



ON OUR WAY



Newsletter of the Women's Center
Pleasant Street, Cambridge, MA 02139
(617) 354-8807

The Women's Center

Spring 2005

Proposed Cuts Undermine Women

On February 4, 2005 in an effort to sell his plan to change Social Security, George Bush said to a single mother of three in Omaha, Nebraska, "You work three jobs? ... Uniquely American, isn't it? I mean, that is fantastic that you're doing that."

George Bush stated quite clearly his administration's attitude toward women. If you have three children, you should work three jobs to support them.

The President went on to tell the woman that, "it will help you get your sleep to know that when we talk about Social Security, nothing changes." (Source: White House Press Office).

In fact, the Administration's plan to privatize Social Security would change the system dramatically, posing an enormous threat to women. Because we earn less than men (75 cents to the dollar), live longer than men, and are less likely to have another source of retirement income than men, Social Security is crucial to our future. Nearly 30% of retirement age women rely solely on Social Security for financial support during retirement years. (Source: United States Social Security

Administration). Social Security helps women in other ways as well. It provides benefits to the disabled and to widows and their young children.

It is fair to say that Social Security is the only safety net program that remains completely intact. That will no longer be true if this Administration has its way.

Progressive analysts estimate that Social Security income is likely to decrease by 30%-50% if the Administration is successful in privatizing a portion of it. In addition, the current Social Security system is indexed with inflation - income levels increase as the cost of living rises. Privatization provides no such guarantee. And, the President is ominously silent on benefits to the disabled and widows and their children.

The attempt to privatize Social Security is only one of many threats to women coming from this Administration. Cuts in HUD funding will decrease affordable housing units by 12,600 in *Massachusetts alone*. Already, housing authorities across the state and nation are trying to figure out how to eliminate

CONTENTS

- 1) Proposed Cuts Undermine Women
- 1) Make Your Donation Your Next Vacation!
- 2) From the Desk of the Fundraiser
- 2) Another Award for WOA!
- 2) Join our e-Community!
- 3) Proposed Cuts Article *continued*..
- 3) Section 8 Tenants Reeling from HUD Cuts
- 3) Announcing *That Takes Ovaries!*
- 4) April & May Calendar of Events
- 5) Bridging the Gap in Domestic Violence Resources
- 5) Back by Popular Demand: Creative Arts for Black Women
- 5) Foundation & Corporate Support
- 5) Quilt Project for Incest Survivors
- 6) Women's Center Wish List
- 6) Support the Women's Center!

subsidies without throwing families and individuals out into the streets. Single mothers and their children will feel this cut deeply. Medicaid, which provides healthcare to low-income families, low-income people with disabilities, and low-income elders, is on the chopping block. Single mothers, their children, and women receiving long term care are threatened with loss of the health care of last resort.

Continues on page 3...

Make Your Donation Your Next Vacation!

Imagine relaxing on a wrap-around porch with an ocean view, walking along the beach at sunset, or enjoying the last of summer's warm sunshine on a beautiful deck. Sound amazing? Then pack your bags for 1 week's vacation at a gorgeous Victorian house on Oak Bluffs, Martha's Vineyard! Thanks to one of our donors, the Women's Center is auctioning off one week's stay at a 6 bedroom summer house. The winning bidder chooses between 2 weeks: September 11th to September 18th 2005 or September 25th to October 2nd, 2005. We are holding the auction online beginning Sunday May 15 at 3 pm and ending Sunday May 22nd at 3 pm.

To bid, go to www.newyankeeswap.com and click on Live Auctions starting at 3 pm on May 15. View pictures of the house today at www.cambridgewomenscenter.org. *Proceeds benefit the Women's Center. For info, call 617-354-6394.*

On Our Way

The newsletter of the Women's Center is published 3 times per year in *April, 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 institutions 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

Women facing the harsh effects of cuts to critical social welfare programs are turning to the Women's Center. As the safety net is chipped away, women depend more than ever before on our free resources and support services.

