

YOUR HEALTH, YOUR CHOICE

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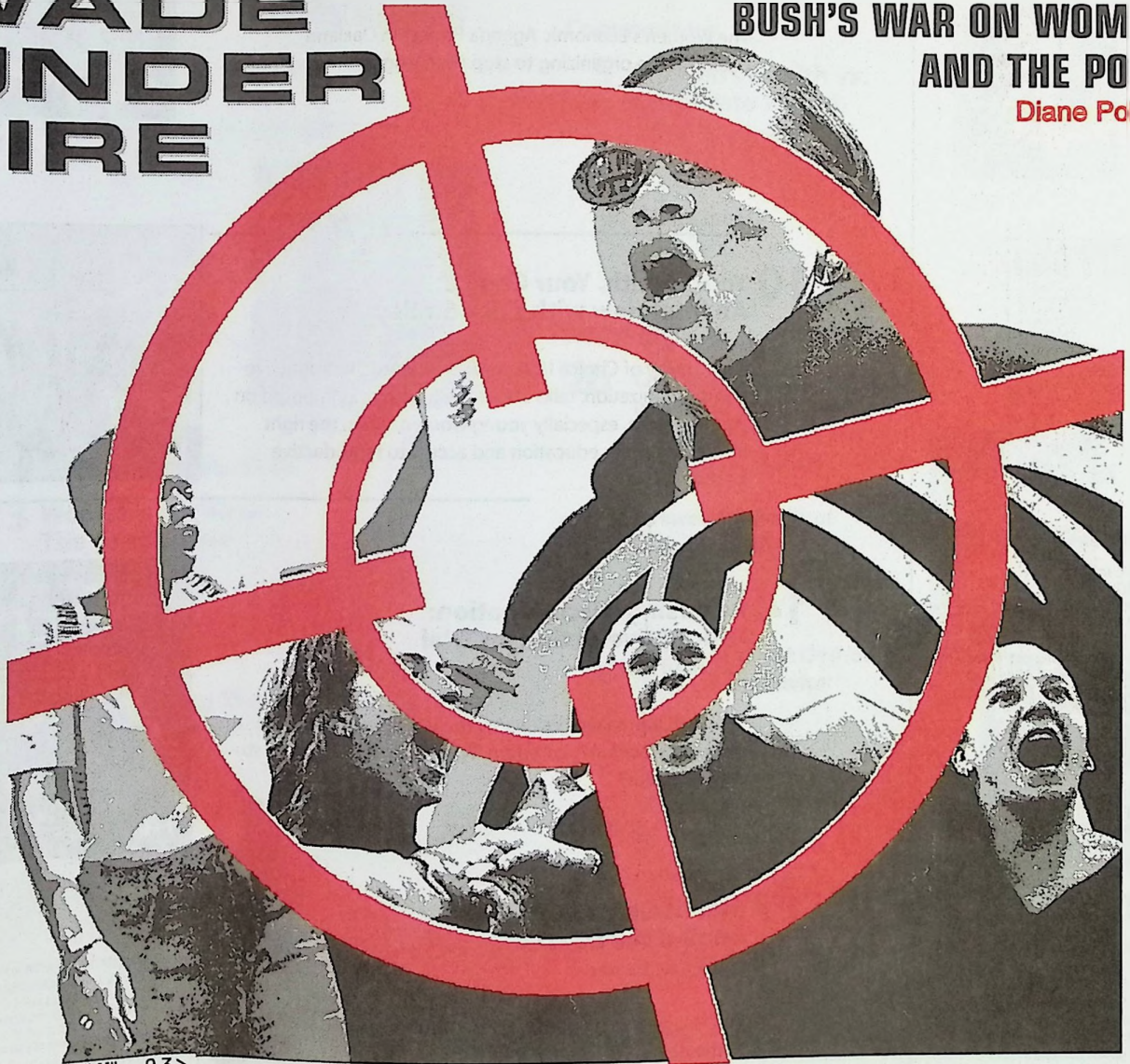
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2003

March



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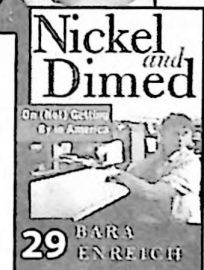
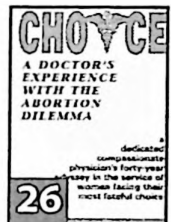
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## Marketing Poverty New York, New York

This international women's month, it is critically important to focus on the policies of the Bush administration that are making the already bleak conditions facing working women even more so. Two useful facts to keep in mind are that nearly 60 percent of working women are concentrated in minimum wage jobs, and these jobs provide half or more of family income.

In an April 2002 speech detailing the economic features of "compassionate conservatism," George Bush made the following remarks: "Our economy grows when trade barriers fall. Our economy grows when the tax burden goes down and stays down. Our economy grows when entrepreneurs are rewarded for their success, not hounded by regulation and needless litigation."

What is the impact on working women when these operating principals are translated into actual policy? They make a bad situation worse. They have pulled the economic rug from under women and their families. (And the cost of the war for oil will only compound the problem.) The costs of creating the conditions of economic growth have fallen disproportionately on working women.

At an October 2001 Woman's Day Award Luncheon, Laura Bush celebrated the contribution of women who are working to make life better in America. She remarked that the "women we honor today know what makes America strong: healthy people and happy families; safe children and free enterprise; a good education and strong reading skills; caring neighbors and willing volunteers." Unfortunately, she didn't take the opportunity to criticize how her husband's policies are not only forcing working mothers to work longer, more irregular, hours, but are contributing to the recent increase in the wage gap between men and women. They are also raising the levels of stress, as 68 percent of married working mothers work more than 40 hours a week, according to a new study by Karen Nussbaum of the AFL-CIO.

Instead of empty rhetoric about family values what is needed is a real program that puts working women and their families ahead of millionaires. Such a program would, at the minimum, guarantee pay equity, a living wage, universal health care, a shorter workweek, paid family leave benefits and private pensions and Social Security that provide for a dignified retirement.

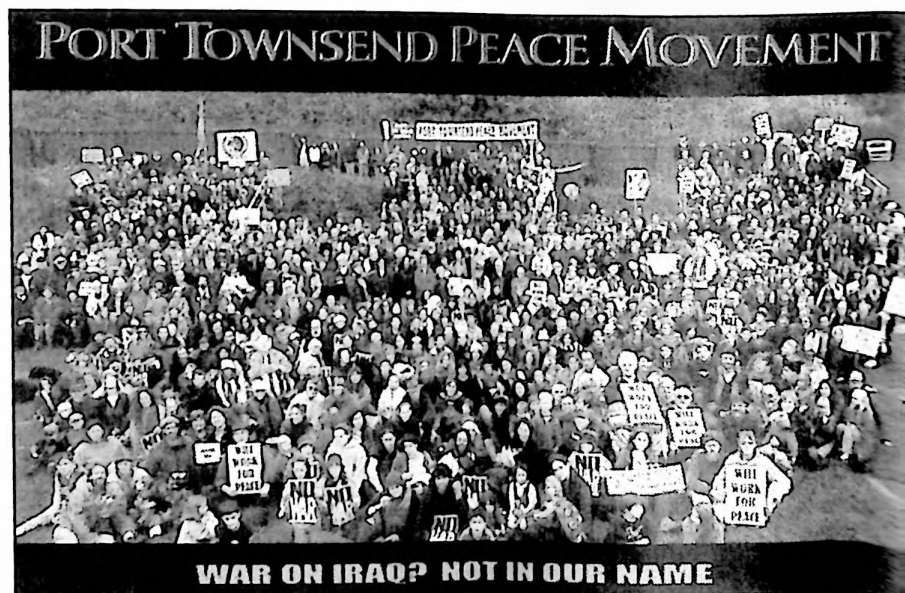
David Eisenhower



## Peace in Our Town Port Townsend, Washington

I'm sending you a copy of our town's peace portrait with the request that you help us popularize the idea. The plans for war seem to reverberate through the media like a trance, but there are saner voices – we just don't own the media. We're hoping to use peace portrait cards to fight against the invisibility political dissidents experience in the US at present. In the course of organizing for peace within our community, we're finding ourselves and our town transformed – we recommend it. Please visit our website ([www.ptforpeace.info](http://www.ptforpeace.info)) for more information. Thanks for the work you are doing.

Ruth Gordon



# Women's Health vs. Corporate Wealth

By Phil Benjamin

**T**he crisis of health care coverage and the crisis of the spread of infectious diseases show the need for health care reform. There are over 43 million people without any health insurance to pay skyrocketing medical bills, and another 60 million with benefits that offer little financial support for needed services. The greater needs of women for access to affordable health care than men indicate the necessity for a stronger movement for universal health care legislation that understands the special needs of women.

The new Senate leadership of Dr. William Frist, the owner and heir to the Hospital Corporation of America, the largest for-profit hospital chain in the US, offers the Bush administration the fig leaf of credibility on the health care legislative front. Frist is a cardiologist who knows clever ways to conceal his profit-greedy approach. He is no dummy. For example, he recently called for the elimination of racial disparities in health care. Racism is a reality in health care and Frist wants to be on the side of good and not evil. But, his words will not be followed up with deeds.

Frist will be pushing a market, profit-making approach to health legislation. For example, he invented the concept of health insurance through tax credits schemes. But, under this kind of proposal, according to the Commonwealth Fund Health Insurance, "tax credits could shortchange women." The Fund

found that "tax credits within the range of those contemplated in recent proposals would not be high enough to make health insurance affordable to women with low incomes." Older women would fare even worse. The director of the Fund, Karen Davis, states that

Health insurance is particularly important for women because they have a greater need for health care than men over their life span, due in part to pregnancy and childbirth earlier in life, and higher rates of chronic illnesses later in life.

Adolescent girls face special problems that must be addressed and covered by all health programs: gynecological problems such as polycystic ovary syndrome, pelvic inflammatory disease, unintended

**Bush's policies may be hazardous to your health.**

pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. It is reported that diseases of adults such as endometriosis and osteoporosis actually can originate in adolescence. Early diagnosis is essential.

The women's movement, including the pro-choice and peace movements, will play a leadership



Valley Community Clinic

*Universal health campaigns will have to consider the special health needs of women.*

role for national health legislation to guarantee that no one is left behind when Congress is negotiating national health care legislation.

While the Republicans look for profit-making solutions, the health care crisis in the US continues to affect everyone. This national disgrace must be addressed in the upcoming 2004 presidential and congressional elections. Unfortunately this may not happen. Too often, financial considerations and concerns over promising too much coverage without a solid health care infrastructure are used to block legislation that would provide universal coverage. Opponents and critics of universal coverage say that we need to move in gradual steps before committing.

Yet, we do have a solid basis on which to provide universal coverage with Medicare and Medicaid. These systems provide coverage for seniors, poor people, as well as some band-aid insurance for children and, in some states, their parents. The current incremental approach has yielded a patchwork quilt of coverage that excludes millions. Proposals for national health legislation should call for universal coverage in order to ensure equitable and affordable health care. ■

*Phil Benjamin is health editor of PA.*

# HOMELAND INSECURITY, FIGHTING BUSH'S WAR ON THE POOR

By Diana Polson

As Bush marches towards war against Iraq, the war continues on the battlefields of America's poorest neighborhoods. And it is spreading. Despite electronics broadening the possibilities for all human life to be provided for, the economic crisis is worsening, pulling more and more people into poverty. Hopelessness is growing across the country due to the hardships people are facing. The Women's Economic Agenda Project (WEAP), a 20-year-old economic justice organization based in Oakland, California, is addressing this hopelessness as we reach out to where our future lies – in the hearts and minds of the American people.

