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Fear, Fortitude and the FBI

As the daughter of two labor organizers, my early childhood education included how to spot FBI agents ("no one else in this neighborhood keeps their shoes shined") and how to answer their questions ("look dumb and slam the door"). So it was no problem for me to identify the stiff-jawed man in a brown suit who sat outside publisher Merle Hoffman's office. What was unnerving was to realize that I was glad to see him; this time the FBI had come to guard, rather than harass us. In fact, the bureau showed up only because Merle had spent days calling the government and talking tough to the media to demand protection for her clinic after the murder of Dr. John Bayard Britton in Pensacola, Florida (see "Heroism: Theory and Practice").

Our daylong editorial meeting had been hastily moved from Manhattan to Queens, so that Merle could remain visible at the helm of Choices Women's Medical Center amid frequent calls from 911 that yet another bomb or death threat had been received. For the editors, it meant personal exposure to the tension and danger that the doctors, staff, and patients face day by day at that clinic and those around the country.

Yes, it was scary. I couldn't just slam the door in the face of this experience. It was a baptism of fire for our new art director, Joy Toltzis Makon, and our new book-review editor, Nina Mehta. And yes, it was disruptive. Again and again, Merle was forced to leave the editorial discussions she loves in order to deal with security issues and media interviews. ("Are you afraid?" one interviewer asked. "I'm angry!" was her posed and inspiring reply.)

But I must admit, the meeting was also exhilarating and had a galvanizing effect on this issue, pushing us to dig for some new insights into women's uneasy relationship with law and law enforcement in this country.

John Stoltenberg, whose role has now been expanded to co-executive editor, went many extra miles to bring in "Busting Mister Short Eyes," the wrenching and finally triumphant story of activist Nikki Craft's crusade to put a child rapist behind bars. Phyllis Chesler ("The Dead Man Is Not on Trial") pored over trial transcripts to detail the injustice and lack of mercy shown to women who kill in self-defense. Magazine pro and veteran feminist Julia Kagan only heard about that meeting—but it didn't stop her from joining the reinforcements and accepting the post of co-executive editor.

It's exciting for women to discard socially-conditioned pretenses of self-doubt and timidity and find we can focus and refocus on the work at hand in the face of cowardly anonymous threateners who would love to permanently dismantle feminist efforts. The FBI may show a friendlier face at the moment, the face of cowardly anonymous threateners who would love to permanently doubt and timidity and find we can focus and refocus on the work at hand in
by nature, I am a romantic and have had warrior fantasies since my early adolescence. Surrounding myself with images of heroic battles, I enjoyed the luxury of believing that reality came in black and white—good or evil. I was Elizabeth I on her white horse at Tilbury, rousing her troops to fight the encroaching Spanish Armada with the words, “I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England, too.” I stormed the ramparts as Joan of Arc, played by Ingrid Bergman on her white horse, sword high, shouting, “Now is the time. This is the hour.” I rode with Amazon women, hair flowing wildly behind me as I drew my bow to strike. Unlimited by gender, I was Richard III and Henry V, defending their crowns in battle, and even a samurai warrior meditating and philosophizing his way to victory.

The combination of focused energy, heightened drama and danger, and an extraordinary sense of mission excited me. It wasn’t conquest I was after; I was moved by an empathic connection with the vulnerable and oppressed. I challenged a great evil power. I was forced to protect and defend my land, my people, or my principles. Of course, however great the odds against me, I always triumphed. And like Wonder Woman with her magic weapons, I always remained physically untouched and forever invincible.

Oddly enough, my dreams have not died, nor have I outgrown my need for them. Quite the contrary. They have formed a psychological background that has subtly merged with my political and personal landscape.

As president of Choices, one of the largest and oldest feminist medical centers in the country that performs abortions, my warrior fantasies have taken on a definitely realistic tone. There are positions and staff to defend, and women to protect against invasions from both the anti-abortionists and their own unwanted pregnancies. And lately, the risks have become so real that my life sometimes feels like one of those Shakespearean plays performed in modern dress, with shotguns instead of swords and T-shirts instead of tunics.

On July 29, 1994, in Pensacola, Florida, the “Reverend” Paul Hill, described by The Washington Post as an anti-abortion “crusader,” pumped three shotgun blasts into the head of Dr. John Bayard Britton, killing both him and his clinic escort James Barrett and wounding Barrett’s wife June. I had witnessed Paul Hill’s “crusading” in Pensacola during the memorial service for Dr. David Gunn, who was killed by Michael Griffin in March 1993. Hill was the lone picketer—contaminating the service with a sign reading “Execute Murderer Abortionists.”

The threats following Dr. Gunn’s murder had pushed me into buying my first shotgun, a 20-gauge, pump-action Mossberg—an action, reported in the New York Daily News under the column head “Make Her Day.” Explaining that the gun was bought for protection in my country house, I said, “If you’re looking for violence, it’s the anti-choice people who harass and hunt people down.” The image of me challenging the antis to “draw” was more prophetic than comical, and in the days to come I would think deeply about the nature of the cause I would die, kill, or be killed for.

Within two days after Dr. Britton’s death, Choices received three bomb threats and a phone call saying, “I have a gun and will be hunting your doctors next week.” Although Choices had
received many bomb threats over its 23 years of operation, and I receive death threats on a continual basis (particularly around Easter, Christmas, and Mother’s Day), this time it felt different. The count now totaled two dead doctors and one, Dr. George Tiller of Wichita, Kansas, wounded. (Tiller now drives to work in an armored car and bulletproof vest.) Frantically, my mother kept calling from Florida asking me why I insisted on going into the clinic. I explained to her I was not living a normal life and that the situation demanded courage and engagement, not retreat.

I knew that I was a lighting rod and a high profile target. This time, I thought, they may really kill me or my staff. I felt a combination of anxiety and intense energy; I was in battle and I was in character.

Choices has a 115-person staff, including seven doctors, and almost 1,000 patients a week. Understandably, our staff was upset and anxious. The doctors discussed wearing bulletproof vests, but stopped when they recalled that Dr. Britton was wearing one when he was blasted in the head. “Perhaps I should come to work in a full suit of armor,” one doctor joked nervously. We both decided that Sir Lancelot walking along Queens Boulevard would attract too much attention.

The ironic part was that Dr. Britton’s murder took place only two months after the Federal Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) bill, making it a federal crime to block access to an abortion clinic or to use force or threats against a clinic’s patients, had been signed into law by President Clinton. For years, anti-abortion violence and harassment against clinic patients and staff were not taken seriously by the law enforcement community.

Since 1977, almost 200 clinics have been bombed—and that doesn’t include 347 unlawful clinic entries, 178 death threats, 568 acts of vandalism, and 35 burglaries. Protecting clinics and their staffs and patients had obviously not been a high priority. We had turned into sitting ducks. Women had been putting their lives on the line for years—and often losing them—in the struggle for abortion rights. Yet it was only after Dr. Gunn (a man) had been killed in the battle that the law-enforcement establishment became involved.

But where were my troops?

Although Choices has a group of loyal clinic escorts who are on duty every Saturday morning to counteract the anti’s harassment of patients, they are a meager substitute for 12-gauge shotguns. I had no armed throng of supporters defending my gates in the days after Dr. Britton’s death. What I did do is reinforce, with armed guards, internal-security procedures honed after years of dealing with bomb threats and potential invasions from Operation Rescue. Then I found out about Henry Felsone and Tony Piso.

These two New York City residents had signed Paul Hill’s infamous petition describing the “use of lethal force in the killing of Dr. David Gunn as justifiable, provided it was carried out for the purpose of defending the lives of unborn children.” And they lived within a 10-block radius of Choices.

The danger was clear and present. Federal protection had been ordered for other clinics under siege around the country, and my staff needed visible signs of support. I called the New York State Attorney General, demanding protection. Two days later, Washington acted and two federal marshals were posted in front of Choices on a 24-hour basis. “These people are terrorists and should be picked up for just making threats,” I told the New York Post on August 2.

The FBI agents who were investigating the threats to Choices were new to the intricacies of the FACE bill and were unsure about jurisdictional issues.

I found myself in the strange position of having to coordinate representatives of the civil rights and criminal divisions of the FBI with my local police precinct to begin an investigation of Felsone and Piso on criminal conspiracy charges.

It wasn’t until after Britton’s murder, the second doctor to die in 19 months, that government officials seriously began to consider and investigate the possibility of an organized national anti-abortion conspiracy to kill providers. Although seemingly realistic and psychologically comforting, it is a serious strategic mistake to view the murders of the two doctors as acts of individual madness. The evidence can be extracted from both the statements of anti-abortionists about what to expect in the way of more killings and the intellectual climate that has been, I believe, deliberately created to undermine support for freedom of choice—even among its strongest proponents.

Consider the words of Don Treshman, director of Rescue America, who was quoted in The New York Times on July 30 saying that Dr. Britton’s killing “may be the start of a new civil war.” He continued, “Up to now, the killings have been on one side, with 30 million dead babies and hundreds of dead and maimed mothers. On the other side, there are two dead doctors. Maybe the balance is going to start to shift.”

The first time I heard the Civil War analogy used to describe the abortion struggle was in 1983 when I debated Nellie Gray, an anti-abortion leader who helped coordinate the yearly January 22 Right-to-Life march on Washington. During a break in our taping, she told me, “You know, this is just like the Lincoln-Douglas debates on slavery,” casting herself as Abraham Lincoln. Of course, she did not seem to consider bearing a child against one’s will as a special form of slavery. Given that there has been an “open season” on providers for years, positioning the abortion struggle as a civil war—or any type of war—is basically optimistic. The guns are all on one side, and women, regardless of which side they may fall on, are most often the casualties.

The real battle is for America’s hearts and minds, and it has been underway for some time.

Years of anti-choice rhetoric by both political and religious leaders positioning abortionists as murderers and abortion clinics as “abortoriums” has created an environment of “moral” entitlement. True believers conclude that killing doctors is working for
Confronting the Antis in Pensacola

By Mary Lou Greenberg

Anti-abortion leader and former Ku Klux Klan member John Burt and two of his associates called a press conference on the steps of the Pensacola courthouse two days after the July 29 murders of Dr. John Bayard Britton and James Barrett. The press conference didn’t go down as planned.

Members of Refuse & Resist! from Atlanta, Minneapolis, New Orleans, and New York City and the San Francisco area’s Bay Area Coalition for Our Reproductive Rights (BACORR) flew to Pensacola the day after the murders. Both organizations have been on the front lines of clinic defense for many years and are founding members of the national Fightback Network of militant abortion-rights activists.

Burt has a long history of vicious attacks against Pensacola’s clinics and ongoing harassment of clinic staff and women seeking abortions. He purchased a small strip of land around The Ladies Center on which he erected scaffolding. He and his crew stand on the scaffolding and yell over the clinic’s fence at the arriving staff and clients. He also was leading a demonstration outside the Pensacola Medical Services Clinic when Dr. David Gunn was shot outside the back entrance on March 10, 1993. Gunn’s killer, Michael Griffin, was a member of Burt’s Rescue America organization, and Burt set up a defense fund for him.

The day of Burt’s press conference we appeared at the courthouse first, holding a large banner that read “No Fear! No Silence! Defend Abortion Providers by Any Means Necessary!” No sooner had Burt begun to read a statement than chants of “John Burt and the KKK/Use the same tactics to get their way!” drowned him out.

I was standing near a Pensacola woman who had come to see what Burt was up to. She had had an abortion herself and was furious at what he had done through the years and how he was trying to present himself now: “I’d like to shut him up,” she told me. “Do it.” I encouraged her, and she began shouting, “murderer, murderer!”

Burt and his cronies, visibly shaken at all this opposition, began to leave, but the activist crew followed him down the street, chanting “murderer” right in his face and shaking their fists at him. The action was prominently covered in the local media, with one station reporting that Burt had been “run out of town.”

Later, I learned that this was the first time anyone had directly confronted Burt. Pensacola is not the only city where extreme reactionary violence has been directed at abortion providers. But a combination of circumstances, including a concentration of backward bible-belt fundamentalists and a history of KKK activity, has made it a particularly sharp battleground. The city’s abortion battleground (continued on page 49)
Listening to Trees

BY ARLENE RAVEN

Nancy Azara's wall assemblages and freestanding sculptures of the past 25 years are made mostly of the trunks and limbs of trees.

The artist, following Drudish forebears occupied by the hallowed nature of the arboreal, finds her spirit with the magicians, sorcerers, and soothsayers of old, in the oldest of perennial passions—for radix, sapling, pod, and hull.

Azara's catholic childhood conjured meditations on the Saints and their Father which, contrarily, brought her to the Goddess and her Progeny.

In function and placement, the walls of the freestanding Spirit House shelter a carved floor of nascent spirals you can walk around. Inside, three pearlescent panels are engraved with signs of the honeycomb. These vivid aural surroundings call up the golden spiral beneath the shell of the shrouded diety.

NANCY AZARA EXHIBITIONS:

Sculptor Nancy Azara in front of "Spirit House of the Mother," 11' x 6' x 7', carved and painted wood with gold leaf.

Photographs by Jesse Melnick.
CRAFTY SOLUTIONS

She used to be on welfare. Now, after just two weeks training, she earns $12,000 a year by painting wooden buttons that will be sold to companies such as Ralph Lauren and Esprit. She belongs to The Watermark Association of Artisans, a member-owned crafts collective in Camden, North Carolina, which has pumped 9 million dollars into the local rural economy over the past 12 years.

Formed in 1978 as a loosely-knit group of artisans, Watermark has evolved into a dynamic wholesaling force composed of 740 members. Under the leadership of Carolyn McKecuen, manager since 1981, the collective has aggressively marketed their crafts through an array of innovative channels—retail stores, design houses, catalogs, trade shows, cable TV, foreign distributors—becoming Camden’s largest employer.

In 1987, the group formed a non-profit, parallel organization to train low- and middle-income area residents to work within the craft industry. “Some of these women didn’t graduate from high school, and all of a sudden they’re selling things to the Smithsonian catalog, making money and teaching others to do the same thing,” McKecuen explains. The two-week training program has served over 14,000 Americans in the past six years, and its comprehensive internship program has taught visitors from Canada, Ireland, Hungary, Somalia, Tanzania, Ecuador, and Peru the business and management skills needed to start cooperative home-based industries in their regions.

With a few days of training, one can start producing such items as baskets, dolls or quilted goods. Quickly learned skills allow members to generate income almost immediately, and give Watermark the work force to produce the quantities needed by major customers.

All work is done at home, so women can adjust their work schedules to family obligations. The collective also offers social counseling services to women in need, and operates a loan fund. These services haven’t limited Watermark’s growth (sales have increased 1370% since 1980), but they do inhibit profit. “We’re not here so the members can make a huge profit at the end of the year,” asserts McKecuen, “but so that they can make enough during the year to pay the bills.”

—SUZANNE LEVINE

Cheers for a California Court

In the Irvine California Unified School District, you used to need a 2.5 grade-point average to stay on the cheerleading squad, but only a 2.0 to stay on the football team. When Melissa Fontes was thrown off the cheer squad for letting her grades slip, she sued. A district court first ruled against her on the grounds that cheerleading was “extracurricular” as opposed to “athletic.” But this past July, an appellate court threw the school a hardball. “The distinction between cheerleading and interscholastic athletics flunks the rational basis test,” Justice David Sills noted in his decision. “Aficionados would no doubt assert that their own sport entails occult mysteries worthy of a Ph.D. thesis...nevertheless...cheerleading is not so much less intellectually challenging than football or basketball that the latter two can be said to be ‘academic’ while cheerleading is not.”

—HARRIET BAROVICK

Paglia on Paglia

In the spot usually reserved for a bibliography, Camille Paglia’s new collection of essays, Vamps & Tramps, offers up a 50-page annotated “Media Chronicle.” Here, as in her first collection, Sex, Art, and American Culture (1992), Paglia records her media battles with “establishment feminists,” her brazen invective against campus speech codes and academic careersm, and her hit parade of controversial lectures. She repeats her throwaway one-liners and sassy observations. She excerpts generously from articles about her, pro and con. She points out cameo roles she’s had in news stories about other celebrities. And—no small feat—she establishes her supremacy in the art of roll call criticism with soundbites on Faludi, Gilbert, Gubar, Millett, Morgan, Sontag, Steinem, Wolf, and others.

Make no mistake: Paglia’s combative, scratch-and-sniff romp through her media appearances is a bibliography. Traditionally (and usefully), bibliographies document an author’s breadth of book-learning, present source material to eager readers, and line up the intellectual forbears who may or may not have been knocked down along the way. They provide context and a terse history of the ideas at play. So it’s no surprise that Paglia has replaced the traditional paean to manifest scholarship with one that frankly acknowledges manifest destiny: publicity. It’s her slant on academe’s “publish or perish” credo. Paglia may be an opportunistic naysayer, a performance intellectual, and a podium star, but her Nexus-listing-cum-bibliography makes amply clear she knows how to register on the sound system we call public debate. —NINA MEHTA

ON THE ISSUES WINTER 1995
Plenty of us have asked the time-honored question: how exactly does one become a sociopath? If you’d asked us a few years ago we would have said confidently “many roads can lead to sociopathology.” Now we’re not so sure.

At least three of the country’s most well-known menaces have followed disturbingly similar paths. —CAROL VINZANT

1. Did the potential sociopath suffer inauspicious beginnings?

David Kresh

self described evangelist; high school drop-out; early life of crime; shot fake Messiah

2. Alternative career ambitions?

failed rock musician turned preacher; wrote: “Mad Man in Waco,” serenaded wives

Roandall Terry

self described evangelist; high school drop-out; early life of crime; burglaries

3. Fashion sense?

out-of-date clothes; unruly hair; wire glasses

Charles Manson

failed rock musician turned preacher; wrote: “Garbage Dump,” serenaded wives

4. Does he have a Messiah complex?

claimed to be Messiah, backed down; said only messenger

5. Is he a real bastard?

born out of wedlock to single mom

6. Hobbies?

followers have fondness of weaponry, arson

7. Defining moment?

found God in Texas on failed roadtrip to California

found God in Texas; branch office in California

found God in California; had follower nicknamed Tex

DISPATCH FROM CAIRO

Judging by American press coverage, the main focus of September’s U.N. Population and Development Conference in Cairo was abortion. But those like myself who attended learned that another “choice” issue is more pressing to women in developing countries. At one particularly impassioned session at the 10-day Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) Forum, women from around the world presented evidence of coercive and deceptive governmental, medical, and research practices in family planning.

One group presented video testimonies by women in India who were forced to continue using a trial version of Norplant even though it caused them to suffer years of continuous bleeding, miscarriages, and other health problems. The women were never informed that the implants were experimental, what the possible side effects might be, and that they would be held hostage to the clinical trials. Since development money is often linked to population control programs, governments are reluctant to strenuously regulate big business pharmaceutical companies.

A woman from Zimbabwe, the African country often cited as having the most successful family-planning program, told about how she was sterilized because of a physical disability at the age of 24—without her consent and without being informed. For 10 years, she continued to take oral contraceptives, thinking she was fertile. A woman from Bangalore, India noted that many women were reluctant to have abortions because they feared being sterilized during the procedure.

Other women spoke out against the current testing of anti-fertility vaccines that induce temporary infertility. Sometimes permanent infertility by a single injection or pill. Concern was voiced about the medical effects of an anti-fertility vaccine, especially with HIV and women, since this method of contraception alters the normal functioning of the immune system.

Other forms of government control are more subtle but equally harmful in encouraging women to further the state’s population interests. A delegate from Quebec, Canada, explained how the Quebequois provincial government offers financial incentives to women who have children: $1,000 for the first child, $1,000 for the second, and a whopping $8,000 for the third. Linking family and fiscal policies, the francophone-majority province is now attempting to maintain its cultural identity and economic strength. Not surprisingly, the availability of family planning services and information about birth control in Quebec are on the decrease.

These women showed that the technologies seen as gateways to reproductive freedom by well-heeled Western feminists are being used to restrict women’s reproductive decision-making power in non-Western nations.

—VALERIE KOSCELNIK

Koscelnik is coordinator of the CHOICE Hotline, a Philadelphia-based telephone service that provides information and counseling about reproductive health and AIDS. She was able to participate in the U.N. conference through a grant from the Diana Foundation, a nonprofit group supported by the publisher of On The Issues.
ELAYNE RAPPING

The Hillary Thing

In a review of the autobiography of Norma McCorvey—the Jane Roe of Roe v. Wade—in a recent issue of The New York Times Book Review, novelist Susan Cheever bemoaned the feminist community’s misfortune at having so faulty a heroine for so important a historic role. What were McCorvey’s failings in Cheever’s view? One could only assume that her status as a working-class lesbian with a rather rough and tumble—but all too common—background of odd jobs, hard knocks, and unfortunate encounters with questionable men rendered her unacceptable as a “feminist role model.” She wasn’t even a self-proclaimed feminist at the time. She was simply someone who needed an abortion and was willing to go to court, to the Supreme Court if necessary, to demand the right to have one.

It seemed pretty heroic to me, especially in light of McCorvey’s less privileged status. But I’m clearly no judge of what a feminist role model is supposed to be these days. I don’t even get “the Hillary thing.” To most people—and after reading Cheever’s review I suspect she is one of them—it is Hillary Clinton who seems most clearly to embody the qualities required to bear the mantle of feminist virtue and honor in the public eye these days. And there is no doubt about it; Clinton is as different from McCorvey as one could be, and still end up on a common stage at a common moment in history. Where McCorvey is poor and uneducated—she now works as a domestic—Clinton is a product of white suburbia and the finest colleges and universities in the land. Where McCorvey made all the wrong moves in her personal life, finding herself, often as not, caught in chaotic, even dangerous messes, Clinton’s life path has been almost magically on target; if one’s goal has been (and Clinton’s surely was) to reach the limits of worldly success and status possible for a woman in a “post-feminist” age. She married well and stayed that way through thick and thin, even taking her husband’s name to ensure his political success. She used her Yale law degree to make oodles of money and powerful friends and contacts in the most prestigious corporate law firm in Arkansas, the better to supplement her husband’s meager (by middle-class standards, if not those of a domestic worker) government salary. She learned to dress, coif, and comport herself to fit the changing fashions of the day, and her rising income and station in life (again, increasingly beyond the dreams or means of domestic workers). She even gave up, early on, her feisty “I’m not some little woman standing by my man” persona in favor of cookie recipes, public tears at Fourth of July fireworks displays, and public baby cuddlings, all of which contributed to her rise to power and influence in national politics, and prominent spot on the current roster of “feminist heroines.” And it all paid off, it seems. For here she is, one of the most powerful, influential, famous, and even glamorous (to be featured in a Vogue photo spread, adorned in the highest of high couture, is surely as glamorous as it gets for corporate attorneys) women in the world.

