



♀ ON OUR WAY



Newsletter of the Women's Center
46 Pleasant Street, Cambridge, MA 02139

(617) 354-8807 TTY and VOICE



WINTER '94/95

WEDNESDAY NIGHT BATTERED WOMEN'S SUPPORT GROUP

When I finally acknowledged that I was a victim of battering, shame and embarrassment kept me from seeking help or even looking at the morass my life had become. With great trepidation I began attending the Wednesday evening battered women's support group.

In the beginning I had convinced myself that I didn't belong, that the circumstances of my abuse were unique, that no one could possibly understand the weight of despair I carried around with me. I came to learn that I did belong, that there were other women who had gone through similar and even more horrible situations. Even during those evenings when I felt too overwhelmed by what was happening to me to speak, I felt the quiet strength of the other women extending their hands and hearts to me.

I still have quite a distance ahead in terms of understanding what happened and getting **me** back. But, I do know that I no longer have to struggle alone. The Wednesday evening support group has given me the ability to believe that my life can be different.

-Anonymous

OPEN ART STUDIO FOR SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

The Open Art Studio for Survivors of Sexual Abuse welcomes you to drop in any time on Tuesdays between 2 and 4 pm. Bring your own art materials and make whatever you like in our relaxed atmosphere - bring coloring books, jewelry to make, sewing, colored pencils, anything you like to work with. We meet in the Children's Room. If you have any questions call Marjy at (617) 489-6910.

WOMEN'S CENTER HOURS:

Monday - Thursday 10am - 10pm

Friday 10am - 8pm

Saturday 11am - 4pm

Open: Dec. 24 Closed: Dec. 26

Open: January 31 and January 2

WOMEN OF COLOR SUPPORT/DISCUSSION GROUP

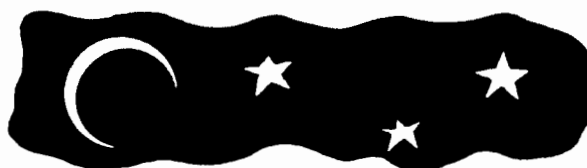
This group was founded to provide a forum where women of color from diverse backgrounds can create dialogue and unconditional support for each other. We see how our dual experience as women and as people of color overlaps and makes our perspectives and our struggles unique. As people of color, we see that we have been divided from each other by historical factors and current social trends that pit oppressed people against one other. We are committed to struggling together with diverse women of color to begin to find the ties that bind us, and to create a sisterhood that is powerful!

Our groups welcomes all women of color -- Asian women, Latinas, Native American women, Black women of all backgrounds, Middle Eastern women, biracial women, etc. Women of any sexual orientation and age group who are willing to engage in dialogue and support other women are encouraged to come. Join us Tuesday nights from 8 to 9:30 pm at the Women's Center.

THREE CHEERS FOR VOLUNTEERS

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! The Women's Center gratefully acknowledges the many committed volunteers who make the Center go. Truly, it is the efforts and spirit of volunteers that keeps the Women's Center going and makes it the special place that it is to so many women. Volunteers are involved in all aspects of our operation, such as maintenance, fundraising, childcare, support groups, database management, bookkeeping, outreach, staffing the front desk and phones, and more.

With deep appreciation to our many wonderful volunteers -- the Women's Center wouldn't be here without you! Gracias.



NOBODY SHOULD HAVE TO DO IT ALONE

*Support Group for Lesbian Partners and
Ex-Partners of Incest Survivors*

No one knows more about the impact of incest upon adult relationship than the adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse themselves. No one, except possibly those who are in intimate emotional partnerships with those survivors. Partners are often present when survivors first remember the abuse, and may become a key part of their support.

On the other hand, partners may find themselves juggling their own needs with the needs of their survivor partners. In addition, it is not unusual for partners to experience their own set of traumas (resulting from the vulnerabilities of intimacy and from the associated dynamics) but to get little or no support for what they may experience.

Relationships which involve the legacy of incest can be extremely confusing and complex. It is not, however, uncommon for some partners to feel that they have no right to complain (or even to forgo seeking out their own support) because it was the survivor who was the one so hurt. But insight and understanding of oneself and of related issues is important in order to walk together in a direction of healing and health.

