



The Women's Center

ON OUR WAY

Newsletter of the Women's Center

6 Pleasant Street, Cambridge, MA 02139

(617) 354-8807

Fall 2004

Brick Fails to Intimidate: Strengthens Women's Center Resolve

On May 27, a brick shattered a window of the Women's Center Resource Room, destroying any lingering illusion that racism does not exist at the Center.

Over the past few years, the Women's Center has worked to develop a strong anti-racism agenda and promote multiculturalism as a priority internally. This shift wasn't simply an effort to engender tokenism, as is so often the case. Rather, we committed to consistently and diligently work to ensure that women of color occupy positions of leadership within the organization. This is now reflected in both the staff and board of the Women's Center.

In our effort to welcome working class, low-income, and women of color to the Center, we, the staff, instituted a number of changes. We developed guidelines to ensure consistency in the treatment of all women utilizing the Center in conjunction with a guide to facilitate access to programming by women who are new to the Center. We appropriated the first floor of the Center as community space, encouraging laughter, music, celebration, conversation, and

discussion.

Slowly but surely over time, the aesthetic of the Center is changing to reflect and welcome a broader constituency. Our posting boards are attractive and neat, allowing women to more easily access information that they seek. Women in their twenties and thirties compliment us on the new atmosphere, which they find more reflective of their generation. We are gratified as we meet new women who enjoy the Center, obtain resources, and find a sense of community and empowerment here.

These changes, however, are met with resistance and anger by some women who have historically experienced the Center as reflecting only their cultural values, wants, and needs.

The connection between this resistance to change and racism is evident when staff and volunteers uphold the Women's Center's guidelines. Frequently, the women of color on staff are the recipients of the most hostile barrage of insults and physical intimidation when pointing out our guidelines. One example out of many is of a white

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woman, who's been accustomed to a predominantly white women's organization, accusing the Assistant Director of being a "flunky" for the Director – never mind that the Women's Center has never before had a woman of color in a position of such leadership and authority... It seems that, her authority and leadership may well be the very thing to which some react with so much anger.

So, although shocking, it was not a complete surprise when, on May 27, a woman who was told that she could not bring her pet into the building, committed a Hate Crime.

WISH LIST



"White Noise" machine

- Dehumidifier
- Digital camera
- Desktop Computers: Pentium III or faster desktops, working mother boards & processor
- Monitors: 17" or larger
- Hard Drive: 10 GB of capacity or larger

- CD-ROM drives & CD burners
- HP inkjet toner cartridges (#45)
- Gift Certificate to Home Depot
- Closet organizing storage bins
- Office Supplies
- Printing/Copier Paper (white and colored)
- Subscriptions to magazines: *Z Magazine, Utne Reader, Bitch, Mother*

Jones, Parenting Magazine, Colorlines, Curve, Bust, Hip Mama

- Magazine rack
- Dishwashing detergent
- Hand soap (liquid)
- 2 or 3 drawer file cabinet with lock
- Herbal tea, coffee, cookies, crackers, rice, pasta, and sugar

On Our Way

The newsletter of the Women's Center is published 3 times per year in *May, September, and December.*

The Women's Center is a non-profit resource and support center for all women and their children, founded in 1971.

Our mission is twofold:

to provide women with the tools and resources they need to emerge from abuse, discrimination, addiction, sexism and racism, harassment, social isolation, violence, poverty, or other injustice

to challenge and change attitudes and actions which subjugate women.



The Women's Center gratefully acknowledges the ongoing efforts and contributions of our volunteers.

Thank you for giving so generously of your time and of yourselves.

The Women's Center relies on the generosity of the community to provide our wealth of free programming.

All donations are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.

For further information, contact:

The Women's Center
46 Pleasant Street
Cambridge, MA 02139
(617) 354-8807

email:

info@cambridgewomenscenter.org

Hours:

Monday-Thursday: 10am-10pm

Friday: 10am-8pm

Saturday: 11am-4pm

Helpline: (617) 354-8807

From the Desk of the Fundraiser

"Thank you for always being the place that I can turn to in those times when there is nowhere else to go. You have saved my life and changed my life many times over. I am most grateful." - Anonymous

It is amazing that a support group, a Helpline call, access to a computer and the internet, or a simple 'hello, how are you today' can change someone's life. A donation to the Women's Center can do the same.