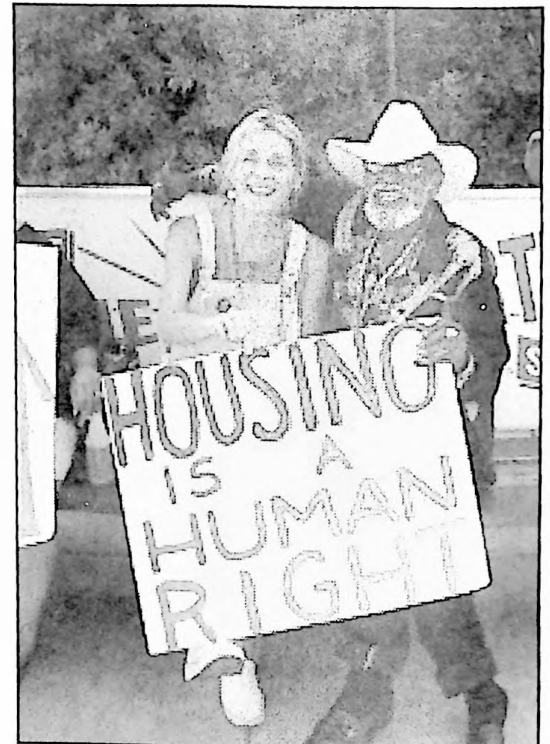
We are at a crossroads. For the first time in human history, we have the technology to feed, clothe, house and provide much-needed medical care to every human being across the world. Technological advances can be used to produce food for all who are hungry, houses can be built in a day and medical advances can improve the lives of children and families everywhere. But at the same time, the gap between rich and poor is growing, the social safety net is disappearing, the health care system is in a state of crisis and good-paying jobs are leaving our communities, only to be replaced with minimum wage work, if with anything at all.

The technological revolution is changing the very nature of our society. During a time of economic expansion in the 1960s, the welfare movement resulted in the broadening of the social safety net, the women's movement led a generation of women to demand equality, and the Civil Rights movement demanded an end to segregation. These movements resulted in inclusion into the already existing system, but the underlying causes of economic oppression were left in place.

We are in a new time. A new class of poor is emerging today. Due to globalization, the structure of the US economy has changed. Industries that used to provide working people with a decent living are now surviving by cheapening labor and replacing human labor with technology. We can see this replacement of human labor everywhere we go. The United States no longer needs many of its workers.

We know this crisis personally because many of us suffer from its effects: lasting unemployment, homelessness, layoffs, lack of quality

health care, unaffordable child care and many others. The statistics reinforce the breadth and depth of the plight we face. The number of unemployed people in California's Bay Area has increased by 52,100 people – an increase of 34 percent in the last year. Over 42 million Americans lack health insurance: this number now exceeds the cumulative population of 23 states plus the District of Columbia. Over 7 million people, 24 percent of California's population, are uninsured. Over 20 percent of California's children live in poverty, and 24 percent of California's children live in low-income working



WEAP activists take a break on a march in Oakland, California.

Diana Polson is coordinator of the Institute for Justice and Economic Security (IJES), the policy arm of the Women's Economic Agenda Project based in Oakland, California.

families. The skyrocketing cost of housing forces many families to choose between rent and food. In January 2003, 114,000 Californians were cut off of welfare due to the federally mandated five-year lifetime limit for receiving aid. More than half of these people work but don't make the living wage that would allow them to leave welfare and poverty.

How do we address such a huge problem? Our strength lies in the millions of people across the United States who have been downsized, are uninsured or underinsured, cannot find affordable housing, are being cut off of welfare, are recovering from addiction and are morally opposed to the direction that this country is going in. The Women's Economic Agenda Project (WEAP) has set out to organize poor and working people of all races and to connect community, faith and labor groups across California to attain our

The gap between rich and poor is growing, the social safety net is disappearing, the health care system is in a state of crisis and good-paying jobs are leaving our communities.

rights to housing, health care and living-wage jobs.

WEAP is a working-class women's organization dedicated to

port themselves and their families.

As the economic and political situation changes in this country, so must our organizing. Through



WEAP activists march for economic justice.

empowering women and all people to fight their own injustices caused by a failed system. Our vision is of economic security for all women and their families and the elimination of poverty. WEAP began in 1982 and was one of the first organizations to address the feminization of poverty. More and more women have joined the ranks of the poor over the last 20 years. The average American family loses \$4,229 annually due to the gender wage gap. If women received equal pay, poverty rates across the country would drop by more than 50 percent. In California, the poverty rate in single-mother households would drop from 19.2 percent to 9.2 percent. Also, women are the fastest growing population of people being imprisoned for drug offenses. Since 1986 the number of women in prison has increased 400 percent. WEAP understands the critical role that poor and working women must play in this movement to end poverty, as they speak truth to the conditions they have to live in as they try to sup-

port themselves and their families. As the economic and political situation changes in this country, so must our organizing. Through marches, bus tours, protests, educational, tribunals, speak-outs and workshops, WEAP has united California workers who have been economically displaced, including refugees of the dot-com revolution, immigrants, the young, the homeless and those cast aside by both the new and the old economies. We began this new type of organizing across the state with our first Freedom Bus Tour in November 2000. On this tour over 40 poor and homeless people crisscrossed the state of California, spotlighting and documenting the shameful economic human rights violations in some of the most destitute areas of the state. The aim was to expand the growing state and national movement known as the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign (PPEHRC).

The PPEHRC is based on the concepts put forward by the United Nations, in a document signed nearly 54 years ago by the United States. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, specifically articles 23, 25 and

26, recognize food, housing, health care, education and living-wage jobs as human rights.

Viewing poverty as a human rights violation allows all people, whether from community-based groups, neighborhoods, homeless shelters, unions or other nations, to condemn poverty and the global capitalism that wreaks havoc on their lives. People who have suffered for a lifetime now understand their hardship and personal struggles in a new framework, through which they

## The fight for women's rights has got to be rooted in the struggle for economic rights.

demand their rights. In simple but powerful language, we encourage poor and working people to fight for brighter futures in which they can provide for themselves, their families and communities.

We march and conduct our freedom rides to break the silence that hides the awful human rights violations of the escalating poverty and unemployment in our state. WEAP advocates that a just welfare system is about getting people out of poverty not simply off the rolls. As we stood opposed to Clinton's drastic cuts and restructuring to welfare, we also participated in sounding the alarm to the dangers of the program in our county as one of 12 organizations to participate in a CalWORKS awareness project in 1998, informing women about their rights under welfare reform. Additionally, we com-

bined this with work to provide computer training for women to get the skills they need to get a living-wage job.

In all of our work, WEAP understands the need not just to identify the problems our country is facing, but to outline and educate about solutions to the economic crisis we face. These solutions include Just Health Care, the right to a living wage, free higher education, safe and affordable housing and workers' rights. We are in dire need of a new health care system as President Bush and Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist plan on privatizing Medicare and as the health care system worsens, resulting in over 40 million across the country without medical care and millions more unable to get adequate coverage for even the most basic care.

The Just Health Care Campaign is the solution we propose to the health care crisis. It is a proposal for universal health care, including universal access to publicly funded, comprehensive, quality health care for all residents of the US from birth to death. Our vision is of a world where all women and their families have the nourishment, shelter and skills to lead happy, healthy and productive lives. Our history is based in the struggle of working-class women fighting to provide for their families. We know that globalization has relegated women to the bottom of the economic pyramid and the fight for women's rights has got to be rooted in the struggle for economic human rights.

Ending poverty in the United States is possible but it will take a new social contract. What is this new social contract? It is society's agreement to take care of its people to insure that everyone can thrive, not just

barely survive. The only way this new social contract will come to be is through a new social movement for economic human rights.

Our efforts at this stage have been on breaking the silence on poverty, countering the isolation felt by the millions of poor Americans who fear they are alone in the crushing uphill battle towards economic security. We have engaged people throughout California and have found that there is growing anxiety among working people. People that were previously doing well can no longer guarantee their families the most basic necessities – food, clothing, housing and health care. More and more families have to focus on their day-to-day survival rather than on educating and spending quality time with their children. All of us sense this crisis, but poverty is still rarely talked about, even amid the downsizing, the layoffs and the inability to feed our families.

Our efforts take us back in history, as we are freedom fighters similar to the abolitionists who were struggling to change an unjust system of slavery, workers who struggled for their rights to organize and women who fought for the right to vote and for equality. We are also taken back to the late 1960s when Martin Luther King, Jr. shifted his focus from civil rights to economic rights. After the Civil Rights movement won the Voting Rights Act of 1964 and the ability to sit at the lunch counter alongside whites, a new problem was exposed. King real-



*The economic crisis has increased homelessness.*

Salvation Army



ized that Blacks could sit at the counter, but without economic security they could not buy the food they needed to survive. In the last years of his life, Martin Luther King was organizing a Poor People's Campaign composed of the poor of all races, focused on gaining housing and employment for America's poor. Martin Luther King said,

Somewhere I read that all men are created equal, with equal rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. But if a man has no job and no income, then he has neither life, nor liberty, nor the possibility of the pursuit of happiness. He merely exists.

Before he died, King was organizing to bring over 3,000 poor people from around the country to a sit in Washington, DC, until the federal government responded to the needs of the poor and unemployed.

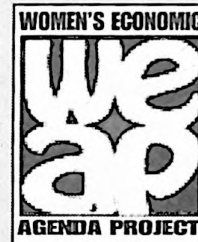
The Women's Economic Agenda Project and organizations around the country have taken off where Dr. Martin Luther King left off, as we continue to build the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign.

The most recent action that WEAP spearheaded was in partnership with our faith-based partner in San Jose, California – the Community Homeless Alliance Ministry (CHAM) – and exemplifies what can happen when we unite community, faith and labor groups. We conducted a March and Freedom Bus Ride to Save the Soul of America throughout the Bay Area. Through this march, we learned that our combined forces achieved much more strength, spirit, clarity, unity, organization, education and media attention than any of us could on our own. Our spiritual partners touched many whose stated mission is the uplifting of humanity and who understand economic rights as God-given rights. Together,

on our common ground as workers and as human beings, we addressed the need for compassion to heal our people and nation. We watched new leaders bring power to their communities with our message of hope and the vision to build a new and truly possible world of freedom.

Join us as we organize from our strengths and on what unites us as humans. This time is filled with great insecurity and great possibility. Our children will be looking back at what we did or did not do to secure their ability to thrive and contribute their strengths to the good of society. Our unity is the only thing that will save the soul of America. ■

## for more INFORMATION



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## Check Out Your MARXIST I.Q.

Each month we will pose five questions from the Marxist classics, and other sources. This month the questions deal with issues related to our special issue on the struggles of women.

**1.) Engels based his Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, which discusses the role of women in society, on Marx's notes and**

- [a] Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*
- [b] Lewis Henry Morgan's *Ancient Society*
- [c] Charles Darwin's *The Descent of Man*
- [d] Sir John Lubbock's *Prehistoric Times*.

**2.) The best-known Soviet "feminist" and Commissar of Social Welfare, and only woman, in Lenin's government was**

- [a] Klara Zetkin
- [b] Yelizaveta Krupskaya
- [c] Inessa Armand
- [d] Alexandra Kollontai.

