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AHA FEMINIST CAUCUS



NEWSLETTER OF THE FEMINIST CAUCUS OF THE AMERICAN HUMANIST ASSOCIATION

Lorrie Williams Humanist Heroine 1999

IN THIS ISSUE

Special Section:
**The Assault Against
Abortion Rights**
Pages 4–16

- 2 **Roster of Awardees**
- 3 **Humanist Heroine
Scrapbook**
- 5 **NAF Report**
- 7 **NARAL Legislative
Update**
- 9 **David Gunn, Jr.**
- 10 **Speech by
Gloria Steinem**
- 15 **Medical Crisis**
- 13 **Religious War
Against Women**
- 18 **“CHES Is Not A
Game”**
- 19 **Meet CHES
Students**
- 20 **Join or
Renew Now!**

Honored by the Feminist Caucus at this year’s annual conference of the American Humanist Association on June 4–6, 1999, in Columbus, Ohio, will be a Canadian teacher who founded a unique charitable society.

Lorrie Williams, of British Columbia, is president of the Canadian Harambee Education Society, which has sponsored educations for hundreds of high school girls in East Africa (see her article “CHES Is Not A Game,” p. 18). The word “Harambee” is Swahili for “Pull Together.”

“CHES’s very existence gives the girls in those areas status. The full impact of CHES is not only monetary but also social. Young, poor, rural girls have a champion—CHES,” says Lorrie.

The group pays 85% of the school fees to ensure that girls have a chance to attend high school, which usually entails boarding away from home.

Lorrie, who retired last year after 30 years’ work as a teacher, founded the charity after working as a headmistress at a school in Kenya in the early eighties, where one of her duties was to expel students who could not pay their fees.

“Kids would try to sneak back into class. Kids will do anything to stay in school. They’ll steal. They will even turn to prostitution. An education is their only ticket



Lorrie Williams

out—and they know it.”

To help these students she incorporated CHES in 1985, and since that time the group has subsidized educations for more than 400 graduating students without the means to pay for educations themselves. Many have gone on to professional careers in nursing and engineering.

Currently, CHES helps 200 girls a year

Continued on page 2

Lorrie Williams: Humanist Heroine

Continued from front page

attend schools in Kenya and Tanzania. In addition to the scholarships, CHES has built a girls' dormitory, a science lab, classrooms and water towers.

Lorrie runs CHES from her home in British Columbia: "It has been a bit of an uphill battle to find and keep sponsors," recruit, and publicize the program, she says.

Lorrie was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, graduated from high school in British Columbia, earned her B.A. in English and History at the University of British Columbia, 1966, and her Master of Education (Administration) at the University of Western Washington, 1982.

She has taught all grades, been a former vice principal, and most recently worked at the Pediatrics Unit of the Royal Columbian Hospital in a job she called "Phonics to Physics," since the children's ages and educational needs were so varied.

She has also instructed teachers in Ethiopia and Thailand through Project Overseas, sponsored by the Canadian Teachers' Federation.

A retrospective piece, "A World of Giving," appeared in her local newspaper following her retirement last June. The article opened with an anecdote about how Lorrie first came to be hired 30 years ago to teach in the New Westminster district in British Columbia. The assistant superintendent of schools found Lorrie's application irresistible: it was mailed from Thailand with a return address in Istanbul! The

superintendent decided this was a teacher going somewhere.

Lorrie has been an active union member as well as a promoter of women's rights, mingling the two interests in developing workshops for teachers on such subjects as gender equity and sexual harassment. She attended the 1985 United Nations Conference on Women in Nairobi with "movers and shakers of the women of the world," as well as the 1995 Beijing conference, where she presented a workshop on the "Education of Girls in East Africa."

Lorrie has the distinction of being the first woman member and President of the Kiwanis Club of New Westminster, B.C. She is a member of the BC Sceptics and MENSA, and has been a delegate to a committee on the Status of Women in Ottawa. Her diverse hobbies include stained glass art, designing International Women's Day T-shirts, playing guitar, and singing in retirement homes.

Incidentally, she is a member of a singing group called "Raging Grannies," who specialize in singing protest songs at demonstrations. The AHA conference audience will be treated to a sample song, as well as slides and a presentation by Lorrie about the work of CHES.

For last-minute details on registering for the June conference, phone the AHA at 1-800-743-6646.

How To Help CHES

For \$35 a year, you can help ensure that a young woman in East Africa has the chance to attend high school. Send your donation to CHES (Canadian Harambee Education Society), 446 Kelly St., New Westminster BC V3L 3T9 Canada. For more information phone Lorrie Williams at (604)521-3416; fax (604)525-6959.

See pages 18 & 19 for more on CHES and the young women it sponsors

AHA Humanist Heroine Recipients

Lorrie Williams 1999

Loretta J. Ross 1998

Dottie Lamm 1997

Annette Van Howe 1996

Rosemary Matson 1995

Kristin Lems 1994

Barbara G. Walker 1993

Sally Roesch Wagner 1992

Sherry Matulis 1991

Carolyn McDade 1990

Ann Simonton 1989

Cleo Kocol 1988

Fran Hosken 1987

Patricia Maginnis 1986

Ben Munson, M.D. 1986

Anne Nicol Gaylor 1985

Tish Sommers 1984

Christine Craft 1983

Sonia Johnson 1982

•
Founded by
Gina Allen 1977

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Meg Bowman (emerita)

Annie Laurie Gaylor

Trudie Hays

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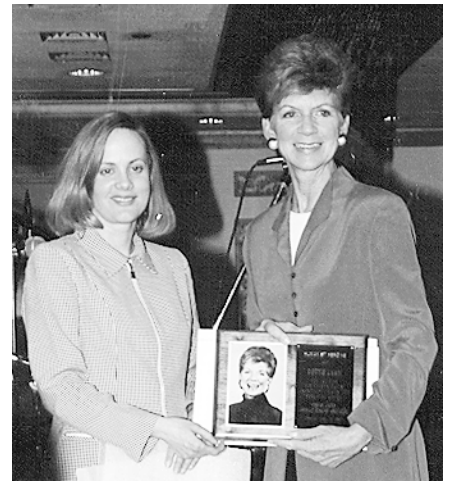
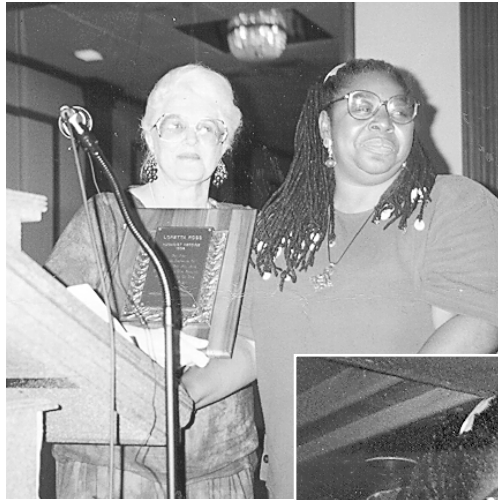
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Feminist Caucus Coordinators Annie Laurie Gaylor, Trudie Hays and Meg Bowman

Humanist Heroine Scrapbook

Meg Bowman presents a plaque honoring Loretta J. Ross as the 1998 "Humanist Heroine."