For so many women, the Center is the first and only place where they feel safe enough to share that they have been raped, sexually assaulted or battered, are lesbian, bisexual or transgendered, or struggling with poverty and homelessness. This week alone, several women contacted the Center because they've been raped; others because they are escaping from batterers who are searching for them. *And it's only Wednesday.*

The Women's Center is a life-line for these women and countless others. The key to our success lies within our community of strength, support, and encouragement.

As a donor to the Women's Center, you make life-changing connections to the Center possible for women. Your financial contribution:

- * Validates the painful struggles that women endure;
- * Shows women that they are not to blame for the abuse and discrimination they face and;
- * Provides women with critical resources immediately - without hassle or red-tape.

Please support our programming with a generous tax-deductible donation. Together, we provide life-changing resources to women who are reaching out to us for support, understanding, and hope.

~ Nicole Marcotte, Development Coordinator

An Intern's Perspective

On my first official day as an intern, I quickly realized that the Women's Center is not just a straightforward resource hub for women. When I helped homeless women who did not know where they were going to sleep at night to secure a bed at a shelter; provided resources and peer support to survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault; and offered a listening ear to a struggling to secure viable employment in a worsening economy, I learned that the Center community was a safe haven for these women and so many more. It is a place where women enduring daily hardships feel understood and supported; where they can relax, use a computer, or share their experiences with other women. Luxuries, I realized, I had taken for granted.

I realized women are stronger when supported by other women, and the Center aspires to truly empower women. During my time at the Center, I found myself trying to help with any project I could to improve the Center for women. Empowering women to overcome their own obstacles made all of my work fulfilling. I cherished every moment in which I could assist women.

Of all that I am taking away from my internship experience, the most important lesson I learned was: No matter how small you may feel your effort or help for others may be, never give up, because your help goes a *long way*- even if you feel your help may go unnoticed. Thank you to all of the women at the Women's Center for inspiring me to continue assisting more women to overcome their fears.

~ Camila Hernandez

As an intern, Camila updated and organized both the Spanish Resource Binder and the Sexual Assault Binder. She also staffed our Helpline.

Brick Fails to Intimidate— Continued from Page 1

She: (1.) made a racist, verbal assault against a staff person; (2.) threatened that staff person; and (3.) threw a brick through the window of the Resource Room.

We understand that racism is experienced not only in the overt act of ‘throwing a brick’, but it is also evident in more discreet ways. For example, when one expects the culture of an organization to reflect white middle class values – that is racism. When white women demand that the entire Center be kept as quiet space, because they believe that quiet is the ‘right’ atmosphere for healing, they are negating the values of many women of color and working class women who see celebration and laughter as their road to healing. That too is racism. And, it doesn’t matter whether those values include feminism or not. Racism is still racism.

The Women’s Center is a community Center for all women. A brick flung through our window will not diminish our determination to build a multicultural organization.

We are excited that since the hate crime, some of the white women in our community have shown a desire to engage in dialogue about racism, and a number of our volunteers have expressed interest in joining the struggle against racism – both overt and covert – within the organization. Their contributions encourage us, as we strive to develop a truly multicultural Women’s Center.

~ Mary Quinn, Executive Director

NOTE: In Massachusetts, a Hate Crime is defined as a crime in which the perpetrator's conduct is motivated, in whole or in part, by hatred, bias, or prejudice, based on the actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, gender, disability, or sexual orientation of another group or individual.

The Woman’s Belly Book: A Reading and Workshop with Author Lisa Sarasohn

The Women’s Center is excited to welcome Lisa Sarasohn, author of *The Woman’s Belly Book: Finding Your Treasure Within*, for a book reading and workshop on October 28th from 6:00-8:00pm.

Lisa will help women discuss and explore how we can reclaim the center of the body - that is the belly.