We need your financial support to meet the ever growing demand for our programs and services.

For 34 years, the Women's Center has been the catalyst for women's rights and women's empowerment in Cambridge and Greater Boston. We make it possible for thousands of women to heal from abuse, find housing and employment, obtain counseling, access educational programming for their young children, and challenge discrimination.

Your donation to the Women's Center is an act for women's rights. It validates women's struggles at a time when gender oppression is consistently minimized or denied outright. Your contribution provides women with opportunities, encouragement, and hope.

Please stand with us to protect women's rights and the Women's Center. Join us today with a tax-deductible donation to the Women's Center. Your financial support strengthens the feminist foundation of our community.

~ Nicole Marcotte, Development Coordinator

Another Award for WOA!

Women of Action (WOA) is the proud recipient of this year's Mary Shea Community Activist Award from the Cambridge Eviction Free Zone. This award is named in honor of longtime housing activist and Cambridge resident, Mary Shea, and is given each year to individuals and community activists in the struggle for housing justice. *Women of Action* was recognized for its campaign to



create a Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA) that includes tenants in CHA decision-making. To this end, WOA demanded and won the implementation of a complaint card system for use by public housing tenants and voucher holders. Located in the Office of Leasing and Occupancy, the complaint cards are an easy and clear way for tenants to state problems and have them addressed by the CHA within 14 days. The Cambridge Eviction Free Zone also praised WOA efforts as path breaking, because they have set a new precedent for other community groups dealing with CHA for tenants' rights. WOA thanks the Cambridge Eviction Free Zone for their consistent support of its work and the work of all housing justice organizations in our community. *~ Lynn Murray, Community Organizer*

From left to right: Erin Hazard, Lynn Murray, Philly Pereira, and Jennifer Quinn

JOIN OUR e-COMMUNITY TODAY!

As a member, you get the latest information about programming, news, and announcements, as well as our monthly calendar. To join our e-community, go to www.cambridgewomenscenter.org and click News and Happenings.

Cuts Threaten to Hit Women Hard Continued from Page 1

We can also expect an increase in the number of families suffering from hunger and inadequate nutrition. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), 425,000 people in *Massachusetts* already lack access to adequate food and nutrition. Many are women and children in single parent households. Yet the Administration proposes to eliminate the Community Food and Nutrition Program and reduce funding for Food Stamps. We'll also see fewer emergency resources for families and individuals currently suffering from hunger and lack of nutrition. Reduced funding for heating assistance is likely to affect the same families, changing the choice between heating and eating to no choice at all.

While the Administration continues to impose 'forced work' requirements (workfare) on women receiving welfare benefits, they propose reducing funds for daycare and job creation programs. To make matters worse, the Bush Administration plans to *increase* the number of hours that mothers must work in return for their welfare benefits from 30 to 40 per week. This would force low-income, single mothers to work for less than the federal minimum wage – a first step in undercutting the minimum wage requirement overall, perhaps...

Undeterred, the Bush Administration flatly states that the federal minimum-wage provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act should not apply to women in "welfare-to-work" jobs. Simultaneously, the Administration continues to push marriage promotion initiatives and abstinence education – a kind of government sponsored behavior modification program directed at women.

Many of us could care less what George and his cohorts think of women, so long as they keep their fingerprints off of our lives. However, the budget and public policy initiatives are fingerprints – the fingerprints of values in our society. This set of prints tells us just how little we are valued.

As an organization dedicated to working for women's rights, we urge all women to stand together and oppose this multi-faceted attack on women. Only when we stand to protect the rights of the most vulnerable among us do we also protect ourselves.

~ Mary Quinn, Executive Director

ANNOUNCING...

