



## Clearinghouse on Women's Issues

P.O. Box 70603, Friendship Heights, MD 20813 Tel: 202 338-4820

Website: [www.womensclearinghouse.org](http://www.womensclearinghouse.org)

**MAY 2006**

*Note: the location for THIS meeting only is Alliance  
for Justice  
11 Dupont Circle, 2nd floor, entrance on New Hampshire*

### **Freeing Afghan Women and Girls--Unfinished Business**

The Taliban took away the rights of girls and women in 1996. Today their rights and lives are still in jeopardy. (See article on page 4.)

Our speakers are eminently qualified to discuss the ups and downs of the current situation and what must be done. **Eleanor Smeal**, as **President of the Feminist Majority**, was the first to bring world attention to the Taliban's brutal treatment of women in Afghanistan. In her multiple leadership roles, Ellie is still working to ensure stability and progress in women's rights in Afghanistan. **Farida Azizi**, a self-styled Peace Activist and refugee from Afghanistan, worked from 2002 to 2005 for Vital Voices as a senior advisor for their Afghan Women's Project. She has been speaking at universities and conferences to bring attention to the needs of Afghan women.

**SPEAKERS: Eleanor Smeal, President  
Feminist Majority and the Feminist Majority Foundation**

**Farida Azizi, Peace Activist, founder of  
Cooperation for Peace and Unity**

**TOPIC: Freeing Afghan Women and Girls — Unfinished Business**

**DATE/TIME: Tuesday, May 23, 2006 / 12 noon – 1:30 p.m.**

**PLACE: Alliance For Justice, 11 Dupont Circle, 2nd Floor  
Entrance on New Hampshire Ave. (THIS MEETING ONLY)  
Bring brown bag lunch**

**Next Meeting: Tuesday, June 27, 2006**

## **Program Summary – April 2006 Meeting**

### **Women's/Gender Studies: How does this field advance gender equality?**

The speakers were Allison Kimmich, Executive Director of the National Women's Studies Association and Dan Moshenberg, Director of George Washington University Women's Studies Program.

Allison Kimmich described Women's Studies as the academic arm of the women's movement. Born in the activism of the sixties and seventies, the goal was to create college courses that were more meaningful and representative of the reality of women's lives, in her words, "to bring women into the curriculum."

The field has come a long way since its inception. Allison noted that it is impossible to focus on gender without an examination of identity categories such as race, sexuality, nationality and other key areas.

Emory University, along with ten other universities, introduced a doctoral degree in Women's Studies. Unfortunately, there is limited information about the new PhD degree at the present time. Unlike in other disciplines, the U.S. Department of Education does not collect information about the field. This means that there is little data about enrollment numbers, standards, and program content.

The National Women's Studies Association is trying to collect pertinent information and perform statistical analyses of enrollment data to set up a data base. Without this, Departments have no basis for supporting programs. According to Dr. Kimmich, too often administrators use this lack of information as a way to cut resources.

She is seeking funding to collect data as the first step in making Women's Studies a professional field.

Dan Moshenberg discussed the relationship of Women's Studies to equity. He quoted feminist writers who declared that "feminism is in a mess, and Women's Studies at best are faltering." They argue that there is little agreement on the meaning of terms and confusion between the goal of equality and equity and parity. Serious questions about the field of inquiry remain. For example, is it possible to quantify equality? Are feminism and women's studies the same? Is equity the same in wealthy nations as in poorer areas?

Compounding these serious intellectual tasks is the tendency of Women's Studies participants to become engaged in politics. Some believe that those involved in Women's Studies try to justify their place on campus by "going into the streets."

In the 1970s and 1980s, Professor Moshenberg noted the field was vibrant and participants contributed significantly to our understanding of women. But as Women's Studies programs became institutionalized and involved in political struggles, the thrust of the programs have become less clear.

At George Washington University, Professor Moshenberg explained there is a strong emphasis on international equity. Such topics as homelessness in Africa, the growing number of women in prison, rape, HIV and other world-wide phenomena are the focus of student investigations here and abroad

## **Program Summary – April 2006 Meeting**

### **Women's/Gender Studies: How does this field advance gender equality? (cont.)**

in his program. In his view, trans-national feminism forces those interested in the study of women to rethink traditional positions on equity in a global context. Noting that by 2050 the United Nations estimates that half of the world's population will be living in slums, issues of pay equity have to be addressed on regional, national and world-wide levels. Although he argues that feminism is large enough to encompass equity, it is essential to remain critical and questioning in examining issues.