Feminist Caucus co-chair Annie Laurie Gaylor presents feminist journalist Dottie Lamm with the 1997 plaque naming her that year's "Humanist Heroine."



Loretta J. Ross was a crowd pleaser at the 1998 San Diego AHA conference.



Kristin Lems, a veteran feminist singer/songwriter, holds the plaque naming her AHA "Humanist Heroine" at the 1994 convention in Detroit.



Loretta, with Feminist Caucus co-chair Trudie Hays (center), and co-chair emerita Meg Bowman.



Meg Bowman shows off the plaque awarded to peace activist and feminist Rosemary Matson in 1995.

The Birmingham Bombing *Remembrance & Renewal*

A Special Section: The Ongoing Assault Against Abortion Rights

Excerpted on the following pages is testimony from a very special event organized on March 14, 1998, in Birmingham, Alabama, in response to the bombing of an abortion clinic there in January, 1998, that killed an undercover police officer and seriously wounded a nurse.

A diverse coalition of local, regional and national organizations organized and participated in a week of "remembrance and renewal," culminating in a special gathering at Birmingham's Sixteenth Avenue Baptist Church, itself the site of a terrorist bombing in the early 1960's that killed four young black girls. The keynote speaker at the commemorative event was Gloria Steinem.

Included is selected testimony from among the many speakers and abortion rights experts at that prochoice gathering, as well as the transcript of Gloria Steinem's keynote address.

Unfortunately, since that memorial, yet another murder by antiabortion terrorists has been committed. Dr. Barnett Slepian, a highly regarded ob-gyn, was shot in his home in Amherst, New York, by a sniper on October 23, 1998. The suspect in that murder, as in the Birmingham and Atlanta crimes, has not been apprehended. Since Dr. Slepian's murder, U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno launched a national taskforce to prosecute and prevent similar attacks.

Stop The Agenda Of Hate

Rachel Doughty
Co-coordinator
Emergency Coalition for Choice

The Emergency Coalition for Choice has called a week of Remembrance and Renewal. On January 29, 1998, another cowardly act of hate ended the life of an off-duty police officer [Robert B. Sanderson] and critically injured a nurse [Emily Lyons] at a women's clinic here in Birmingham, Alabama. Since that shocking though unfortunately not uncommon attack, authorities have linked this bombing with the bombing of a lesbian night club, with the international Olympic park bombing, and another women's clinic in Atlanta.

Today at this historic place we draw the line at Birmingham. We see reproductive rights as a basic civil human right. The Emergency Coalition for Choice organized a week of events to draw the line.

It is our fervent hope that the brutal bombing of the New Woman All Women Health Clinic will be the last violent attack on women's rights, on human rights, in America. But we are also here to renew our

commitment to stop this agenda of hate wherever and whenever it may raise its ugly head, in whatever form it may take. When we see or hear intolerance creeping or stalking about, we must say loudly and clearly through our actions and words:

Stop the agenda of hate.

*When you're
using words like
"kill" and
"murder," that's
where it can
lead.*

*—Barnett Slepian, M.D.,
1994, shot to death, 1998*

The Emergency Coalition For Choice
Drawing the Line in Birmingham



A Week of Remembrance and Renewal
M a r c h 7 - 14 1998

“An Orchestrated Reign of Terror” Against Abortion Providers

**Vicki Saporta, Executive Director
National Abortion Federation**

*There is a
definite
orchestrated
reign of terror.*

We at NAF work to keep abortion safe, legal and accessible. NAF represents the doctors, nurses, counselors, administrators, the dedicated health care professionals who keep choice a reality for thousands of women in this country every day.

I'd like for you to imagine what it must be like to be an abortion provider, or to be a receptionist at one of five clinics last summer in the West that received bomb threats regularly, threatening the lives of clinic staff day in and day out. Or to be an administrator at a clinic and go home and find that there's a "wanted" poster with your picture on it, circulating in your neighborhood. Or to be a doctor and find that your house is picketed on a regular basis, and that your kids are followed to school.

And then you wake up and hear about Birmingham, and you wonder: Why Birmingham? Why not my clinic? Can you imagine how difficult it was for those clinic employees to open up that morning, and every morning since?

After the bombing what does a clinic administrator do when they see a bomb threat? After they tell the patients, after they do the bomb sweep, do they keep it open or do they evacuate? Administrators make these difficult decisions every day.

Shortly after the Atlanta bombing, in Seattle we heard about the theft at a chemical company of ammonium nitrate. The ATF thought it was going to be used to bomb a clinic in the area. Just imagine being that clinic administrator who receives the call in the middle of the night, and feels it is her obligation—and the ATF assures her that it is—to call all the other clinics in the area to let them know that they could be the target that evening or the next morning.

Do they call law enforcement officials to help open the clinic? Do they do bomb

sweeps? What about that trash can leaning against the front door. Is it silly to be worried? Would you pick it up as you normally did, or make sure it was rendered safe? Doctors, nurses, the dedicated health care professionals who work at these clinics can't take anything for granted anymore. They can't even receive flowers or candy or a gift box sent in appreciation without wondering: is this a threat? Is it going to explode? A very difficult way to live.

Is Birmingham an isolated incident? Unfortunately, the answer is no. The National Abortion Federation has kept statistics on violence and harassment against abortion providers for 20 years. There is a definite orchestrated reign of terror. Violence has escalated through time, perhaps best shown in the Army of God manuals.

The first edition concentrated on harassment: calling clinics, making false appointments, tying up phone lines, supergluing the locks, parking the vehicles there, chaining themselves to the axle so they can effectively blockade, moving on to butyric acid attacks.