That Takes Ovaries:

Bold Females and Their Brazen Acts

Mother's Day Weekend: May 6, 7, & 8

Jimmy Tingle's Theater
Davis Square, Somerville

Section 8 Tenants Reeling from HUD Cuts

These are difficult times for women who rely on programs administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA). In particular, the Section 8 voucher program is under attack.

As a result of funding cuts made by HUD, CHA lost 1.2 million dollars from its budget. To resolve the loss and reduce costs, CHA is setting new policies that impact tenants enrolled in the housing choice voucher program.

One new policy reduces the amount of the Section 8 voucher that CHA pays to landlords where rents exceed 100% of the current Fair Market Rents. While it is expected that landlords will accept the rent decrease because rents have gone down and there are a large number of vacancies, some landlords may try to demand extra payments from tenants. This is illegal. If a landlord demands extra payments, the tenant should contact CHA immediately and also contact community legal services. It is also important for tenants to understand that a landlord cannot evict a tenant without going to court and getting court permission.

Other CHA policy changes increase the portion of rent paid by tenants on their re-certification date. Twice in 2004, CHA reduced the payment standard (the maximum CHA pays for rent). The exact amount of the increase depends on individual tenant circumstances but will likely range from \$100/month for a studio, \$150/month for a 2 bedroom and nearly \$300/month for a 3 bedroom apartment.

With all of these changes, now is the time for tenants who currently hold vouchers to start talking to their neighbors who may also hold vouchers. It may be possible to meet and bargain with your landlord collectively. If necessary, tenants can contact CHA for help in convincing your landlord to accept the decrease in the rent payment from CHA. If you are disabled and need to stay in your apartment and your landlord is objecting the rent decrease, contact CHA for information about requesting a higher rent on the grounds of reasonable accommodation.

Now is also the time to join a local community organization that is working to save the Section 8 Program and keep it running effectively for tenants, such as The Section 8 Action Committee of the Cambridge Eviction Free Zone. It is important for women to participate in organizations that are communicating with CHA about the processes they adopt to administer these changes. Organizations like *Women of Action* (WOA) meet regularly with information, strategies and goals to keep people in their homes. Get involved now so we can win the fight for affordable housing!

~ Lynn Murray, Community Organizer

For information, call WOA at 617-308-7330. For information about the Section 8 Action Committee, call 617-354-1300.

GROUPS

Monday

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

*7:30-9pm ~ Stitch N' Bitch, (weekly)

7:30-9pm ~ Lesbian Partners & Ex-partners of Incest Survivors, 4/18. & 5/16

6-8:30 ~ Incest Survivors Interfaith Quilt Project, 4/11, 4/25, 5/9, & 5/23.

Tuesday

*7:30-9pm ~ Bisexual Women's Rap,

4/5: *How do you describe yourself?*

4/19: *Queer relatives: do you have a gay uncle? Or do you feel you are the only one?*

5/3: *Managing relationships:*

Communication, Levels of Intimacy,

Staying Friends, &

5/17: *Looking Fem, Acting Butch.*

7:30-8:30 ~Healing Circle, (weekly)

*7:30-9pm ~ Support for Married But Not Straight Women, 4/12 & 5/10.

7-9pm ~ Writer's Circle, 4/12 & 5/10; [info: Cassandra @ (617) 4942695].

Wednesday

6-7pm ~ Self Care Through Pre Tai Chi Meditation and Chi Kung, (weekly)

7:30-9pm ~ Lesbian Rap, weekly (beginning 5/18.)

*2-3:30pm ~ Women Maximizing Abilities Now, 4/6, 4/20, 5/4, & 5/18. [Info: woman@braintrust.org]

7-9pm ~ Battered Women's Support Group, 4/6, 4/13, 4/27, 5/4, 5/11, & 5/24; [Meets weekly, except 3rd Wednesday of each month].

Thursday

6:30-8:30pm ~ Healing & Art for Trauma Survivors, 4/14, 4/21, 5/12, & 5/26.