And more power to her, as the very fitting phrase would have it. Why shouldn’t a smart, tough, ambitious woman be sitting in the White House, making policy, lecturing Congress, heading up a national task force on one of the most crucial issues of our day, and—best of all—making an awful lot of men, from the Hill on down to the gutter, very nervous and cranky about it all? And why shouldn’t she also—as People magazine and Linda Bloodworth-Thomason assure us she does—maintain the kind of egalitarian marriage so many women aspire to, in which both partners—even the one who’s male and the president of the United States for heaven’s sake—respect, support, and nurture each other in perfect balance while also sharing in the (apparently) equally successful rearing of an amazingly (given the circumstances of her life) normal, well-balanced, even athletic teenage daughter. Who wouldn’t be impressed? Who, as a feminist, wouldn’t feel pride and hope in so exemplary an image of the “Yes You Can Have It All” New Woman?

So why am I increasingly uncomfortable, even irritated, at the very mention of Hillary Clinton these days? Why does the sight of that tight jaw
(which I used to admire as forceful and serious); everchanging blond hairdo (which I used to enjoy keeping track of); and poised, articulate presence (which I used to take pride in); tend more and more to set my teeth on edge and make my mouth curl down in disappointment and distaste? Why, when once I so welcomed the coming of Hillary to the Hill, do I now find myself, more and more, wishing she would just go away and give us a chance to regroup and rethink the whole “female role model” problem? For it is a problem, and the coming of Hillary, far from solving it, has only, in my view, complicated, confused, and muddied it for a generation of second wave feminists who once thought we knew what we wanted.

In fact, if the rise of Hillary Clinton teaches us anything as feminists, it may well be that we were foolish to ever buy into the media image, so popular in the 1970s and 1980s (think Danielle Steele, Clair Huxtable, Working Girl, and Virginia Slims) of the Woman Who Has It All—high-powered career; successful, supportive hubby; cute, well-adjusted kids; great house, car, and expense account. Way too many women have been knocking themselves out trying to live up to that image, and beating themselves up, in one way or another, for failing to achieve it, in the last two decades. But Hillary it seemed had gotten it right at last and could, we perhaps hoped, provide some guidelines for the rest of us on just how it could be accomplished.

But what we’ve seen, as we’ve studied her style and technique, is more and more troubling in what it reveals about the compromises and indignities of a life lived in the confines of that media-constructed image. Personally, professionally, and even morally, the life chosen by Hillary Clinton (and she surely had many choices) has proven to be less noble, less fulfilling, and less useful as a way of getting things done in the world—for women or anyone else; most depressingly, perhaps less fun, than the Visa and Virginia Slims ads, the Lear’s and Working Woman covers, would have had us believe. For in tying herself so tightly to the model of the “partnership marriage” as a functional unit for achieving all things great and small—love, sex, success, good works, and children—in a society still wracked with gender bias and oppression and far from ready to change much, she has ironically set herself up to be a case study in the unraveling of this particular American Dream. And the lesson for feminists has been a hard one: It’s still a man’s world and if you are going to play by its rules in its big leagues, you are—still—going to have to conform to The Man’s often demeaning standards and values. Worse yet, even if you’re willing to accept those rules, constraints, and humiliations, you are not likely to achieve what you set out to achieve anyway.

Early on, came the womanizing business which, I thought, she handled admirably. After all, this is the real world and it was time for America to grow up and face the sexual facts of life about love and long marriages. Ward and June are dead after all (were dead even when alive, actually) and a good relationship is worth tinkering with and building upon, since no one is perfect. Well and good. But the stories and humiliations just kept coming and—having put all her personal and professional eggs in the White House basket rather than at least keeping her professional independence—she was forced to keep that stiff upper lip to the point of major paralysis, as the whole world watched and sniggered. Jackie Kennedy and Eleanor Roosevelt were at least spared that kind of public shame.

But I still would have given her the benefit of the doubt and accepted (for her, not me) the personal hypocrisies and compromises, the embarrassingly phony media makeovers of style, personality, even biographical anecdotes (I like cookies, babies, haute couture, and Fourth of July fireworks as well as the next person, after all), even her often sordid financial and moral wheelings and dealings in Arkansas and in the White House (misplacing capital gains records? forgetting about $20,000 loans and orders to move files from offices?) if indeed she had managed to transform the hokey, anarchonistic role of First Lady into a real force for progressive social change.

But just the opposite has happened. The more she has tied herself to the policies and agendas of her waffling husband and his corporate male cadres of advice and support, the less she has been able to even speak forcefully for, much less act to achieve, the progressive (not to say feminist) vision of a better world she has apparently twisted herself into personal and moral knots to get a shot at. Health, welfare, crime—the Clinton administration has gradually descended to a level of compromise and backsliding in all three areas to the point where no good, and much possible harm may well come to women because of them. Reproductive freedom is now “negotiable” in the health bill. Donna Shalala is sounding like Dan Quayle on the issue of single mothers, family values, and welfare “tough love”; and the prisons are already expanding to accommodate the growing numbers of desperate women who, in these dire times, are finding themselves on the wrong side of the law as prison sentences expand and legal rights and public defense rosters shrink. But the pale male powers that be, it seems, were not satisfied even with these rather major bows and scrapes in their ideological direction. They wanted still more in the way of image revisionism. And Hillary, yet again, seems to be complying. With health care reform all but dead, welfare reform a nightmare to be awaited with trepidation, and programs to keep women out of jail a vague 1960s memory, Hillary has recently retreated even further from her early political promise. Suddenly, she is far from the front lines of battle and planted safely and sedately in the reception lines and tea parties which she, only two years ago, held in such disdain. Even Barbara Bush, with her recently published, surprisingly feisty, memoir is more politically relevant these days. But at least she gets to keep the title, the address, the Dona Karon originals, the summers—a few more anywhere—at the Cape. It’s not a bad life, but it’s a far cry from what she—we thought—was ultimately after.

And all for the sake of a dumb media image of “having it all.” If she had only read Anita Shreve’s wonderfully heart-breaking Women Together, Women Alone, about the last twenty years in the lives of the thousands of women who “graduated” from the consciousness-raising movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s and went on to learn the hard way that the world was far from ready to accommodate itself to the many demands and dreams of second wave feminists. Naomi Wolf, Katie Roiphe, and Christina Hoff Sommers to the contrary, most of us have not found it so

(continued on page 59)
"The Dead Man Is Not on Trial"

It's almost as if people expect men to rape, beat, and murder women and children. No one's surprised when they do, and society tends not to punish them too harshly, if at all. But we don't expect women to kill, not even in self-defense, and when they do, watch out! The judicial system reacts as if Western civilization's gonna totter and crumble if even one member of the so-called superior/inferior sex gets away with killing one violent man in self-defense.

If you're a woman who has killed a white man in self-defense—whether you're a police officer, like Sheila Ryan DeLuca, or a severely battered wife, like Jayne Stamen—chances are, your story won't be believed. The jury probably won't be permitted to hear about the dead man's history of violence toward you, or toward other women and children.

As lawyers and judges love to say: "The dead man is not on trial, he's not here to defend himself, we can't prejudice the jury against him." So the jury remains in the dark, even if the murdered man previously kidnapped and attempted to rape a teenage girl or killed a man (Larry Quigley) in a brawl (as in DeLuca's case); even if he repeatedly, and documentably, beat her, placed loaded weapons to her head, shoved shotguns up her vagina, and constantly threatened to kill both her and her family (as in Stamen's case). The evidence of a man's previous crimes against female human beings is presumed too "prejudicial;" the "rules of evidence" won't allow it.

We need to rewrite the rules.

Sheila Ryan DeLuca's case has haunted me for years, not because her case is unique (unfortunately, it is not), but because I knew women who'd known her. Sheila had already served 10 years of her 20-years-to-life sentence for murder when, for the first time, I was told that she was willing to talk to the press and to enlist support for a clemency campaign. In July, I went up to Bedford Hills Correctional Facility in Westchester County, New York to speak to her.

Sheila had a soft, not a tough, demeanor. She's a "good girl": middle class, law-abiding, a former nun, a retired police officer, an athlete. She seemed utterly sincere, almost naive. No guile here. No fantasies of salvation through media coverage either. She was friendly, warm, mature, grave, filled with unspoken sorrow. And shame and terror, still.

Newspaper accounts of her trial identified Sheila as a "Black Widow Killer," not as a former nun or police officer. (Her abductor and rapist, Robert Bissett, was described as a "fireman"). She was portrayed by Bronx district attorneys Mario Merola and Anthony J. Schepis as being on a "partying spree," luring the younger Bissett into having sex with her, and then killing him. "She got what she wanted," Schepis sneered at the trial. "What did Bissett want with a 42-year-old, heavyset blonde woman when he's got his girlfriend? What does she want with a 28-year-old good looking fireman?" She was portrayed as if she was a murderous man, someone who might routinely kill members of the opposite sex after having sex with them because they're all "evil temptresses, dirty whores."

On April 18, 1984, the jury found Sheila guilty of second degree murder and Judge Lawrence Tonnetti sentenced her to 20 years to life. It was a complete shock to Sheila, who had been free on bail for two years; her attorney had assured her there was not enough evidence to convict her. After the trial, she was immediately removed to Rikers Island where she thinks "I must have had a nervous breakdown."

On August 4, 1994, Judge Robert J. Ward overturned her conviction; as we go to press, Sheila is out of jail, but the district attorney has appealed Judge Ward's decision. Sheila is not yet a free woman, but for her to even get this far required a campaign for freedom that lasted 12 years and required at least eight "keys" to click open her jail cell. Perhaps analyzing what it took to open that door will inspire more feminists to get involved in a campaign to free Jayne Stamen and other women in prison for killing in self-defense. What did it take to free Sheila?
A FAIR-MINDED APPEALS JUDGE

Many women who have been kidnapped, raped, threatened, and terrorized find themselves absolutely unable to speak about what happened to them. However, Sheila heroically overcame her silence and was ready to testify about how and why she had shot Robert Bissett to death.

But Sheila’s lawyer, John Patten, did what most criminal attorneys do. He refused to put his client on the stand, or to call her husband, who, by then, was dying of cancer, or to call any of Sheila’s many and prestigious character witnesses.

Maybe Patten was inexperienced. Or overconfident. Or both. Patten did send Sheila to see Flora Colao, an expert witness in rape trauma syndrome. But Patten’s decision not to allow Sheila to testify meant that he’d laid no foundation for Colao’s expert testimony; and so the judge did not allow it.

Sheila had expected to testify. She was “shocked” when the “defense rested.” Perhaps Sheila was so used to taking orders, that she thought she had to do whatever Patten told her to do. He knew best. However, according to Judge Ward, even if a lawyer advises a client not to take the stand, the client still has the right to do so—and must, in fact, be informed of that right. Patten’s failure to do so constituted “incompetent counsel.” So did his failure to vigorously pursue an “extreme emotional disturbance” defense, an omission that seems incredible when you consider Sheila’s story—the story the jury never got to hear.

On the night of September 21, 1982 and the following morning, Sheila was out celebrating her birthday and her softball team’s victory. She had just retired after 15 years on the police force. Her usual shift was from midnight to 8 a.m., so it was not unusual for her to be out late. In a sense, Sheila was always “on duty.” When her husband, Peter DeLuca, a newly retired police captain, began to feel sick, she drove him home. (He insisted she return to the party, as she was “the guest of honor.”) Sheila was also keeping a careful, protective eye on a friend, Karyn Travelina, a schoolteacher, who’d had too much to drink and who periodically left the after-hours club to make phone calls, asking Sheila to wait for her and promising to return.

Enter, Robert Bissett, Robert Barrett, and Eugene Murphy: three very loud, aggressive, and drunk men in their late 20s. They tried to pick up Sheila and Karyn, but when rebuffed, they turned nasty and called them “dykes.” Sheila was actually a closeted lesbian, married to a man who “knew all.” Hours later, after Karyn had been gone a long time, Sheila decided to look for her. She walked out of the bar and into a nightmare.

“I went to my car and I put the key in,” Sheila told me. “From behind or from somewhere, Bissett comes and grabs me, pushes me into the car, and says ‘We’re going to have some fun. We’re all going to have a party.’ His two friends are with him. I start to struggle with him in the car, and one of his friends shows me a knife. He said, ‘Look here, just do as we say or we’ll cut you. We’ll kill you if you don’t cooperate.’ They kept calling me ‘bitch’ and ‘cunt’ and ‘whore.’”

The three men were drunk, snorting cocaine, and smoking what appeared to be angel dust. “Bissett was completely out of control, high to the point of aggressive, hyperactive, wired,” said Sheila. “I just followed orders: drive left, drive right.”

They terrorized Sheila by talking about the women they said they’d had sex with—then killed. They asked Sheila if she’d ever had sex with three men at once, told her they would “cut me to make me big enough.” They said if they killed her, it would be just another “piece of ass wiped out.”

Sheila was paralyzed with fear. She had been a victim of childhood sexual abuse. She was a police officer, but back then, when only two percent of the force were women, female officers did not draw frontline duty. They handled kids; they were matrons. They didn’t have male partners and they weren’t trained to fight like men against violent men.

She was forced to drive to the Bronx Park Motel, where the men drank more beer and watched a pornographic movie. Fearing gang rape, she miraculously talked Bissett into sending his friends outside. In so doing, she became psychologically complicit in her own rape: another level of shame. Outside, his friends yelled, kicked in the window, cracked the door, and demanded their turn. The motel man-

ager told his clerk to phone the room and order the group to leave.

“This is your fault,” Bissett told Sheila. “Now, you’re dead. I’m gonna fuck you and then I’m gonna kill you.” Bissett ditched his friends, forced Sheila to drive him to his black Ford van, and then to an abandoned area. In the van, “for what seemed like an eternity,” said Sheila, Bissett raped her, both orally and vaginally. “Then all of a sudden, he was dead weight on top of me.” Bissett had passed out. Sheila managed to slip out of the van and escape.

“I started talking to myself, saying, ‘You’re alive, just forget this ever happened—block it out. Put it behind you—it’s over; you’re alive.’” She telephoned her husband to pick her up, but mistakenly gave him the wrong address and ended up getting home by herself. “I wasn’t keen on talking about it. I guess I felt disgusted and disgusting. I just felt dirty.” She thought she could handle what happened without telling anyone about it.

It wasn’t until hours later, when she found she couldn’t stop showering, or shaking, or crying, that she told her husband Peter that she’d been raped.

Peter insisted that they report the rape (which they did, although the district attorney never pursued the charge). But first, Peter wanted to drive over to the crime location so they could describe it correctly. Trembling in fear, Sheila stuck her off-duty revolver in her belt. Amazingly, the van was still there. More ominously, so was Bissett—who knocked Peter down (“He went flying out of sight.”), and then, cursing and threatening (“You’re dead now.”) lunged at Sheila. “I told him to stop. He grabbed my arm, and starts pulling me back into the van. It was as if I was being vacuumed back in. I shot him and I shot him and I shot him,” Sheila told me. Bissett was dead.

Self-defense. Extreme emotional disturbance. These are the two defenses that the jury never got to hear, noted Judge Ward, when he overturned Sheila’s conviction on the basis of “incompetent counsel.” But what did it take to get the judge to even review her case?

A MALE RELATIVE WITH A LAW DEGREE

Judge Ward might never have had the
CONFessions of a Child Molester

"I'll show you mine if you'll show me yours" is not unusual for five-year-old children. Playing "doctor" is looked upon as a natural part of growing up. But I never grew up. I still wanted to play "doctor" with children when I was an adult.

As a result there are hundreds of girls and young women who had to see, hear, and feel what they never should have had to. Most were strangers, but some were relatives. And there are even wider circles of indirect victims—my former wife, our children, my sisters and their families—anyone who ever trusted me.

During my youth I was always "a good boy—never any trouble." I obeyed the rules. I attended church. I waited until I was 18 to smoke, until the legal age of 21 to drink. The Good Guy mask was easy to wear.

I don't know whether my fascination with nudity was any more than normal for a teen. Occasionally a friend would get hold of a nude magazine with black-and-white pictures and liberal use of an airbrush. My only prey then were my sisters, who soon learned to put a washcloth over the keyhole when they took a bath.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The author of this true account led an apparently respectable life for over 20 years while secretly exposing himself to and fondling young girls. ON THE ISSUES solicited this article to increase awareness of how some men get away with—and rationalize—pedophilic behavior. With the understanding that the author no longer engages in these criminal activities, we promised to shield his identity.

I turned 18 in 1962, and new opportunities for my voyeurism began to unfold. Now I could go into the smoke shops and look at Sunshine and Health along with Playboy and Nugget. Years before the words "kiddie porn" were in the vocabulary of most people, I realized that the younger the girls in the pictures, the more I looked.

Next came the hours in smelly theaters looking at old movies of burlesque shows, then the first color movies about some clown with X-ray glasses. Topless bars appeared soon after I turned 21, and massage parlors in the early 70s, when I was in the service.

I made the transition from voyeur to exhibitionist in the military. I went to a gym where boys and girls took karate or judo a couple evenings a week. The door to the
In truth I didn't want to frighten them by cheering them up. If I had been bad at first, I often gave the impression of being a nice guy. I used to have a look and ask, "Have you heard of this girl?"

I was really a nice partner. I was really a nice testicle. So blind. Of course, you know, I put on the show. Even when I made obscene calls to my partners, they were not bad. I was a guy. I was a girl. I was a girl. I was a guy. I was a girl. I was a guy. I was a girl. I was a guy. I was a girl.
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men's locker room was usually open and the drinking fountain was right outside. I learned how to be stepping out of the shower naked just as the children went to the drinking fountain after their lesson.

The girls were my target, and sometimes they seemed to take an extra-long drink. Ah-ha, I thought, they liked it. That was the beginning of a rationalization I would use for the next 20 years. And that was how I separated myself in my mind from bad guys who hung around schools, jumped out of bushes, and enjoyed frightening and hurting children.

When I first read about the myth of rape (the belief of many rapists that women "like it" and "want it"), I remember thinking to myself, How can those jerks believe such a thing? Of course women don't like it! I was too blind, callous, and stupid to recognize my own big lie—that I was a "nice" guy, the girls were my "partners," and I didn't want to hurt them.

The gym setup ended when I was assigned to a different base, but the new town had a couple of good smoke shops with well-stocked, you-must-be-18-to-enter sections. There I first discovered magazines with names like Nudist Angels and Little Nudists, which had pictures of girls photographed in nudist parks.

In one early nudist publication I read a first-person story by a man who wrote of driving around with his windows down and his pants unzipped. Seeing a tender prospect, he would get her to come to his car window by asking for directions to the library or grocery store. I tried the technique and it worked.

I had the same feeling of invulnerability that is often ascribed to teenage drivers. And even when the police arrested me, it was not enough of a reality check to keep me from offending again. And soon.

Good-bye, military career. Hello, bail man, attorney, commanding officer, psychiatrist #1, judge, psychiatrist #2. Good Guy I had been found out. Time for a new mask.

As Changed Guy, I satisfied the court by keeping all my appointments with a therapist. After a year I was allowed to plead not guilty and my record was expunged. I worked as a laborer, eventually found a real job, married a girl I met in church, bought a house in the suburbs, and had three beautiful children.

With that façade in place, I continued exposing myself. For a time I hoped that visits to nude beaches could be my outlet, but everybody there seemed bored—there wasn't any "ne-nie." I preferred the exposure when I could get a rise out of my victims; the girls had to be old enough (ages 6 to 10) to know it was "naughty."

In department stores I tried leaving the curtain slightly open while trying on pants. Always making sure that the exposure was passive, both to continue the self-lie and to lessen the chance of arrest.

When I made obscene calls, I often gave the girl a chance to hang up first: by cheerfully asking: "Hi—do you have time for a friendly neighborhood obscene phone call?" If she didn't stay on the line and go along, I would call another.

By the time my own children were old enough to go to playgrounds, I used them as a cover. I would wear cutoff shorts but no underwear. As Good Dad, I would laugh with my kids and give them a push on the swing or the merry-go-round. Meanwhile I sought places to sit so that other girls could have a look.

While committing these crimes, I also wallowed in what I call my gray world—seeking nude bars, nude beaches, and adult bookstores with their explicit, 25 cents-per-view video loops. In the early days of video booths, there would be the occasional hand-written sign: "14-Year-Old Girl Shows How." I gravitated toward those. I also looked for books that featured teenaged girls or younger who were always fascinated by sex, thereby reinforcing my rationalization.

Although my gray world was not criminal activity or my part per se, it certainly added to the deadening of my soul and provided the momentum for my activity that was criminal. I do not mean to imply that I myself am a victim or that I couldn't help myself. I fully accept all responsibility for all my crimes; yet pornography was clearly a major influence on me.

Any addiction calls for bigger hits, and I began going beyond passive exposure to blatant abuse. Fortunately my daughter was not a temptation for me. My love for her and protective instinct as a father were strong enough to spare her. But I exposed myself to and fondled the genitalia and clothed breasts of two young nieces and exposed myself to two other extended-family members.

After one such incident, I began therapy...
with a psychologist who specialized in abnormal sexual behavior. At that point I felt both vulnerable and fortunate. Only a few people knew of my problem, my wife seemed willing to stay with me, and I had a genuine desire to quit the criminal activity.

Insofar as the therapy addressed my criminal activity, it was excellent. There was emphasis on recognition of thinking errors, rationalization, and minimalization. Aversion therapy was of some help. What was most effective for me was emphasis on victim impact—learning to understand that even those girls who seemed to go along with it would feel dirty, wonder why this was happening to them, and feel as if they were to blame.