The second edition of the Army of God manual reads like a "how to" on making and detonating bombs. You could really make a bomb if you followed those instructions. They actually advocated moving into arson and bombing. But the clinics kept reopening. And they decided the only way to truly stop abortion was to murder providers.

Look at Shelly Shannon's own progression. She's now in prison for a series of arsons and for attempted murder of Dr. George Tiller. She started out as a picketer. She became frustrated that abortions weren't stopping because of her picketing activities, so then started to commit arsons, became frustrated that the clinics were reopening, and then decided to murder an abortion provider.

In 1993, we had the first murder, of Dr.

Continued on next page

Unfortunately, in the 1990's you almost have to be a hero to provide reproductive health care services to women.

Continued from previous page

David Gunn. During that time there were extremists who signed doctrines saying it was justifiable to murder doctors, proudly listing their names on these petitions. Then in 1994, we had Paul Hill—one of those signers of the justifiable homicide doctrine—kill Dr. John Bayard Britton and Col. James Barret in Pensacola, Florida.

That same year, John Salvi murdered two receptionists at two different clinics in Brookline, Massachusetts.

Now here in Birmingham, we have another murder, and the death toll increases to six. These people are criminals and they remain unrepentant.

Maybe you saw “Nightline” just this week. Michael Brey was on “Nightline,” himself convicted of a series of attacks in Maryland and the Washington, D.C. area. In fact he firebombed NAF in the mid-1980s. He got on TV and told why he thought it is justifiable to murder doctors.

These people think that they are heroes—they are not. Emily Lyons is a heroine. Her courage has been an inspiration to all of us.

Unfortunately, in the 1990's you almost have to be a hero to provide reproductive health care services to women. Women still have to run the gauntlet of fear and harassment in order to obtain these services at far too many clinics.

Is there anything that we can do to stop the violence? I'd like to think that we live in a civilized society where using violence to advance your own personal political agenda is not acceptable. It is not acceptable to use violence to achieve what you cannot achieve through the Supreme Court, in other courts or in the Congress or state legislatures. It is not acceptable to bomb and burn clinics. It is not acceptable to murder providers in the so-called name of life.

So what can we do? Today is a good start.

We in the pro-choice community need to remember that we are the majority, and we need to provide support for abortion providers. We need to let elected officials know that we want stopping this violence

and solving these crimes to be a priority, and to have the requisite funding that a priority warrants. We need to let law enforcement officials know that we want a zero tolerance policy against criminal activities taking place outside clinics. That means arresting and convicting the extremists for trespassing, for blockading, for vandalism, and other criminal activities that are lower down on the totem pole. Because when local law enforcement officials stop those acts at that level, they don't tend to increase to bombing and arson and murder.

When you tell clinic blockaders, “You have three hours to stay here and we won't bother you,” the next place they'll stay four hours, and the next place they'll do something else. They move to areas where they can get away with more.

It's time to treat the criminal behavior as criminal. It's time to get to the point where there is no community left in the United States that tolerates this criminal behavior, and put a stop to it once and for all.



Prof. “Mike” Stillman, one of many organizers of a historic pro-choice response to the bombing at an Alabama abortion clinic, hawks a commemorative T-shirt at the event. The shirt commemorated all the abortion clinics that have been bombed or arsoned, and the names of all the clinic employees and abortion providers who have been murdered by antiabortion terrorists.

Abortion Is Mainstream Medicine

**Michelle Farley, Administrator
New Woman All Woman Health Clinic
(bombed January 29, 1998)**

I want to thank you all for being here today. I want to read you a postcard that I got from Atlanta:

“I am the 25-year-old father of two beautiful children. I have a large family in the Birmingham area; some worked with U.S. Steel. When the news of the clinic bombing went on the airwaves, I was saddened and angered. The deaths of women from back alley abortions should never be allowed to repeat itself. As a black man, our struggle has produced heroes. This struggle over women’s rights should and will produce its own.”

Unfortunately, it’s already done so. Emily Lyons is a hero. People in the news have said that the clinics are trying to make martyrs out of our police officer and our nurse. That’s not true at all. I looked up the

meaning of martyr and it means “sufferer, a victim.” Emily is not a victim. Emily is one of the strongest women I have ever known. To survive this is a testament to her strength, and to that of each and every staff member who has ever been in an abortion facility. She is a hero. She is a woman of distinguished valor, she is a champion, she is a model, and so are each of my staff.

Today is not just about our clinic, it’s about abortion, it’s about women’s rights. It’s a fight we’ve been fighting way too long.

Forty-three percent is the current statistic. Forty-three percent of American women will choose to have an abortion, for whatever reason, at least once during her lifetime. Forty-three percent, folks. This is mainstream medicine. We’re not fighting over whether a child has the right to a tonsillectomy or not. Why are we fighting over women’s right to make whatever decision is right for her and her family? Please do whatever it takes to support all the facilities.

Forty-three percent of American women will choose to have an abortion, for whatever reason, at least once during her lifetime.

Stop The Legislative Assault Against Women, Too

**Bell Taylor-McGhee
National Abortion Rights Action League**

I grew up in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. I can remember the time when it was the segregated South. I remember the “colored” and the “white” water fountains when I was a little girl. I’d go downtown with my father to the store, and I remember those times, of course, when I was told I couldn’t do something because I was “colored.” I said “no” to all those things then, and I’m saying “no” to them now. In fact, one of my fondest memories of growing up in the South was that my girlfriends and I would go downtown every Saturday, drink at the “white” water fountains, and run!

The inflammatory rhetoric that we hear from leaders of the antichoice movement helps to fuel the violence. It’s not just enough to go on national TV and denounce the violence and say, “We had nothing to do with it,” “Of course, we all deplore the violence.” It looks good on television but it doesn’t pass the smell test. They’ve got to do more than that. They have got to stop the legislative assault against women, too.

NARAL tracks legislative assaults against women all around the country. Every year we produce a state-by-state review of reproductive health services and abortion rights in all 50 states. It’s alarming what we found this year, and what we con-

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tinue to find every year.

I want to lay out the political landscape, so you'll understand it's not just the violence, it's the legislative assaults, as well. Women are under constant siege by those who oppose abortion.

For the first time since *Roe v. Wade*, both houses of Congress are antichoice. Out of 435 members of the House of Representatives [in March 1998], only 133 are solidly prochoice. In the Senate, 33 out of 100 are antichoice. They control all of the jurisdictions, all of the committees that have anything to do with women's reproductive health care services.