Join us in experiencing a sampling of belly-energizing movement, breath, and body awareness activities drawn from the *Woman’s Belly Book* as we learn to embrace the belly, and not be ashamed of it.

~ Melissa Jean-Charles, Volunteer Coordinator

WOA Says “NO!” To Random ‘T’ Searches

Over the summer, the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA) initiated a “random” search policy, calling it an effort to “guard against terrorism.” Though the MBTA claimed searches would be at random, the policy left the door open for the inclusion of behavioral profiling as a factor determining who would be searched.

We believed that such searches do not keep people safe. Instead, they would inspire fear in citizens while stripping away our constitutional right to be protected from unfair searches and seizures. Behavioral profiling would unjustly target people of color, with “random” searches amounting to racial profiling.

In response, *Women of Action* (WOA) collaborated with other grassroots organizations and civil liberties groups to form *The Safe and Free ‘T’ Alliance*. *The Alliance* challenged the constitutionality of the policy and demanded that searches of ‘T’ passengers be stopped.

Along with other members of *The Alliance*, WOA organized the entire summer at ‘T’ stations. We handed out flyers to riders that explain why the search policy was ultimately racial profiling; instructed folks about what to do if they were “randomly” selected by ‘T’ officials with bomb-sniffing canines; and participated in rallies, which included street theatre depicting mock MBTA check points to illustrate how invasive and inefficient the searches would be for riders.

Due to *The Alliance’s* organizing efforts, the MBTA halted its “random” searches of ‘T’ passengers. However, the MBTA reserved the right to initiate searches in the future.

~ Lynn Murray, Community Organizer

Update: On September 15th, the MBTA decided to permanently implement “random” bag searches of ‘T’ passengers. In response, WOA will work with the Safe and Free ‘T’ Alliance to fight against these civil rights violations by the MBTA.

For information on how you can help to protect civil liberties, contact Lynn at 617-308-7330.



**Honor Someone in your
Life with a Gift to the
Women’s Center**

Searching for that perfect gift? Look no further! A donation to the Women’s Center is a wonderful gift for birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, or just to say thank you!

Send a contribution to the Women’s Center with a note giving us the name and address of the person you are honoring. We send your loved one a note telling them that you’ve made a gift in their name.

GROUPS

Monday

*4-5:30pm ~ **AESP Support for Women Working with Trauma Survivors**, (weekly for 10 weeks; pre-registration required)

*6-7:30pm ~ **Al-Anon for Women** (weekly).

*7:30-9pm ~ **Lesbian Rap**, (weekly)
 Topics: 9/20 - *Gender Bending: Butch/Femme & Modern Androgeny*, 9/27 - *Dress To Impress: Lesbian Fashions*, 10/4 - *Movie Night: Better than Chocolate*, 10/11 - *Transgender Issues*, 10/18 - *Winter Sports*, 10/25 - Spirituality.

7:30-9pm ~ **Lesbian Partners & Ex-partners of Incest Survivors**, 9/20 & 10/18.

Tuesday

*10:am-12pm ~ **Parenting Support** (weekly), Info: Diane (617)876-2139.

7:30-8pm **Healing Circle** (weekly)

*7:30-9pm ~ **Bisexual Women's Rap** 9/7, 9/21, 10/5, & 10/19.

*7:30-9pm ~ **Support for Queer Married Women**, 9/14 & 10/12.

7-9pm ~ **Writer's Circle**, 10/12; info: Cassandra @ (617) 494-2695.

Wednesday

*2-3:30pm ~ **Women Maximizing Abilities Now**, 9/15, 10/6, & 10/20.

*6:30-8:30pm ~ **What's Next? Begin to Discover Your True Life Path**, 9/22.

7-9pm ~ **Battered Women's Support Group**, 9/1, 9/8, 9/22, 9/29, 10/6, 10/13, & 10/27.

7-8:30pm ~ **Eating Disorder Support Group**, 9/8, 9/15, 9/22, & 9/29.

Info: bethiecpa@hotmail.com.