My criminal activity went down to almost zero, with an occasional slip. I told one particular niece I was in therapy and promised not to touch her again. She seemed anxious to believe me. I had asked her not to tell years earlier, when I first began exposing myself to her. Now I got her hopes up and I asked her again not to tell anyone what I had done—thereby placing on her the additional burden of being responsible for my family's staying together.

About four years later, I broke my promise. At a family gathering, I touched her shoulders in the same way I had done in the past when I used a "back rub" as a cover for fondling her breasts. Memories were triggered (but not all of them, I was to learn later). Hope was shattered. The nightmare was back. She told.

My sisters were horrified and wanted me out of their lives. My wife stayed with me for the sake of our children, including a newborn baby.

Throughout all of this, I prayed to be freed from my pedophilia. The stumbling block was my unwillingness to let go of my gray world—the world of commercial sex and nude beaches. I recall telling God that I would surrender that desire to him someday, but not yet. Then I winked and gave him permission to work on me in that regard.

Rock bottom came years later when my niece was in therapy and remembered my fondling her. I naively assumed she had told everything already: in fact her memories of my touching her genitals had been blocked.

My victims now lay all about. My wife felt that I had married her under false pretenses and had used her as a sign of legitimacy. We divorced. My direct victims have suffered the most, but there are so many indirect victims and so many ways they have been hurt: misplaced guilt, dollars for therapy, strains on relationships, lack of sleep, sadness, fear.

As for me, hitting rock bottom was the ultimate reality check. If someone needs to cross a 100-foot canyon to escape a bear, the difference between a 105-foot ladder and a 95-foot ladder is not 10 feet; it is the difference between life and death. In the same way, the distance between total surrender and almost-total surrender is between life and death.

Being free from my gray world has meant all the difference for me. I am now 50 and have lived without pornography and all its trappings for two years. I have lived without criminal activity for eight years.

For this I can thank many people who have loved me without condoning what I have done. Two men in particular have my gratitude. One of them is my accountability check. I periodically look him in the eye and tell him I am still free. The other man is the cousin who told me of a 12-step program for people with sexual addictions, a program based on the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous.

No light from heaven has shone down and hit a reset button on my psyche. The temptations are there, and I must keep up my guard for the rest of my life.

If anyone would pray for me, let it be that I will have skin thick enough to withstand what comes my way and yet thin enough to care for the pain of those around me.

My prayer for my victims is that they will be healed; that they will direct all blame toward me and nowhere else; that they will be protected from all men like me; and finally, that God will use the trial that I have put them through to make them all the more sensitive to the hurts of others so that they can be loving, caring people.
"This is one of the most terrible times for sexual minorities in years, and we must form links with one another to overcome the common enemy of religious prejudice and oppression. It does none of us any good for lesbians and gay men and bisexuals and nudists and pedophiles and pornographers and sadomasochistic people to point fingers at each other and say the other person is immoral. None of us are free until we are all free."

—Convicted child rapist Joseph Wanner, alias "Robert Bandonis"

On May 29, 1992, Joseph Robert Wanner, 39 years old—substitute elementary school teacher; pro-feminist member of a university women's action committee; naturist; and articulate defender of abortion, animal, atheist, and Native American rights—was arrested at his home in Kutztown, Pennsylvania. The 70-page search warrant and affidavit—reported to be the longest and most detailed in the history of Berks County—charged Wanner with 14 counts of rape, 14 counts of statutory rape, 12 counts of involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, 3 counts of corruption of minors, 19 counts of sexual abuse of children for the production and manufacturing of child pornography, 144 counts of child sex abuse for possession of child pornography, 17 counts of indecent assault, 6 counts of aggravated indecent assault, and 1 count of voluntary deviate sexual intercourse (with a cat).

The affidavit also cited an anonymous person who told the police about Wanner in the first place. That confidential informant was me.

Undercover Among Nudists

In the early 1980's I was arrested myself numerous times—in Santa Cruz, Rochester, Oshkosh, and Cape Cod—for refusing to put my shirt on at the beach when ordered to do so by state and federal agents. It was an outrageous insult to me to be told what to wear by the government in a society where corporations exploit women in topless bars, pornography, and advertising and we are denied control of our own bodies.

Because of my civil disobedience for shirt-free rights, I was offered a part-time job by Lee Baxandall, president of The Naturist Society, Inc. (TNS), the second-largest organization representing nudists in the United States. During my five years working for the company, I also lived at TNS headquarters with Baxandall. There I became privy to letters, news articles, police reports, and private conversations about men in the movement who, like Wanner, were looking for sex with children—not exactly the naturist party line about "wholesome body acceptance."

My own anti-pornography activism also put me on the trail of naturist pedophiles. I traveled across the Midwest, doing civil disobedience in a year-and-a-half-long action called National Rampage Against Penthouse in the mid-80s. In Iowa the president of an American Civil Liberties Union chapter approached me after my slide presentation and offered me three large boxes of pornography that he claimed had been found in a trash can in the city park. He advised me to rip it up or burn it, whatever I desired. It was the most explicit, most extensive collection of child pornography I had ever seen.

The next week, as I went through all the boxes, I first felt sickened and defeated, then enraged. Amidst urination and bondage magazines using children in every way imaginable were copies of nudist publications like Nudist Moppets, Little Nudes, and a publication called Beasts. On one page was a photograph of two children in the swimming pool at Tan Oaks nudist camp; on the next, a man wearing a black ski mask was raping an Asian child. I recognized the signature photographic styles of several well-known naturist photographers. The collection even included a copy of The World Guide to Nude Beaches, a book put out by my employer and edited by Baxandall.
But nothing prepared me for what I learned, firsthand, during nude events. At one Naturist Society gathering I attended at Elysium Fields in Southern California, a mother was terrified after a very weird man (he was, I met him) talked her little girl. He followed the family for two days. He even asked the parents where they lived and if their child was allowed to play out in the front yard. Though Baxandall was present when the mother complained to the camp owner, the man was allowed to run for a Naturist Society leadership position several years later. At another TNS event in Los Gatos, California, in 1983, a girlfriend of my lawyer’s daughter told me she was molested by a man in the tauts. My lawyer, her daughter, her friend, and I confronted the man for over an hour. The camp owner asked the man to leave but declined to call the police.

Then in 1984 at a TNS gathering in Arizona, I observed a group of men throwing money into the swimming pool for almost the whole day, for children to dive in later. Later that afternoon, I learned from a very dejected child that one man had lured them to the parking lot with promises of more money and then masturbated in front of them. I reported that man to the camp management; he was asked to leave, but again the police were not called.

Two months later, at a TNS gathering at Sunny Rest Lodge naturist resort in Pennsylvania, Paul J. Zimmer, founder of an anti-circumcision group called the Newborn Rights Society, was caught in the act of fondling an eleven-year-old boy. Zimmer was baby-sitting the boy and had brought him to the camp without the mother’s knowledge. This time police were called. Also suspected of sexually abusing that boy were James Joseph O’Boyle and Robert J. Schumann. While waiting for the police to arrive at the remote location, Baxandall and the camp managers questioned all three men—and I vehemently confronted them—for several hours inside the camp headquarters.

It turned out that Zimmer had been abusing the boy sexually and psychologically for years. He was charged with “involuntary deviate sexual intercourse,” “indecent assault,” “sexual abuse of children,” and “corruption of minors” and later pled guilty to endangering the welfare of a child. But that time O’Boyle and Schumann, who had been convicted in 1976 on a child molestation charge, both got away.

The very day before Schumann arrived at the Sunny Rest gathering, he was arrested for sexually abusing another child and released from custody. Those charges were later dismissed, but in 1986 he pled guilty to “endangering [another] child” and served nearly two years in prison. (Schumann now faces a 1993 charge of sexually abusing a child who was eight.) O’Boyle, a highway patrolman, was indicted in June 1986 on more than 90 counts of child rape and sodomy after assaulting 13 boys over a five-year period in the course of investigating child-abuse cases. He is currently serving a 10- to 20-year term in Bellefonte, Pennsylvania.

I began to wonder if everyone came in contact with so many pedophiles. I asked several people, and concluded I was encountering a disproportionate number of sexual predators because I worked for The Naturist Society. As I was to learn the hard way, nude events all over the country were being used by pedophiles to network with one another and to meet, photograph, and gain sexual access to children, and the leadership was doing nothing substantial to stop them. In 1986 I put together a slide show of pornographic images produced by nudist/naturist publishers—most of it reproduced from the stash given to me in Iowa—to confront the lie repeated by nudists and naturist leaders that “nudity has nothing to do with sex,” and their denial that the movement was rife with sexual predators. I took this slide show to several naturist events and was surrounded and deeply disturbed at how uninterested the movement was, how little members did, how many excuses they made—and what danger children were in because of it.

I finally came to understand that naturism is a paradise for sexual predators—a safer place for child molesters than for children. The cultlike acclivity of nudists, the large percentage of swingers and sexual liberals; the respect for anonymity and secrecy; the complacency, complicity, and liberalism of nudist/naturist editors—all work in pedophiles’ favor.

Getting the Goods on the Bad Joe Wanner had been a member of The Naturist Society since 1987, a prolific naturist writer, an activist for VOCAL (Victims of Child Abuse Laws), a member of the Pedophile Information Exchange (PIE), and a member of the North American Man/Boy Love Association (NAMBLA) since its inception in 1979. I first heard of him in July 1985, when he wrote a letter attacking me for my anti-pornography work. I had been going into stores across the country and ripping up Penthouse magazines to protest the racist, sadistic Asian bondage photos printed in the December 1984 issue. Wanner compared my mutilation of Penthouse to Nazi burnings in Germany. His letter had been submitted to The Event (now Naturally), a national publication that advocates clothing-optional recreation. Although the letter was never published, Bern Loibl, the editor, sent me a copy.

In April 1986 Loibl also became concerned about Wanner. In a memo to TNS president Lee Baxandall, editor of Clothed With the Sun (now N Magazine) and at the time still my employer, Loibl asked: “Do you know anything about a Joe Wanner? He has been writing a number of letters, I suspect under the name of Ms. Kriebel, all relating to children... I’m sensing an obsession.” Loibl attached the letter written by “Ms. Kriebel,” and also noted a reference she made to VOCAL, a child abusers’ lobby group. Sounding exactly like another liberal defender of the “right” to sexualize children, “Kriebel” wrote that she had acquired a camera recently but was concerned because just a few miles away from where she lived a man had been arrested and charged with “sexual abuse of children” just for “taking nude photographs of a young boy. I would like to know how photographers can avoid these terribly ageist child-abuse laws. It seems that as the anti-pornography, anti-sex, anti-nudity religious fanatics gain control of society, they destroy many of the freedoms we [Naturists] have enjoyed for decades.”

Take one night as I compared this letter to Wanner’s 1985 letter attacking me. I recognized “Ms. Kriebel’s” signature as his. Then I reread all the hack issues of The Event and found another obviously pro-pedophilia letter—typical of many published in the naturist/nudist press—from Wanner: “Ms. Kriebel” in fall 1985: “I think that by having many more photos of young people of all ages (toddlers, pre teens, teens) this will help to show that nudism is the healthy, family-oriented, non-cetic way of life—it’s always intended to be.
"When Willie Sutton was asked why he robbed banks, he replied, Because that's where the money is. Well, if you're looking for nude children it would be logical to go to places like a nudist camp or beach where nude children are going to be."

—Patrolman Robert Gately, Wanner's arresting officer

Could you have more photos of children?"

Up to that time, Wanner might have been on my shit list just for his unpublished letter attacking me, but the night I made the "Kriebel" connection was when I scrawled his name on a manila folder and stuck it in my file drawer containing a growing number of convicted and suspected sexual predators operating within the naturist movement.

In February 1989, I talked to criminal investigators at the Kutztown, Pennsylvania, police department. I passed on the letters and articles by Wanner that documented he was using aliases and obviously obsessed with children. It all began to make a case that Wanner was a sexual predator of some kind. Kutztown police immediately opened an investigation.

Simultaneously I had begun accumulating a file on one "Robert Bandonis" (sometimes "Rev. Robert Bandonis"), whose articles and letters from Pennsylvania were appearing regularly in The Event. He too articulated a familiar sexual predator’s rationale. In spring 1990, for instance, Loibl ran an article by "Robert Bandonis" with photographs "Bandonis" had taken at Sandy Hook Nude Beach. One was of a young boy playing on his hands and knees, nude, with his genitals exposed, building a sand castle—apparently unaware that he was being photographed and that the photo would be published in a national magazine. A man on the beach threatened to toss "Bandonis's" camera. A woman also got mad at him for asking if he could take a picture of her. According to "Bandonis," "[It] made me feel like I should have taken her picture without bothering to ask first."

It doesn't take very many sexual predators to ruin a kid's day at the nude beach—or, for that matter, her or his life. In fact, lots of nude people don't like having voyeurs and sleazy scum cruising for photo opportunities to add to their masturbation collections. But when "Bandonis" recounted his predicament to a sympathetic lawyer who specializes in the rights of sexual minorities, "[The lawyer] told me I did nothing wrong. He said that as long as I was on public prop-
Long after I had turned my "Bindonis" file over to police, I learned from investigator Robert Gately that "Robert Bindonis" was yet another of Wanner's aliases, with a past office box miles away in Tuxedo town.

The Innocents and the Guilty

Three years after my tip-off led to an investigation, the Kutztown police entered Wanner's house. They couldn't believe what they found. It took them four days, around the clock, to search the debris—stacked floor to ceiling—containing vast amounts of pornography and file-size boxes packed with nudist child pornography including Nudist Angels, Lelly Pops, and Little Nudists; six Polaroids of a baby boy; and two sexually explicit photographs of a nude boy at a beach believed to be Sandy Hook; and over a hundred black-and-white photographs showing nude children involved in sadism, masturbation, fellatio, and vaginal penetration by objects.

Wanner also had boxes full of homemade pornographic videos. One documents his repeated rapes of a mentally impaired thirteen-year-old girl he had hired ostensibly as a "housekeeper." The girl was described by Gately in the arrest warrant as "so mentally deficient that such person is incapable of consent." According to newspaper accounts she was forced to have sex with Wanner once to three times a week. She said she did so because she was "afraid of him." Her eleven-year-old sister, whom Wanner was also charged with sexually abusing, told police Wanner had them look at pornography on five occasions. Another video documents Wanner masturbating and involved in sexual activity with cats.

At early as 1983, there had been an abuse report filed against Wanner, though he was not convicted, for molesting two prepubescent children—one who had cerebral palsy—while working for an agency that provided child care. In May 1990, at an Allentown clinic where Wanner went for kidney dialysis, police were called after a nurse complained that Wanner and another man—anti-circumcision advocate Paul Zimmerman—had in their possession nude photos of male infants and toddlers. When police arrived at the scene they found the photographs, NAMBLA materials, and a copy of The Event. There was also a claim by a boy in 1990 that Wanner had attempted to lure him away from a swimming pool, though no charges were ever filed. Like other pedophiles, Joe Wanner had been sexually exploiting children a long time before he was apprehended.

It was one of the happiest days of my life when Robert Gately—the Kutztown cop who dedicated himself to the undercover work—took Wanner off the street. On January 8, 1994, Wanner, in a plea bargain, pled guilty to five counts of "sexual abuse of children," three counts of "involuntary deviate sexual intercourse," two counts of "sexual abuse of children for filming sex acts," and one count of "indecent assault." At his sentencing he expressed no sympathy for his victims, and no remorse for the harm he had caused others. Wanner was ordered incarcerated for 10 to 30 years at the State Correctional Institution at Rockview.

In June 1993, according to a local newspaper, Wanner was slugged in the eye by a twenty-year-old. In prisons, men like Wanner are often contemptuously referred to as "short eyes" by fellow inmates who—unlike a lot of liberals—don't have much tolerance for pedophiles.

Tenacious Feminism on the Case

It took me years to obtain enough information to get clear about how the liberal community had deserted survivors of sexual abuse, how sexual liberals' interests conflicted with the true liberation of women and children, and how the naturist agenda clashed with the feminist one. That's when I became disillusioned and stopped working with the national naturist movement. Until they recognize and acknowledge the child-abuse problem they have in their ranks, stop covering up for pedophiles and publishing their propaganda—until they identify abusers to their general membership and aggressively turn abusive men over to the police—I will work actively against them, just as I work against pornographers and other sexual predators.

Pedophiles use naturist magazines as coffee-table porn the way heterosexual men use Playboy. Sexualized photos are used to promote sales of naturist publications, even though objectification negates the very concept of healthy body acceptance. The innocence of smiling children along with the sexual availability of women are used to promote naturism to the general public, even though the movement is made up primarily of adult men. The sexual and commercial interests of naturist publishers and photographers often make them allies—philosophically and legally—with child abusers, pedophiles, and pornographers. With the help of a good friend, I finally figured out it was these guys who belonged in jail—not me, and I stopped focusing so much on civil disobedience. My protest, which began in 1981 with me removing my shirt, led to my refusal in 1987 to remove my clothes at TNS clothing-opptional events.

A year later I was fired. Barandall put his reasons for firing me in writing: my continued work against TNS (which went on the last year I was employed), my tenacious radical feminist politics, and my refusal to recruit more women into naturism.

Lately I spend more time at my computer than at any nude beach. Word of my work is getting out, and now people send me leads and reports. Today my files include over 50 men who operate or who have operated within the nudist/naturist movement, and who have been convicted on child pornography, molestation, and/or rape charges. Among them are members of nudist and naturist organizations, photographers, nudist camp owners, nude-beach organizers, and other leaders in the movement. There are many more who are suspected. Several of these men, in addition to Wanner, have been arrested because of my networking with local law enforcement and/or postal inspectors in their areas. I expect that others will be arrested in the next few years. ©

Nikki Craft is publisher and editor of the ICONoclast, a newsletter that exposes connections between the nudist/naturist movement and the exploitation of children and women. To support Craft's work or for subscription information, write to her c/o N.O.P.E. (Naturists and Nudists Opposing Pornographic Exploitation), PO. Box 2085, Rancho Cordova, CA 95741-2085.

20 ON THE ISSUES WINTER 1995
Legal secretary Rena Weeks was astonished when a jury awarded her $7.1 million dollars for being forced to endure the gropings of Martin Greenstein, a partner at the world's largest law firm, Chicago-based Baker & McKenzie. Weeks and her lawyer had sought only $3.5 million. But several jurors, assessing the firm's net profit of $65 million, felt that ten percent of the company's capital was a fitting penalty.

The high jury award made national headlines in September 1994. But there's likely to be much less publicity later on when the appeals judge, inevitably, cuts the award down to something that won't make much of a difference to the company's bottom line and leaves Weeks feeling cheated.

In 1991, for example, Texaco got a wake-up call about sex discrimination from a jury that awarded Janella Martin, a credit supervisor, $5.3 million in lost wages and $15...
million in punitive damages. Martin, who handled over $2.5 billion of barge and refinery-related transactions every year for Texaco, was verbally promised a promotion to manager if she moved from Houston to Los Angeles. But after relocating, she saw a male outsider promoted instead. When she sued for sex discrimination, Martin claims she was threatened by a manager who said: “When you’re walking down an alley one night, you’ll get a tap on the shoulder and you’ll have an accident.” The jury foreman, Rod Hoard, explained the high punitive damages: “We wanted to set an example against Texaco, and if we gave one million dollars, it would be like one dollar to them.” But two years after the highly publicized award, Judge Ronald Cappai threw out the verdict on appeal, saying Martin’s damages should be limited to $150,000. “An inflamed jury allowed their passions to get the better of them,” Cappai intoned. A higher court upheld Cappai, so Martin and Texaco will face off in a second trial.

Martin is among a small band of discrimination fighters whose hard-fought and well-publicized court victories have helped make the workplace more equitable for women employees. Over the last few decades, lawsuits have forced companies to make fundamental changes. In the insurance industry, women can now escape the secretarial ghetto and become sales agents because in 1979, Muriel Kreshevsky spearheaded a $200 million victory on behalf of 900 secretaries denied advancement opportunities by State Farm Insurance. Some women can now become firefighters because in the early 80’s Brenda Berkman sued to be the first female fire fighter in the New York City Fire Department, a force of 10,000. Companies need to be careful about making women the “last hired and first fired,” even in recessionary times, because 48-year-old Bernice Stanfill of Del-Mar, California, proved breach of contract and sex discrimination against her employer, Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), and won a jury award of $3.1 million.

And shaping career paths to fit the needs of women with children received a boost recently when Cynthia Fisher, an assistant biology professor, successfully sued Vassar College for paying her less than peers and failing to grant her tenure because she took eight years off to raise her kids before her Vassar employment. Federal Judge Constance Baker Motley ruled for Fisher: “The persistent fixation of the Biology Department’s senior faculty on a married woman’s pre-Vassar family choices reflects the acceptance of a stereotype and bias: that a woman with an active and ongoing family life cannot be a productive scientist.”

But advances won through the courts are now being threatened. Women who win lawsuits against employers who discriminated and harassed them are finding that the battle doesn’t always end with a big bang and cash in hand. Corporate heavyweights such as Ford Motor Company, AT&T, Pfizer, Texaco, and Exxon have fought on to what lawsuits cost them monetarily and in bad publicity, and have banded together to clip plaintiffs’ wings. Forming a coalition called the Civil Justice Reform Group, these Fortune 100 firms are dedicated to stopping plaintiffs now. Under the guise of tort reform ("tort" is the term for a lawsuit in which an injured person tries to recover money for economic damages or non-economic damages such as pain and suffering), they have succeeded at capping punitive damages at $300,000 in federal courts. Now they are waging and winning state-by-state campaigns. All but a handful of states—Colorado, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, and Louisiana—have or bar punitive damages. Take away punitive damages and the possibility of a substantial settlement evaporates, not only for plaintiffs but for the few attorneys specializing in employment practice law not already on corporate payrolls or retainers.