Since the rightwing takeover of Congress in 1995 they have voted consistently to restrict women's reproductive options. They have voted 81 times to roll back choice; we lost all but 10 of those votes.

Let me tell you what's going on:

- Military women (and their dependents) cannot get an abortion at overseas military hospitals, even if they pay for it with their own money.
- Women who work in federal government cannot choose a health plan that includes abortion.
- Low-income women do not get their abortions covered.
- Native American women who get health care through the Indian Health Care Services cannot get an abortion.
- Women in federal prisons cannot get an abortion.

This is systematic. The picture isn't any better at the state level. Last year [1997], 405 antichoice measures were introduced in states across the country. Today, one quarter of the states are enforcing at least three or more restrictions, such as mandatory waiting periods, biased counseling, parental consent and notices. This is not an accident. This is a concerted effort by those who oppose choice to make sure women have no options.

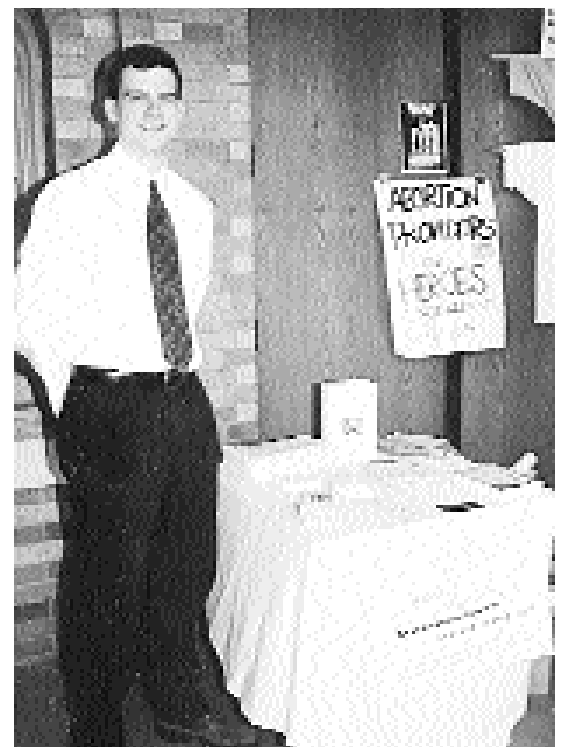
The hypocrisy is appalling when you think that those who oppose abortion do

absolutely nothing to make it less necessary. The same people who vote against women's abortion rights also want to slash family planning services so that women can't get contraceptives.

It's really about women being able to make decisions that dictate their lives, women being their own moral agents and determining for themselves when the time is right and when it is not to bear a child. It's about control.

Until the majority of Americans protect choice as a fundamental American value, as a principle that must be upheld the same as the right to vote or the freedom to worship—the violence will not stop. We have to be just as dogged as those who are voting to roll back choice. We have to hold our elected officials accountable. We have to protect and defend those elected officials who courageously stand up and defend choice. And we have to get rid of those who don't, vote them out of office.

We also need to talk to sisters, daughters, brothers, anyone you care about. Your silence will not protect you.



Adam Butler of Birmingham, one of the organizers of the Emergency Coalition for Choice

Refuse To Call the Antis “Pro-Life”

David Gunn, Jr.

It's been five years since my father was murdered outside his clinic in Pensacola. He was the first and unfortunately not the last casualty in the war against abortion providers. Since his death I've been struggling with questions, namely, what role does the antichoice movement play? Are these related to other acts of domestic terrorism, and what can be done to curtail future acts of terrorism?

First I would like to address the “pro-life” issue. All people, in order to continue living and breathing, must be in favor of life. We're all pro-life if we continue to take a breath. So being “pro-life” does not require being antiabortion. It's hard to argue against the label of “pro-life.” If you're the other side, that makes you “anti-life,” “pro-death” and “antifamily.” They're equating prochoice advocates and abortion providers with murderers.

On the other hand, they're the ones who form extremist organizations, preach hatred, blockade women's clinics, wage cultural war, and murder innocent people. Their actions reveal people who are not

pro-life but rather people who are scared of social change, individual liberty and equality among all persons.

We must refuse to refer to them by their chosen name of “pro-life” [applause] because anyone who holds the tenet of hatred as sacred, who terrorizes and murders the innocent and in general forces their theology upon the nation, does not deserve that label.

Intolerance, ignorance, intimidation and fear are all tools the antis use to try to undermine our cause. The rhetoric of the antichoice movement which dehumanizes opponents has resulted in seven homicides, if you include Dr. George Patterson of Mobile. These murders were all centered around the abortion issue. But the perpetrators of these attacks and their supporters are not solely concerned with abortion.

Our country is under siege by proponents of religious zeal who are pushing their social agenda with abortion as the galvanizing force. If we simply look at who is accused of bombing the Birmingham clinic, we will see a startling example—Eric Rudolph, a member of the Army of God, who allegedly bombed two clinics, one here [in Birmingham] and one in Atlanta, and who might have been responsible for the nightclub bombing and possibly is connected with the bombing of the Olympic park.

In these instances, pro-choice, gay rights and international community are the targets, making this more than a war against reproductive choice, but also against sexuality and diversity. In order to stem the hatred we must stand together as a community and denounce the acts of these organizations.

It is our responsibility to supply the voice of reason and respect amidst all the misinformation and spite. We must expose the groups and their radical social agendas, behind the religious guise of a “pro-life” stance, as the domestic terrorists and hate groups that they are.

The rhetoric of the antichoice movement which dehumanizes opponents has resulted in seven homicides.

In Memory of Two Heroines

This special section on abortion rights is dedicated to the memories of two very special women physicians who died last year:

Hania W. Ris, M.D., 84, of Madison, Wisconsin, a pediatrician and early crusader for birth control and abortion who died March 24, 1998; and

Liz Karlin, M.D., an internist and feminist who provided abortions in Madison, Wisconsin, although unceasingly stalked by antiabortion harassers. Her untimely death at age 54 on July 27 occurred from brain cancer.

Both were true Heroines.

“If They Torture Your Sister, Plant A Tree”

The Moral Majority and all those groups are actually made up of the people our European ancestors came here to escape!



Gloria Steinem addressing the “Drawing the Line in Birmingham” commemoration held in March 1998 after the bombing of an Alabama abortion clinic earlier that spring.