**3.) According to Engels, domestic labor contributes to the economic oppression of women by**

- [a] subjecting them to the laws of socially necessary labor time
- [b] removing them from social production
- [c] subjecting them to patriarchal authority
- [d] denying that they engage in productive labor.

**4.) The first socialist country whose Family Code specifically enjoined men to share housework and childcare equally with women was that of**

- [a] Cuba
- [b] the Soviet Union
- [c] China
- [d] the German Democratic Republic.

**5.) Engels says that "to bring the whole female sex back into public industry" (i.e., to give it equality) which of the following must be abolished as the economic unit of society**

- [a] the factory
- [b] the closed union shop
- [c] the monogamous family
- [d] the bourgeois property relation.

See answers on page 24.

Questions based on articles in *Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, ed. by Tom Bottomore.

# YOUR Health, Choice,

## An Interview with Erica Smiley of Choice USA

*Editor's note:* Erica Smiley is the Campaign Coordinator for Choice USA. She is also chair of the Youth Commission of the Black Radical Congress. She was interviewed by Joel Wendland.

**PA:** *Can you tell us about Choice USA and its goals?*



Erica Smiley

**ES:** Choice USA is one of the most recently established national reproductive rights organizations and has made its niche working solely from a youth perspective. Recognizing that young women and men are affected by attacks on reproductive choice, Choice USA organizes youth to put forth strategies to defend and further a woman's freedom to control her body. Through national and regional trainings and institutes, local and national campaigns and substantive volunteer, internship and fellowship opportunities, Choice USA aims to ensure youth have the tools needed to lead today's struggle for reproductive rights.

**PA:** *What are some special issues young women face regarding reproductive rights?*

**ES:** There are many. Access to emergency contraception in student health centers is a big issue.

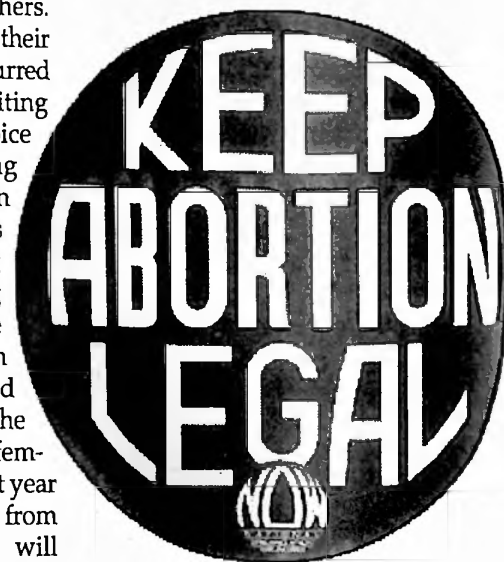
One of the most exciting campaigns Choice USA is running is to fund comprehensive sex education. We often underestimate the importance of sex education within the public schools. The goal is to guarantee that youth have access to all of the information they need to make healthy and responsible decisions when it comes to relationships, sex and reproduction.

We've kicked off a sex education campaign right in our own backyard in Washington, DC's public high schools. Other community members and organizations have shown an interest and we are building a local coalition of parents and teachers. Students are still fine-tuning their strategy. Our campaign has spurred surprise and extremely exciting alliances between pro-choice youth, unions representing school health and education employees and even religious bodies in the DC area. Young people, especially young women, are beginning to see control over their bodies as an issue of self-determination and not just a campaign created for the first time in the 1960s by white feminists. Hopefully within the next year we'll win some concrete gains from DC officials after which we will begin building elsewhere in the nation.

**PA:** *What kind of opposition have you encountered?*

Mainly the opposition has been with funding. There is a lot of support, ideologically, for comprehensive sex education in order to prevent teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. But the city council and school board representatives, many of whom do not necessarily see this as a budget priority, are saying that there's just no money.

Part of the problem can be attributed to federal funding streams, which are the Special Projects of Regional and National Significance (SPRANS) funding stream, the welfare reform stream (Community Based Abstinence Curriculum, Title V of Welfare Reform) and the Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA). [This funding is for abstinence-only programs, not comprehensive sex education.]



Washington, DC, has actually received SPRANS funding, quite a bit of money, approximately \$880,000 from the federal government.



HIV/AIDS activists call for more money to fight the AIDS crisis.

There's money for abstinence-only sex education programs, but no money, no federal support, for comprehensive sex education programs. Clearly, when it comes to funding on a local level – and this isn't only happening in DC – what we're facing specifically is an imbalance in funding. There's not enough money to fund teachers, books and curriculum for sex education. We're trying to figure out a way to flip that balance, at least on a local level, and get it funded. This is what DC youth come up against in demanding funding for sex education from their school board and city council. There are currently no federally funded programs for comprehensive sex education.

**PA:** *What is an abstinence-only program?*

**ES:** Abstinence-only programs are very flawed and give a lot of misguided information. They are very much based in conservative rhetoric and theory. Such programs try to prevent young people from engaging in sex until they are married and in heterosexual relationships. Anything else, contraception, abortion, or anything outside of a heterosexual marriage, is considered wrong and has psychological and physical consequences. These programs teach false success rates for condom and other contraceptive use, based on right-wing rhetoric as opposed to medical

fact, and discourage young women from getting birth control pills.

When arguing for comprehensive sex education, we are really just arguing the need to teach youth medically accurate information to insure they have all the information needed to make healthy, responsible decisions. Our basic stance is that to prevent young people from having sex until they feel they are ready is a

Abstinence-only programs teach false success rates for condom and other contraceptive use, based on right-wing rhetoric as opposed to medical fact.



noble thing to do. But doing so at the risk of lying or giving wrong information is dangerous.

**PA:** *Do myths about sex education have an effect on health issues?*

**ES:** Yes, for example, there is a

move to get youth to sign a virginity pledge. It is well known more than half who sign the pledge end up breaking it. The problem is not that they have sex. Since they've only been taught abstinence, they have no idea about contraceptives or what to do if they become pregnant or infected. Young women and men end up getting into more trouble than if they had had comprehensive sex education. In this case, an informed decision would have been a more responsible one.

**PA:** *Pro-choice advocates have accused the Bush administration of altering public health web sites. Information has been found suggesting abortions lead to breast cancer. Is there a relationship between abstinence ideology and what the Bush administration has done?*

**ES:** The Bush administration, to appease conservative supporters, is definitely making an all-out attack on reproductive choice. This is medically inaccurate information. Statements like "abortions lead to breast cancer" are outright lies. Legitimizing such statements by putting it on a government web site is why people are criticizing Bush. It's no longer about making sure people have all of their options available but more about promoting right-wing propaganda. This is out-and-out wrong.

In Washington, DC, we actually have one of the highest rates of teen pregnancy and HIV/AIDS infections. We probably have some of the highest rates of sexually transmitted infections, because we aren't teaching young people how to protect themselves. So when the DC City Council tells us there is not enough funding, it relates directly back to the Bush administration.

**PA:** *How do these issues affect women of color?*

**ES:** Reproductive choice has an



NOW activists fight for affirmative action.

interesting impact in Washington, DC, which is known as the "Chocolate city." Women of color have historically been used as breeding mechanisms or, in the period of eugenics, to prevent a particular race from reproducing. The issues concerning reproductive choice in the women of color community can often be very, very different. When I said breeding mechanism, I should clarify that this means during the period of slavery or indentured servitude where women were used to reproduce the work force. The history of how women of color have been treated reproductively has had an impact on how many women view reproductive choice today.

These issues are very intense and difficult to address on a personal level, because they often affect a women of color's not being able to choose when she wants to have a child. "Crack campaigns" offer drug-addicted women quick money to become sterilized and welfare reform imposes limits on the number of children one can have. In addition, Black and Latina women have some of the highest rates of hysterectomies compared to white women, showing doctors are more prone to prescribe this surgical solution than its alternatives. Thus, reproductive choice for women of color

Reproductive choice for women of color often has a completely different meaning.



The Republicans hope to use their slim control of the Supreme Court to overturn laws protecting a woman's right to choose.

often has a completely different meaning.

For example, when the eugenics movement was strong, women of color and low-income women were prevented from having children altogether to decrease the number of minority births. [As a result of this history,] you'll still hear arguments by Black women in medical or academic journals saying that abortion is nothing but genocide. And that's frustrating, because, as we see it, reproductive choice is an issue of self-determination. It is an issue for a woman and her partner to decide if and when to have sex, if and when to have a child and if and when to terminate a pregnancy. When it's looked at as an issue of self determination, then even the ability to have children becomes an issue of reproductive choice. So with women of color, issues of reproductive choice generally, but not always, focus on this. And it is a little worrisome when the anti-choice community exploits this very delicate differentiation with women of color in an effort to make them appear to be more anti-choice when, in actuality, women of color want the same amount of control and self-determination over their bodies as white women.

It is the job of youth to

demonstrate that reproductive choice is an issue of self-determination, an issue of controlling when you will and will not reproduce. Wanting to have a child, and/or wanting to prevent or terminate a

door and broaden the issue of reproductive choice, its going to be incredibly important in mobilizing communities of color to vote with us, even just voting for sex education in your town.

a huge disregard for democracy in other nations. Bush's executive order sent a chilling message to the reproductive rights community and to women who had voted for Bush who were blinded by the "compassionate" image he promoted. Some state legislatures even attempted to pass statewide gag orders under the same philosophy. Pennsylvania is one such example. Our local affiliates at Pennsylvania State University, the University of Pittsburgh and Muhlenberg College were strong enough to beat it!

## Bush's refusal to allow advocacy for reproductive rights demonstrates a huge disregard for democracy in other nations.

pregnancy are all valid options, and the right to choose which path to follow should be supported and protected by the government - not attacked.

*PA: How important is it for the rest of the pro-choice community to understand this?*

ES: When considered as an issue of self-determination, it opens the door to accepting different perspectives on how reproductive choice might be viewed. It's incredibly important for the entire reproductive choice community to recognize, because when it's looked at as just something that the white feminist movement did for the first time back in 1973, then it limits all reproductive choice issues that happened before then with regards to breeding and eugenics. Even funding remains an issue, because abortion hasn't always been accessible, even since *Roe v. Wade*. If you can't afford one, it's not accessible. If we open the

*PA: Since entering office, Bush has made decisions against reproductive choice. What has been the impact?*

ES: There are so many things to talk about here. Choice USA has two campaigns addressing specific cut-backs. When first entering office, Bush issued an executive order known as the Global Gag Order, which froze USAID funds to international clinics and organizations that performed legal abortions, counseled patients about abortions and contraception, referred people to other clinics that performed abortions or advocated reproductive choice laws. Anything that minutely related to a potential abortion provider was cut off from funding. It's interesting because the rhetoric that the Bush administration used was, "We don't want American tax dollars going towards abortion." Now mind you, the US never funded international abortions due to the Helms Amendment in 1973, which prohibits international family planning programs from doing so.

This refusal to allow advocacy for reproductive rights demonstrates

*PA: Could you elaborate on the consequences of the Bush policy on funding for international programs?*

ES: The United States, through its USAID funding stream, often gives money to clinics in countries around the world for basic services, including basic reproductive rights services, such as pap smears, counseling and other family planning, contraception, and particularly with AIDS counseling. With lots of AIDS campaigns going on worldwide, the US has paid for such things as condoms to be distributed and AIDS education.

