



CAMBRIDGE WOMEN'S CENTER ON OUR WAY

FALL 2021 NEWSLETTER

25 MOUNT AUBURN STREET | WWW.CAMBRIDGEWOMENSCENTER.ORG

Diana Williams was the winner of our 50th Anniversary logo design competition this year! The logo she helped create is featured above. Congratulations to Diana, and thank you to everyone who participated! Second place winners included Casey Fox, U. devarajan, and Solmaria Deleon



Nan Genger, 2021

Here

Where ever you are,
it's called Here.
Like a quiet friend,
She is there.

Listening intently,
patiently, and
without judgement.

Catching every echo
of your heartbeat--
recording the
metronome
of your life--

she cherishes
that you are here.

If you are ever lost,
Just ask her where you are.
For Here knows where you are.
All you have to do
is breathe,
now.

Here

DESIREE BUMANGLANG
heal, a manuscript in progress
2021

On the occasion of our 50th, we decided to open this newsletter with a reprint of the article from issue 2 of *On Our Way*, as we did on our 25th Anniversary. Rereading this has helped us to remember how the Women's Center came to be, and how every day since 1971 has been a process of creating what the center is and what we are going to become. We hope you enjoy the read...



about the women's center...

We thought it would be a good idea to tell people a little of the history behind this struggle.....

It started the summer of 1970, when women at a Bread and Roses meeting voted to create a women's center which would be open to all women. It was announced in several Bread and Roses meetings, newsletters, and at a conference, that any women could work on the project. The idea was to provide a place where new women could come, where certain services could be set up, and where existing women's groups could get together. By March 6, 1971 (the day Boston area women celebrated International Women's Day), \$4000 had been raised.

Many different women came up with the idea of seizing a building at different times during the year. About three weeks before International Women's Day a few of those women contacted other women from as many different groups as they knew of, as well as those working on the demonstration for International Women's Day, and had the first meeting specifically to discuss taking over a building. Some of the groups contacted were Gay Women's Liberation, 'Hysteria,' the 'Mole' Women's Caucus, the women's health collectives, Hemenway Community Women, the child care action group, Bread and Roses orientation program, Women and Imperialism Group, the women's Law commune, feminist study group, as well as the original women's center group from Bread and Roses.

A lot of us didn't know each other, but one thing we had in common was all wanting to take a building - one that there was a possibility of keeping. We felt that such a struggle would make our movement larger, more unified, and more powerful.

Initially we divided up the labor so that some women were researching buildings and checking into how people would feel about a take-over in their community; others were working on setting up several minimal services (as health referral, child care, legal services, self-defense); still others spent time looking into supplies etc. As the plans developed people volunteered for special tasks such as gathering the food, dealing with security, tactics, and negotiating, making banners and painting brigades, entering the building in the first group, and forming welcoming committees. We all saw this as the necessary amount of organization for a few days --- a temporary responsibility until other women could get to know each other and sign up to share these responsibilities.

On March 6, while women were gathering on the Boston Common for the march to the Charles Street Jail, and eventually to the women's center, twenty women had entered the building in groups of five, and were making preparations for the arrival of the march.

The march arrived at the center, 888 Memorial Drive, at about 3:30 that afternoon... There was a welcoming committee, plenty of women's literature, and food and music and joy. We held the building for 10 days. During that time there were dances, dinners, women's skill classes, meetings, a 'lavender lounge' for gay women, and a really neat children's party for kids from the neighborhood that was a terrific success.

Women left the center with mixed feelings. On the whole it was felt that our energy would be better spent finding a new women's center than trying to bail ourselves out of jail.

Since then there have been some good dinner-meetings, dances, etc., but most of us feel that we have lost touch during the summer. Women have been working on the shitwork part of getting the center all summer. We're pretty close to moving in, and we have to start thinking about what exactly our women's center is going to be.

Staffed by Alison, Carla, Laura, Maryann, Sue, and Sunny.



Plaque at 888 Memorial Drive commemorating the takeover. It reads "SITE OF A HARVARD BUILDING OCCUPIED BY FEMINISTS WHO DEMANDED AFFORDABLE HOUSING, CHILDCARE AND EDUCATION, AND THEN FOUNDED THE CAMBRIDGE WOMEN'S CENTER -- MARCH 6-15, 1971"

Center Updates

Left On Mass Ave...