*6:30-8pm ~ 40+ Lesbian

Gathering, 4/21: *Crushes*, & 5/19.

*6:30-8:30 ~Women of Action Open Mike, 4/7 & 5/5.

7:30-9:30pm ~ Thursday Night Gathering of Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse, (weekly) Topics first Thursdays, 4/7: *Panic and Anxiety*, 5/5: *Finding our Voices*.

Friday

6-7:30pm ~ Incest Resources Facilitated Discussion for Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse, 4/15: *Boundaries* & 5/20: *Relationships*.

Saturday

*11am-1pm ~ Coming Out Open Discussion for Women of All Ages, 4/2, 4/16, 5/7, & 5/21.

*11am-1pm ~ Women of Action, 4/9, 4/23, 5/14, & 5/28. [Must call Lynn at (617) 354-6394 prior to meeting.]

1:30-3:30pm ~ Resume Writing Workshop, 5/21 [first of 3 part series; must register at (617) 354-6394].

Sunday

2-5pm ~ Building Bridges: A Conversation to Bridge the Gap Between Immigrant Communities and Domestic Violence Service Agencies, 4/24.

Women's Center Hours

	Computer Lab
Mon-Thurs: 10-10	Mon-Thurs: 10-9:45
Fri: 10-8	Fri: 10-7:45
Sat: 11-4	Sat: 11-3:45
Sun: CLOSED	Sun: CLOSED

The Women's Center is closed on Monday May 30 for Memorial Day.

New and Featured Activities

Building Bridges: A Conversation to Bridge the Gap Between Immigrant communities and DV Service Agencies:

Women working with battered women examine the needs of immigrant women and how we can better meet those needs.

Creative Art Class for Black Women:

Second series of classes begins soon for women who identify as Black or African American. Commit to 6 classes to explore creativity and themes relevant to the lives of African American women. RSVP to Lace at (617) 868-9900.

Lesbian Rap: Returns on a new day of the week beginning Wednesday' 5/18.

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) 868-9900.

Nothing Too Heavy to Share (NTHTS):

For survivors of ritual and extreme abuse only. Day and evening meetings weekly. Info/Register: (781)-278-0997

Incest Survivor's Interfaith Quilt

Project: For women incest survivors to create a quilt expressing how one finds faith, hope, and spiritual strength as a survivor. Meets 2. 1/2 hours twice per month. Materials supplied. Register with Michelle at (617) 864-4052 or email: michelle@storyplace.net

Self Care Through Pre Tai Chi Meditation

and Chi Kung: Become present in body, quiet in mind, and aware of your breath. Please dress comfortably. Info: mankat@care2.com.

Resume Writing Workshop: The first in a series of three resume writing and interviewing technique workshops. Info/register: (617) 354-8807 or email: mary@cambridgewomenscenter.org.

Stitch N' Bitch: Weekly group combines creativity, relaxation, and conversation. Bring sewing, quilting, knitting, or other craft. Join others in chatting, laughing, and letting go of stress. Info: loomis@cpsd.us.

Bridging the Gap in Domestic Violence Resources

Domestic violence is a social epidemic that crosses class, culture, and color. According to a special report on Intimate Partner Violence published by the US Department of Justice in 1998, women were victims in about 876,340 violent crimes. In the same study, women of color were victimized by intimate partners at a significantly higher rate than white women.

It is because of this that the Women's Center is hosting *Building Our Bridges: A Conversation Between Immigrant Communities and Domestic Violence Service Agencies* on April 24th. This forum is an opportunity for agencies to come together and build a relationship in making domestic violence a top priority in the community. There will be a panel discussion featuring several organizations from the area, each identifying with different immigrant organizations. The goal of this forum is to encourage dialogue between the Cambridge community and surrounding agencies with the purpose of increasing awareness about how domestic violence affects women of color, especially women from immigrant populations. No one can deny the importance of information and communication to these communities, particularly for those in our community to know what agencies exist that they can identify with. Please join us on April 24th for this important conversation.