By cutting off USAID funding, they ended services such as pap

◆ (continued on page 30)

## for more INFORMATION

**Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States:**  
[www.siecus.org](http://www.siecus.org)

**SIECUS NY Office**  
130 West 42nd Street, Suite 350  
New York, NY 10036-7802  
Phone: 212/819-9770  
Fax: 212/819-9776

**SIECUS DC Office**  
1706 "R" Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20009  
Phone: 202/265-2405  
Fax: 202/462-2340

**Choice USA**  
1010 Wisconsin Ave. NW, Suite 410  
Washington, DC 20007  
[www.choiceusa.org](http://www.choiceusa.org)

**No New Money for Abstinence-Only Programs:**  
[www.nonewmoney.org](http://www.nonewmoney.org)

**The Global Democracy and Protection Act is titled S. 367 in the Senate and HR. 755 in the House.**

# REVERSING DISCRIMINATION

## Affirmative Action on Trial

By Melissa Chadburn

A major accomplishment of past civil rights struggles has been the creation of affirmative action policies that have provided greater access for people of color and women to higher education and jobs.

And while the right attacks affirmative action programs, they have also continued to strip the social safety net on which many people of color have come to rely. The result is that people of color are more likely to experience economic difficulties combined with restricted access to jobs and programs that might alleviate those hardships. Additionally, the basis on which the right attacks affirmative action ignores the real root of

racial and economic inequality in this country.

In the early 1980s, defense spending skyrocketed and federal spending on virtually all programs affecting poor children was cut significantly, including Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), food stamps, Medicaid and other health and nutrition programs. There was a shocking increase in deaths among infants: a 3 percent rise in 1983, and growing ever since. This was primarily a reflection of such preventable social and economic conditions as poor nutrition, inadequate housing, faulty sanitary facilities, lack of basic health (for pregnant

women as well as newborn children) and the like. With a 9.8 infant death rate for every 1,000 live births in 1989 (the most recent year for which final figures were available), America was one of the worst places in the industrialized world for a child to be born. For African American and Hispanic children, among whom the death rate was nearly twice as high as among Anglo infants, the chances of surviving the first year of life were less than for babies in many third world countries.

Furthermore, because of a dramatic increase in teenage pregnancy and single-parent families, declining wages, growing unemployment and lower welfare payments, by the mid-1990s approximately 26 million American children – about two out of five of those who survived the first year of life – were living in poverty. This was an increase of well over 50 percent from the previous decade, and the number and percentage were rising. It also meant that children were the single largest group of destitute citizens in the entire nation. The US came to have the highest child poverty rate in the industrial world. Furthermore, according to a study conducted by the National Academy of Sciences, the fastest growing group in

Credit: www.bamn.com



Thousands of students march to support affirmative action at the University of Michigan in 2001.

*Melissa Chadburn is a law student and member of the Young Communist League.*

America with no place to live were those under 18 years of age. At least 100,000 children were homeless on any given night, and their number, too, was growing.

Because children of color are disproportionately represented in this population of poor children, programs to reverse the trend are crucial. Advocates of affirmative action believe that the controversial program has a major role to play in reversing poverty trends among families and children of color. With statistics like those mentioned here, it is evident that programs such as

Students who are the children of the wealthy have advantages when applying to universities. George W. Bush is only the most famous example.

affirmative action are necessary to redress the imbalance of resources available to economically disadvantaged groups, minorities and women.

But affirmative action opponents refuse to allow this issue to be seen in its larger context. They have tried to give the public only a narrow view of what affirmative action is and does. As result, they are focusing their effort to abolish affirmative action in single-issue arenas.

The most recent example is the lawsuits against the University of Michigan (*Gratz v. Bollinger* and *Grutter v. Bollinger*), which gives points to qualified students of color and female students in the admis-

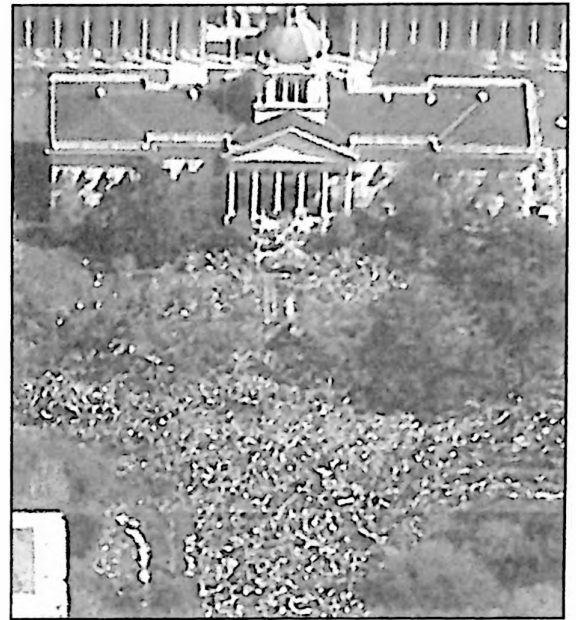
sions process. This allows students of color to have a greater chance of serious consideration and acceptance for admission. Points are also awarded to all women students based on economic disadvantages. Some students get points simply because their parents attended the school – a rule that gives distinct advantages to wealthier students who are almost always white.

Opponents of affirmative action rarely consider the interplay between class, gender and racial differences. They argue often that students who have benefited from affirmative action policies are not as qualified as students who might have been excluded from admission.

The message is that students of color are always not as capable as white students. But to believe this argument is to ignore some important facts about university admission. For example, students who are the children of donors have advantages when applying for admissions. George W. Bush is only the most famous example. Not even George W. Bush has tried to argue that he was a capable student. Similarly, a study conducted in the early 1990s showed that in the Harvard graduating class of 1992, 200 white students, who could only be characterized as objectively “unqualified” upon entry, gained admission for no other reason than that their parents attended the school. This number was higher than all of the Black, Chicano, American Indian and Puerto Rican students graduating that year combined.

People who have legally challenged affirmative action in higher education because they were excluded to make room for “unqualified” students of color rarely consider that perhaps they were excluded to make room for unqualified white students whose families happened to be well-known or rich.

The point is that wealthy stu-



Thousands of protesters march in Florida in 2000 against Jeb Bush's plan to eliminate affirmative action in university admissions and state contracting.

dents have another kind of affirmative action that is automatically accepted and assumed to be the normal operating procedure. This class advantage remains unchallenged by opponents of affirmative action for students of color.

In the two lawsuits challenging the University of Michigan's use of affirmative action, Grutter and Gratz claim their rejections for admission were the result of racial discrimination against them because they are white.

On December 2, 2002, the Supreme Court announced that it would hear the Grutter and Gratz cases this term. The decision in these cases could very well be among the most important civil rights issues of the 21st century as the outcome of these cases may determine whether or not colleges have an affirmative duty to provide equal access to higher education.

The last time the Supreme Court agreed to hear a case on affirmative action was in the case of the *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* in 1978. In this case, the Supreme Court struck down “quotas,” but upheld that race could be considered as a factor for college applicants, because it believed that a diverse student body would improve the

educational experience of all students.

As a result of the court's decision, some universities decided to award points to the applications of Black, Latino and Asian perspective students in order to ensure a higher representation in the student body. The University of Michigan followed suit.

Since the cases were filed in 1997 the University of Michigan has firmly stood by its decision to offer equal opportunity education. Its administration maintains that not only do minority students that are admitted benefit from affirmative action but the student body as a whole can benefit from the diversity of their peers.

Advocates of affirmative action point to California as an example of what happens in universities when admissions policies that open universities to racial minorities are removed. In 1996 California ended affirmative action through Proposition 209, and since then the admission rates of people of color fell drastically (44 percent at UC Berkley and 36 percent at UCLA). In the state of Washington, after the passage of the anti-affirmative action Initiative 200 in 1998, a similar effect was seen in the state's universities. A decision on the University of Michigan cases is expected in the summer of 2003.

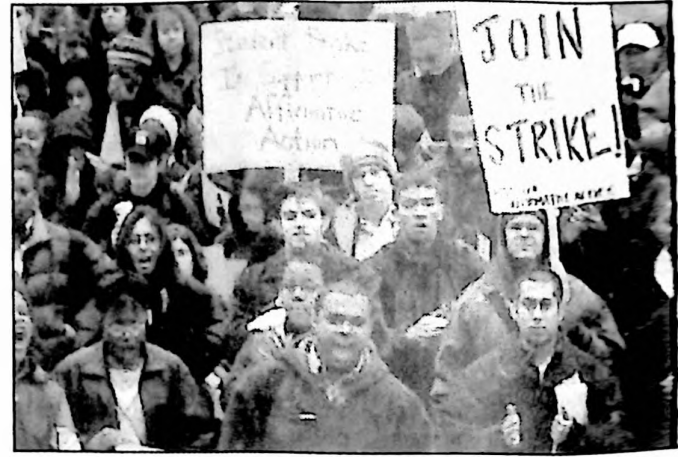
Proponents of the affirmative action admission policy have collab-

orated in an organization called Americans for a Fair Chance (AFC) to aid the University of Michigan in its defense. Shirley J. Wilcher, executive director for AFC, a consortium of six of America's leading civil rights organizations, said,

The future of America is contingent upon creating opportunities for tomorrow's leaders. As America is becoming increasingly diverse, affirmative action to promote a diverse student body and to remedy past discrimination continues to be a national imperative.

Americans for a Fair Chance includes the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, National Pacific American Legal Consortium, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., National Partnership for Women and Families, and the National Women's Law Center.

William Trattner, a welfare advocate, in his book, *From Poor Law to Welfare State*, argues:



University of Michigan students strike to support equal access to higher education through affirmative action.

The fate of the world is determined by the influences, which prevail with the child from birth to seven years of age. All our problems go back to the child-corrupt politics, dishonesty, and greed in commerce, war, anarchism, drunkenness, incompetence and criminality. We know that much of our labor for the radical betterment of society is costly and fruitless. It is because we are working against nature. We take the twig after it is bent and has stiffened into a tree. We take the brook after it has become a torrent.

This reformer means that historically America has responded inadequately to its shortcomings, whether they are health issues, race-related or civil rights-related. We have very few programs that address the root of the problems or make up for any past and current racial discrimination or inequalities. Affirmative action is the only program that even remotely resembles any form of reparations, yet is still only limited to a select group of future generations while ignoring disadvantaged groups as a whole. Without affirmative action we only have our past to look forward to.

On April 1, supporters of affirmative action are planning a march in Washington, DC, to call for a new civil rights movement. Litigation and legislation alone will not prevail. The defeat of Jim Crow or the victory of affirmative action in the 1960s would not have been successful without a mass movement. ■

## REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA VS. BAKKE, 1978

In this case, the US Supreme Court ruled that race could not be considered as a factor in university admissions in order to correct past injustices. Essentially, they argued that reversing institutional discrimination was not fair. Justice Powell, who wrote the majority decision, did argue, however, that universities could use race in the admissions process in order to broaden the diversity of the student population to enhance the quality of the educational environment. This aspect of the judgment is what the University of Michigan bases its case upon.



# Star Struck

## The POLITICS Behind the DAZZLE

By Michael Shepler

In a society in which self-aggrandizing award shows abound, Oscar night remains, for many movie fans, a guilty pleasure. Political and partisan from its inception, the Oscars hold up a mirror, often distorted, sometimes accurate, not only to Hollywood, which is little more than a name now, but to the country, the world and the tenor of the time. Many viewers of this years Oscar ceremonies may not know that the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences was originally formed at the behest of Louis B. Mayer in 1927 to function as a company union, which successfully delayed labor organizing in the film community for five years.

