and would create a national taskforce on women and girls in the media. This taskforce would be composed of a wide range of different interest groups such as Girl Scouts, media representatives, and advertisers.

The media's crucial role was highlighted when Bresnahan stressed that change will never occur without all stakeholders working together. *The Healthy Media for Youth Summit* in October 2010 was a first step toward that goal. Another event to watch for is the *Blue Ribbon Commission on Healthy Media for Youth*. It will highlight the importance of empowering young girls and finding alternatives to the sexualized images of females in the media today. Amongst others, actress Geena Davis will co-chair the Commission and representatives from *Seventeen Magazine* will be members. For more information, visit: [www.girlscouts.org/who\\_we\\_are/advocacy/watch\\_whatyouwatch/](http://www.girlscouts.org/who_we_are/advocacy/watch_whatyouwatch/).

**Mary Bailey** noted that sexualization is not limited to girls, but can have serious consequences for boys as well. As editor of *The Watchful Eye*, the monthly newsletter of Montgomery County NOW's Sexualization of Youth Project, Bailey said that "while girls are being channeled by the media and others to be sex objects, boys — through their easy access to online pornography — are being inculcated to seeing girls through predatory eyes." Boys should not be getting their main sexual education from pornography, she said, because it reduces their empathy and crowds out romantic impulses.

Among other efforts, the Project has sent the American Psychological Association's educational suggestions to the County's public school system, but response so far has been modest. The Project's latest target is Wal-Mart's new product line of anti-aging cosmetics for girls — ages 8 to

## Program Summary, continued

12. Called Geo-Girls, the line offers 69 separate products, including moisturizers, exfoliators, and makeup. “Wal-Mart is not women’s friend,” she said. “First it underpaid us, and now it’s starting in on our daughters.” An upcoming Montgomery County NOW press conference will define the

threat that stores like Wal-Mart are placing on children’s development and the importance of emphasizing young girls’ love of “horses, hiking, and books” over a premature concern with appearance. For more information visit [www.mcmdnow.org](http://www.mcmdnow.org).

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## Deep Cuts to the Social Security Administration

*From the Frances Perkins Center, Newcastle, Maine*

During this time of economic hardship for many, Social Security claims have reached an all time high and are still increasing. The Social Security Administration (SSA) has been understaffed for a decade. In 2009, the average processing time for disability claims was 491 days. SSA’s outdated and aging data processing system needs to be replaced to ensure uninterrupted benefit payments. While the administrative costs for the program are very low, a small increase is needed to handle the higher load.

To improve service, President Obama requested increased funding for SSA. However, the budget passed by Republicans in the House of Representatives reduces SSA funding for the rest of 2011.

This is the effect of those cuts on Social Security, retirees, disabled workers, and families:

- SSA’s budget would be cut \$1.7 billion below the level needed to provide promised service levels and current projects.
- SSA has projected that its workers could be furloughed for up to one month out of the seven remaining months in 2011.

- Up to 400,000 people would have their retirement, survivors, and Medicare applications significantly delayed, becoming part of a large and growing backlog.
- Up to 290,000 people would have their disability benefit applications delayed, leading to 30 days of additional wait time, over and above the already unacceptable 491 day backlog.
- SSA’s essential new National Computer Center would be put at risk. A cut of \$118 million will at best slow its completion, which is already over a year behind schedule, and at worst make the building impossible to complete.

The proposed cuts will simply make it harder for workers and their families to claim the benefits they have earned. Social Security hasn’t contributed a penny to the federal deficit; it currently has a \$2.6 trillion surplus and is estimated to run a \$113 billion surplus this year. Its budget should not be cut to reduce the deficit.

To find out what you can do to stand up for Social Security go to [www.FrancesPerkinsCenter.org](http://www.FrancesPerkinsCenter.org) or [www.StrengthenSocialSecurity.org](http://www.StrengthenSocialSecurity.org)

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## Women of Wal-Mart

*From The National Women’s Law Center press release*

The National Women’s Law Center, together with the American Civil Liberties Union and 32 other organizations have filed a “Friend of the Court” brief to support the women of Wal-Mart in the Supreme Court case *Wal-Mart v. Dukes*.