Later, in response to questions, Dan Moshenberg explained that equity is an accounting system with flaws. What about women not in the wage economy, or how does one do a quantitative analysis of productive labor? How does wage labor support non-wage labor? Does equality mean that men and women are interchangeable? What about disagreements among women with regard to fair treatment?

Allison Kimmich was asked if the PhD in Women's Studies is accepted and recognized throughout academia. She responded that the question is still unsettled since the PhD is so new and untested. Moreover, there is still some uncertainty about Women's Studies at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. In most institutions, faculty members hold a joint appointment in a discipline as well as in Women's Studies.

Although there are still reported problems in tenure and promotion issues, her own experience suggests that graduates are marketable. Later some of the young women attending the session confirmed that they were advised at their institutions to major in a discipline, with Women's Studies as a secondary concentration.

Both speakers agreed that the most pressing research topics today are global issues. Other areas of research relate to human rights and sexual trafficking. Another concern is that conservatives view Women's Studies as too ideological. They are demanding that opposing views be taught in all classes, even if such views are literally opposed to equity and fairness.

There were serious problems with definitions throughout the discussion. For example, what is the difference between women's studies and gender studies? Are feminism and women's studies the same? The debate over terms, according to Dr. Kimmich, attests to the fact that the field of inquiry has grown and changed. New issues require new approaches. In general, however, the term women's studies remain more expansive than gender studies. Both speakers ended by repeating the importance of sustaining an international focus on women in the women/gender studies field.

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

Things are going well at the Clearinghouse. Our meetings are attracting larger numbers and in March we even had a visitor from San Diego, CA. Olivia Puentes-Reynolds, President of the San Diego Women's History Museum, flew all the way across the country to attend our meeting! Arvonne Fraser, co-author of "How Women Transformed International Development," sent an email congratulating us on the CWI Newsletter and made suggestions regarding possible activities. Thank you all for spreading the word and for your input. Keep it up!

Ellen

## **GETTING TO KNOW BOARD MEMBERS**

**Alvin Golub** retired as Executive Director of the Washington Psychiatric Society. He has served as a consultant on workplace and healthcare issues to the federal and local governments. He has organized several mental health and substance abuse coalitions. He helped organize the Coalition for Adequate Mental and Drug Abuse Services which spearheaded a drive to support legislative efforts on behalf of non-discriminatory benefits for substance abuse and mental illness treatment in the District of Columbia.

A lifelong tennis player, Al, unable to achieve glory in his younger days in the sport, is a ranked senior player in the Mid-Atlantic Tennis MD Association and is a medal recipient of a recent Senior Olympics Competition. A two-time Navy veteran, Mr. Golub and his wife Maxine have two daughters and four grandchildren.

## **NEW CABINET IN AFGHANISTAN INCLUDES NO WOMEN**

Afghan President Hamid Karzai's new cabinet currently includes no women. President Karzai did not reappoint the three women who had previously served in his 25-member cabinet. The one woman he did choose to be minister of women's affairs was rejected by the Afghan parliament. Moreover, Karzai did not appoint any women to the Supreme Court. An aide to Karzai who spoke to the *New York Times* on condition of anonymity said that since women had won guaranteed representation in parliament, there was no longer any need to give them special appointments to the cabinet.

While establishing quotas to ensure women's inclusion is one necessary step, it isn't sufficient. The inclusion of women in government and persistent legislative and judicial reform will be imperative to ensuring that Afghanistan becomes a true representative democracy," wrote Isobel Coleman, director of the Women and US Foreign Policy Program at the Council on Foreign Relations, with Swanee Hunt director of the Women and Public Policy Program at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, in a joint op ed published in the *Christian Science Monitor*. "Women's inclusion in Afghanistan's government, which the international community has been using as an indicator of democratic progress, is actually regressing." [Feminist Daily News Wire April 25, 2006]

## **SUE WHITMAN AWARDED 2006 METLIFE FOUNDATION AWARD**

Congratulations to CWI member Sue Whitman who was one of 26 seniors chosen nationally by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging to receive the 2006 Metlife Foundation "Older Volunteers Enrich America" Award. Nominated by IONA Senior Services for her many years of volunteering, Sue was the subject of a front page feature article in the April 12<sup>th</sup> issue of the *Northwest Current*. A reception was held on April 27 in Washington, DC for the awardees followed by a luncheon on April 28 where she received the award.