This well-financed effort to stop anti-discrimination lawsuits began with a war chest based on initial corporate contributions of up to $100,000 that were funneled into research and lobbying. For instance, Texaco sponsored a study by the Washington Legal Foundation showing that punitive damages awards against businesses in five large states went from $1.1 million in 1968-1971 to $343 million in 1988-1991. The study did not separate out product liability suits, which generate the biggest awards. Anita Larsen, a Texaco spokesperson says that “lawsuits suck the lifeblood out of a corporation’s bottom line.”

The pressure to curb big awards has made it increasingly unlikely that a woman who has been discriminated against or harassed at work will prove her case and be compensated. Jerry Leaphart, an attorney practicing in Ridgefield, Conn., after 17 years in a Fortune 100 company, spells out what corporate tort reform efforts signal: “The pendulum is swinging away from employees seeking reasonable redress under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its amendments prohibiting discrimination on the basis of overt characteristics...
including age, race, and gender." Leaphart describes the many obstacles large corporations now throw in a plaintiff's path: having new hires waive the right to sue in employment contracts; watering down affirmative action plans in company handbooks by describing them as "a guide and suggestive but not binding"; retaining all the lawyers and expert witnesses specializing in employment practice in the location where a trial will take place; petitioning the Securities Exchange Commission to remove non-economic issues such as discrimination from a company's annual filing; "swarming," and other delaying tactics such as excessive discovery time which add years to a case; and "scorched earth" tactics involving litigation to the plaintiff's last breath.

Abby Liebman, an attorney from the California Women's Law Center, sounds the alarm for what corporate pushes for tort reform may mean. "You need an award significant enough that very large companies will pay attention. Sometimes smaller damage awards are looked on as fines, and the companies will just keep discriminating."

Without timely resolution of lawsuits, workplace discrimination claims its victims slowly and deliberately, particularly when the employer will stop at nothing to silence an employee turned plaintiff/traitor. The result can be years of intense frustration for the plaintiff. In 1988 Charles Koster watched his daughter's mental and physical health deteriorate during a protracted sexual harassment case against the bank that employed her. When presiding Judge Richard Daronco set aside the jury's $2.5 million verdict for Koster's daughter, the father shot and killed Daronco, then himself.

How many women will be willing to risk the years of frustration involved in a lawsuit when they realize that judges are likely to turn large jury awards into pennies?

Sixty-year-old Catherine Malarkey, an executive secretary, was derailed from the fast track after pointing out in a memo to Texaco higher-ups that executives were discriminating against veteran women workers because of their desire to have young secretaries. She fought—and won—a 14-year battle with the firm, but the result was only a $130,000 award plus legal fees. Texaco has been enjoined from retaliating against her, but Malarkey finds herself threatened again by a poor performance review and is forced to ponder the hundreds of thousands of dollars needed to drag Texaco to court again.

Watching a recent round of 2,500 layoffs at Texaco, Malarkey sees many of the outcasts close to the edge mentally, physically, and financially. She says: "The fear and stress levels of employees today is sickening. My way to fight discrimination was a lawsuit but too many others are afraid they will lose the pittance that the company gives them at termination. There are many women hurting and suffering, and if there is no way for them to win a large dollar award, corporations will get away with everything they can."

Discrimination gets easier in hard times, and federally-protected Equal Employment Opportunity rights may get smashed on the rocky shoals of corporate downsizing, recession, and burnout. Who will be brave and resourceful enough to go to the toothless Equal Employment Opportunity Commission or to hire an attorney when the unemployed look at them with envy? But long range, companies that continue to permit discrimination and harassment may be shooting themselves in the foot. Workforce 2000, a study by the Hudson Institute for the U.S. Department of Labor, estimates that 85 percent of the 26 million net new American workers in this decade will be women, members of minority groups, and/or immigrants. Companies that refuse to share power and money with those considered "inferior" may soon find themselves with a mediocre work force and unable to compete with forward-looking companies that can choose and promote from the more vast and diversified pool of talented people.

Necessity can bring about a quantum change of mindset. Maybe Gary Brouse, director of equality programs at the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility, a Manhattan-based consulting and investment organization, is the herald of transformation. In a "Mr. Smith Goes to Exxon" scenario, Brouse suggests that discrimination will be abolished when "the CEO has a change of heart and realizes that discrimination is unconscionable. He will then make it clear that discrimination will not be tolerated." Brouse says that executives at large companies such as Con Edison, Hoechst, and A&P have already made such about-faces for enlightened self-interest.

Fighting efforts to take the teeth out of jury awards allows victims of harassment and discrimination their constitutionally-guaranteed day in court. And high monetary awards force corporations to realize that gender bias can be unprofitable, as well as unconscionable.

Marlene C. Pituro is a free-lance business journalist. She lives in Hastings-on-Hudson, New York.
Girlz
IN THE
Hood
If I had known I would ever be a 35-year-old woman, I would have never gotten tattooed,” Marianne Diaz-Parton says, laughing. “I mean, how stupid, all over my hands!”

Faint blue marks bruise the knuckles of Diaz-Parton, the director of prevention programs at the Los Angeles Community Youth Gang Services Project. Despite her age and her job description, Diaz-Parton is still officially a gang member.

“I’ve never been jumped out of my gang, I don’t plan to, I don’t want to,” she says. “I don’t feel being a gang member is the problem; I think the activity is the problem.”

Diaz-Parton works from a large, ancient office in what used to be the Los Angeles Jail. Dressed in brown jeans and a yellow V-neck T-shirt, with her long hair loose and gold chains sparkling on her neck, she doesn’t look like a typical director in a social-service agency. She tells of a recent argument she had with her supervisor, who wanted the gang workers to dress more “professionally.” No way, she told him. Dressing up would be a great way to tell the gang members that the workers were “above” them. “I don’t want to be an authority figure, but to relate to the kids.”

“You have to understand their world to know what’s important to them,” says Diaz-Parton. Gang members want to be recognized. They are needy. They are often abused, alcoholics, or lonely, the misfits who don’t fit in, the leftover kids. While society rejects them, their gang accepts them, no matter what problems they have. “If people think that gang members are there because they’re just assholes, that’s ridiculous,” she insists in a low-toned, emotionless voice. “There’s a reason behind every gang member that’s out there.”

A Gang of Her Own
At 14, Diaz-Parton was an A student from a two-parent family in Hawthorne, a Los Angeles suburb. But she wasn’t happy. She was the only Mexican girl in her all-Anglo neighborhood, and she had been harassed for years by other kids because of it. She was overweight. And worse, she “liked girls” but didn’t know what to do about it.

She considered joining a gang, but “I wasn’t happy with what I saw,” she says. “They were all male-dominated gangs, and I’m a very liberated person. I didn’t like the fact that the guys held control of those gangs.”

So, instead of joining a gang, she formed one of her own. In one year her all-female gang, named Carnalas grew to 60 members. The girls did a lot of hanging out together, typical of the bored, restless teens of the neighborhood.

Soon Los Compadres, a boys gang in the area, recruited them. “A lot of my home girls felt that it was a bad move to merge because then the guys were going to control us,” Diaz-Parton says. But there was interest in both gangs in finding boyfriends and girlfriends, and after several “businesslike” meetings the gangs merged into the new Los Compadres.

Diaz-Parton, who had never gotten into serious trouble before becoming a gang member, soon rose to be the #2 position in Los Compadres, a feat for a female. People looked up to her. “My home girls and home boys did what I asked.” She felt on top of the world.

The anger she had for the people who didn’t “accept” her, she now used against them. “I became pretty important in our schools because people would fear for their life,” she says. “I didn’t feel powerless. I was very in control. What more can you control than someone’s life?”

But there was a price. A gang member’s “word” is everything and her pride must be upheld. The boys in Los Compadres had more enemies and skirmishes than Carnalas had, and the girls had to adopt the boys’ gripes. They were now part of a more dangerous game where the losers often ended up dead. Game over, no replay.

As a top dog in her gang, Diaz-Parton soon became a wanted woman, and rival gang members sought her out to challenge, threaten, and shoot at.

The crisis came when one of Diaz-Parton’s girlfriends was marrying a member of a rival gang. Diaz-Parton was allowed to attend the wedding, on the condition that she didn’t bring weapons or any of her own gang members. As the wedding reception progressed, the groom got drunk.
"He started disrespecting the gang I was from, insulting me and my home girls, insulting my home boys who weren't even there, and basically made an ass out of himself," Diaz-Parton explains. Then the groom made his near-fatal mistake: He hit her in the face with a gun.

"I can't say it really hurt that much, other than my pride," she says. "But to allow that to go by without something happening would have ruined me—period—as far as gangs were concerned."

So after the reception, the young gang member drove over to the newlyweds' home. First she went to the bedroom window and told her friend, who had a one-year-old child, to grab the baby and jump in the closet. The friend did so, without any questions. "She knew her husband was out of line," Diaz-Parton says. "That's the code of the neighborhood. You make a mistake; you're going to pay for it."

Diaz-Parton then walked to the front of the house and knocked on the door. The groom opened it. "I really don't think I was going to shoot him until he started laughing." She did what she "had to do" and shot him. One of his friends started running away and she shot him too.

A New Life

At 18, Diaz-Parton entered jail and spent almost three years in prison on two counts of attempted murder and conspiracy to commit murder. When her time was served, she could have gone back to her gang and been a VIP once again. Her friends had saved a place for her, and even found her a home.

A practical person, Diaz-Parton always had "her own mind." Her decision to never enter jail again was a change of heart, not a rebellion against the authority she encountered there. She had no plans when she was released, but her probation officer told her she had to get a real job. Three months after she got out of prison, a deputy sheriff who knew her when she was young "put his ass on the line for me" and got her a job as a gang worker. It turned out to be just what she needed. She got paid well. She got a car and a walkie-talkie. She could still be a powerful figure in the neighborhood. She was now on a different path, and that was cool.

"It made me feel just as important as I felt when I was in the gang," Diaz-Parton says of her new job. She seems even prouder now that she's risen to director.

Escalating Female Violence

"Girl gangs" have been around for decades, but they have not been well understood. "Historically, girl-gang members have been viewed merely as sexual conveniences," says Joan Moore, author of Going Down to the Barrio, a study of Chicano gangs. Girl gangs were traditionally "auxiliaries" of men's gangs, and one study done in the 1970s found that fully independent girl gangs constituted less than 10 percent of all gangs. Instead of running their own gangs, girls were considered sexual property of the boys, with a few tomboys who broke the rules.

While it's hard to separate the stereotype from the reality (most researchers in the 50s were male, who interviewed male social workers who targeted male gang members), the stereotypes of girls as sex toys stuck.

"I beg your pardon; I was a toy to nobody," Diaz-Parton exclaims, saying that cops still like to think of girls that way. The police attitude seems endemic of a larger myopia when it comes to the problems of inner city girls.

Teenagers today can choose not to join a gang, but they can't choose not to be affected by gang life. The pressures of economic problems, immigration, and racism made the streets combustible, and the harsh violence and ruthlessness of today's gangs confounds those Americans who grew up in gentler times. Today's gangs are a far cry from the Sharks and Jets of West Side Story, who now seem almost quaint and innocent, in spite of the tragedy that marred the romance of the ill-fated lovers, Tony and Maria. The fists, sticks, and knives of 1950s gangs have been replaced by guns, and death is commonplace.

Julia and Paula, 14-year-old ninth graders at Manual Arts High School in South Central Los Angeles, spent a year in a Youth at Risk program designed to help young people stay out of gangs. They live on the edge, surrounded by gangs but trying to avoid them because "they're dumb." "We see all our friends getting shot and stuff," Julia says. "Being a gang member... that's just risking your life." Paula chimines in. "Young as they are, Julia and Paula have noticed an increase in female violence in the past five years."

"I guess they see the guys do it and stuff," explains Paula, who wears huge dark blue "gangster" jeans with frayed ends.

Julia's silver braces gleam on white teeth as she chatters nervously in spurs, with a Mexican accent, rolling up a magazine in her hands. Her older brother and sister have both been involved in gangs. "I don't feel safe in this neighborhood," Julia says. "They shot my house and I don't like it." This week, Julia is scheduled to have a fight with a girl who stared at her sister the wrong way. "My sister, when she fights, she goes crazy," she says.

"Teenage gangs are a reflection of a teenage culture," notes Moore. "In the 1950s, females were not as aggressive. They were less inclined to actively start a fight. Instead, they were often 'protected' by older male gang members. "The whole ideology of protection and chivalry was going on with the guys," she explains. "Females were not to be put in jeopardy."

Today, about a quarter of the youth arrested in the United States each year are girls. While gang girls tend to be arrested for "status" crimes such as running away or school delinquency, as opposed to violent crimes (committed by boys, gang and non-gang), nine times for every female-committed violent crime, many studies are showing that girls are becoming more violent. A 1992 Search Institute study of 6th to 12th graders in towns and cities smaller than 50,000 found that 45 percent of young women engaged in violent behavior at least once. The FBI reports that during the 1980s, girls' arrest rates for violent crimes increased faster than boys' at 16.5 percent for girls and 4.5 percent for boys. Between 1985 and 1989, girls' arrest rates for murder and non-negligent manslaughter increased 18.9 percent; for aggravated assault, 35.9 percent.

Interestingly enough, during the period of 1968-1977, female violence also soared to new heights, which gives some researchers hope that this new female "crime wave" is just a passing phase. Some feel it is also the reason the media is so interested in female gang members at the moment.

As Meda Chesney-Lind, a professor and researcher at the University of Hawaii, Manoa, writes in her paper, "Girls, Gangs, and Violence: Anatomy of a Backlash": "Those who tout both crime waves (now and 20 years ago) utilize a
crude form of equity feminism to explain the trends observed and, in the process, contribute to the 'backlash' against the women's movement.

Trends notwithstanding, many researchers feel that girls join gangs for protection, or to learn skills to help them escape abuse. About 12 percent of all adolescent girls, 15 percent of college women, and 20 percent of all adult females have experienced sexual abuse and assault. For girl-gang members, the incidence appears to be even higher.

"Almost a third of girls in gangs admitted to the interviewers that they had been sexually tampered with at home," Moore says of a study she worked on, adding that this statistic doesn't even include abuse which girls might get from their male peers.

"I would suggest that the majority of girls who are committing acts of individual violence have in some way been victimized or abused," says Wolfe. (Many male perpetrators of violence, such as child abusers, have also been victimized at children, studies show.)

Gangs may be places of refuge for these girls. Chesney-Lind likens girl gangs to the "consciousness-raising groups" of the 1970s. Yet many girls jump from one bad situation to another, as the increasing violence out on the streets is not much safer than violence at home.

Street-Wise Feminism

Are girl-only gangs a feminist statement? "To some extent there are ways in which these women are bonding with each other," Leslie R. Wolfe, president of the Center for Women Policy Studies in Washington, D.C., explains. "They are building little sisterhoods.

"They're going through their women's movement too, finally," Diaz-Parton notes. "They're starting not to accept the male attitude toward them anymore.

While Diaz-Parton has many regrets about her gang life, she most especially regrets that her girl gang joined the boy gang. The girls found that the boys often involved them in petty squabbles with other gangs with whom the girls had previously had no problems. "A lot of my home girls today feel that joining Los Compadres was what actually destroyed the gang in the end; that we could have kept going and took care of ourselves."

As one young girl-gang member said to Diaz-Parton about the boys: "If they want to party, that's cool, but they don't run us."

Still, only a few girl gangs have the guts to go it alone. They feel more secure having the guys there and are having a hard time being independent. "It's always scary to break out of a mold," says Diaz-Parton. "If the girls knew exactly how the home boys talked about them when they weren't there, they might have a different attitude."

A Dearth of Programs for Girls

Unfortunately, the growth of gang violence among inner city girls has not yet resulted in adequate services. Diaz-Parton complains that services for kids are continually cut and programs for girls are even harder to come by. She has become the girls' advocate at the project, where only three out of about 50 gang workers are female. Most of the programs and sports, from football to baseball, are for boys. In the 1950s, social workers often tried to get girl gang members to attend "charm" clinics in etiquette and cosmets, learn sewing, or help with charities as a way to prevent delinquency. Programs haven't improved much. A national study done in 1991 on the state-of-the-art violence-prevention programs found that only three programs out of the 51 respondents were for females. Of the three, one served potential perpetrators of violence; the other two served survivors of violence. Even when programs include females, their special needs are overlooked, such as day care, are overlooked in many youth programs.

"Policy makers are concerned about male adolescent violence because, frankly, they're afraid of being attacked," Wolfe explains. A tall young black male is seen as much more threatening in white society than a 13-year-old L.A. girl carrying her 10-month-old child.

Many programs also seem to be languishing in a huge cultural gap. "They're real sorry," Julia says about the Youth at Risk Program. She and Paula joined as a way to get out of going to class, but after a while the program got boring. They couldn't relate to the mentors at first (many of whom were white) because they lived far away and couldn't speak Spanish. "But we started to understand that they were there for us," says Julia. "All those days we were crying, crying, crying, about the problems that we had, the hurt... you want people to listen to you."

The culture gap is why the Community Youth Gang Services Project hires gang members to counsel gang members and why Diaz-Parton is particularly suited to her job. Once Diaz-Parton got into a position of "power" at the Project, she started a girl's softball league. A breakthrough occurred when, after the male gang members started drinking and goofing off during the games, the girls finally told them to quit it or leave. To their surprise, the boys behaved themselves. It gave the girls a great sense of self-esteem and personal empowerment.

"They don't know that there's power in numbers," Diaz-Parton explains. "They don't know that there's a way to get what you want without violence; they don't know how to register to vote."

Diaz-Parton feels that if kids could learn how to deal with things pro-actively, they wouldn't resort to violence. "It's really hard to convince kids not to react in a violent way when violence is the only thing rewarded in this society.

Perhaps the most important thing to remember is that most kids in gangs are just that: kids. Despite many sensationalized media accounts, most gangs are just a group of kids who like to drink and party, not a sophisticated crime syndicate. Most gang members are just "followers" who need the purpose, structure, and authority of the gang—structure that seems to missing otherwise. For abused girls, in particular, the gang brings some normalcy to their lives, says Moore.

"Other than the violence, I don't think there's a lot of difference, between a gang and a sorority or fraternity," Diaz-Parton says. "I think it all depends on where you fall economically. Everybody has a need to be a part of something, and the gangs are the most available and the most glamorous thing happening right now."

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The Ugly Duchess

She was everything a woman wasn't supposed to be.

By Edith Pearlman

In Alice in Wonderland, the Duchess' face is not described; the artist John Tenniel takes the responsibility of rendering her. I understood his drawings to be eyewitness, on-the-scene sketches, just as I understood Alice's adventures to be true accounts. In these drawings, the Duchess looks cranky, smug on her second. She is short of nose and long of lip, wide of jaw and small of eye. Her girth is draped in a loose garment that drags on the ground. A comfortable sort of sandal peeps out below. It's the costume of a derelict, topped by a lunatic hat. But she didn't look unattractive, at least not to my young eyes. The Duchess looked—though I was astute enough not to mention it—a little like my great aunt Elsa.

And compared to the Alice of the drawings, that starched child whose Mary-Janed feet stood stiffly in third position, and to the mannerly Alice of the prose, the Duchess was refreshingly discourteous. "You don't know much," she snapped at Alice when they first met. The Duchess was everything a woman wasn't supposed to be: disputatious, unmaternal, indifferent to the squalor of her kitchen, incapable of controlling her cook. On her second and last appearance, she lobbed dissociated aphorisms at poor bewildered Alice. It seemed as if both the chronicler and the illustrator wanted me to dislike the Duchess. I resented the manipulation. I liked the lady.

Decades later, I encountered the Duchess' predecessor. "The Ugly Duchess" hangs in the National Gallery in London. She was painted by the Flemish artist Quentin Massys in the 16th century.

This earlier Duchess is fiercer than Tenniel's. You can see how the illustrator of Alice softened his subject. In Massys' work, the brow is a high hairless dome; Tenniel brings the headdress down almost to the eyes, kindly concealing the baldness. The upper lip of the Massys Duchess is as long as a primate's—this Tenniel allowed. But in the Massys painting, the Duchess' ears stick out like a gremlin's, her neck is leathery and lined, and her flaccid breasts are puffed up unconvincingly by a stiff cylinder of a dress. Tenniel omits these features, opting for a broader distortion more suitable for children. His Duchess is a mess, but not upsetting, whereas Massys' old lady is a frightening study of gussied-up old age—the romantic headdress jammed onto the ancient forehead, the ringed fingers spoiled by dirty nails, the heartbreakingly expectant smile on a skimpy mouth.

Old dear! I thought, ogling the Duchess. There was still a resemblance to Aunt Elsa. I walked out of the gallery, wondering if there would someday be a resemblance to me. But I was off to meet a man for lunch and stopped thinking about the Duchess. At least for the afternoon.

I didn't forget her face though. And I didn't forget her appellation: ugly. Is there any word a woman dreads more?

The fatigued grimace, in two versions of the Ugly Duchess: John Tenniel's drawing for Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland (above) and a portrait attributed to Quentin Massys, A Grotesque Old Woman, c. 1500 (right).
Cruel and silly are, by comparison, compliments. "I would gladly give half the wit with which I am credited for half the beauty you possess," wrote Madame de Staël to Madame Recamier. "I am so plain," sighed Jane Eyre. "A used-up article," Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote of herself, "never much to look at." And after a new arrangement of her hair, George Eliot complained: "Uglier than ever."

The Massys Ugly Duchess, hanging around my mind, began to symbolize women's worries about their looks, especially their worries when no longer young and nubile. She began to represent the fruitless effort to beautify and the mockery it invites. I began to wonder whether anyone in 16th-century Flanders had responded to the simper of this willful old flirt.

I discovered that the Ugly Duchess never lived in Flanders. She never lived in any country other than the imagination. She had no physical existence. She wasn't even invented by Quentin Massys. She was created by Leonardo da Vinci in a drawing that purportedly was an anonymous study of the grotesque. Grotesque!—worse even than ugly. Then came the Massys painting, then an engraving by the Bohemian etcher Wenceslaus Hollar, and finally the drawings of John Tenniel.