In the years when the studios flourished there was generally a good crop of films from which to choose when the Oscars rolled around. The abundance of quality often made it seem less obvious when more controversial films were overlooked. An egregious example occurred when Alfred Hitchcock's *Rebecca* was voted best picture for 1940 over Orson Wells' *Citizen Kane*. Although nominated in multiple categories, *Citizen Kane* won for best original screenplay alone.

Sometimes it didn't work out

that way. In 1946 *The Best Years of Our Lives* took seven awards including best actor, best screenplay and best picture. Coming at the close of World War II, the film involved three vets and their return to peacetime America. Resisting the cliché happy

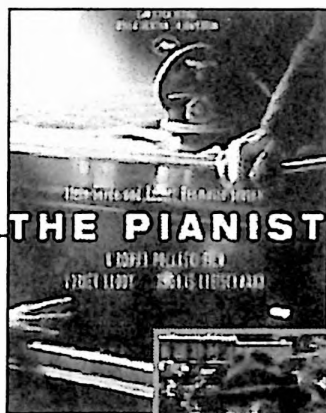
ending, it presented a co-mingling of hopefulness and unease; a yearning for a lasting peace alongside the knowledge that fascism has deep roots and dies hard. Little more than a year later the House Committee on Un-American Activities began its investigation of "Communist influence" in the picture industry. *Lives* director William Wyler stated that his film could not have been made in the climate of fear that had subsequently settled over Hollywood.

Progressive Hollywood had just five years until the second round of hearings in 1951 fully institutionalized the blacklist. During this "gray" period moviegoers were treated to masterworks such as *Body and Soul* in 1947 (John Garfield was nominated for best actor, losing out to Ronald

Colman in *A Double Life*), *Force of Evil* in 1948 (again starring Garfield, written and directed by Abraham Polonsky, remarkably receiving no nominations and its creators were blacklisted) and *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* in 1948 (winning best direction and best screenplay, both to John Huston

### MY OSCAR CHOICES

**Best Picture:**  
*The Pianist*



**Best Actor:**  
Adrien Brody in *The Pianist*



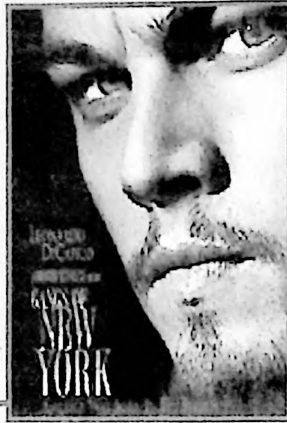
**Best Actress:**  
Julianne Moore in *Far From Heaven*

Michael Shepler is a poet and playwright living in Walnut Creek, California.

# MY OSCAR CHOICES

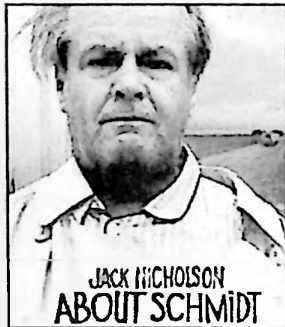
## Best Supporting Actor:

Daniel-Day Lewis in *Gangs of New York*



## Best Supporting Actress:

Kathy Bates in *About Schmidt*



## Best Documentary:

*Bowling for Columbine*



along with best supporting actor to Walter Huston).

The industry continued to rely on blacklisted writers throughout the 1950s. Best screenplay winners in 1956, 1957 and 1958 were blacklisted writers writing under assumed names. The blacklist was officially broken in 1960 when Dalton Trumbo's screenplay of *Spartacus* helped the film win four Academy Awards. Still, each writer had to battle his own way back onto the screen and while many did, others did not.

In 1955 Elia Kazan's *On the Waterfront* took eight Oscars. Stunning for its acting and location shooting, at its core the film was a justification for informers. Both Kazan and script writer Budd Schulberg had been high-profile "friendly witnesses" before the Un-American

Committee. A dramatic footnote occurred in 1999 when Waterfront director Elia Kazan's name was put forth by industry conservatives as recipient of a lifetime achievement award. A dozen survivors of the blacklist, among them, Abraham Polonsky, Ring Lardner, Jr. and Bernard Gordon formed the Committee Against Silence,

which protested the presentation and picketed outside the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion on Oscar night. Kazan got his award but the applause was muted.

Crippled by loss of an anti-trust suit and television's impact the studio system began to fall apart in the late 1950s. For a number of years this seemed to have a positive effect for moviegoers. Low-budget moneymakers like *Marty* and *Easy Rider* led to more adult sub-

ject matter. This new wave of films often included big Oscar winners.

By the mid-1970s, coinciding with the first films of Spielberg and Lucas and a general turn to the right politically, the studios were swallowed up by conglomerates. We began seeing far fewer worthwhile films, a gradual triumph of special effects over story, carnage over character and the dominance of demographics, with most movies geared toward a teenage audience. This, unfortunately remains the case today.

This year as in the past, I plan to check in periodically on the awards ceremony. There are always a handful of new movies worth seeing. Among the 2002 crop: Michael Moore's anti-gun lobby film, *Bowling for Columbine*; *Far From Heaven*, an unaffectionate look at 1950s America cloaked in the guise of a recreated Ross Hunter confection; *Frida*, an ambitious, often dazzling biography of Frida Kahlo which, untruthfully and unfortunately features her between the sheets with Trotsky(!); *The Pianist*, Roman Polanski's austere Holocaust story; and *Gangs of New York*, which features Martin Scorsese's take on immigrant America and the draft riots of 1863.

For the first time in quite a while there are a growing number of films which are attempting to stretch a bit beyond the empty fare doled out since the 1980s. I believe there is an audience that hungers for intelligent, passionate films. Certainly a work comparable to John Ford's *Grapes of Wrath* could be fashioned from the lives of people who are suffering daily from George Bush's Social Darwinist agenda.

Studios and many actors lobby shamelessly in the weeks before the ceremony.

Pictures that win awards are guaranteed a new lease on life at the box office, and a winning actor or actress is assured, if only for a few years, larger paychecks and a higher spot in the casting pecking order. As with all of life, it's politics. ■



# CELEBRATING WOMEN'S HISTORY YESTERDAY & TODAY

**M**any of the most remarkable women activists in modern history were members of the socialist and later Communist movements. One such woman was Claudia Jones.

Born in Trinidad in the British West Indies around World War I, Claudia Jones grew up in Harlem in the 1920s and 1930s, becoming a factory worker while still a teenager. The



## Ain't I a WOMAN? The Story of Claudia Jones

By Norman Markowitz

International Labor Defense (ILD) campaign for the Scottsboro youth attracted her to the Communist movement. Her talents as a speaker and organizer soon led to her emergence as a community leader. She worked as Harlem youth leader of the National Negro Congress, the most significant mass organization connecting the struggle for civil rights and labor rights of the time.

For Jones, the issues of workers' rights, civil rights and women's rights were dialectically interrelated. She quickly established herself as an enemy of male chauvinism, bringing that concept forward in both the community and in the Communist Party USA, particular-

ly to male leaders who weren't always happy to confront it. For Jones, the Communist movement was a movement of equals, and criticism and self-criticism were central to all Party work.

Jones was a critic of Earl Browder's revisionist policies, particularly his abandonment of the CPUSA's position on self-determination for African Americans before his removal as general secretary at the end of World War II. She served briefly in the postwar era as Secretary of the Party's women's commission at a time when the CPUSA and the international movement generally were renewing work against male chauvinism and for women's rights. However, the domestic Cold War,

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*Norman Markowitz is a contributing editor of PA.*

CELEBRATING WOMEN'S HISTORY YESTERDAY & TODAY • WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH • CELEBRATING HISTORY YESTERDAY & TODAY

CELEBRATING WOMEN'S HISTORY YESTERDAY & TODAY ● WOMEN'S  
HISTORY MONTH ● CELEBRATING WOMEN'S  
HISTORY YESTERDAY & TODAY

launched by large corporate capital, the bipartisan conservative coalition in Congress and the Truman administration against the CPUSA and its allies, soon brought fierce repression against party activists and prison sentences for many Party leaders.

Jones was imprisoned at the Alderson Federal Reformatory for Women in 1951

and spent the last months of her life in London editing a revolutionary journal, the *West Indian Gazette*, for West Indian workers. Her death, before the age of 40 in 1952, robbed working-class women and men, Blacks and whites, West Indians and Americans, of a courageous and remarkable leader. Jones embodied the strength and dynamism of working-class women, raising



*Claudia Jones established herself as an enemy of sexism.*

under the anti-Bill-of-Rights Smith Act for "conspiring to teach or advocate the violent overthrow of the government," the same ruse used to imprison Ben Davis, Gus Hall and other CPUSA national leaders. The prison sentence aggravated the tuberculosis she had contracted as a young worker in Harlem in the 1930s. Fearing perhaps that she would die in prison, the Truman administration released her after a year and had her deported to Great Britain, the colonial master of her native Trinidad.

Although she had little time left, Clau-

dia Jones spent the last months of her life in London editing a revolutionary journal, the *West Indian Gazette*, for West Indian workers. Her death, before the age of 40 in 1952, robbed working-class women and men, Blacks and whites, West Indians and Americans, of a courageous and remarkable leader. Jones embodied the strength and dynamism of working-class women, raising

For further reading see:

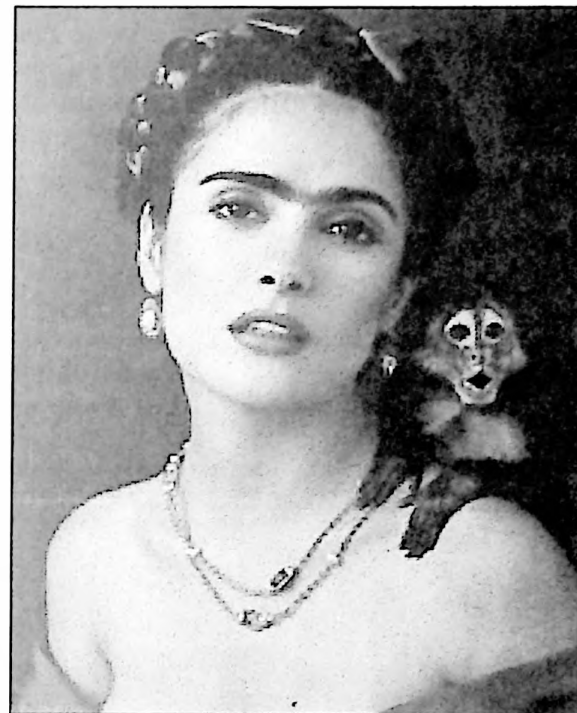
Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem During the Depression* (Urbana, U. of Illinois Press, 1983) and Angela Davis, *Women, Race, and Class* (New York, Random House, 1981) contain valuable material concerning women, the Communist movement and Claudia Jones. ■

*Frida was an enthusiast: she got the most out of everything. The world around her was more than enough cause for permanent rejoicing. She celebrated saint's days, birthdays, baptisms, and most of the popular holidays, both religious and secular.*

*Frida's Fiestas, Guadeloupe Rivera and Marie-Pierre Cole*

**F**rida Kahlo was born of a Mexican mother and a German Jewish émigré father. "Frida" is apparently Yiddish for joy, happiness and freedom.