The brief says that even though women tended to have higher performance ratings and more seniority, on average they earned \$5,000 less than men, had to wait significantly longer for promotions than men, and were less likely to be promoted to higher positions. Also, women employed at Wal-Mart say that they regularly faced gender stereotyping and these stereotypes affected pay and promotion decisions because the company relied on subjective decisions made by individual managers. “At the heart of this case is an important question — Is Wal-Mart too big to be held accountable?”

## Women's History Month: Pelosi Statement

“During Women’s History Month we honor the giants who paved the path for progress and equality. From those who marched for suffrage, to those who suffered for advancement, to those who have broken glass ceilings in every aspect of modern life, this month is an opportunity for us to celebrate the women who came before us. As this year’s theme says, our history is our strength.

“This month we also recognize the silent heroes of the present: women who make history every day as mothers and daughters, community leaders, and proud citizens. It is in their honor, and with the highest aspirations for future generations of women, that we recommit ourselves to expanding opportunities for all. With opportunity in mind, in the last Congress we took action to ensure health care for all Americans. On this Women’s History Month, for the first time, no longer is being a woman a preexisting condition.

“Today, we must also recommit to addressing the economic challenges facing Americans; indeed women have been particularly hard hit by this downturn. To do so, we must focus on the top priority of the American people: creating jobs. But instead, some in Congress are prioritizing legislation that is extreme and divisive, dangerous to women’s health, and is nothing less than the most comprehensive and radical assault on reproductive freedom in our lifetime. At the same time they are restricting reproductive choice, Republicans are limiting access to family planning and primary care, even when it saves lives.

“This month, let’s come together to honor the labors of America’s women, in the workplace and at home, with our own best efforts to ensure progress. And let us never forget that we come to this place because of the brave, relentless and optimistic actions of the women heroes of our nation’s history.”

## Women in America: Indicators of Social and Economic Well-being

The White House Council on Women and Girls has issued a new report, *Women in America*, a comprehensive resource for information on women’s lives today. The report provides a statistical portrait showing how women’s lives are changing in five critical areas: people, families, and income; education; employment and health; crime and violence; and women veterans. This study says not enough has changed in the disparity between men and women’s salaries since the 1960s.

The study was conducted with the Office of Management and Budget and the Economics and Statistics Administration within the Department of Commerce.

“Facts are important in helping to paint a picture of how lives of American women are changing over time and in pointing toward the actions and policies that might be most needed. Better understanding women’s social and economic well-being now and in the past will help generate ideas to help us all win the future.”

## March Movies about Women

Acknowledging women’s history month, *Women’s eNews* lists some movies that will open in March, about women and mostly directed by women:

- *The Imperialists Are Still Alive* writer-director Zeina Durra’s film about a well-to-do Manhattan artist’s Arab descent.
- *Certified Copy* by director Iranian Abbas Kiarostami, set in Tuscany with Juliette Binoche.
- Cary Fukunaga’s *Jane Eyre* emphasizes the hard and dark realities of impoverished, powerless Victorian-era girls and women.
- Catherine Hardwicke’s *Red Riding Hood*, a gothic genre with damsels in distress.
- Jordan Scott’s *Cracks*, a dramatic thriller about repressed teenage girls, set in an elite British boarding school.

## Women, Money and Power Summit

The Feminist Majority, in partnership with the YWCA, presents the *Women, Money and Power Summit* Thursday, April 7, through Saturday, April 9 in Washington DC. House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi will speak at the luncheon April 7 (also congressional visit day) and there will be a salute to Nobel laureate Shirin Ebadi who fights for women’s rights in Iran. For further information, contact [www.feministmajority.org](http://www.feministmajority.org)



## Clearinghouse on Women's Issues

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### COMING EVENTS

- March 27** **Real Portraits: Katharine Graham.** Double feature 1 pm. McEvoy Auditorium, National Portrait Gallery. [www.npg.si.edu](http://www.npg.si.edu)
- 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](http://www.arenastage.org) or call 202-488-4380.
- May 4** **Iona's Art of Caring Luncheon.** Mayflower Hotel. Noon-2 pm. Benefits family caregiver programs and services at Iona. Call 202-895-9416 for tickets. [www.iona.org](http://www.iona.org)

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*Photos: D. Anne Martin; Editor: Roslyn Kaiser; February summary draft by Liberty Slater and Elizabeth Plank, FMF Interns; Production: Letterforms Typography & Graphic Design.*

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