However unreal, my Duchess had a significant career as an artist's model, as painter copied drawing and engraver copied painting. I still see her around. I see the determination in the Massys portrait on game old ladies who shrug off the granny uniforms society would have them wear, and go gaudy instead. I see the fatigue of this willful old flirt. The overeager grin that the Duchess gave Alice at the croquet game shows up on unglamorous women at parties who refuse to be ignored, talk a little too much, and, if left standing alone, look not angry but only a bit underappreciated.

But then we Duchesses straighten our backs, check our nails, remember to smile, and soldier on.
Better to live alone; with a fool there is no companionship.

The Pali Canon (sacred scriptures of Theravada Buddhists), c. 500–250 B.C.

Americans are marrying less, divorcing more, and forming households of one at a great rate. Yet it’s pairs and families who dominate the popular and political culture, keeping the huge population of live-alones off the screen of our national vision. “Politicians talk incessantly about families and ‘family values,’” notes a black woman, 42, who lives alone. “Aren’t I a citizen, too?”

More than 24 million Americans—one out of four adults—live alone. Over 15 million of them are women (who comprise 75% of all people over 45 who live alone). Individuals move in and out of the single population as couples are formed and broken, as children are born, grow up, and move out, and as mates die. But the percentage of single American households keeps increasing.

Negative stereotypes of the person living alone persist, especially where women are concerned: the elderly widow, divorcée, or empty-nesting single mom, pining away in a large, echoing house or a tiny, cramped apartment. But the truth is—while some people want to change their status, growing numbers are choosing to stay single.

Living Alone and Loving It

“I have no intention of being part of a couple again,” says Nancy Elder, a management consultant in the Midwest. Her feelings are echoed around the country, by men and women who have tried the traditional route and found it didn’t work for them.

“I like living alone. I like not living with someone I don’t want to be living with an incredible amount,” agrees Helen Weingarten who lives in a college town in Michigan.

Actually, everyone contacted for this article claimed they were the wrong person to talk to; they were much too busy to fit the loneliness stereotype.

“When I get to go home alone early, it’s like a gift that I give myself. I get in bed, watch television, pig out, catch up on all the papers and magazines I haven’t read...That’s my gift for the evening,” says Barbara Bode, who administers a non-profit organization in Washington, D.C.

Like many singles, Bode has a full social calendar unaffected by her lack of a permanent partner. Many women report that a newly single status reduces invitations from married friends, but most eventually find new connections with those also on their own.

The United States is the first society rich enough to produce enough housing and income to enable so many people to live by themselves. The decision by so many people to live alone has profound implications for the nation as a whole. Single people may need more health services if they are hospitalized for even a minor problem. And as the population ages, it’s probably true that singles will require a group home situation earlier than couples living together, especially if they are hit with a chronic illness.

And the future is not that far off. Although in the movies singles living on their own are usually pictured as twentysomething, in real life most of them are 35-plus. They are the ones earning enough money to afford the solitary life. Younger singles usually share with parents, lovers, or friends.

This mostly middle-aged and middle-class group is a new phenomenon, and it is everywhere. In 1993, one-third of all first-time home buyers were single, according to a study done by Chicago Title and Trust. Singles bought homes in the suburbs, condos in urban centers, and vacation houses in resort areas.

Although the popular culture doesn’t seem to notice these statistics much, business is beginning to recognize a market. Think of soups for one and single-serving frozen foods. Much of the growth of health clubs can be attributed to the single person’s need for a place to go after work that doesn’t include drinking. So can the growing number of coffee bars. And the popularity of salad bars suggests a population that can’t use up a head of lettuce before it turns brown.

Can’t Get No Respect

Yet, with the exception of some beer and fast-food ads, single adults are left out of the national image. Vacations are advertised for couples or families. Financial planning assumes a pair at least. Car-buying decisions are a family affair. The “family values” debates suggest an assumed amorality from anyone not living with blood relatives.

When singles are portrayed in movies or TV, it is always
with the assumption they will end as half of a pair. In real life, many people who reached middle age alone are choosing to stay that way. In this age of AIDS, some have opted for celibacy. Some have found interests beyond the social scene. Others continue to search for romance, but insist it will never again be a live-in relationship.

Lily Rivlin, a New York filmmaker, has started a support group for women who are not only single, but also childless. "If you don't have children, you don't count in our society," she argues. Rivlin and others believe the male-dominated culture is threatened by women who don't fit the standard mold. "They don't know how to deal with us, so we're just discounted," she says, pointing out that most men really don't want an equal partner. Rivlin would like to see singles, particularly women, organize as a political pressure group. That way the women would feel better about themselves and the power structure would have to acknowledge their existence.

"All the icons and archetypes we're presented with have to do with couples, including gay and lesbian couples. Pairs have more cachet than a single anything," says Jeff Mortimer, an editor at the University of Michigan who claims to own a button reading: "Stop me before I marry again."

"The deck is stacked against the single person, especially the single middle-aged person, not just legally and not just economically, but culturally," Mortimer finds. "The message that comes across is that living alone can't possibly be something that a person can freely choose, or enjoy."

I Really Want to Be Alone

Many of those who live alone identified with a retired woman who asked advice columnist Dear Abby for a politely worded refusal for holiday invitations. Friends, neighbors, and former co-workers insisted she spend Christmas, Thanksgiving, and other holidays with their relatives. She preferred to eat alone in a restaurant or practice cooking a gourmet dish for herself to "pretending to have a good time..."
Another career woman recalled how liberated she felt when she decided to forego a fish dinner with others attending a meeting in San Francisco. Instead, she took herself to a Greek restaurant on a Saturday night and had a wonderful time on her own.

Privately, as the number of people living alone has mushroomed, attitudes have changed. Fifty years ago, Garbo renounced Hollywood and shocked the world with her desire for solitude. Today, almost everyone has an aunt, uncle, sibling, or parent who lives alone, lessening the believability of stories about weird loners.

“There are a million kinds of places you can go as a single person,” insists Helen Weingarten. In larger cities, the choice is even more readily accepted, although some women have complained about the problems of social events associated with work. One woman who hates to ask male friends to be her escort reported that when she shows up alone at such functions, “I have been the absolutely only single person there.”

All Is Not Rosy

Even though many of these middle-aged singles live alone by choice, there are problems. Almost everyone mentions the annoyance of everyone assuming that they are part of a pair. As one woman who lives in a town without public transportation pointed out, even taking her car in for repairs can be a hassle. It’s assumed there is a partner to provide transportation until the car is ready. And, she wondered, how can one person hang a curtain rod across a six-foot window?

One person does not live half as cheaply as two. Real estate taxes are the same no matter how many people live in a house. So are maintenance costs. And car repair bills. One person may use a bit less electricity or gas than two, but a woman on her own may have to hire help to do chores and make repairs. Of the 7.6 million single homeowners 65 and over, six million (79%) are women.

Jeff Mortimer cites disadvantages singles face in taxes, insurance, and even getting a loan. He also remembered losing a job to a married man who was much less qualified for the position than he was.

Vacation planning is often mentioned by singles as evidence of their invisibility. One woman decided against a cruise when she learned how much more it would cost for a single cabin. Hotels also charge more for one person. And most packages assume travelers are part of a pair. In larger cities, the demand has produced some travel agencies that specialize in trips for people on their own.

Financial Shock at Retirement

Women who have worked all their lives often have their own pension, social security, and IRAs. But they have earned their share in an economy that paid women less than 70 cents for every dollar a man made. Retirement plans for couples may include two pensions and two government checks, but the retired single makes do with one of each, often calculated on a lower base pay. The Older Women’s League’s study shows that minority women are even more likely than whites to be alone and poor as they age.

A study by The Employee Benefit Research Institute in 1993 had even more alarming predictions for women on their own. Three-fourths of the elderly poor are women. Half of the women over 65 are widows. (One happy reason for more older women: According to several studies, men who live alone die at an earlier age than those living with a wife or caregiver, but women who live alone survive longer than their nubial sisters.)

Single mothers and displaced homemakers (women whose primary occupation had been caring for a family and who failed to find full-time employment after a divorce or death), are four times more likely to be living below the poverty line during their working years. There have been no published studies of how childless singles do in the general economy.

Many singles are aware of the problematic future and are considering some kind of communal arrangement with friends. In Ann Arbor, Michigan a group of single women are thinking about building a house together—each person would have a separate apartment, with a shared communal living room and kitchen. In Washington, D.C., a group of friends are talking about buying themselves a retirement home in Costa Rica. In New York City, a group of single women writers discuss buying a weekly newspaper in New England.

Still, those are individual solutions to a national problem. As more and more singles move into retirement and the possibility of serious illness, the country will have to take notice of them. Perhaps they will begin funding their own political-action committees and send lobbyists to Congress. Or the single members of Congress will establish a Singles Caucus.

At the very least, there should be a concerted effort to get the national planning for health insurance, retirement, home care, and other problems to reflect more directly the reality of the American population. Not everyone has live-in caregivers. Not everyone can expect family members to be available for long-term home nursing. Not everyone spends their final years in the warm embrace of a long marriage and loving family. Not everyone has relatives nearby for holiday visits or even basic shopping. Millions of people will be relying on “the kindness of strangers” during the years when they are least able to fend for themselves.

Journalist Bryna Taubman first explored the subject of the singles population in a series for the New York Post in 1969. She is co-author of How to Fall in Love and Land on Your Feet, due out in Spring by St. Martin’s Press.
Fresh perspectives on breast exams, “natural” vs. medication-assisted childbirth, and how doctors can regain the trust of American women are part of our special women's health section.

Breast Intentions

Enlightening medical students about the female body.

BY JEANETTE BATZ

“Basically, you’ll learn how breast examinations should be done, then you’ll teach and evaluate the medical students,” Dr. Tuteur tells me. I nod intelligently and recross my legs, trying to look astute. “They used to use prostitutes for this,” he adds.

• • •

That evening I mention the part-time job casually on the phone to my mother. “You have to let them examine you naked?” blurts my mother, who won’t examine her own breast alone in the dark. “Yeah,” I reply, adding lightly that they used to use prostitutes.

“Why are you doing this?” she asks, bewildered.

“Because it pays $22 an hour,” I answered.

• • •

“Take off everything but your underpants, put that gown on, grab a sheet, and wait,” one of the other
“clinical subjects” tells me. I make a little pile, stuffing my stocking into my skirt and tucking my bra under my blouse. A medical student walks into the room without knocking, and a chorus of female voices drives him back. Door closed, we chuckle at the ironies of protocol.

Ten minutes later the students file in, smelling nervous. The genders have been split, and my schedule has managed to draw me to the males. The professor does a demonstration, then suggests that each student find a clinical subject and practice. Our role is to teach, remind, correct—and make them comfortable with our bodies.

A lanky, sweet-faced lad approaches me immediately. I glance around, absurdly relieved to be, promlike, selected. On the center examining table sits an obese woman in her sixties, her long gray hair straggling over pendulous breasts. Students line the side of the room waiting their turn, but it takes a nod from the professor before one of them approaches her.

I feel a stabbing sympathy, then pure feminist rage. But the rage is tainted by aesthetic revulsion. I, too, judge her body ugly, as I have my own, cringing at my breasts’ shapeless nipples and downward slope. Their image crops up in National Geographic—not Penthouse. I wonder if the young men will be disappointed, then grit my teeth. They must learn to love the flesh itself, not its form.

Unaware of these musings, my first medical student is introducing himself as Student Doctor Kirkpatrick. He offers me an ice-cold, clammy hand, then catches himself and bolts to the sink: Always wash your hand in front of the patient before beginning the examination.

Clean and innocent, he begins, with a halting explanation, the visual inspection. I put my hands at my waist and press in, a peasant woman angry at her man. He tells me he is looking for “orange-peeling or lesions, any abnormalities.” I tell him a woman’s breasts are always abnormal: too saggy or pointed, too shallow or floppy. At 15, we crossed our hearts with wire and padding while the boys jacked off across the arm cavity and press up into its bundle of nerves. He extends a cold shaking hand towards my body, forgetting the “position of function.” Dr. Tuteur stressed in the lecture.

“Begin in the ‘tail’ of the breast,” I tell him, wondering how medicine arrived at such a satanic description. I am nervous too. He presses his fingers down against my skin, rotating lightly. “Press harder,” I tell him, drawing strength—from my vulnerability. He cups the bottom of my right breast in his hand and compresses the flesh with his left hand, moving his fingers awkwardly across the top. “Press against the chest wall,” I direct him, because tumors can grow there. And because I want to regain some power.

When he does as I say, I feel something shift inside me. Never again will I perch cold and clammy on the edge of a metal table, clutching a tissue-paper bolero jacket closed, afraid to get down and walk around in case the Doctor comes in. Never again will I do as the Doctor bids without question.

Once upon a time, the Doctor didn’t know.

In the “third position” I lie down, my hips rolled away from young Kirkpatrick, my arm over my head in a position that feels like sexual abandon but isn’t. He makes his rings around the rosy one final time, his touch growing more sure. “Move the nipple aside,” I tell him. “There’s a hollow space underneath.”

When he checks his anatomy text, he no doubt will find a structural reason. For me, it’s the hollow created when men and babies suckle; one of the dark chasms Jung calls women’s mystery. We crave connection: Is it because we feel our own emptiness? Or because we have room for the world?

He thinks he is finished. “What about the axillary nodes?” I quiz. “Oh yeah,” he blurts. “I’m sorry.” (Later I ask another clinical subject how long this innocence will last and she grins: “Through December. By January they come in brusque as God.”)

A xillaries are tough: You have to support the woman’s arm on your own, minuet style, and convince her to relax while you locate the under-arm cavity and press up into its bundle of nerves. He doesn’t want to hurt me; I tell him to go ahead, just as I’ve told every man I ever loved. And sure enough I feel invaded, turned inside out. He probes and presses and finds nothing. I am still whole, satisfied by this treeful of knowledge.

Women are always more whole, they say; we are “grounded.” Heavier with water, moist with the world’s fluids. Completed and self-sufficient because our power lies inside us. I am a thousand women—flirt, hausfrau, Venus, blue-stocking—yet I do feel placid, justified by a womb I may never fill. Does the young Kirkpatrick sense this? Can I convince him?

The next student introduces himself and begins the inspection. I now realize that each will have his own attitude toward my body. The short thickly built guy thinks my body is his laboratory; the former musician, intense as Hamlet, feels his way into its rhythms. The older redhead is intrigued—“The body is an amazing machine,” he says,
reminding me of my first Ob/Gyn, who talked about cogs, wheels, and operations until I left screaming silently, hysterical, womb-panicked by his imposition of cold structure.

Some of the students show an acolyte's reverence, a sense of my skin as envelope, and life beating warm beneath it. Others want a map, a compass; certitudes of definition and diagnosis. A few stay humble, and they are my favorites. Because it is humility I am learning myself, in this clinical act of prostitution. I ease into routine, dropping my gown readily for each new student, but what replaces embarrassment is neither arrogance nor indifference.

This is my body, narrow-shouldered, fair-skinned, with full, pale-nippled breasts and arms freckled darker beside them. Not one of these clinicians can reduce this body to certainty; what lies beneath sight is closer to spirit than flesh. Like post-modern faith, it requires a gentle probing that takes nothing for granted, overlaps its own circles, stops short of center.

I can teach them what I am told: the steps of the exam, the danger of inappropriate touch, the consummate need for courtesy and order. But how do I teach them that my body has a life of its own? That together, my body and I harden, swell, fall, soften, give suck—and none of that can be deconstructed or controlled. Read the textbook, but never forget: The female body is as mysterious as the soul.

And as shameless.

Jeannette Batz is an award-winning journalist who writes about feminist and social issues for The Riverfront Times, a progressive weekly in St. Louis. She participated in the clinical program at Washington University School of Medicine last year, while finishing her doctorate in American studies.

Natural Childbirth: From Option to Orthodoxy

BY NICOLE BOKAT

"I did it!" a beaming Elizabeth announced to our mother's group. "Chloe was born naturally." The other women clustered around mother and baby, nodding in approval that Elizabeth had passed the childbirth test with flying colors. Once again, a feeling of alienation crept over me. Pregnant with my second child, I planned on requesting anesthetics the moment my labor pain got too intense.

Unlike me, many women today strive to have natural childbirth. Even Marla Maples "had no anesthesics," Donald Trump bragged to The New York Times. The most popular way of achieving this goal is through Lamaze training; to distract the laboring mother by focusing her attention on complicated breathing techniques. According to a 1992 article in Forbes magazine, half of the parents of the four million babies born in 1991 went through Lamaze training. This figure doubled from 25% in 1987. Why are we so caught up in the trend?

If all things come in cycles, then our culture is immersed in a growing moralism when it comes to motherhood and, as a by-product, childbirth. Having proven that we can be independent, high functioning, high earning, and aerobically fit, women are also striving, once again, to excel at motherhood—beginning with our marvelous feats of endurance in the delivery room. How many other long, arduous procedures do people brag about surviving without the benefit of modern medicine? Has anyone ever heard of "natural open-heart surgery?" How about a "natural vasectomy?"

While avoiding drugs to minimize the risk to one's baby is the underlying aim of natural childbirth, conquering the process has, inadvertently, become a status symbol. Having a child, "naturally," is considered a badge of honor among some mothers; perhaps this is similar to surviving a bullet among men who've been to war. The more militant portray triumphant veterans of childbirth battles in grandiose terms, conjuring up images of Mother Teresa, Joan of Arc, or the Mighty Lioness of the Jungle. But, even for the more mainstream, "natural childbirth" has become a catch phrase; one that appeals to the "good mother" in us. What has been lost is the message of the women's movement: Every woman should be free to make her own choices about pregnancy and motherhood without being judged.

Yet, too many pregnancy books, peers, and care providers insist that if we fail at natural childbirth, we are settling for an inferior experience or, worse, exposing our infants to potential risks. Tracy Hotchner's Pregnancy and Childbirth is representative of a slew of guides for expectant mothers. The author advises women to try and avoid medication, warning that any drug might harm the baby. Yet, in the next breath she explains that maternal anxiety—a reaction to pain and fear—can adversely affect labor. Enjoying every minute of your labor is thus the only guilt-free choice.
We seem to have regressed mightily from the mid-nineteenth century, when the anesthetic use of chloroform was discovered and endorsed by Queen Victoria, who had nine children, despite the clergy’s protestation that women needed to suffer in childbirth to atone for Eve’s sin. As Jessica Mitford describes in her wonderful book *The American Way of Birth*, for the next 80 years, the fashion in childbirth—for those who could afford it—became avoidance of pain through anesthetics. Then, in the 1930’s Grantly Dick-Read, the author of *Childbirth Without Fear*, and later Frederick Lamaze, attempted to steer women away from the use of much coveted anesthetics. Dick-Read believed that women’s anxiety creates the pain of childbirth. Lamaze acknowledged that the process was painful, but insisted that women themselves could control the degree to which they felt that pain. Both men advocated the “conditioning” of women through breathing based on Pavlov’s experiments with dogs. Once again, women were held to ridiculous standards of perfection while simultaneously viewed as victims of their own imagination and fears. Today, those who most ardently advocate natural childbirth have merely politicized women’s suffering for a new purpose: the health of the baby. In doing so, they have embraced the age-old image that true femininity requires martyrdom.

With my first son, my doctor assumed that my husband and I were in sync with the times; it was understood that I would attempt natural childbirth and then breast-feed our baby for the acceptable six months to one year period. We listened to the rhetoric, felt guilty for any doubts we harbored, and signed up for Lamaze. In the class, the nurse chided women who planned, in advance, to have epidurals. She cheerfully reassured us that we could “push our way to victory,” since we were “made for having babies.” Having secretly hoped for a loophole that would require my using painkillers, I suddenly questioned whether or not my cowardice pointed to a maternal deficit in me.

Then came the endless stories of successful drug-free births from friends and acquaintances. Alice allowed her older child into the birthing room until the final hour; then, valiantly, gave birth in a shower! Jane rocked on all fours in the final stages of labor. Two of my neighbors popped out sons en route to maternity centers, then bragged about the births as if they were stellar achievements rather than lucky accidents of nature.

Along with my admiration for these audacious sisters, I couldn’t help but wonder: What’s next in this “Can you top this” atmosphere? Giving birth in the workplace? While jumping out of a plane? Birthing theaters (selling tickets and

having people attend “improvised” productions)? Despite our courageous performances, our choices do not always reflect what’s best for mother and child. One woman I know romanticized the idea of a home birth, free of medical intervention. An emergency complication—coupled with the distance to the hospital—turned her experience into a nightmare. Sadly, she is now unable to have more children. Women who grow nostalgic about the less intrusive, less technological environment of yesteryear seem to forget how often their foremothers died “naturally” in childbirth.

My own reservations notwithstanding, I finally succumbed to the dictum that labor was a crucial test of my maternity. Unfortunately, my first son’s birth turned out to be unnaturally brutal. During the pushing stage, he lodged himself on my spine, refused to budge, and caused me unbearable distress. Treating my labor like a difficult sporting event, my obstetrician shrugged and exited “to get a Snickers bar” when—after three hours of pushing—I received an epidural. As I was leaving the hospital, I spoke to a top administrator who shook her head at my story. “It was much more civilized in my day,” she said. “They put you out, and, when you woke up, you had your baby.”

This second time around, I’ve already informed my new doctor that I harbor no fantasies of winning the delivery room medal of honor. Since women’s childbirth experiences range from exhilarating to agonizing, we should be encouraged and supported to understand both our options and their limits in what is, finally, a dive into unknown waters. Each of us should balance the needs of our infants with our own mental and physical health. Planning and daydreaming should center on the baby, not the birthing event.

I’ve flatly rejected all rhetoric that exalts the advantages of breathing like a hyena. I’m ignoring the cheerleading tactics of those in the medical and motherhood community who make women, like me, feel inadequate because of discomfort and “natural” fear about childbirth. I believe that it’s time for the childbirth industry to stop making women feel guilty for not blindly embracing the latest childbirth craze. The pain of childbirth needs to be depoliticized and viewed exclusively for what it is: suffering. Finally, the myth of the perfect versus the malicious mother must come to rest, beginning in the labor room. After all, our ultimate aim is to be mothers, not heroes or symbols. What could be more natural than that?