46 Pleasant Street house under construction (left), new sign outside of our temporary Mount Auburn Street location (right).

Thanks to an anonymous donor, our main building is undergoing a complete renovation, which is well underway. We are projected to move back in late 2022 / early 2023. The new building will feature wheelchair accessible bathrooms, an elevator to all four floors, a larger kitchen space and dining area, adaptable community spaces, and much more.

On April 19th, we left 46 Pleasant Street, took a left on Mass Ave, and moved into a temporary location at 25 Mount Auburn St. in Harvard Square. The movers who showed up expecting a "routine office move" were met with evidence of 50 years worth of community gathering. Volunteers have been helping us unpack, move furniture, and get settled...it is definitely an ongoing process. Below are some photos in the new space!



Our temporary drop-in space at 25 Mount Auburn St. Dining area (left), living room (center), and computer / library (right).

Commonwealth Corps Members

In August we welcomed three Commonwealth Corps Members to the center in August. Khadija, Leila, and Marta have been supporting the drop-in and will be with us in this capacity until the end of June, 2022! So far they have brought strength, laughter, and language capacity to the center!

Note from a Volunteer

"I love working at the Women's Center. It's a great place to work! The people are very nice to work with! I'm happy to be there it makes me feel like I'm at home! Amen"

SHIRLEY
CWC VOLUNTEER



Welcome, Stephanie!



Stephanie Haynes joined the CWC staff in August as our new Director of Programs and Services. In her new role, Stephanie will help guide the drop-in program while supporting community members and volunteers. Stephanie was born and raised in Boston, and brings 11 years of experience working in the nonprofit and education sectors. She is committed to closing equity gaps in access and opportunity for all marginalized people.

The library in our temporary location at 25 Mount Auburn



When we moved out of Pleasant St last spring, we packed up the library, moving about one third of the books to Mt. Auburn St and placing the remaining two thirds in storage. We quickly unpacked the books in our new location and set up bookcases in the back hall. After just two weeks, the books were all arranged by category and ready for your perusal and circulation. Since that time, through donations and some free books from LibraryThing, we have added 20 books to the collection. I hope you will check us out!

THERESA A, TOBIN
VOLUNTEER LIBRARIAN

Support our Clothing Closet!



Are you getting ready to clean out your closet? Please think of donating your unwanted clothing to the Women's Center! As some of you may know, we now have a Clothing Closet in our Harvard Square space, where members may take what they need when they visit the Center. We accept seasonally appropriate items in good clean condition — no holes, rips, stains, or odors — in all sizes, women's and men's. Shoes, boots, and bags are also appreciated. Donations of new socks and underwear are also needed (we cannot take used underwear). Please help spread the word. Thanks! Email donatios@cambridgewomenscenter.org

ELLEN
DONATIONS VOLUNTEER

Groups & Workshops

See a full calendar at www.CambridgeWomensCenter.org or pick one up at 25 Mount Auburn St. during drop-in!

November 2021:

- Alterations and Tailoring with Aelen (On-Site)
- Body Positive Book Club
- Coping in the time of COVID
- Feminist Book Club
- Healing Through Creative Arts Zoom Workshop
- Holistic Living
- Housing Support Drop- In Hours (On-Site)
- Knitting Group (On-Site)
- Lesbian & Bi Discussion Group
- Let's Journal!
- Let's Write!
- Make Your Own Greeting Cards with Rubber Stamps (On-Site)
- Meditation Group
- Nonviolent Communication for Compassionate Conflict Resolution
- Self-Care Group
- Self-Love Group
- Sewing Group (On-Site)
- Slow Flow Yoga
- Spanish- English Conversation Exchange
- Trauma Support and Discussion Group
- Upcycled Design Workshop (On-Site)
- Women 65+ Group (On-Site & Zoom)
- Women's Center Board Meeting

Let's Write!