* wheelchair accessible groups

Thursday

6:30-8:30pm ~ **Healing & Art for Trauma Survivors**, 9/9, 9/23, 10/14, & 10/28.

*6:30-8:30pm ~ **Women of Action Open Mike**, 9/2 & 10/7 [Must call Lynn at (617) 354-6394 prior to attending.]

7-8:30 ~ **Lesbian Buddhist Book Group**, 9/2 & 10/7; Book: *Insight Dialogue* by Greg Kramer.

*7-9pm ~ **30+ Multicultural Lesbian Rap**, 10/21 topic: Open Discussion; info: Rose @ (617) 953-5102.

7:30-9:30pm ~ **Thursday Night Gathering of Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse** (weekly), Topics 9/2: *Children in Our Lives*, 10/7: *Food* Info: lilithlive@aol.com.

6-8pm ~ **Experiential Introduction to The Woman's Belly Book: Finding Your Treasure Within**, 10/28.

Friday

*6-7:30pm ~ **Incest Resources Facilitated Discussion for Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse**, 9/17 topic: *Speaking Our Truth* & 10/15 topic: *Anger*.

Saturday

*11am-1pm ~ **Coming Out Open Discussion for Women of All Ages**, 8/7, 8/21, & 9/18.

*11am-1pm ~ **Women of Action**, 8/14, 8/28, 9/11 & 9/25 [Must call Lynn at (617) 354-6394 prior to attending first meeting].

11:30am-12:30pm ~ **Infant Message: A Healthy Way To Love Your Baby** 10/23 & 10/30; register @ (617) 354-8807.



New and Featured Activities

AESP: Support for Women Working with Trauma Survivors: Professional development series—10 weeks for crisis counselors and advocates working with trauma survivors. Must RSVP: (617) 354-8807.

Eating Disorder Support Group: Join with others dealing with eating disorders, gain support, and discuss body image. Info: bethiecpa@hotmail.com

Experiential Introduction to The Woman's Belly Book: Finding Your Treasure Within: by Lisa Sarasohn, author. Develop skills to reclaim your center. Info: lisa@loveyourbelly.com.

What's Next? Begin to Discover Your True Life Path: Interactive workshop by Inna Nirenburg. Jump start your creativity to discover possibilities and solutions in your life. Info: inna@heyWhatsNext.com

Healing Circle: Returns September 7. Includes meditation, visualization, breathwork, and energy aware- ness. Quiet the mind. Release the past. Live the present. Dream the future. Info: ashanti@intentionality.net.

Infant Message: A Healthy Way To Love Your Baby: Saturdays 10/23, 10/30, & 11/6: 11:30am-12:30pm. Classes train mothers in the art of baby massage to sooth and develop closer connection with the young child. Space limited. Register at (617) 354-8807.

Mother~Child Art Classes: Series of 10 free classes for young children (2-4 years old) with their moms. Children explore creativity and develop fine motor skills, while painting, sculpting, and drawing. Register at (617) 354-8807.

Nothing Too Heavy to Share (NTHTS): For survivors of extreme abuse, ritual abuse, and forced

To find out which groups are open to M to F transgendered women (living full time as a woman), call (617) 354-8807.

Marching for Women's Lives

Earlier this year, I was hired by the Boston Black Women's Health Institute (BBWHI) as a consultant to organize a group of women to attend the "March for Women's Lives" in April. As I became more involved, I learned more about the history of the event. In the past, the large, national pro-choice organizations, namely NOW and Planned Parenthood set the agenda when a woman's right to choose was under siege. This time, seven organizations, representing diverse constituencies including the National Latina, The National Black Women's Health Imperative, ACLU also came to the table at the beginning of the discussion.

This new group called "The New Voices for Reproductive Justice" demanded that the agenda expand to include and fully integrate the concerns of women of color and low income women into a major reproductive rights platform based on social justice. The expanded agenda also included a woman's right to be healthy, to raise healthy children and would address racial and class based disparities in health care. This expanded agenda brought a need to rename the event "The March for Women's Lives", and under that new name men and women of color working on a number of different issues like domestic violence, environmental racism, economic justice and HIV/AIDS could see their issues fitting in to the broader agenda.