Fortunately the Women's Center offers a facilitated support group for lesbian/bi partners (and former partners) of women survivors. Its purpose is to validate the experiences of partners and to highlight the many common threads which exist (since we are all subject to the human condition: ex-partners, partners and survivors alike). The group meets twice a month (the 1st and 3rd Monday, 7:00 to 8:45pm, except for some Monday holidays). It is a discussion group, open on a drop-in basis. Some women can only come once a month; other women come whenever they can. However, several long-term core groups have formed at different times over the years. At the moment there is a lull in the group, which creates the potential for a new core group to form. Women are encouraged to take what is useful to them and to leave the rest behind. Over 150 women have attended the group, and many have found it extremely helpful.

Couples where incest is a factor sometimes find themselves isolated from friends who may not understand. A number of supportive friendships among people who do understand have come out of this group. Information about reading materials and professional referrals is also available. Confidentiality is protected. So if you've been contemplating coming to this group, come check it out.

-Daniella

BODY/MOVEMENT WORKSHOPS

Although you are aware that your feelings affect your body, you seldom notice the opposite: that shifting your body postures and movements affect your feelings and thoughts. To be stronger you must be more flexible. Everything you do, you do with your whole body, so to be different, you have to expand your awareness of your habits and movements. If you want to change your automatic reactions so that you can be more responsive, you need to learn to come from a more centered place. Only then can you have a range of options. You can then learn new ways of moving that will allow you greater flexibility, direction, and peace.

In all our workshops for women we include practices and coaching to begin learning and experimenting. Two workshops will be held at Women's Center. "Standing Up For Yourself While Keeping the Lines Open in Relationship" will be held on Wednesday evening, January 18th at 7 pm, and "Converting Stress to Strength" will be held on Wednesday evening, February 22nd at 7pm. Please call Judi Goodman, LICSW, (617) 862-3699 or Linda Kelley, (617) 267-0416 to register for these workshops.



MOVING TO TRANSFORM

The vision for Moving to Transform is to create a safe place where women can come to share movement and exercise that they find helpful in their healing process.

Dayote, a Lakota Sioux wise woman, says, "We are all convalescing. We need to honor that."

We're all in recovery from one trauma or another. We are all healing. Often we try to change our lives by talking about it. But the changes are difficult to incorporate until we find ways to make peace with our bodies and find joy in them.

Through gentle movement from yogic and Taoist traditions, we can embody our healing amidst the peaceful community and support at the Women's Center.

We meet on Wednesdays from noon to 1pm in the Children's Room. If you have questions, or would like to participate but the time's not good, please call Judith at (617) 923-8856.

YOUR DONATIONS KEEP US GOING AND GROWING!



DIVERSITY TASK FORCE

The Diversity Task Force, which seeks to address the issue of increasing racial/ethnic/cultural diversity at the Women's Center, is now in its 5th week of meeting. The group was inspired by some women who are part of the Women's Center and were concerned with the lack of diversity which has characterized the women's movement in general, and the Women's Center in particular. We have been meeting with the hope that our efforts can lend to creating an environment at the Women's Center where: racism and ethnocentrism are confronted; women committed to the liberation of all women pledge to deal openly with the different manifestations of racism; and where an openness to dialogue and welcoming of all women can be achieved. We realize that ending racism in our movement and in our center is crucial in order to achieve the kind of equitable society that many of us strive for.

The Diversity Task Force is open to women committed to this ongoing challenge to make racism and ethnocentrism a central part of their own consciousness, and a part of women sharing with each other. The group is still in its formative stages and is open to new members. We intend to develop specific strategies to diversify our women's movement and the Women's Center. A major strategy that we are engaged in now -- and which is surely an ongoing process -- is confronting the reality of racism and how it affects **all women**. Some of our ongoing topics include: "Race and its Effect on the Way Women Relate to Each Other", "Racism in the Women's Community", etc. We are committed to using outside resources, books, articles, and events to help increase our understanding of the complexity of the issues that we face. Our meetings at this point are structured around discussion and dialogue. We welcome women of color and white women who are interested in this challenging and difficult task.

As an African-American woman who is a part of the Diversity Task Force, I admittedly have had my reservations about popular methods of achieving diversity and unclear motivations around the emerging concept of multiculturalism, especially in light of my history and the history of my people in this

country. It seems sometimes that it is easier to delight in how multicultural our society is becoming, and to engage in activities that acknowledge the beauty of diversity, without taking into account that racism is still alive and well. I have felt that even some progressive people in U.S. society have been reluctant to deal directly with racial and ethnic **oppression**, which is a part of the daily reality of people of color in this country. This is definitely true in the very visible and organized women's movement which has not fully listened to women speaking their truths; it has not dealt systematically with eradicating racism and ethnocentrism within its ranks. I believe that all women living in the United States who are interested in the empowerment of themselves, whether they be white women or women of color, must begin to deal with the effects of racism that have robbed us of the possibility of aligning ourselves with each other. Only then can diversity happen.