I have to admit that I was, at first, unsure of how Let's Write! would adapt to Zoom. Before the pandemic, the group met on the 2nd floor of the Women's Center and I had strong associations with that cozy oval table, the windows looking out on the street, the light. I'm happy to share that the transition turned out to be a fruitful exercise in adaptability and trust. In the last year, Let's Write! has grown in size, with participants joining from other cities and states—even other countries! It has been really exciting and fortifying to experience the stories that have come out of our meetings and continue to be a part of this community. Some participants have also shared that the virtual format makes the group more accessible, though of course the opposite is true for others. At some point in the future, I'd love for Let's Write! to be available in both formats!

LAURA VAN DEN BERG
LET'S WRITE! GROUP FACILITATOR

Alterations & Tailoring with Aelen



Aelen outside her shop

Throughout the pandemic, Aelen has been offering free drop-in alterations and tailoring at the CWC. Aelen also has her own business: "Ninawa Zero-waste Clothes", where she sells custom creations using repurposed materials. You can find her booth at the Central Square market behind H-Mart selling beautiful tote bags, pillows, and dresses. **Follow Aelen on instagram @ninawazerowasteclothes or email her at ninawa.fashion@gmail.com**

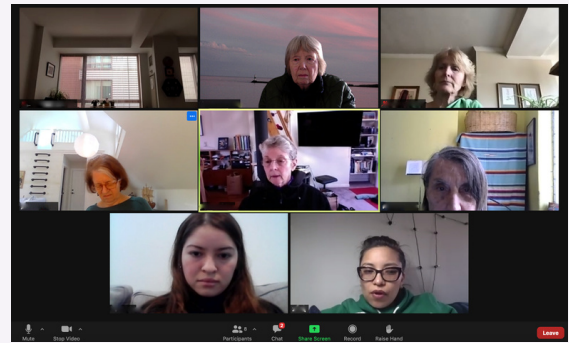
Sewing Group



Karlotta and Christian in kitchen

The sewing group started meeting on-site over the summer! Sometimes group participants and their children would help with the food delivery afterwards. They continue to meet on Thursday mornings. The group has been led by Karlotta for many years. You can drop-in to sew with them on Thursdays from 10am-noon. A new knitting group meets afterwards from noon-1pm.

Grupo de Intercambio de Conversación Español-Inglés



Zoom screenshot from a Spanish-English Conversation Exchange Group meeting in 2021

Grupo de Intercambio de Conversación Español-Inglés (Spanish-English Conversation Exchange Group) has been ongoing at the Women's Center since August 2015, when it was started and led by Martha Blass from Mexico. The group now rotates its facilitators weekly. It meets via Zoom Wednesdays 1-2:30pm.

Currently we have 5 - 8 women who attend regularly. Each gives a short presentation on any topic in the non-native language, followed by serious but gentle corrections from the native speakers. Occasionally we break out into actual discussions, where we often share laughs and sometimes a few tears.

Participants have hailed from Mexico, Colombia, Chile, Venezuela, Argentina, the Dominican Republic, Brazil, and Spain, not to mention Boston, Cambridge, and surrounding areas - and England. Among us are mothers, wives, workers, students, and retirees. Our fluency in the other language varies from so-so to excellent. Curiosity about each other's cultures and language unites us.

Many of the native English-speakers have connections to Spanish-speaking countries, often having lived in or visited them. One has extended family there and deep ties to the culture. One helped build a clinic in Guatemala. Another works with refugees in greater Boston.

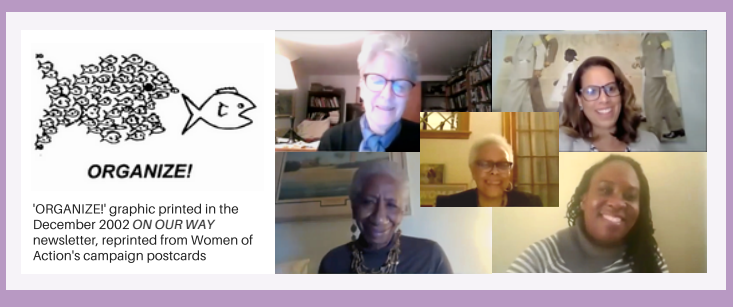
¡Únete a nosotras en la conversación!
Join us in conversation!