Bringing different groups of people to the table at the beginning also helped to change the way organizing for these events was done. The National Latina organization sent ambassadors to local health organizations serving Latinos in cities throughout the country. The Massachusetts chapter of NOW and Planned Parenthood connected with Senator Dianne Wilkerson and BBWHI to find out how to best reach African American communities in Boston. Lula Christopher, the Executive Director of BBWHI, networked with African and Haitian women's organizations here in the greater Boston area. There were efforts being made at the national, local and grassroots level to fulfill the promise of having a more diverse protest in DC, and the results were visible. One other byproduct of these effective new methods of organizing was that more than one third of the women attending the march were 21 years old and younger. Methods that were used to bring forth more racial and class-based diversity, also appealed to young women.

I learned many lessons in my short time as an organizer for this event, but the one I am trying to impress on many feminist organizations is that the diversity you seek in the movement has to be represented at the organizing table. Women of color and low-income women are natural organizers because we have learned that we have to work together to survive. When we are at the table, we will bring different ways organizing that will be beneficial to everyone at the end of the day.

~ *Gabrie'l J. Atchison, Women's Center Board Member*

Foundation and Corporate Support

A special "thank you" to the foundations and organizations who have contributed \$250 or more since December 2003

BOSTON WOMEN'S FUND
 Bushrod H. Campbell & Adah F. Hall Charity Fund
 Cambridge Community Foundation
 Cambridge Trust Company
 Chahara Foundation
 City of Cambridge
 Clipper Ship Foundation
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 First American Title Insurance Co.
 Frances R. Dewing Foundation
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 Haymarket Peoples Fund
 Mind's Eye Yarn
 George and Beatrice Sherman Family Charitable Trust
 The R.O.S.E Fund
 Women Empowered

We gratefully acknowledge the many inkind contributions that help to make our work possible and the Center more comfortable including those from:

MINUTEMAN PRESS
 NECS
 SBHN



Introducing the Community Feedback Board

The Women's Center is proud to introduce the Community Feedback Board – a tool to connect your ideas about the Center to the entire Women's Center Community. If you have a comment, observation or question about any Women's Center policy or program please fill out a comment card and turn it into the volunteer in the staff office. A Women's Center staff person will read, answer and display your comment on the board on the first floor.

This is one effort in a series of initiatives at the Center to spark dialogue among women while providing information and clarity about the structure and philosophy that drive and govern the Center. It's also a way to highlight the important voices of all women who walk through the door and take part in our community.

**We will hold our first Community Forum later this fall. Look for the date in our next calendar. ~ WC Staff*

The Women's Center
46 Pleasant Street
Cambridge, MA 02139

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New Workshop Series: *Infant Massage: A Healthy Way to Love Your Baby*

Infant massage is an ancient art form which shows your love for your baby. The deep emotional bonds formed in infancy with the people who are caregivers (whether biological or adoptive), lay the early foundation for a developing human being. Massaging your baby helps you to understand the language that your baby shares with you, giving you clues to respond in healthy and loving ways which add to that initial positive foundation. Infant massage helps form deep emotional bonds with your child that last a lifetime!

Join us for this 3-session workshop series. Each 1 ½ hour session accommodates 5 mothers/women caregivers and their babies (4 weeks to 1 year old). **All massaging on your baby will be done by you.** Bring you baby, your questions and ideas, and a blanket or towel from home for a fun adventure in learning the power of positive touch!
~ Theresa Ochenkoski, Licensed Massage Therapist

Space is limited to 5 mothers/women caregivers and their babies. Participants must attend all 3 sessions. To register, please call 617-354-8807.

Yes, I want to support the Women's Center!

Enclosed is my tax-deductible donation of: ___\$500 ___\$100 ___\$50 ___\$25 ___other \$ ___

___ I'm interested in volunteering at the Women's Center.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Checks payable to **The Women's Center**. To: Women's Center, 46 Pleasant Street, Cambridge MA 02139

If you'd prefer to be taken off of our mailing list, please check the following box and return

Thank You!