Nicole Bokat has a doctorate in English and teaches at the New School for Social Research in New York City.
Can Separate Be Equal in Women’s Health?

The case for creating a one-stop service for women patients.

New ideas for improving women’s health care have been in the air since the highly publicized 1990 U.S. General Accounting Office study which noted how infrequently women are included in clinical trials of new medicines. The most ambitious and comprehensive reform program aired to date is the campaign to create a medical specialty in women’s health. To find out how changes in the academy might affect women’s experiences in the doctor’s office, ON THE ISSUES editor Ronni Sandroff talked to Eileen M. Hoffman, M.D., co-founder of The Women’s Health Project, an organization dedicated to educating the public and professionals about women’s health as a medical specialty. Dr. Hoffman, clinical assistant professor of medicine at New York University School of Medicine, has a private practice in internal medicine in New York City, and has published numerous papers and given many presentations on this subject.

OTI: At a time when medicine is being criticized for being overspecialized, why do you think we need a new specialty in women’s health?

EILEEN HOFFMAN: Women today receive very fragmented medical care. When I began to treat my own women patients, I found that many of them had gone from doctor to doctor with their symptoms. They didn’t receive the needed treatment because each doctor viewed them as a collection of the body parts relevant to a particular specialty, not as a whole person.

Let’s look at the evaluation of abdominal pain, for example. Gynecologists deal with the pelvis; internists with the abdomen. But in women’s bodies, there is no clear anatomical distinction between the abdomen and the pelvis. This is one continuous cavity. The intestines pass through the pelvis and can form tracts into the vagina. Endometrial tissue can migrate up to the diaphragm and cause pleuritic [lung] pain. Yet because medical specialists divide women’s health, the woman with abdominal pain must often visit two physicians. Each examines her in part and then sends her to the other. There is no continuity of thought or continuity of care. And the social and emotional factors that can affect abdominal symptoms—such as a history of incest, domestic violence—are often completely ignored. When we talk about having a specialty, we refer to training primary care providers in the comprehensive care of women, not training specialists.

OTI: So the problem is that women’s reproductive problems are isolated from other health issues?

EILEEN HOFFMAN: The fact that gynecology grew up as our nation’s women’s health specialty made sense a hundred years ago, when most women’s health needs were, in fact, gynecological. Many women died during childbirth; for many others childbirth caused major lifetime disabilities, such as tears between the vagina and the bladder, resulting in incontinence, or prolapsed
Eileen Hoffman: I see just the opposite. Femi—

OTI: Won't creating a women's health specialty further 

Eileen Hoffman: I see just the opposite. Feminists often get nervous when women are separated out because our differences have all too frequently been held against us. But the push for equality or gender neutrality has not served women well in medicine. We need to move to an appreciation of the fact that women and men are different, to recognize these differences respectfully. 

Today, women are no longer leading mainly reproductive lives. In fact, reproduction may never enter the lives of many women. For most of us, it is just one aspect of our lives. We are more than just breasts and a pelvis. Women have hearts, bones, brains, and immune systems. We are living equal lives to men in terms of athletics, education, and professional activities, but our medical and social institutions haven't yet caught up with that fact.

OTI: There's a fear that separate will never be equal, that devoting female from male medicine will ghettoize women's health and lead to even less adequate treatment.

Eileen Hoffman: Women's health is already “ghettomized”—to a surgical specialty focusing only on reproductive health. Even early feminist efforts to improve women's health care did not break out of that concept. When Our Bodies, Ourselves was originally published in 1969, the feminist movement challenged the power relations between women patients and male physicians. But it retained the assumption that reproductive health could be equated with women's health. This narrow focus did nothing to challenge women's relative exclusion from the non-reproductive aspects of medicine. The exclusion has been almost comical. For example, it was long known that premenopausal women were relatively immune from coronary artery disease. But this information was not used to treat heart disease in women—although it is the number one cause of female death. Instead, in the heyday of heart-attack hysteria, estrogen was given to men.

In the last four years we have seen dramatic change in our concept of women's health. The Women's Congressional Caucus spurred the federal General Accounting Office to study the issue, and in 1990 it released a groundbreaking report criticizing the National Institutes of Health for their failure to include women adequately in clinical trials. This one statement of fact, at this particular time in history, raised to new levels the nation's consciousness about women's health. It occurred within a cultural climate ready to receive it—an atmosphere poised to respond to women's demands for inclusion. This time women will not resort to alternatives outside mainstream medicine. Instead they, and their male allies, intend to change the system to meet the legitimate needs of women.

I believe that creating a place within the hierarchy of medicine devoted to the comprehensive care of women from a woman-defined perspective is the only way to assure that it will not be marginalized and that every medical student receives training in women's health.

OTI: Do we need a specialty in men's health, too?

Eileen Hoffman: No. We're already concentrating most of our efforts on male medicine.

When pediatrics was developing as a specialty, many people argued that it was unnecessary. In fact, I'd like to see a specialty in women's health modeled after pediatrics, with its emphasis on the whole child. Pediatrics has...
set a precedent for taking social context into account when you are concerned about the health or illness of the child. A pediatrician often looks at how a child functions in the family, in its peer group, in the schools, with law enforcement, as a way of judging health or illness. And pediatricians advocate on behalf of children when they are not functioning well in those settings. Maybe that’s why we’ve done a little better job of dealing with child abuse than domestic violence.

**OTI:** How do you see the “social context” applying to women’s health?

**EILEEN HOFFMAN:** I often feel that if I didn’t take the time to really understand my women patients’ backgrounds and personal histories, that I would be misdiagnosing and mistreating them most of the time. The health status of women is intimately connected to their political and economic subordination.

It is when physicians focus on the whole person within the context of their life that real strides in understanding health and coping with illness occur. If medicine had always included women on par with men, violence would have long ago been identified as a problem of epidemic proportion. It would be understood as the primary etiology of disturbances we now categorize as multiple personality disorder, borderline personality, eating disorders, substance abuse, somatization, chronic pelvic pain, and “too frequent” utilization of health services. Male aggression would become a leading psychiatric diagnosis and millions of dollars would be spent researching the causes and treatments of this life threatening and totally preventable disorder.

Many of the most crucial women’s health concerns reside outside the traditional biomedical model. Poverty and violence disproportionately affect women. Societal concepts of sexuality, physical appearance, self-esteem, and body image produce a whole array of problems that are not recognized by the current medical system.

Most physicians are unprepared to diagnose and treat emotional disorders. Yet approximately 20% of all patients visiting primary care physicians suffer with well-defined mental disorders; the number rises to 40% if minor disorders are included.

Women’s normal life transitions, as well as such serious emotional problems as eating disorders, chemical dependency, depression, anxiety, childhood sexual abuse, rape, domestic violence, and their sequelae, are poorly conceptualized within traditional medical school and postgraduate curricula. Physicians rarely diagnose and appropriately treat these common problems in women leading to residual and unnecessary disability.

**OTI:** You often read that women are the main users of the health-care system and account for many more doctor and hospital visits than men. Some commentators have cited this as proof that the system serves women well.

**EILEEN HOFFMAN:** It is curious to me that women keep coming, when the number one complaint that women have about their doctors is that they feel unheard and unseen.

One reason is that women are trained to use the health-care system at an early age for menstrual problems, contraception, childbirth, routine pap screenings, and so on.

Another reason is that the medical environment may be one of the only places women can focus energy on themselves, instead of taking care of others.

Another possible reason for women’s so-called overuse of the system is that patients continue to seek satisfaction. The Commonwealth Fund’s Commission on Women’s Health did a survey last year which showed that 41% of women changed physicians within the last year, and that by and large the major reason was that the women felt there was poor communication. Twenty-five percent report “being talked down to” by their doctors. Another 17% said they were told their symptoms were “all in their head.”

The health-care system is not set up to meet women’s interests and needs to make decisions contextually and collaboratively. Our personal medical decisions often have large effects on the other people in our lives. This is not fully understood in the health-care system. Many male doctors may be interested in boiling everything down

*Engraving of a birth scene, Basel, Switzerland, 1500*
into its essence: Making a diagnosis, writing a prescription and feeling that he has completed his business. But this does not always fill women’s needs.

Appropriate doctor/patient communication is not just a nice frill. Studies have shown that high blood pressure and diabetes are better controlled when there is good communication between doctors and patients.

So reducing fragmented care by training one specialist to provide contextual, comprehensive primary care to 52% of the population—and an even larger proportion of users of the health-care system—may help hold health costs at a reasonable level while actually increasing quality of service.

And we do need to extend care to more women. According to the Commonwealth Fund’s Commission on Women’s Health, 36% of uninsured and 13% of insured women do not receive needed care. Because women are more likely than men to be poor and employed part-time or not at all, they are less likely to have access to needed medical care than men. Within the current paradigm, older women, poor women, women of color, disabled women, lesbians and bisexual women, in particular, very rarely receive the level of care appropriate to their needs. More than one-third of women do not seek or receive Pap smears, mammograms, pelvic exams, breast exams, or a complete physical. The rate is even higher for elderly women. Many women have significant risk factors for heart disease, lung cancer and osteoporosis, but no knowledge of risk reduction.

**OTI:** What do you say to the charge that a women’s health specialty is simply a marketing tool, or that it’s designed to solidify the power of women physicians?

**Eileen Hoffman:** Many of the “women’s centers” now being developed by hospitals are, indeed, just a marketing tool. Pink curtains in the dressing rooms may be the only significant change. The centers are created to do tests on women—bone scans, mammograms, and so on. Many centers do not offer comprehensive, integrated medical care. So I understand why people are wary.

Some critics are concerned that a specialty in women’s health will attract predominantly female providers, which will make it less prestigious and underpaid. It’s true that women doctors are leading the efforts in women’s health-care reform. This has led some male physicians to suggest that a specialty in women’s health may be just a ploy by female physicians to corner the market. And there are some male physicians who worry about their economic futures, now that women patients explicitly prefer women physicians—kind of arbitrary discrimination men have rarely experienced. But let’s be clear: Women’s health refers to the sex of the patient, not the sex of the physician.

The need for a specialty becomes clearer when you consider nutrition. No physician questions the value of good nutrition in maintaining maximum health and speeding recovery from medical conditions and surgical treatments. However, physicians cannot specialize in nutrition and most medical students have little or no nutritional training. The same fate awaits women’s health unless it becomes a specialty. Currently, students and physicians interested in women’s health must make a personal effort to learn about the field.

So it is not until women’s health is institutionalized and becomes a focus for research that substantive changes will be realized. I think the only way to assure that women receive medical care on par with men is the development of a formal interdisciplinary primary care specialty in women’s health. Training would include sex- and gender-specific information assuring that women’s health and illness is examined within the context of their complex hormonal and social milieux. Politically, it is from the power base of a specialty in women’s health that efforts to mainstream better treatment into the internist’s office and the gynecologist’s office are most likely to be successful.

A specialty in women’s health will be an explicit acknowledgement from the medical profession to women that it will no longer use men as the standard. I think it should be the next demand of the feminist movement in the health arena. This is an excellent way for medicine to regain the trust it has lost among women patients.
Feedback

“I thought that nothing you could show me about Iran could greatly shock me. Was I ever wrong!”

A REAL MINIMUM WAGE
Thank you for alerting readers to women’s stake in “welfare reform.” Lynn Phillips’ article, “Safety Net Performs Vanishing Act,” and her “Seven Step Program” (Fall 1994) were right on target. This program calls for a $1.10 hourly increase in the minimum wage. That would help. But three times that increase is needed to bring the minimum wage up to its relative worth in the 1930s.

I agree that it is criminal to talk of cutting women and children off welfare when the number of available jobs is millions less than the number of unemployed. The Guaranteed Annual Income demand is central to the Phillips program or any other rational solution. My family was on welfare during the 1930s depression. A guaranteed annual income would have spared us the indignity and insult of being on “welfare.”

The best way to reduce welfare is to provide real jobs. Bring back the WPA. Massive public works programs with jobs at union wages, combined with on-the-job training, would solve many problems beyond the reduction of welfare rolls. Included could be child care, housing for the homeless, and repair of our crumbling cities. Members of Congress, Matthew Martinez and Maxine Waters, have introduced such a bill, the Job Creation and Infrastructure Restoration Act of 1994, HR 4708. It asks for $250 billion in five years, an amount that would save money in the long run. The billions being spent to build new prisons would be better spent on preventing crime by creating jobs.

Beatrice Lumpkin
Chicago, IL

EAT YOUR WORDS!
In an otherwise fine article about hysterectomy, (“My Uterus, Myself,” Spring 1994), Elayne Clift describes her fears as being “terrified that I would go crazy, forget my children’s names, become suicidal, obese and/or dysfunctional.” Those of us who are fat must object to being included in such a list of awful fates. Sometimes feminists are the worst offenders when it comes to size acceptance issues, and it would help if Ms. Clift and the editors of On The Issues would read (better yet—publish!) some literature, so that they would understand that there is some disagreement about what causes people to be fat. “Obesity” implies that it is caused only by compulsive overeating.

Some of us are sane, happy, and competent, and many of us have children whose names we remember very well. We don’t belong on the “awful” list.

Lizbeth Binks
Baltimore, MD

BLAME CAPITALISM
I have read with interest the article on women and immigration, “Needed: A Feminist Immigration Policy,” by Eleanor Pam (Summer 1994) and was appalled at her ignorance and nationalism. Like her, I come from a Holocaust family, only mine was not so fortunate. The Depression-era anti-immigrant scapegoating worked to keep most of my family out of the U.S. As she should know, the Nazis were also anti-immigrant and the end result of all anti-immigrant policies are concentration camps. Haiti, for example, is one big death camp.

Our economic problems are not caused or aggravated by immigrants. They are caused by capitalism, the private profit system, which has enriched a few people greatly, and impoverished the rest of us to an even greater extent. We do not need “a coherent plan that serves all our national interests” but rather a world view that sees all of us as citizens of planet Earth, who have a right to seek work and personal safety wherever it may be, just as the multinational corporations have a right to set up shop wherever they wish.

As to the views of the reactionary Federation for American Immigration Reform and of the National Review, people are known by the company they keep. No feminist can keep company with these fascists.

Lee Heller
San Francisco, CA

I recommend that Ms. Heller read my article


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again. Her “world vision” has apparently narrowed her view and expanded her intolerance. Thinking feminists have the right to explore and test varying perspectives without being trashed, as we were in our early history, for not falling into step with ideologues and agendas that are not in our best interests. Like Diogenes with his lantern, Ms. Heller searches my words and finds, not pain, but heresy. It would have been closer to the mark if she had noticed an honest attempt to analyze and present alternative views, including her own. Eleanor Pam

TOYS ’R’ US

Ellen J. Reifler’s article, “Time Warp in the Toy Store” (Fall 1994) was right on target. My partner and I are raising our four-year-old daughter. She loves her dolls, dishes, and stuffed animals; she also loves the Power Rangers, hot wheels, trains, dinosaurs, bugs and pretend power tools. We do not gender-limit what she plays with or wears. We make a point of telling her how great she looks no matter what she is wearing, as long as it is clean and matching. We roughhouse with her, as well as cuddle.

Many adults and other kids call her a boy (although her hair is not short in the back and she wears earrings), but she quickly sets them straight. Amazingly, at her new school, instead of other kids influencing her, she is influencing them with her “gender doesn’t matter” ideas.

I think a good point was made about some parents being afraid of “influencing” a child to be gay. Since my partner and I are lesbians, that fear does not concern us. We simply want to raise a happy, healthy child who is comfortable with herself.

Unfortunately, for many young girls and boys, most parents still buy into the “girl versus boy” thing. At least some of us are working to change old attitudes and eventually these old ideas may be no more. Thanks for an excellent article and, as usual, a wonderfully, informative magazine.

Lindsey Holzapple
Wasco, CA

DANGEROUS ALLIANCES

I pride myself on being one of the few people in this tabloid-lobotomized age who is aware of the threat that radical Islamic fundamentalism represents to Western civilization. Therefore, I thought that nothing you could show me regarding Iran could greatly shock me (“Sexual Apartheid in Iran,” Fall 1994). Was I ever wrong!

These are people who call us decadent and immoral—who say they will cleanse the world of our evil. So far as I know, however, no religious leader in America (with the exception of the late David Koresh) writes “revelations” allowing for the sodomizing of children.

We are in more danger from the radical Islamic world today than at anytime since Ayatollah Khomeini was still alive.

Even the [Roman] Catholic Church has had a moral lapse dealing with the radical Islamic threat. In order to oppose any language about abortion at the U.N. Population and Development Conference in Cairo, the Church reached out for help to all Islamic nations. Both Iran and Libya were soon trumpeting their triumph over the Vatican coming to them seeking their help. Libya said that the Vatican would plead their case in regards to Libya’s implication in the Pan Am flight 103 bombing, which the Vatican immediately denied. Not surprisingly, Patrick Buchanan defends the Church’s blunder.

Trying to end Iran’s evil against its women is an admirable goal, but the threat here at home is just as real and just as imminent.

Wallington Simpson, Jr.
Montebello, NY

CONTACTING CAMP SISTER SPIRIT

Thank you for a superb women’s magazine. In the Fall 1994 issue I found the article on women’s status in Iran horrifying. Here in our country those brave women in Ovett, Mississippi face the same kind of mindset that creates such existence for women not only in Iran but around the globe (“Mississippi Feminists Under Attack”).

I wish you had given us some address for sending whatever means of support those of us out here feel inclined to give. The women of Camp Sister Spirit are creating a vital space for women—we must continue to empower them with our words, our wishes, and donations. Keep us informed and please tell us how to help our sister Amazons.

Charli Agiza
El Paso, TX

OVARIAN CANCER SCARE

In the otherwise valuable article by Beverly Zakarian (“Hidden Ovarian Cancer, Buried Issues,” Fall 1994) there is an ambiguity that may needlessly panic readers. Zakarian describes ascites as “a fluid that accumulates from the metabolism of a rapidly growing tumor.”

In my own experience, ascites are associated with ovarian cancer, so when I had ascites I also underwent numerous tests (blood tests, CAT scans, ultrasound...) that came up positive for ovarian cancer. But when I agreed to try a potent diuretic and the ascites disappeared rapidly, the blood tests came up negative for ovarian cancer. More than a year has passed with no return of the cancer scare.

I know that one experience does not disprove a statement that has been carefully researched, but perhaps I am not alone in this experience. I would amend Zakarian’s statement to read: “ascites, a fluid that accumulates in the body and may indicate metabolism of a rapidly growing tumor”—or something else that would indicate the (continued on page 58)
New from Common Courage Press

A scholar and radical feminist, Chesler does not equivocate.

—Library Journal

There is both honor and grace in these strong and beautiful essays. This isn’t feminism for cowards. Chesler stands up for real women in trouble, in pain, hurt by patriarchy’s cruel domination. These are intellectually exciting, truly visionary essays; and they may just remind those with feeble convictions and political amnesia that the women’s liberation movement is deep and wide, stubborn and brave, hates injustice, loves freedom, and ain’t dead yet.

—Andrea Dworkin

Phyllis Chesler has remarkable courage: these are brave and far seeing essays, brilliantly written and conceived. A heroic piece of insight.

—Kate Millett

“Heroism is the only alternative,” Phyllis Chesler writes in this important book. But despite our heroism, feminist gains are made only to be eroded in each generation. To prevent this constant whiplash, this constant erosion, we must take Dr. Chesler’s words with utmost seriousness and translate them into action. An essential text for our time.

—Erica Jong

Assesses sexual inequality in America and demands deep structural changes for the survival of all women and men... Chesler is on track in challenging women at a time when the feminist movement seems to have stalled... she sharply challenges the liberal thinking of gender neutrality... an ardent analysis of critical issues.

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UNFURLING A MAESTRAPERCE
Mythic and mortal female ancestors grace this San Francisco landmark. By Diana Scott

On first encounter, it makes you want to shout. The size, boldness, and richly vibrant color send out an elating visual energy. Four two-story heads representing mythic female ancestors of African, Native American, Asian, and European origin frame the building, gazing at each other from the corners. Their enormous scale (3/8 inches=1 foot) are part of what makes the mural so impressive.

"I like to paint big. There's something nice about the physicality of it. You move up and down and go back... You use all different size brushes," said muralist Meera Desai, twentysomething, the youngest of the seven muralists who were chosen competitively to receive the joint commission.

Veteran muralist Miranda Bergman, closer to 50, believes that, "a history of women of the world over time calls for monumental space. You have to speak in a loud voice to be heard over the din of TV and sexist billboards."

The board of directors of the Women's Building in San Francisco decided to commission the new mural two years ago, to celebrate the building's upcoming 15th anniversary. Founded in 1979 by the San Francisco Women's Centers, the Women's Building describes itself as the only women-owned and -operated advocacy, service, cultural, and social action women's center in the
country. According to executive director Shoshana Rosenberg, the building provides meeting space and such services as rape counseling, job training, and legal aid to over 1,000 women each week. It hosts aerobic and self-defense classes, shelters dozens of nascent projects, and is also home to the San Francisco National Organization for Women (NOW). This “room of our own community” is located in a four-story landmark building in San Francisco’s predominantly Hispanic Mission district.

The muralists chosen—with over 100 years of combined experience—seized the opportunity to reclaim women’s history with openly, powerful images from women’s culture that patriarchal societies have long suppressed. High above the doorway on the building’s entrance facade, a seated nude goddess with butterfly-wings sits, pregnant with girl-child. The goddess holds the sun on high: below her cascade streams of water, alive with fish. She’s the single fantasy goddess of the piece, created by Susan Kelk Cervantes to embody light and life-giving energy. “All women can learn to have control over their own destinies. She holds the sun [symbolizing] that potential,” says the artist.

The procreative goddess, culturally subversive in her unabashedly uneroticized corporality, provoked an early challenge: The San Francisco Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board found her out of character with the historic building facade and threatened to block municipal funding of the project. As repeated delays threatened the project’s implementation (dependent on much donated labor), “We called in the press,” says Cervantes. Opposition dissipated with the painstaking demonstration that paint could be removed.