**An address by Gloria Steinem
Sixteenth Avenue Baptist Church
Birmingham, Alabama, March 14, 1998**

Greetings to my sisters and brothers of Birmingham, and brothers and sisters who have come here from many other places, and especially to Emily Lyons—whom I was able to go and see in the hospital before this meeting, and her husband Jeff, and her parents and her two daughters who were all there—whose pain is unspeakable: twenty surgical procedures, and not through yet, lying there with pins in her legs, unable to see, cheerful and making jokes, but deeply afraid too, I think.

Like many of us, she too watched that “Nightline” show with Mr. Brey, who when asked about her said that she wasn’t courageous, she was foolish. It sounded like a threat.

I asked her what I should tell you, and she said, “Well, I want to keep on. Tell them not to stop, and not to let those people win.” [applause]

I’ve been trying to figure out what I could say that could bring some of the themes and subjects and glorious words that we’ve heard today together. In a way, I don’t have to bring them together, because the adversaries bring them together. The adversary is the adversary of all the goals we’ve heard enunciated. I used to have a postcard on my wall in the office of Ms. Magazine because it was like poetry—it had so beautifully brought together everything into a small space. It said:

“Now that I’ve read your magazine I know for sure that you are a lesbian, commie, witch-bitch, long-haired dyke who supports abortion and dates Negroids.” Then underneath it said: “Isn’t that just like a Jew?” Fantastic, don’t you think?

What is the politics? What is the reason behind the fact that the adversaries of abortion also oppose contraception, and sex education that would reduce abortion? Why is it that those who are against equality for African-Americans, men and women, are also against equality for European-

*To say that
sexuality is only
okay if it's
directed toward
procreation is
like saying you
can have
freedom of
speech,
providing you
only say one
thing.*

American women (as white women are calling ourselves in an effort for euphonious, parallel phrasing)? Why are those against abortion and family planning also against lesbians and gay men? I mean, does this make sense! Why are those against abortion also in favor of capital punishment, and even war?

I think that we should concede that it makes sense. There *is* a logic to it. It is not illogical. There is an authoritarian political purpose here. The purpose is to control women's bodies as the most basic means of production, the means of reproduction. That, even in a single-race or single-class society, would be necessary in order to control how many workers there are, how many soldiers there are, who owns them, and systems of paternal ownership, and so on, and to make sure there is a continuing supply of cheap labor.

We are trying to seize control of the means of reproduction. It even sounds radical! So when we make this sweetly reasonable demand that we just want control of our own bodies, we're doing something deep and radical, in the true sense of radical, which is going to the root. Now, in a society in which there is a racial caste system, the need for this control of the means of reproduction is redoubled. It's why racism and sexism are completely intertwined and why it is not possible to uproot one without also uprooting the other.

And that is why if they are going to maintain a racial caste system in the long term, they have to maintain some degree of racial purity, and visible difference. Otherwise in the long term it all disappears. In order to do that, they have to control the bodies of the women of the ruling white class. That's why so-called miscegenation has been the most punished crime in America; it hasn't been murder, it hasn't been theft, it has been the taking over, even out of love and free will, of the body of the means of reproduction of the ruling class by men of color. The other way, even by rape, even by force, when women of color were taken over by white men, didn't matter,

because that just produced more children marked on their skin as cheap labor. The white men—except for the white men in this room who are an exception to everything!—owned everything.

What that meant was the freedom of white women had to be restricted in order to maintain the racial caste system just as the bodies of women of color had to be exploited in order to continue the supply of cheap labor. So both white women and women of color had to be controlled as a means of reproduction in order to keep this caste system going.

What is implicit in what I just said is that in order to do this, you have to control sexuality. You have to create a society in which all sexuality must take place within marriage and have the goal or possibility of conception if it is in the upper classes, therefore to control the ownership of those children. So all sex had to be only "okay" sex, sex that ends in conception. And that's why it goes together with being anti-gay and anti-lesbian. It's not just anti-gay and anti-lesbian. They actually take formal resolutions against masturbation—really! I always want to know how they enforce this? The Moral Majority and all those groups are actually made up of the people our European ancestors came here to escape!

We have been told a lie about sexuality. We have been told its only moral purpose is for conception. This is a lie, as it turns out. Human beings are the only animals who can experience sexual pleasure at times equally when they can conceive and they can't conceive. All other animals—I don't want to oppress other animals, maybe they should speak for themselves—we think, at least, tend to have sexual drives focused at times of estrus, in times of heat when they can conceive. Human beings can uniquely experience the same pleasure whether we can conceive or not. Therefore part of our uniqueness—like our cerebral cortex, our ability to read and remember, and so on—is that sex is a form of communication, not just a way to procreate, if we *choose* to.

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We must never ever talk about terrorism in other countries, without also talking about terrorism in this country.

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Because we also can invent the means not to procreate. All sexuality is also a form of communication. It's a way we reach out to each other, and a way we can express love and caring. So to say that sexuality is only okay if it's directed toward procreation is like saying you can have freedom of speech, providing you only say one thing.

Now we come to the question of capital punishment, war and so on. Why is there such a clear correlation? People who are antiabortion are also in favor of capital punishment. Well, the answer is, as we know, they are *not* pro-life. The question is not life or no life. The question is who decides? It's not *what* gets decided, it's *who* decides. And because they are authoritarians, what they're essentially saying is only the state or the church or whatever the authoritarian group is—only it can decide. Therefore capital punishment is okay, war is okay, because that's decided by the authoritarian body. Abortion is not okay, because that is decided by the individual, and is subversive, and undermines the whole ability to control women's bodies, of all races and colors and ethnicities, to control the most basic means of production, the means of reproduction.

That is where all authoritarian regimes start. You know Rush Limbaugh is fond of calling us femi-nazis. It wouldn't bother me so much if it weren't so ahistorical. I keep thinking, where has he been? Because in fact the Nazis, the National Socialists as they called themselves, were antiabortion and anti-family planning. In fact, when Hitler was elected, among the first things, and perhaps the very first thing he did, was to declare abortion a crime against the state and to padlock the family planning clinics. Because he wanted to produce the "master race."

It is the root of authoritarianism. It is the first thing that the fascist, authoritarian regimes do. Sometimes I think of the experience of Europeans coming here who are old enough to remember the first burst of fascism in Europe. (You don't have to be too old.) They look around at our ultra-

rightwing and say, "This is fascism, you know. Hello?" But we, having not experienced it or experienced it in quite the same way, are less likely to see it.