Since the Diversity Task Force is not merely concerned with increasing the diversity of women of color who come to the Women's Center for the sake of numbers, but is committed to exploring and confronting the very pervasiveness of racism and ethnocentrism which has separated women from each other, it is my hope that with the participation of caring women, the Diversity Task Force will begin to create avenues to make the Women's Center a safe space for all women.

-Mirangela Buggs



WOMEN WRITERS

The writing blues got you down? Curious about writing with a supportive group of women? Improve your spirits, flex your muscle, and come to write with women every other Saturday, 12:30 to 2:30 pm.

The group generates topics to write about for specified time segments, voluntarily reads aloud just-written pieces, and then offers positive verbal comments. Some recent topics have included: "My first best friend," "Last night ...," and "unseen influences". The women's writers group continues to welcome and receive new members on an ongoing basis. And the group often goes out afterwards to a nearby cafe to continue to connect.

NEW FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN

One thing foundations and corporations look for in funding the Women's Center is that we get a significant portion of our budget from individual donations. We are pleased to announce that the Women's Center is launching a new "tile campaign," through which donors can dedicate a tile at the Women's Center. The idea for the campaign came when a contributor wanted to publicly honor some women in her life in a place devoted to women's empowerment. She thought the Women's Center would be the ideal place for her dedication and donation.

Since then, we have launched our "tile campaign" which invites people to "purchase" a commemorative tile in the Women's Center's living room or kitchen. Tiles can be used to honor or remember a woman, or to express a word or phrase that is meaningful to the donor. We are working with local artists to create tiles that will be long-lasting and attractive in the Women's Center.

We welcome anyone who is interested in participating and contributing to this campaign. If you would like to dedicate a tile (a new gift idea? ☺) call Pamela at (617) 354-8807 for details.

CHEMICAL INJURY INFORMATION NETWORK

This new group for chemical-sensitive women meets at the Women's Center the first Thursday of every month from 6-7:30 pm. We welcome new women to join this ongoing advocacy group and share information about chemical sensitivity to environmental pollution. Come to the group to talk with other women and learn what we are doing to reduce our risk of long-term illness and injury. We will also work to change public policy on the use of pesticides, carpeting, synthetic fragrances, etc. Upcoming agenda items for discussion include:

- The new Veteran's Administration research into Gulf War veterans illnesses: Implications for all chemically-sensitive people.
- What's happening at Brigham & Women's Hospital? How can we help non-unionized staff who are chemical injured?
- Ongoing problems at the Registry of Motor Vehicles, UMASS Boston, etc.

Join the Chemical Injury Information Network for information-sharing, medical and legal referrals, networking, support, and action. If you have questions about the group, or about special accommodations, please call the Women's Center at (617) 354-8807.

INTERNATIONAL/INTERCULTURAL GROUP

I would like to share with you my thoughts and feelings about the International/Intercultural Group at the Women's Center.

I have been a member for about two years now and enjoy every minute of it. I come from the ex-Soviet Union and my name is Marina Goloborodko. I am a citizen of this country and have been residing here for the past seventeen years of my life.

The group has helped me to understand who I am and what my cultural identity is. The group has helped me to resolve the struggle within me. I have learned to appreciate cultural diversity and to respect cultural differences of this great country of ours - America! Every community should have a group such as the International/Intercultural Group for women.

As a female, I have learned to support and understand other women in a similar situation. I have gained power, strength, wisdom and compassion towards Universal Sisterhood. I feel so lucky to have found the International/Intercultural Group! We have to keep it going. We have to provide global understanding and support for other sisters who are not so lucky, because they do not know about our group, yet. But if we reach out, everybody will find their place at our group.

-Marina Goloborodko



WOMEN'S COUNSELING AND RESOURCE CENTER

WCRC has added two new therapists! This brings our membership to 10 and increases our capacity to offer quality feminist therapy at the Women's Center to women with no or low income. We continue to seek volunteers, and require that therapists have a graduate degree in the counseling field and two years post-graduate experience doing individual therapy with adults. Our phone number is (617) 492-8568 - call us!





TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

LESBIAN RAP

Mondays, 7:30 - 9pm

- Dec. 5 Butch/Femme/Gender.
- 12 Families and Holidays.
- 19 Pot Luck.
- 26 No Meeting - Holiday.



30+ LESBIAN RAP

Tuesdays, 7 - 8:30pm

- Dec. 6 Honesty in Relationships.
- 13 Setting Limits with Loved Ones.
- 20 Stages of Relationships.
- 27 Questions You Wish You'd Asked.

BISEXUAL WOMEN'S RAP

Tuesdays, 7:30 - 9:30pm

- Dec. 6 Jealousy.
- 13 Fantasies.
- 20 Power & Envy.
- 27 The Art of Meeting & Flirting.

INTERNATIONAL/INTERCULTURAL WOMEN'S GROUP

Usually the 4th Saturday of each month, 1pm

- Dec. 17 Field Trip (354-8807 for info).

FACILITATED OPEN DISCUSSION GROUP FOR INCEST SURVIVORS

3rd Thursday, each month, 7:30-9:15pm

- Dec. 15 Taking Care of Ourselves.
- Jan. 19 Staying Present.
- Feb. 16 Boundaries.
- Mar. 16 Work Issues.

INCEST SURVIVORS' THINKTANK

1st Wednesday, each month, 7:15-9:15pm

- Dec. 7 Isolation & How to Break It.

AGING WELL

1st Sunday, each month, 2-5pm

- Dec. 4 'Mild Depression in Older Women, & an Effective Exercise Program' with Roberta Rosenberg, Harvard Cooperative Program on Aging.
- Jan. 8 'Ayurvedic Medicine' with Valeska von Allwörden.

DIVERSITY TASK FORCE

(every other Tuesday, 5:30-7:30pm)

- Dec. 13 Racism in the Women's Community.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT SUPPORT GROUP

Monday, Dec. 12, 7-9pm.

FEMINIST READING GROUP

- Thurs., Dec. 15, 7 - 9:30. Backlash by Susan Faludi.

ONGOING GROUPS

SUNDAY

- ♿ • Aging Well (*1st Sunday*) 2-5pm

MONDAY

- Battered Women's Support 7:30-9pm
- Women's NA 12 Step 7:30-8:30pm
- Lesbian Rap 7:30-9pm
- Lesbian Partners & Ex-Partners of Incest Survivors (*1st & 3rd Mon.*) 7-8:45pm
- ♿ • Reproductive Rights Network (R2N2) (*usually 2nd & 4th Mon.*) 6:45-9:30pm
- ♿ • Women with Disabilities and Chronic Illness Support Group (*1st & 3rd Mondays*) 7:30-9pm

TUESDAY

- Bisexual Women's Rap 7:30-9:30pm
- ♿ • 30+ Lesbian Rap 7-8:30pm
- Diversity Task Force (*biweekly*) 5:30-7:30pm
- Eating Awareness & Body Image Group (*Newcomers, 1st Tues, 6:30pm*) 7-9pm
- Women of Color Support Group 8-9:30pm
- Open Art Studio for Survivors of Sexual Abuse (*Bring art or craft supplies*) 2-4pm

WEDNESDAY

- Assessing Your Therapy (*irregular meetings*) . . . 7-9pm
- Battered Women's Support Group (*weekly except 3rd Wed. of month*) 7-9pm
- Boston Bisexual Women's Network (*2nd Wed, odd #d months*) 7:30-9pm
- Incest Survivors' Thinktank (*1st Wed.*) . . . 7:15-9:15pm
- ♿ • Lesbian Al-anon 6:30-8pm
- ♿ • Moving to Transform. 12-1pm

THURSDAY

- ♿ • Cancer Support Group (*2nd, 4th Thurs.*) . . . 7-8:30pm
- Chemical Injury Information Network (*1st Thursday*) 6-7:30pm
- ♿ • Facilitated Open Discussion for Incest Survivors (*3rd Thursday*) 7:30-9:15pm
- Feminist Reading Group (*Dec. 15, call for future dates*)
- Incest Survivors Open Discussion . . . 7:30-9:30pm
- ♿ • Women's Community Cancer Project, Open General Meeting (*1st Thursday*) 7-9pm

FRIDAY

- ♿ • Incest Survivors Anonymous 6:30-8pm
- Women's Spirituality (*2nd & 4th Fri.*) 6:30-8pm