I remember the first time I saw her artwork in a book about her life. I opened the book slowly several times and slammed it shut before building up the courage to read it in its entirety. Perhaps the images evoked feelings of pain, anguish and a power once known and forgotten. Reading through the book's pages, I came to under-



Salma Hayek portrays Frida.

# REFLECTIONS ON FRIDA

By Claire Carew

stand Frida's gift to us was her superb understanding and expression of self. The book ends with the great artist's cremation as Diego Rivera, her husband, stood by silently watching the flames engulf the body but not her spirit.

The first time I drove up to Casa Azul (the Blue House), Frida's home in Mexico, I looked at the soldier standing guard and wondered why security was needed. This was in 1996. The courtyard, as seen in the movie *Frida*, was rich with vegetation and cheerfulness that only the tropics can so abundantly accomplish. A sense of her presence filled the air as I looked at her dresses and read her diary, though she had

left this earth 42 years prior to my visit. It wasn't long after that that I visited Casa Azul twice more, again weaving threads of memory and carefully observing all that was there for me to see and feel. It was evident that Frida's spirit triumphed over pain and physical challenges. This is what I teach my students and this I believe they respond to well. My students who are primarily of South Asian ancestry easily identify with Frida. The halls of our schools are filled with her likeness, "Miss, she looks like mother," the students say.

The great Mexican artist's life story continues to reverberate throughout the world with a movie of her life, starring the Mexican

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Claire Carew is a artist and educator living in Toronto.

actor Salma Hayek which came to theaters in 2002. The movie *Frida* has at least honored the vitality of both the artist and the woman of color. Hollywood doesn't often show us as we are – especially if we are Communist.

There is a Negro spiritual with the line "Ain't no grave can keep my body down" that describes what has happened with Frida. She is very much alive and as with any movement and any hero, whether it be Dr. King or Frida, the thrust comes from the people. Then the powers-that-be may declare a holiday or make a movie. With this in mind one must thank the filmmakers, especially Hayek, for getting the film produced. At the same time, one wishes it were a three-dimensional Frida, the Frida I have come to know.

In reality, Frida Kahlo's paintings explore her identity and are highly revealing capsules

of her grief, emotional turmoil and strength. The imagery shows her strong connection to her aboriginal roots and interests in the Aztec worldview. The theme of birth, physical and psychological pain, and death and duality are often featured in her works. Aztec legacies, Mexican and Egyptian goddesses and other world imagery populate her work.

## The great Mexican artist's life story continues to reverberate throughout the world.



What would Frida say about herself if she were alive today?

*I am Frida Kahlo of Mexico. My life has been bittersweet. I will not diminish myself to fit into your box. 'I never knew I was a surrealist till Andre Breton came to Mexico (in 1938) and told me I was.'\* I am proud and vibrant. My clothing, hair and jewelry tell you my strengths; I include Aztec glyphs, Mexican and Egyptian goddesses Coatlicue, Queen Nefertiti, Christian icons. I have studied Freud. Look at my art if you want to know about me, my photographs. Look at my home if you want to understand me. Read the books I have read. Study the Aztecs. I am flattered that in the year 2002 ordinary people are learning about me. See the movie. I return your stare.*

*Yours Truly,  
Frida*

*\*Carr O'Keefe, Kahlo: Places of Their Own. ■*

# INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY MARCH 8

CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY • WOMEN'S  
WORKING-CLASS MOVEMENT

Capitalist restructuring is promoted all over. Working peoples' social gains are being abolished to reduce labor costs. The relative and absolute impoverishment of sections of the working class is increasing. The working-class family is increasingly burdened with expenses for education, health care, welfare, insurance and retirement. Private capital is gaining ground in these sectors. Women are particularly affected.

The restructuring being carried out in labor relations, the economy and in social security will have grave consequences for working people and the popular strata of society.

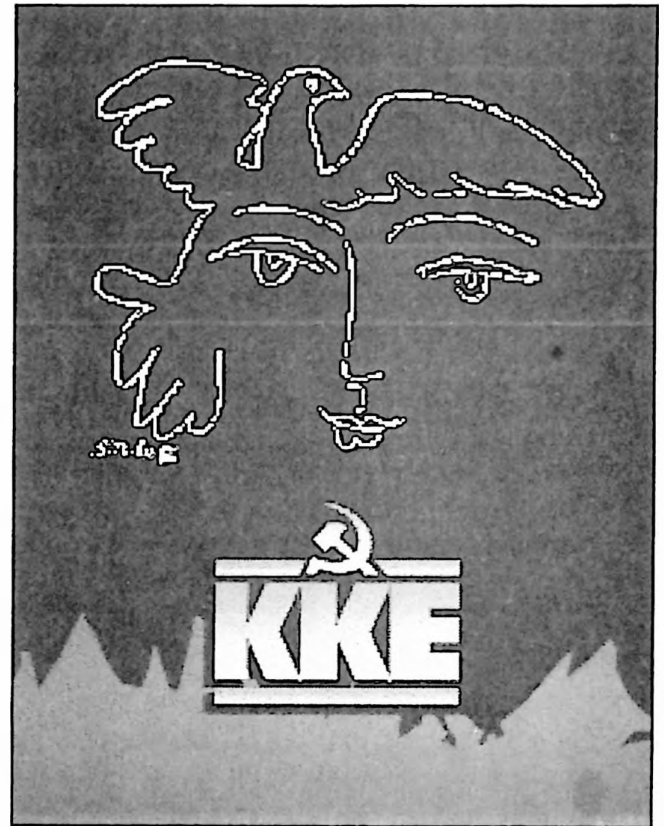
## WOMEN'S EQUALITY: The GREEK View

By Aleka Papparigha

The expansion of flexible work, the establishment of "flexible" pensioning, the reduction in health care and social benefits along with privatization will exacerbate even more the already acute problems faced by women. Part-time employment of women will increase.

The militant women's movement, along with the trade union movement, the anti-war movement and the popular movement is currently undertaking a number of actions around these issues.

Women's struggle is in common with that



of other working people. At the same time, however, special efforts are required for both sexes to support the cause of fighting discrimination against women, including older as well as more recent prejudices rooted in class exploitation and inequality.

Capitalist restructuring and the superstructure supporting it are rendering women's problems more acute, placing more obstacles to the increased participation of women in the organizations of the mass movement and to the access and use of free time.

"Flexible labor" measures intended to support a woman's right to work are in reality

*Aleka Papparigha is general secretary of the Communist Party of Greece.*

pretexts for part time contingent labor policies and must be struggle against.

Women must demand full-time, stable jobs with pay corresponding to the increased needs of themselves and of their families.



Greek workers protest Bush's war.

Credit: www.rizospastis.gr

The protection of children is a matter that involves both parents. The establishment of an integrated network of social facilities for the family, children, senior citizens and people with special needs would help to improve the lives of women and to increase free time at their disposal. As things have become established today, the greatest part of the burden of caring for all the above-mentioned categories is borne by women.

Greece's educational system must take into account the need to educate children and adolescents in the principles of gender equality and against prejudice and anachronistic views. Within this framework a struggle must be promoted to change the content and orientation of the mass media as regards this issue.

A serious effort is being made by the Communist Party of Greece to inform the people and disclose all the anti-popular and anti-labor measures that have been taken or are in the pipeline, along with measures to expand political action. ■

We demand:

- a 35-hour week with a seven-hour workday five days a week;
- retirement at age 55 and 50 for heavy, unhealthy work or after 30 years of work regardless of age; and
- pension increases based on 80 percent of salary or 20 daily wages of an unskilled laborer.

Other demands include a free public health-care system with specific measures to protect women during the duration of their reproductive years. Special attention must be placed on the prevention of occupational diseases, based on the specific features of women's health needs. Likewise, preventive medicine and the special monitoring of expectant mothers and their children is important. Social security must be extended to women with special needs, widows, divorcees, women lacking insurance coverage and single mothers. Family planning centers and free modern state-run day care, providing creative activity for children and toddlers, must be established.

## Check Out Your MARXIST I.Q.

The answers to the questions on page 9:  
1) B, 2) D, 3) B, 4) A, 5) C

### How to score yourself:

Each question is worth 20 points.

0-40: You need to go to a re-education camp.

50-60: You are unprepared to withstand bourgeois revisionism.

70-80: You qualify for a medal.

90-100: You should be writing articles for PA.

**BE PREPARED:** Next month have questions from Vol. 4 of Lenin's Collected Works.

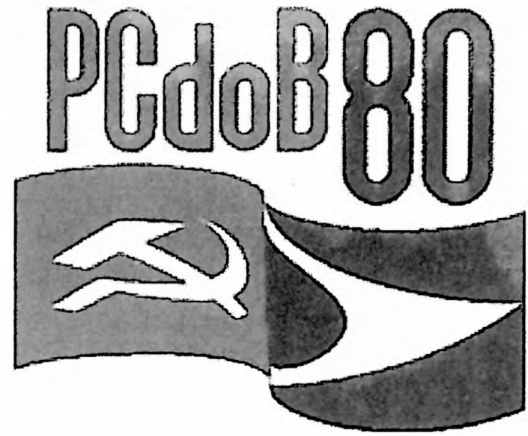
— 'You are what you read'



With the arrival of the new millennium the fight for women's equality acquired new dimensions. In Brazil, over the past few decades, women reached new positions relative to their participation in the job market, role in the family and involvement in politics.

Women comprise almost 51 percent of our country's 171 million inhabitants and represent over 40 percent of the economically active population. Brazilian women are 51 percent of the voters and in the elections of 2002, 42 women were elected to Congress, a 45-percent increase over previous elections. Today 10 women are Senators (12.3 percent of the total) and two govern Brazil's 27 states.

1 9 2 2 • 2 0 0 2



the "feminization" of poverty along with the reduction of social programs and the loss of workers' rights is pronounced.

Peace is a necessary condition for our

# REDISCOVERING THE ROAD TO EQUALITY

By Jô Moraes

The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics shows that 17.5 percent of men and 20.4 percent of women have finished high school. The proportion of literate women is also slightly higher than men.

Significantly, wage differentials between men and women were reduced over the last few years. Among female head of households, in 2000 the monthly average income was 71.5 percent of men's. Nine years before, however, it was 63.1 percent.

In Brazil, the neoliberal offensive rearranged the state and politics according to the logic of the market and in the interests of international financial capital. The presence of women in different sectors of the economy occurred within the context of these structural changes.

This situation has brought about serious consequences for the lives of women in the continent, especially Brazilian women where

survival. The approaching war, even in countries like ours that are far away from the conflict, will affect people's daily lives. To begin with, gas used to cook food will undergo price increases.

In Brazil, "Lula" was elected with the help of a political front in which the Communist Party took part. His election represents an important victory. The new situation now makes possible the amplification of the government's public policy on gender. This will mainly concern those policies relating to the value of women's work.

No other feminist current, but the Marxist one has so centered in all its development, the importance of women's emancipation as a decisive condition for human progress. The perspective of feminism today, therefore, means rediscovering the ever new, but old dream of socialist equality. ■

Jô Moraes is vice chair of the Communist Party of Brazil and state representative of Minas Gerais, one of Brazil's 27 states.

## **Choice: A Doctor's Experience with the Abortion Dilemma**

Don Sloan, M.D., with Paula Hartz, New York, International Publishers, 2002, 2nd Edition.