The completed Maestrapeace, which covers two 65’ by 80’ window-punctuated walls of the building at 18th Street near Valencia, illustrates the contributions of women throughout history from all parts of the world and the healing power of women’s wisdom over time. The roughly 12,000 square foot (including gables), color-saturated painting rises to heights where only a few core muralists ventured, atop seven and a half levels of scaffolding. “It’s very big, it’s very public, it’s beautiful—a spectacular visual celebration,” said Tim Drescher, muralist, teacher, and author of San Francisco Murals: Community Creates Its Muse.

The “San Francisco seven” muralists worked collaboratively for nearly a year and a half along with about fifty volunteers to complete the two-part mural. They are carrying on a community-painting tradition that dates back to the New Deal era work of Diego Rivera and the thirty-odd Coit Tower muralists, four of whom were women. Women have been leaders in this city’s community-mural movement since the late 1960s, when mural-making...
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spilled outdoors from the visually vibrant interiors of the Haight to become politicized, and enjoyed a militant renaissance in the Mission district. The predominantly Latina group, Mujeres Muralistas (Women Muralists) took to the scaffolds in the early '70s demonstrating that women could become visible in their own image. (Cervantes and Alicia belonged to this group.) According to Bergman, “A strong women's movement here created a whole body of women raring to go,” coupled with good art school programs in the '60s and '70s for women of color, in which key muralists enrolled. “Murals are what made art and politics come together.”

The image of 1993 Nobel Laureate Rigoberta Menchu, herself an activist for indigenous people's rights, figures prominently in this latest, space-claiming vision. Menchu’s head towers on a gable above the adjacent rooftop, radiantly backlit with moonbeams which illuminate her flower-emblazoned Guatemalan blouse (huipil). An ornate Aztec speech glyph denoting “special speech” curls, snakelike, from her lips. In each of two, enormous outstretched hands she holds a goddess: on the left, bare-breasted Yemayah, the Yoruba goddess of rivers and the sea, source of earliest life; and on the right, similarly bare Coyoxiahqui, the Aztec moon goddess, breaking out of dismembered captivity. Goddesses proliferate: the elegant Guanyin, Chinese goddess of compassion; an African funerary mask that represents the spirit of the ancestors; the Indian goddess Dakini, in warrior stance, destroyer of divisive, egotistic ignorance. A Hopi rainbow goddess and ancient Slavic oracle doll round out the feminist pantheon.

Beneath Rigoberta's billowing skirt, larger-than-life mortal women are clustered, Georgia O'Keeffe and Joycelyn Elders among them, as well as a Latina healer and a traditional female African drummer. The shadow-spirit of poet Audre Lorde reaches high to inscribe the words “future generations.”

For the sake of inclusiveness, a single figure of the New Man (modeled after muralist Edythe Boone’s young son) is depicted next to the drummer.

Given the pitfalls of literal inclusiveness—“It obviously
wouldn’t work for artists to do two million portraits,” Bergman notes—along with the problems posed by the building’s many windows, some clever means of symbolic inclusiveness were needed. Artists devised two key ways to incorporate suggestions culled from hundreds of responses to a community survey which guided their work. One strategy was to incorporate hundreds of women’s names—historical, protean, and divine (including sponsors)—on color-layered bands in gold calligraphy. Another was to use cloth patterns (researched by muralists and painted predominantly by volunteers) to represent many different cultures.

Streams of boldly patterned cloth, from Africa, Asia, Latin America, India, the Pacific Islands, and Native America, represent women’s traditional forms of creativity and wealth. Cloth binds both sides of the painted narrative together and gives rhythm to the “flow lines,” blank ribbons on which over 450 women’s names are inscribed in gold (the sure-handed work of master calligrapher Olivia Quevedo, teacher, healer, and former nun).

“There are some fairly serious omissions, but you can’t say it all.” Bergman concedes. “I wish we had a tradeswoman in there.” A computer was added after an objection expressed at a major public design review, that technology had been omitted. “There are as many white women [proportionally to their numbers worldwide] as other ethnicities,” the artist adds, noting from experience that this question invariably arises when women of color are depicted in numbers.

Expressive of a more inclusive, 1990s feminism, the mural evokes a range of healing emotions, spiritual strengths, and proud actions. Below Rigoberta’s left hand, Lolita Lebron, the imprisoned Puerto Rican nationalist, reaches her arms wide in freedom. To her right, a Warsaw Ghetto resister signals halt to aggression. At street level, a joyful lesbian dances with her disabled, red-shoed partner; a nurturant tribal grandmother bathes a toddler; a sari-clad mother suckles an infant while painting. Beneath Rigoberta’s right hand, anti-apartheid activist Lilian Ngoya burns her passbook; and United Farm Workers founding organizer Jessica Govea invokes solidarity.

The name for the mural came from Rigoberta Menchu’s assistant, who called it a “maestrapeace.” “The semantic overturning of masterpiece grew on us,” says Bergman. The artists liked playfully changing a term traditionally applied to “white male European art,” with connotations of supremacy and submission, into a bilingual assertion of women’s worth and mission.

“Maestrapeace is easily one of the most significant mural projects in the history of the city,” says author Drescher, who has documented murals worldwide.

Muralist Bergman thinks of it as “a standing ovation for women’s liberation; a non-negotiable demand for respect; a healing waterfall of women’s love; a prayer for everybody in the world; a sweet subversive dream of peace.”

Diana Scott writes about architecture, public art, and ecologically-sound design.
genocide by gas inhalation. Hill had used the media to defend his position on the justification of murdering doctors who perform abortions. "We're saying 30 million children have died. Sometimes you have to use force to stop people from killing innocent children," he told Nightline on December 8, 1993. Two days after Gunn's murder, Hill called the Donahue show to set up an appearance to announce that Dr. Gunn deserved to die.

Another, maybe even more dangerous casualty of the relentless onslaught on abortion and abortion providers has been to increase a sense of ambivalence about abortion itself as a moral or necessary choice. Many people who describe themselves as politically pro-choice and are committed theoretically to the issue, often feel the need to say, "I don't like abortion, but..." while political leaders follow President Clinton's adage that he wants abortion to be "safe, legal, and rare."

This reluctant public and political engagement with the reality of abortion within women's lives has extended to the millions of women who have abortions, and to their lovers, families, and friends as well. Having made the difficult, profound, personal choice to have their abortion, feeling relieved and grateful for the service, most women prefer to integrate the experience privately, rather than cast it in political terms—understandable, but dangerous. Few become vocal supporters of the clinics that have helped them or return to work as clinic escorts. And we need their support. If the 30 million women who have had abortions since legalization—and their husbands, friends, lovers, and families—came forward to support choice and providers, what an army that would make.

Unappreciated and unrecognized, viewed as mavericks at best or pariahs at worst by establishment institutional medicine, abortion providers stand alone, apart and vulnerable. For historical and political reasons, most abortion services are performed at outpatient, freestanding facilities. Risking their lives on an almost daily basis, doctors and other health-care workers continue to provide services in a war zone where only one side is armed.

This both real and intellectual isolation played out most recently on the international front at the U.N. Population and Development Conference in Cairo. The Catholic Church, along with its situational fundamentalist allies, described the provision of birth control to women who need it as "biological determinism" and the promotion of women's equality as "cultural imperialism," while aggressively promoting their own brand of theocratic imperialism. Bending to this pressure, Vice President Al Gore assured the attendees at the conference in an August 25 press conference that "the United States has not sought, does not seek, and will not seek an international right to abortion"—underlying the U.S. government's belief that reproductive freedom is not viewed as a transcendent human or civil right, but merely as a local privilege that can be granted, limited, or denied according to national customs and laws. This may have been situational diplomatic maneuvering, but it reads as gender-specific noblesse oblige.

Back on the home front, Piso and Felisone continue to live happily in Queens and the FBI investigation continues with no published results so far. The federal marshals are down to guarding Choices seven hours, and patients come and go as they have for years.

I sit alone and think of Kawana Michele Ashley from Clearwater, Florida. Lacking romantic heroines, desperate and living very much in the present, Ms. Ashley felt forced to use a deadly weapon to defend herself against an invasion. Nineteen years old and 20 weeks pregnant, she couldn't raise the funds for an expensive, second-trimester abortion. No swords and daggers for Kawana. No metaphorical visions of Amazons in battle. No, she just picked up a pistol and shot the fetus in her uterus, causing a wound that eventually killed it after delivery by cesarean section. Because the fetus was considered developed enough to have lived outside the womb, Ms. Ashley was charged with manslaughter and is currently being held on $50,000 bail.

The casualties mount. Where are my troops?
tion facilities have been hit hard by anti-abortionists, beginning on Christmas day 1984 when several were bombed and severely damaged.

A press conference later that day by the Fightback Network exposed Burt's connections with Britton's and Barrett's killer. A September 1993 article in the anti-abortion magazine Life Advocate entitled "Florida Pro-Lifers L.D. Gunn's Replacement," reported that on Friday, August 6, 1993 John Burt, Floyd Murray, Don Gratton, and Paul Hill stalked and photographed Dr. Britton. (Murray and Gratton also appeared with Burt at his attempted press conference.) The article also documents that Burt produced a threatening "wanted" poster of Dr. Britton "making vital information about him available to the public," including his home and office addresses.

Pro-choice forces went on the offensive again at another press conference. This one was held in Tallahassee, the state capitol, on August 12 by Judy Madsen and Michele Herzog, co-founders of The True Majority. The group advertises itself as "a movement of Christian women with a pro-life vision...the true majority, who believe in the sanctity of human life, the sanctity of motherhood, and God's ordained design for mankind through the family..." Judy Madsen is the Madsen of the June 30, 1994 Supreme Court decision, Madsen v. Women's Health Center Inc. which upheld the establishment of "buffer zones" around clinics.

When the staff at the Feminist Women's Health Center in Tallahassee heard about plans for the press conference, they were outraged. Dr. Britton was their medical director; he had stepped forward to do abortions in Pensacola after Dr. Gunn's murder, in addition to carrying on his responsibilities in Tallahassee. The Feminist Women's Health Center and the local chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW) had organized a rally at the governor's mansion August 4 and held a wake for Dr. Britton at the clinic a few days later.

The Health Center relies on people in the community for clinic defense, and it has a reputation as a place where anti-abortionists can't get away with harassing women or doctors. Clinic director Brenda Joyner feels the antis can't be allowed to go unchallenged.

At the press conference, Madsen tried to distance herself from Paul Hill and claimed she didn't know Hill or John Burt. But to her surprise, Joyner and others spoke up and exposed her as having been arrested previously with John Burt's wife at a clinic. The press conference was turned upside down as reporters began asking Madsen to comment on what Joyner had said, and it received wide coverage in the Florida press.

Another feature of the Florida scene in the wake of these murders is the increasing public visibility of the Ku Klux Klan in defense of the killers.

On Saturday, August 20, about a dozenKKKers, including some Nazi skinheads, were protected by local police. Operation Rescue members, who last year purchased a house across from Aware Woman as a staging ground, were out earlier with their usual signs attacking women but ducked inside when protesters used chants and agitation to link them to the KKK. One unusually candid "Kluker" stated: "I believe everyone has a right to be born; we'll weed them through later." A message on the Klan hot line in September stated that Paul Hill is a "hero."

Many thousands of women and men must be mobilized to take action in support of the right of all women to safe and accessible abortions, to confront and stop the reactionaries, and to stand with those who are on the front lines. James Barrett and his wife June volunteered at the clinic after Dr. Gunn's murder in March 1993. It was their job to escort Dr. Britton, Dr. Gunn's replacement, from the airport to the clinic when he flew in each week to do abortions. June Barrett has continued to speak out courageously since the murder of her husband and Dr. Britton. She told a local Pensacola newspaper: "My husband died for the cause of a woman's right to choose," and said that she would continue to be a clinic escort. "I'm not going to sit back in a corner and not do anything. Somebody's got to stand."

Many people in Pensacola and elsewhere have echoed that sentiment. But to stand and do what is a big question. For many doctors who do abortions in Florida and elsewhere, bullet-proof vests and body armor are as necessary to their work today as surgical instruments. Many also have armed themselves for self-defense. They are on the front lines of this war every day, and the pro-choice movement cannot allow them to stand there alone.

Calls to rely on President Clinton, new laws, and the police, have only succeeded in disarming and demobilizing much of the pro-choice and women's movement. A few weeks before the murders, the clinic director at The Ladies Center had begged the FBI to pick up Hill, but the government refused to act. The police did nothing to stop Hill the day Britton and Barrett were killed. The clinic-defense movement is full of examples of laws and police deployments being used, instead, against those who militantly defend women's right to choose. Federal agencies will certainly seize on this opening to investigate and spy on pro-choice activists.

Immediately after the murders, some pro-choice forces called for "peace" and "reconciliation." Others said there can be no reconciliation as long as women and abortion providers are being harassed and assaulted outside clinics and at their homes. Having defended clinics for many years, I share that view. Calling for "peace" in the face of these continuing attacks is like asking women and providers to lay their heads quietly on the chopping block. ♥

Mary Lou Greenberg is a long-time revolutionary activist. She helped organize the first mass defense of abortion clinics against Operation Rescue in New York City in 1988 and has also defended clinics in Washington, D.C., Buffalo, and Minneapolis.
Choice Books

THE DEEP DIVIDE: WHY AMERICAN WOMEN RESIST EQUALITY
by Sherrye Henry
(Macmillan, N.Y.; $25 hardcover)

By Ruth Sidel


"In election after election," the radio interviewer and producer observes, "the women's vote' has failed to materialize for pro-female, pro-choice candidates who might have stormed the Establishment's walls." Working closely with political scientist and public opinion pollster Ethel Klein, Henry set out to find some answers by exploring the concerns of "mainstream" women (those who do not identify themselves as feminists) through a series of focus groups. Ten groups were formed around the country, each including ten women of various ages, occupations, and backgrounds, whose incomes ranged from $15,000 to $90,000. Eight groups consisted of white women, while one included Hispanic women from California, and another was comprised of African-American women from New York City. As a control group, ten white women—also married and single, with and without children—who considered themselves feminists, met to discuss the same issues that the other groups considered: the nature of equality, their conflicting roles as women, and their attitudes toward feminism and women in positions of power.

What Henry and her colleagues learned is important for all of us concerned with equality for women. The focus groups clearly indicated that while the role of wife is no longer as central as it once was in the self-definition of many American women, the role of mother remains of great importance. Henry writes that "children were so much a part of the discussion that whether [women] were talking about themselves, work, men, money, values, or political agendas—'having children' was a continuous refrain weaving through the music of their lives." While this sample of women did not identify as feminists and often criticized feminism, having flexible choices—such as childbearing; in moving in and out of the work force at various stages of life; in working part-time or full-time; in focusing on career, job, or homemaking—was a key priority. Consequently, in valuable segments of the book that explore the political implications of her research, Henry advises candidates that they will enlarge their base of support among women if they concentrate on issues such as child care and health care that support families, and on workplace issues.

However, while The Deep Divide analyzes the values, attitudes, and priorities of mainstream women, it frequently does so with simplistic overgeneralizations. For instance, Henry claims that "women do not want to look like, or act like, men," that "women do not understand other women's problems," and that "women feel independent in their bones." Which women? These women? All women? All the time? The book frequently has a highly critical, condescending tone. Henry states that American women are "avoiding the responsibility to make their own equality happen," that they "do not understand the larger social and economic factors that limit their lives," and that they "remain locked in the passive voice" and resist "their own political redemption." Moreover, "Hispanic women's relationships with their men" are "eye-popping," particularly when the husband is a "Victorian head-of-household."

Women are all-too-ofen berated for not thinking and acting in ways the author and her colleagues think are best for them without sufficient recognition of the nuances and complexities in modern women's lives. American women do not simply see themselves as females, but as members of racial, ethnic, and religious groups; as lovers, partners, daughters, wives, and mothers with multiple responsibilities and allegiances; and as workers ranging from upper-middle class professionals to the working and non-working poor—who consequently have to cope with diverse realities that foster very different, and sometimes competing, priorities.

Toward the end of her book, Henry does address conflicts within the women's movement and policy decisions made by dominant voices of second wave feminism that she feels have alienated significant segments of female voters. She states that focusing on "abortion rights, lesbian rights, and the Equal Rights Amendment—abstract concepts that separate women from men—turned off mainstream women" and, in fact, "were deliberately intended to do so." She urges future female political candidates to emphasize bread-and-butter issues that affect women's daily life and to "frame feminism to include justice for everyone..." The Deep Divide, despite its shortcomings, is essential reading for all those—women and men alike—who hope to have an impact on American policy-making, and who hope to encourage women to become
more active players in the political process. 

Ruth Sidel, professor of sociology at Hunter College, is the author of Women and Children Last and On Her Own. Her most recent book, Battling Bias: The Struggle for Identity and Community on College Campuses, was published by Viking in August.

ON THE ISSUES WINTER 1995

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Get excited, Get involved, Get ON THE ISSUES

The Year of the Woman that elected so many women to national, statewide, and city office in 1992 has given born-again feminist political junkies like me unprecedented numbers of women in public life whose stories we can follow and learn from. At last, some women in the news who are not rock singers, television and movie stars, or Bad Girls of the Moment like Tonya Harding, Marge Schott, Leona Helmsley, Lorena Bobbitt or even Deborah Norville (sure, you remember Deborah—the Today Show's anti-Pauley?).

And at last we can begin to read, and write, a lasting record of women and politics: narratives and histories and campaign how-to's. Hardcover books, meant to last. Scholarly books, not just campaign bios. You-can-buy-them-at-a-bookstore books that are about women as power players rather than as victims of the system (widows, welfare mothers, sexual harassed) or gadflies outside it (Joan of Arc or Rep. Pat Schroeder).

Of course, few pleasures are unmixed. Hurrah! we are coming of age as leaders of our country; but, oh dear! now we have to learn what this means and figure out how to do it. Hurrah! there are thrilling books; but, oh dear! some aren't.

Claytie and the Lady is one of the latter. With the same discomfort as when I voted against Liz Holtzman in New York's 1992 Democratic primary for the Senate, I have to say co-authors Sue Tolleson-Rinehart and Jeanie R. Stanley have taken on a deliciously promising subject—the subtitle is "Ann Richards, Gender and Politics in Texas"—and made it not just dry. It's granular.

Fortunately, some raisins are mixed in. The book comes alive when sources are quoted directly and extensively. This starts to happen in the middle of the book, once we get past Ma Ferguson. (Like Lurleen Wallace in 1960s Alabama, Miriam Ferguson, the first woman governor of Texas, was elected in 1924 as a surrogate for her husband—though unlike George Wallace, "Farmer Jim" Ferguson was impeached.)

Campaign veterans like Richards' finance director Jennifer Treat, fund-raiser Martha Smiley, and chief of staff Mary Beth Rogers talk well about gender issues and the technical problems in managing a candidate's image. Richards decided to become a slugger in what she called "a demolition derby" primary and a brutal campaign. She figured her opponent's wounds were even greater. This strategy worked for her, especially because Republican Clayton Williams added some self-inflicted wounds with stupid remarks about women and open ignorance about local issues. The material is rich, smart, important; nonetheless, I wish Doris Kearns Goodwin and Molly Ivins had written this book. Or Ann Richards herself.

Richards' bon mots are sprinkled throughout Claytie and the Lady, but not densely enough for me. In quota-bility, Ann Richards belongs on any-
Nine-term Congresswoman Lindy Boggs is another feminist—come—lately, and we’re glad to have her.

Lindy Boggs, a nine-term Congresswoman from Louisiana and widow of Representative Hale Boggs, can also wear that label, and proudly. She has written, with Kate Hatch, *Washington Through a Purple Veil: Memoirs of a Southern Woman*. Yes, that subtitle is a clue. She did spend her early childhood on a vast plantation, and at first I feared the anecdotal book might be *The Little Colonel Goes to Congress*. But I needn't have worried. Just as Shirley Temple—who played the Little Colonel in the movies as a curly-headed moppet prettily pouting and stamping her foot to get her way—grew up to become the distinguished U.S. ambassador to Czechoslovakia during the 1989 Velvet Revolution, so Marie Corinne Morrisson Claiborne—who was born to be pampered on a Mississippi River sugar plantation in Pointe Coupee, Louisiana, in 1916 and was called “Rolindy” by her baby nurse 'cause she took after her daddy Roland—matured into a valuable legislator. She established the Congressional Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families, provided a common-sense voice on the House Appropriations Committee, and was a vigorous member of the Congressional Caucus on Women’s Issues. As a superdelegate to the 1988 Democratic Convention, she was not bound to any candidate, but voted with delegates from her home district for Jesse Jackson. At the time, she was the only white member of Congress representing a district that had a majority of black voters.

Yes, Lindy Boggs is another feminist—come—lately, and we’re glad to have her. Like Ann Richards, she was a superwoman juggling motherhood, marriage, and political involvement. Again like Richards, she stepped fully into the political limelight as a candidate in her own right only after her children were well along and her first career, as wife, was over—in Boggs’ case because, tragically, her husband died in an air crash in Alaska. She and Richards had to learn to handle direct, rather than derivative, power and they were seasoned.
by life experiences, not feminist ideology. Yet when they were in position to make a real difference in other women's lives, they were ready.

Lindy Boggs adds a wonderful dimension to the concept of "transition- al" women leaders. Her two daughters, who inherited a zest for politics and public policy from both sets of genes, have fulfilled the sometimes shaky-seeming promise that all this role-model stuff will pay off someday with women who feel entitled to achievement, power, and glory. One daughter is the nationally-respected broadcast journalist, Cokie Roberts. Cokie's older sister, Barbara Boggs Sigmund, became the mayor of Princeton, New Jersey. In the 1980s, I was once on a Mother's Day television talk show with Barbara, who was wearing a black eyepatch because of the cancer that ultimately took her life. She had a picture of her mother and grandmother together, and when she spoke of what she learned from these fine women, she made it seem that the transition in just three generations from, say, Scarlett O'Hara through the Little Colonel-in-Congress to the first woman mayor of Princeton was the most logical progression in the world. And of course, I like to think it is.

Book still to be written: From Governor's Mansion to White House by EMILY's List. I can't wait to read that one.