~ Melissa Jean-Charles, Volunteer Coordinator

For more information, contact Melissa at 617-354-6394

Back by Popular Demand: Creative Arts for Black Women

The next series of classes for the Creative Arts Group for Black Women is about to begin! Join us as we explore the healing and transformative power of creative arts. Each session includes an arts project using different media (paint, clay, collage, 3D sculpture, drawing etc.) and discussion time.

In our last series, we created clay sculptures based on meaning of our womanhood. We discussed the power of language as we explored the different "names" used to refer to us as black women, and we created poetry that reflected our feelings about love and anger. Participants found the classes to be a great way to explore themselves as creative beings while connecting with women of color in a positive environment.

The next 5 class series begins Saturday, April 23rd and includes a reception in June to celebrate the work produced by the group. Class is free and space is limited so register early to reserve your spot. No experience is necessary!

~ Lace Campbell, Instructor

To register or learn more about the group, contact 617-868-9900 or info@BeyondtheFourthWall.com

Foundation & Corporate Support

A special "thank you" to the foundations and organizations who have contributed \$250 or more in the last year

Lassor and Fanny Agoos Charity Fund
Boston Women's Fund
Bushrod H. Campbell & Adah F. Hall Charity Fund
Cambridge Arts Council
Cambridge Community Foundation
Cambridge Savings Charitable Foundation
Cambridge Trust Company
Chahara Foundation
Citizens Bank
City of Cambridge
Clipper Ship Foundation
Draper Laboratory
East Cambridge Savings Bank
Frances R. Dewing Foundation
Sheila Gamble Fund
Hartley Corporation
Haymarket People's Fund
Mind's Eye Yarn
TJX Foundation

We gratefully acknowledge the many inkind contribution that make our work possible:

NECS
SBHN

Quilt Project for Incest Survivors

At first glance, quilt-making and healing from incest may seem unrelated. However, when you put the two processes side by side, similarities emerge. Each constructs beauty and wholeness out of fragments, and both imply connection to a larger community. Because incest is a betrayal trauma, collaborating on the completion of a quilt represents the courage to overcome fear and prioritize faith, joining together with others, and sharing.

The Incest Survivor Interfaith Quilt Project utilizes two approaches to quilt-making. A core group meets on a semi-weekly basis to develop the concept and design for the quilt. At one-time workshops, women may create their own personal square about faith to be incorporated into the quilt, as well as share their thoughts and ideas. The workshops do not require a long-term commitment to the project. No quilting experience necessary.

~ Michelle Harris, Facilitator

Register with Michelle at (617)864-4052 or

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

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Women's Center Wish List



Household

- ❑ Air Purifier
- ❑ Dehumidifier
- ❑ Electric / Carpentry/ Painting Work
- ❑ Gift Certificates to Home Depot, Pier 1 Imports, and Tags
- ❑ Liquid Hand & Dishwashing Soap
- ❑ Large Straw Area Rug
- ❑ Kitchen Supplies

Technical Equipment

- ❑ CD ROM drives / CD Burners
- ❑ Computer Tech Assistance
- ❑ Desktop PCs - Pentium III+, Hard Drive 10GB+
- ❑ Digital Camera
- ❑ HP Inkjet Toner Cartridge #45
- ❑ Merlin Telephones

Miscellaneous

- ❑ Closet Storage Bins
- ❑ File Cabinet with Lock
- ❑ Office Supplies
- ❑ Subscriptions: Adbusters; Boston Globe; Curve; Girlfriends; Hip Mama; Mother Jones; Off Our Backs



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



Enclosed is my tax-deductible donation of: ___\$1000 ___\$500 ___\$250 ___\$100 ___\$50 other \$ ___
___ My donation is in honor of: (name/address) _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Thank You!

Checks payable to **The Women's Center**. Mail 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