Reviewed by Norman Markowitz

As someone who has long admired Dr. Don Sloan's articles and letters in the *People's Weekly World* and *Political Affairs* on a wide variety of subjects, I was still positively surprised and moved by the new edition of his memoir, *Choice: A Doctor's Experience with the Abortion Dilemma*. I have known some good doctors and some bad ones – those more interested in their investments than their patients – but I have not known any with a strong social conscience and the commitment to act on that conscience.

As a young doctor with a commitment to labor and the left in the 1960s, Sloan put his career future on the line by performing illegal, but medically safe, abortions for women in need. This brought him into an underworld of dedicated physicians who served their patients by providing safe abortions instead of back-alley criminals who took the health and sometimes the lives of desperate women. It also led him to become an activist who used his position to fight for abortion rights. In the process, he observed the formation of political alliances between progressive legislators and some who saw abortion as a way to limit the reproduction of the poor while keeping social welfare costs down.

But this memoir is not really about Sloan, but rather the women who came to him for help, and the hypocritical and oppressive system that denied them reproductive rights before *Roe v. Wade* (now in its 30th anniversary year).

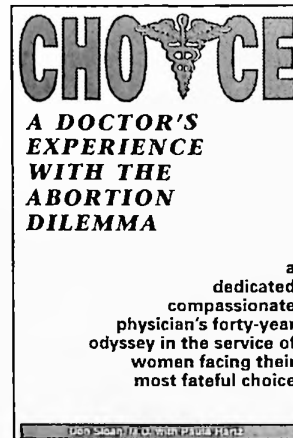
The stories don't conform to any pattern, but they interconnect ques-

tions of women's health, family and individual economic and social needs. As Sloan writes:

It isn't impossible – I've had it happen to me to have a woman come in for an abortion, and then in a couple of years come back and ask for help in managing a difficult pregnancy to term. That points to the highly individual nature of every pregnancy – each one is a special situation composed of the time, the place, the people involved, their finances, their health, the state of their relationship. For the woman who wants a pregnancy, often no cost is too great, sometimes even at the risk of her own life. The same thing is true for a woman who looks at her own situation and decides on abortion.

In telling their stories in an absorbing way, Sloan also captures the tangled and changing relationships of men and women in the last decades of the 20th century – the seriousness and sadness that abortion often means for women who make the decision to preserve marriages and families.

As I read Sloan's brilliant memoir, I became more and more angry – not so much at his accounts of the "holiday abortions" that wealthy and prominent women used to get in the American hospital in Batista's Cuba and similar places when abortion was illegal in the US. After all, those class distinctions are what capitalism is all about. Instead, I con-



trusted the plight of his patients with those politicians, beginning with Nixon, who used abortion as a "wedge issue" to stigmatize and often traumatize women who had

finally gained the right to a legal abortion with *Roe v. Wade*. I thought also of Henry Hyde, the hypocrite who served as a manager of the Clinton impeachment in the House, brushing off the accounts of his own affair with a married woman which ruined her marriage, as a "youthful indiscretion" (he was in his 40 at the time). The "Hyde Amendment," which got through Congress in 1976, barred Medicaid funds for abortions, which a Nixon-appointed dominated Supreme Court upheld. This gave poor women a choice between accepting unwanted pregnancies and returning to the back alleys.

Most of all, I became angry at the Rush Limbaughs and the Fox News pundits who market arrogance and ignorance and a great deal of boredom to the public, come out with cut-and-paste books thanks to name recognition and big money advertising. If "free markets" really existed and this were a "free country" where mass media gave the population something more than the menu of reactionaries, conservatives and centrists, *Choice* would be a best-seller. Readers would be moved by and learn from the experiences of the women Sloan has helped over the last four decades.

(continued on page 28)

**Fireweed: A Political Autobiography**

Gerda Lerner, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 2002.

Reviewed by Joel Wendland

Considered among the founders of "women's history," Gerda Lerner is one of the leading feminist historians. Lerner has written works on women in the labor movement, African-American women and feminist theory. But her most recent work, *Fireweed: A Political Autobiography*, narrates her personal development and its historical contexts. On writing an autobiography, Lerner says,

The living select what to remember, and what they select is what had meaning for them in their relationship with the dead ... If the living change, the memory of the dead also changes.

This view of memory and its role in the construction of "reality" is a crucial theme of the book.

The scope of this book is limited to her youth up to 1958. It opens with her earliest childhood memories in Vienna, Austria before the rise of the extreme right and the ultimate annexation of Austria to Nazi Germany. Born into an upper-middle-class Jewish home with severe marital conflicts, Lerner quickly learned to mistrust adults, who seemed willing to lie to maintain control or to smooth out the contradictions of life. In hindsight, she remarks that it was her experiences in childhood that made her skeptical of "representations of reality that present the world from the point of view of the powerful." Her disbelief was further reinforced by disparities between the religious teachings and the reality of class divisions she saw at the synagogue. The snobbishness

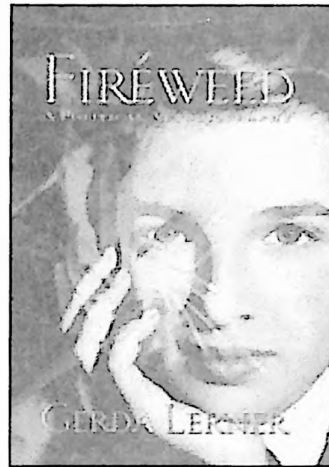
of her father and his set and society's use of religion to control its citizenry sparked her agnosticism. From her mother, she learned to despise and resist bourgeois gender roles.

As a youth, Lerner read the Marxist classics along with much of the world's progressive literature. She considers her small role in reading and passing along anti-fascist newspapers to have been part of the international communist movement. She writes:

I was part of something bigger than myself, bigger than the constraints of daily life. I could overcome my fear and the limitations of my overprotected upbringing; I might even become heroic, as other political people had. I, who was an outsider everywhere, could belong. Here was my hope, my escape.

She came to understand that the fascist and extreme right-wing forces relied on fear to control and to silence; her job would be to refuse fear.

Soon Hitlerites came to power in the Austrian government and mass deportations, imprisonment and the internment of Jewish people began. Her father managed to escape and prepared to bring his family out of the country. After his departure, however, Lerner's remaining family was arrested and held briefly. Before the decision was made to imprison or to kill all Jews, she was able to escape Germany to France and finally to the



US in late 1939.

She met and married her husband Carl in New York and moved with him to Hollywood in the hope of his finding work in the movies. He worked as an

editor and union activist. Carl was a member of the Communist Party, but Gerda did not join the Party immediately. She feared deportation, as she was officially registered as an "enemy alien," even though she had escaped the country for fear of being a victim of the Nazi holocaust.

She worked with progressive groups such as the League of American Writers and the Congress of American Women and volunteered with the Democratic Party in 1946 to oppose Richard Nixon's congressional bid. She writes affectionately of her friendship with Communist Party members and union activists and describes the lasting influence of writers' workshops led by John Howard Lawson, on her intellectual and political development. By the end of 1946, she joined the Communist Party. She helped oppose the Taft-Hartley Act and supported the independent presidential campaign of the progressive Henry Wallace. She also details the harassment and economic difficulties encountered under McCarthyite repression.

By the late 1950s, she had left the Party. Overall, her position is that she does not regret having been in the Party because it helped her to form

much of her life's intellectual, political and personal work. Throughout most of this book, Lerner criticizes many of the positions and dynamics of the Communist Party. Much of the criticism revolves around what she calls the "crimes" of the Soviet Union, the Party's handling of certain questions such as the national question and the woman question and its relation to other sections of the left. Many of the criticisms are important and can make useful discussion. For this and for the sensitivity of this deeply personal and historical narrative, I recommend reading this book.

At the end of the book, Lerner adds a postscript in which she gives a more concise version of her experiences with the Party. She writes that had she written her autobiography 20 years ago, she wouldn't have anything to be "ashamed of" or have anything to "apologize for." Now she seems to feel she has. She feels that her involvement in the campaign against racism, for a growing and unified industrial trade union

movement, against war and for nuclear disarmament was all part of a "Stalinist system." She says, "I cannot evade my own complicity in studied ignorance."

The struggle for peace and justice is something to apologize for?

She discarded Marxism during the period of the denunciation of Stalin. She came to believe that the "so-called errors of the Communist leadership in the Soviet Union were structural and built into the very fabric of Marxist doctrine." For this, she shed Marxist analysis of the national question and of women's equality.

Marxism, in her view doesn't adequately treat the non-class (or multi-class) characteristics of racial oppression or male supremacy. In fact, patriarchy in her view is a system that supercedes and overarches capitalism in a lot of ways. This view derives from the notion that male supremacy and white supremacy retain characteristics that seem to cross class boundaries and thus must exist prior to capitalism. Ironically, she accuses the Communist Party of

"bourgeois liberalism" regarding women's rights, while chastising women Party activists for their exclusively working-class orientation.

While it might be easy simply to dismiss these sorts of criticisms, I don't think it is beneficial to do so. Marxism is advanced by taking into careful and sincere consideration thoughtful critiques of it and its leading organization. Her criticism should not be used to reject Marxism, but to explain the autonomous aspects of democratic struggles. Her criticism should not be dismissed as irrelevant nor should the emphasis on different levels of political engagement be regarded as distractions from "real" struggle. It is crucial to consider some democratic efforts to be, in and of themselves, significant to advancing human rights and unity. The struggle for affirmative action or for reproductive rights are in and of themselves just and principled struggles.

For these reasons Lerner's work should not be read uncritically or dismissed out of hand. ■

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### Book Review: *Choice: A Doctor's Experience with the Abortion Dilemma* ◇ (continued from page 26)

Television would present serious discussions about the social and health issues that abortion entails rather than highlighting the last bombed abortion clinic and murdered doctor. Now conservative politicians decry both the violence and abortion, rather like racist politicians in the South who used to deny they approved of or had anything to do with KKK terror against Blacks. Both Sloan and the women he brings to life in *Choice* could help millions understand that "choice" is about rights and freedom and life for the living.

In experiencing "deja vu all over again," Sloan writes:

I close my eyes and I see a women.

She is too tired, too poor, too lacking in resources, too alone, too young to deal with a pregnancy. She wants a child, but not without a husband, not on her meager take-home pay, not in the cramped little apartment that is all she can afford ... If she had the money she could go to another state, perhaps another country. But she doesn't. Her public hospital doesn't do abortions. Her public clinic isn't permitted to mention them. And time is running out.

So she gets a name - a doctor, an ex-pharmacist, a dentist, a nurse if she's lucky, but maybe only a woman who once successfully aborted herself. And she ends up in an emergency room - bleeding, in

shock, in a coma, dead. ... It doesn't have to be this way. If we can learn to see the abortion issue clearly - not religion but science, not ethics but rights, not sexism but equality for women - we can begin to work on this dilemma.

*Choice* contributes to a solution to this dilemma and should be read widely by women and men seeking to break free of the demagoguery, fanaticism and cynical political manipulation that the right and the Nixon, Reagan, Bush I and Bush II administrations have used when addressing the abortion question. ■

**Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America**

Barbara Ehrenreich, Henry Holt, New York, 2001.

