



NEWSLETTER

of the

FEMINIST CAUCUS

of the American Humanist Association

SEPTEMBER 2007

FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

As many of you know, the Feminist Caucus has a new co-chair. It has been a long-standing FC tradition to have co-chairs, and at this year's 66th Annual American Humanist Association Conference Sena Havasy accepted the position. We are very happy to have Sena, and she and I are beginning to share the responsibilities of leading the Feminist Caucus. You can read her Feminist Humanist Bio in this newsletter.

At the Feminist Caucus Strategy Session this year we decided that the FC needed a Mission Statement and that we should develop a Strategic Plan. I was told that the FC has not had a mission statement in the past, so we have drafted a sample statement:

Feminist Caucus Mission Statement

The mission of the Feminist Caucus of the American Humanist Association is twofold. First, the Feminist Caucus works within the American Humanist Association to help it to fulfill its goal of Humanism. Second, the Feminist Caucus works externally to promote feminist Humanist ideals in our greater society and culture. We accomplish both of these by engaging with AHA members, activists, and organizations in ways that help to promote a full humanity for women, acknowledging the necessity of this, as patriarchal culture stands in opposition to women's humanity.

We'd love to hear our member's comments on our sample statement! Please e-mail your comments and advice to femcaucus@americanhumanist.org

Feminist Caucus Strategic Plan

In order to make the Feminist Caucus a more vital and active participant in the American Humanist Association, we have decided to create a strategic plan. The current objectives represent an evolving plan that will be responsive to both the direction in which members desire to see the FC moving and the needs of the FC as they emerge and advance.

We would like to ask that FC members select the four ob-

jectives that you see as most vital and e-mail your selections to femcaucus@americanhumanist.org. All you have to do is title your message "FC Strategy Plan" and then list the numbers that correspond to the objectives you choose. Sena and I will tally your responses to see which are the most important to you and these are what the FC will work hardest to achieve.

1. The FC will sponsor 2-3 workshops at each AHA annual conference, including the annual Strategy Session/Business Meeting. These workshops will reflect the feminist Humanist values of the FC membership and the content will be on topical issues relevant to feminist Humanist issues.

2. The FC will work with the AHA board to develop issue areas where the FC can be of value to the AHA in its efforts to promote Humanism.

3. The FC will hold 2 online bookreads per year in order to create knowledge within the FC and the AHA on certain issues and in order to help create community within the FC members.

4. The FC, in the person of either of its co-chairs, will write a submission for each issue of *Free Mind* in order to inform the AHA membership of FC activities.

5. The FC will work with other feminist organizations such as NOW, the Feminist Majority Foundation, NARAL, SisterSong, the World March of Women, and others to advance our feminism and our sisterhood nationally and globally.

6. The FC will increase its internet visibility by expanding its link from the AHA website and by creating its own website.

7. The FC will increase its visibility and membership amongst Humanists by initiating efforts with AHA chapter affiliates.

HUMANIST HEROINES

2005 Amy Goodman 2004 Aileen Hernandez 2003 Kate Michelman 2002 Samantha Smoot 2001 Diana Russell 2000 Molly MacGregor 1999 Lorrie Williams

1998 Loretta F. Ross 1997 Dottie Lamm 1996 Annette Van Howe 1995 Rosemary Matson 1994 Kristin Lems 1993 Barbara G. Walker

1992 Sally Roesch Wagner 1991 Sherry Matulis 1990 Carolyn McDade 1989 Ann Simonton 1988 Cleo Kocol 1987 Fran Hosken

1986 Patricia Maginnis 1986 Ben Munson, MD 1985 Anne Nicol Gaylor 1984 Tish Sommers 1983 Christine Craft 1982 Sonia Johnson

Patricia K. Willis and Sena Havasy, CO-CHAIRS - Patricia K. Willis, NEWSLETTER EDITOR



FC NOTES

Robin Morgan is the AHA's Humanist Heroine 2007. What a fantastic person and feminist! Robin gave a strong feminist speech at her award ceremony, asking the question, "Why is a Feminist Caucus necessary at the American Humanist Association?" As we all know, patriarchal beliefs and practices have a way of insinuating themselves into any organization that is not specifically created as a feminist organization, and the AHA has had to acknowledge this and work to overcome it. Robin's HH award dinner was particularly impressive as we had a total of four Humanist Heroines, including herself, sitting at her table: Cleo Kocol, HH 1988 and founder and former Chair of the FC; Rosemary Matson, HH 1995 and former FC Chair; and Lorrie Williams, HH 1999. It was a fantastic sight to see four Humanist Heroines together! Unfortunately, there was not enough time after Robin's talk for her to take questions and comments—something she says she loves to do—but we have made a special effort to rectify this: you will be able to read a follow-up interview with Robin in the next issue of the *Humanist*.