50th Anniversary Celebration Recap

In the midst of a challenging year, we have still found occasions to reflect, embody joy, learn and find community and connection in one another. In March, we celebrated 50 years since the founding of the Women's Center with a series of virtual events, including a 50K "Step" challenge, a screening of 'Left On Pearl', the documentary film made about the founding of the Women's Center, a community organizing panel, women's history trivia, a workshop for survivors "SOS Sharing Our Stories" led by Saafyr, a Healing Through Trauma Informed Yoga session, and a virtual celebration where we honored CWC "foremother" Judy Norris. The 50th planning committee was chaired by Vera Grbic with incredible support and contributions from committee members: Cheryl Weber, Monika Hyatt, Rochelle Ruthchild, Nan Genger, Keara Bohannon, Mary Ellen Malloy, Morgan Bolling, and Amy Cannistraro. Special thanks to Kimm Topping, Libby Bouvier, Shreya Raghuraman, 888 Women's History Project, *Left On Pearl*, Survivor Theater Project, Hands to Heart Center Yoga, Mayor Siddiqui, Lamplighter Brewing Co., and CCTV Cambridge.

Community Organizing: Past and Present



The Cambridge Women's Center has a long history of community organizing - from its founding through protest, to a community organizer staff position beginning in 1998, to a depth of relationships with other community organizations and activists. On March 10, 2021, we learned from community leaders across generations who spoke on and embodied the power of community organizing. Eva Martin Blythe (center), former ED of YWCA Cambridge moderated an inspiring panel with Lynn Murray (bottom right), former Women of Action Organizer at the CWC, Caroline Hunter (bottom left), anti-Apartheid activist and educator who organized the Polaroid Revolutionary Workers Movement in Cambridge and beyond, Cathy Hoffman (top left), peace educator, activist and former Director of the Cambridge Peace Commission, and Natanja Craig-Oquendo (top right), Director of The Boston Foundation. We stand on their shoulders and are honored to have them as part of our community.

Panel made possible thanks to local historian Kimm Topping. Watch the full video online at bit.ly/Organizing-Panel



You can read more about Lynn Murray's work as the Women's Center's first community organizer in *Mapping Feminist Cambridge: Central Square (1970s-1990s)* publication, which is available on the Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women website. Lynn organized with Black women, Cape Verdean women, and Latin American women who were low-income on issues concerning transit justice with the MBTA, and housing justice with Cambridge Housing Authority.

Left On Pearl: Our Radical Origins



On March 7, 2021, we joined Director Susie Rivo (top left) and Executive Producers Rochelle Ruthchild (bottom right), and Susan Jacoby (bottom left) of the film *Left On Pearl*, in conversation with Reverend Irene Monroe (top right), Co-host of All Rev'd Up on GBH. In 2018 Rev. Monroe wrote a column on the film, which you can still read at blackcommentator.com. The panel was moderated by former Director of the CWC, Jessye Kass (center). Below are excerpts that offer crumbs from a deeply important conversation that urges us to reflect critically on our past in order to show up with integrity in our present communities.

Reverend Irene Monroe:

"What I don't want to get lost is *Left On Pearl* and what white women did in that era. I don't want that social history, the importance of that to get lost, but at the same time, the necessity to critique it, that yes, when my spouse and I went to see the film we said "those are some badass white girls" and we [also] said "oh, that really speaks of privilege!" because they would've slammed a sister on the ground...it had little to do with a Black woman centeredness, even though it was in a Black community.

I don't want criticism...to negate the importance of women's liberation...yes, it's flawed, but then we're such a "cancel culture". I feel personally...that [over] the many waves of feminism, women's liberation is becoming diminished even more."

Rochelle Ruthchild:

"One of the things I'm proudest of in the film is that it's the story of the creation of the Women's Center and the takeover that took place that was primarily by white women, but it really intersected with a movement in the Riverside community...The tenants and the homeowners movement of Riverside was really a movement of strong African American women. I think one of the things we wanted to show in the film is the way those two movements intersect. It's not to say that we were best buddies, but we were able to make an alliance that really was powerful and made some difference for all the women involved.

I feel like at this point in my life I'm really passing on to the next generation and the next generation to continue what we started. The Women's Center has a universal feminist women's liberation ideology but also we are rooted within a community and I think that part of the work of the Women's Center for the next 50 years is to make connections to a community which is predominantly a community of color."