We are here together in one battle. This is not a laundry list of issues. This is a cohesive world view. If we don't understand that you can't be a feminist without being an anti-racist, and you can't be a feminist without supporting gay rights, without supporting lesbian organizations, then we fail at our peril. If we don't understand that you can't be a civil rights worker—you can't successfully uproot the racial caste system without also uprooting the sexual caste system—then the very first thing that is going to happen is that the black community or the community of color in question is going to be diminished by half, because you're going to leave half of the community disabled by sexism. And in the long term, it is simply not going to be possible to uproot the racial caste system which is so deeply intertwined and dependent on that of sex. So we *are* here together.

Our opposition knows its coalition. Look at the alleged bomber here who is part of a group that is anti-Semitic, that is anti-Black, anti-gay, that is militaristic. It's all there. I hope finally that the nature of this crime and the crimes in Atlanta and the apparent connection between and among them and these various militaristic groups around the country will finally make clear that this is a cohesive planned campaign, a national campaign—that even the FBI will be able to take that on board, and understand that these are not isolated incidents and that we must never ever talk about terrorism in other countries, without also talking about terrorism in this country. [applause]

I hope that it is perhaps possible in this church of such symbolism of tragedy and of hope, that just as a bombing with civil rights motivation caused a turn-around in the country, that a bombing against reproductive freedom will cause a turn-around in this country. I know that we sometimes feel that we are out there on the edge of history, with

We've had five to eight thousand years of patriarchy. I think we should just declare it over—an experiment that failed.

the wind whistling past our ears. Actually, we're not, because the original cultures on this and other continents were much more egalitarian, had a different relationship with nature, were not hierarchical, were much more communitarian, with consensus forms of decision-making and so on. Women controlled their own fertility.

You know, sometimes I think, to be frank, that we've had five to eight thousand years of patriarchy, racism, nationalism, all this stuff. I think we should just declare it over—an experiment that failed. [applause]

You know that those thousands of years are less than five percent of human history. Ninety-five percent of human history existed before that. I just came back from South Africa, where among the first things they did with their new democracy was to make sure that abortion was legal and safe. It is great to see. I also went to see the reigning queen, a tribal leader, a woman, who rules 900,000 folks, and is one of the most respected hereditary leaders because her group came from Zimbabwe and is to Africa what Native American groups are to this

country.

Sometimes we get the feeling that if things weren't ever better, they never will be better in the future. But it was different before. Actually the Iroquois confederacy gave shelter to runaway slaves, because they were exogamous, and it turns out they inspired the suffragists, did you know that? I never did. It's comforting to know that if it happened before, it can happen again.

Even though we feel we are on the edge of history, we are learning from history and creating in the future an even better version of what existed in the past.

If we are ever going to turn around, this is the symbolically right place to do it. This is the community to do it. Let it start here. Ever since I stood outside the clinic where a tree was being planted where the bomb went off, I've been trying to think of the Alice Walker poem—does anyone remember it? "If they murder your sister/Plant a tree./If they torture you brother/Plant a tree. . . ."

And you in this community have done that. And I thank you.

The Religious War Against Women

Annie Laurie Gaylor
AHA Feminist Caucus
Freedom From Religion Foundation

The group I represent, the Freedom From Religion Foundation, came into existence in part because of the abortion movement, because of the organized religious opposition to abortion rights. My mother Anne Gaylor, in working for the repeal of antiabortion laws in Wisconsin in the late sixties, soon realized that the true enemy of abortion rights and all women's rights was organized religion.

Virtually every vocal opponent of contraception and abortion for the past 30 years argues against these rights on the basis of God and the bible. There were many fine

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Annie Laurie Gaylor, Feminist Caucus co-chair, addressing the prochoice rally in the historic Sixteenth Avenue Baptist Church

When it comes to abortion, religious opponents are not just hurling bibles. They are hurtling bombs.

Continued from previous page

organizations working for women's rights, but none—we felt—getting at the root cause of women's oppression—patriarchal religion and its incursions upon our secular laws. So that's why I'm here today.

The primary organized opposition to reproductive rights in this country always has been religion. In fact, we are in the midst of a religious war not just against abortion rights, but women's rights in general, not just in our country, but worldwide.

In this country, the religious terrorism is directed at birth control and abortion clinics, their patients, medical providers and staff. In Alabama, it is the Army of God bombing abortion clinics. In Algeria, it is terrorists from similarly named groups who are shooting schoolgirls on the streets for not wearing veils.

In America, the foot soldiers of the Religious Right are engaged in their campaigns of terrorism, harassment, stalking, arsons, bombing, murder, trying to close down legal abortion clinics by force. They do all these things in the name of God. In Afghanistan, the radical Islamic Taliban that has taken over that country is literally halting all medical care for women—the hospitals in the capital city are already closed to women. They've done this, and worse, in the name of Allah.

Islamic fundamentalist theocrats openly talk of jihad, a holy war. So does Patrick Buchanan, who has called for a Christian jihad in this country.

Whether declared or undeclared, there is nothing new in this religious war against women. After the organized women's movement was officially launched 150 years ago this year, Elizabeth Cady Stanton said the "bible was hurled at us on every side."

Every freedom won for women in this country, small or large—from wearing bloomers to riding bicycles to not wearing bonnets in church, to being permitted to speak in public, to attend universities, to enter professions, to vote and own property—was opposed by the churches. In the 1970's and 1980's, it was the churches—

Catholic, fundamentalist Protestant and Mormon—which marshalled political forces to defeat the Equal Rights Amendment.

And the most important right women have strived to obtain is the right to decide if and when to become a mother. Foes of women's freedom know that controlling women's reproduction is the ultimate way to control women. That is why when it comes to abortion, religious opponents are not just hurling bibles. They are hurtling bombs.

This is a religious *war* against women because it relies on threats, force, violence, harassment, terrorism. Pascal said: "Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction." And Voltaire said people who believe in absurdities will commit atrocities.

What happened on January 29 was an atrocity. It painfully reopens wounds of all the other atrocities here in Birmingham and elsewhere, also directed against civil rights, especially what happened to four young girls bombed in this church 35 years ago. Violent extremists who oppose equality such as the Army of God and the KKK, are always convinced they are acting in the name of God.

Let me acknowledge the great historic work of the SCLC, that was headquartered here, and to say a grateful word for the work of RCAR, Fran Kissling, and any one of any belief who does not let dogma get in the way of humanity. It is vital in the abortion debate that the mainstreamers and liberal religionists do not yield the moral high ground or let the crazies and fanatics speak for them.