The FC held a raffle of three of Robin's books at the conference: *Demon Lover: The Roots of Terrorism*; *The Burning Time* (concerning the beginning of the witch hunts in 14th century Ireland); and her newest book, *Fighting Words*, which takes on Christian fundamentalists. The raffle was a tremendous success primarily due to our wonderful HH Lorrie Williams, who sold almost \$500 worth of tickets. But we don't want to neglect the others who also sold tickets, bringing the total to \$550 for the FC: we extend many thank you's to those people as well. We are going to come up with another idea when we award our 2008 Humanist Heroine Ellie Smeal, who leads the Feminist Majority Foundation and has been a vital voice of the Second Wave Feminist Movement in the U.S. since the 1960s.

The Personal is Political

Dancing the Right Tune

With a musical staff of
god-speak moves, they
whirl society in woman-
hating ways. Doe see

doe, promenade, and click
heels in parson-praying
time. Dance all rights away
with the politics of god.

We can disco in their
lock-step rhythm or two-
step with reason and
tango with truth. If we

don't waltz reality their
fox-trot misogyny will
prevail and humanism will
be as out-of-date as a minuet.

Cleo Fellers Kocol, 1988 Humanist Heroine
August 11, 2007

FEMINIST HUMANIST BIO Sena Havasy

I was born in a small town in Maine during the white-glove-and-hat-for-church days of the 1940s and 1950s. Mom was Catholic and we went to mass every Sunday, the priest and three nuns collecting us on the way.

I learned about misogyny from my family, where my younger brother was king. As the older girl (by one year!), it was my job to see that he behaved and I who took the blame if he didn't. I had no real authority and couldn't physically make him do anything—though I tried very hard. I remember an incident when I was three or four years old. We were strictly forbidden to cross the street in front of our house. But across the street there were workmen eating their lunch who urged my brother to join them, which he did. He got an apple, many accolades from them, and returned gloating. I became extremely frustrated when my mother didn't even scold him. His male privilege served him well and it also pointed out to me the subservient position I was being socialized into. My brother already knew, on an operational level, that as a boy he was superior to me as a girl, even though I was older: I was supposed to have stopped him but his male privilege rendered me powerless to do so. Our lives went on this way until I graduated high school and left home.

In New York I belonged to a group led by former members of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, volunteers who served in the Spanish Civil War on the side of the Spanish Republicans. They were an idealistic group and some seemed to accept me without prejudice. I kept the younger ones than myself from using sexism against me by being bolder than they (men seem to understand bold). For example, I once commandeered a car from a young black member to pick up a young woman who was having an abortion. When we got there and he discovered, to his great surprise, that she was black, I had a partisan for life!

Some years later, I moved to California with my new husband. Those were the days of the Free University where everyone taught about what they knew and it was all free. At a bird watching class I met a soul mate, another Capricorn. She was an energetic and talented feminist who became and inspiration to me, and a dear friend.

I started a communal house called Windermere House. I wanted my son to have adult males to relate to but I found after living in the house that men were not very interested in children who either weren't their own or were the children of a woman who wasn't a potential conquest, although they were nice enough to him in an abstract way.

I moved to Albion, CA where I found myself pressed into service as a midwife due to the fact that no real ones were available. I studied with an older midwife, along with another member of the counter culture community, and gloried in feeling useful and close to the earth! At each of three fall County Women's Festivals I was privileged to deliver a baby in the redwoods surrounded by a circle of loving women.

I managed a cooperative craft store in Little River that led to my envisioning a business of my own, Rising Moon Designs. I returned to the San Francisco Bay Area in pursuit of that goal. I started outfitting women in T-shirts with the slogan "Ladies Sewing Circle and Terrorists" as a joke (this has occasionally led to problems whereupon women promptly react with indignation!). The slogan has been around since 1979. It was advertised in every issue of *Ms.* magazine until they stopped taking ads, and it has been proudly worn by countless women in many of the marches in Washington, DC and other places.

In 1990 I met an amazing woman at a feminist consciousness-raising group. I discovered that she was a member of the Humanist Community of Silicon Valley, and I started to attend the meetings. This woman was truly inspiring, as she conducted board and planning meetings in front of a roomful of men, something women of my generation were rarely allowed to do! I was encouraged by seeing a woman in a position of respect and authority, and so ran for the board myself and was on it for several years. I am currently chair of the Membership Committee and I schedule the monthly

potlucks and seasonal celebrations. I am a certified Humanist minister and I perform Humanist weddings. I also take most of the pictures for our chapter newsletter.

In 1992 Alex Havasy-Social Action Chair and all around good guy—and I were married in Arizona at the annual American Humanist Association conference by that same impressive woman who had first inspired me toward Humanism and feminism within it!