Panel made possible thanks to The 888 Women's History Project and the Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women. Watch the full video online at bit.ly/LOP-2021



888 Memorial Dr. during the 1971 takeover (above) and from the march (right)

To learn more about the film *Left On Pearl*, see the trailer, or host a film screening, visit www.leftonpearl.org





An Ode to Judy Norris on the Occasion of the Cambridge Women's Center Fiftieth

The year is 2021
 We've been through a ton
 Some fifty years before
 In the 888 takeover of Cambridge folklore
 The Women's Center was born
 Grew into a tree from a feminist acorn
 And critical to its long life
 Through years of struggle and strife
 Judy Norris, our comrade
 Steady commitment no fad
 With tool in hand
 Or spreadsheet on computer stand
 From Tooth and Nail
 To Instagram and email
 Judy has been the Women's Center rock
 Mother hen of all the flock
 Of activists, the curious, the strays
 Who enter the Center on most days.
 Judy your accomplishments galore
 Could fill a book and then some more
 I join many who honor and salute you
 You are a heroine of feminist labor through and through.



**IN SISTERHOOD AND SOLIDARITY,
 ROCHELLE GOLDBERG RUTHCHILD
 FOUNDING MEMBER
 14 MARCH 2021**

Healing is...



The "Healing is..." project of the Trauma Support Group. Presentation of the artworks from Nan Genger, Casey Fox, and Morgan Bolling of the Trauma Support Group to Judy Norris on the occasion of our 50th Anniversary (bottom).

The Cambridge Women's Center is celebrating its 50th anniversary this March. The Center is a vanguard resource, empowering the personal and political lives of women in the community and areas beyond. Members of the CWC's Thursday night Trauma Support Group want to offer a series of messages about healing to inspire others and to celebrate our journey of solidarity. Following the prompt "Healing is....," short responses are printed with background artwork made by the members. What a powerful and moving example of survivors(ing) of trauma finding strength in recovery and extending hope into the community.

NAN GENDER

An Incomplete Timeline

1971-1980

- 71 - Int'l Women's Day March, building takeover at 888 Memorial, house purchased at 46 Pleasant, Women's Center founded
- 72 - Move-in to 46 Pleasant St., initial meetings to determine how to run the center, The Women's School begins meeting, fire at the Women's Center, no electricity for months
- 73 - BARCC, Houseworker's Handbook, Women's Health Initiative, Women's Press starts at the center
- 74 - Elizabeth Stone House founders meet at center
- 74-80 - The Combahee River Collective holds early meetings at center
- 75 - Transition house founded with Women's Center support, battered women's directory starts at center
- 80 - In-house training on incest, anti-racism meeting, WORD (Women Opposed to Registration and the Draft) begins meeting

1981 - 1990

- 81 - The Women of Color Support Group begins meeting, Women Against Violence Against Women "Take Back the Night" event, introductory steering committee begins meeting
- 82 - Women's Task Force Solidarity Day Coalition March and Rally, fundraiser for TTY telephone machine, Women's Center burns mortgage, Archives of the Boston Area Women's Liberation Movement open on 3rd fl. of center
- 83 - Support Group formed in Boston against increased violence against women at the Framingham Women's Prison, Women of Color Support Group begins a Women of Color Emergency Fund, supported creation of Finex House
- 84 - Purchased wheelchair lift, Survivor's Newsletter Collective forms, "Newsletter for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse."
- 85 - Computer committee formed
- 86 - Provided space for the Deaf Women's Counseling Project, Coffeehouse event organized, Political Action Hotline at the center, Pro-choice Rally at the Church of the Covenant
- 88 - The Names Project AIDS quilt displayed in Boston, women in visual arts exhibit
- 89 - Multicultural training, Renovations: fresh paint, patio, wheelchair lift, rally for Women's Equity in DC, serves as set for United Way film about DV, provided space for The Women's Community Cancer Project