But neither should we let the political debate deteriorate into a contest between believers who say God supports a woman's right, versus the implacable orthodox who scream that abortion is a sin.

Because that's a battle that has no place in our capitol buildings, should not be fought, and can never be won. No two denominations, no two clergy, no two biblical interpretations, seemingly can agree.

The gap between the number of women who need abortions and those who can provide them is growing exponentially.

Where there is one religious authority, there will always be a contrary religious authority. In our secular country, we are all free to believe what we like, but our government must remain above the religious fray.

And that's women's salvation—our precious, uniquely American principle of the separation of church and state.

Our constitution says you cannot legislate your religion. Belief that a "human being exists at conception" is a matter of faith, not fact.

You cannot shut down an abortion clinic because *your* church or *your* pastor or *your* holy book opposes abortion.

Our government cannot issue a divine fiat saying when a soul exists, or that a soul exists.

Despite what the Ten Commandments and Judge Moore and Gov. James and Attorney General Pryor and the Christian Coalition and the Christian Family Alliance say, in America, we can have as many gods as we like, or none at all.

Women and the men who support women's rights must make it our business to

protect our First Amendment, because it protects us. We must fortify the wall of separation between church and state, because it is the only barrier, *it is the only barrier*, standing between women's rights and this holy war.

As we renew our support, we pay homage to the remarkable courage and commitment of Emily Lyons. We renew our support in memory of Robert Sanderson, in memory of Dr. Gunn of Pensacola, in memory of all the women who have died from illegal abortions, the 200,000 women who die every year worldwide because abortion remains illegal or inaccessible. We renew our support in defense of women's lives.

Adlai Stevenson once wrote:

"It is a common heresy and its graves are to be found all over the earth. It is the heresy that says you can kill an idea by killing a man, defeat a principle by defeating a person, bury truth by burying its vehicle.

"Man may burn his brother at the stake, but he cannot reduce truth to ashes; he may murder his fellow man with a shot in the back, but he does not murder justice."

"We Are Approaching A Medical Crisis"

Kirsta Kirtzberg
Medical Students for
Choice

I will graduate from medical school in 1999. During those four years, the time we will have spent discussing abortion—talking about all the health and social issues—will be less than the time it took me to walk up to this podium.

The silence has been created and perpetrated by political pressure and by the very real fear of violence among medical professionals. Every day in this country, clinic workers and doctors are harassed and threatened. In the tragic example of the


**Motherhood
by Choice not
Force**


Birmingham bombing, these are not empty threats.

I would like to be able to tell you that the terrorist actions of a small group of people has not dampened the struggle to provide reproductive health care for all women. But at the level of medical schools in the United States, it has.

In the years since *Roe v. Wade*, the climate of fear has resulted in a huge decrease in the number of programs which offer abortion training to new doctors.

In the mid-seventies, shortly after abortion was legalized, 66% of all ob-gyn pro-

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We are approaching a crisis situation in which the right to reproductive freedom is in name only.

grams offered abortion training. Today that number has dropped to 12%. Abortion is conspicuously absent from almost all medical school curricula. Most students are not even taught how to counsel a woman about her pregnancy options, because even this is deemed too controversial.

Abortion is the most common surgical procedure for women in this country, and yet medical students have to seek out information and training in abortion techniques on their own, often to no avail.

The result is that the gap between the number of women who need abortions and those who can provide them is growing exponentially. In over 80 percent of the counties in this country there is not a single doctor who is able or willing to provide abortion services. Of course, this affects poor women and rural women most of all.

Therefore, 25 years after *Roe v. Wade*, we find ourselves in a terrible dilemma. In many places it is more difficult to find a doctor now to provide an abortion than it was when it was illegal. Most of the 2,000 doctors who do provide abortions are over 65 and they continue to work because they remember firsthand the women who were maimed or killed by illegal abortion. Unfortunately, there are not enough new doctors who are courageous enough or have the skills to take their place.

We are approaching a crisis situation in which the right to reproductive freedom is in name only. The reality is one of dangerously limited access to abortion.

How can we overcome this seemingly overwhelming atmosphere of silence in the medical school, and fear in the community?

Medical Students for Choice has been working since 1993 to make sure that all medical students learn the basics of abortion and abortion counseling. Currently we have 4,000 members in all 165 medical schools, and we continue to provide a training opportunity to all students. It is our belief that absence of safe and legal abortion is a health issue, and compromises the health of all women.

As a community, we need to continue to

provide support for clinic workers and doctors. I encourage all of you to continue clinic defense and patient escorting. Every time there is an antichoice rally, whether it is in front of a clinic or a doctor's home or a capitol building, we need to be there to remind clinic workers and doctors that the vast majority of Americans support a woman's right to choose.

This week on March 10, which was the fifth anniversary of the murder of Dr. David Gunn, a coalition of organizations sponsored the fifth annual National Day of Appreciation for Abortion Providers, and hundreds of people said "thank you" to those who continue to courageously protect our reproductive freedom. I urge you to continue to support providers and to let them know their work saves women's lives, both literally and figuratively.


We need to remember that abortion is a legal right in the United States—a hard-won right 25 years ago—and in this country rights are meant to be exercised in broad daylight, not in the shadow of fear. Rights should be exercised by all people, no matter where they live, no matter how much money they have.

At this time, the right to choose is in danger from harassment, violence, and the lack of providers. We need to reclaim this right and bring it into the open, by demanding that medical professionals take the training they need, and by creating a climate of respect and dignity for them to work in.

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Practical Way to Help Protect Abortion Rights

One way to help protect abortion rights is with a check, sent to what is believed to be the longest continuously running abortion charity, the Women's Medical Fund, administered voluntarily for more than 20 years by 1985 "Humanist Heroine" Anne Nicol Gaylor, of Madison, Wisconsin.

Enclosed with this newsletter is a brochure describing this unique charity, in

which all the money goes to pay for abortions for women (and teenagers) without means.

Your gift to the Women's Medical Fund, Inc. (PO Box 248, Madison WI 53701) is deductible and goes right to work, ensuring that a poor woman can exercise her constitutional rights under *Roe v. Wade*.

Feminist Caucus Workshop

Keep "CEDAW" Alive! What YOU Can Do

In 1979 the U.N. General Assembly passed CEDAW (the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women), which was sent out for nations to ratify in 1980. Since then, 163 nations have signed it—but not the United States! The United States is in the same company as Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, and Iran, other ultra-right nations that refuse to ratify CEDAW.