I am thrilled to have recently been invited to join Pat Willis as co-chair of the Feminist Caucus of the AHA and I look forward to getting to know people in a different capacity than here-to-for!

FEMINIST HUMANIST BIO

Alex McNeill

My Life as a Feminist/Humanist

I am a twenty-year old independent, free-thinking woman. I am a Political Science major with a minor in Women's Studies at Slippery Rock University in Pennsylvania. I am also a political junkie and president of my school's College Democrats; I have worked on six different campaigns, most recently that of Congressman Jason Altmire (PA 04). At the time that I am writing this biography, I am in the last few weeks of my internship at Congressman Altmire's Washington, D.C. office. This past year, I was fortunate enough to attend both the NEW Leadership and Winning Edge Candidate Trainings sponsored by Pennsylvania Center for Women, Politics and Public Policy at Chatham University. Through the Girl Scouts, of which I am still a member, I was also able to attend the Pennsylvania Governor's Conference for Women twice.

I was raised Presbyterian by two parents who were always open to new ideas. My mother, raised as a Lutheran, converted to Judaism and is now Presbyterian. My father, a Presbyterian for his entire life, was resolute in never forcing any kind of religion on me. Growing up with parents like that taught me to be open to new religions as well. When I first went to college, I found the Presbyterian churches far too conservative for me. Through an assignment about religion

RAISE YOUR VOICE!

Rant & Reason

Humanist perspectives on breaking news and politics

JOIN THE DIALOGUE!

Check out the AHA's new blog, **RANT & REASON**, providing Humanist perspectives on breaking news and politics.

Log on at BLOG.THEHUMANIST.ORG and raise your Humanist voice!

BE HEARD!

in a Political Science class, I began to learn about Unitarian Universalism. I started attending the U.U. Church at school and it was that experience that allowed me to find Humanism.

I have been a feminist all of my life. I was an only child and my parents are both feminists. However, it was not until I took a Women's Studies class that I found out how feminist I really was. I have participated in the Vagina Monologues (I was the Happy Fact and the Not So Happy Fact, for those who are familiar with Eve Ensler's show). I was one of the early members to the Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance (FMLA) at our school (a college group connected to the Feminist Majority Foundation). Through the FMLA, myself and two other members hung approximately 700 hangers with quotes and statistics to commemorate *Roe v. Wade*. We also held a "Feminist Free Speech Day" in the middle of our university, complete with picnic tables to stand on, blow horns, and microphones. I have just finished my Women's Studies internship. I am a Girl Scout and work at a G.S. summer camp each year. I decided to write a badge about the history of the Women's Movement and Feminism. It was a great experience in which I was able to talk to the girls about what happened, what is happening, and what they can do. The girls responded very well to it, and at the end of each week I held a Jeopardy review game.

The simple fact is that feminism and humanism are closely related. As Gloria Steinem once said, "When we speak of equality, of women and men, of Blacks and Whites, of all the world's people, we are talking about humanism."



Feminist Funnies

The Mother Superior's Dying Wish

The old Mother Superior lay dying in the hospital. For

years she had faithfully served the poor and the destitute of the nation's capital. She motioned for one of her novitiates to come near. "Yes, Mother Superior?" asked the novice.

"I would really like to see George W. Bush and Dick Cheney before I die," whispered the Mother Superior.

"I'll see what I can do, Mother Superior," replied the novice, perplexed.

So the novice sent the request to the White House and waited for a response. Soon the word arrived: Bush and Cheney would come to visit the Mother Superior on her deathbed. As they helicoptered to the convent, Cheney commented to Bush, "I don't know why the old nun wants to see us, but it will certainly help our images with Catholics. And maybe women too."

Bush couldn't help but agree, and said, "Uh, yeah sure, Dick."

When they arrived at the Mother Superior's room the dying nun took Bush's hand in her right hand and Cheney's hand in her left. There was silence and a pursed look of serenity on the Mother Superior's face as she lay there gazing at them both. Finally Bush spoke. "Uhm, ma'am, could I ask you a question? Of all the people you could've chosen, why did you want me and Dick to be with you when you die?"

The Mother Superior slowly and carefully replied, "I have always tried to pattern my life after our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

"Amen" said Bush.

"Amen" choked Cheney.

The Mother Superior continued... "He died between two thieves. I would like to do the same."

Thank you for supporting The Feminist Caucus!

Dues : \$15 individual; \$25 chapter

Enclosed is _____

Enclosed is an extra donation of _____

Name _____

Street _____

City/State/Zip _____

E-mail _____



Send to: The American Humanist Association - Feminist Caucus - 1777 T Street NW - Washington, DC 20009-7125
 T. : 800.837.3792 - F.: 202.238.9003 e-mail: FemCaucus@AmericanHumanist.org