Reviewed by Rachel Peterson

Barbara Ehrenreich's *Nickel and Dimed* recounts her experiences working at a variety of low-wage jobs in three different states. A successful journalist with a career of writing about gender and class disparity, Ehrenreich spends three months living and working undercover as a waitress, a caretaker, a maid and a Wal-Mart associate. She makes it clear that she began her venture with a sense that she would not be able to "make it," and that indeed her conclusions could have been reached "without ever leaving [her] study."

Her choice to instead engage in "old-fashioned" reportage is what has gained this book so much deserved attention. In struggling for housing, food, fair wages and work conditions herself, and even more compellingly, by detailing the challenges faced by her co-workers, Ehrenreich presents a wrenching, brutal indictment of poverty in the United States.

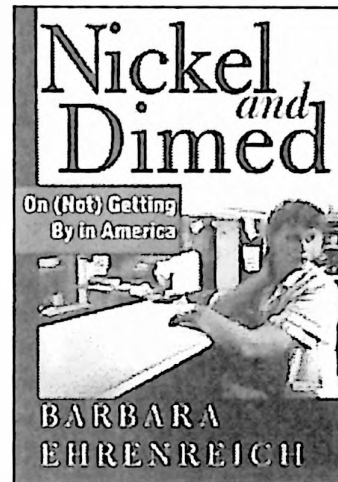
Ehrenreich undertakes her experiential research with three rules. First, she could not try to get jobs that utilized her own work experiences (thus clerical work, for example, was out). Secondly, she had to take the best pay offered and keep the job as long as possible (and as she puts it, "no Marxist rants or sneaking off to read novels in the ladies room"). Third, she had to accept the most affordable housing available. She allowed herself certain comforts such as a car (as she admits, a distinct privilege over most of her co-workers), the use of her ATM card if ever faced with hunger or homelessness

and a \$1,000, which, she reasoned, would be necessary to cover deposits, first month's rent and living expenses until her first paycheck. She also acknowledges that having no child to support or health problems to contend with made survival much less difficult.

Ehrenreich's first venture, in Florida, introduces her to the plight of unaffordable housing for low-wage, full-time workers at the Hearthside restaurant where she finds a job as a server. She writes about her co-worker, Tina, who shares a single room at the Days Inn with two others because none can afford the deposit, first and last months' rent, necessary to move into an apartment. There is also Joan, the restaurant's hostess, who lives in a van parked behind the restaurant and showers at the shared motel room. Such living arrangements demonstrate that, contrary to what many believe, "there are no secret economies that nourish the poor, on the contrary, there are a host of special costs." At the Hearthside, she also gets her first taste of the insults of management. She writes,

I still flinch when I think that I spent all those weeks under the surveillance of men (and later women) whose job it was to monitor my behavior for signs of sloth, theft, drug abuse or worse.

Ehrenreich is always careful to



note that while management is still underpaid and often once held jobs like those they control, and thus are not "exactly the class enemy," they have "crossed over to the other side ... corporate

as opposed to human."

In Maine, Ehrenreich works at the Woodcrest Residential Facility (a home for the elderly) and Merry Maids, a cleaning service, where customers are charged \$25 an hour for each cleaner, who in turn receives \$6.65 an hour. For these wages, the not-so-merry maids are subjected to a range of dehumanizing practices, including being strapped into vacuum cleaners worn on their backs, not being permitted to drink even water while on the job (though as Ehrenreich points out, no client ever offers), the unexpected horrors of bathroom cleaning and the patronizing scrutiny of their clients who set traps throughout the house to test the workers' honesty and thoroughness. Most disturbing in this chapter is the utter desperation of her co-workers, all female, who can barely afford a bag of chips for lunch (grabbed at convenience stores and eaten en route to jobs) and who fantasize endlessly with each other about the food they can't afford to eat - simple meat and vegetables. The thinnest of her fellow employees is Holly, who works through extreme nausea of pregnancy in fear of losing her job, her husband's wrath if she takes a day off and the loss of pay. Things

come to a crisis when Holly breaks her ankle and continues "hopping around the bathroom, wiping up pubic hairs" but refuses medical help, undoubtedly due to a lack of insurance.

Ehrenreich's last job is at Wal-Mart in Minnesota, of which she gives an account that elicits more hostility towards the shark than it already has earned with its treatment of overseas workers. Here Ehrenreich encounters the concept of "time-theft," whereby talking to co-workers on the job constitutes stealing from the company, a relentless project of rearranging clothes and displays after customers rifle through them and to suit management's ever changing demands and incessant criticism. The pressures of Wal-Mart life causes the most dramatic transformation for the author - she finds herself developing an upset stomach,

nervous habits and that, under these circumstances, she is "meaner and slyer ... more cherishing of grudges, and not quite as smart" as she had imagined herself to be. She also finds that workers' desire to organize is strong, though constantly undermined by management's warnings.

Over the course of this work, Ehrenreich combines compelling personal experiences and extensive research to depict a world where workers, especially women workers, are faced with a constant struggle for food, housing, medical care, child care and some sense of self-worth. As they are forced to substitute the compensation of the paltry praise of management for adequate pay, some come to identify with the goals of management while others fester inwardly with hostility that is too diffuse and seemingly hopeless to direct as they spend most of their

energies surviving, on and off the job.

Ehrenreich argues that poverty is greatly underestimated and misunderstood in the United States. She says that the media, the government (especially with its pro-corporate, anti-worker policies and welfare cuts) and the wealthy conspire to keep things as they are. Her book is written with wit, acuity and sensitivity and with an understanding that among the women she worked with, she was incredibly privileged. She concludes that "shame at our own dependency, in this case, on the underpaid labor of others" is necessary to understand our participation in the economy. For the workers themselves, she is sure that "they're bound to tire of getting so little in return and demand to be paid what they're worth ... and we will all be better off in the end." ■

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## Your Choice, Your Health

♦ (continued from page 13)

smears, counseling and other basic reproductive rights services that many women get here in the US on a routine basis. This has had a grave impact on a lot of women and youth. Sometimes the defunded clinic was the only one nearby or the only one that was affordable.

This is frustrating because clinics sometimes would be using money raised on their own or money gathered from other countries, to provide services. So the US essentially is telling countries such as Denmark and Great Britain what they can and can't do with that money, which is interesting.

What's even more frustrating is that the Bush administration consistently says they want to be a demo-

cratic force in the world, but they're barring small organizations from even advocating abortions in their own countries. Meanwhile, anti-choice groups can advocate against abortions. It just doesn't seem very democratic. To combat this there is a Global Democracy Promotion Act to repeal the Global Gag Rule. It's essentially an attempt to expose the executive order for what it really is.

PA: *What can we do?*

ES: Considering Congress recently has had such a devastating turnover affecting pro-choice and other positions, one of the main things we need to do is to consistently be a mosquito in their ear and

call regularly about passing such bills as the Global Democracy Promotion Act and the Family Life Education Act (FLEA), which promotes funding for comprehensive sex education. There are other bills that are important, such as the Emergency Contraception Education Act, which educates congresspeople about various forms of contraception - just so they know when they are passing laws for policy, they aren't basing it on inaccurate medical information. On our website, at [www.choiceusa.org](http://www.choiceusa.org) there's actually a link so that you can call or e-mail directly from the website to your congressperson about a particular bill. ■

**THE CHERRY ORCHARD**

After the family broke up  
and moved away,  
after they sold the jewels –  
the family silver,  
the furs those ridiculous eggs –  
after the revolution came and went,  
after we discovered work,  
tilled the fields like peasants,  
after Olga became a doctor,  
Irina a porn queen in America,  
and our uncle –  
last of the old aristocracy –  
a drunkard sleeping on the streets of L.A.,  
things only got worse for me.  
We are old now, my husband  
still sits with his head in his hands  
while day after day, I stand on long lines  
waiting to buy a piece of cheese or an apple.  
The doctor still comes,  
talks more nonsense than ever,  
as men do when they are impotent.  
I don't think it will get better.  
After we went out on the streets,  
after we stood shoulder to shoulder in the square,  
after the walls came down,  
and the old leaders left,  
the Americans came –  
and the others.  
And we will go on –  
sewing clothes for foreigners  
drilling oil for their cars,  
mining diamonds for their women to wear.  
They will take our students,  
our best dancers and filmmakers,  
exhibit them abroad  
as Columbus did his Indians,  
while starving the ones he left behind.  
In return they send us their unwanted wastes  
and the dangerous medicines  
they are not permitted to sell back home.  
I sit alone now in the orchard,  
watching dust raised by falling timber.  
They tell us they will leave a stand of fir trees somewhere,  
to graze like buffalo in an American national park.

Marilyn Zuckerman  
The Cherry Orchard and A War Where No One Is Killed are drawn from  
Marilyn Ackerman's *Amerika/Amerika* (Cedar Hill Publications, 2002). She is  
the recipient of a PEN Syndicated Fiction Award and an Allen Ginsberg Poetry  
Award. Cedar Hill Publications can be reached at cedarhill\_bks@hotmail.com

**GHAZAL FOR A WEEK OF TERROR**

In the fuming of the World Trade Center, the  
whole world's trouble  
Crouches, pounces on rescue crews, claws them  
down in the rubble.

An ashy tickertape cascades from tower to street:  
Photos  
Xeroxed and hand-scrawled pleas by mothers  
bound by the rubble.

The fire-fighter – her sorority girl nose gash-  
scarred – accepts  
The last dance at Windows on the World ball-  
gowned by the rubble.

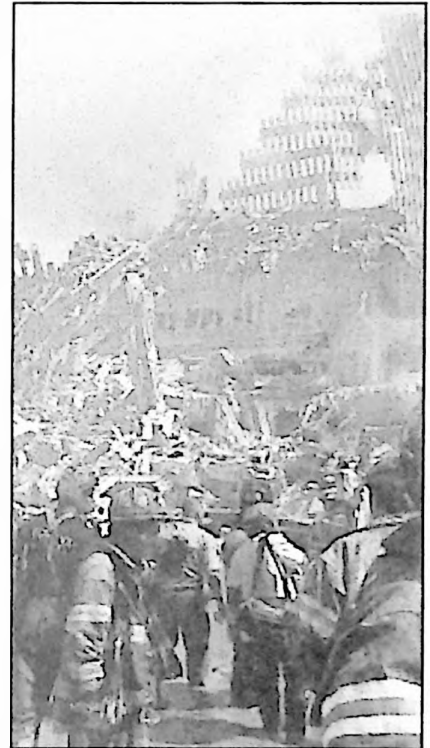
The camera lens, a pendulum, pans the ever-  
smoking site,  
And pundits, mute, extend their mics to see  
sound in the rubble.

Big boys blubber as, for an hour, the nun names names  
of men  
whose work-day misery now makes molehill  
mounds in the rubble.

I recall my young dead long ago, who fell from  
AIDS, from blood clots,  
From drugs, from rape-murders, and rummage  
around in the rubble.

I stretch skyward to follow buzzing fighters with  
my gaze and  
Ask God if the old Anne will ever be found in the  
rubble.

Anne Babson  
from *Counterterrorist Poems* by Anne Babson,  
(Pudding House Press, 2002, www.puddinghouse.com)



**A WAR WHERE NO ONE IS KILLED**

<p>the reporter said, not on the bridge, or on the train that blew up because they didn't expect it to be there, nor the villagers in Kosovo set on a tractor</p>	<p>among soldiers, nor Iraqi women and children in the shelter pilots thought was a military hideout – or the North Vietnamese peasants they said were all terrorists</p>
---	---

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