Why this embarrassment? Because Sen. Jesse Helms (R-NC) has it "bottled up" in the Foreign Relations Committee and won't allow it out for Senate approval. President Clinton has repeatedly pledged that he will sign CEDAW when/if it arrives on his desk.

In order to keep CEDAW alive, several states (Iowa, South Dakota, California, Illinois, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont) and many counties and cities (San Francisco, San Diego, Evanston, IL, Broward County, FL) have passed resolutions in support of CEDAW or ratified CEDAW for their own jurisdiction.

You can organize a CEDAW campaign in your community. Come to the Feminist Caucus workshop in Columbus on

June 5 or contact Billie Heller at (310) 271-8087, email BilliCEDAW@aol.com, FAX (310) 271-2056.—*Meg Bowman*



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“CHES Is Not A Game”

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Founder

“We can’t do everything . . . but we can do something!”
—CHES motto



See page 1 for more on Lorrie Williams, the 1999 “Humanist Heroine.”

In 1982, I flew over to Kenya for fun and adventure. I had read an article in the BC Teacher magazine that someone there needed some help with a small school. Firmly clutching my return ticket, I flew to Africa and, as the hours passed, faded like the good-bye orchid I was wearing. Thirty-seven hours later, I stood up to the rims of my heels in mud in the school compound. Things did look better the next morning.

I walked to the school office and was immediately appointed deputy head (vice principal) and was given the distasteful task of expelling students who could not pay their fees. In East Africa, primary school is somewhat free but secondary is not. Consequently, poor, rural students stand little chance of even starting high school.

One day, I was asked to expel Margaret who was the brightest girl in Form One. Since I was earning only \$100/month, I was not in a position to help students so I wrote to friends back home and they responded generously. When I returned to Canada, I decided that virtue should not go unrewarded and I established the Canadian Harambee Education Society in 1985. We were granted charitable status by the federal government. Slowly we built up a group of supporters and to date have graduated over 400 students. At present we have 200 students attending secondary school.

For the first six years, we operated solely in Kenya. We were contacted by a couple of CUSO (Canadian University Service Overseas) volunteers who invited us to see their operation in Tanzania. After a twelve-hour bus ride, we bumped our way into the desolate town of Katesh. There we witnessed the successful Canada-Tanzania Wheat Programme that provided grain for much of the country. The downside of the project was the displacement of the Baribag People

(similar to Masai) who had no longer any free range in which to graze their cattle. Needless to say, these poor people were now even poorer. It did not take much persuading for us to open up the scholarship programme to the girls in this area. Our best student is a blind girl who has now qualified for Form 5 (A-Levels).

It is a fact that 100% of all the money collected for Africa goes to Africa. To obtain administration money, we sell African jewellery or hold special raffles. My friends leap into doorways when I go by—they never know what I am selling next.

I operate CHES from my home and every two years, go over to East Africa to view the operation. Just when I am running out of steam and enthusiasm, I see great groups of girls who no longer shuffle in, heads down and mumbling. I see confidence and optimism. Not every girl will succeed in getting to post secondary training, but the benefits of even just a secondary education are considerable. It has been proven that the number of children a woman will have is generally inversely proportional to the number of years she spends at school. Her children will be better nourished, will be better able to survive infancy, and will be better educated. Education is a good investment for the individual and for the nation.

A school year in East Africa begins in January (how logical!) and it operates three months on and one month off—i.e., April, August, and December are holiday months. It seems strange to call it a holiday as most of our students go to boarding schools and in the off months are expected to help with the subsistence farming at home. There is no guarantee that an education will equal wealth and well-being, but it is true that without it, their poverty is permanent.

And so, in our little way CHES hopes to change the lives of a small fraction of the population. Our motto: “We can’t do everything . . . but we can do something!”

Meet the Feminist Caucus-Sponsored CHES Student

Judith Awinja, sponsored by the AHA Feminist Caucus. ("I'm sorry you cannot see Judith's delightful dimples in this photo," writes Meg.)



The Feminist Caucus helps to sponsor a Kenyan high school student through Lorrie Williams' CHES charity: Judith Awinja, attending Imbale Secondary School, located several miles from Kakamega, western Kenya. She has been first out of 84 in her class and graduated in January with the expectation she will be enrolling in a university.

Meg Bowman, Feminist Caucus co-coordinator emerita, invited Judith and two other CHES students to accompany her and her own granddaughter Christine for a week of travel in western Kenya in January 1998. Meg reports:

"None of these young women had ever

before seen an elephant, zebra, giraffe, camel, etc. When we stayed for three nights at a huge hotel in Nairobi, for the first time they rode in an elevator, saw TV and Judith was the only one who liked ice cream.

"We taught them how to flush a toilet, take a shower, partake of all-you-can-eat buffets, and in Nairobi they saw TV for the first time and did not like going in the elevator or looking out the window of their 9th floor suite."

Meg also took the young women on a shopping spree in Nairobi, and they visited the Richard Leakey Museum, Karen Blixen home and other sites of interest, including Kenyatta University.



This is Angella Kadenyi, one of the students Meg Bowman sponsors through CHES, who is now attending Nairobi University majoring in English with the goal of becoming a teacher. She would like to receive English Lit books (Dickens, Shakespeare, etc.). Her address is: Angella Kadenyi Ajanga, College of Education & External Studies, University of Nairobi, PO Box 92, Kikuyu, Kenya.

CHES student Anyonje Shikunga, Secondary School, Kenya, with sponsor Meg Bowman.



Be A Humanist Heroine (or Hero)!

Send in your 1999 AHA Feminist Caucus Membership today!

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No woman can call herself free who does not own and control her own body. No woman can call herself free until she can choose consciously whether she will or will not be a mother.

—Margaret Sanger

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Please take a moment to fill in the handy enclosed renewal slip (or the form below) and write out a \$10 check (or more!) now for your 1999 membership in the AHA Feminist Caucus.

Please look for and use the enclosed envelope pre-addressed to

the AHA Feminist Caucus.

Feminist Caucus membership comes due every year at the time of the annual conference of the AHA (this year it's June 5, 1999). Your support is what makes it possible to continue the annual "Humanist Heroine" award and publication of

the annual newsletter.

Prompt renewals are much appreciated!

You will be sent your annual membership card showing that you are a Feminist Caucus member in good standing. Renew today through the mail! Thank you!

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