1991 - 2000

- 91 - 20th birthday party, inaugural eating awareness and body image group, renovation of front garage, "Knowing Herself: Women Tell Stories in Psychotherapy" event, alternative holiday gathering
- 93 - helped develop and collaborated on "Women's Health Day," which became a very popular annual event for 10 years
- 94 - Women's political poetry workshop, Diversity Task Force begins, kitchen tile fundraising campaign
- 95 - 15th anniversary of Incest Resources, City of Cambridge DV Summit and Cambridgeport Take Back the Night March, creation of Women of Color Referral Book
- 96 - 25th Anniversary, Ryles Nightclub fundraiser, W.I.T.C.H. feminist lecture series at center, WomanSpeak on CCTV, community awareness action in response to rape in Central Sq.
- 99 - First community meeting since 1972 to discuss changes at the center, Susan Abod benefit concert for the center, film series "Films for Thought" begin at the center, roof-work, sells Darden stocks because of anti-gay policies
- 00 - Internet access at the center

2001-2011

- 01 - First of a series of anti-racism workshops facilitated by the diversity committee
- 02 - Center releases policy revision to officially include those who identify as women, IWD celebration at YWCA features in-progress Left On Pearl film
- 03 - BWF honors Women of Action for their transportation justice advocacy
- 04 - Women of Action opposes the MBTA's random searches for racially profiling riders, center introduced the "Community Feedback Board" to better provide dialogue in the community, WOA successfully demanded the implementation of a comment card system at Cambridge Housing Authority
- 05 - Center hosts "Building Our Bridges: A Conversation with Immigrant Communities about Domestic Violence"
- 06 - Financial crisis, closing averted with formation of new board
- 08 - LGBT Survey, Garden Committee, computers replaced
- 09 - IWD celebration and dedication at 344 Broadway celebrating 888 takeover, yard sale, second computer lab opens, Survivor Theater Project performed "Rescuing Persephone: Surviving and Transforming Sexual Violence"
- 10 - Sacred Space 2010 Women of Color Conference, Lesbian Chat participates in Dyke March
- 11 - Left On Pearl film screening at Brattle Theater

2012-2020

- 12 - CWC HERstory quilt, new ButchBo! Life group begins meeting
- 15 - Current Trauma Discussion Group begins at the center
- 16 - Boston Feminists for Liberation begins meeting at the center, Girls LEAP hosts self defense classes, Feminist Book Club, Write Your Story begin at the center
- 17 - Women for Political Action forms at the center and holds Sanctuary City open house event at the center
- 18 - Survivor Theater Project turns 10, "Break the Chain (Link Fence)" Campaign
- 19 - Website update, new volunteer training, volunteers build new flower beds
- 20 - CWC adapts to the COVID-19 pandemic, Incest Resources ends and biRch House opens in Arlington, IDEAA committee forms, center experiences burglary and installs alarm system, begins renovation discussions



Thank you:

Aesop
Andala Cafe
The 888 Women's History Project
The Boston Foundation
Boston Women's Fund
Brookline Food Rescue
Cambridge Arts Council
Cambridge Community Foundation
Cambridge Trust Company
Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women
Cambridge Naturals
CCTV Cambridge
College for Social Innovation
Commonwealth Corps
Community Cooks
Curio Spice Co.
Darwin's Ltd.

Dignity Matters
Door Store
East Boston Savings Bank
Food for Free
Hands to Heart Yoga
Lamplighter Brewing Company
Lovin' Spoonfuls
Mass Cultural Council
Mass Humanities
Mass Service Alliance
MIT Monologues
Nola Pikalova
Our Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence
Saafyr and SOS: Sharing Our Stories
The Riverside Boat Club
YWCA Cambridge
ZS Associates

...and many others!



Cambridge Women's Center

25 Mount Auburn St. | Cambridge, MA 02138
Phone Number: (617) 354-6394
Email: info@cambridgewomenscenter.org

Drop-In Hours:

Tuesdays 3-8pm | Thursdays 12-5pm | Saturdays 12-5pm

Website:

www.CambridgeWomensCenter.org

The Cambridge Women's Center relies on the generosity of the community to provide all of our free programming. All donations are tax-deductible.

The Women's Center is a tax-exempt non-profit organization, (Women's Educational Center Inc., Federal ID #23-7131753)



Cambridge Women's Center

25 Mount Auburn Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
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