SATURDAY

- ♿ • Coming Out Discussion for Women of All Ages (*1st Saturday; usually ASL interpreted*) . . . 11am-1pm
- Finding & Surviving the Workplace (*2nd Saturday*) 11:30am-1:30pm
- International/Intercultural Women's Group (*4th Saturday, 3rd Sat. in Dec.*) 1pm
- Women Writing (*biweekly*) 12:30-2:30pm
- Works in Progress (*biweekly*) 12:30-2:30pm

THE ABORTION ACCESS PROJECT

The Abortion Access Project has just published the first directory to accessible abortion services in Massachusetts. The directory lists which hospitals and clinics perform abortions, cost, whether or not they accept Medicaid and/or offer free care, and availability of translation services. Copies of the directory have been mailed to health centers, women's centers, shelters and other agencies across the state. Copies are available at the Women's Center for reference, or by calling the Abortion Access Project at (617) 738-9479.

The Project continues to work on the issue of training and licensing mid-level providers to do abortion procedures. If you are a pro-choice nurse, nurse practitioner, midwife, or physician's assistant (or know someone who is), please contact us.

We are also working on expanding training opportunities for medical residents, and monitoring hospitals that merge with Catholic institutions and thereby lose reproductive health services. We welcome new members to our general monthly meeting and to call of our task forces. Our next meeting is Monday, Dec. 12, 6:45 to 9:30 pm, at the Women's Center. Call us at (617) 738-9479 for more information about our activities!

LATINA SURVIVORS GROUP FORMING

A free 12-week therapy group for Latina survivors of sexual abuse will start at the Women's Center in February or March if there is enough interest. Maria Toureilles, a Latina therapist who has worked with survivors for many years, will lead this group. Please call (617) 354-8807 if you are interested in being part of this group.

SKILLED VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Women's Center is seeking volunteer plumbers and electricians to help us with our capital improvements project. If you are interested in donating your time and skills, please call Judy at (617) 354-8807. Also, in the snowy winter months we can always use a few good women to help shovel at the Women's Center! Please call if interested.

YES! I want to help the ♀'s Center "On Our Way!"

Enclosed is my **tax-deductible contribution** of:

\$100 \$50 \$25 \$10 \$other _____

I'd like to become a regular monthly sustainer, with a pledge of \$_____/per month.

Please send me a volunteer application.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone #(s): _____

GROUPS AND THE WOMEN'S CENTER

Looking for a group? And nothing at the Women's Center fits? There are still several possibilities:

1) Call or visit to find out if the group exists elsewhere. We have a lot of information about groups outside of the Women's Center.

2) Check our list of women interested in starting/joining specific groups, posted in the Resource Room. Current ideas include Mothers without Custody, Relationship Issues, Transition/Change, Surviving Trauma, Self-Injury, and General Women's Support Group. You can add your name to the list or take the names of other women interested in starting/joining a similar group.

3) Suggest a short-term group topic. Therapist Vera S. Cohen leads groups throughout the year at the Women's Center (past groups have included Living with Loss, Friendship, Women 45 & Over, and Assessing Your Therapy). Currently, she is considering facilitating a short-term parenting group, a general support group, and another group about loss. If you are interested in one of these groups, or would like to suggest a new short-term group topic, leave a message for Vera at (617) 354-8807.

4) Start a group yourself. Most of the groups at the Women's Center were started by one or two women. Space is limited, yet there is some room.

Women interested in starting a group fill out a "space request form," answering questions about the nature of the group, why it should meet here, and how it will be structured. Decisions about new groups at the Women's Center (and other decisions about the Center as a whole) are made collectively at the All Center Meeting. Decisions are based on the perceived need for such a group, its connection to women's issues, and the level of commitment of the woman/women starting the group. In particular, we want to ensure that someone is present for every meeting of every group we publicize, so no woman will come to find that the group is not meeting.

Feelings of isolation/disconnection are rarely the topic of a group, but are common in many groups. In a successful group, members feel less isolated as they talk, listen, and experience understanding and acceptance. Making sure a group runs in a way that is inclusive, non-judgmental, and comfortable for all members involves a lot of effort but is very worthwhile and important! We are planning to write a manual on "How to Start/Run a Successful Support Group" and are writing an article for the next issue of *On Our Way* with tips for running and starting groups. Any feedback is most welcome! Call Judy at (617) 354-8807.