## **URGE CONGRESS TO PROVIDE A PERMANENT MUSEUM SITE**

In 1987 Congress declared March "Women's History Month." Almost two decades later, little exists to permanently acknowledge women's contributions and achievements. It's time to honor women's extraordinary legacy with a prestigious site for the National Women's History Museum.

The National Women's History Museum (NWHM) has identified the ideal Museum site in our nation's Capital. The Pavilion Annex of the Old Post Office Building, located on Pennsylvania Avenue, NW -- America's Main Street, is in close proximity to national museums that now attract millions of visitors from around the world. This federally owned building has been vacant since 1992. Congress is being asked to put this building to good use by honoring women's remarkable contributions to our nation. For more information and to view a video prepared for Congress narrated by Academy Award Winning Actress Meryl Streep, visit the National Women's History Museum Web site at [www.nwhm.org](http://www.nwhm.org).

To secure a permanent site in Washington, D.C., the cooperation of several government entities is needed. The U.S. Senate has already given its support for the use of the building. But before final approval is granted, the House of Representatives is looking for public support for this site. You can contact your Congressional representative on line by going to the following URL <http://capwiz.com/nwhm/issues/alert/?alertid=8424146&type=CO> [NWHM newsletter]

## **WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE ARTIFACTS GO ONLINE**

Sewall-Belmont House and Museum put 400 images of their 10,000 artifacts collection online in March 2006. These images can be seen by clicking on COLLECTIONS tab on their Web site <http://www.sewallbelmont.org>. The online collection was made possible by a donation of a state-of-the-art digital imaging system from IBM, the business technology firm based in Armonk, N.Y. [Women's ENews]

## **AAUW UPDATES CONGRESSIONAL VOTING RECORD**

AAUW members have a long history of lobbying Congress and holding their legislators accountable for how they vote on AAUW priority issues. The annual AAUW *Congressional Voting Record* for the 109th Congress, First Session (2005) is now available on the AAUW website: <http://www.aauw.org>. The AAUW Congressional Voting Record provides information about elected federal legislators through the votes they cast on critical issues. Legislation was selected on the basis of the AAUW Public Policy Program adopted by convention delegates in June 2005. These priorities include education, judicial nominations, tax and budget, civil rights, and reproductive choice.

While the voting record is neither an endorsement nor a condemnation of any member of Congress, AAUW does encourage the use of it as a tool to hold your legislators responsible for their votes. AAUW urges us to thank our congressional representatives for their consistent support of equity for women and girls. [AAUW Action Network]

**CWI NEWSLETTER NOW AVAILABLE VIA E-MAIL:** Members wishing to receive the CWI Newsletter via email instead of U.S. mail can send their e-mail requests to [cwinwsltr@aol.com](mailto:cwinwsltr@aol.com)

**COMING EVENTS****MAY 14**      **MOTHER'S DAY****MAY 23**      **CWI MEETING** at the Alliance For Justice, 11 Dupont Circle, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, entrance on New Hampshire Ave. (This is an alternate location for the May meeting only.)**MAY 22-  
JUNE 1**      **DC OFFICE OF PLANNING PREVIEWS DC's COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**  
to the citizens of the District of Columbia in a series of meetings throughout the city before its presentation to the City Council for approval. To view the meeting times and locations go to <http://www.inclusivecity.org>**JUNE 6-7**      **WOMAN OF THE YEAR Salutes BETTY FRIEDAN**  
Pat Schroeder will be the keynote speaker at the Woman's National Democratic Club's *Woman of the Year Award* Reception, Silent Auction and Dinner on June 7 at the Woman's National Democratic Club. A luncheon panel on June 6 will discuss Friedan's achievements and legacy. Go to [www.democraticwoman.org](http://www.democraticwoman.org) or call Patricia Fitzgerald on 202 232-7363, xt.3003; or see CWI April Newsletter for further information.

CWI Board of Directors, July 2005 – June 2006. OFFICERS: President, Ellen S. Overton; Vice President Program, Sue Klein; Vice President Membership, Jean Landweber; Treasurer, Linda Fihelly; Secretary, Harriett M. Stonehill. BOARD MEMBERS: Alvin Golub, Harriett Harper, Roslyn Kaiser, Ruth G. Nadel, Jacqueline Scherer, Clara G. Schiffer, Joy R. Simonson, ex officio.  
Sheila A. Willet, Newsletter Editor

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**FIRST CLASS MAIL**