Anne Mollegen Smith, a co-founder of The Getting-It Gazette, the hot-pink feminist tipsheet launched during the 1992 Democratic Convention, has also been editor-in-chief of Redbook, Working Woman, McCall's, and the short-lived tabloid newspaper, HER, New York.

**UNDER MY SKIN: VOLUME ONE OF MY AUTOBIOGRAPHY, TO 1949**
by Doris Lessing,
(HarperCollins, N.Y.; $25 hardcover)

By Jeanne Schinto

Until she was 30, her nickname was Tigger, after the character in Winnie the Pooh. It stuck through two marriages, so she was not only Tigger Taylor but Tigger Wisdom and Tigger Lessing. While a Communist Party member in the 1940s, she was known, preposterously, as Comrade Tigger—"the last fitting me even less than the others," writes Doris Lessing in her autobiography, the first installment of a two-volume retrospective called Under My Skin. This "Tigger" personality was "expected to be brash, jokey, clumsy, and always ready to be a good sport, that is, to laugh at herself, apologize, clown, confess inability. An extrovert. In that it was a protection for the person I really was...."

Why an autobiography? Don't we already have a clear idea of Lessing's character and moral commitments from her 37 other books—more than a shelf's worth of extraordinary rich-

**FOR THE YEAR OF THE WOMAN & POLITICS BOOKSHELF:**

| Barbara Boxer, with Nicole Boxer |
| Strangers in the Senate: Politics and the New Revolution of Women in America | (National Press Books, Bethesda, MD; $23.95 hardcover) |

| Doris Kearns Goodwin |
| No Ordinary Time: Franklin & Eleanor Roosevelt: The Homefront in World War II | (Simon & Schuster, NY; $30 hardcover) |

| Celia Morris |
| Storming the Statehouse: Running for Governor with Ann Richards and Dianne Feinstein | (Charles Scribner's Sons, NY; $25 hardcover) |

| Madeleine Kunin |
| Living a Political Life | (Knopf, NY; $25 hardcover) |
ness and range, including The Golden Notebook (1962), the early feminist manifesto (though it was never intended as such); the semi-autobiographical quintet, Children of Violence; and the five volumes of futuristic space fiction, Canopus in Argos: Archives. Lessing anticipates the question. Her reply: "Self-defense." In other words, "Biographies are being written." Now, at age 75, she wants to put forward her own record of her past. Curiously, though, she provides little guidance to those who say are trying to match up elements and themes in her fiction with scenes from her "real" life. Besides, she writes, "It was with Landlocked [1970] that I left [autobiographical fiction] behind." Instead, she offers a recreation of her early life in "an Africa that no longer exists."

Lessing's account begins with her birth in 1919 to British parents living in Persia, continues through her childhood and young adulthood on a farm in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), and ends in her thirtieth year, just after she sells The Grass Is Singing to a London publisher and departs for England. By relying on what she describes as "the strict use of memory," Lessing makes, amply clear, that she is no more beholden to the factual, empirical approach now than she was as a girl who instinctively "knew" the color blue or the shape of a mountain. Her account is a work of the imagination—a moving and imaginative chronicle of childhood—"that lengthy 'tactile and sensuous subjective experience,'" as Lessing calls it.

So how did Tigger evolve into "Dotis Lessing"? How did the "busy hardworking girl, ready to conform, anxious to be liked, wanting a best friend," become a visionary writer? A partial answer may lie in the enthusiasm that seem to lie off the pages of this memoir: the "dreariness and repetitiveness" reading and other intellectual exercises that are as compelling and vibrant now as they must have been some 50 years ago. Reading Tales From Shakespeare, T.H. Lawrence, biographies, and children's classics is likened to "sucking toffee." What surprises in this memoir is the loathing and pity she felt for the person who presided over this largely home-based educa-

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The Making of the She-Male
Janice G. Raymond
"Unhappiness, the 'transsexers'... are causing a disease... actually they engage in the... shamming and controlling of 'masculine' and feminizing behavior. Raymond's development and documentation of this thesis is robust. Her book is an important achievement." —Thomas Sewell, NY Times Book Review
1994 / 304 pp. / Paper, $17.95

SURVIVING THE DALKON SHIELD IUD
Women v. the Pharmaceutical Industry
Karen M. Hicks
In 1985, the A.H. Robins Co. filed for bankruptcy protection from the growing number of lawsuits involving the Dalkon Shield IUD it had manufactured in the early 1970s. This book chronicles the development of a contemporary women's social protest movement that arose in response to Robins's legal efforts to minimize its financial accountability to the women injured by its product. 1994 / 208 pp. / Paper, $18.85 / Cloth, $37.00

MAKING VIOLENCE SEXY
Feminist Views on Pornography
Diana E. H. Russell, Editor
This is a collection of feminist articles, including testimonials by survivors of pornography, that together make a convincing case for the view that pornography (as distinct from erotica) causes harm to women, including acts of violence. 1993 / 320 pp. / Paper, $19.95 / Cloth, $49.00
opportunity to render his precedent-setting decision, if, in my opinion; Sheila didn't have a male relative, Patrick Gill, who was a lawyer, and who was willing to “vouch” for her, find lawyers for her, and work with them on her behalf.

MONEY MONEY MONEY
Sheila also needed enough money (at least $150,000-$200,000 to start with), to pay attorneys John Patten, Allan Dershowitz, and her current lawyers: Mark F. Pomerantz and Warren L. Feldman of Rogers & Wells, and David T. Grudberg of Jacobs, Grudberg, Belt & Dow. Sheila joked that she was “probably the only woman who ever paid to get into Bedford Hills,” as most women get there with public defenders. She also said that Allan Dershowitz, who handled her first appeal, “had no interest in me” once she refused to go on network television with him. As a closeted lesbian and an (uncounseled) rape victim, deception was safe, exposure was dangerous. It would take Sheila 10 years before she'd be willing to talk to the media.

COMPETENT COUNSEL
Sheila needed lawyers who knew what they were doing and who would not jettison her after she exhausted her funds. Lawyers Pomerantz, Feldman and Grudberg were both willing and able to carry Sheila for more than seven years pro bono.

Most women prisoners cannot find good lawyers. Battered wife Jayne Stamen has not yet found one willing and able to represent her pro bono. One of her advocates, feminist Sharon Wyse, who attended her trial, notes that Jayne was only able to scrape together $10,000 for lawyer Adrien Di Luzio—a man whose “counsel,” in my view, was as “incompetent” as John Patten's, maybe more so.

Essentially, Jayne was forced to endure what Sheila had endured (including rape and gang rape)—but for nine years at the hands of her husband Jerry, who was 17 years her senior. Jayne was almost always drunk, her eyes were almost always bruised, her lip split, often a leg, or one of her arms, was in a cast or a sling. Everyone who saw her saw this—but no one stopped Jerry.

Jayne called the police many times; but they never arrested Jerry, according to the amicus brief filed by G. Kristian Miccio on behalf of Sanctuary for Families, National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women, The New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and other groups. According to Miccio, Jayne also tried to escape, many times; each time, Jerry tracked her down. She was desperate, had become an alcoholic, and was as crazed with terror as any long-term victim of torture would be. Jayne hired three men to “break her husband's legs.” Not to kill him. Jayne still “loved” him. She only wanted him to stop torturing her. She thought that perhaps, if he could feel what physical “pain” felt like, he'd stop beating her.

Domestic Violence, and other groups. According to Miccio, Jayne also tried to escape, many times; each time, Jerry tracked her down. She was desperate, had become an alcoholic, and was as crazed with terror as any long-term victim of torture would be. Jayne hired three men to “break her husband's legs.” Not to kill him. Jayne still “loved” him. She only wanted him to stop torturing her. She thought that perhaps, if he could feel what physical “pain” felt like, he'd stop beating her.

Di Luzio did put Jayne on the stand and did present her as “extremely emotionally disturbed.” Though Di Luzio did what Sheila's lawyer failed to do, there are many ways to be incompetent and no sure recipes for success. According to Wyse, Di Luzio did not prepare Jayne to testify. Jayne had never received counseling as an alcoholic or a battered woman. On the stand, she cursed, wept, and raged; what she said was often incomprehensible or inconsistent. Di Luzio was inconsistent too. Sometimes he told the jury that “she didn't mean to kill her husband” and other times that “she caused her husband's death.” He told the jury that Stamen's thinking was “distorted,” that
she was "non-functioning," "psychologically diseased," and a "zombie." Di Luzio "didn't seem to like his client, his heart wasn't in it," notes Wyse. "Di Luzio actually declined the judge's offer of a mistrial," reports David Satz, a feminist activist who also attended the trial. "He said there was no money for it!"

On March 21, 1988 Jayne Stamen was convicted and sentenced to eight to 25 years in jail. She has been in jail ever since. In a sense, Jayne has been a prisoner-of-war for 15 years; that's if you include her nine-year marriage, and I do.

WHITE MIDDLE-CLASS FRIENDS
Sheila Ryan DeLuca eventually found competent attorneys and a fair minded judge. She was a non-battered, law-abiding, educated, middle-class woman with a profession. She had friends who were similarly situated and therefore tended to remain alive and out of jail. Sheila's friends also had certain crucial middle-class "skills"—they were automatically "likable," credible, and they knew how to "network."

The loyalty of one such friend was crucial in keeping Sheila's spirits up. Carol Bozek was a childhood friend who "never gave up" on Sheila. For 10 long years, Bozek, and Toni Iovino, another loyal friend (who kept a room empty for Sheila and called it "Sheila's room") kept writing, calling, visiting, and sending packages. This helped Sheila always to remember who she was. Bozek also kept prodding others to visit and write, and apprising them of Sheila's current legal and psychological status.

Unlike Sheila, Jayne Stamen had few middle-class skills, and no middle-class friends or resources. Jayne was "just" a wife, and because she'd been battered for so long, she was fiercely isolated.

GOOD NETWORKING IN JAIL
Another factor in Sheila's favor was her ability to recover her mental health and to maintain an "acceptable" character in prison. She did not become hard, "crazy," or angry. She expressed remorse for having been forced to take a human life. She was a model prisoner; she knew she needed her guards, clergy, and the warden, as character witnesses in court proceedings and at parole hearings. She impressed these witnesses (and her own lawyers, too) as an easygoing, hardworking, repentant, docile, "likable," uncomplaining, unhardened, unembittered, non-political, non-troublemaking woman.

DOING TIME
Despite all of the above, Sheila had to spend more than 10 years in jail: penance, perhaps, for having killed a white man.

POLITICAL MOVEMENTS
Sheila has also benefited from the existence—and the continued existence—of the prisoners' rights/anti-death-penalty movement, and a continuing feminist movement which has educated judges, lawyers, juries, and the media about the nature and prevalence of violence against women and about the rights of convicted prisoners. Constitutional rights alone were not enough to free Sheila; such rights are not equally or automatically applied. Such rights are, shamefully, for sale in America. All things being equal, they often go to the highest white, male bidder.

Consider that in Jayne Stamen's case Judge Harrington refused to hear from any expert about battered woman's syndrome; and he refused to consider a justification (justified homicide) defense. According to Miccio, Judge Harrington said: "Because someone sits around and decides, gee, he's been threatening me for 10 years. One of these days he's going to shoot me; that does not automatically invoke a justification defense, for the rest of their lives... assuming that the victim was a horrendous person, does not give any one a license to kill that person."

We need to rewrite the rules. Although feminists and the media rallied behind Jayne Stamen's campaign for freedom, they've yet to succeed. According to Satz, media coverage may even have encouraged the judge to sentence her harshly. Because of new law-and-order legislation designed to keep those who have committed violent crimes in jail with no exceptions for battered women who kill, Jayne Stamen has not been allowed out on work release or temporary work release.

Sheila needed the eight separate keys I've described—plus a good dollop of luck—to "click" open her jail cell. In case all of the above failed to work for a permanent release, Sheila was prepared to "go public," in the hope that media visibility might then lead to executive clemency, or to legislative reform.

On the eve of Ward's decision, a woman whom Bozek had kept apprised of Sheila's plight came forward. The woman, Dr. Eleanor Pam, had the motivation, the compassion, the skills, and (through her husband) the right legal and political connections to organize a pro bono media campaign for Sheila. Media visibility can sometimes create a climate that may lead to executive clemency (although it never helped Jean Harris—who was freed only when Governor Cuomo thought she might die while undergoing heart surgery). Pam set to work, almost full time, a month before Ward rendered his decision, calling journalists, TV networks, politicians, Hollywood producers, and feminist activists—including myself and Kate Millett.

Good Samaritans like Pam may do something like this only once in a lifetime, and then only for someone with whom they have a personal connection. But every woman wrongfully imprisoned needs such a skilled and well-connected volunteer in her corner.

Pam's skills and connections might have accomplished nothing had Sheila herself not been willing to "go public." Media is tricky for a prisoner. Too much publicity can anger wardens, judges, and district attorneys (we're talking about a woman, not about O.J. Simpson). Just the "right" amount of media, in the right place, at the right time, might persuade the state not to reprosecute someone like Sheila, to let her go on the basis of "time served."

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Jeanne Adlerman
San Francisco, CA

OJ...
It was with a sinking heart that I read Andrea Peyser’s article on the deaths of Nicole Brown and Ronald Goldman. She used words that pornographers use to eroticize the suffering and death of women: "buckets of blood"; "he hacked bit ravishing wife to death." It was steamy and tawdry. He "married blondes." I guess Nicole isn’t a real person to Andrea, only blonde. I hope and pray that Nicole’s family and children never see what she has written; the callousness would break their hearts again. It was not Nicole’s fault that the media and tabloids have made millions of dollars from milking every drop of sensationalism and cruelty from her murder. Nicole’s and Ronald’s death were not a melodrama or a soap opera, but to them reality, terrifying, and forever.

Peyser also supports the myth that abused women see to blame for their plight. She says, "It’s sexist, but one must take into account that many women will not press charges." I could answer this charge but, after everything that has been learned about how all systems enforc women’s oppression, I believe her ignorance is willful.

Peyser’s self-righteous posture of media sensationalism rings hollow when you realize she works for a newspaper, the New York Post, which media sensationalism rings hollow. Andrea Peyser’s article on the deaths of Nicole Brown and Ronald Goldman. I would never see what she has written; the callousness would break their hearts again.

We need to rewrite the rules.

Editor-at-large Phyllis Chester, Ph.D. is the author of seven books, including Women and Madness, Mothers on Trial and the recently published Patriarchy: Notes of an Expert Witness.

Jayne Stamen, who can be contacted at #88-G-0213, Albion Correctional Facility, 3595 State School Road, Albion, NY 14411, has asked that interested readers write Governor Mario Cuomo (Executive Chamber, Capitol, Albany, NY. 12224) asking for clemency on her behalf. On the Issues would appreciate receiving copies of letters sent to Governor Cuomo on Stamen’s behalf.

NOT ANOTHER TATTTOP WOMAN

Believe socialists have always erred in thinking the women attached to wealthy and powerful men are wealthy and powerful themselves. This has been proven wrong many times, but this case illuminates the fact that all systems and institutions of government conspire to oppose women! All of this is destructive to the fundamental ethic of sisterhood and cooperation. Because you did not love us care for Nicole or abused women, you have diminished all of us, including yourself!

Natasha Barker
Fountain Valley, CA

IGNORED!
The Fall 1994 issue of On the Issues, was my first reading of your magazine. What a great magazine, it discussed the problems of women in Russia, Iran, interviews with and on black men, even toys and Roseanne. You covered it all.

So, I guess you feminists agree that your domestics, babysisters, office employees, home attendants, and other black women who are struggling today un pitiful handouts from a society that perpetually ignores black women who, at retirement age, are taking care of white mothers and fathers of equal age; who have helped to build this country; who nurse and feed its white children as well as their own; who can prevent your homes and your dinners and who, when shunned by the world should even go unmentioned in your fall publication.

Turn around. Open your eyes. Do you see us? We’re the ones you’re trying to pretend aren’t there. If you’re writing about feminism shouldn’t you include every woman?

Unnoticed & Unmentioned,
A Black Woman, Queens, NY

We plead not guilty! While we don’t use quotas, or check each issue to make sure women of every racial, ethnic, and religious group are mentioned, we do strive to be inclusive in an open-hearted, non-mechanical way. I call your attention to some recent major articles that focused exclusively on black women: "A Simple Human Right: The History of Black Women and Abortion," by Loretta Ross (Spring 1994), "What Women Can Learn From Malcolm X," by Flo Kennedy and Irene Davall (Summer 1993) and "Living in the Trenches: A Celebration of Carol," by Helen M. Stummer (Fall 1993).

Roni Sandroff, Editor
RAPPING (continued from page 10)

easy to get even one or two of the goodies feminism taught us to shoot for and believe we deserved—money, power, love, happy marriage, even an occasional hot or otherwise satisfying relationship with a nice, decent attractive man (should we be so oriented). Instead, most of us have had to settle for and juggle around a lot less in the way of just desserts. In fact, most of us—especially the vast majority who are neither white, nor middle class, nor straight—have found ourselves with a lot more in common with Norma McCorvey than Hillary Clinton.

But having watched, studied, and assessed the First Lady's career as the first publicly annotated recipient of the Having It All and Then Some Award, I must confess that I don't feel at all badly about that fact. Norma McCorvey, after all, did something truly heroic that made the world a better place for all American women. And she could write her own life story in her own words and say so, whether Susan Cheever and The New York Times like it or not. Hillary Clinton, on the other hand, has, it seems, mortgaged her soul to the spin doctors and gridlock meisters for the questionable prize of living in the White House with a man whose morals and politics she is forced not only to put up with, but support and defend.

She could, interestingly enough, have kept her day job and still been one of the most powerful and successful attorneys in America. She even could have chosen to take another independent position in Washington (say, working for Marian Wright Edelman's Children's Defense Fund) and been in a position to really fight for something worthwhile; something that would help women and children, even when her husband's agenda opposed such progressive goals and policies. That, to me, would have been, if not heroic, certainly admirable and dignified—two words I have a harder and harder time mustering for her these days. But then of course she had to give up the Faustian female dream of Having It All in twentieth-century America, a dream Norma McCorvey never had the luxury of contemplating.

Elayne Rapping's latest book is Media- tions: Forays into the Culture and Gender Wars.
The concern last spring about penises, both secreted and saved, reminded me of my long-held belief that male urination has not kept pace with 20th-century plumbing. Whereas standing may have been sensible in evolutionary terms for quick-release moments (like chasing prey across the plains) or for marking territory in prehistoric times, modern porcelain conveniences cannot accommodate the carelessness of males who stand while urinating. Any woman who has lived with males knows that most do not confine their urine to the bowl, and someone—usually a woman—ends up mopping the mess.

Why do we train boys to urinate in a standing position when, even as adults, they cannot perform the function with precision? Though some males have been taught by the women in their lives to clean up after themselves, they’re a distinct minority. Most residential toilets used by boys or men are cleaned by their mothers, female partners, sisters, or housekeepers.

Something is gravely wrong with this picture. And so, for approximately 25 years, I’ve nudged, cajoled, and rallied friends and relatives to teach their boys to sit while peeing.

I began contemplating sedentary urination when Nixon was president. A lesbian friend was toilet training her two-year-old son. Recalling countless bespattered toilet seats he had forgotten to raise, I suggested that life might be more pleasant all around if her child simply sat down, thereby confining his output to the bowl. She marveled at the novelty of the idea, but worried that her child would have yet another problem “fitting in” with other boys—since he was already destined to confront homophobia at school.

A friend of mine knows a woman who stands—straddling and facing the john—when she pees. Apparently, she adopted this stance as a three-year-old after her grandfather told her that “the crabs” would bite her tushy if she sat down. With scanty formal evidence to go on, I suspect she may have even greater difficulty confining her urine to the bowl than standing males do. Unfortunately, she was unavailable for comment. Luckily, she’s an anomaly.

To check the heartbeat of America on the subject of male urination, I surveyed a few men who stand, a few who sit. Bill, a white, 44-year-old construction worker who stands, complained about using stalls when the urinals are full (in theaters, for example) because “most guys pee all over the place...they never hit the toilet...they even miss the urinal.”

Unlike their peers, he and his brother long ago learned to clean up after themselves, including the toilet, since their mother worked outside the home.

Fred, a 41-year-old chemist, objected to my suggestion that public urinals simply be dismantled. They are, he reported, more convenient. But he acknowledged that “The overall issue is the lack of societal pressure on males to clean up after ourselves. An emphasis on general fastidiousness would eliminate the controversy altogether and would have a carryover impact—if you clean the toilet/floor after urinating, you are more likely to clean the sink after shaving, or clean dishes after eating.” Helpfully, he pointed out that toilets need to be oval and elongated if men are to sit while urinating, in order to allow for manual direction of the flow.

“Sitting is simply more comfortable,” cheered Michael, a self-described “fanatically tidy gay man.” He noted that it’s much easier to contain the flow while seated, especially with a morning erection. “It’s better all around. You don’t have to clean up pubic hair that falls outside the toilet, your bathroom doesn’t smell, and your pants don’t get wet because it shakes off better.” Meanwhile, Alex, a 22-year-old Chinese-Philippino-Mexican American, switched to sedentary urination several years ago for religious reasons. “One of the Buddhist teachings is that women live longer because they sit down to pee,” he explained. “I have been sitting ever since I learned that. It really is more peaceful.”

Exceeding the first couple examples, America has clearly reached a consensus: Sedentary urination is cleaner, neater, and more peaceful. Yet challenging the status quo is daunting to many men (and many parents), raising concerns about conformity, masculinity, and patriotism. Standing with feet placed a shoulder’s width apart is more soldierly, more aggressive, more determined. Sitting is more passive: The flanks are exposed.

My cousin Aaron is embarrassed that an episode of urethritis 15 years ago forced him to sit to direct his stream more effectively. He taught his son to stand. Why? “Because that is what the other kids do.” But when I asked 4-year-old Nathan about his preferred mode of urinating, he informed me that he was comfortable sitting or standing. “But I want to tell you a secret,” he said in a hushed tone. “Sometimes when nobody is around I stand on the toilet and pee into the sink.”

Dr. Gartrell, editor of the recently published book, Bringing Ethics Alive, is associate clinical professor of psychiatry, University of California at San Francisco.
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